



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MINING,
METALLURGICAL, AND PETROLEUM ENGINEERS

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Drew Meyer: The First Penn State Mineral Economist

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of recorded interviews with Drew Meyer conducted by George Luxbacher on February 28th, 2023. This interview is part of the AIME Oral History Program.

ABSTRACT

Growing up in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and embarking on to Penn State, Drew Meyer became the university's first mineral economics student. Fate brought him to the minerals industry through life-changing guidance from his academic advisor, and Meyer graduated with his Bachelor's and Master's in Mineral Economics. After serving in the Army in psychological warfare in Vietnam, Meyer led a 39-year career with Vulcan Materials Company. Meyer's unique skills in mineral identification, market predictions, and mining logistics made him invaluable to Vulcan and its quarry acquisitions. A past SME President and SME Legion of Honor Member, Meyer has a rich 58-year history with SME. Meyer was among the catalysts of SME, pushing for programming changes as he elevated interest in aggregates within SME. Meyer helped facilitate the birth of SME's Industrial Minerals Division and is a recipient of the AIME Hal Williams Hardinge Award for exemplary service in the industrial minerals sector.

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

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Editor's note: After the untimely passing of Drew Meyer in November 2024, the interviewer, George Luxbacher, took over the editorial task, which Drew had never been able to get to after our interview due to health issues. Drew had told me he wanted to make some corrections; hopefully, I have been able to adequately address those things Drew was concerned about.

The verbatim transcript has been edited for readability, some small errors corrected, and additional context and references have been added. Please refer to the video for the exact interview.

00:00:14 Introduction

Luxbacher:

This is George Luxbacher on behalf of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration. I'm here at the 2023 SME Annual Conference and Expo in Denver, Colorado, on February 28th, 2023, with Drew Meyer. Drew and I are both past presidents of SME, Drew in 2012 and me in 2008. And I'm here to get Drew's perspective on our industry and profession. This recording is part of AIME's oral history capture program. So welcome, Drew.

Meyer:

I'm happy to be here and hope everything goes well.

Luxbacher:

You and I have had an opportunity to practice this over a bourbon a few weeks ago, so we are ready.

Meyer:

A good way to start.

00:00:48 Growing Up in Chocolate Town, USA

Luxbacher:

A good way to start. So, we're well practiced. So, Drew, tell me a little bit about where you grew up.

Meyer:

Well, I grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania, which is Chocolate Town, USA. We all love Hershey's Chocolate. A very small town. So, you can't say we were in a very worldly position, even though Hershey Chocolate is sold worldwide. I'm not doing a commercial for Hershey, but we love our

Hershey Chocolate and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. I went to school with the people who owned the company. But anyways, that's where we started. The interesting part of it for me is that we had several limestone quarries in the immediate area, as well as a lime-producing quarry. So, there was that mineral background that I was aware of, but can't say that I was really involved with it at all.

Luxbacher:

Interesting. So, what did your parents do for a living?

Meyer:

My father worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, and my mother worked at a couple of different places. But with another candy company in Hershey.

Luxbacher:

A competitor?

Meyer:

A competitor. But they made different types of chocolate, and I'm not even sure they didn't buy some of it, as did Reese's, which was an independent company that developed the peanut butter cup. But they bought all of their chocolate from Hershey. I was fortunate enough to work in the quality control lab at the Hershey Chocolate Corporation and was able to test the chocolate before it went out. Had to test the beans when they came in. All of those kinds of things, which actually works into the story of what I was doing as I grew up. The Hershey Chocolate Corporation was such a dominant place. One of the things they did was they tried to hire college students that were in the College of Chemistry at Penn State, and you could work in the quality control lab to do that. That's what I started out going to Penn State for—Chemistry.

00:03:57 Life-changing Guidance – Becoming a Mineral Economics Student at Penn State

Meyer:

I went to my orientation before I started the chemistry program. And the counselor that you talked to during the orientation said, "I see that you are going to go into the College of Chemistry." I said, "Yes." I didn't know really what I wanted to do, but that seemed to fit my interests.

She said, "Well, you know what? I don't think so. You actually are very good with verbal skills and still good on the technical side. But I think you would be unhappy being in a chemical lab as your profession." She said, "I was just looking back through the books of all of the different things that we have, and I found this program called Mineral Economics." She said, "I've looked

through it. It speaks very well to your verbal skills, and there's still an awful lot of the technical aspects. You'll get chemistry. You'll get mathematics. You'll get a lot of the mining engineering courses that you'll take in there." This was a program that had been developed by the US Bureau of Mines right after World War II. I thought about it for a while and decided, you know what, this really does have a lot of stuff in here that I kind of like.

I graduated from high school when I was 17, and no 17-year-old, I think, or almost no 17-year-old, had any idea what they wanted to do. But this was very attractive for me. As a result, I became the first freshman student that Mineral Economics had at Penn State; all of the other students from other majors would find out about the program and go [transfer] into the Mineral Economics program.

So, I was the first one to start, first entering as a freshman in Mineral Economics, and then the first, of course, to graduate. Then, the first to get a master's degree in Mineral Economics. So that's how I kind of got into the industry in a way that I never could have contemplated when I started.¹

Luxbacher:

That is a fascinating story. So, these college counselors— it's amazing. So here you were on one path, and a college counselor who really didn't know you except for what the paper said turned your path.

Meyer:

Yes. And there's one thing, because everything worked out so well, and I enjoyed mineral economics so much, I've often regretted that I never could go back and tell her, "Golly, I don't know how many students you've helped, but you sure helped me." That I know, and that I regret, that I couldn't say that to her.

00:07:38 Eating Chocolate on Chocolate – Working in Quality Control for Hershey's Chocolate

Luxbacher:

¹ Interviewer's Note: According to an article by the first then Chief, Department Head equivalent, of Mineral Economics at Penn State, W. M. Myers "A New Curriculum in Mineral Education" (Mining and Metallurgy, May 1948, pp. 284-5), a degree in Mineral Economics at Penn State was approved in 1946 and graduated its first class in 1947, the program appealed primarily to transfer students from other majors. Dr. Ridge, the Department Head during Drew's time there, was working through a transition, as long-time faculty members such as J.J. Schantz, were leaving and new faculty like Richard Gordon (1964) and Richard Newcomb (1965) were joining and reinvigorating the department. Drew's remembrances of being the first freshman student probably relates that everyone in the Mineral Economics program before him transferred in from other majors at Penn State, and thus he was the first full 4-year undergraduate, a fascinating distinction. When he continued in graduate school after his BS, he then became the first student to enter as a freshman and go all the way through the MS degree. Penn State records show that six MS degrees were given in 1966, including Drew's. I only wish I could go back and get more context to Drew's remarks since I think it would have added significant information to his unique story.

That's a fascinating story. So, I can tell you, you and I aren't that different in age. I showed up at Penn State, and you did that profile to figure out what you were suited to, which I'm sure she was looking at for you.

Meyer:

Yes.

