

FeedBack

Bilby Tower and San Diego

Mr. Cheves,

It's not often that I write to Editors of magazines but after receiving my recent issue of *The American Surveyor* I felt compelled to make a few comments.

First, the cover photo. I'm sure the guys in the photo are all hard working, upstanding individuals but do you think a cover photo showing a guy with his shirt off and his underwear exposed is the image of "American Surveyors" you want to portray? Too bad there wasn't a woman in a bikini working on dismantling the tower...

Second, the article "A Reckless Path of Destruction" by Mr. Pallamary, PS contains a pretty disturbing photo. The photo on page 44 that shows the surveyor set up in the road could be used to teach others exactly how not to set up traffic work zones. The surveyor appears to have no traffic control devices set up around him, i.e. cones, etc. His truck is parked around a blind corner and although he has some traffic cones behind the truck, his work zone is set up in such a manner that as a motorist approaches from around the corner behind his truck they could potentially be surprised when encountering his truck which could cause them to swerve either into the surveyor, into oncoming traffic or both. This seems like not only a very poor decision on the part of the surveyor which could compromise his safety as well as the safety of the public but also a poor choice for a photo to include in the magazine.

It's obvious that Mr. Pallamary is frustrated by the situation in San Diego and he has some legitimate gripes. However, San Diego is not the only place in the world where survey monuments and control get blacktopped over. To consider a monument or marker "unrecoverable" because it has been blacktopped over seems a little extreme if not lazy. Nobody enjoys chopping through blacktop to recover a survey point but it goes with the territory. Mr. Pallamary should be thankful that he doesn't live and work in a location where he has to chop through frozen blacktop or frozen ground to recover a survey point. In regard to his statement about creating potholes when recovering survey markers, it seems as if he is just adding to the problem, creating a public hazard and possibly harming the image

of the surveyor. He could carry some patch material with him in his truck or he could re-melt the chopped out bituminous chunks using a little gasoline and a match and make a nice patch. This works quite well, I've done it myself numerous times and my crews continue to do it on a regular basis. The public does not care that the survey marker was there first and that we as surveyors have a right to chop through the blacktop. All they see is a pothole left by a surveyor, it's irresponsible to leave an un-patched pothole and creates a bad image for the surveyor.

Finally, I also attended the ESRI Survey Summit. Although parts of it were good I think "excellent" may be a stretch. I couldn't help but feel that surveyors are an afterthought and not much effort was put into creating a worthwhile agenda. It would seem that with such a lofty title as "Survey Summit" more of the content would have been geared toward professional surveyors.

*Thank you,
Michael J Welling, LS
Washington County Surveyor
Stillwater, MN*

Crattie responds: Frankly, the underwear bothered me too. However, realistically speaking, within 15 years one will not be able to attend a surgery, court room or political convention without 70% of the participants being either "tatted up" or pierced in some way. Just look around now on any college campus at our future leaders, physicians, attorneys, accountants and surveyors. Zoot suits, Elvis' hips, long hair, there's nothing new under the Sun.

Pallamary responds: The photograph does not depict the entire safety layout and configuration. If you look behind the black truck in the left side of photograph, you can see some of the traffic cones that were laid out and that extend around the curve and down the street. The picture does not include the cones behind the photographer nor does it include the flag person also behind the photographer. The intent of the photograph was to display the narrow street and the challenges associated with the monument problem; all safety measures were implemented. In addition, the street dead ends a couple of hundred feet behind the black truck and

because the street is so narrow, the posted speed limit is very low. Notice also that there are no driveways in this area.

When I worked in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont in subzero weather conditions in the 1970's, the roads and dirt were so frozen, it took a considerable amount of time to set pins, spikes, stakes and hubs. It really became a problem when the temperature went under 10 below zero and the chill factor reached 30 or 40 degrees below zero. Incidentally, one of the reasons I moved to California was to work in a warmer climate where I am thankful I no longer work in a climate where I used to chop through frozen blacktop and frozen ground to recover a survey point.

In California, if one were to carry around cans of gasoline to melt chopped out bituminous chunks, he/she would need a large number of permits, indemnification agreements, insurance riders, city and coastal permits, hazardous waste permits, EPA safety zones, 40 hour HAZMAT training requirements not to mention a large number of related inspections. In addition, Southern California has had and continues to experience a large number of deadly wildfires. Most people that light fires like the one suggested and whether permitted or not, usually end up paying huge fines and going to jail. If you notice the adjacent topography, the hillsides are very steep. Above and below this site are large expanses of oily Eucalyptus trees. These burn very fast.

