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ASHRAE President 2022-23



So I was born in 1945 in Lahore.

It's a city of 12 million people, and it dates back 2,500 years.

So Lahore is really an amalgam of cultures, which resulted from multiple invasions of northern India, and it's really considered the heart of Pakistan.

My dad served in the army, and so we actually moved from place to place wherever he was posted.

And so growing up, I went to school in five different cities.

And at that time, most of the schools were run by the Catholic Church, so they were strong disciplinarians.

And so, in 1947, India and Pakistan broke up into two countries. And at that time, my dad was posted in central India, and we had to travel by train from Allahabad to Lahore. And it's a rather long journey, and it was quite harrowing, and there were many attempts on our lives.

And to give you a little bit of context, two million people were killed in this breakup of Pakistan and India, and 16 million people were uprooted from their homes. And it was a massive transfer of population.

I got interested in engineering. There weren't too many professions available at that point in time. And my mom, she didn't like lawyers, and she thought doctors didn't have family life. So she said, "You better become an engineer."

So I became an engineer. That's how I got interested in engineering.

My dad was posted in Dhaka, and I went to the engineering university there. The university was an affiliate of Texas A&M, and I graduated in mechanical engineering.

Well, you see, HVAC was a novelty in those days. It was an emerging technology and a profession in our part of the world.

I was good at thermodynamics and fluid mechanics, and so I was interested, was fascinated by air conditioning equipment and this emerging technology.

And so I was drawn to the HVACR industry. Once I was in, I was hooked for life.



My first job was with a Trane distributor, and there was an application engineer. And as an application engineer, I got to select equipment and systems, and I absolutely fell in love with this business, and that love affair continues to this day.

The challenges at that point in time were a paucity of technical information. The technical information we got was from manufacturers' catalogs.

And the other challenge was that there were no computers. Even calculators had not been invented, so everything had to be done by hand.

And I worked with my second job, which I saw an ad in the paper, and it was for the position of chief engineer at the InterContinental Hotel.

Now, InterContinental Hotel was owned by Pan Am World Airways. And I walked in, it was a walk-in interview, and I got hired.

And the man who hired me, he was an inspiring mentor. He taught me some of the lessons which I've never forgotten. That is, you don't back down against challenges, you be tenacious, and you really put in all the effort that's needed. So these lessons have stuck with me all my life.

And so I worked for InterContinental for 12 years.

And after I graduated from Dhaka, three years after that, time to change countries again because Pakistan broke up into Bangladesh and Pakistan.

So just three days before a planned visit of Senator Robert Kennedy to our hotel, he was going to be staying there, the hotel was bombed and had extensive damage.

And management said to me—I said, "Look, I'm going away." And they said, "No, you stay here, and you get this repaired."

So I said, "All right, on one condition, and that is that when I get it done, you transfer me to Karachi."

So I moved to Karachi after that, and I've lived in Karachi for 55 years, and my two younger sons were born there.

In 2013, my wife passed away, and in 2017, I remarried. So my current wife is Chinese.

And a couple of weeks ago, my granddaughter was married to an Englishman.

And we've got all nationalities in our family. We're a multicultural, multiracial family.

After working for InterContinental for 12 years, I decided it was time for a change in profession.

So if you're a young engineer or an engineer with not many resources, the best option is to get into the consulting business. It doesn't have a lot of capital investment.

So I set up my consulting practice in 1980.



And when I set up the practice, I needed all the technical information, which as I said earlier, was not so easily available. And ASHRAE is the world's greatest source of technical information on HVAC, so I became a member.

And my first ASHRAE meeting was in 1997. I went to Philadelphia, and that really opened my eyes to the scale and the technical reach of ASHRAE.

So I've been active in ASHRAE since 1980.

Now, for the last 25 years, I've been involved with the Region at Large.

So the Region at Large was formed in 2001, and in 2003, the first CRC of the region was held in the UK in Reading. And I traveled there with a petition to form a chapter in Pakistan in Karachi.

And after that, because I had already been a founder of the Pakistan HVACR Society, we collaborated, and we set up chapters in central Pakistan in Lahore and northern Pakistan in Islamabad, and later on in Faisalabad. So we got four chapters in Pakistan. I was instrumental in that activity.

Now, I served the region as chapter president, as sub-region chair, as assistant regional chair, and as DRC for four years.

And during this period of involvement with Region at Large, we restructured the Region at Large. It's got a different governance model. It's unique in ASHRAE.

Now it's got sub-regions and assistant regional leaders and things like that. It's got its own bylaws.

And I look upon Region at Large as a mother region which spawned other regions. So I was actively involved in the formation of Regions 14 and 15. And of course, it gives me great satisfaction to see how they're prospering.

Networking is, in my opinion, absolutely central plank of ASHRAE's charm and its, how will I say, its importance to a professional engineer.

The very fact that ASHRAE was born out of a need for people to collaborate 130 years ago still remains valid today.

So I believe the world is changing dramatically. That change is posing its own challenges.

We need much greater dialogue across the world.

We need to adopt new technologies, and that can only be by, how will I say, having more members participate in ASHRAE.

And my strategy was that that should be in terms of greater transparency to attract members to participate in ASHRAE.

The pandemic made us realize that it was never going to be business as usual, and so we needed to go digital and have a lot more of our meetings online and so on.



And the changing environment in the world needed much greater global linkages. So when I became ASHRAE president, my theme was securing our future.

And so securing our future involved three things. It involved very strong relationships in the industry with the manufacturers, partners, other societies, people who shared the same goals.

And it required us to be on top of knowledge. And the knowledge means not only the technical knowledge, but the events happening, how change is being driven across the world.

And finally, we needed to be nimble and ready to adapt ourselves to the changing circumstances.

So in my presidential year, we had a global summit in Istanbul.

And this summit, we brought together the board of directors and the CRC of Region at Large and many international organizations. And one of the objectives of the summit was to discuss the critical issues of the day and write down reports, and I believe those reports constitute guidance for ASHRAE today.

The other thing that we did was that we started a system of industry roundtables.

So ASHRAE is, in essence, a service provider to the global HVACR industry. We give them all the knowledge and the technology. And so you need to listen to the voice of the customer.

And the industry roundtable fulfills that and allows us to tailor products and services which the industry needs.

I'm glad to see that ASHRAE has embodied these roundtables, and they continue to be held at every CRC till this time. We're moving forward.

Many of those things exist today and have become part of ASHRAE culture.

We've signed up a lot more relationships across the world in the years since I was president.

We're more actively engaged in dialogue.

We've embraced new technology. Decarbonization, for example, is a strategic pivot. We're now doing our designs from the standpoint of climate change and global greenhouse gas reductions.

We've also brought in AI, IoT, and data-driven design, and these are as a result of, I think, the dialogues that we've held and the introspection we've carried out as a society.

When Tim Wentz became president of ASHRAE, he used an expression, "being in the room."

So ASHRAE is that room in which you've got manufacturers, consultants, you've got researchers, academics, and if you're going to be anybody and succeed in the industry, you need to be in that room.

That's what I would tell the young people. Don't be out of that room. You got to be in that room. You got to network with all these folks. That opens up the career possibilities. That broadens your professional horizons.



So that's what I would say to younger people.

I enjoy travel. I like to travel and meet different people, and that's been a passion with me, traveling.

I love watching movies. I see a movie every day, okay?

And I'm fascinated by history, so I read a lot of history because I think the lessons of the future are actually set in the past.

So, if you know your history, you're better able to adjust to what comes next in the future.

ASHRAE has meant the world to me. It's been a central part of my professional success, and it's enriched my life, and I'm truly blessed by my global ASHRAE family.