Luxbacher:

And the counselor looked at mine and told me I should be a farmer. I was going into engineering, and I said, "No, I'm going to be an engineer." But my profile showed I would be better off as a farmer. So now, hearing your story, maybe I should have gone into farming. Maybe I'd be a highly successful farmer today.

Meyer:

Heaven forbid. I wouldn't be doing an interview then.

Luxbacher:

So out of curiosity, how come Hershey? Since you weren't a chemistry major, Hershey still took you into the quality control program?

Meyer:

Yes, yes, they did that because one of the CEOs decided that's what they were going to use as a criteria and support the Penn State chemistry curriculum by hiring students to come there for the summer.

Luxbacher:

So, have you developed a lifetime love of chocolate because of that summer employment?

Meyer:

No. But what Hershey does have is all throughout the factory, refrigerators that they have a man whose only job is to go around and keep the refrigerators full. You can have as much chocolate as you want, and you can carry it out in your belly, but no other way. But that was great for a young college kid. Man eating chocolate on chocolate. Chocolate bars and Reese's is just very good.

00:09:33 Yankee Going South – Getting My Master’s Degree & A Job with Vulcan Materials Company

Luxbacher:

Very good. So, you mentioned that you did your undergraduate work, then you went back for your master's. What led you to do a master's?

Meyer:

Well, I was in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps or ROTC and commissioned as a second lieutenant when I graduated from my senior year. They indicated that they, the Army, had enough second lieutenants at that time, which was unusual. So, I said, well, how about you give me another year and let me get my master's degree? And they said, okay, go for it.

Then, when I got my master's degree, I found out that there was an opportunity to go to work for Vulcan Materials Company because another PhD candidate was interviewing with Vulcan, which is an aggregate company. And he said, "Come on in and interview." I said, "Yes, but I only have six months." And he said, "Come, interview anyway." It would be good practice for you. So anyway, I went there, and the man who had come to interview me, I said to him, "Now I can only promise you six months; that's all the military will give me, and then I've got to go on active duty." He says, "Oh my God, you're exactly what I want. I'm short on staff because these men are in the National Guard. They will be back in six months, so you're exactly what I want. Somebody who'll come and work, fill a position, and because of your master's degree, be productive right away." That's how I got to work for Vulcan Materials Company and retired from there after 39 years of service.

Luxbacher:

So, if you didn't have that service, if the Army said, well, we'll defer again, you could have gone for your PhD, and we could be talking to Dr. Drew Meyer right now.

Meyer:

Yes, that's quite possible, I guess. But second lieutenants were rarely in high supply because it was during the Vietnam War. And second, lieutenants had a perilous type of position, oftentimes.

Luxbacher:

Understood.

Meyer:

Therefore, it was unusual that that happened.

Luxbacher:

So, what did you do? You worked for Vulcan for these six months. What did you do for Vulcan for those first six months?

Meyer:

I went into their market research department, and what they wanted was somebody who had knowledge about the mineral industry. First of all, because that's the business they were in—the quarrying business. But they were also taking a look at getting into the coal business. A lot of coal was being mined in Alabama, and they were looking to see if they could expand into that. I brought some knowledge of that industry as well. So, one of the first things I did was to work on that acquisition, which never happened, but they did enough looking at it at that time.

Luxbacher:

So, you mentioned Alabama here. You were a Pennsylvania boy, and that's where they took you, to was Alabama, to do this work?

Meyer:

That's where it was.

Luxbacher:

That was your first exposure to the Deep South?

Meyer:

Yes. With a little trepidation, this Yankee had to go south, but it was a delightful town, and we fit in very well, very quickly.

00:13:35 Attending Penn State – How Fate Brought Me to the Minerals Industry

Luxbacher:

Okay, so let me go back to two things. First, I wanted to ask you why did you pick Penn State?

Meyer:

You know, that's really an easy question for me. Hershey was a small town, and everybody seemed to want to know your business, and I didn't want everybody to know my business. I

mean, I'd get reports from around town; oh, I saw Drew over here telling my mother this or something. No, I wasn't there. Yes, but we saw your car. No, you didn't see my car. I had a Nash Rambler, a Red Nash Rambler convertible.

Luxbacher:

That fits your personality. Drew, I just want to mention that, but go ahead.

Meyer:

So, it was one of those things that I wanted; to go to a big college. A big university where I didn't have to worry about anybody knowing me. And so many of my classmates wanted to go small because they didn't want to be a number. I wanted to be a number. So that worked out exceedingly well. I was stupid enough at that time and lucky. That's the only place I applied to. Nowadays, people seem to apply to half a dozen.

Luxbacher:

If not a dozen.

Meyer:

That's right.

So they accepted me, and I graduated from there. And they're big. They had a very good reputation, and I got everything that I needed out of it.

Luxbacher:

One of the few mineral economics programs in the whole US at the time. So, if you hadn't gone there—

Meyer:

I never would have gotten into mineral economics. Those types of things happen, and you don't really see it at the time.

00:15:57 ROTC at Penn State – Graduating as a Second Lieutenant in the Army

Luxbacher:

Right! So, you signed up for ROTC. Just out of curiosity, why did you, knowing about the Vietnam War, what was happening in Vietnam? Why did you elect to sign up for ROTC when you went into college?

Meyer:

Well, at Penn State, the first two years were mandatory. All males had to be in ROTC at that time.

Luxbacher:

Wow. I'm not that far behind you. And I wasn't aware of that. So, it was a mandatory thing.

Meyer:

Mandatory². So, at the end of that, you had the opportunity to ask to stay in, and you would be commissioned as a second lieutenant when you graduated. In fact, you graduate at Penn State in your Army uniform and are commissioned at the same time you received the degree. I just figured that I had the possibility of going to Vietnam, and I'd rather go as an officer than as an enlisted man. So that's why I stayed in.

Luxbacher:

That's interesting because you graduated with your BS in what year?

Meyer:

In '65. Master's in '66.

Luxbacher:

So, I was a little bit behind you because I was '73. But I wasn't even aware that Penn State had that ROTC requirement. So that's interesting. I just learned something about my own school, where I went as well. Interesting.

00:17:33 My Internship & Thesis – a Penn State Mineral Economics Master's Student

Luxbacher:

² Interviewer's Note: From a Penn State webpage, "In the early 1960s, the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War was quickly escalating, and mandatory ROTC participation for all freshman and sophomore males at Penn State was still in effect. This obligation was regularly protested by students.

After the Army stated that a compulsory program was unnecessary for them to secure the number of needed officers, a major milestone for Penn State ROTC occurred in 1962 when the University Faculty Senate passed, by a narrow margin, a recommendation to end mandatory ROTC.

The Board of Trustees acted on the recommendation the following year, and voluntary ROTC became effective July 1, 1964."

See: <https://www.psu.edu/news/academics/story/nittany-lion-battalion-celebrates-100-years-learning-leadership-and-service>

Looking back on this, you were in a unique program in the US because the Bureau of Mines helped set it up. Were there any professors there that stand out in your mind that were your mentors, or people that really gave you direction and gave you that path in Mineral Economics?

