



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MINING,  
METALLURGICAL, AND PETROLEUM ENGINEERS

## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**Nikhil Trivedi: Devotion to SME, The Minerals Industry, and Keeping Innovation Alive**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history is the result of recorded interviews with Nikhil Trivedi conducted by Dave Kanagy on May 13, 2022. This interview is part of the AIME Oral History Program.

## **ABSTRACT**

Born in a freshly independent India with an insatiable desire to grow up, Nikhil Trivedi realized his interest in metallurgical engineering at the age of five. Trivedi's pursuit of higher education and love for minerals brought him to the Mackay School of Mines in Reno, Nevada, and on to the University of Minnesota for his PhD. After overcoming the obstacles of being a foreign student in the United States, Trivedi became a US citizen and went on to join Pfizer's Minerals Division. Noting Pfizer as a company that encourages innovation and growth through research, Trivedi achieved a 30-year career there, contributing to the evolution of the mining industry. Trivedi became an expert problem solver, a voice for the industrial Minerals community, and a driving force behind R&D at Pfizer. Trivedi's devotion to the minerals industry also expands to his commitment to organizations like SME and AIME, where Trivedi highly values his service as SME president or as an active member of committees. SME fostered Trivedi's career and has become the love of his life.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

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## **PART 1**

### **00:15 Introduction**

Kanagy:

Thank you for listening today. This program is a continuation of the AIME Oral History project to capture the history of important members and their industry experience. My name is Dave Kanagy. I'm the Executive Director of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration. I'm pleased to interview Nikhil C. Trivedi today, who has served as SME and AIME in many different ways.

But most importantly, Nikhil served as the SME President in 2010 and the AIME President in 2016. It's an honor to interview Nikhil and provide our listeners with some historical background regarding his early years in India, his move to the United States, his education, and his career and working years; and finally, we'll talk a little bit about his commitment to organizations like SME and AIME and some philanthropic organizations that Nikhil has been involved with. So let's begin, Nikhil; tell us a little bit about your early years being raised in India in the 1950s and '60s.

### **01:12 Born in a Freshly Independent India – Choosing Between Doctor or Engineer**

Trivedi:

Yes, indeed. I'd be happy to. I was born in a freshly independent India. India became independent in 1947. I was born just a couple of years after that. My father was a principal of a boarding school. The title was Headmaster. That was the British legacy, and the students who were going to the school that he was heading up were all from Africa, but they were Indian students from Africa. So as Indians have grown up knowing people of Indian origin, traveling all over the world, it's nothing new to us that we find someone in Sweden, Iceland, Africa, or the US. My mother was a 1935 graduate of Agra University. Education for Women at that time was rare in India, but she happened to be from a very progressive family, and she was educated and earned a master's degree in 1935.

I have three siblings, my three sisters. They're all older than me, and I am the youngest. All my sisters are professionals. One is a hematologist. One is a professor. The other one is also a professor of mathematics. My father died very young. He was only 42 when he died, and I was three years old. My mother brought us up. A lot of struggle, a lot of social, environmental, and financial issues. But she was a strong woman, and she raised us well. India at that time was just, as I mentioned, freshly independent, and nation-building was the thing that everybody talked about. How do we get back on our feet; what do we do? So us younger generation, like myself, had no choice in studies. You either became a doctor, or you became an engineer. And that's it. Because those were the two that were needed. Hard currency was hard to come by. So basically, you did things within India, or if you had to go somewhere else, you paid for it on your own. So that was the India then. But there was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, and I think I brought some of that with me when I came here.

### **04:03 In A Hurry to Grow Up – Finding Metallurgical Engineering at 5 & Graduating College Before 18**

Kanagy:

Wonderful. That sounds interesting. How did you get interested in mining and metallurgy, then?

Trivedi:

I come from a state which is not at all mining intensive. There was nothing about mining that we knew as I was growing up. But the choice was made that I had to become an engineer because I didn't want to become a doctor. And so, I contacted a few people, and they said that metallurgical engineering was something that was badly needed to build the country. Now, remember, I'm still only five years old, so my going into college was going to be ten years or 15 years away. I was in a hurry to grow up because of the family circumstance. I actually graduated from high school at the age of 14, and I finished college at the age of 17 and a half. So at Bombay University, just to get close to metallurgy, I chose geology as my minor and chemistry as my major. So I graduated from Bombay in 1967 with a degree in chemistry and geology. And that was as close to metallurgy as I got.

Kanagy:

Very nice. How did you pick the University of Bombay, say, over the Indian School of Mines or the Institutes of Technology in India?

Trivedi:

Ah, good question. Most of the young people growing up aspire to join the famous IITs, the Indian Institutes of Technology, and of course, if I wanted to major in metallurgy, I should choose the Indian School of Mines. I could not do that. Two reasons. I was underage because I had graduated so early that by the time the cutoff age for engineering admission at IITs and ISM was 18, I wasn't 18 yet. But I wasn't willing to wait—number one. Number two, I was a mediocre student. My grades were not all that good. And, you know, the millions and millions of Indian young men who I was competing against had a lot better grades than I did. So admission there was kind of difficult for me. And that's what opened the door for me to go outside of India.

#### **06:47 “US is the Beacon of Hope” – Pursuing Higher Studies at the Mackay School of Mines**

Kanagy:

So you were 18 or so when you graduated from college, and you decided to come to the United States. What led you to come to the US for further studies?

Trivedi:

You know, it's like a cliché. You say, well, the US is the beacon of hope, and I truly, truly believed that. When I was 13 or 14, I would take two subway trains to go to downtown Bombay to visit the USIS library. The United States Information Service, USIS, as they called it, the USIS library was full of what I might today say propaganda but was so much informative and so much impressive. And remember, in the early '60s was the Kennedy assassination. Suddenly, all the people were sympathetic to the US and really looked at the US as a beacon of hope, truly, and that's why I chose to come to the US. The United States Information Service gave me insight into which would be good colleges for me to pursue my interest in metallurgical engineering.

Kanagy:

What was your initial impression of the United States? Because I know you came here in 1968 if I remember correctly.

Trivedi:

Yes, you do remember that 1968 was a shocker for me because I came to the US and went to Chicago. And at that time, Mayor Daley was hosting the Democratic National Convention, and what I saw was shocking. It shook my faith, and I said, did I really come to the right place? This is not what I saw in the US Information Service propaganda. But this cannot be the US. It just cannot be. But in all honesty, my faith and my trust in the US came roaring back when I left Chicago and moved westwards to Nevada.

Kanagy:

Very good. Well, let's talk about that move west to Nevada, and how did you find out about the Mackay School of Mines? Tell me a little bit more about your first-year studies in the US.

Trivedi:

Be happy to. Mackay School of Mines was a name that had come up when I was in Bombay looking at possible opportunities. I had a dear family friend, actually one of the past students of my dad's, who was living in San Francisco at that time. So he said, you've got to come to the West Coast. So my geography was decided I was going to the West Coast. And then, in the back of my mind, I had known that I wanted to go to Mackay School of Mines because, from Bombay, I had chosen that as my destination. So I applied for admission, and fortunately, I got in. Money was tight, just didn't have any, but I had just enough to pay my first semester fees.

