

# FeedBack

## Eye-openers

Wendy Lathrop's article "Misperceptions" [Vol. 7, Num. 8] was timely and well stated. Growing up in a relatively small town at the time when I did, we rarely saw people with obvious physical problems, so I had to make some major adjustments in attitude when I got to a major university and "different" conditions were all around me, even blind students carrying portable typewriters to keep notes or do composition in classes. I had never considered how a blind person would keep notes. I trust Wendy will continue to keep us alert to situations outside of our daily concerns, and hope we will always try to be "people persons" in business as well as life.

Gerry Curtis  
Via the Internet

## Lathrop Replies

Thank you for taking the time to write (and of course for the compliment as well). Blind students with typewriters—now that's a different solution! I think my own most "eye opening" experience was about 25 years ago, encountering a blind karate student at the annual all-women martial arts training camp I've been attending since forever. While I had deaf students before, and students with cerebral palsy, and even some with varying levels of diminished vision, it was my first experience with a totally blind martial artist. I should have been less surprised, as one of my friends in college loved it when we would rent a tandem bicycle so that he (blind since birth) could get some exercise and feel the fresh air of the countryside. We are limited primarily by our own expectations of ourselves, and hopefully we do not let other people's perceptions narrow our worlds for us. That can include our physicians' expectations as well. After I was rear-ended by a truck in 1993 and lost all feeling on the right side, I was told that I would probably regain only 70 to 80% of my mobility, and that I'd never dance or practice martial arts again. Of course, being the determined, hardheaded person I am, I just had to prove them wrong and return to the

activities I loved most. After two and a half years of hard work I regained 100% (although I admit that the aging process is now starting to slow me down). At this point I am hoping that my lawyer friend's physicians and therapists are not underestimating her resolve to overcome her brain injury and holding her back from what she is capable of recovering. —*W.L.*

## Things That Go Bump

Eric Stahlke's article "Just Say You've Been There" [Vol. 7, No. 8] triggered a memory from a time when I was surveying in Alaska that I thought might bring a smile or chuckle to your readers. In the summer of 1976 I was traveling from Fairbanks to Fort Yukon to do some survey work in an old military surplus two-engine Beechcraft operated by Fort Yukon Air Service. The pilot was a WWII vet who was good and loved his craft. Since he knew me, he invited me to sit in the copilot seat to make it more comfortable for the two matronly school-marm passengers from the Midwest who were there to sample the sights, sounds and smells of Alaska. As we were descending on final approach to the Fort Yukon airport, at about six miles out the pilot gave a little tug on the controls and then quickly returned to the glide path which gave the plane a little "hiccup" and caused the two passengers to audibly gasp. As soon as we landed they excitedly asked the pilot what had happened. With a straight face and only a hint of a twinkle in his eyes he informed the two ladies that we had just flown over the "Arctic Circle". They ooh-ed and ah-ed and I am sure passed this "important" experience on to their students when they returned to the classroom.

Lynn P. Wallace, PhD, PE, RLS  
Via the Internet

## Stahlke Replies

Thanks for sharing that amusing experience. Like a joke that never wears out, I've seen pilots continue to do this on a fairly regular basis over the years. Whether flying on a little single engine or a 737, doesn't matter, the only

criterion is a pod of tourists on board. Amazingly, just about everyone accepts the disturbance as a natural phenomenon. Of course, us surveyors do our bit by nodding in affirmation when the pilot makes the announcement.—*E.S.*

## The Cost of C.O. Status

The timing of Albert Theberge's article "CPS-98: An Odd Geodetic Survey Crew" [Vol. 7, Num. 9] about conscientious objector geodetic surveyors was intriguing, since the Winter 2011 issue of *National Parks* included an article called "In Good Conscience" about the broader scope of the alternative services provided by the Civilian Public Service (CPS) corps. While not contradicting Mr. Theberge's article in the least, the *National Parks* piece did provide a grittier view of the hostility toward conscientious objectors, noting that those in the CPS had to pay the government \$35 per month for their own room and board, rather than receiving entry-level GI salary. Such was the cost of religious freedom. For those who found this an unaffordable expense, families and churches at home often raised the funds. In this light, the accomplishments of the geodetic corps—and other CPS corps—are even more noteworthy.

Wendy Lathrop, LS, CFM  
Via the Internet

## More on Apprenticeship

In Mr. Gibson's article "Licensure by Apprenticeship: Effects of the surveying profession" [Vol. 7, Num. 4] he does make some points, but I don't agree with his conclusions. His "Carrot and Stick" doesn't make sense. He makes it sound as if employers are trying to keep their star, low-wage earning employees from going to college. I have never seen or heard of this happening until I read his article. I have worked for several development and civil engineering firms and all were very supportive of their employees furthering their education, and most offer covering the cost when the employee passes the course. Most employers support their employees not only with individual courses but also

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would assist with time off and such if the employee was working toward a degree. Employers who do this also know that they will have more educated employees who would stay with the company longer than those employees who work for companies that don't want to help their employees grow.

