



BIR 2017 Convention: Memories and new directions

A new BIR leader is about to start, while a veteran metals trader shared 50 years of memories with BIR delegates.

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Brian Taylor

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Pictured above: Michael Lion of Hong Kong-based Everwell Resources Ltd., who served as the 2017 BIR World Recycling Convention keynote speaker.

At the 2017 Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) World Recycling Convention, held in late May in Hong Kong, delegates had a chance to meet the bureau's new director general, who will start in June 2017. At the same convention, veteran metals trader Michael Lion offered a perspective on his career, which has spanned parts of six different decades.

The BIR's new director general is Arnaud Brunet, who previously headed the Europe Brussels office of Japan-based Sony. He also previously has worked for Esso France and IBM France.

BIR President Ranjit Baxi, who also is president of London-based J&H Sales International Ltd., said the BIR has continued performing while temporarily being without a director general. Baxi said he is sure Brunet "will carry it forward in a good spirit."

Baxi added that he was pleased with the Hong Kong convention's ability to draw more than 900 participants from some 63 countries. He also said BIR is planning to convene in Barcelona in the spring of 2018 and in London for its autumn 2018 convention.

BIR Treasurer Tom Bird of United Kingdom-based Liberty Steel said the bureau finished 2016 with receipts of €2.06 million and expenses of €1.93 million, for a surplus of around €135,000. He commended the BIR staff for having "kept [spending] well under control." The BIR has prepared a break-even budget of €2.167 million in receipts and expenses for 2017.

Also at its Annual General Assembly meeting, Baxi was renominated and approved for another two-year term as BIR president.

Lion, who is currently based in Hong Kong where he manages his own trading firm, Everwell Resources Ltd., looked back on a career that has involved stints in London, New York and Hong Kong.

As a trader, he has spent time in numerous nations, including having visited China in the late 1970s, just as its economy began to open to the world. Nonetheless, said Lion, "After 40 years of going to China, it's not how much I know, it's how much I don't know."

Lion's recounting of his career began in the 1960s when, at the age of 17, he became a clerk at the London Metal Exchange (LME). He also showed a photo from that era when he played in a rock band and had longer hair, before a mandatory LME haircut. (Later that same evening, Lion entertained BIR delegates with a half-hour rock and blues set where he fronted a band both as lead singer and harmonica player.)

Lion also discussed the 1990s, when "the company that I ran collapsed." He added, "I wasn't a very nice person at the time and I probably deserved it." Lion thanked the people who encouraged him to get back into the business after a stint "selling used cars in Los Angeles for a while." He added, "Maybe when people have second chances, they look at things in a different way."

Lion's 21st century career included several years at Sims Metal Management, where he oversaw the trading of a high volume of nonferrous scrap into China.

Regarding the changes over that many decades, Lion reviewed the prior use of telex machines, fax machines and searching for international telephone land lines in remote parts of the world. He concluded, however, "The hardware has changed, but the reality is the way we try to conduct our business fundamentally is really very, very unchanged."

The BIR 2017 World Recycling Convention was held at the Hong Kong Convention Centre 22-24 May.