### **10:19 My Attraction to Reno – Enthusiasm for Mining Geology & Love for Industrial Minerals**

Kanagy:

Very good. What was something that struck you as a foreign student in the US in the late 1960s?

Trivedi:

US folks were extremely receptive to foreign students, and that was the best thing that I saw first thing. Nevada and Mackay offered me that opportunity that I had seen and expected when I was reading all the documents at the USIS. The safety I felt. Remember, I was still only 18 and a half or 19, and the professors I encountered at Reno. Honestly, there was something about the ambiance in Reno and Mackay that made me fall in love with Mackay and Nevada, and that love actually still endures. I am still like a magnet. I want to go to Reno to do things.

Kanagy:

How did you financially support yourself? Summer jobs? Jobs in the casinos?

Trivedi:

Well, you know, the age thing always came in my way. Oh, to work at the casino, you had to be 21, and I was not. So. But, you know, I was so fortunate. There was a professor there, Professor John Butler, and let me just give you a little background on what was happening in Nevada at that time. "Uranium King" Charlie Steen had just built a huge mansion in Reno. His original discovery of a massive uranium deposit was near Moab, Utah. The original Texan who moved to Utah and discovered uranium, and he built a huge mansion in Moab. But the US Atomic Energy Commission consolidated everything about uranium. So basically, he just could not monetize his uranium holdings. So, he moved to Reno and built a mansion there because he had enough money. But at that time, what he created was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm amongst the mining and exploration geology community to keep on exploring, exploring for gold and silver. That's obviously in the Nevada culture. But then he kind of gave it the impetus.

John Butler was a professor at Mackay School of Mines. He would get these hundreds of thousands of samples to be analyzed to determine the gold content and the silver content. And he needed somebody to help him out with that. So I stepped up, and I needed the money, and he taught me gold assaying (assaying) the old-fashioned way to make the crucible, to weigh out the sample. First of all, to do the right sampling, weigh out the sample, burn it, and then take the nugget. And most of the time, you had to deliver the bad news to the miner that he's got nothing. But that was a source of income for me.

Another way I supported myself was a project that I took on under the guidance of my advisor, Ross Smith. It was a National Science Foundation project, and he put me on the payroll because, without that, I couldn't have done that. One summer in Nevada, I worked in a small town called Battle Mountain, Nevada. It is somewhere in the desert between Winnemucca and Elko. And there I was exposed to barite operation. My first exposure to industrial minerals. And as you know, I spent my life in industrial minerals. And that's where, again, it's Nevada. And I just fell in love with the industrial minerals business after that. So that's how I supported myself.

#### **15:04 My Mentor & Supporter Ross Smith – Learning About Life, My Thesis & Joining SME**

Kanagy:

Very good. You've often mentioned your mentor, Ross Smith. Tell us a little bit more about him.

Trivedi:

Yeah. I get emotional thinking of Ross. I was 19. I was looking up to a person whom not only I would learn from about mining and metallurgy but learned from him about life. I don't think he realized how much he helped me. I would observe him. I would any time go to his office. His wife was also a professor in Reno, and I got to know his children. But Ross, who had just graduated from MIT and after a one-year stint at South Dakota School of Mines, he came to Reno as a professor. And I was probably one of his first graduate students.

He encouraged me to join SME. In fact, he paid my first two years of dues at SME, 1968 and 1969. Those two years of dues came from [him]. I don't know how much they were, honestly, probably not that much, but that's not the point. So I always remembered him for that. He encouraged me to, after I graduated from Reno, to go to Minnesota, and he stayed with me till I finally settled in Minnesota. Because as I'm going to tell you in a little while, life in Minnesota was rough for me, but Ross was there for me as a guide even after I graduated from Mackay.

The project I worked on at Mackay was very interesting, and Ross was the right man for it. It had to do with electrophoresis and asbestos minerals. Difficult to handle. But he had a grant from NSF because, at that time, asbestos minerals were under scrutiny for their impact on lungs and health. And so that was my research. I felt it was pioneering. But then, as I did some more literature research, I found out that it wasn't all that pioneering as other people had done some work on it, but I enjoyed doing that work.

So that's Ross, and I'm ever so grateful to Ross for not only showing me about SME, but when I ran out of money, he encouraged me to apply for a scholarship from WAIME, the Women's Auxiliary of the AIME, and I did get the money, and that helped me get through. And at that time, I decided that I would do something for the WAIME and the parent organization at that time, AIME. And as you know, later on, I did get the chance to do so.

Kanagy:

So very nice.

Ultimately, at the end of your time at Mackay, you earned your degree. What was your degree in, and what did you focus your thesis on at Mackay?

Trivedi:

Yeah, my degree was in metallurgy and mineral economics. My minor, there was mineral economics, which was a unique combination, I felt, because my goal was to look at the economic impact of the mining industry and how we can enhance the economic performance of minerals. So that was a good combination for me. My thesis was on, as I mentioned, Zeta potential measurements on complex silicate minerals as they were aged in aqueous systems. So to make a long story short, it was about asbestos minerals. They were aged in water, and their surface chemistry was measured, and I did the work.

My professors there, I am so grateful to all of them. Frank Bowdish was a direct descendant of Antoine Gaudin from MIT. Jack Winston, Pierre Mousset Jones, (Mousset-Jones) who is still a professor in Reno. He was a professor then, so I don't want to tell how old he is, but at the same time, amazing people that I encountered. And that, again, reinforced my faith in America, that this was a place where all these things were so readily available to this kid from far away.

### **20:15 Surviving Minnesota – A First-year Ph.D. Student with No Adviser, Project, or Money**

Kanagy:

So after you received your degree in Nevada, you moved on to do some additional work at the University of Minnesota. Can you tell us about your experiences in Minnesota?

Trivedi:

Yes. Ross was the one who recommended it, as I mentioned earlier. Ross said that's where you want to go. Ross was a surface chemistry person, and he, of course, his comradery was with surface chemistry-type metallurgists. So he picked for me to go to Minnesota under Professor Iwasaki. Professor Iwasaki, I think he's still in Minnesota. And Iwasaki was he had a good grant coming in from the taconite industry. At that time, Minnesota was focusing heavily on its taconite; it still does. But there was a huge research



effort at the university, so money was good, and that was one consideration. To make a long story short, I drove from Reno to Minneapolis, and for the first time, I saw condensation coming out of the exhaust of the car. And I had never known because it was cold up in Minnesota. That October got cold, and it stayed cold for the five years that I was in Minnesota.

They say Minnesota is where men are made, and it did make me. It was a struggle. Trying time for me. What happened is that there was a massive environmental problem in Silver Bay, Minnesota. There was a company called Reserve Mining Company, and the tailings had leaked out into Lake Superior. And suddenly, pretty much overnight, the public opinion in Minnesota was against mining. Very soon, the funding just got cut off. So I had no funds. Lots of people decided to leave and move to other locations. Professor Iwasaki decided that he was going to go back to Japan to pursue some work at Nippon Steel. So here I was, a first-year Ph.D. student without an adviser, without a project, and hardly any money.

