Richardson Steps Down after Much Praise, BBQ

After 22 years of service to the Texas A&M University System, which included 13 years as TTI Director, it is clear that the soft-spoken, mild-mannered Herb Richardson forged life-long friendships and earned monumental respect from the people he worked for and with. Heart-felt tributes dominated speeches given during several public events during Richardson’s last month on the job. Richardson stepped down on Halloween Day, Oct. 31.

“He has totally given of himself,” said Chancellor Emeritus Dr. Barry Thompson during Richardson’s retirement reception Oct. 11 at the Annenberg Presidential Conference Center. “In today’s world of very poor ethics—in today’s world of self-serving leadership—in today’s world where people are so divided in this country—Herb is a peacemaker and a consensus builder. It’s important to remember that there are only a few people like Herb in the
Speaker after speaker showered the outgoing director with praise and admiration, highlighting his work ethic, intelligence, ability to motivate and humble personality. “Whenever he came into my office, you knew you were going to get the truth,” said State Senator Steve Ogden. Deputy Director Dennis Christiansen told the crowd, “he genuinely cares about the people of TTI. We will look back at Herb’s tenure and know that TTI had the right leader at the right time.”

Trinity Industries Senior Vice President Mark Stiles summed up all of the speakers’ remarks this way: “You are a remarkable man…and thank you for being our friend.”

After being inundated with glowing remarks from all seven speakers, the unassuming Richardson brought the crowd to laughter after he approached the podium and told his well-wishers, “I was sitting there thinking this must be a dream and I’m dreaming I’m attending my own funeral.”

Ogden and State Representative Fred Brown unveiled plaques with resolutions from both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives honoring Richardson’s career. Vice Chancellor and Dean of Engineering Dr. Kem Bennett revealed that $200,000 was raised to endow the Herbert H. Richardson Faculty Fellowship, designed to attract faculty members who show special promise in teaching and research.

And in one of his last public appearances as director, Richardson was guest of honor at an Institute-wide farewell barbecue Oct. 27 at the Brazos Center in Bryan. Employees were served up brisket, sausage, chicken, potatoes, beans, coleslaw and a couple of hours of humorous skits and speeches that drew attention to Herb’s driving skills, use of the alphabet and love of plaid shirts. (At least half of the employees wore plaid to the event in his honor, but ironically, Herb elected to wear a striped shirt.)

As a gift from employees, Richardson received a stainless steel backyard grill emblazoned with the TTI logo.

Richardson had his own gift for his replacement, Dennis Christiansen: a plaid shirt.

In final remarks to the hundreds of employees in attendance, Richardson said, “The best job I’ve ever had
was being director of TTI. I thank you, and we’ll be in touch.”

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2. Short Course Session Highlights
Richardson Retirement

In a symbolic gesture occurring during the opening session of the 80th Annual Transportation Short Course, Director Herb Richardson handed over to director-elect Dennis Christiansen the gavel used 6 years ago to signify the 50th anniversary of TTI. “I am especially pleased the successful candidate has been selected from within the Institute,” Richardson told the Rudder Auditorium audience.

Opening session speakers used the opportunity of Richardson’s retirement to aim light-hearted jabs at the outgoing director. Dr. Lee Pedicord told attendees about first hearing ‘the man from Maine’ speak. “Herb took R’s off words that had them—like “caah” (car), and added them where there weren’t any—like idear (idea).”

Later, Deputy Director Christiansen told the group that for years, he thought Herb’s assistant (Becca Simmons) was named “Becker.” One of the speakers said a western belt might be given to Richardson as a retirement gift. But, instead of having it stamped “HERB-BOB,” signifying his time in Texas, they would have it read “BUBBAR,” in honor of Herb’s alphabet rearrangement.

The opening session began with a video that focused on TxDOT employees who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. TxDOT Executive Director Mike Behrens thanked all of his employees for their hard work in the previous year. He said the work of TxDOT, because of budget cuts, has changed by necessity. But he said, “We (work) to enhance the quality of life in Texas.”