Mr. Gibson's "Comfort Zone" and "Apprenticeship vs. Learned Profession" comments falls short of belief. Is an apprentice really that limited to new technologies, theory and applications? I guess it would depend on the circumstance, the educator, and the apprentice's commitment to learn. I have talked with my degreed peers in the profession who say that the few hours of field training and quick run-through of theory from their college days left them unprepared for the real world applications once employed. During my apprenticeship I was constantly introduced to new ideas, technologies, applications, methods, and theories. To think that a college degree is a one-stop shop to all that is needed to be known in a profession is ludicrous. Actual on-hand field and office experience cannot be duplicated in a classroom. I'm not trying to downplay a degree, I think it is time well spent, but there are more ways to obtain a quality education and to become a good practitioner. I agree with Earl Henderson, PLS [Vol.7, Num. 7, page 54] that too much account is taken into the status word "professional" and more needs to be done about being a professional.

Maybe a study needs to be made that will investigate those accounts where land surveys have been reprimanded by the governing boards for not complying with the regulations, or where surveyors have failed their clients in some way to show if there is a correlation between a practitioner with a college degree or an apprenticed practitioner committing those issues for which they are being reprimanded.

Surveying is one of the last remaining professions that allow apprenticeship. I'm sad to see the move some states are making to just accepting four year degree applicants to take the LS exams. Apprenticeship was the only form of

education once a long time ago. College education and apprenticeship have coexisted for many years, now and I see no reason why it can't continue. Per Mr. Gibson's comments [Vol.7, Num. 7, page 54], it would appear it to be more profitable for colleges should the option to apprentice go away. I hope this is not so. Not everyone learns at the same pace or by the same structure.

*Tom Costello, PLS  
Via the Internet*

## On Crawlspace and Basements

Example 1 of my article "Crawlspace and Basements" [Vol. 7, Num. 9] has generated some confusion, although it is correct and exactly as provided by David Zaika of FEMA. The reason for questions I've received is the introduction of an unexpected variable, being a difference between the shaded 1% annual chance floodplain on the map and the actual ground elevation at the foundation of the structure.

The ground elevation in the example of 226.00' (lowest adjacent grade, or LAG) is higher than the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) of 224.00', a situation that under ideal circumstances means that the site, by virtue of being above BFE, is outside of the area in which flood insurance is mandatory. But Example 1 is meant to illustrate the rating of flood insurance, seemingly a contradiction in this instance of high LAG. There are two possible circumstances resulting in the conditions of this sample problem.

**Scenario 1** The mapping process is a generalization that does not always capture every rise and knoll in the watershed, for a variety of technical reasons including but not limited to technique of capturing or generating elevation, mapping scale, and contour interval. When the actual ground elevation is higher than the mapped elevation, the area is an "inadvertent inclusion" into the floodplain, but until a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) officially removes the site from the 1% annual chance floodplain, flood insurance will be required, with rates based

upon comparison of the BFE (which in our example is 224.00') to the structure's lowest floor elevation (LFE, which here is a foot below BFE at 223.00'). The further below BFE the LFE is, the higher the premium, despite the "inadvertent inclusion". Thus, we find ourselves paying flood insurance while waiting for a LOMA. Once the LOMA is issued, some portion of paid insurance premiums may be eligible for reimbursement under certain circumstances.

**Scenario 2** In areas where fill has been brought in to elevate a site above BFE, the soil does not behave the same as natural ground no matter how expertly the fill is compacted. Technically, a site filled to a height above BFE and thereby granted a Letter of Map Revision Based on Fill (LOMR-F) is no longer within the 1% annual chance floodplain and no longer subject to mandatory flood insurance requirements. But hazards still exist, and FEMA's Technical Bulletin 10-1 ("Ensuring that Structures Built on Fill In or Near Special Flood Hazard Areas Are Reasonably Safe From Flooding", available through FEMA's website) provides various warnings about soil saturation and the effects on structural stability. To circumvent mandatory flood insurance requirements, the LFE must be above BFE no matter how high the LAG.

There is much more that could be said about each of these situations, but that would expand this explanation to the length of a feature article. Meanwhile, remember that a lender always has the option to require flood insurance on a structure serving as collateral for a loan no matter what flood zone is involved. – *W.L.*

**Got some feedback?** We always enjoy hearing from our readers. You can contact us via our website at [www.amerisurv.com](http://www.amerisurv.com), or send a letter to: The American Surveyor, P.O. Box 4162, Frederick, MD 21705-4162. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and length. Due to the variety of titles used by licensed surveyors throughout the U.S., we use the title LS after the name of any registered land surveyor.