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HILL WINS 2009 TITANIUM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Robert Hill Jr., president, Solar Atmospheres of Western PA, has garnered the International Titanium Association's (ITA) 2009 Titanium Achievement Award, citing him as a leader and pioneer in developing vacuum-thermal processing solutions for the aerospace industry.

Hill will receive the award at the ITA's annual conference, TITANIUM 2009, which will be held Sept. 13-16 at the Hilton Waikoloa Village, Hawaii. The ITA is headquartered in Broomfield, CO.

The ITA's Achievement Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the advancement of technology and applications in the titanium industry. Twelve men have received the prestigious honor during the last nine years. Recipients must demonstrate a body of work that has helped to advance the titanium industry.

"I am completely thrilled, feel blessed and supremely honored to win this award," Hill declared. "Considering my years of work in the titanium market, this award represents the pinnacle of my achievements." Solar Atmospheres of Western PA is a unit of Solar Atmospheres Inc., Souderton, PA.

A member of American Society of Materials' (ASM) since 1980, Hill has published numerous articles on vacuum technologies and vacuum heat treating applications. By way of comparison, he noted that he recently won the ASM William Hunt Eisenman Award, but considered the ITA award more dear to his heart. Why? "Because Solar Atmospheres' has built its business on titanium here in western Pennsylvania," he said. "Titanium is a big part of what I've done throughout my professional life."

Hill, in a career that spans three decades, has specialized in the development of large vacuum furnace technologies and titanium processing capabilities for Solar Atmospheres. Nine years ago he launched the company's 60,000-square-foot facility in Hermitage, PA. During that period he has overseen three major capital-investment plant expansions. The site houses 13 vacuum furnaces including one that measures 36 feet in length. Hill and his associates pioneered the dual-loading "car-bottom" furnace design, which is shaped like a rail car with a total weight capacity of 150,000 pounds.

The facility registered \$13 million in sales last year, with a large segment of the business devoted to the heat treating of large structural parts for the Boeing 787 program. In particular, he said the Hermitage site is the only North American facility approved to meet Boeing's Beta Anneal Slow-Cooled Aged (BASCA) 160 specifications, which involves the vacuum heat treating of forged parts using VSMPO's Ti 5553 alloy.

"Bob's enthusiasm, drive and grit have been primary in the success of the Hermitage plant," William R. Jones, Solar Atmospheres' chief executive officer, stated. Jones praised Hill for developing a valuable asset for the titanium market, "without which this industry would not have advanced as quickly or easily as it has during the last five years."

Dan Buwalda, plant manager, Alcoa Power and Propulsion, Whitehall, MI, served as the chairman of the Achievement Award selection committee. "We reviewed a number of highly qualified nominees and the individual that clearly rose to the top was Robert Hill," Buwalda said. "He is recognized as a pioneer in developing titanium vacuum-thermal processing solutions for the aerospace industry."

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