And so I had to become creative. So I went to the chemical engineering department, was as close as I could get, and convinced them to take me on. I convinced, first of all, the minerals department to keep my funding, and I convinced the chemical engineering department to get me some sort of an interdisciplinary project. The conditions were that I had to take microbiology as my minor and analytical chemistry as my minor. So I did. So finally, I did the thesis on microbial interaction in leaching of copper and nickel sulfide concentrates from the Duluth area of Minnesota. And that was a PhD thesis I worked on. I got some publications out of it but made some amazing friends over there.

The faculty at Minnesota consisted of Professor Eugene Pfeider. I think SME has a Pfeider scholarship. Don Yardley and, of course, Charles Fairhurst and Jim Lawver, and these were the people that I interacted with. On the chemical engineering side, my advisor was Professor Henry Tsuchiya, one of the most well-known biochemical engineers of his day, and Professor Neil Amundson. My chemistry Professor was Kolthoff, and I'm mentioning these names because I don't want to take credit for it, but I have this link to them.

All three of my professors have halls at Minnesota named after them. Amundson Hall for Chemical Engineering, Kolthoff Hall for Chemistry, and Heller Hall for Walter Heller in Economics. So no credit to me, but I felt link to history. My thesis was well received. It was interdisciplinary. Funding was a constant struggle. But I survived and got out of Minnesota in four years.

### **25:33 Becoming A US Citizen – My Adopted Hometown, Reno & My Adopted State, Minnesota**

Kanagy:

What were those four years? What was Minnesota like during those four years? Back in the early seventies?

Trivedi:

You know, Minnesota, it's just an amazing place. Many times, I tell people that my adopted home state is Minnesota, and my adopted hometown is Reno. And people get confused. But I have so much love because I got so much from my stay in Minnesota. Minnesota, at that time, was struggling from the standpoint of pro-mining and anti-mining. Pro-environment — mining was bad for the environment, wrong concepts. Also, Minnesota was a big paper maker, and they were also like environmentally bad. So things like that were the topics that were going on. From the standpoint of university. It was one of

the best, and I still say it was number one in chemical engineering. Number two being Madison, Wisconsin. But then, people in Madison disagreed with us. I love Minnesota, and I still do.

Kanagy:

So you finished your PhD at the University of Minnesota, and you decided to stay in the United States. Did you give any thought to going back to India after that?

Trivedi:

I did. I did. And in the mid-seventies in India, opportunities were nonexistent for engineers. There was a glut of doctors and engineers because all of us had put so much effort. You know, you might see that even in a small town in the UK or here in the USA, you will find an Indian doctor practicing somewhere and doing well in service to people. And the same thing happened to a lot of engineers. A lot of us looked for opportunities in India and decided to come here. I was still underage. My age continued to haunt me in a good way or a bad way. And so I was thrown for the draft in the US if I stayed here. And so that was a big decision I had to make. But I did choose to stay here. And a basic decision to basically take US citizenship came later on when I joined Pfizer, an international company that required international travel.

#### **28:24 Joining Pfizer's Minerals Division – A Household Name Connecting the US & India**

Kanagy:

Okay. Very good. Well, your life did transition out of Minnesota, and you essentially started your work life. Tell us about what the transition was like for a student from India that was leaving the university, and you were going to become a research engineer in a company in Pennsylvania.

Trivedi:

Yes. Yes. And I'm still in Pennsylvania. In January of '74, my thesis advisor, Henry Tsuchiya, called me in his office and said, I was at this conference, and I met this headhunter. I guess that's the word they used in those days for recruiters. He said this headhunter is looking for a PhD who wants to work in a minerals company. And I said you found the right guy because I wanted to work in minerals. Yes, I did have—I was going to get a PhD. So he says, here, this is his card. There was a company called Ability Search. It doesn't exist anymore, and the name was Mr. Dowd. Pierre Dowd. So I called him, and he said, Yup.

I had never prepared a resumé because I was struggling with it. I do want to work, or I don't. So I had no resumé. But they called me to come to Allentown, Pennsylvania, for an interview. And I came here, and I met the local people at Pfizer, which was a pharmaceutical company, but it had a minerals division. And I joined that division as a research engineer at a staggering annual compensation of \$18,500 a year. It was great money. So I came here as a research engineer, and I just stayed with that company for 30 years. So.

Kanagy:

Nikhil, you finish your degree at the University of Minnesota with your PhD. When you finish a degree

with a PhD, many people have a choice of going to work for a company, as you did, but also people have a choice perhaps of being a professor and doing research and teaching students in higher education. What led you to go the company way versus staying in the university system and becoming a professor?

Trivedi:

I actually never gave a thought to being a professor. Remember, what drove me to come to the US and take up the engineering profession was nation-building in India. And I realized that for that, I had to be in a corporate environment or an engineering establishment and not really looking at teaching the future generation. I also don't have the patience. I didn't have the patience. I still don't have to deal with kids who, I'm not going to say kids, but young men or women who don't quickly pick up things and go with it. So I just ruled that out. And also, Pfizer, which was the first and only opportunity that came my way, was extremely well-known in India. It had an Indian operation.

In fact, my cousin's uncle, well, my uncle, was on the board of Pfizer, India. So in many ways, Pfizer's name was a household name for us as we gathered in family gatherings. And the idea I had, which never really got fulfilled, was to leverage that association with Pfizer here to send me back to India and become a member of Pfizer India staff. That never happened because the businesses were so different. But that answers your question. Many times, people look at me and say, you must be a professor. I sometimes come across that way. As you know, I'm also a member of SOMP, the Society of Mining Professors, probably the only non-academician who is not a professor who is a SOMP member. But that's me.

### **33:18 My 30-Year Career with Pfizer – The Company That Encouraged Innovation**

Kanagy:

Very nice. You spent your entire career with one company. That doesn't happen very often these days. You often mentioned that experience had a profound and deeply meaningful experience to you. Shed as much light as you can on that for us, would you?

Trivedi:

I can talk for hours about my association with Pfizer. You know, when you find a company that is pragmatic, that has an established corporate culture that is unparalleled, you stay with them. There is no reason to change. I think one thing that young people who might be watching this video I want to send a message to is if you become part of an organization that is growing, there is no need for you to leave the company. I joined the division. The minerals part of the big corporate entity had sales of \$40 million when I joined. We're selling three industrial minerals products talc, limestone, dolomite, and lime, which is made from limestone. When I left after 30 years, the sales had grown to \$650 Million.

So from 40 million to 650 million in 30 years shows you that the company was continuing to grow, and this was all grown internally. We didn't acquire any other company. We grew through research. I was fortunate to head up the research effort eventually. I started out as an engineer. Then I became production manager. Then I became technology manager. Then I became R&D manager, and then all the technical activities I was leading up. And all that happened over that 28-to-30-year period. Again, growing company. Open-minded company. The company that encouraged innovation. These are the companies that you want to stay with. There is no reason to change.

