

CAMERAN MIRZA (1935-2022)

By Arman Mirza, Romana Mirza and Ken Ahmad



Cam, with his grandson, Danial in 2008

Described as a “north star” and a “beacon of decency, integrity and hard work”, Cameran ‘Cam’ Mirza passed away on October 22, 2022 at the age of 87. The eldest of six, Cam was the patriarch of his family and a trailblazer for his South Asian community, being one of the first to immigrate to North America from Hyderabad, India.

Cam was born in London, England, in 1935, to parents from Hyderabad. His father Babar Mirza, a pioneer of Indian civil aviation, was studying in London at the time; his mother Sayeedunissa Begum was the daughter of the former Prime Minister of Hyderabad. He immigrated to Canada in 1957 and studied at McGill University (Macdonald College), earning a BSc in Agriculture (1961). He subsequently earned a MSA in Agricultural Engineering from the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph (1963), followed by an MSc in Geotechnical and Geological Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1965).

Cam started his geotechnical career with Geocon Ltd. in Montreal and Toronto from 1965 to 1967. He then joined the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario (MTO) and remained there until 1981. By that time, he was head of the Soil Mechanics Section. He left the MTO to work with and manage Strata Engineering Corporation from 1982 to 2000. During that period, Strata was recognized as a leading geotechnical consultancy in Ontario. From 2000, Cam worked as an independent consultant for various firms including SNC-Lavalin, Golder Associates and AECOM. He was appointed Adjunct Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Toronto in 1996, where he lectured 3rd and 4th year soil mechanics and foundation engineering.

Cam amassed 50 years of distinguished experience in geotechnical and geological engineering, foundation engineering, engineering materials (soil, asphalt and concrete), site characterization, hydrogeology, slope stability, settlement analysis, instrumentation and monitoring, project management and as an expert witness. He managed several R&D projects for Public Works and Government Services Canada, CANMET/EMR, Agriculture Canada and the private sector. With MTO, Cam worked on innumerable Ontario highways. Some of his key projects were the Toronto’s Don Valley Brickyards (conservation and historical geology); slope stabilization and shoreline protection in Moosonee (northern Ontario); the Canadian Coast Guard Dock & Seawall in Parry Sound and other major Ontario highway projects.

Besides his technical contributions, Cam gave back generously to the engineering profession. He was an active member of the Professional Engineers of Ontario Experience Requirements Committee, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering (CSCE) and the American Society of Civil Engineers. He was inducted as a Fellow of the CSCE in 1985.

Cam was an active member of the CGS, participating in numerous technical activities and seminars. He also participated in several other technical and code/specification committees and sub-committees such as CAN/CSA-S6-06. He published over 60 papers on varied topics including soil classification, construction through muskeg, highway rehabilitation, buried structures and thermal energy storage.

His family home was a hub for friends and family. He and his wife, Rashida, provided a home away from home for many. Cam was especially fond of children, who he befriended in a genuine way, always seeking to inspire wonder and make them laugh. And he was also a guardian of our elders. Cam's personal interests included gardening, classical music and most recently golf. In 2021 he self-published a book about golf for the amateur.

Cam is survived by his wife, Rashida, his daughter Romana, his son Arman, and a number of other family members. His passing is deeply felt by his family, his extended family, his community and the many people he taught, encouraged and fostered.