



Barbara A. Filas

2008 Medal of Merit Recipient

Barbara A. Filas is a third generation miner, a second generation mining engineer, and a licensed professional engineer. Her grandfather emigrated from Finland to work in the copper mines in Bisbee, and her father, Carl Appelin, worked in those same mines from the age of 15. Like her father, Barbara earned her Mining Engineering degree from The University of Arizona.

Filas started her career in the underground coal mines. She joined the coal industry shortly after passage of the Federal Surface Mining, Control and Reclamation Act. At the time, this new law shifted emphasis toward obtaining permits for the coal mines and preparation plants that she had been working for. This resulted in her unplanned specialization in the environmental and compliance aspects of mining. In 1987, Filas left a soft coal market to apply her environmental expertise to the booming gold mining business in Nevada.

In 1989, Filas opted to leave active mine operations to join the Denver-based consulting firm Knight Piesold and Co. to specialize in permitting, compliance, and the preparation of international social and environmental impact assessments, action plans and management systems. Her consulting work has taken her to six continents for projects in coal, metals, and industrial minerals. She is currently President of Knight Piesold's U.S. operations and serves on its global Board of Directors.

Filas has volunteered thousands of hours to the mining industry. She has worked with the World Bank, mining associations, regulatory authorities, and other interest groups to influence the direction of laws, rules and guidance documents to assure that the industry remains politically and economically viable into the future.

Through her active involvement with the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration Inc. (SME), she has served in numerous positions and committees. Notably, she was instrumental in helping to create the Environmental Division in 1997, the Student Mentor Program in 1999, and served as the Society's 4th President and its first female President in 2005.

Mining Foundation of the Southwest
American Mining Hall of Fame