### **35:46 The Three C's, Regulations & Lessons – Working in An Enlightened Corporate Culture**

Trivedi:

And that's what I did. I'll give you a couple of— over the years, we never talked about what we did. I met you so many times, but I never told you what I do. The reason is the company does tend to have a certain amount of restriction on what you talk about; your research activity. I can talk about it now. A lot of it has been published since when I joined the company in 1974. The first major opportunity that came our way was the OSHA guideline on asbestos minerals in talc. Talc was a big business for us, and here comes this guideline that was going to put a tremendous amount of burden on that and maybe even hurt the business. We, therefore, developed a strategy. I was not involved in that. Upper management was.

And again, I want to give credit to an enlightened corporate culture that pervaded down to the entire organization. Three C's. Compliance. The first thing you do is comply. You just don't question. That is a regulation that has come down. Comply. Second, "C" - communicate. Communicate to the regulatory authorities. Communicate to your customers. Communicate within the company what it is that is coming down and what it is that we are doing about it. And the third one is competence. Build your competence to address what is coming down.

In contrast, and I don't want to belittle anybody, but when I would come to SME meetings and talk about these regulatory issues, which was a big subject to SME all the time, regulations, regulations. Most of the people complained about the regulation. Oh, they should be thrown out. Our thing was compliance. Now, remember, we were under the umbrella of MSHA because we were a mining company. We had nothing to do with OSHA. Our customers had to deal with OSHA. But we took on that responsibility to comply on behalf of the customers. And that brought us loyalty.

But it taught me a lesson, taught me a huge lesson. No need to complain, comply, and then become competent. And you can argue with competence as your base and say these are wrong. And guess what? Twenty years later, OSHA reversed their rulings. They came back and said that was the wrong ruling. We're going to restrict, leave that restriction out. That's an example of why you stay with a company with that kind of culture. And I learned a big lesson from that.

### **39:03 Growing Through Research – A Big Multinational Corporation & Opportunities to Learn**

Trivedi:

The company also had a good handle over there. They were a research-based company. They still are, and they wanted every business unit to demonstrate that they can grow with research. And we had to grow in order to remain a part of this big multinational corporation. Having a multinational parent was a tremendous benefit. Compensation levels were much higher than an ordinary mining company. Travel was encouraged because the idea was to learn, and there was hardly any restriction on what kind of research activity you took on. But you didn't talk about it, and you didn't even patent things. Patenting was very rare because the idea was to hold things as trade secrets.

Our limestone business was kind of dormant, but we wanted it to grow. So we created an opportunity through our research. And I was part of that. But my team, an outstanding team that I was able to

assemble, gave me the tools to do that. A simple example of how we grew that business from what was about 400,000 tons to something like 700 thousand tons over the years. Two simple examples of products we developed which would be useful for listeners. One is a product from talc that is called Microblock, and Microblock is a blocking agent. Most of us go to grocery stores and complain about those little plastic bags that just don't open, and you have to literally rub them or use some sort of moisture to open them. So we put in the sheet, a type of material, so that they open up readily.

The second one, which of course, is now a dead business, but at that time, it was a great business, was a synthetic calcium carbonate material whose shape contributed to the burning of cigarette paper. It used to be smoking was popular in those days, and people would have their burnt cigarettes. We had developed a product which when put into paper, would hold that ash on the cigarette until you tap on it. Otherwise, you would have had ash all over, but you could always hold that cigarette and then take it to the ashtray and tap on it, and it would go down. So those are the tools that I can talk about.

We did a lot of work in precipitation technology, and we coined the term crystal engineering because that was our business on the marketing side during those 30 years I was there. We developed a concept of building our production facilities next to our customers, the so-called satellite plants. So the major issue that industrial minerals face is transportation costs because the properties, the quarries, are located in remote areas, and customers are located in other parts of the country. The material doesn't travel much because the cost itself of the delivered cost is sometimes more, a lot more in transportation than in the actual material costs. So we built a plant outside the customers, the so-called first in, first out, kind of inventory thing, but at the same time doing it the right way. It developed tremendous amounts of relationships with customers. That's the story.

Kanagy:

Well, I guess my biggest takeaway today, Nikhil, is going to be the chemicals that are held in a cigarette now before you tap them down.

Trivedi:

So, yes.

#### **43:54 Just Keep Digging – Work Life at Pfizer Learning About Industries & Establishing Relationships**

Kanagy:

I didn't know they had that. And that's great. Hey, tell us a little bit about what the work life was like at Pfizer and maybe a little bit about the corporate culture. I think a lot of people would be interested in understanding that.

Trivedi:

Yes. Pfizer had an amazing leadership team that was sitting in New York. As the head of the technical activities in this little division, I had my office on the 13th floor of the Pfizer building on 42nd Street. And I did commute from Eastern Pennsylvania to Manhattan, sometimes every day, but sometimes not, because I was traveling a lot. Even the leaders who were responsible for financial parts were technically oriented. They knew what questions to ask when we would have our technical program reviews. It

would not be only the technical people; it would be the business people. Everything had to be oriented to making money and keeping the customer happy.

One of the things that I do remember is we would do surveys of customers to see how we can grow the business. And one time, I asked the question, "Well, you know, we are going to our existing customers. Why don't we go to the ones who don't buy from us? We need to get them to say, why don't they buy from us?" And so the whole aspect opened up where you establish relationships with people, regardless of whether they were your customers or not. And so we could learn from them as to why they chose the competitor's product.

We also were encouraged to stay in touch with our competition. I have great friendships with people with whom we competed. The lawyers didn't appreciate much of that, but I never talked about pricing, so it was okay. It was just quite all right. We were encouraged to belong to organizations. We established a group called PLA, Pulverized Limestone Association, where we talked with all the other limestone producers. That's where I first met Ben Severinghaus because he was a limestone producer and Bob Freas. We also created opportunities for our business through memberships in TAPI, the Technical Association of Pulp and Paper Industry. In order for me to supply product to my paper customer, I needed to know paper making. I needed to be able to talk to them. I need to be able to understand their problems. This is the opportunity of industrial minerals because industrial minerals basically are minerals that are used by other industries. And so you need to know how those industries work.

I'm not saying that that's not so, but a gold or a copper company doesn't deal with the end customer. They deal with gold refineries, and that's the end of that. They don't deal with the jeweler, whereas we deal—I had to learn just an example, why certain talcs are not used in cosmetic applications, and it's simple technology. Talcs in Montana have extremely high hydrophobicity. That means they are oleophilic. That means they love oil. And so when you have a cosmetic additive put on the talc, talc just sucks it up and doesn't release it when it should. When that talc is sprayed on your body, if that fragrance is not released, it's useless. And so we learned a few things as to how you pick the right kind of talc. All this is because of the support from corporate on digging through. Keep digging. Keep digging.

As a mining company, Pfizer didn't have a geologist on staff. There was no geologist. Which surprised me. But then I became a geologist. I would go to Death Valley and determine which of the mines would be useful. And I would do the surveys and travel a lot. Travel was encouraged, and I took up that. And that's when I chose to become a US citizen. Because with an Indian passport, traveling was difficult, extremely difficult. And so that brings you back to how I became a US citizen.