Short Course is designed to share with employees the latest techniques and research involving all aspects of transportation. It’s also where TxDOT hands out annual awards to its employees.
TTI employees who served as Co-chair for the numerous break-out sessions were: Roger Bligh, Brian Bochner, Joe Button, Kay Fitzpatrick, Tom Freeman, Ginger Goodin, Kassandra Agee-Letton, Steve Roop, Ed Seymour, Bill Stockton, David Trejo, Katie Turnbull, and Montie Wade. Session speakers included: Dean Alberson, Susan Chrysler, Jim Kruse, Curtis Morgan, Cesar Quiroga, and Jerry Ullman.

3. Christiansen Officially Director

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents formally appointed Dennis Christiansen Nov. 1 as the director of TTI, replacing Herb Richardson who retired after holding the position for 13 years. Christiansen was named as the sole finalist for the position during the Board’s regular meeting on Sept. 22.

“The leadership provided by former directors Jack Keese, Charley Wootan and Herb Richardson has put TTI into a strong and enviable position,” Christiansen said in assuming his new post. “It is a real honor and I feel very humbled to be named to follow in their footsteps and lead the Institute. TTI has an exceptionally qualified and dedicated staff and, because of that, we have many exciting opportunities ahead of us.”

Since 1993, Christiansen has served as deputy director of TTI. He has spent most of his career at TTI, beginning in 1972 as an assistant research engineer, and working his way up in the organization as associate research engineer and program manager, research engineer and division head, associate director and most recently, agency deputy director.

In an email to employees moments after the announcement, Christiansen wrote:

“Over the next couple weeks I will be naming the TTI management team, and I will keep you informed as these decisions are made. The Institute is in a very strong position, and we have many interesting opportunities in front of us. I am looking forward to continuing to work with you. Let’s keep all the lines of communications open.”
4. ‘Teens’ Wins National Award

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has presented TTI’s Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) with its National President’s Safety Award. The honor was given to TDS team members representing TxDOT and TTI at AASHTO’s Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, Oct. 28.

“This national recognition will go a long way in ensuring the continuing success of Teens in the Driver Seat,” said TDS Program Director Russell Henk. “It has been an honor and privilege to lead our team in the effort to save the lives of teenagers. This AASHTO award is the result of a lot of hard work from a lot of people in TTI representing a wide range of disciplines.”

TDS is a peer-to-peer education program aimed at alerting teens to the preventable causes of car crashes, the number one killer of teenagers. Local TDS programs are organized and operated by the teenagers themselves at their individual high schools. Studies have shown that teens will be more influenced by their peers, than by their parents.

The TDS program is now being deployed in more than half of TxDOT’s 25 districts at nearly 60 individual high schools. Dozens of other schools will initiate programs this school year. The latest schools that joined the TDS effort are in the Austin, El Paso, Lubbock and Tyler areas.

Visit Teens in the Driver Seat website:
http://www.t-driver.com/

Learn more about AASHTO awards:
http://www.transportation.org/?siteid=37&pageid=600

Read and view recent media reports:
5. TTI Joins International Road Federation

It is a pretty safe bet to say that TTI Researcher Carlos Chang-Albitres owes much of his career to the International Road Federation (IRF). Since 1948, the IRF provided graduate school scholarships to 1,150 transportation students from around the globe. In 1997, Chang-Albitres was a private sector employee in his home country of Peru, working in the field of materials and pavements. That’s when he was nominated and selected in a worldwide competition to be an IRF Fellow to attend Texas A&M University.

Since then, he received his masters degree, worked part-time at TTI, went back to work in Peru for three years, and came back to TTI full time. Chang-Albitres is currently an associate transportation researcher who is crafting international projects for TTI and is in the final stage to receive his Ph.D.

“Being involved with the Fellowship Program helped me grow substantially in my professional career,” said Chang-Albitres. “I would not have been able to accomplish these things without having received IRF support. So, yes, IRF made all of these things possible.”

When TTI became a member of the IRF in October, it was a homecoming of sorts for Chang-Albitres. IRF’s Deputy Director General Michael Dreznes visited and toured TTI, while showing key employees how membership could benefit the Institute. Chang-Albitres was by his side.

