



Bart Crattie is a land surveyor registered in the states of Georgia and Tennessee. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Surveyors Historical Society.

## Yellow Jackets and Other Vile Critters

One of the most glorious occurrences in this business of land surveying is that magical moment you sight through the instrument's telescope

only to behold a true wonder of nature. On line 200–300' ahead are your front man and brush cutter doing the yellow jacket shuffle. You know exactly what I'm writing about. Scoot, scoot. Safely secure in your remote location hindered only by the restrictive optics of the telescope, first one fellow flapping at the air, now the other, crossing the line, vocal, hither and yonder, zig-zagging across your limited field of barrel vision. Yellow jacket, hornet, bee and wasp stories abound in this profession.

On a two-man crew, the fore sight is set. Pulling up the legs, heading forward, you cross paths with the rodman, heading for the backsight. We've all been there when, on passing, he mumbles under his breath "Watch out for the bees." Time to contemplate the meaning of "gingerly." Step lightly, to heck with big sticks. What does your immediate future hold?

Once I headed out on a multi-state project with two greenhorns, having never hung a bob on the tape with

either. One fellow, who claimed experience, was to carry out the instrument duties and be my eyes and ears should I be absent. The other fellow was with

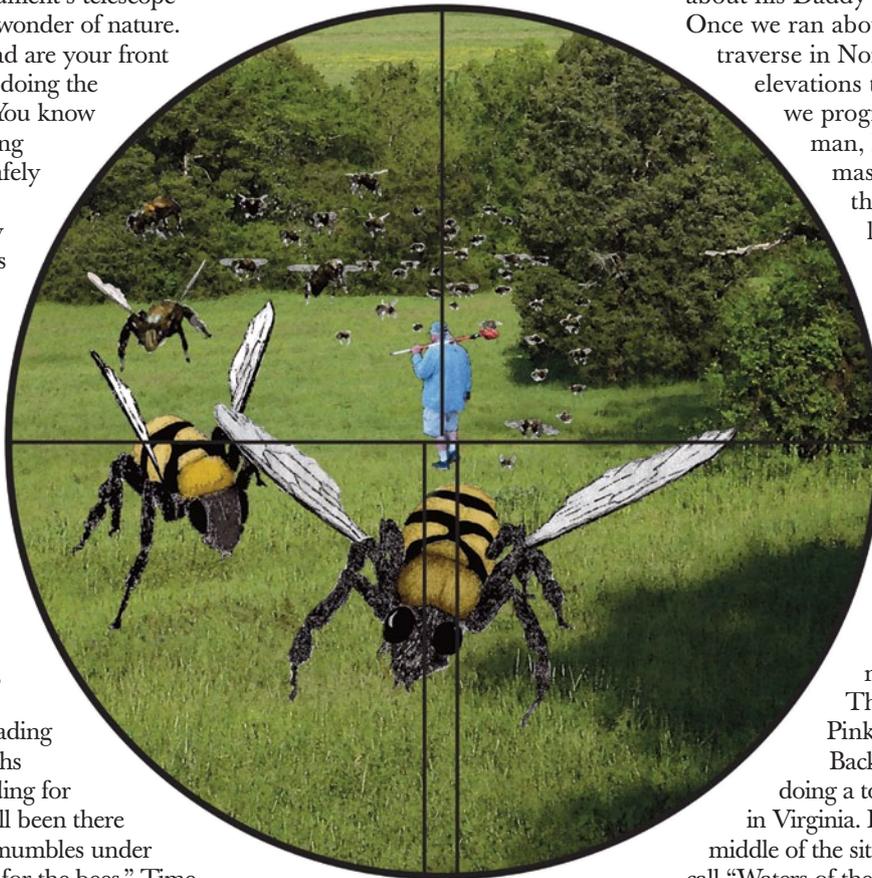
land measurement turned out to be quite an experience. Three occasions from that journey reside in my life reflections, and each memory regards Pink, Jr.

Before I get to little Pink, a story about his Daddy Floyd is in order.