## **PART 2**

### **00:31 Walter Nazarewicz – My Inspiration for Hard Work & Devotion to a Cause**

Kanagy:

So, in a large company, I think it's important that you have mentors. Can you talk a little bit about who you worked with and for at Pfizer and how they mentored you through your 30-plus-year career there?

Trivedi:

Absolutely. I saw over a 30-year period in Pfizer, which was a multinational company, a shift that was so useful to me. I know that in the 1977-78 timeframe, I wanted— I was so eager. You know, my whole life has been impatient. I was so eager to take on a P and L responsibility, profit and loss. So basically, I wanted to run a business unit within the company. That was not at all possible because I was a foreigner. It just wasn't done. You stay in the technical side. That's what you do. You don't really go into P and L responsibility. And that's fine. I took that. But over that 30-year period, the people who helped me become who I am today were all my colleagues. I want to name so many of them. Being humble at heart, I just take everyone as a mentor. But there is one that I do want to mention by name.

Mentors have played a big role in my life. And, you know, earlier, I mentioned about Ross Smith. At Pfizer, I came across another one, Walter Nazarewicz. Walter was the country manager for Pfizer in Japan, and he returned to the US to take over the Pfizer minerals business. So he came as president of Pfizer Minerals, and I was his technical person, and the business grew, and the business grew because of his hard work; I learned from him. He would work 18-hour days, and he would make us work. I received calls from him at 11 p.m. saying, what about this, and why can't you go there tomorrow morning? And I say it's 11 p.m. today, and I don't have anything to pack and go tomorrow, but I can do it the day after. The drive that he had was my inspiration. The amount of effort he put in, we as a business and him individually. We would basically have memorized the customers and their locations and what were our targets there. And we all had to memorize that and remember that the next target is this and that 50,000-ton plant. The third target is this, and that's an 80,000-ton plant. So you put more effort there and slightly less effort there.

He also served as president of the Ukrainian Institute. Now, there is a significant Ukrainian American population in New York, and he was President of the Ukrainian Institute, which has a beautiful building on 79th Street just outside of Central Park, and that building was tax-free. Mayor Koch of New York had his eyes on that building, and he wanted it to be taxed. Walter was fighting litigation against city hall, the proverbial city hall, and at the same time, running this business and making progress in the business and making progress in Ukrainian Institute. And I saw that as a tremendous encouragement to me. That there is no reason why you remain focused only on work. You can do other things. You can help your group in any way you want to. And I picked SME, and I decided that I would take Walter's example and do service to my profession. And I took on SME as my primary cause.

I owe a lot to Walter. He was extremely generous to me, sharing his knowledge. He offered me if I wanted to go to Sloan at MIT and do my MBA. And I declined because I had just started my young family. And I declined that. But it was great to have that offer. So the only thing that I do remember clearly is Walter was in Finland on business, and he had a heart attack. They took him to the hospital there. As soon as he came to, he called his wife, Frances, and said, just send Nikhil over. And the confidence he had in me was something that I'm still joking about, thinking that he called me and not his own son or son-in-law or someone else. But he called me for that, and I flew to Finland to bring him back.

Kanagy:

So Walter played a large part of your success at Pfizer, I would say.

Trivedi:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Kanagy:

Are there others that you'd like to mention?

Trivedi:

There are so many of them. George Wells was one of them. George was an amazing individual. He taught me about the use of industrial minerals in paint. Paint was the big application for us, or in glassmaking, which was another big application. Hank Bailey, Henry Bailey, was my boss for many years, and he taught me the power of what you can do in the plants. Because when I was manager of manufacturing, Hank was my boss. Hank's interesting family background. They came from the original Mayflower. He would go up to the Mayflower people from Keene, New Hampshire. I learned some accent there from him. But what a wonderful guy he was. And Walter. So. Yeah.

### **07:37 The Blessings of Big Corporations – Spinoff Companies, International Exposure & Opportunities**

Kanagy:

So working for a large corporation, lots of things can happen to you in your career. Divisions can be sold off. You know you can get bosses routinely changed on you. And having different reporting structures. If you were talking to a young person, how would you guide them in managing their success at a big company if they were to work for a big company going forward?

Trivedi:

Big companies are, in some ways, blessings because if you have a boss that you don't like for some reason, just stay in there because another good one will come along. Or you change your ways to adjust to the new boss. We did encounter, Dave, what you mentioned. Our company was spun off. Pfizer corporate decided that they wanted to focus on health care, and somehow, the industrial minerals business was as far from health care as you can get. And so they decided to divest of that company. But I must say, Pfizer was still, again, a very benevolent company. Instead of selling us to some other mining company or minerals company, they spun us off as an independent IPO company, traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Not only that, but Pfizer also forgave our debt of almost \$150 million. Pfizer absorbed that.

So we as a company became independent in 1992, October 23rd, as a company called Minerals Technologies Inc., totally debt free. We, in fact, had to take on debt just to have a line of credit. So those were good things to a young person watching this. I would say this is a great opportunity to adjust your own selves once it's come and go. Some are good. Some are not good. But you stay in, and you will be okay. Multinational companies offer a tremendous opportunity to have exposure to local culture and local ways of doing things and bringing in your own skills to help those local units. So, you know, a mining company operating in Indonesia, for example. Great opportunity for a young person to bring in his or her knowledge.

### **10:21 Going Beyond My Job Description – Giving the Industrial Minerals Community a Voice**

Kanagy:



So, you have often mentioned to me that you did more than your job description. What do you mean by that? And can you describe that for us?

Trivedi:

Sure. Walter always encouraged, you know, you got to do more than that, and that's not enough. That's not good enough. And he would go on and on in his Long Island accent. But I did. One of the first things I did was to reach out to our customers and our competitors with whom I had great, friendly relationships. One thing I did was become a founding member of the Calcium Carbonate Association of Europe. The reason for that. We were not really producing calcium carbonate in Europe, but we were producing synthetic calcium carbonate in Europe. So, in some ways, we needed to be with the calcium carbonate family. We were not mining, but we were still producing and selling in the same field that our competitors were selling.

So I created it, and I was lucky to get support from all those competitors who didn't have to work with this American company. But they did, and we created the Calcium Carbonate Association of Europe. That association then became a part of another big organization. I was on the ground floor with what was IMA Europe, Industrial Minerals Association of Europe. That led to IMA, North America. So again, the Industrial Minerals Association and having the industrial minerals community come together as a voice for things that were happening to us was one of the things I did on the side. I also was a member of TAPPI, the Technical Association of Pulp and Paper Industry. And in that, I became an adviser to the research effort at Georgia Tech University [Georgia Institute of Paper Technology]. So they put me on the Research Advisory Board of Georgia Tech. So those were some other non-business activities that I took on. And then, of course, SME spent a lot of time in SME.

Kanagy:

We'll get to SME.

Trivedi:

We will get to SME. Yes.