The entire purpose of the article is to discuss the hazards and problems created by the City when they do not do their job. If the monuments were raised and encased at the time of resurfacing as they law requires of them, the story would not exist. California law requires that land surveyors recover original monuments and they control the location of real property. It is patently unfair that private surveyors bear the burdens of government neglect.

Bilby Tower

Mr. Cheves,

I recently received your latest issue of *The American Surveyor* (Volume 9, Issue 7). On the cover of this issue are the five men that worked on dismantling the Louisiana Bilby tower as discussed in your article within this issue. I am very

disappointed at the choice made to put this picture on the cover of this magazine.

In my opinion, the land surveying profession is constantly battling its professional image. Many people do not have an understanding of the professional attributes of a land surveyor, what is involved in his, or her, daily tasks, or the level of education required to become a land surveyor. By placing an image of poorly dressed, shirtless, tattooed men, on the front of a professional magazine, this further depletes our professional image. These men did the job that they were asked to do and probably do a fine job at their duties. However, their images are not suited to the cover of this magazine for professionals. It would have been more appropriate to place a historical image of this Bilby tower on the cover, or something more noteworthy, and survey related, than what was chosen. By only glancing at the cover of this magazine, and without an understanding of the article in its interior, this just furthers the unprofessional image of the land surveyor by the public eye. Thanks to this type image promotion, we cannot expect professional respect by the public or the wages that go along with a professional position.

I hope that a better choice for the cover image will be made in the future—one that correctly depicts the professionalism of land surveyors.

Sincerely,

Jon P. Hoebelheinrich, RPLS
JPH Land Surveying, Inc.
Keller, Texas

Lathrop's Sense of Direction

My Dad was a merchandiser, fancy name for someone who drives around putting displays in drug stores, liquor stores and markets. He covered most of Los Angeles County and all of Orange County. As far back as I can remember I spent my summers with him and for a few years during the early 60's I did the same work. Pretty nice gig, \$140/week plus vehicle expense account and see the boss for an hour or two once a week.

On Fridays we would get our stops for the next week and over the weekend spend an hour or so setting up our routes. I could do this without a map. Even today I have a fair idea where business streets

are in the LA basin. My survey work, ground water monitoring wells, still sends me all over the So Cal area.

What I find though, is now, when on the freeways I have to read the street signs. For awhile I could not figure out why. It's the proliferation of sound walls along all freeways that abut residential areas. Really eliminates a lot of land marks. Like driving in a tan tunnel.

My wife has a Garmin and we sorta use it on trips. I, like that study stated, find the screen too limited, it would be nice to be able to zoom in and out like Google Earth. The worst thing about it is searching for a motel or Wendy's. It searches in a radius and finds stuff you already passed—real handy. It does take you to a specific address nicely.

She has almost no sense of direction. Don't even try and use north, south, east or west. Where with me that's all I want. And it's a learned thing. My son, a PE with a survey background, has the sense of direction but has no clue where Van Nuys is without a map.

I met my wife while overseas, she grew up in Vienna. About 20 years later she got me to accompany her on one of her trips to visit her family. Following her sister and brother in law from Salzberg back to Vienna at night we got separated. She was amazed that I found her mothers house without driving in circles until we tried to find a parking space.

W. Tom Foster, P.L.S.
North Tustin, Ca.

Landon Blake's Footsteps: The New Packing Shed

Landon Blake describes a situation that was probably caused by the failure to record deeds transferring title after the lot line adjustment was approved by the planning agency. The California Subdivision Map Act states (par 66412) "The lot line adjustment shall be reflected in a deed, which shall be recorded." However, more often than not, the recording of deeds is ignored. Consequently a lawyer or lending agency will use the latest recorded deed, missing the resolution recorded by the planning agency which includes the legal description for the new (adjusted) parcels.

The solution to a problem such as Mr. Blake described may be to assume

that the "new" parcels, without recorded deeds, to be illegal parcels. Even though the planner has approved the creation of the new parcels & the assessor has accepted the lot line adjustment maps & legals in the recorded resolution & has created new APN maps, the deeds have never been recorded & no title transfer has taken place. The planning agency could have insisted that deeds be recorded in tandem with the resolution & the assessor could have rejected the title transfer without deeds. However, I believe the ultimate responsibility lies with the surveyor who initiated the process & failed to follow through to completion.

