

CEA LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S AWARD

FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Community Builders

In Winfield, Alberta in the 1960s, there wasn't a huge emphasis on education. Most of Leo Broks' buddies quit school after Grade 10. "My parents insisted that we graduate from high school," Leo says, so that's what he and his younger brother Corry did. Both Broks boys had an academic bent and the principal of his school took Leo to a varsity weekend at the University of Alberta. "That was my first taste of higher education, Leo says. Still, he joined the ranks of general labourers alongside his buddies after high school graduation. "There was a foreman on site whose main form of instruction was yelling at us," Leo recalls. It was enough to drive him away, so Leo applied for, and got accepted to, engineering. He has since had time to think about his regrets: "I regret not sending that foreman a thank-you note."

He graduated as a P. Eng. in civil from the U of A in 1970 and worked for a few years managing an Edmonton satellite office of a Calgary-headquartered company. The experience was valuable he says, and he learned enough about himself and the industry that he knew he wanted more autonomy. He incorporated AL-Terra Engineering Ltd. on December 2, 1976. Leo's brother Corry had followed his brother's example and entered engineering, and Leo convinced him to join the company 18 months later.

The Brokses started work developing the firm's expertise in land development engineering, urban transportation, urban renewal, highway engineering, and transportation planning.

In the late 1970s, there was a lot of work in land development, but when the recession of the 1980s hit, that kind of work dried up and AL-Terra was forced to consolidate and diversify. Times were lean and most of the employees went their own way. "For a while it was just Corry and I and a secretary, Karen Rowland," says Leo. They nurtured their few infrastructure clients from those lean times 30 years ago, and have gained repeat business in the intervening years, right up to the present.

"We first joined the CEA in the mid-1980s. It brought us into close, trusting contact with numerous firms in the and we've benefitted from the collective knowledge, both technical and business wise," says Leo.

The brothers are low-key about their business, their success, and their points of pride; the humility may be partly a Broks thing and partly an engineer thing. Leo says that his career highlights include



Corry G. Broks, P.Eng., President,
AL-Terra Engineering Inc.



Leo Broks, P.Eng., Board Chairman,
AL-Terra Engineering Inc.

going beyond clients' expectations. "I get satisfaction from adding value to a project," he says. "I like to save money for the client, and I like to use land in a more productive way."

"I like being able to offer low-cost solutions with high returns," Corry says. He offers some examples from AL-Terra's recent portfolio. "We designed a jug-handle on 17th Street and Baseline Road," he says. "It was an area of high collisions and putting in an interchange was cost-prohibitive. The jug-handle removed left turns and made the area safer." Likewise, there are the rural roundabouts. Thinking outside the box, AL-Terra came up with roundabouts as a studied, low-cost solution to four- and five-kilometre queues forming in peak times at intersections on Highways 11A and 20.

Dedicated mentors, the Brokses believe that taking care of the next generation of engineers is the best way to ameliorate the dearth of professionals in the 20- to 40-year age group. "And mentorship is how you achieve controlled growth," Corry says. They are the progenitors of two namesake \$5,000 engineering scholarships.

"One of the gratifying aspects of developing AL-Terra," says Leo, "has been mentoring young people, who've developed into exceptional engineers and leaders, many from the U of A and U of S co-op programs."

Their company is built on the premise that they give back to their community in tangible ways, too. "We give to a number of charities," Leo says.

"We donate about one per cent of our gross," Corry adds. "Every year we identify a charity, and usually charge a junior person with overseeing the process."

Both Brokses married school teachers, who helped them get through the rough times in the 1980s to later prosperity. Both raised three sons, and both have a clutch of grandkids to dote on. It's fitting that, in recognition of their many years of excellence in civil engineering and community service, they both receive the CEA's Lieutenant Governor's Award for distinguished service. Congratulations, Messrs. Corry and Leo Broks.