“IRF really opens the door to worldwide transportation contacts with our members from 90 countries on six continents. It serves as a catalyst for public and private partnerships to organize, promote and develop international road programs,” Dreznes said. “And our crown jewel is the
Fellowship Program.”

Meanwhile, Chang-Albitres will work with the IRF as its regional coordinator in Latin America for the Fellows Alumni Association. “I know first hand how the IRF can change the lives of people through the Fellowship Program. But the potential for TTI to grow internationally because of its partnership with IRF is just as promising.”

6. Deer Research Center Now Has TTI Affiliation

When Transportation Engineer Keith Knapp accepted a job at TTI a couple of months ago, he brought with him the multi-state Deer-Vehicle Crash Information Clearinghouse (DVCIC) and its website. Knapp has been director of the Clearinghouse since its inception and expects to continue to lead the effort through the Deer-Vehicle Crash Information and Research Center pooled fund. Because Knapp is now an associate research scientist with the Work Zone and Dynamic Message Sign Program, it means that TTI will soon inherit the Deer-Vehicle Crash Information and Research Center.

“The Clearinghouse was started in Wisconsin in 2001, designed to alert the public to the dangers associated with deer-vehicle collisions,” Knapp says. “We now also want research to get underway to find the best ways to reduce the number of these crashes.”

Knapp says about 150 to 200 people die every year in the United States as a result of the one million deer-vehicle collisions, costing $1 billion annually. “In Texas, there are only a few thousand animal-vehicle collisions reported each year, but based on what I’ve seen in other states and from insurance estimates, I suspect it might actually be about 10 times that number or more.” Knapp says Texas usually leads the nation in the number of fatalities from deer-vehicle collisions.

Knapp says $260,000 is committed from six states in the midwest and northeast to fund the Deer-Vehicle Crash Information and Research Center, and he will soon find out if it will receive additional funding from Federal Highway
Administration through the Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP). “To me, this is a traffic safety issue—one that needs to be seriously addressed through a focused effort.”

Visit the Deer-Vehicle Crash Information Clearinghouse website:
http://www.deercrash.com/

Read a recent media report about the Center:

7. Smith Inducted into Hall of Honor

Aviation pioneer and longtime American Airlines Chairman Cyrus R. Smith was inducted into the Texas Transportation Hall of Honor on Oct. 6. The ceremony was held at the C.R. Smith aviation museum in Fort Worth.

“Mr. Smith was the patriarch of the American Airlines family,” said Gerard Arpey, chairman and chief executive officer of American Airlines. “Without his leadership, the American Airlines of today would not exist.”

A native Texan, Smith was born in Minerva in 1899 and attended The University of Texas at Austin. Smith became president of American Airlines in 1934. Over the next five years, he consolidated American’s route structure into a smooth, sensible network and standardized the company’s heterogeneous collection of airplanes with a fleet of new DC-3s. By 1941, Smith had helped American become the leading domestic carrier in the United States. As he led American Airlines for the next 34 years, he helped shape the entire airline industry.

Smith’s son Douglas attended the event and accepted the plaque for his father. “To my father, the airline was not something on a piece of paper, it was a collection of people who all had meaning to him.”

TTI Deputy Director Dennis Christiansen noted in his remarks that the C.R. Smith aviation museum “was a

(L-R) Gerard Arpey, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of American Airlines; Dennis Christiansen, Deputy Director of TTI; and Douglas Smith, son of C.R. Smith, stand in front of a restored American Airlines DC-3 located in the C.R. Smith Museum.
tremendous setting to give special recognition to a visionary transportation leader in our state and country.”

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8. TTI in the News

There have been numerous mentions of TTI and our experts in recent media reports. Here are links to some of the stories.

