



# Donn

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Donn has been an integral OHMPA volunteer, serving on several committees and the Board of Directors since 2009. His extensive involvement with OHMPA, paired with his nearly 20 years of experience in the industry, has well prepared him to take the helm of OHMPA as its 2016/17 president. During an early morning interview, Donn took time out of his busy schedule to share a bit about himself, his background, his involvement with OHMPA, and what he hopes OHMPA will achieve during his tenure as president.

**Q: What were some of the early influences in your life that led you to become interested in engineering and road building?**

**A:** At the age of two, my family moved from the Philippines to Zambia, Africa, where my father worked in the copper mines as a maintenance electrician for over nine years. I remember he would bring home interesting rocks for us to see and collect. I liked seeing all the different kinds of rocks and learning about where they came from and how they were formed. Living in Zambia, you had to maintain the vehicles you owned. My dad was an avid mechanic and he would enlist me to help him repair his car. I think all of these early influences got me interested in engineering.

**Q: How did you get your start in the asphalt industry?**

**A:** In between my third and fourth year studying Civil Engineering at the University of Toronto, I applied for a summer job as a laboratory technician for Ashwarren Engineering Services. I was hired by Paul Lum (2008/09 OHMPA president) and spent the summer of 1997 as the lab foreman of the portable laboratory for a hot-in-place recycling crew. We tested Marshall mixes for quality control compliance on ERS requirements on major MTO and municipal contracts that included Highway 69, French River, the City of Peterborough, London Airport and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carlton. Once

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he appearance of spring marks the beginning of paving season and a changing of the guard within OHMPA's executive committee. This March at OHMPA's AGM, OHMPA president Steve Smith will hand the president's gavel over to Yellowline Asphalt Products Ltd. General Manager, Donn Bernal.

# Meet incoming OHMPA president Bernal

by ABIGAIL WRIGHT PEREIRA

I graduated the following year, Paul wanted me back and hired me on at Ashwarren as Assistant Lab Supervisor.

**Q: Who were your mentors and how did they influence your career?**

**A:** I have been fortunate to have mentors within the industry that challenged me and helped to steer me in the right direction. When Ashwarren was acquired by Lafarge Canada in 2001, I was assigned to complete performance reviews of asphalt plants in Ontario and the Maritimes. Don Piper, former manager of asphalt plants for Lafarge, was a consultant and he and I spent a lot of time together. He was passionate about asphalt plants and had all kinds of stories about the different plants he had encountered through the years. While I was putting together reports on plants throughout Ontario and the Maritimes, I worked with Don and Domenic Passalacqua. I was like a sponge just trying to absorb all of the asphalt plant knowledge they were passing down to me.

Paul was also an influential mentor and pushed me to learn the quality side of asphalt production and paving. He gave me a lot of responsibility in my work involving mix designs. He made me go everywhere, which exposed me to the different types of aggregates in Ontario, and introduced me to his network of people. On many weekends Carlo Fallavollita and I would drive around different job sites and see their progress. I learned so much just listening to him and his thought process on running a job. Lastly, during my time at Lafarge, Mark Rivett (2003/04 OHMPA president) helped me to develop business acumen and encouraged me to step out into leadership roles.

**Q: How did you first become involved with OHMPA?**

**A:** Early on in my career, I saw how Paul and Mark were able to make a positive difference in the industry through their involvement with OHMPA and that made me want to follow suit. Both of them encouraged me to get involved

and in 2009 I joined the Board of Directors. Joining OHMPA also helped me to find my voice. When I first got onto the board I was the new kid on the block and one of the younger guys in the room. In a larger group of people, I tend to be an introvert. However, becoming active on the board and on various committees forced me to speak up and be heard in front of a crowd.

**Q: Since joining OHMPA in 2009, what, in your opinion, are some of the association's significant accomplishments?**

**A:** I think in the last few years OHMPA has caught up with the times in terms of having a significant digital presence via its website, social media channels and ASPHALTopics. Through these mediums, OHMPA is beginning to be recognized as the foremost authority on asphalt pavements in Ontario. I think with the addition of new staff and board members, the association has begun to take a fresh look at its approach and is recognizing that it has to keep up with changing dynamics in marketing as well as education.

**Q: What do you hope to see OHMPA achieve during your term as president?**

**A:** I would really like to see OHMPA implement a wide-reaching educational program and I am happy that education was listed as a priority in OHMPA's strategic plan. We are at a crossroads in the industry where many industry leaders are retiring and I see OHMPA helping to facilitate a crucial knowledge transfer to the younger generation. While working at Ashwarren and Lafarge, I was involved in teaching asphalt operations programs and I saw the difference that these programs made to improve the quality of asphalt operations. Additionally, if contractors and municipalities can have the same level of knowledge and speak the same language, we will be much better off in our ability to produce quality asphalt pavements. »

**Q: You are also a professional photographer and one of your photos graced the cover of the 2015 Fall edition of ASPHALTopics. What got you interested in photography?**

**A:** I've always loved having a camera with me. During my time living in Zambia, my parents did not take many photographs. I have a lot of great memories from Africa and I always wished that I had more photographs from that time in my life. When I was 18 years old, and could afford a decent camera, I bought a Minolta film SLR and took it with me everywhere I went. One day, a friend asked me to photograph his wedding, but I didn't feel like I was up to snuff with my photography skills to do the photos justice. So, I enrolled in a two-semester photography course at Sheridan College. I also took some photography workshops to further enhance my skills. That's when I knew I had what it took to pursue my hobby professionally and began shooting weddings, landscapes, newborns and family events. In some ways being a photographer gives me the same rush as working in the asphalt paving field; everything has to be timed just right, you have to know your priorities and be at the right place at the right time. Also, I feel that with photography, one can gain a wider view of the world through the lens of a camera. Lastly, I try to use photography to give back to the community and I volunteer as a photographer for Habitat for Humanity's annual Women's Build and Polar Bear Dip events. ■



## JUST THE FACTS

### EXPERIENCE

**2013 - Present**

General Manager – Yellowline Asphalt Products Ltd.

**2011 - 2013**

General Manager, Materials – Aecon Construction & Materials Ltd.

**2010 - 2011**

Operations Manager, Aggregates & Asphalt – Oxford Sand & Gravel Ltd.

**2006 - 2010**

General Manager, Asphalt – Coco Paving Inc./Lafarge Canada Inc.

**2003 - 2006**

Asphalt Manager – Lafarge Canada Inc.

**2001 - 2003**

Asphalt Performance Analyst – Lafarge Canada Inc.

**1998 - 2001**

Laboratory/Technical Supervisor – Ashwarren Engineering Services

### OHMPA COMMITTEES

Marketing Committee, Environment Committee, Awards Nomination Committee, Benzo(a)pyrene Technical Standard Subcommittee, AC Binder Task Group, ASPHALTopics Subcommittee.

### EDUCATION

University of Toronto – Bachelor of Applied Science & Engineering, 1998.

### FAMILY

Married for 13 years with two daughters ages seven and nine.

### HOBBIES

Photography; loves British cars and hopes to one day rebuild an early 80s Lotus Esprit; biking in the Ride to Conquer Cancer in June.

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