Ed Eargle, Oscar Rucker retire after 33 years

By Bob Kudelka

With each having 33 years service at SCDOT, Ed Eargle and Oscar Rucker left with a wealth of knowledge in their respective fields when they retired this spring.

A 1975 USC graduate with a degree in civil engineering, Eargle rose through the ranks from first joining a training program in Richland Construction and at the Research and Materials Lab; the Safety Office in Pre-Construction; Bamberg Construction, Orangeburg Construction (Resident Construction Engineer), Materials Engineer, Assistant Road Construction Engineer; Road Design Engineer and Pre-Construction Support Engineer, overseeing 71 employees when he retired.

Rucker attended Clemson University for two years before graduating from USC with a degree in business management. He joined SCDOT in 1977 as a statistician in the Rights of Way Office. He moved into a field position in 1981, dealing with landowners in the delicate job of acquiring land for the state.

"It's definitely challenging but we always try to put them in a little better situation than they were before," Rucker said.

In 1985, Rucker became District Rights of Way agent and in 1991, Chief Appraiser. He was named Assistant to Director Ed Kelly in 1995 and in 2001 became Director of the Rights of Way Office. He supervised 100 employees.

Both Rucker and Eargle spent a few minutes with The Connector as they ended their careers.

CONNECTOR: As your career ends at SCDOT, what are you most proud of?

RUCKER: "I'm most proud of the people I had working with me, the relationships developed during my 33 years with the Department. I've been involved in a lot of great projects but it's the people really who mean the most to me."

EARGLE: "I'm most proud of the people that we have who work here in Pre-Construction Support and the people I've been involved with throughout the Department. I'm proud to be part of the team. As far as projects, I'm proud of our employees' success in automating plan development and design from hand drawings to electronic digital output including the improvements of our printing from blueprints to scanned electronic files. A result of many years of work and coordination by many SCDOT employees is the development of the Plans Library, the management of all stored road and bridge plans with access across the network to all Department employees throughout the state. This was just expanded last week to those outside the Department through an extranet application by subscription called 'Plans Online.'"

CONNECTOR: Tell me about your decision to retire.

RUCKER: "I felt like it was time for me to move on and give some other people the opportunity to move up."

EARGLE: "Five years ago, I found out I had prostate cancer. I'm cancer free now, but you start to look at things differently. I had the opportunity to go on the TERI program. I felt like I needed to look ahead not just for me, but my family also."

CONNECTOR: What will you miss most about SCDOT?

RUCKER: "I can tell you it's the people. I am fortunate just to be able to come back and see the folks who work here."

EARGLE: "I'll miss the people."

CONNECTOR: How do you plan to spend your time in retirement?

RUCKER: "I took a month off and I am working now, doing right of way for the LPA Group. I enjoyed my job well enough that I wanted to continue doing this. And I'll play as much golf as I can get in."

EARGLE: "I'm looking for a job. I would love to stay in public service working for the good of the citizens."

CONNECTOR: What advice would you give a new employee starting out at SCDOT?

RUCKER: "I think patience. You get frustrated sometimes with the state system, but if you're patient enough things will work out if you work hard. You have to create some opportunities for yourself by being willing to take on things sometimes when you're not asked to."

EARGLE: "To be patient. Learn what you can, wherever you're working. Learn what you can whatever you are doing. Nothing's too trivial to learn from. There's always a payoff."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Oscar Rucker, center, poses with his family at a retirement luncheon in Columbia where many of his co-workers, friends and family joined to celebrate his career at SCDOT. His wife, Sharon Rucker, retired from SCDOT Human Resources in 2003, and his daughter, Lynsee Gibson, works in Program Controls.

Oscar Rucker

Residence: Cayce
Education: B.S. in Business Administration, USC
Hobbies: Golf
Family: Wife Sharon, children Jason, Lynsee and Rachel
Clubs, memberships, etc: Trinity Baptist Church

Ed Eargle

Residence: Born and raised in Orangeburg and currently lives in Columbia
Education: B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering
Hobbies: Traveling, reading and working in the yard and small farm.
Family: Married to Pam Hitchcock from Ilion, NY; two children, a son, Sid, who is married and has our first grandson, Dylan, and our daughter, Clare. Both of our children live in Greenville.
Clubs, memberships, etc: St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Ed Eargle and his wife, Pam, enjoy refreshments with co-workers and friends at a retirement drop-in on May 25.