### **13:04 Importance of Family – “My Family is Very Dear to Me, and I'm Very Proud of Them”**

Kanagy:

So I know that your family's important to you. Very important to you. I've had the pleasure of going to a couple of your daughter's weddings. And if anybody has been to an Indian wedding before, I encourage them. It is well worth the experience. But talk a little bit about how you and Nishi met and raised children and all the traveling in the working world that you were involved in at the same time.

Trivedi:

Yeah, that's a great question, Dave. My family is dear to me, very, very dear to me. And they have been with me all along, supporting what I do. Without hesitation, there is absolutely nothing held back. Nishi and I had a traditional Indian wedding— how weddings were arranged in India. It was an arranged

marriage. I met her on January 15th of 1981. I got engaged to her on January 18th of 1981. I got married on January 26, 1981. So didn't know her at all before the ten days before the wedding, and on January 31st, I came here because I had to watch the Super Bowl, and then I had to go back to work. Then Nishi joined later. It was a tremendous amount of adjustment for her. And I appreciate that very much. I had already been in the US for 12 years by then or 13. For her, everything was new. And here is this guy whom she never knew. She's marrying him, coming over, and he backs off and goes to Finland or to Sweden. Or to Denmark or to Germany. And she just lives alone in the house. And she adjusted so well; I'm so proud of her. And I'm so thankful to her. This is my way to say thank you.

We have three children. Shamik came in 1982, and then Pracheta came in '84, and my youngest, Chinmayee, came in '87. And all this time, I regret one thing. I missed a lot of their schooling because I was traveling all the time. That was the business. Sometimes I took on travel because I wanted to like going to SME meetings fall and the winter. They used to have two meetings in those days. I would go to both of them and going to PLA (Pulverized Limestone Association) meetings, going to IMA meetings, and all of them. And happy to say I got a tremendous amount of support from them. My family is very dear to me, and I'm very proud of them. I get emotional thinking about them. And yes, those weddings. Yeah, they cost me some money, but that's what the money was for. So I enjoyed it.

### **16:29 Travel Adventures – My Desire to Learn & Flying with Celebrities**

Kanagy:

Well, I enjoyed being there. I can tell you that. So tell us a little bit about some of your exciting travel adventures that you experienced.

Trivedi:

Yes. Yeah. Travel. I enjoyed travel. I always did. And it was always the underlying reason was to learn something. Every time you go, you learn something. And that was what was driving me. I've been to a place called Jokkmokk, J-O-K-K-M-O-K-K, in Sweden. And that's where they have a huge limestone deposit. And I went there to explore that. We chose not to acquire that because it was remote and it was in a tribal area. You don't realize, but in Sweden, there is some tribal area to the language is different the culture is different. And it was way up north of the Arctic Circle. We decided it just wasn't our expertise, so we didn't buy that.

I've been to Tallinn in Estonia. I've been to Sumatra all on company business. I've been to Thailand. I've taken trips in the Concorde three times. One time from London to here, a celebrity was with me as a passenger. It was former Texas Governor John Connally. He was at that time President Reagan's treasury secretary, I think, if I'm not mistaken. So he was a cool passenger. Didn't talk to him, though. Gave him his space. Next time I was flying from here to Paris, and the guy sitting next to me was President Carter's national security adviser, Cyrus Vance.

And the third time I was coming back from either London or Paris on the Concorde, was a person I talked to actually was the singer Stevie Wonder. Talked to him. He was a wonderful guy. Enjoyed talking to him. Those are some exciting things I had. I enjoyed that very much. Travel has been— and I still keep doing it. I'm still traveling all over to pick up things and learn things. A small town in Sweden was one of the best places that I could take my family to, and we did that.

## **19:28 Evolution of the Mining Industry – Globalization, Competition & Innovation**

Kanagy:

So, can you talk a little bit about the evolution of the industry over the last 30 – 40 years? You know, greater emphasis on environmental, some of it by choice, some of it by regulation requirements. Talk a little bit about the health and safety improvements the industry's made and how we've really become a pretty global business.

Trivedi:

Well, you know, I think globalization has helped us in many ways because the demands that come in from other partners who are outside of the US make you think differently. And to me, that was one of the biggest things that happened to us in a globalized business environment. I have seen companies providing just lip service to the concept of sustainability and safety, and environmental stewardship, just lip service, no actual commitment. That's a very gratifying thing for me to see at this stage in my career, to see how companies are shifting their thought process. Pressure from shareholders is one of them. Pressure also from partners and competitors.

Competition has become pretty much local now, although they are global companies. But competition is here, and you have to remain competitive. And so you do these things more. The more you do focusing on health and safety and sustainability, the more it is contributing to your bottom line. And I think businesses have now started realizing that there was resistance initially during the early stages. One of the things that I do feel is happening still is the social acceptance of certain industries, mining one of them is a prime example of how mining and chemicals are; this nobody wants it in their backyard, and that is, I believe, as a mining person, unfair to us.

But at the same time, we have to react to people's expectations of us. I don't necessarily like the fact that industry is consolidating. Big mining companies are merging together to create one bigger mining company. Suppliers are consolidating. If you really look at US suppliers of equipment to the mining industry, they are all either Swedish or Danish. Think about it, the big US companies like Joy and others, Denver Equipment Company, they don't exist anymore. So that consolidation basically hurts innovation because there is no incentive for them to create new things. So I do regret consolidation. Customers are consolidating. Limits your business, and paper companies are coming together. You now have only one customer and not two or three that you had before. So those are some things that I've seen over the years. And all I would tell young listeners is got to deal with it. Competition, you have to keep it alive because that will keep innovation alive.

## **23:25 Keeping Competitive Advantage – Patents with Pfizer & Publications on the Use of Talc**

Kanagy:

Nikhil, in your experiences of working during the years? Do you have any particular patents or papers, or publications that you're proud of and you'd like to share with us?

Trivedi:

Absolutely. For several years of my career at Pfizer, I was basically a manager and administrator, didn't

do hands-on research, but there was some that I did, and I did get a patent on a product called the alkali-resistant glass fiber. The concept was to take talc and limestone and blend them in certain proportions, and make a fiber out of it, which demonstrated, to our surprise, alkali resistance. So the advantage of that would be to use that as a filler in corrugated cement areas. The roof in third world countries and it would have been a huge market. We licensed that technology out to a French company, and this did it that way because it was not a business close to what we wanted to grow in. So again, that's an area that Pfizer gave us an out. We were open to licensing technologies, and we were open to licensing out our technologies. We were not patenting a lot because that would require you to divulge information. But we were patenting enough to make sure that we could keep a competitive advantage.

So, during my tenure as head of R&D, we filed for 50 to 55 patents, and then all of them have to be filed globally. And that just added a lot of cost. But the company was able to afford that. I was invited to write some chapters on talc. It's a unique mineral, something very close to my heart, and I've done a lot of work in it. So, I've been contributing chapters to TAPPI and to the polymer industry on the use of talc. I did that publication. I didn't do many. I made a couple of presentations at SME, more presentations at TAPPI, and a couple of publications that I am very proud of, which I coauthored with Jessica. Jessica Kogel and Mark Herpfer. We coauthored chapters on sustainability as it applies to industrial minerals. So yes, I've done a few. I could have done a lot more, but my job didn't allow me to do much on publications.

