L. David Suits

North American Geosynthetics Society

Geosynthetics are synthetic products and materials used to improve the performance of grounds or foundations in geotechnical engineering. L. David Suits's career in geosynthetics spans three decades. As Executive Director of the North American Geosynthetics Society (NAGS), Suits is responsible for assisting colleagues with technical decision making, developing programs and ideas to promote and carry out the mission of the society, and devoting time to making NAGS more visible to the engineering and academic communities.

Before accepting the position at NAGS, Suits spent 37 years at the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) in the Geotechnical Engineering Bureau. He joined NYSDOT in 1968, serving first as a junior engineer; he went on to serve as assistant soils engineer in 1969, and soils engineering laboratory supervisor in 1976. During his time at NYSDOT, Suits was involved in many research studies on the use and performance of geosynthetics.

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"Activity in the area of research has opened many doors for me," he says. "I came to know, on a first-name basis, many of the geosynthetic innovators and pioneers. I also had the opportunity to be a contributor to a new technology that not only enabled cost savings for civil engineering projects, but improved methods of construction and in many instances enabled a project to be constructed."

Suits was able to participate in projects and professional activities outside NYSDOT. In the mid-1970s, during the planning stages of a design to replace the old West Side Highway in New York City, Suits and a group of colleagues demonstrated to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that a geotextile curtain could provide sufficient protection against potential contamination from the Hudson River, a likely result of proposed dredging. Using samples of the river water and soil that was to be dredged, Suits and his team developed several new geosynthetic testing techniques and devices to demonstrate the capabilities of the geotextile curtain.

"At one point, we decided to see how the river water, without any of the dredged soil, would affect the geotextile," Suits recalls. "The naturally suspended material in the water plugged the geotextile in six hours. The EPA asked no more questions."

Although the design for the West Side Highway replacement was not implemented, some of the test methods developed by Suits and his colleagues were adopted as standard test methods for geosynthetics by the ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) International Committee on Geosynthetics.

Suits advises young engineers: "Don't be confined by the 'four walls' of your employment organization—become involved in outside professional activities." He adds, "The potential for new research opportunities aside, I always knew and still know that if a question or problem arises for which I—or my immediate office associates—don't have the answer, I can get on the phone and get an answer in a short time."

Suits's involvement in TRB began when he attended meetings of the Subsurface Drainage Committee in the 1970s. He joined the committee in 1983 and served as chair from 1990 to 1996. He has chaired the Geosynthetics Committee, Soil Mechanics Section, the Design and Construction Group, and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program's (NCHRP) Project Panel on Implementation Plan for Automating Highway-Materials Testing. Currently, he is a member of the TRB Technical Activities Council.

In addition to his work at NAGS, Suits serves as an adjunct professor for the geosynthetics design graduate course at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. He is a graduate of Clarkson University, Potsdam, New York, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering in 1967 and 1969, respectively.

He has received many awards for his work in geosynthetics, including NYSDOT's Excellence in Engineering Award in 1991 for work in geosynthetics, and the department's Award of Excellence in 1995 for work in the revision of AASHTO specification M-288 on geotextiles. In 2006, Suits was named an emeritus member of the TRB Geosynthetics Committee.

Gale C. Page

Florida Department of Transportation

Gale Page has worked in pavement technology for more than 40 years. He began his career in 1965 at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as a project manager and supervisor working in highway planning, design, and construction contract administration. For the past 26 years, he has been the engineer responsible for all flexible pavement–related specifications, testing, and research, and for the performance analysis of in-place flexible pavements for the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT).

Working for Florida DOT, Page contributes to the development and realization of many pavement-related procedures, tests, and training programs. He is an advocate for hot-mix asphalt (HMA) pavements. From 1979 to 1982 he participated in the development and implementation of in-place strength measurements of pavement layers for use in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO's) modified pavement design for flexible pavement rehabilitation projects.

"Sharing my expertise and learning from others helps to improve the science, technology, and practice of what we do as engineers."

Page has participated in developing specifications, procedures, and practices for milling and for reuse of reclaimed asphalt pavement into quality HMA. He participated in development and implementation of binder and mix specifications for higher performance in Superpave®, an improved system for specifying the components of asphalt concrete, asphalt mix design and analysis, and performance prediction. He continues to work to improve those specifications.

From 1998 to 2001, Page was involved in the creation of a comprehensive, five-part HMA training program for construction technicians. The training materials developed for the program have assisted many other state DOTs.

Looking back on his years of service in the transportation industry, Page considers his greatest accomplishment to be his role in the hiring and professional mentoring of seven engineering graduates at Florida DOT. Five of the engineers are still working in asphalt materials and pavements at the department.

"If I look back at what I've accomplished and the contributions I've made to the transportation industry, that is history—in today's what-have-you-done-for-me-lately environment, the past is not of interest to many," Page observes. "What is important is who you have hired or mentored to take on the challenges of the future."

Page's involvement with TRB began in 1982, and he has chaired or served on many TRB committees and National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) panels. He served as the vice chair of the Asphalt Advisory Committee during the Strategic Highway Research Program, and he has chaired several NCHRP Project Panels, overseeing practical research on Laboratory Determination of Resilient Modulus for Flexible Pavement Design; Investigation of the Restricted Zone in the Superpave Aggregate Graduation Specification; Quality Control and Quality Assurance Procedures for Superpave Mixes; and Superpave and Its Implementation.

For the Technical Activities Division, he has chaired the Characteristics of Nonbituminous Components of Bituminous Paving Mixtures Committee, the Bituminous Materials Section, and the Design and Construction Group, and was a member of the Technical Activities Council.

"My participation in TRB and my work with the Design and Construction Group has been personally and professionally rewarding," Page comments. "I believe that the Design and Construction Group is the 'heart' of TRB, and as long as that heart thrives and beats, TRB will continue to fulfill the mission started by its predecessor, the Highway Research Board."

In 2001, Page was the recipient of the Secretary's Award for Sustained Superior Achievement—the highest award presented by the Florida DOT. He is a registered professional engineer in Florida and Wisconsin, and has published widely on topics related to pavement testing, materials, design, and evaluation.

Page graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1965, and a master's degree in engineering in 1975. He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, served as a member on the ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) Board of Directors, chaired the ASTM Committee on Road Paving Materials, and served as president of the Association of Asphalt Paving Technologists.

"I look at participation in technical and professional organizations as being integral to my job," Page notes. "Sharing my expertise and learning from others helps to improve the science, technology, and practice of what we do as engineers."