25th Anniversary

Iowa’s Mr. LTAP: Stan Ring

“Please call me if you have any questions. My phone number is 515-294-6777.” So Dr. Stan Ring ended his front-page column in the first issue of Technology News in April 1983.

This was the personal style that earned Ring his reputation as “Mr. LTAP.” The original director of Iowa’s Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP, later Local Technical Assistance Program or LTAP), Ring made himself available to Iowa transportation agencies needing information or assistance.

With his knowledge, experience, and passion about transportation engineering, Ring was a quiet powerhouse of a resource.

Ring spent the first nearly two decades of his career with the Iowa DOT (then the Iowa State Highway Commission). There he managed urban work on Iowa’s federal-aid highways and acted as the commission’s liaison with federal and local agencies in transportation planning.

In 1967 Ring left the agency to teach transportation courses in ISU’s Department of Civil and Construction Engineering.

For 20 years, in addition to teaching, Ring advised graduate students and conducted research, most significantly, wind-tunnel analysis of snow drifting, and design of low-water stream crossings.

Ring had a special interest in and talent for outreach, and eventually he led ISU’s Civil Engineering Extension Program. It was in this role that he competed for and won the RTAP contract.

As RTAP-then-LTAP director, Ring set a standard for service that Iowa LTAP staff still remember and try to emulate.

Ring personally connected with transportation workers around the state, tirelessly promoting transportation engineering, teaching workshops, and building his extensive knowledge base and photo library of Iowa’s transportation history.

Whether discussing civil engineering initiatives with new county engineers or quizzing old hands about Iowa’s transition from mud-clogged byways to well-drained paved roads, Ring brought an enthusiastically engaging spark to every interaction.

After retiring from ISU in 1988, Ring continued serving Iowans for 12 years as LTAP’s part-time librarian.

Ring oversaw the library as enthusiastically as he had built the LTAP center. He stocked the shelves with an up-to-date collection of slideshows, videos, and publications and sent them, on request, to towns and counties across the state. He oversaw the transition from a paper catalog of holdings to a user-friendly online electronic catalog, www.ctre.iastate.edu/library/search.cfm. He developed a display about LTAP’s services and carted it to dozens of events where transportation workers gathered, like APWA and ISAC conferences.

One lovely day in September 2000, Ring dismantled the LTAP display he had just hosted at Iowa’s annual road maintenance expo, then went home for a little nap. He died that afternoon. Mr. LTAP was 77.

Next time you’re in Ames, stop by the LTAP office and visit the Stan Ring Memorial Library, now under the able stewardship of Jim Hogan. Stan would have appreciated the convenient, moveable stacks.