Launching *Teens In the Driver Seat* in East Texas (Tri-County Leader) Oct. 26

TTI at center of regional transportation plan (Bryan Eagle) Oct. 24

Commuter changes (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) Oct. 17
http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06290/730714-84.stm

Work zone dangers (Fort Worth Star-Telegram) Oct. 16

Commuter changes (USA Today) Oct. 16

Work zone fatality (Fort Worth Star-Telegram) Oct. 13

Hurricane evacuation (Bradenton Herald) Oct. 13

Flexible work schedules (KTRH Radio) Oct. 13

New interchange (Kansas City Star) Oct. 7
9. Briaud Receives Prestigious Meyerhof Award

TTI Research Engineer Jean-Louis Briaud is the recipient of the 2006 Meyerhof Award for Excellence in Foundation Engineering, presented at the 59th Annual Canadian Geotechnical Conference held Oct. 1-4 in Vancouver.

Briaud received the award for his work and innovative solutions involving various foundation problems. The award was named for the first president of the Canadian Geotechnical Society, Geoffrey Meyerhof.

Briaud received his Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa in 1979 before joining the Zachry Department of Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University. He is a professor in the Construction, Geotechnical and Engineering Division.

10. TTI Rolls with Trains

Eighteen TTI employees pooled their funds and were high bidders on two of the trains that were part of “Trains: Tracks of the Iron Horse” exhibit at the George Bush Presidential Library. One of the trains, entitled “Let’s Roll” is signed by the former President and is now on display in the lobby of the Gilchrist Building.

TTI artists are completely redesigning the other train to have a transportation theme. That ‘new’ train will be unveiled after the first of the year.

Employees are urged to use caution around the exhibits and asked not to touch them.

The Sept. 29 auction, which included 41 trains, raised $120,000 for the George Bush Presidential Library.
Foundation.

11. TTI Anniversaries

5 years

Jennifer Kristynik, Financial Accountant II (BUS)

Karen Smith, Conference Coordinator (KGE)

Juan Villa, Associate Research Scientist (ASP)
12. Fenno’s Death Prompts Education Fund Donations

The education fund for the son of David Fenno will remain open for donations as TTI employees mourn the death of the associate research engineer who passed away Oct. 12 following a lengthy illness.

“In lieu of flowers, Dave requested that donations be made to his son’s college education fund. Dave said that he hopes William will be an Aggie someday and that it would mean more to him if we helped the family in that way,” wrote Tony Voigt in an email to all TTI employees on news of his colleague’s death. “Dave fought a decade-long battle with cancer. During his fight he inspired those who knew him with his never give up attitude and determination to live.”

Voigt shared with fellow employees a portion of a letter written by Fenno before his death:

“I have survived synovial sarcoma cancer for 12 years now with a lot of hope and prayers and trying numerous treatments. Along the way I found my soul mate and married Monica Ybarra Fenno, had our wonderful son in William Alexander Fenno. I couldn’t have made it through all these years without the love and support provided by my loving parents and many of you.

“It’s been a long, bumpy, and sometimes painful road, but it’s been worth taking, for I’ve made so many friends with you, and known what it is like to start and have a family.

“So as I draw to a close, I leave you with a teardrop and a hug, and a hope that someday we will meet again above.”

Anyone interested in contributing to the education fund can write to:

The Fidelity Advisor 529 Plan – William Fenno
Acct # 704035310
Fidelity Investments Institutional Operations Company, Inc. (FIIOC)
P.O. Box 770002
Cincinnati, OH 45277-0081
13. TTI Blood Drive

A total of 27 employees gave the ‘gift of life’ in the latest TTI blood drive Oct. 24. Four of the employees were first-time donors. “It is heartwarming to know that a simple procedure like giving blood can mean so much for people in real need,” says Nancy Stratta, who helps organize the TTI blood drives.

Other employees who help with the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center drives are Mary Cearley, Linda Chatham and Lance Bullard.

For the first time, employees had the chance to sign up as a blood marrow donor with the National Marrow Donor Program Registry. Three employees signed up with the registry.

The next TTI Blood Drive is scheduled for Jan. 30.

