

While mining is still a male-dominated industry, there are plenty of women filling valuable roles in the sector. Here is the story of one who helped pave the way.

BECKY WOOD, MANAGER OF ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, AND SAFETY, TEICHERT MATERIALS, INC.

Becky Wood may be a rocket scientist, but to those who know and work with her, she is also a respected colleague, friend and genuine rock star.

With a degree in Geological Engineering from the University of Arizona College of Mines, and a degree in



Industrial Engineering at Arizona State University, Becky has worked in underground and open pit copper mines, built solid booster rocket engines, and managed environmental, health and safety issues.

Becky Wood at 2018 CalcIMA Legislative Conference

It all started long ago

When she was in the third grade, she read about the past continents of Pangea and Gondwanaland and thought, “this is so cool – I want to know more about rock.”

Math was her favorite subject. She did math problems for fun. Her father would grill her and her sister on their times tables at the dinner table. Her sister hated it, but Becky loved it.

She was the first in her family to attend college.

People had been telling her for years that with her love of math, she should be an engineer. So that is the box she marked when she arrived at the College of Mines. But when the registrar asked what kind, she was stumped. She didn’t realize there was more than one kind.



Rock drilling contest while a student

As engineering student

Since her father was an electrician, she selected electrical engineering, but later added geological when she discovered much to her delight that she could study both math and geology at the same time.

“I found my home,” Becky sighed.

She sure did.

As professional engineer

Her career started right out of college at Cypress Pima, an open pit copper mine in Tucson, Arizona.



Memorabilia from aerospace years

Four years later, she moved to Sacramento to work as a contractor for Aerojet. It wasn't long before she was picked up for a permanent position at Chemical Systems Division of United Aircraft Corporation (later United Technologies Corporation) in San Jose.

There, Becky built solid-fuel booster rockets, the type later used to launch

missions to the sun and stars - Venus, Mars and beyond.

While her work with rocket engines was fulfilling, her love of geology was pulling her back to the earth. In 1994, she took a position with Teichert, Inc., a 130-year-old California construction company in Sacramento. Her feet have remained solidly on the ground there for the last 25 years.

As industry leader

As Manager of Environmental, Health, and Safety at Teichert, Becky oversaw environmental issues and designed and implemented occupational safety and health programs. As the Chair of the California Construction and Industrial Materials Association (CALCIMA) Environmental and Natural Resources Committee, she was involved in many areas pertaining to legislation and regulations for air, water and waste issues.



Becky (2nd from left) with Congressman John Garamendi (3d from left) and colleagues at Cap to Cap lobbying trip



Award ceremony at United Technology Corporation Chemical Systems Division

She was also a strong force in numerous professional committees, including serving as Chair of the Cleaner Air Partnership and Technical Advisory Committee as well as the air quality team for the Chamber of Commerce Cap-to-Cap (Capitol-to-Capitol) lobbying trip.

As mentor

For many years, Becky has been an active volunteer with the Association of Women in Water, Energy and the Environment. She also mentors young women who have dropped out of high school, tutoring them in math so they can pursue a GED or equivalency.

“These young women are struggling,” Becky explained. “It is gratifying to help them see a way forward, to pursue a better life for themselves and their families.”

As role model

Over the years, Becky has built a solid career that stands as a shining example for women of science, and mining in particular. And she encourages others to give it a try.

“I love this industry,” she declared. “If you want to be a change-maker, you can find it here. At Teichert, I’ve always had full support to do what was right.”

Great advice that has already had an impact close to home. Becky’s daughter is just finishing up in the engineering program at the University of California Los Angeles.

For young women contemplating a career in mining, she offers some simple advice.

“Try it,” she stated. “In this industry, the sky’s the limit – you can go anywhere and do anything you put your mind to.”

That is for sure. Becky’s journey has been filled with a variety of roles and experiences.

Building rocket engines was fascinating work.



The launch of Titan IV 2005

“Every time I watch a rocket launch it brings tears to my eyes,” she related. “I know the effort and care that goes into the steps that lead up to that moment and every one of them has to go right – it is a miracle every single time.”

These days, Becky is thinking about a launch of a different sort. Her last day with Teichert is April 1, 2019.

Big boots to fill

When colleagues gathered with friends and family to celebrate Becky and her long list of accomplishments at a retirement party recently, it was clear that an important part of what makes Becky so remarkable is how much she does for others. Whether it is the annual holiday cookie exchange at her house; or the trips to the asphalt plant during the night shift, with cookies in tow; or making morning visits to the neighbors to make sure they are well; Becky’s care for her family and friends, her coworkers as well as the environment is boundless.



A table full of cookies for the annual cookie party

As she moves on with her next chapter in her life, be that traveling, camping, reading, bike rides, and spending more time with her husband, family and friends, we can be assured Becky will continue making friends, impacting lives, building bridges, promoting cooperation and increasing knowledge and understanding wherever she goes and whatever she does.

“I absolutely love this industry,” Becky shared. “We have the best people.”

We agree. The best people, including one very special rock star who is leaving a very long shadow and some big boots to fill.

Becky Wood on Change

Things were very different for women in fields predominantly populated by men when a young Becky Wood entered college as an aspiring engineering student.

One example of just how different things were was in the engineering program at University of Arizona. In the mining building the only restroom for women was on the first floor by the Dean’s office where the secretaries were.

Becky found a similar situation when she went to work at an underground copper mine. There, since the sole restroom facility was used primarily by men, they made a metal sign for her to place on the door outside so that the guys would know when not to enter.

“I never found these sorts of things to be a problem,” Becky explained. “It’s just the way it was back then.”

Over the years she has seen a lot things change for women in the workplace. These days it doesn’t seem to matter so much whether you’re male or female, what matters is whether you can do the work.

“Today, there is definitely more parity and more opportunity at every level – and that’s a good thing,” Becky concluded.