Larry Otter, LS
Foothill Engineering

Bart Crattie's Last Tower Standing

"The Last Tower Standing" article in Vol.9, Issue 7 made me pause and say "Huh?"

"Wait a minute.. there's a few of these towers still on Merritt Island Florida."

And here's a couple of pictures that I snapped this morning of one and the monument directly under it (attached)..

I'm sure I'm not the only one who's brought this to your attention

D. Wayne Wright, PSM
Honeycutt and Associates, Inc.
Titusville, FL



FeedBack

Plane Table Surveying

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to “The American Surveyor” 2012 Vol. 9 No. 6 article “The Last Plane Table Surveyor?” by Norman G. Sloan.

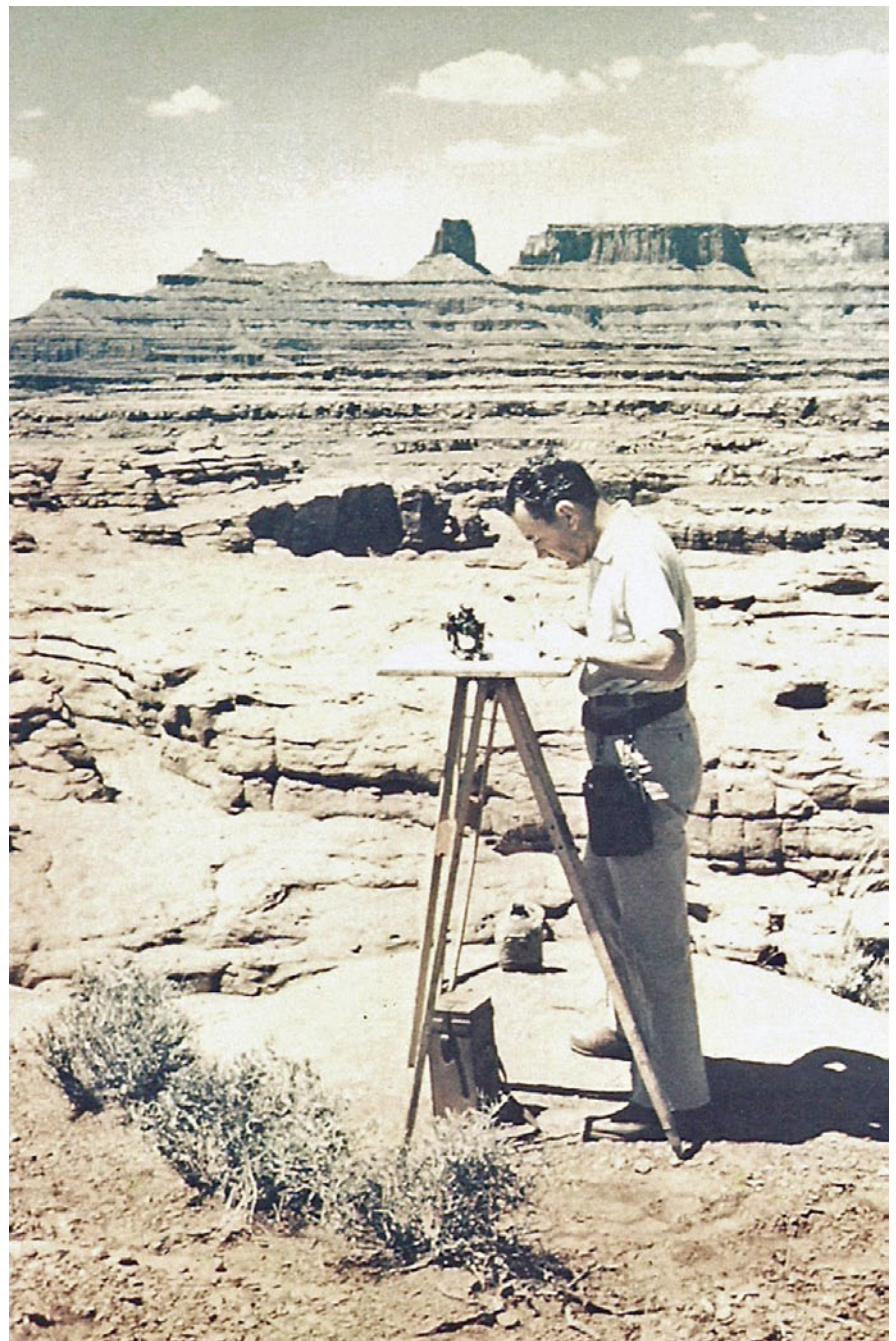
I am writing to inform you of a Registered Land Surveyor in Wichita, Kansas who is currently in his 74th year as a plane table surveyor. He will begin his 75th year of oil field surveying in September. This surveyor will celebrate his 95th birthday on September 23, 2012.