Meyer:

Oh, my. There were a number. Dean Ridge³ was there. He was the dean of mineral economics at the time when I went for my master's degree. I got a— what do they call it? They basically paid my tuition.

Luxbacher:

They gave you an internship.

Meyer:

Internship. Yes.

Luxbacher:

Within the department.

Meyer:

Yes. I, along with another one of the students, master's students, we used to proofread his books on economic geology. I'm not sure how much of it I understood, but it was a very interesting process to sit there. We'd read to each other so that we could both look at what the sentences were and all of that to make sure that it was coming out right. We weren't critiquing his science at all. We were [doing] nothing more than trying to make sure that there were no obvious types of mistakes.

Luxbacher:

So, was a thesis required in the master's program? Did you have to write a thesis for your master's?

Meyer:

I did.

³ Editor's Note: Dr. John Ridge was the Head of the Department of Mineral Economics and, at the time, the Assistant Dean for Resident Instruction.

Luxbacher:

So out of curiosity, Drew, since you've never told me this before, what was the title of your master's thesis?

Meyer:

You know, I can't recall what the title is⁴— but I can tell you what it was about.

Luxbacher:

Okay, that's fine.

Meyer:

At that time, there was an awful lot of discussion about desalinization. So, in conjunction with my thesis advisor, John Tilden⁵, on a topic selection, he said, "This is one thing that I'm sure you can do in the year that you have available." What I did was to research all of the literature about desalinization and give a review of what that literature was talking about. That's what my thesis was, desalinization, which I thought by this time would be in much greater use. Desalinization, not my thesis.

Luxbacher:

But there's still quite a few desalinization plants in use. It may ultimately be much, much greater in the future.

Meyer:

Particularly in the Middle East.

00:20:46 Army Service – 18 Months in Germany & Orders for the 4th PsyOps Group in Vietnam

Luxbacher:

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Interviewer's Note: From a query to the Penn State library system, the title of the thesis is "By-product recovery from brines associated with desalination plants".

⁵ Interviewer's Note: Penn State records show Dr. Richard Gordon as Drew's thesis advisor; Dr. Gordon joined the Penn State faculty as an assistant professor in 1964. Dr. John Tilton didn't join Penn State until 1972, although he may have had an informal role there during Drew's graduate program. Dr. Tilton is a renowned Mineral Economist, and Drew undoubtedly interacted with him over the years, and he might have confused Dr. Tilton for Dr. Gordon.

In the Middle East, yes. We mentioned Vietnam here. So obviously, you had Vietnam in the background, and you were commissioned, so you knew you were going to wind up going into the service. At the time you graduated, Vietnam was still going on. You could have easily gone to Vietnam.

Meyer:

Well, I did.

Luxbacher:

You did go to Vietnam?

Meyer:

I first went to Germany.

The first thing I did was to go to the officer's training school. You do the initial one, which is basic officer training. Then you move on to advanced, and the advanced officer's training is once they put you into which grouping within the Army. I was in the Quartermaster Corps.

I did that. Then, I was sent to Germany, to Mannheim, and to the USAREUR (U.S. Army Europe) Augmentation Readiness Group, which was a pre-positioned seven divisions of armor equipment and engineering equipment. All of the type of equipment that you would need to fight a war in Europe, because they said, how are we going to get our troops over there and in a position to fight quickly if we have another war.

So we maintained all of that equipment. I was at the group headquarters, and we maintained in six locations all across Germany where we had all of the equipment ready to go on very short notice. They'd fly the troops in with their regular weapons, the rifles or handguns, and everything else was there. I did that for 18 months, and then, on my birthday, I got orders to go to Vietnam. The orders were to go to the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg and go into psychological operations training.

So, that's what I became trained for, and went to Vietnam in the 4th PSYOP Group⁶ and spent my time there.

Luxbacher:

⁶ Editor's Note: A good summary of psychological operations in Vietnam, including the 4th PSYOP Group and the activities Drew mentioned here along with some pictures, can be found at <https://www.psywarrior.com/VietnamCommanders.html>.

I can see the clear link between psychological training and mineral economics.

Meyer:

There you are.

Luxbacher:

I could see how that set your career path going forward.

Meyer:

Well, it may have been a little bit of when I was doing the basic training when I first went on active duty. We did an exercise where you're, in essence, a force that's coming into a community. Somehow or other, I had the job of being the person who wrote the speeches for the commanding officer to give in the town square. Maybe that was done well enough that they took note of that, and I ended up in psychological operations. And it's not what people think it is.

Luxbacher:

We've had some discussions over a bourbon about this. I understand.

Meyer:

It's one of those things where you're trying to influence by giving people the information that they need to have. It can also be abused, as we all know. But our intent as the US Army is concerned is that it's an influencing message that helps people to understand what's happening.

Luxbacher:

Get the truth out.

Meyer:

Yes.

00:25:42 Good Morning, Vietnam – Psychological Operations & Broadcasting News Across Vietnam

Luxbacher:

So, Drew, before we move on to all these other interesting aspects of your life, let me just ask a few more things about Vietnam. This is interesting. I'm learning about psychological warfare. And now I understand how you took SME by storm. You used psychological warfare techniques. We'll tie that back in.

Meyer:

Yes, we'll see.

Luxbacher:

But you had mentioned when you and I were talking earlier about a radio system you had in Vietnam. Why don't you just tell us a little bit about that?

Meyer:

Well, we had a 1,000,000-watt radio station, one frequency, and we handed it out to any Vietnamese that wanted it because it was in the Vietnamese language, of course. Only had that one frequency. We broadcast a whole range of different things. News and other helpful things, as well as trying to convince the Viet Cong, who might get a chance to listen to it, to come over to the back end of the Vietnamese fold. One of the interesting things about it, there were only about three or four of those types of stations in the United States. We had this set up in the Pleiku, which is the Highlands, so that it would cover the entire country of Vietnam.

One time, the Engineering Corps was doing some work around the site, and they had a dump truck there with its bed up, drove under a guy wire, and pulled the whole thing down [the antenna]. So that was a disaster for us. And one thing that we had to do then was get another one brought from the States and get it put up.

I was stationed in Saigon, but our units were Nha Trang, which was on the coast, Danang, which was up on the border with North Vietnam. Benoit, which is right outside Saigon and Canto, and that was in the Delta. So, we were spread all over, and I spent a lot of my time going all around to these various locations.⁷

Never got into a Huey, however.

I was always in cargo planes and stuff like that, but still traveled over the entire country.

Luxbacher:

Interesting. So, this was the radio system that's famous for Good Morning, Vietnam.

⁷ Editor's Note: Drew served in the US Army from 1967-70, attaining the rank of Captain. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Army Commendation Metal, National Defense Metal, Vietnam Service Metal, and the Vietnam Campaign Metal.

Meyer:

Yes, you know, I don't know.

Luxbacher:

It would probably be it.

Meyer:

Yes.