### **26:36 An Expert Problem Solver – Innovative Solutions & Conflict Resolution**

Kanagy:

Very good. Nikhil, I know that you're very good at solving problems and finding solutions to challenging issues. Is there one or two that you might share with us where you found a solution that was difficult at first but you found a win for everybody?

Trivedi:

Sure, of course. Yeah, that's a good one. That's a compliment, and I thank you for that. I'm not necessarily the best at it, but I try to be innovative in finding solutions. We did a lot of business in Scandinavia. Scandinavia is where papermaking really started because, as some people like to say, all they have is trees, nothing else up there. So you cut the trees down and make paper out of it. Not true, but okay. We did a lot of business in Finland. I had 30 people reporting to me in Finland with a lab in a small town called Parainen, Finland. A big paper maker, extremely astute businessmen, but a great opportunity for my company to do business there. And so I was dealing with a Swedish paper mill to develop a 125,000-ton plant over there, and we were coming into good negotiations. Things were progressing well. And just as in any contract, one of the last items is conflict resolution.

What do you do to resolve the conflict, if there is any? Now we are going as friends, and we are working together, and it's all great. There is no conflict, but there sometimes is in a business environment. You had to address that. You just can't say we are never going to have conflict. So that clause was one where we got stuck because the CEO of the host company in Sweden insisted that any litigation would be in Stockholm and would be under Swedish law. And, of course, we were Americans. We were not going to give in to that. So my boss here— Walter, said, no way, it's going to be New York, and it's going to be laws of New York. Go figure it out. So here I am, sitting in a small town called Silverdalen in Sweden and calling him. There were no cell phones, and I used my brain to do something about it. So, I came up with

a solution.

I worked with my counterpart there, and I said, look, we don't want us to go to court. So we have to somehow address this clause and make it make our bosses happy. But we need to do some way that we're building a deterrent for anyone to go to court. So I said, what if, if you, Sweden, want to take us to court, it has to be in New York, and if we want to take you to court, will be in Stockholm. We floated it up. Everybody accepted that, and we moved on. We haven't taken each other to court, from what I know. I've been away all these years, but it was a good business, and we did it. So that's one example. I'm happy that I could do that. Conflict resolution is one of the major challenges that we face as businesses. There is conflict, and we have to resolve that. Using innovation is the way to do it.

Kanagy:

Thank you.

Trivedi:

Sure.

### **30:45 SME, the Love of My Life – Committees, Presidency & Comradship**

Kanagy:

Nikhil, I want to change topics a little bit with you here and talk a little bit about some of the things you've done in your career with SME, AIME, and some other philanthropic organizations. You briefly mentioned joining SME or AIME back then. Tell us a little bit more about that and what was driving you to work inside of the SME organization and other groups that you belong to.

Trivedi:

Thank you for that. As you know, SME has been the love of my life, and that is my serving, my profession. That's really what drove me as an engineer in the mineral community, the mineral industry. I felt obligated to provide some service to an organization like SME. I mentioned earlier, in 1968, I joined as a student member, and Ross Smith paid my dues. Never forget that. In the 1970-71 timeframe, I started regularly attending SME meetings, and I started working on committees within SME in about '76-'77 timeframe. After that time, I initially joined MPD [Mineral Processing Division] because that was the mineral processor. I am a mineral processor. And then, as the business was industrial minerals business, I switched over to the Industrial Minerals Division.

I have been a beneficiary of a tremendous amount of support from members at SME. It has been a give-and-take. It's not been one way. And that's another thing that my mentor, Walter Nazarewicz, taught me. It's a two-way street. It's not one way. Don't think that you are doing things. You are getting a lot that you don't even realize. Even today, when an SME member calls me, I respond to that call in a matter of 2 to 3 hours, regardless of what the question is. And I'm happy that people do call me.

The first person I encountered at SME who I looked up to was Roshan Bhappu. I think the thing that attracted me to him was the fact that he was from India. Looked like me, a short guy, and his wife and I could talk in our mother tongue, which was a great gift to me to have this wonderful conversation at

every SME meeting. Another one that I dearly remember is Ben Severinghaus. I had met Ben earlier in PLA, Pulverized Limestone Association. He was a competitor, a fierce competitor. But he and Bob Freas just helped me so much to learn the ropes within the industrial minerals group at SME.

Jack Burst, Jack was – he actually wanted to hire me to work for him. He was vice president of something at Dresser Industries down in Houston. And he would just every time he would meet me at SME, he would say, one of these days, I'm going to get you. And one of these days, you're going to come down to Houston and talk to me. So, one time, I was in Dallas, and I decided to drive down. It was a beautiful day, as all days in Texas are. I drove down to Houston, and I said, "Here I am; let's talk." So, on the spot, he offered me a job, and on the spot, I declined because I was fine where I was. But our friendship just continued from there on. When he became SME President, I don't recall the year 1996 or '95 or one of those. He put me on not only his nominating committee but also on his executive committee. In those days in SME, the executive committee was the one that made all the decisions. That's when I learned the inside of how SME works. What are the pros and what are the cons and all that? Later on, after Jack had stepped down and, I think, kind of moved on to, he moved back to Rolla, I stayed in touch with him.

But then I had another mentor that came along, and that was Frank Alsobrook. Frank was extremely knowledgeable. He wanted to run for SME President, but his business was such that it was a one-man business, and he said, if I did SME, I would lose my business. And so he said, Why don't you do it? And so I ran for SME presidency in the year 2000. I lost the election, but that's fine. I continued on at SME and then eventually became president in 2010. Along came great friendships. I want to specifically mention great friends like Bill Langer, Jessica Kogel, and a whole bunch of others, but really amazing, amazing friends that I've been able to make.

Frank also twisted my arm so bad that I was crying in pain to become an associate editor of IMAR 7 [Industrial Minerals and Rocks 7<sup>th</sup> Edition]. Jessica was one of the senior editors, and then I joined her and Stan Krakowski, and Jim Barker as the fourth senior editor. It was a very good learning experience for me. I got to know a lot about other industrial minerals that I didn't know about. I got to know how people do a huge Volunteer Effort. 127 authors, 24 associate editors, and four senior editors to come up with this 1600-page volume, which remained on the bestseller at SME for at least the first two years of its publication. It was a great feeling. It really was a wonderful feeling. Contribution to my profession, specifically in the industrial minerals side, was the way I looked at it. So that's my association with SME. And it still goes on.

### **38:02 My Most Valued Award – My SME Appointment to Serve as a Trustee of AIME**

Kanagy:

Tell us a little bit more about you got involved in AIME for a period of time after SME.

