

**\*Chain S. Sandhu\* (1941-2020)**  
**A Genconian-Elec. Engg 1959-63 batch**  
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In a story that even Hollywood could not script, Chain Singh Sandhu lived the epitome of the American Dream. At the age of four, his father was murdered during the partition of India. He was raised by an illiterate mother on a small farm in Punjab, where they scraped out their existence. Despite his tough upbringing, Chain was a dreamer. At a time and place when people were encouraged to put their energies into their crop fields, Chain educated himself, obtaining an engineering degree from \*Guru Nanak Engineering College - Ludhiana,\* followed by a master's degree, and a position as Assistant Professor at Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh. He could have stayed in India and pursued a comfortable life, yet he felt drawn to the United States by opportunity and the call of a young president who wanted to land a man on the moon.

Chain landed in the US in 1969 with his wife, child, and \$8 dollars in his pocket. With few opportunities for foreign engineers, he worked a short stint as a janitor, and later a job on the assembly line at General Motors. Chain eventually earned a position as a GM Staff Development Engineer through his persistent recommendations for process improvements witnessed firsthand working on the line. At the time of his promotion, Chain was the first Indian to ever achieve a senior engineering title at GM. By the time he departed General Motors in 1986, Chain had been recognized as a man of innovation and vision and had been charged with managing GM's "Factory of the Future Program" for the Guide Division. A box of mementos that his family recently discovered is filled with encouraging letters and gratitude from former GM CEO Roger Smith.

In 1986, Chain took the opportunity to run a small company named NYX with declining revenues and a cash crisis. By 1989, Chain purchased NYX. His dream was to create a company where people of all backgrounds, religions, and languages would be welcome as long as they were willing to work hard. Chain's dedication, persistence, and vision led NYX on an incredible journey of growth. Today, his company is a multinational organization with 17 locations and 4,200 employees in five countries.

Chain enjoyed spending time with his employees and started every day with a walk on the manufacturing floor to visit his people and "to listen to what they have to say because there is wisdom there." Chain stressed the importance of engineering, innovation, and growth; and was driven to develop new products, processes, customers, industries, and geography. Most of all, Chain was focused on people and perpetuating a people-focused culture with shared core values. In his last meeting with his Senior NYX Executives, Chain gave some enduring parting advice: "If you take care of the people, everything else will take care of itself."

Under Chain's leadership, NYX became a 10-time GM supplier of the year amongst other customer accolades too numerous to list and was named one of the fastest growing companies in the state of Michigan by Crain's Business. Chain received dozens of awards from the Asian, Asian-Indian, and Punjabi community for his vision, leadership, and philanthropy. He was recognized by Ernst and Young as the Entrepreneur of the Year and named the Hank Aguirre Humanitarian of the Year by the Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council. Chain received further recognition with the Madonna University Heritage Award. Chain was the recipient of the Vision in America Award given by the Comcast / International Channels Network for outstanding contribution to the immigrant community and, he was presented the Governor's New American Leadership Award by Governor Rick Snyder.

Chain was an active contributor to the community around him. Chain served as the Chairman of the Hidden Falls Sikh Gurudwara in Plymouth, Michigan, and was an active board member on the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Minority Business Development Council, the General Motors Supplier Diversity Council, and the Madonna University Engineering Advisory Committee.

As a former educator and a firm believer in the value of education and opportunity, Chain and his family created several scholarship funds including: the Chain S. Sandhu Scholarship Fund at Butler University; the Guru Nanak Engineering College Scholarship Fund; and the Ronald Kalczynski & Chain S. Sandhu Endowed Scholarship at Brother Rice, in total helping to finance the education of nearly 100 students to date.

For decades, Chain assisted hundreds of students and families immigrating to the US, providing an immediate community landing spot and professional growth opportunities, always taking great pride watching the children of his employees becoming doctors, engineers, valued members of their communities, and citizens of this country he dearly loved.

Chain fought a valiant fight against cancer for the last four years. His final days were spent at home on his farm with his family, a location that brought him great joy with many hours spent in the fields with his grandchildren, discussing life's lessons and his organically farmed crops.

Chain was preceded in death by his brother, Raghbir S. Sandhu, and his daughter, Ramandeep Kaur Sandhu. Chain is survived by his wife, Satwant; his brother, Ram; his sons and their spouses, Jay (Roop) and Mick (Jessica); his four grandchildren who were the apples of his eyes, Nirvair, Naveen, Rajan, and Rohan; as well as the 4,200 employees of NYX he considered his family, and the indelible mark he left in a circle of people far and wide.

"I have learned a lot from Chain, and for me he was a different kind of businessman: humble, but at the same time very focused on being the best. I'm proud to have had the opportunity to spend quality time with him even in the end."

\*Bo Andersson\*

Yazaki Corporation, CEO & President, Europe & Africa and North and Central America

"Today, we lost a tremendous leader and trailblazer of the global automotive industry. I met Chain in 2001, and we became fast friends. Since then, I have tried my best to emulate Chain's authentic and humble example of leadership and life in general. He was the kindest man I ever met. We are all very hurt inside, by the loss of this wonderful husband, dad, and friend; our gentle giant. I will miss him so much, but I will always feel appreciative for having him as my friend and mentor. Thank you, Chain."

\*Curt Clawson\*

Former Chairman & CEO Hayes Lemmerz Corporation, and former US Congressman from Florida

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