

## Professional Development The Never Ending Story

**W**hat do the following situations all have in common: going to church on Sunday just to meet girls, being nice to your aunt so she puts you in her will, Anna Nicole Smith's last marriage, and supporting "Mandatory Professional Development" because it will increase membership in your State Association? Let's try "Doing the right thing for the wrong reason" for starters.

Professional development and continuing education go hand in hand. The reason that any profession is committed to continuing education is to insure that the public's health, safety and welfare are protected. The concept of granting Professional Development Units (PDUs) for attending chapter meetings is not serving the public's interest. It is entirely self serving on the association's part. I have attended many "knife and fork club" meetings billed as "chapter meetings". The food was good, the beer was cold and I heard a slew of new jokes. How many points was that worth?

Many states offer continuing education workshops periodically and at their annual meetings. I've been involved as a speaker at six or eight of these meetings, presenting one- or two-day workshops on various boundary and PLSS-related subjects and being pleasantly surprised at the attitude of the audiences. These workshops were considered "mandatory" and were very well attended. The surveyors seemed genuinely glad to be there and vigorously participated in the workshop discussions. A few actually admitted that they learned something. Prior to this experience I was on the fence regarding the "mandatory" part. As an educator and presenter of seminars I am constantly being accused

of wanting to "feather my own nest" every time I speak in support of the concept, but as a Professional Land Surveyor I also have a working knowledge of the benefits derived by attending well presented, meaningful seminars and workshops on practical and useful subjects.

Every time surveyors attend a workshop there is a potential benefit to the public or to their clients. The surveyor may learn how to get a project approved more quickly or at a lesser cost, to use a piece of new equipment more efficiently thereby saving time and money by doing a project more accurately and quickly, to prepare an ALTA map so that the lender's attorney and the title company don't bleed all over it, to become more familiar with laws that affect the practice of surveying, to become familiar with photogrammetric mapping so that he or she can advise the client when it is efficient to fly or not to fly a job, to have the fundamental boundary principles reaffirmed so that his or her survey does not "create chaos in the neighborhood," and to learn how to speak and dress in a manner that his or her presentation before the Planning Commission or in court doesn't come off like the Three Stooges rolled into one.

Every time surveyors attend a workshop there are potential benefits. A surveyor may learn how to best serve a client and get that "warm and fuzzy" feeling that comes with getting paid or getting that next big job, to be a better surveyor and to be more valuable to the public, to become more careful and diligent doing boundary surveys and staying out of court, to become familiar

with the US Public Lands Survey System and get that boundary properly located and recorded, and perhaps to gain some knowledge and confidence to be able to venture into some aspect of surveying not tried before.

Besides the normal technical and legal seminars presented, a good Continuing Education program should contain subjects such as project management, business practice, contract law, people skills and ethics. As Conference Program Chairman for my association I had tried to put this type of workshop on several times and found little interest for them among the profession. Perhaps as part of an overall mandatory program these valuable workshops might be better attended.

Will a mandatory continuing education program eliminate the poor practice and incompetence of some practitioners plaguing the surveying profession? That remains to be seen. It is apparent that such a program will help some "cross over the line," but what effect it will have on the "hardcore unprofessional" is a crap shoot.

Eventually you are going to be faced with voting to support the concept of mandatory continuing education and professional development credits. Vote yes, but for the right reasons. *AC*

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