



David E. Nicholas

2014 Medal of Merit

David E. Nicholas, past president and co-founder of Call & Nicholas, Inc., had no knowledge of mining or geological engineering until his University of Arizona dorm mate introduced Nicholas to his father, William C. Peters, head of UA's Mining and Geological Engineering department. Inspired, Nicholas changed his major from astronomy to geological engineering. He found his vocation.

After two summer jobs with Hanna Mining and earning a B.S. in Geological Engineering in 1970, Nicholas signed on full-time exploring in Montana and Idaho for copper deposits. A transfer to Hanna's Pilot Knob underground iron mine in Missouri allowed Nicholas to focus on his major area of interest--underground rock mechanics. In 1972 Nicholas returned to UA for a Master's Degree in Rock Mechanics, studying under Dr. John Abel and Dr. Richard Call.

Under Call, Nicholas studied pit slope stability; under Abel, he studied underground rock mechanics receiving an M.S. degree in 1976 for his work at the Oracle Ridge underground mine. For inclusion in CANMET's 1977 pit slope manual, Call subcontracted Nicholas to develop a program to model the distribution of potential step paths.

After receiving his M.S., Nicholas worked for the consulting firm Pincock, Allen, and Holt, with Call and worked on slope design and underground mining projects worldwide in North America, Chile, Sweden, Botswana, Liberia, and China.

In 1979, Nicholas and Call formed a business partnership as independent consultants and, in 1980, established Call & Nicholas, Inc. (CNI). Call and Nicholas grew the company and created a culture of collaboration and team effort. Through his work at CNI, Nicholas has been instrumental in many large underground and open pit mine projects, including the Grasberg open pit mine and block cave mines at P.T. Freeport Indonesia. In 1982, Nicholas received the Robert Peele Memorial Award for his paper, *Method Selection, A Numerical Approach*.

With Nicholas's guidance, CNI has evolved into a world renowned consulting firm and currently has over fifty employees at its consulting, slope monitoring instrumentation, and laboratory testing operation in Tucson, Arizona. Today, Nicholas consults for long-time clients and enjoys mentoring young engineers and geologists.