

2017 American Randonneur Award

Shab Memarbashi, RUSA #4501

BY PAUL ROZELLE

As if there were any doubt about how deserving Shab Memarbashi is of the American Randonneur Award, when it was presented to her at a surprise luncheon in her honor, Shab's first words after the shock and flood of emotion dissipated were to beseech humbly, "Why me?" She had done nothing extraordinary, she thought, or had merely done what anyone else would do to help. In addition to her extraordinary service to others, humility defines Shab.

In her 13 years as a RUSA member, Shab has volunteered at 1200Ks all over the United States (Texas Rando Stampede; Sunshine 1200; Cracker Swamp 1200) and, indeed, the world (LEL; Granite Anvil; Miglia Italia; Míle Fáilte) as well as cooking and working at controls for DC Randonneurs, South Florida, and Central Florida. You might have also encountered Shab by the side of the road at PBP, ceaselessly and loudly ringing her cowbell while shouting words of encouragement to every passing rider, especially those looking like they could really benefit from an extra emotional boost.

While Shab volunteers on many of the events in which her accomplished husband, Hamid Akbarian (#4500), participates, it is not always the case that she is at a ride because of him. Shab volunteered at the 2015 Sunshine 1200 despite Hamid not riding, and Shab was coming to the Granite Anvil in 2017 by herself regardless of Hamid's participation, although she eventually talked him into it. How many of us have spouses or partners who drag us along to ride so that they can volunteer



— PHOTO DAVE THOMPSON

to help others? That's Shab, and Shab treats each rider with the same care and attention she gives to her own husband.

Shab's exceptional kindness and generosity are even reflected in something as mundane as making rice, an hours-long process that involves soaking the (proper) jasmine rice in the (proper) olive oil. Shab wants us not to be just well fed, but fed well.

As riders, RBAs, and a national organization, we recognize that not a single event would happen, not a single kilometer would roll by, and not a single friendship or experience that this sport has given us would have ever been formed without our volunteers. Through

her extraordinary and boundless energy, her gentle warmth, and her years of selfless service, Shab has not only helped us, Shab has inspired us. Thank you Shab, from all of us, and congratulations on your well-deserved American Randonneur Award! 🚴

Hamid Akbarian (#4500)
Alain Abbate (#4779)
Viktoriya Abbate (#4778)
Paul Rozelle (#2955)
Jim Solanick (#41)
Dave Thompson (#4226) and
his wife, Sandy.