00:28:55 Marrying My Lovely Wife, Dixie, My Senior Year at Penn State

Luxbacher:

Fascinating. So somewhere in here, you got married, I believe, to your lovely wife, Dixie. Was that when you were still at Penn State?

Meyer:

Yes, we got married in my senior year.

So, we went to Penn State. She worked at a private company that was doing work that required a security clearance. It was— I'm not even sure what she did, but she was an administrative assistant.

That's what we call them today. Then, they called her a secretary. But at any rate, then, of course, we stayed on for the extra year after that.

Luxbacher:

Right. So, she went to Germany with you, but I take it she didn't go to Vietnam with you. She stayed in Germany?

Meyer:

That's right. She did not. She got pregnant when we were in Birmingham, and she couldn't go over until the baby, our daughter, was, I think, she had to be 12 weeks. So, I went ahead, and then she came and joined me.

00:30:35 Returning to Vulcan Materials – Market Research, Acquisitions & A Civil War Quarry

Luxbacher:

Interesting. So, when you finished up your tour of duty in Vietnam, you mustered out of the service, I take it?

Meyer:

Yes, so I was in three years because of that extra service to go to Vietnam.

Luxbacher:

So, when you got out, I assume Vulcan kept a position for you over that time.

Meyer:

They had to. There was the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 [SSCRA], which required that anybody who was in the military had to be hired back if they so chose.

And that you had to be treated as if you were working during that period that you were gone. So you still had the opportunity to negotiate on what you were going to do, etcetera. But by and large, they didn't have a choice. But the good news was they wanted me back.

Luxbacher:

They wanted you back. So here you went to an interview because a PhD student said, come along with me just for the experience and then after all this, you came back, and you went right back to work for them.

Meyer:

Yes, he went to work for Vulcan, also.

So, it worked out very well.

Luxbacher:

Very nice. So, tell us a little bit about your career with Vulcan, then. You started with Vulcan; now, with all this extensive psychological warfare background, you could utilize in your new career.

Meyer:

Well, I still was in market research, and market research involved not only the process of helping us to understand our markets better, but also to be involved in any acquisitions that Vulcan would be involved in. And they were growing at that point. They basically started out as

a small business; the CEO and owner at that time, Houston Blount, was the brother of the last Cabinet-level postmaster general, Winton "Red" Blount. They were a growing company, and they were acquiring family-owned businesses.

I was involved in the acquisition program for a large part of the time that I was with them.

Luxbacher:

And that was well outside of Alabama, too. They were acquiring all through the South, weren't they?

Meyer:

Yes. And not only that, they acquired an aluminum scrap processing company that took scrap aluminum and produced aluminum doors and aluminum windows, and all of that kind of thing. Products that could be extruded. And they also purchased a detinning operation that bought scrap tin cans, removed the tin from it, and then made stannous fluoride and other chemicals. So, they were diversified in that way, in addition to having the aggregates companies they bought. What still amazes me is there is a quarry that they have that was first opened up during the Civil War and is still operating to this day.

Luxbacher:

What state is that in?

Meyer:

That's in North Carolina.

It's a big quarry it supplies aggregate to the Raleigh-Durham research triangle, as well as all of the area around it.

Luxbacher:

That may be the longest-operating mine in the US.

Meyer:

Yes, I don't know.

Luxbacher:

That's pretty impressive.

Meyer:

But it's a big one.

00:35:03 My 39-Year Career with Vulcan – Aggregate, Metals & Construction Materials Divisions

Luxbacher:

So, did you stay in the aggregate side, or did you do some work in some of these other sides as well?

Meyer:

Well, I went to what they call the metals division. I forgot they also had a chemicals division that was located out in Wichita, Kansas. I never got involved with that, surprisingly.

Luxbacher:

Because you wanted to be a chemist.

Meyer:

That's right. But never got involved with that. I was with the aggregate business. Then I went to work for our metals division [in Sandusky, Ohio], worked with them for four years, and then back to the headquarters again. Then, I got a little bit itchy, I guess, and I went to work for Waste Management Company [in Chicago]. The reason that happened was because they were interested in some technology that we were looking at out in California for recovering tin cans from garbage, and then they would sell it to us, and they'd make money. We'd reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill, and we got more scrap for the detinning operation⁸. So, I only worked for them for about 18 months. And Vulcan came and asked me to come back, and I did. So that's where I finished out my career at that point. I was also in one of their construction materials divisions that was headquartered in North Carolina.

Luxbacher:

So, you lived in North Carolina?

⁸ Interviewer's Note: Vulcan Metals Division had detinning operations in Baltimore, Md., Pittsburgh, Pa., Gary, Ind., Llanelli, U.K. and Hartlepool, U.K. as well as involvement in aluminum recycling. It was sold to AMG in 1988. Vulcan was originally founded as Vulcan Detinning Company in Sewaren, NJ in 1902. Detinning involves removing tinplating from tin cans without dissolving the steel underneath.

Meyer:

We lived in North Carolina for four years. That was very interesting because the company that Vulcan had purchased there was a really colorful family operation, that started out back before the Eisenhower Interstate system started to be built [in the mid-50s]. They would go around, back then, permitting a quarry where essentially, there wasn't any quarry in the area. They'd go and find a farmer that had some acreage, they'd look and see if it had rock. Then they'd contract with the farmer, open up a pit, supply the aggregate for a certain number of miles of interstate, and then move on.

Luxbacher:

Just move down the road.

Meyer:

Yes. And that's when aggregate was selling for \$1.10 a ton. Very, very cheap. But they were making money.

Luxbacher:

So, you worked for them for four years; then you went back to Birmingham again?

Meyer:

Yes.

Luxbacher:

So basically, you lived in Birmingham most of the time.

Meyer:

Well, yes. Interrupted by four or five years at the Metals Division, which was in Sandusky, Ohio. Located up on Lake Erie.

They called it the Mid-East division. That, again, was for about four years. We were in Chicago when I was with Waste Management. I think that's it. Otherwise, we were in Birmingham.

Luxbacher:

In Birmingham with Vulcan. Interesting.

Meyer:

Yes.

Luxbacher:

So just in total, how many years did you put in with Vulcan before you retired?

Meyer:

39.

00:39:10 Mineral Economists' Unique Skills – Mineral Identification, Market Predictions & Logistics

Luxbacher:

So, Drew, being a mineral economist, is a unique field. I think that even today, there's not that many universities that have that program. So, when you entered into that aspect with Vulcan, what did a mineral economist do? And how did you utilize those skills you learned? And well, answer that, then we'll see how that changed over the 39 years that you worked for Vulcan.

Meyer:

I'll have to think a little bit more about the change. But initially, what I brought was an understanding of a broad range of mineral-type operations. And because the company, as soon as I joined it, was looking at the coal industry as a diversification thing. They were already in the metals business. They had made that acquisition before, but they were still learning how to benefit from it. The metals business included, as I said, detinning, and the aluminum business, processing aluminum scrap. They also had the chemical division; I did not get very involved in that. But still, there was that understanding that I could bring about these various types of industries involving the mineral industry.