Trivedi:

Well, you know, when I got that WAAIME scholarship, I mentioned that earlier; that's when I resolved in my little mind this 20-year-old kid had decided I'm going to do something about AIME someday. (WAAIME stands for Women's Auxiliary of AIME.) I didn't know the relationship that WAAIME had with AIME and that WAAIME had eventually moved on to become a part of SME. That was irrelevant to me. But I knew that I had to provide service to AIME. And I'm ever so grateful to the SME board for helping

me achieve that goal by nominating me to be a trustee of AIME and then eventually serving it as its president. AIME exposed me to the other member societies, and I enjoyed dealing with all of them. Just amazing people who are doing things to help the profession, regardless of what it is. So that's my AIME. And again, I thank the SME board for putting me in a situation where I could be of some help to AIME.

Kanagy:

Nikhil, you've earned a lot of awards from SME and been recognized numerous times. Are there any awards that are special to you, or is there one more special than the others?

Trivedi:

Dave, all awards are dear to me because they are from my colleagues. They come to me from my peers. They come to me to recognize what I have done or to encourage me to do more. But there is one that I want to talk about as a specific award, and that is the Mackay Alumnus of the Year Award that I received in 1995. That was the first time I got an award, and I felt a tremendous upliftment that, yes, I can do things that people recognize. Till then, I didn't know whether people were recognizing; it wasn't important whether people recognized. But to see that people recognize and they say, come to Reno, and we want to give you this award was a tremendous upliftment.

The second award that I feel is most important to me, all of them are, please, you know, the Aplan and the Hardinge, the McConnell, even the Ivan B. Rahn. Very great awards. But to me, the award that SME gave me to put me on the AIME track was the biggest award that I feel that opportunity is the award that I got, and I valued that the most because that could fulfill one of my desires to work.

#### **41:30 Tenure as SME President – Governance, Global Mineral Professionals Alliance & Networking**

Kanagy:

So, you had the opportunity to be the SME President in 2010. Tell us a couple of things that you feel you accomplished during your tenure as the SME President.

Trivedi:

Yes. During my tenure as SME President. Just to go back a couple of years, in 2006 or 2007, Barbara Filas, SME President a few years prior, established a committee, an ad hoc committee, to look at SME's governance and structure. We had 45 board members, something along that line, and I was part of that committee where we developed a governance where SME would have nine board members so that we trimmed that down. That new governance structure, which was new then, was something I needed to boost when I took over as SME President. So, one thing that I consider as one of my contributions to SME during my year of presidency is to establish a strategic plan that boosted that type of governance structure.

The second thing I feel as a contribution to SME is that I established the first standing committee to look at SME's participation in a different way into the health and safety aspects. So I'm happy to see that today we have a thriving division within SME, which is the Health and Safety Division. We already had the environmental division, but to have health and safety as a division with focus on that was something I felt was very, very good. The third thing that I can look at as I'm an internationalist. I believe in global

everything. And so the third thing that I feel good about is to kick off by writing a letter to all other English-speaking mineral associations globally to come together and talk about, let's just exchange notes. And that is currently known as Global Mineral Professionals Alliance. And I know that they will continue to foster those relationships. And that's very dear to me, and I'm very happy that it is continuing on. So.

Kanagy:

So, hopefully, there are some young people listening to us today. How would you characterize some of the skills that you've picked up and the opportunities you've had that have helped you in your career by being a part of SME?

Trivedi:

Well, you know, I mean, everybody says networking. Networking is SME. You can talk about your work without any fear of competition on that platform that is available to you. Is, again, another SME opportunity. I believe, honestly, that at SME, I always interacted with suppliers. I wanted to know what new things they were doing. I wanted to find out, and I wanted to tell them what I needed. Because only when you tell them what you need is when they might come up with a solution for you. And you do that to three or four other suppliers, you talk to your friends in industry, and they will teach you. Mining people are usually extremely open. You can visit a mine and go through their processing plant without any hesitation because everyone has similar circuits. Everyone has similar problems, too. So it was great.

Industrial minerals, on the other hand, was different. We were very secretive about having people walk through because sometimes that was the thing that was unique to us. I'll give you one simple example. Our own— my own company, I developed the concept of using an air classifier to make fine particles from a Japanese flour milling operation. I visited a flour milling operation in Japan on one of my tours, and I saw that they were splitting out very fine flour for high protein, high-end bread application because they had done some research that said that finer particles had more protein. I don't know how true that is, but that's what they did. So they developed a classifier, and I said, This is what I want to use so that I can produce an ultra-ultrafine mineral particle to sell. And so I did that. I incorporated that. That became our trade secret for a long period of time. So to the listeners out there, I would say, you know, use your imagination. Go out and look at industries that are not related to you because you will learn something from them and bring it to your divisions and your jobs and take advantage of that.

#### **47:24 My Philanthropic Involvements – United Way & Serving My Indian Community as a Hindu Priest**

Kanagy:

So I know that SME and AIME haven't been the only activities you've been involved in outside of work. Tell us a little bit about some of the involvement in the United Way, the hospitals, and tell us a little bit about being a Hindu priest.

Trivedi:

Ah, yes, of course I am. I'm currently working with the local hospital to raise funds. I've been with them several years now as a community representative on the local hospital's board. And it has been rewarding. United Way is another one that I have taken on as a cause that I support. Having been



Pfizer's highest-ranking person in this area, I've established local contacts with local businesses at a higher level and then am able to encourage them to match their funding for United Way and things of that nature. I'm still serving the mineral community as a member of the Board of Governors of the National Mining Hall of Fame, and that is, again, a very rewarding experience for me.

And as far as the other side, the community service to my Indian immigrant community, I am a priest. I provide those services to people who are looking for a priest to marry the young ones or to have a ceremony or a housewarming ceremony or things like that. You know, the Indians do many ceremonies and any occasion to get together and eat; so many ceremonies. The one that I have specifically tried to stay away from is funerals. I somehow don't like. I did my mom's funeral, but that's just about it. I'm not doing any more funerals. I don't like to do it. I am a priest, and so I have to maintain a certain purity of my body. As a result, I'm a vegetarian. Never got tempted to smoke or eat meat. If I have maybe by mistake eaten meat. I'm okay with that. But now I'm a vegetarian, and I like that.

Kanagy:

So as we wrap this up a little bit, Nikhil, what message would you want people to have from you as a takeaway for today?

Trivedi:

I am an example of a beneficiary of great people around you. I have had great people working with me, for me, around me, and I have looked up to even outsiders who I admire. Surround yourself with good people. That's one message I give you. If you do that, you grow with them. The other message I want to give to people is to expect the most from you and the least from others. Don't expect people to do things for you, but expect the most from you. You got to do things, whatever it is that you want to do. You got to do it. And don't look at somebody who didn't do their part. One other motto I have lived with is be very generous with praise. Not false praise, but where it is due. Just praise a person's effort and be kind when it comes to some failures that you might encounter in people who work with you or for you. So that's the message I want to give to people. Just be kind to others.

Kanagy:

Well, Nikhil, thank you for your time today. We appreciate all of the comments, the thoughts, and hearing about your career. It's fascinating. And I thank you for contributing to the AIME oral history program here today. So, thank you.

Trivedi:

Thank you, Dave. Thank you very much.