

FeedBack

Doing the Right Thing

Wendy, quite possibly the best article ever written in a surveyor's journal ["If Not Now, When? Sept. 2008]. It matters not how technically proficient we are, how much money we make or how well "esteemed" we seem to be in our profession when we face serious illness or death. What do our friends and relatives think about us? Do we make time for them? Do we care about them as much as we do our work? You are right, sometimes we get the priorities mixed up.

Recent events in my own life have brought this into focus. Family and friends have gone through serious health problems and sudden death. Hopefully, these events put us back in touch with reality. Too many want to "ignore" or "pass by" these events. I believe that being confronted with one's own death and eternity scare most people. Certainly not an uncommon attitude. That aside, who will really care how hard we worked 50 years from now, 100 years from now? The relationships we have with people are much more important than "getting the contract" and "closing the deal" and "finishing under budget." Yes, business and the making of a living are important and doing one's job to the best of our ability is essential. But we so often lack the balance necessary to "do the right thing" when these inconvenient circumstances arise. Would to God that we would see and do "the right thing" and not "the convenient thing." Keep up the great work. Keep up the balance of life and living!

Don Grower
Via the Internet

Lathrop Replies

Thank you so much for your comments (and compliment). I have to remind myself constantly that an unfinished detail of work will still be there tomorrow without disaster striking, but a dinner date with my husband or a reunion with old friends or a chance to spend time with someone who needs a little extra help or TLC are all one time opportunities. In the long run, it is not work that makes my world brighter

(although I love what I do). It is the people in my life who make the real difference. Incidentally, I have just bought a pair of tap dancing shoes and take my first class in less than two weeks! –*W.L.*

Our Ancient, Honorable Craft

The arrival of *The American Surveyor* each month is always the occasion for a brief intermission in my busy life to see what latest antics my professional colleagues have been up to.

Leininger's article "Can Retracements Be Confidential?" [Sept. 2008] caught my eye. In his comments, Mr. Leininger mentions a former boss who would not share his records with others. He also mentions under present care, those records are now open to all—a move to the common good of all professional surveyors in my estimation.

In brief, my answer to Mr. Leininger's question is a loud and clear NO! So long as no monumentation is done and everything is strictly on paper, that is work product. The instant a monument is set, confidentiality is gone and the hammer of litigation is cocked. That set monument is an assertion of sovereignty and affects any adjoining property owner(s) who are the general public. Something all of us should remember, each and every survey is the opinion of that surveyor, not a judicial decision.

As indicated by my bona fides above, I am a member of a vanishing group of practitioners who are "professional dinosaurs" in their own trade. I read the professional publications, yet I really don't know what they are talking about anymore. The equipment is so expensive and complicated that my exposure is

...what happens when the power goes down or there are no more AA cells?

I have been licensed for 56 years as a land surveyor in the states of California (L.S. 2712) and Nevada (L.S. 737). The attitude of Mr. Leininger's former boss was common (but not universal) when I apprenticed with my father before WW II. What a surveyor knew and had in his records was his stock in trade and his reputation. If he was known to have more "secret" information at his disposal than the other "upstarts" in the county, he benefitted greatly. Therefore if he knew his competition had started at a corner which was not what it was supposed to be, he was one up on the other guy. It was not a matter of "Gotcha!" although it may be seen that way.

stopping by and watching a modern surveyor use it.

I was privileged to teach surveying in a community college. That experience opened my eyes to the fact that the present field surveyor is a button pusher and the present office surveyor has a program in his computer that will do everything for him but wipe his nose. (Back off, gang—I am merely making a statement by using sarcasm.) But to emphasize that point, what happens when the power goes down or there are no more AA cells?

Almost all of the professional literature I see today deals with modern, equipment, modern approaches and modern procedures—and rightly it should. This is

today, not 100 years ago. Yet when I talk to the modern generation of surveyors, they have an overwhelming interest in what I used to do or how my father used to do it.

I investigated my father's generation of surveyors and discovered a lineage of equipment and procedures that even I, the (now) old timer, wasn't aware of. For example, did you know there were five different varieties of thumb tacks to fasten your drawing to your drafting board? Did you know that old texts devoted three pages of text and diagrams to the complex task of sharpening a lead drafting pencil? Have you adjusted your goniasomometre today? Thought not.

When you consider the Golden Gate Bridge and Boulder Dam were designed with a book of logarithms and probably laid out with a Gurley transit, maybe the "old boys" were onto something.

With that in mind I began to acquire information from textbooks of that day and old photos from my father's albums dealing with the general period ranging from 1890-1920. I ended up with two complete books. One deals with my father's tenure with a USGS survey crew mapping a portion of the Cascade Mountains in 1912-1913. This is almost a photo essay of what they did and how they did it.

The other book is a compilation of the equipment of that day, things he might have used and even more precious, the prices he would have had to pay for it. The price of one laser scanner today would have bought everything in the catalog and probably the company that made it. Times do change.

Our profession of surveying is an ancient and honored craft. Without it, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Aqueducts of Rome and the Cathedrals of Europe might never have come into being. It is a history that should not be allowed to disappear.

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