I got involved in permitting activities where we had to go before permitting boards and convince people to give us a permit. As I think I might have mentioned before, there was no permitting required for a lot of the operations that Vulcan had that they operated for specific projects. Find a farmer that had rock that was close to the surface, and they'd be in business. But over time, when you started to have to get permitting done, get zoning changes to accept it, all of this, I think the Penn State mineral economics program gave me some background to use and to help. Because I was involved in all of those types of operations, not only the statistical aspect of determining how big a market was going to be there when we opened up, and how that would all work into the corporation. So, that knowledge of the mineralogy, having to go through and learn how to identify different types of rock, matters in the construction business. What kind of aggregate you've got, whether it's limestone or whether it's granite, or

igneous rock. We call all igneous rock granite, as do most people when they talk about it, but they don't know the difference.

Luxbacher:

Right. Very different specifications. I understand.

Meyer:

So those were the types of elements. The mineral economics program even got into the financial aspects. You had a marketing/sales group being able to identify, to a degree, that you needed two different types of aggregate. Whether you were dealing with something that was soft, like a lot of limestones are, although they can be very hard also, but it gave that sort of background that very few people had coming out of college.

00:43:44 Permitting Quarries – Mines Amidst High Schools & Subdivisions

Luxbacher:

Fascinating. So just how long does it take to permit? I know it's a variety, but how long, on average, do you think it takes to permit a quarry today compared to—

Meyer:

Even when I was there, we had some projects that took us ten years to get fully permitted. And it's a wide variety of reasons why that might happen. Some of them are environmental, and some of them you just happen to run into an adjacent property owner that has the ability to make things very slow and painful.

We were able to operate quarries where the entrance to the quarry was across from a high school. We could and did operate in those kinds of conditions. It wasn't something that you had to have out where nobody could see you or hear you.

Luxbacher:

You didn't necessarily have an adverse relationship with those.

Meyer:

We had very good relationships with them.

We got to the point where we would not permit anything under or not attempt to permit anything under about 400 acres. If we could get more than that, that was good. But 400 acres, in most cases, gave us enough longevity so that we could make significant money for it.

Luxbacher:

Had enough buffer between the quarry and the surrounding community?

Meyer:

Yes. Well, the strange thing is that Vulcan had a lot of quarries that were nowhere close to anything. Then they built subdivisions all around them. So, we went from a place where we were out in the wilderness, so to speak, to where we had to be extremely careful about noise, dust, and traffic. The interesting thing that we discovered in doing some analysis is that one of the biggest things they'd say is, oh my God, all this truck traffic is going to be coming. It's going to make it very difficult. Well, it turned out, as we did some of the surveys, a normal suburban development, with the way families grow, there are two, three, maybe four vehicles that are in one house. Right on top of that, you have people that are leaving there in the morning. But then, if you have stay-at-home moms, they've got to go to school, take kids to school; they're out, back and forth. The traffic is heavier from a subdivision than it is from a quarry.

00:47:18 A 58-year History with SME – Past President & Legion of Honor Member

Luxbacher:

Understandable. As a mining engineer, I can appreciate that fully. Okay, great. Let's talk for a few minutes about SME. I see from your badge for this conference that you're a Legion of Honor member of SME. I am as well. So, we have both been members for over 50 years. I think you've probably been a Legion of Honor member a little bit longer than me.

Meyer:

Well, in 1965, when I was in my senior year and still wondering, I knew that I was going to go into the military, but I thought I'd better become a member of SME [then more often identified as AIME] to give me the background. I guess that I need to get a job in the mining industry when I get out of the military, because I did not expect to make it a career. I wanted to serve, but I did not expect that I would stay and, like I say, make a career of it.

Luxbacher:

So early on, you felt that SME brought value to you in trying to select a career, trying to get into the industry?

Meyer:

Absolutely.

Luxbacher:

So really, I'm not that far behind you because I joined as a student in, I think, 1970. You were '65, so you have five years on me as a Legion of Honor member.

Meyer:

I think it worked out very well. And I said I was dedicated to that because I paid the dues for those three years when I was in the military, because I wanted to maintain that history, if you will, with SME.

Luxbacher:

Did *Mining Engineering* magazine make it to you every month in Germany?

Meyer:

You know what? No.

00:49:18 Attending SME Annual Meetings & Educating Vulcan about Mining Engineering

Luxbacher:

I kind of figured that's what it was. So, your involvement with SME, you joined, and then you went to work for Vulcan. Was there a local section chapter that you were involved in then?

Meyer:

There was, and it was and is still primarily a coal section. Oh, coal mining is big in Alabama, in particular in the Birmingham area. I attended that meeting every time there was something to do with whatever Vulcan was interested in and whatever I was interested in, but they were very heavily oriented to coal. I didn't make it to those meetings as much as I would have liked. Still, after I got really active in SME itself. When I would go periodically and talk up SME and try to get them to be more involved as a section in SME. But after that first early work on coal, well, I really didn't get involved very much.

Luxbacher:

So that's interesting. My involvement in SME really came about through the local section because I was really heavily involved at that level. So you rather took a different path. Yes. You got more involved in SME on the national side versus the section?

So how did that come about? That's interesting.

Meyer:

Well, with the sessions that we have at the SME annual meeting, there were enough sessions that were aggregates-oriented. So that's how I started giving papers as well as coming to listen to the papers. Vulcan, as a whole, for many years, didn't think they needed mining engineering. They said, well, most of what we're doing is moving dirt around, overburden. So, we can take another type of engineer.

Luxbacher:

Civil or whatever.

Meyer:

Civil engineers, yes, we'll hire them. They're cheaper anyway. And that was kind of their attitude. But that's changed, right? First of all, we operate underground. We've got an underground quarry in Lexington, which is under Rupp Arena. But that's an active underground operation that needs to have a mining engineer in there and not a civil engineer.

There's lots and lots of operations that we now have that are underground or in certain conditions that you need to have a mining engineer involved.

00:53:02 Elevating Interest in Aggregates Within SME – A Push for Programming Changes

Luxbacher:

I know those years you came to SME, while we may have had some aggregate programming here, we didn't have a whole lot. I think you were responsible really for elevating a lot of the interest in aggregates within SME at the annual meeting, weren't you? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Meyer:

I was, and Mike Karmis [at the time the Mining Engineering Department Head at Virginia Tech and the 2002 SME President] was one that was very active in trying to get that to happen. You know, looking back, I'm not sure what it was, why he had that interest in getting the aggregate industry much more heavily involved.

Luxbacher:

I think I remember that era, too, and I think it was because they had graduates that started to show interest in aggregates as opposed to coal all of a sudden.

Meyer:

That's what it was.

Luxbacher:

The aggregate companies were suddenly coming to Virginia Tech, saying; we're interested in your people. Mike realized we had to start programming for this.

