

Deputy Director Les Holland retires

By Rick Murray, Director's Staff Division

The walls are bare. Papers have been put away. His desk has been cleared. But despite Les Holland's retirement from the DOT, he still can't manage to say the "R" word. "Let's just say I'm switching gears," said Holland.

The deputy director's retirement was effective June 30 with an open house held June 25 to commemorate 29 years of service. Jack Riney, a retired DOTer, stood before the guests honoring Holland and reminisced. "I remember seeing Holland wearing a lure hat one morning. Then I saw him later and he wasn't wearing it anymore. I asked him why he wasn't ice fishing and he said that he was so busy chopping a hole in the ice that he got too tired to fish."

Co-workers added that because of Holland's "persistence and dedication to succeed," he was able to gain valuable executive experiences as assistant to former Governor Harold Hughes; assistant to the Iowa State Highway Commission director of highways; managing public affairs; legislative liaison; and Director of the Rail Division (later the Rail and Water Division).

Yet Holland won't take credit for his accomplishments—he gives the credit to a book: "When I was in eighth grade, I came across a career book. I was flipping

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*- Retired Deputy Director
Les Holland*



Holland displays mementos of his career - in 1985 he was presented with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials President's Modal Award for his work in rail matters.

through the pages when I came across public administration," reflected Holland. "After reading about that field, I knew that's what I wanted to be when I grew up."

But growing up took longer than he expected, he said. When Holland graduated from Ames High School, he began working at the Chevrolet Buick dealership in town. He just didn't have the drive to go to college, he said.

That began to change when a mechanic asked if he wanted to do mechanic work for the rest of his life. "I told him I didn't know, and he frowned and said that I should go to college," recalled Holland.

That vision reinforced his admiration

for the people who have supported him along the way. It was people like that mechanic who helped inspire him to pursue his eighth grade dream, he said.

And he has no regrets about the path he chose. In 1959 he walked away from the University of Iowa with something very important to him—a bachelor's and master's degree in public administration.

Thirty-eight years later, Holland is leaving the DOT with something equally important—an appreciation for the people at the DOT. "People make our organization tick, not divisions. And if you get rid of the people working for you, you get rid of the most important ingredient the DOT has," he said.