Mr. Robert E. “Bob” Moser began his surveying career in 1938 after being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy. He was hired in Wichita, Kansas as a rodman with Laughlin-Simmons & Co. out of Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. For two years he was a draftsman in the Oklahoma City office before receiving his own district in Tyler, Texas as a full-time oil field surveyor. In 1944, Bob Moser was transferred to Great Bend, Kansas where he “ran” elevations on drilling oil rigs for the next seventeen years. The following two years (1961–63), Mr. Moser worked out of Dallas, Texas calling on various midwestern companies about the services offered by Laughlin-Simmons & Co. During his entire surveying career with Laughlin-Simmons & Co., Mr. Moser was summer relief for other company surveyors in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Ohio while covering his own Kansas district.

The summer of 1963 brought Mr. Moser back to Wichita, Kansas where he continued to actively survey the eastern half of Kansas until the deaths of Mr. Laughlin and Mr. Simmons. The company then folded.

However, Mr. Moser has continued to keep his land surveyor’s license active and his work now includes “running”

elevations on drilling oil rigs, staking locations for new oil and gas wells, as well as locating “old” locations drilled back in the early 1930’s to present. He often laughs that he is now being hired by the grandsons who run their grandparents’ oil companies. Mr. Moser continues to use his original alidade, one of his two original tripods plus a



Response to Pallamary's San Diego Monument Destruction Article

My recent article regarding the destruction of survey monuments by the City of San Diego is noteworthy in many ways. Over the years I have written a large number of stories and several books as well as periodically posting an industry newsletter. None of these endeavors have received the volume of positive responses as has this article. Amongst the many comments I received, the following are archetypical:

I have been following with great interest your crusade for monument preservation in San Diego... I have not had much need to venture into San Diego City or County to perform surveys but I did have one notable experience which fits exactly with the problems you have been having... As you may guess, my research turned up very little and even less when I went to the city. Not only was there nothing available but their recovery system was extremely convoluted in my opinion and didn't turn up much more than wasted time and a charge for parking. Upon taking the field, I discovered nothing in the way of street ties (not surprising since there were no notes indicating that there would be any)... After pecking at the asphalt for a while with a chisel and hammer, we discovered that it was the concrete collar around a well monument... When we finally got it sufficiently uncovered we discovered that the steel monument cap was removed and discarded and the well was filled with asphalt... probably a foot deep. Lacking the necessary equipment (or budget) to dig up and remove over a foot of asphalt, we had to give up and managed to base our survey on a few found points further north for which no notes were provided but they fit the original alignment of [the street]... Mike, we are all indebted to you for taking on these bureaucrats. Thanks for all that you do.

I just read and appreciated your article about monument destruction in and around San Diego. I understand that to speak out as you have against officials who can affect your business takes professional integrity that is oftentimes absent when the consequences can be intimidating.



15' wooden rod, and does all his own drafting and accounting.

I know the previous facts to be true because Bob Moser is my dad and I have been his rodman off-and-on over the past 58 years. His latest surveying job was on a drilling oil rig just two weeks ago in McPherson County, Kansas.

Just thought your magazine would find it interesting to know there are various plane table surveyors still active out there. All that sunshine, fresh outdoor air, and miles of walking over uneven terrain must be good for the body.

**Marilyn Moser Hagemeister
Wichita, Kansas**



FeedBack

A private surveyor can lose his license for not filing a RS [Record of Survey]. These government employees are blatantly defying State law and since they are government employees their licenses should be revoked forever. If they don't have a license they can't hold their position at the city maybe that will get them to follow the rules. The biggest problem with government employees today is their "holier than thou" arrogance. Somewhere along the line their attitude has gone from them serving the public to the public serving them... My son is a licensed Civil Engineer and he has had the "privilege" of dealing with the City of San Diego. That road is filled with potholes.