Meyer:

Exactly. Now, I'm glad you reminded me of that because that's exactly what happened. And they had one year where practically every one of their students went into the aggregate industry. Coal was down a little bit. They didn't need as many mining engineers. That's right. It was his foresight that really started to get me more involved. That's how it happened. I think if it hadn't been for him as being the driving force, and the fact that the industry was changing. Our aggregate industry was changing; that's what got the aggregate business involved with much more than it was.

Luxbacher:

So, which division here at SME were you involved with?

Meyer:

Well, initially, I just kind of did whatever was interesting to me, and there was programming involved with it. But it did not have its own section, right?

Luxbacher:

Its own home. Nobody took ownership.

Meyer:

That's right. And that's what we were doing was building that.

00:55:17 Finding a Home for Aggregates – Leveraging SME's and NSSGA's Strengths

Luxbacher:

Okay. Could you tell me how you went about that and how you found a home within SME for aggregates, knowing the importance of aggregates?

Meyer:

I think with Mike Karmis being sort of the catalyst, he opened a lot of doors and gave us opportunities. And I jumped in to work with him and through him to try to get this established. I was also involved, at the time, fairly heavily with the National Sand and Gravel Association. I got up to Vice Chairman with that before it merged with the National Stone Association. So, it's now the National Stone, Sand, and Gravel Association [NSSGA]⁹. But I was involved with both of those, both SME and NSSGA, when it formed.

It was the National Sand and Gravel Association and the National Stone Association. They merged and became the National Stone, Sand, and Gravel Association. So that's how we got NSSGA. So, I was involved in both of those and very heavily involved in the National Sand and Gravel Association and got to the level of Vice Chairman before the merger occurred.

Luxbacher:

So, you were in a unique position to bring those people that were with you in the trade association, because that's what the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association was really, a trade association with members. You were able to bring those people into SME with programming that you knew was appropriate.

Meyer:

That's right. It was a very hand-in-glove kind of thing because there were so many common interests, even though NSSGA and the two prior separate operations were much more heavily involved with the government and the political side of the whole thing.

Luxbacher:

Government relations side.

Meyer:

And they were fighting the silica issue. Yes, that was very, very much on the minds of the regulatory agencies. All of those things gave that side of the perspective of the industry, and then SME gave the more technical side. Fortunately, our company recognized that having somebody involved with those companies, as I was it, gave them the opportunity to leverage what each of those organizations was doing best.

00:58:39 Facilitating the Integration of Aggregates into SME's Industrial Minerals Division

⁹ Interviewer's Note: In February 2001 2 large aggregate associations, the National Aggregates Association (which Drew referred to as the National Sand and Gravel Association) and the National Stone Association, merged to form NSSGA. At the time of the merger, Drew was the Vice Chair at NAA, a key leadership position, and had previously served as the Treasurer.

Luxbacher:

So ultimately, where did aggregates mining land within SME — which division within SME is your current home?

Meyer:

Well, it's now become broader than that. For a while, we did have a separate committee within SME that was just the Aggregates¹⁰.

And now we're in the Industrial Minerals and Aggregates Division¹¹.

Luxbacher:

It recognizes a broader description of industrial minerals.

Meyer:

It also reflects, I think, the opportunity to bring together a larger group. And there are, in that Industrial Minerals and Aggregates Division, there's a lot of overlap with the production of materials that are aggregate-based, rock-based, if you want to use that term. And so, it fits.

Luxbacher:

And this programming is continued. I know because I look at the program, and there's still a lot of aggregate programming that continues within this.

Meyer:

They get into permitting, and we have, of course, things about operating plants that are served by a quarry but producing lime, cement, and other materials. Other industrial minerals, gypsum, etcetera.

Luxbacher:

So really, with Mike Karmis as a catalyst, you executed the plan to pull all this into SME.

Meyer:

¹⁰ Interviewer's Note: That was the Construction Materials & Aggregates Committee, which Drew chaired.

¹¹ Interviewer's Note: The Industrial Minerals Division was formed in AIME in 1935. When the Mining Branch of AIME was established during a reorganization in 1949, the Industrial Minerals Division was one of the three initial divisions, along with Coal and Minerals Beneficiation. The Mining Branch became SME in the AIME decentralization program in 1957.

Yes, and not by myself.

Luxbacher:

I understand. But you were a large part of that and got us to where we're at today.

Meyer:

Fortunately, Vulcan was very supportive of that.

Luxbacher:

Very good. Very good. So, as that occurred, you obviously moved into an SME leadership path, which is interesting. So, tell us how that came about.

Meyer:

You know, what is it one of the baseball guys says? Success is just in showing up. Well, I did a lot of showing up, and there was enough guidance from people who wanted to see this happen that there was a lot of support there, and a lot of other people working to get the same thing to happen.¹²

01:01:34 Society Awards – The Hardinge Award for Exemplary Service in Industrial Minerals

Luxbacher:

So, Drew, what awards have you gotten from the society or from even the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association over time? Just out of curiosity, do you remember?

Meyer:

Well, as I say, I got as high as the Vice Chairman of the National Sand and Gravel Association just before they merged. So, I never made it to the chairman. They didn't have presidents. They had chairmen. I don't know what the difference is. And you know, right now, I can't recall what awards I might have gotten with the Stone or the Sand and Gravel Association.¹³

¹² Editor's Note: Much more than "just showing up", Drew served on the Strategic Finance Committee, Construction Materials & Aggregates Committee, Mineral Education Sustainability Task Force, Executive Director Search Committee, and the Ad Hoc Marketing Committee. He also served on the SME Board of Directors (2006-2009) as well as the Vice President of the SME Foundation (2002-2009), followed by his continued service as a Trustee.

¹³ Interviewer's Note: Drew service was honored by his appointment in 2004 as an honorary Life member of the NSSGA. He also was selected as the 2002 AGGMAN Professional of the Year by Aggregate Manager and appeared on their magazine cover.

Luxbacher:

What about SME Awards?

Meyer:

Well, SME, I have, of course, the AIME Honorary Member. I also have the Distinguished Member award. Also, I'm a Legion of Honor, meaning that I've been a member of SME for more than 50 years, and I think it's 56— 56 or 57 years. And then there are a variety of ones for donating to the Foundation, the John T. Boyd Challenge¹⁴, which was for those people who have donated a fairly large amount of money over time.

Luxbacher:

Over \$10,000.

Meyer:

Over \$10,000? That's right. And as I say, I was chairman of a lot of committees in NSSGA, but I can't remember awards. I don't know why.

Luxbacher:

That's fine. So, let's not forget the Hardinge Award. Tell us a little bit about the Hardinge Award. I heard you had to reinforce the wall in your home to hang it.

Meyer:

It is a very big and heavy plaque. There is no question about that. I don't know what it's made of, but it's very impressive. It's got a prominent place on the wall. But that one I was very proud of because it is for exemplary service. And that's one of the big ones that I can always remember.

Luxbacher:

That one's for exemplary service in the field of industrial minerals, which we've just established, includes aggregates. So very impressive.¹⁵

¹⁴ Interviewer's Note: Drew and Dixie met the John T. Boyd Challenge, for \$10,000 of lifetime giving, in 2011. In 2018, they joined the 25K Club, acknowledging their lifetime giving of \$25,000; only 23 members of SME have attained this giving level as of 2023.

