

**SHARON TOJI**

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**PROFILE****SHARON TOJI**

Sharon Toji is General Manager, CFO and ADA Sign Consultant for the H Toji Companies, comprised H Toji and Company (an architectural signage and wayfinding designer, fabricator and installer); and Access Communications, (a consulting company specializing in accessible communications for the built environment).

**EXPERIENCE****SIGNAGE AND GRAPHICS INDUSTRY — 1978-PRESENT**

Since joining the family company, H Toji and Company (founded in 1954), Ms. Toji has been involved with signage design, code signage, wayfinding design and print design. She has performed numerous sign surveys since the advent of the ADA in 1992, from hotels to college campuses and athletic venues to entire small cities. Most recently she has been involved with several projects to develop new wayfinding solutions for some challenging environments, including the Honda Center in Anaheim, CA.

**ACCESS COMMUNICATIONS — 1991 PRESENT**

With the advent of the ADA, Sharon Toji researched the proposed signage standards and guidelines both federally and for the State of California and wrote many articles for the industry, gave seminars and workshops, trained code officials, and authored a manual, "Signs and the ADA," used throughout the country. The signage industry appointed her as their initial voting delegate to the American National Standards Institute A117.1 Committee in 1992. After they rotated representation, Ms. Toji was appointed as alternate by various disability organizations, and for the last several cycles has represented the Hearing Loss Association of America as voting delegate. When President Clinton asked the U.S. Access Board to appoint a Committee to revise the original ADA Accessibility Guidelines, Ms. Toji was appointed to serve on the Communications Sub-Committee and was one of a handful of members who wrote the complete revision of the signage guidelines. These are now known essentially as the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

**DIVISION OF THE STATE ARCHITECT — ACCESS COMMITTEE**

Sharon Toji served as a member of this state committee for many years until it was disbanded by the most recent State Architect. The Committee was an offshoot of the original Universal Design Advisory Board, or UDAB, of which Ms. Toji was also a member until it was disbanded by the State Architect of that administration. The Access Committee was the first line of investigation for proposed new and revised accessibility codes for the State of California.

**CALIFORNIA STATE FIRE MARSHAL — COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBLE EVACUATION**

Ms. Toji served on this Committee from its inception. The Committee was successful in revising Chapter 10 of Title 24, dealing with tactile exit signs and other egress code signs such as stair level indicators. By the time budget concerns caused the Committee to cease operation, the Committee, working from plans devised by Ms Toji and Eugene Lozano of the California Council of the Blind, had proposed changes to evacuation plans that are used by the City of San Francisco.

**CALIFORNIA BUILDING STANDARDS COMMISSION –ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESS**

Sharon Toji was appointed to three, two year terms on this Committee, which advises the State Building Standards Commission on new and revised code adoptions having to do with access. She represented individuals with cognitive based disabilities.

**EVAN TERRY TEAM - COMPARISON OF 2010 ADA AND 2010 CBC FOR CALIFORNIA**

Ms. Toji was chosen by Evan Terry Associates for the team they formed to provide contractual services to the State of California. The Team analyzed and compared the federal standards and the state building code in order to make recommendations on the the federal changes could be integrated into the 2013 California Building Code.

**PUBLICATIONS, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS**

Sharon Toji is the author of Signs and the ADA/ABA, a manual for sign professionals, designers, specifiers and ADA Consultants. It includes a California chapter which shows the most stringent standards, the 2010 ADA or CBC Title 24.

Ms. Toji is also the author of a number of articles that have been featured in industry publications such as Sign Builder Illustrated, Sign Business Magazine, Signs of the Times, Sign Craft and Awards and Engraving Magazine. She contributes to such industry sites as Sign Web and has been a long-time featured panelist on the International Building Code Discussion Group. She also leads a popular group on Linked In, "ADA Sign Lady."

She has trained numerous architects, building inspectors and plan checkers for CALBO, Los Angeles and Riverside County, City of Los Angeles, and the Division of the State Architect. She has held training sessions at the California Department of Rehabilitation, the Certified Access Specialists Institute, and the Los Angeles Chapter of CSI on accessible signage. In 2012 she was a presenter for the National Fire Protection Association, and participated in their signaling workshop. She presented for the Pacific ADA Center as part of the 25th ADA anniversary. As part of long-term consulting services to Kaiser Permanente, she presented a signage design workshop based on the 2010 Standards at their Innovation Center in Oakland, and also prepared a side by side comparison of the original ADAAG, the 2010 ADA SAD and 2010 CBC sections on signage and wayfinding. She has been a consulting specialist on access for Sutter Health and has assisted OSHPD inspectors. She has also given webinars, both for the California Hospital Association, and in Washington DC for the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center. That webinar remains available on their website.

## **EDUCATION**

Reed College, Portland Oregon, BA 1958; Universität München, Germany, Graduate Study 1958-1959, Fulbright Travel Grant and Bavarian Study Fellow; University of California at Irvine, 1967-1968 (dates approximate - fifth year).

## **SKILLS**

Extensive knowledge of the ANSI Standards, the ADA Accessibility Guidelines, both the original and the 2010 ADA/ABA Revision. California Building Code, Titles 19 and 24, Chapters 10, 11A and 11B as they related to communication for persons with sensory based disabilities, as well as to people who need expeditious wayfinding because of mobility based disabilities. This knowledge includes not only the codes and standards as they are written, but also includes a broad knowledge of their history. She has worked intensively with persons with all kinds of disabilities, and was a pioneer in working with adults who had learning disabilities caused by dyslexia, dysgraphia, and vision impairments. She is also knowledgeable about the barriers within the communications environment for people with various forms of impaired color vision. She has done extensive work both on contrast in the built environment, including in transportation venues, and on standards for loop systems and video phones for people who are hard of hearing.

## **ACCESSIBILITY RELATED COMMUNITY SERVICE AND HONORS**

- Sharon Toji was honored by the California Chapter of the American Association of Architects with a Presidential Citation for her work on accessibility in the built environment.
- Sign and Digital Graphics Magazine appointed Sharon Toji to their technical advisory board, and chose her as one of their Innovators and Influencers for 2013.
- In the new planned community of Irvine, Sharon Toji was elected to the first school board, and was one of the first city commissioners, as well as on the original community Board of Directors. In all these roles, she was intimately involved in design and construction decisions for major school and city building projects, as well as for the Barclay Theatre at UC Irvine.
- In Portland, Oregon, Sharon Toji was given a special award by the Reed College Alumni Association for founding the Reed Education Project, which dealt with adult literacy and related disabilities, and became the recipient of a grant from President Johnson's "War On Poverty." Later, she was chosen as the youngest ever "Portland Woman of Accomplishment" for that program, which evolved into the official adult literacy program of Multnomah County.
- As a teen, Sharon Toji won a national award presented by President Eisenhower in Washington DC for her essay on hiring disabled veterans and that began her formal association with the disability movement.

## **REFERENCES**

- Michael Mankin, Architect, Universal Design, Division of the State Architect, Sacramento (Retired)
- Gene Lozano, Chair, Environmental Committee, California Council of the Blind, Sacramento
- Michael C. Schroeder, formerly Kaiser Permanente, National Facilities, Facilities Planning
- Richard Skaff, Executive Director, Designing Accessible Communities, Guerneville, CA
- Sally Swanson Architects, Principal, Sally Swanson AIA, San Francisco
- Janis Kent, Architect, CASp, Founder, Certified Access Specialist Institute
- Marsha Mazz, US Access Board Technical Specialist, (Retired). Currently Director, Accessibility Codes and Standards, U.S. Spinal Association.

*Contact information and other references available upon request.*