Once we ran about a 6000-foot traverse in North Carolina carrying elevations trigonometrically as we progressed. As the front man, I was setting some massive nails—the kind that some folks build log homes with. Floyd was running rear. We closed out in about a day and a half. That evening at the motel, Floyd, grinning tooth to tooth, proudly told me that on every point, he was sure to stomp it into the ground real good and deep. Lest, someone trip on it. "That would mess up our closure." That was our original Pink Floyd.

Back to his boy. We were doing a topo for a grocery store in Virginia. Right there, dead in the middle of the site, was what we now call "Waters of the State." The depth and breadth of this unnamed tributary was at least eight to ten feet each way. I was visiting the corners we had found, writing a concise description of each, while the greenhorns were clearing some line.

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us as a crew member simply because his old Daddy, Floyd, couldn't make the trip. (Floyd never understood why I called him Pink.) That expedition in

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My goodness, I heard the God-awfulest screeching and looked down in the creek bottom. Little Pink, unable to climb up the high banks was running, screaming and splashing, all the while beating himself in the head with the flat of his machete. Yellow jackets had become entangled in his curly hair and were stinging fool out of him. The first thing that impressed me about Young Pink was he didn't quit then and there. He did moan though, a little that night at supper. A few days later we were wrapping things up. That was the day I learned that Young Pink threw up each time we lifted a manhole cover. Man, did we hoo-haw him. To this day I wonder if he still suffers this affliction.

On the previous evenings of this survey, we had to cross a large field to get to our vehicle. Amusing ourselves, crossing this pasture we would flip our machetes high in the air before us, seeing whose would "stick." Little Pink did a marvelous underhanded throw that sailed impressively nearly to the clouds, flip, flip, flipping. When that thing landed, it sunk all the way to the handle and a cloud of yellow jackets materialized. Gravity placed that "Collins" right in the opening of a now-angry hive. From a safe distance, we all had a pow-wow. We all concluded that this was an excellent excuse within our little group to not drive all night to get home. We would retrieve the machete early the next morning before bees were stirring. I like cold bees best. About sunrise, we salvaged the knife with not a bee in sight and headed



I am 400 miles from the remote dirt we had just measured and the notes tell me there is a "hump" in the downward, gravity-inspired flow of that Virginia sewer. The unnamed operator of surveying instruments, that experienced chap in

his superior. Pink, Jr. had just now crossed that threshold of the thing we all call Land Surveying. Two weeks prior, the boy had no idea how utterly important candor, honesty and integrity are in this business. Pink told me of how he and his "superior" had labored for an hour or more but were never able to raise that particular manhole cover. Bossman had grabbed up the field book and just made up a couple of numbers. I guess one of the things that really bothered me about Bossman was that he didn't even have the gumption to come up with credible numbers.

Pink realized pretty early on that there are other bothersome and certainly vile critters in this business beside yellow jackets that are a real, true hindrance to a survey crew. Twenty years later, I fret just a little that one of my competitors snatched him up. I'll go through my career, knowing, appreciating and admiring young Pink's newly found level of awareness and integrity for the true art of land surveying. Have faith it never ends. *A*

*Note: Telescope image on opening page by Mary Petruska. Cartoon by the author.*

**"...there are other bothersome and certainly vile critters in this business beside yellow jackets..."**

home. The boy's knife throwing abilities were certainly impressive (with a little gravitational coordination).

A week or so later, once more enjoying the pleasure of my own bed and refrigerator, a screwball thing happened. I found a sanitary sewer line that defied physics, hydrology, said gravity and all of the statements of universal truth concerning payday—those being, "Hot is on the left," and "The check's in the mail...." Here

whom I entrusted the total responsibilities of a survey crew, was unable to fathom how in the world pooppy was shooting rapids in this magical manhole whose invert was two feet higher than the one upstream. I fretted and cussed and fretted some more, knowing there was an 800-mile round trip and loss of any profit in my future. Leaving the office that night with head bowed, I found young Pink waiting outside. Young Pink didn't rat on