



Introduction of Rita Leahy
2018 Honorary Member of AAPT
by Carl Monismith

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor to introduce Dr. Rita B. Leahy as a new Honorary Member of the Association of Asphalt Paving Technologists.

I have the great pleasure to have known her since August 1987. We met at the International Conference on the Design of Asphalt Pavements at the University Michigan (now the International Society of Asphalt Pavements).

We have worked together since 1989 while she was a staff member in the Asphalt Program of the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP). She was Project Manager for the portion of the Asphalt Program entitled *Performance Related Testing of Asphalt-Aggregate Interactions and Mixtures* for which I was the PI at UC Berkeley. She was very helpful to our program.

Rita's resume is very impressive; she has been associated with the transportation industry for 29 years (asphalt pavement technology and pavement engineering).

- Asphalt Institute (professional organization)
- SHRP (government)
- Oregon State University (OSU) (academic)
- Senior Project Manager and Project Engineer (consulting organizations)
- Technical Director, CalAPA (professional association)
- Private Consultant (e.g., California High Speed Rail Project)

Rita is a registered professional Civil Engineer in California, Texas, and Virginia.

Rita has been active in research and in the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and AAPT. In research at OSU she was PI on projects with the Oregon DOT, FHWA, and private industry. In the TRB she was active in committees (e.g. Chair of Quality Assurance Committee AF20, Construction). In the AAPT she was the first women President of the organization in the first 80 years and, while on the Board of Directors, has made major contributions to the Association.

While in consulting she has worked on major projects; For Bechtel Corporation, for example, she was involved with two major airfield projects in Costa Rica (San Jose) and Qatar (Doha).

Rita is an outstanding instructor. Examples are OSU and the Institute of Transportation Studies in their Technical Transfer Program for Caltrans, local government engineers, and industry. A significant example is for the Caltrans/Industry effort to transition from the AR to the PG asphalt grading system on January 1, 2006. Rita, with Larry Santucci and me, conducted 18 one-day sessions throughout the state in 13 locations with 1200 plus attendees (1/3 Caltrans, 1/3 local government, and 1/3 industry) over about a four-month period. The result was a smooth transition to the PG grading.

Rita has been an excellent mentor for young engineers with whom she has worked. She is an outstanding role model for young women engineers and an outstanding person!

Personally, I am most pleased that she is a wonderful friend!

Rita Leahy Remarks

It is said that the key to an effective presentation/speech/homily is a good beginning, a good ending and as little time as possible between the two. I hope to make my comments directly proportional to my height ... short. So, I am humbled by and grateful for this honor. At the risk of overlooking someone—my memory sometimes fails me like other body parts—I'd like to acknowledge some people who've made been a better engineer and a better person. People that have encouraged me, guided me, supported me and inspired me.

Matt Witzak, my thesis advisor at the University of Maryland, who told me “never let your data get in the way of your results.” Seriously, Matt introduced me to asphalt, and taught me how to see the forest for the trees when analyzing data.

Ed Harrigan helped me be a more effective technical writer.

The PennDOT guys—**Jim Moulthrop** and **Ron Cominsky**—as well as **Chuck Hughes** from the Virginia Research Council—they taught me to be the patient and perceptive listener.

Gary Hicks showed me the ropes of academia and all the angles of consulting.

Carl Monismith always had time for my questions, ridiculous and repetitive as they were. He is the gold standard by which all academicians are measured...for his commitment to the institution and his students. It is a standard to which many strive, and few achieve.

Dave Anderson for his intensity ... whether its binder properties or AAPT publications.

Gene Skok for his remarkable restraint in dealing with AAPT personalities and egos.

Ray Brown for generously sharing everything he knew about airfields, and for teaching me that there are only two kinds of beer: beer in a bottle and beer in a can.

Larry Santucci for his business acumen and ever-present calm, reassuring demeanor.

Jon Epps for getting me into blue jeans and boots to appreciate the concept of “fit for purpose.”

Not surprisingly, all of the aforementioned, are, and I say this with deepest affection, “geeky white boys.” That said, I want to add that with time there became more and more women attending AAPT meetings with whom I could commiserate: Becky McDaniel, Shauna Teclemariam, Amy Epps Martin, Jo Daniel, and now the incoming President of AAPT Audrey Copeland. It’s refreshing to see more young women in the audience. I’ll know that we’ve reached critical mass when I have to stand in line in the restroom.

Again, I thank you for this honor.