â€œTime to smell the roses...â€

GIM International asked Preetha Pulusani some questions on her retirement from Intergraph after 25 years:

Is your leaving Intergraph induced by the fact that 25 years is such a nice, complete number, or are other factors involved?

Preetha: Timing is everything, and twenty-five is a nice complete number, as you say. I have been thinking of taking a breather for some time, and passing the 25-year milestone felt very satisfying. The opportunity to take a break and smell the roses was a great one, and I took it. As I looked back, I realised that I had really not had such a break since the time that I was about sixteen years old and emigrated to the United States from India. Since then, I was always either in school or at work. The only other times that there was an interruption from work was when I took off a few weeks, thrice, for maternity leave. Now only my youngest son is still living at home with us, and even he goes off to college this year. So, timing wise, everything professionally and personally seemed to converge very well for me. I also felt that in those twenty-five years I had seen and experienced broadly and deeply on several fronts â€” everything from product development to marketing to general management - in good times as well as not so good ones. Therefore, I feel that the time was right for a bigger change in my life.

Over the past 25 years Intergraph has changed from being a hardware-oriented company to a service-oriented one. What are your feelings about this change?

Preetha: Intergraph has certainly transformed with the times. When I started working there in 1980 the company was very much about highly optimised hardware for interactive graphics. However, during my entire career I was always on the software side and very much into its pioneering mapping and geospatial technology. It is absolutely brilliant to see this company today, after many highly successful, in addition to some turbulent, years, emerge as a relevant force in the market for specialised software and services. Change is necessary and at times it is good; what Intergraph has successfully accomplished is adapting to and leading that change.

What do you consider as your main achievements?

Preetha: I feel extremely fortunate to have spent these many years at Intergraph, having seen the best of the best and living through the very tough years, followed by the transformation of the company under Jim Taylorâ€™s leadership. Now, with new leadership, the company is going through an exciting period of growth. I am proud of the work that we accomplished on several fronts, including products - our legacy MGE product line and our flagship GeoMedia, the open architecture of which began changing the geospatial landscape. In addition, I was able to give voice to Intergraphâ€™s technology and application leadership within the geospatial community. I am also proud of the early steps we took with â€œopen GISâ€” and it is extremely gratifying to see how well this industry has evolved to make geospatial a much broader entity within governments, private enterprises, as well as with consumers.

Ultimately, though, my proudest achievement is about people and about building the very best teams over time that develop, market, sell and support our leading solutions to customers, large and small, around the world. I was able to pick the right people and grow their talent and skills in areas where they showed excellent potential, and by doing this I felt like I accomplished more than everything else put together.

Given that your roots are in India, how do you perceive the booming ICT developments there?

Preetha: Over the past decade tremendous positive changes have occurred in India. Today when I return it is nothing like the home country I left almost thirty years ago. The sheer size and quality of human resources is overwhelming, and India is certainly taking economic advantage of this. I am glad to be around during the time while this is all happening. I am also fortunate to be very much in the thick of the ICT developments in India and globally to understand how profound this economic boom can be. Given my experience and interest I will, of course, continue to follow these developments closely and, who knows, maybe I can be a small part of them sometime in the future? Itâ€™s great to have a background and legacy from the fast-developing nation of India whilst having a firm foothold in the United States. This combination has been like an
incredible gift to me professionally and personally.

What is the next step in your career?

Preetha: At this point I really don’t know. My retirement from Intergraph is an interruption in a very satisfying career and it is also a sabbatical, of sorts, that I intend to take very seriously. At the same time, at the back of my mind I know that my working days are not over. When the time is right some months from now I will evaluate my options and make some decisions. It’s a great feeling to know that I can take some time to decide my future. Whether my next phase will be about being an entrepreneur or back in corporate life, whether it is about working in a profitable concern or a non-profit organisation, whether it is about geospatial or not and, finally, where on this exciting planet will it be? I don’t know if all this makes sense, but I am truly excited about the potential of the future, even though it is largely unknown to me now. I hope to have opportunities to utilise my skills and experience somewhere, somehow, someday. Now, though, I intend to get back to smelling the roses.