¹⁵ Interviewer Note: SME/AIME Hal Williams Hardinge Award was established in 1958 and recognizes outstanding achievement which has benefited the field of industrial minerals. Drew was the recipient of this award in 2010.

Meyer:

Yes.

Luxbacher:

So, it's just interesting that I used to go to Central Appalachian meetings with Hal's son, who lived in Lexington years ago. So, we used to travel back and forth. We had meetings in Charleston, West Virginia, and he used to travel with Joe Leonard, myself, and several other people. Frank Gaddy, all these people that are famous. It was just interesting. I had the opportunity to know them back then. Yes, but this is the award that Dave Kanagy says that we need a mini forklift up on the stage to pick it up.

Meyer:

And that's true.

01:05:08 Recognizing the Foundation AIME Built and Its Role as an Umbrella Society

Luxbacher:

Very impressive. I didn't ask you about your AIME service since both you and I have served within AIME, and we're proud of the association of SME with AIME. Knowing that SME really is the foundation of AIME, we're the closest of all the member societies to our heart.

Meyer:

In fact, when the transition was made to the four constituents of AIME members, I think we call—

Luxbacher:

Member Societies.

Meyer:

That's right. I was so AIME-oriented, I thought, what happened to AIME all of a sudden? I'm SME, and I don't know what happened. But it took a little while until I finally got an understanding of why what was happening happened.

His citation reads "For his outstanding contributions to and visionary leadership of the aggregates industry and for his relentless efforts to make SME and the SME Foundation better and stronger organizations."

In fact, when I became president, I thought there have to be some other people who were left out of the understanding of what went on. So, one of my columns¹⁶ was on how did we get from where we were to where we are.

Luxbacher:

Where we are. Very good. Very good. You served on the board of trustees of AIME, too, so you had the opportunity, all those years later, still to give back to AIME through service on the board of trustees. Did you find that interesting?

Meyer:

Oh, it was very interesting, and a number of different issues because of the way AIME was now an umbrella, so to speak, over the member societies¹⁷. So, it did give you a different perspective about how they interacted and how each is really a very important part of the other, is the way I express it.

01:07:28 Consulting on A Nuclear Power Plant Acquisition & An Aggregate Rail Service

Luxbacher:

Okay. Very interesting. So, you retired from Vulcan. I know you're still heavily involved in SME. You still come to SME every year. You attend all these sessions here that still pertain to aggregates. For a few years there, you did some consulting, didn't you?

Meyer:

I did. I never did a lot, but had a couple of interesting ones. A gentleman was interested in acquiring one of the nuclear power plants that was shut down in Alabama, and they needed to have some perspective about what the demand would be for electricity. I used that as an opportunity to not only say what is going to be the demand for building and construction in the area that would be served, but also aggregate. Another company that I did a study for, that was within that nuclear power plant generating area, to build a quarry that would be able to serve by rail down to the coast of Alabama, Louisiana, etc. There is what's called geologically the fall line, where beyond which there's no aggregate except sand and gravel.

That area, if they need an aggregate or crushed aggregate, they have to be served by rail or down the Mississippi because this operation could also get on the Mississippi to go down to New Orleans, etcetera. So, I had two different people at the same time trying to put together

¹⁶ Editor's Note: The September 2012 President's column in Mining Engineering was entitled "Success can be traced to its roots: SME one of four AIME Member Societies that are prospering".

¹⁷ Interviewer's Note: AIME (American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers) has 4 Member Societies: SME (the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration), TMS (The Minerals, Metals, and Materials Society), SPE (the Society of Petroleum Engineers), and AIST (Association for Iron & Steel Technology).

something. I can't remember his name either, and I should. But he eventually did buy the plant, and I don't know whether he'll ever get it going back again or not.

Luxbacher:

But he owns it. Impressive.

Meyer:

Yes.

01:10:15 Vulcan's International Operations – Aggregate from Mexico, Kuwait, Dubai & the UAE

Luxbacher:

You were talking about the fall line there. So in a different part of my career, I ran a bulk materials terminal south of New Orleans, and we brought aggregate in from Mexico. So, you were railing it down that direction? We were bringing it up from Mexico and then offloading it to shore, and then trucking it out.

Meyer:

Vulcan operates a quarry on the Yucatan Peninsula, which is limestone. They've got a couple of ships which then bring it to the coast of the US.

Luxbacher:

Oh, I could have unloaded the Vulcan ship. I don't remember. It was too many years ago.

Meyer:

Well, one of the things I did when I was still with Vulcan was a study right after the first Gulf War. Vulcan was looking at establishing an operation that would supply aggregate to Kuwait. Sand and gravel was their primary material, but they had sulfate mixed into it, which is not very good if you don't get it clean for making concrete. It can make concrete very unstable.

Luxbacher:

It's corrosive to the concrete mix.

Meyer:

That's right. So, there were operations in the Emirates, United [Arab] Emirates, that were shipping aggregate. And what we wanted to do was to establish a port, an operation yard in Kuwait, to supply aggregate. I worked on that for about a year. The locals hung on to their materials, and we just never could get a big enough operation going. They went back to what they were doing before.

Luxbacher:

So, the interesting tie here is you were working with the Al-Turki family. My son currently works for the Al-Turki family in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, running a rental car operation that they have there. So it's just interesting that we have this tie that comes back.

Meyer:

Yes. Vulcan also operated for quite a number of years in Saudi Arabia. And that's kind of what got us interested in saying, well, maybe we can start to establish more operations there, but just too much politics and local issues — Our partners in Kuwait just weren't able to get it done.

Luxbacher:

But you got to spend a little bit of time in the Middle East, then.

Meyer:

I did, yes. I would travel back and forth between Kuwait and Dubai, and then travel through the UAE in order to go to two separate operations that we were going to bring via self-unloading ships that would unload in Kuwait.

01:13:52 A Proud Father & Grandfather

Luxbacher:

Oh, interesting. Okay. So, I think we've talked a lot about your career. Let's just talk just for a few minutes here about your family. We've already mentioned your lovely wife, Dixie. Would you like to tell us a little bit about your family?

Meyer:

Well, yes. My oldest daughter is a nurse, and we are constantly amazed at how much she knows. She has diagnosed us with stuff that the doctors later on came around to saying, yes, that's what it was, or we never did really get a good answer. But she came up with a good answer, and we were able to pursue that. Our second daughter has been a pharmaceutical rep, and she started out in human resource management in a hospital, and then got to liking the

earnings potential of a pharmaceutical rep. And that's what she's basically been doing for a long time. I shouldn't tell you how old she is. It makes us seem old.

Luxbacher:

We're not old. Old is a state of mind.

Meyer:

That's right.

Luxbacher:

That's why this Legion of Honor thing should be renamed to sound younger.

