



Donald Berry

DONALD S. BERRY

1911–2002

Elected in 1966

“For transportation and safety technology.”

BY RAYMOND J. KRIZEK

DONALD S. BERRY, Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering at Northwestern University, died in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on December 16, 2002, at the age of 91. A consummate transportation engineer, Professor Berry helped create transportation engineering programs at three universities and was responsible for pioneering interdisciplinary graduate studies in transportation engineering at Northwestern.

Don was born on January 1, 1911, in the middle of a blizzard on a ranch near Vale, South Dakota. He attended high school in Rapid City, South Dakota, and graduated from the South Dakota School of Mines in 1931. His graduate studies took him to Iowa State University, where he received an M.S. in 1933, and the University of Michigan, where he completed his Ph.D. in transportation engineering in 1936.

During his graduate studies at the University of Michigan, he met the girl who was to become his wife for more than six decades. At a student dance one evening, Don met a young lady named Helen Mitchell, an M.S. student in history, and that was the beginning of their romance. After their first date, Don told his roommate he had met the girl he was going to marry. Don and Helen were married on October 30, 1937, in Washington, D.C., Helen’s hometown. Their honeymoon consisted of the trip from Washington to Evanston, where the couple set up home-

making in an apartment. In the ensuing years they had two daughters, Judy (1940) and Jeane (1946).

Donald Berry's professional career was devoted to education and research in traffic and transportation engineering. After spending 12 years as a transportation engineer and then director of the Traffic Division at the National Safety Council in Chicago, he embarked on a career in academia. As a professor, he helped organize graduate programs in transportation engineering at the University of California, Berkeley (seven years), Purdue University (two years), and Northwestern University (22 years). The 10 to 15 M.S. and 2 to 4 Ph.D. graduates each year from Northwestern University went on to occupy many key positions in federal, state, and local transportation agencies, on university faculties, and in consulting firms. From 1962 to 1968, Don was chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering at Northwestern. Over the years, he directed in-service training programs in traffic and transportation engineering in many parts of the United States and several foreign countries, including Venezuela, Spain, South Africa, Thailand, Israel, and the Philippines.

Even before Don Berry became a university professor, he was an educator. During World War II, he was selected by the FBI to teach courses in major cities throughout the country on controlling transportation and traffic in the event of blackouts, air raids, or wartime damage. Later he worked in Washington for the Office of Civil Defense.

Don always brought the practical world of transportation into the classroom. He was a teacher who made every academic concept real and established bridges linking research to practice. He built cooperative education programs connecting the university to key public agencies, allowing students to finance and broaden their education by working at these agencies and conducting research as a part of their work. He strongly encouraged his students to join and participate in the activities of professional societies, including attendance at meetings of the Institute of Traffic (now Transportation) Engineers (ITE) and Transportation (formerly Highway) Research Board (TRB).

Don created a family of graduate students whom he nurtured to professional maturity, setting academic, professional, and

personal standards that are being promulgated to this day. Because of his interest in students as people, his classroom was a diverse and interesting place to study transportation. He never returned from a professional meeting without bringing into the classroom what he had learned about practical problems and ideas, and his students grew professionally and intellectually as a result.

Don was very active in TRB and served on numerous committees, including a term as chairman of the Executive Committee in 1965. He also served on various committees of ITE, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Society for Engineering Education, National Safety Council, and several special assignments. His research produced more than 100 papers on numerous subjects related to traffic and transportation engineering. He initiated much of the early work relating speed to accidents and contributed materially to the development of chemical tests for intoxication. His inquiring mind took him into many other areas, and his explorations led to regulations and traffic operational developments that are now accepted as basic principles.

Dr. Berry received many honors and awards during his lifetime. One of the most prestigious was his election to the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) in 1966; he was the first transportation educator to become an NAE member. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Engineering degree by the South Dakota School of Mines in 1964. In 1967 he was the recipient of the Sesquicentennial Award from the University of Michigan, and he became a Walter P. Murphy Professor at Northwestern University. In 1972 he received the Theodore M. Matson Memorial Award from ITE and the James Laurie Prize in Transportation from ASCE. Five years later, in 1977, he was given the College of Engineering Professional Achievement Citation from Iowa State University. After retirement in 1979, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Transportation Division of the Illinois Section of ASCE in 1992 and the Wilbur S. Smith Distinguished Transportation Educator Award in 1993. On the day he died, a package arrived in the mail awarding him lifetime emeritus status in NAE.

Dr. Berry was a registered civil engineer and was active in many professional societies. He was a fellow of ITE and a fellow and honorary member of ASCE. In addition, he belonged to Sigma Xi, Tau Beta Pi, Chi Epsilon, and Phi Kappa Phi.

He was an active member of Saint Matthews Episcopal Church in Evanston, Illinois. After his retirement, he joined the North Shore Senior Center, where he taught classes in defensive driving for ten years. He was also a member of the Commission on Aging for the city of Evanston, and he enjoyed playing duplicate bridge, golf, and ping-pong.

Don is survived by two daughters, Judy Stasik of Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Jeane Borkenhagen of Lincoln, California, eight granddaughters and nine great grandchildren, and a sister, Elizabeth Hagman, of Royal Oak, Michigan. Helen, his wife of 63 years, died in 2000.

Don Berry was a man of admirable integrity and loyalty, a leader in engineering and higher education, and a dear friend to all who knew him. We are all richer because Don shared his life with us, and we miss him greatly. As a mentor, friend, and inspiration, his legacy is the hundreds of trained professionals, including many university professors, who will carry his message throughout the world for many years to come.