Learn more about blood marrow donor program: http://www.giveblood.org/nmdp/nmdp_overview.htm

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14. Poster Contest Reveals Kids’ Transportation Ideas

The results are in from a statewide poster contest that coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Highway System. The contest, entitled Transportation: Past, Present and Future, was sponsored by the Future Engineers Committee of District 9 of the Texas Institute of Transportation Engineers (TexITE). The contest was open to all 5th and 6th graders.

First place has been awarded to Donovan Street, a 5th grader from Carrollton, who illustrated automobile travel in the past, present and future.
The second place winner, College Station 5th grader Claire Simmons, used her pencil to show three modes of travel in Texas—automobile, train and bicycle.

A 6th grader from Bryan, Analecia Lopes, received third place for her flying bus drawing of what the ride to school might look like in years to come.

All 23 poster entries were judged by a panel of transportation professionals (TTI employees), and the Future Engineers Committee sponsored cash prizes for the top three vote getters.

“With this first annual poster contest, we were hoping to encourage students in Texas public schools to seek higher education in the engineering and science fields, with of course, an emphasis on transportation engineering,” says Melisa Finley, a TTI assistant research engineer and chair of the District 9 Future Engineers Committee.

The second place winner, Claire Simmons, is the daughter of TTI Research Engineer Kay Fitzpatrick.

15. Editor’s Corner: Numbers You Can Count On

Technical documents often rely on numbers and data to communicate crucial information, so clear number use is important. Editorial styles for numerals, spelled-out numbers, measurement units, and related issues can create stumbling blocks for authors and readers.

The method for referencing numbers in a document depends on the particular editorial style the document follows. For example, manuscripts created for TxDOT Research Management Committee projects follow specific rules for
- **Numerals or words.** Use numerals for percentages, measurements, dates, and numbers of 10 or larger. In some cases following the style would look odd – such as “eight out of 10” instead of “8 out of 10” – so numbers used within sentences may vary from the rules for clarity or to remain consistent with each other.

- **Choice of measurement units.** Use standard U.S. units, either alone or with metric symbols, in a consistent style throughout the document. If a particular section must use a different style – for example, quoted material that expresses measurements in metric units – then add a note explaining the style deviation.

- **Abbreviation choice.** Consistently spell out units or abbreviate throughout a document and avoid plural abbreviations. Because of possible confusion over the word “in” with the abbreviation “in” we recommend that you spell out “inch.”

- **Abbreviation definition.** Standard or commonly understood measurement abbreviations may stand without definition (ft, hr, etc), while less well-known abbreviations need to be defined on first use.

- **Numbers as modifying phrases.** TxDOT style allows but does not require hyphens with measurements used in a modifying phrase (such as 5-ft wall). The simplest way to handle measurements is to omit hyphens throughout the document.

- **Comma separators.** TxDOT editorial guidelines specify that numbers of four digits or less used in text omit commas. In tables, however, you will need to decide on a case-by-case basis whether to include commas for alignment. There’s not always safety in numbers, but the safest approach to using numbers is to choose a clear, consistent style throughout your document. If you’re a regular reader of Editor’s Corner, you know I’m going to refer you to the editorial guidelines, so here you go: see pages 39–43 of the guidelines for more information. For assistance with editorial use of numbers in your manuscript, contact Rhonda Brinkmann.

[Link to top of page]
16. Reminders/Calendar
(Please contact CenterLine with items for this section)

**TxDOT RMC Meeting**—Nov. 6 – 9 Arlington
[http://ttinet.tamu.edu/news/#news4032](http://ttinet.tamu.edu/news/#news4032)

**Transportation Research Board 86th Annual Meeting**—
Jan. 21-25 Washington D. C.
[http://www.trb.org/meeting/](http://www.trb.org/meeting/)

**TexITE Winter Meeting**—Feb. 1-3 Houston

**5th Transportation Leadership Forum**—Feb. 2, 2007 San Antonio

**TTI Holiday Schedule**
- Nov 23-24 Thanksgiving
- Dec-25-Jan.1 Christmas-New Years

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Communications. We encourage your comments and suggestions for articles about TTI people and research efforts. Please send email to news@ttimail.tamu.edu or call Rick Davenport at (979) 862-3763.