Meyer:

Well, I don't know. It sounds impressive, though. So anyway, then we have four grandchildren. The oldest daughter has a boy and a girl, and the youngest daughter has two girls. The oldest daughter has one in Auburn. The youngest daughter has one that has graduated from Alabama. She's doing some work with doctors to start the process to go get her PA [Physician's Assistant]. Then we've got the grandson. He was in chemistry, and when COVID came along, he just said, I can't do this remote learning stuff.

Now he's an assistant manager of a Starbucks, so we'll see where that goes. We might get him as a franchisee of Starbucks. And the youngest grandchild is at Ole Miss, and she enjoys it over there. She's just a freshman, so she's got a little while to go. But she's going to do well. She's one of those that is very, very focused. She's very focused, and she really knows what she wants to do. And so, we're looking forward to seeing how she progresses in Ole Miss.

Luxbacher:

But you never know where life's going to take her, because look at you. You wanted to be a chemist, but for that person who could look at you and assess and tell you where your future success was.

Meyer:

And she was right. She was right. I have never regretted it for one minute. And as I said earlier, I've certainly said it at other times; one of my greatest regrets is never going back and telling her that she really made a difference in my life and got me into the mining industry, which has been very, very good to me.

01:18:13 Catalysts of SME – Recognizing Mike Karmis & Dave Kanagy

Luxbacher:

Good, good. So, is there anyone at SME that you would like to mention in particular that over these years— I know you mentioned Mike Karmis was really the catalyst that really got you heavily involved in the SME programming, and we really have you and Mike to thank for that, because SMEs much better for it. But were there other people in SME that you think back— I know Dr. Tilton at Penn State, and you still kept in touch with him for quite a few years.

Meyer:

Yes.

Luxbacher:

Are there other people that you want to mention?

Meyer:

Well, I was on the committee that hired Dave Kanagy¹⁸, and that's a thing that I was very happy to be involved with and very proud of the outcome. And so, there are a lot of people that claim credit for Dave Kanagy. But I'm one too.

Luxbacher:

That sounds good.

Meyer:

So, that was an interesting process that we did in hiring him. But the fact that he was an executive director of one of the other AIME member societies that really helped him. He had so much knowledge about the mineral industry, even though it was the Iron and Steel Society that he was working for.

Luxbacher:

Right.

Meyer:

He still had a lot of understanding of AIME, of SME, and all of the operations. And he really knew how to turn it around, and it needed turning around at that point.

¹⁸ Interviewer's Note: Drew was on the select Executive Director Search Committee that hired Dave Kanagy.

Luxbacher:

He knew Claude Crowley back when Claude ran SME. So he had that knowledge, like you say, he was able to step in and move things forward. Very good. I noticed you didn't mention that you have a son-in-law who's a gold miner.

Meyer:

Well, he is. He's more of a wannabe gold miner. He does produce, has produced some gold. But he hasn't achieved the real thing yet.

Luxbacher:

He's an aspiring gold miner.

Meyer:

He's an aspiring gold miner. That's correct. But he spent a lot of time in Honduras. And there's a lot of alluvial deposits, gold deposits. And he even tried, here recently, to process using leaching. And that didn't work out as well as he had hoped, either. But he's given it a shot.

01:21:22 Detinning Operation – Using Tin Cans to Extract Copper

Luxbacher:

Very good. I should also mention when you were talking about your detinning operation, I was thinking back. Of course, this may have gone out of vogue by the time you got your mineral economics degree, but do you remember what tin cans were also used for? To extract copper. They used to use tons of tin cans out in the West. They'd have the copper solution and pull the copper out and replace the tin.

Meyer:

Well, the other thing, the same operation bought water meters, and they used to recover the copper and the components of water meters.

Luxbacher:

Out of water meters. Yes. Interesting.

Meyer:

So that was kind of a unique operation as well.

01:22:22 Final Remarks – Grateful to Be a Member of the Mining Industry

Luxbacher:

This has been a fascinating discussion. Is there any advice that you'd like to give to young leaders in our profession, or even the youth that are just coming into mining?

Meyer:

Well, this doesn't exactly answer your question immediately, but I am truly impressed by the number of women we have in mining now. That's such an unusual thing. And as always, women always make men better. So, I am looking forward to seeing them; their presence grow in the industry. And so I would have no reservations about recommending it if my daughters wanted to get into the mining industry. I think it's a great career, and it's one that obviously women can perform and do a great job. So, if there's advice here, it's that the industry is one that gives a good lifetime of earnings and being part of a community, so to speak, that I think you will always benefit from being a member of the mining industry.

Luxbacher:

Great. How about summing up your career? This is going to be an interesting one. Sum up your career in 2 or 3 words, Drew.

Meyer:

I can't say anything in two or three words.

Luxbacher:

That's why I was laughing when I asked that.

Meyer:

I don't know; it suits me because it's something that I really have enjoyed being a part of. And again, that's why I say I regret not being able to tell that counselor; you made a fantastic decision when you told me that you ought to take a look at mineral economics and being part of the mining industry.

Luxbacher:

Fabulous. So I can tell you that you've come a long way from being that first person to enter as a freshman at Penn State. You've come a long way. We've known each other for quite a few

years with SME within the SME family, and I've really enjoyed knowing you. I've learned a lot from you over the years.

Meyer:

I've learned a lot from you, too, that's for sure.

Luxbacher:

Hopefully good stuff.

Meyer:

It is.

Luxbacher:

This has certainly been a pleasure to interview you. You've had a fascinating career. I've really enjoyed the stories. I'm sure there were more stories that you and I have talked about over a bourbon that I'll kick myself when we stop this interview because I'll say, why didn't I ask about this or that? But this was really a pleasure. I've enjoyed spending the time with you.

Meyer:

Well, I'm getting so old now I'm forgetting more than I knew. There's some things I could have said that I just can't remember them like that, but I can remember them.

Luxbacher:

I understand. Well, thank you very much for your willingness to share your story with AIME and SME. And this has absolutely been a pleasure. Thank you.

Meyer:

Well, thank you. Thank everyone that was part of the selection committee for selecting me. I've enjoyed it.

Luxbacher:

They made a great decision to select you.

Meyer:

Thank you.

Final Interviewer's Note: Drew Meyer passed away unexpectedly on November 13, 2024; we had all expected Drew, despite some health problems, to be with us for many more years. The Luxbacher and the Kanagy families had the pleasure of vacationing with Drew and Dixie just the month before in Hawaii. At that time, Drew and I talked about finishing up his oral history; I never expected that the task would fall to me, and I only hope that I have done justice to Drew's fascinating life story. While Drew and I had several long talks before the oral history was recorded in 2023, primarily over a fine bourbon and cigars, and discussed what he wanted to cover, as I did this edit, I realized how much we had left out. Drew's numerous publications and presentations, including some for the National Academies, his accomplishments as SME President, his strong support for the SME Foundation, and his unwavering commitment to our industry all deserved more time. Those who watch the full oral history will see through our interactions what good friends Drew and I were, and I miss him dearly. My life was much richer through that friendship.

George Luxbacher