Upon reading The American Surveyor's latest issue, I am appalled by actions of the local City government and its staff. The cadastral history, in the form of controlling land corners, is one of extreme importance, not only to surveyors, but to all land owners and the general public! The cost to the public of the destruction of historic cadastral monuments is not immediately recognized by either the private land owners or the city agencies... The cost of monument relocation, law suits and neighborhood disputes are only a small part of the true cost... I urge you and the local surveying professionals to continue to set the standard high and stay the course.

Hard-hitting article. Keep up the good work. Sorry to hear things are so bad in San Diego.

Nice work!

Other than a letter suggesting that I and other California surveyors fill the asphalt patches with gasoline and burn the detritus to assure that the patch is sealed, an inadvisable suggestion in fire prone Southern California not to mention the regulatory permitting nightmares, two local surveyors, both of whom work for the same company, were critical of the manner in which the story was presented; they felt that I should have exhausted other remedies before having the article published in a national magazine. Notwithstanding the extended efforts and problems I



encountered 25 years ago when the matter was ultimately taken up by the State Attorney General's office, what these critics did not know is the depth and extent of my efforts over the last three and a half years prior to the article being published, to resolve these problems. Indeed, to quote the philosopher, poet and novelist George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Prior to the AS article being released, I reached out upwards of thirty times to several city surveyors along with sending letters, emails, making phone calls, sending Federal Express packages and certified letters to others including the mayor, the city council, the city attorney, department directors, deputy directors, deputy city attorneys, and the city clerk, all characteristically, to no avail. When the television reporter Mike Turko ran his story, he spent three weeks making similar inquiries and asking critical questions, all of which went unanswered, falling on deaf ears. In addition, and in an effort to engage in a formal debate on this issue, following the filing a complaint with the local Professional Practices Committee, I offered to make a \$1,000.00 donation to the charity of choice, in the name of anyone at the City of San Diego, including the City Attorney's office, who would agree to present the City's position in an open and public forum. There were no takers.

Prior to the recent article in the AS magazine, I contacted several city surveyors, department heads, directors and others to let them know that the article had been written and did anyone want to respond or reply before being released. I did this as a courtesy, consistent with my

efforts over the previous three and a half years. Again, no one responded.

Since the article was published, I made an inquiry to the City following some problems a client was having regarding undocumented City survey monuments. I wanted to know who was placing questionable survey monuments in front of my client's property in the area of where previous record monuments had been placed and that had been destroyed. Predictably, no one responded to me. I was once again forced to resort to the California Public Records Act in order to compel a response and to date, it has been slow in coming.

Given these problems along with my continued efforts, it is evident that the principal problem exists because many municipal surveyors operate under the misguided belief that they are not subject to the same laws that govern licensed professionals. This appears to be a common problem across the country.

With regards to the mistaken and improper notion that the City has not had a chance to respond to my inquiries and efforts and assuming my thirty odd documented requests and invitations was not sufficient, not to mention Mike Turko's efforts, the magazine publisher, Marc Cheves has graciously extended an invitation for anyone at the city to reply to the article. I am aware that one individual made a call, complaining and not surprisingly, this individual did not leave his name or number.

As another point of curiosity, my two critics accused me of using the "bully pulpit" of the magazine to advance my position. This is an entertaining criticism considering I am a mere David fighting Goliath. When one considers that of the

many letters and emails I have received, the one underlying theme of every other local surveyor is the concern of retribution from the city for publicly supporting my efforts. This is a sad and disturbing concern.

As to the evolution of this story, after spending the last three and a half years fighting the city on these issues, it is the city field surveyors who have channeled the course of this dialogue for at each and every step of the way, I have informed them that if they continued doing what they are doing, I would continue to elevate the debate. How many years of inquiry and failed attempts at communication must one endure and why isn't anyone smart enough to call me up and ask me to sit down and talk this all out? This is a pretty straight forward process and in spite of the ignorance and arrogance of a lot of people at the city, this eventuality was laid all out for them.

The ball still remains in the City's court and every day, I place it there hoping that they will work with me. In the meantime, the paving continues. A recent press release by San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders announced the City's intentions (<http://www.sandiego.gov/mayor/pdf/factsheets/2012/factsheet120620.pdf>)

The city will repave hundreds of additional city streets after taking advantage of record-low interest rates on Tuesday to issue bonds for \$75 million in capital projects. The city will spend more than \$30 million of that money to repave some 60 miles of San Diego streets, continuing Mayor Jerry Sanders' aggressive efforts to improve roadways left in disrepair by decades of neglect. This latest round of resurfacing comes after the city spent \$47 million over the past two years on one of the largest streets-repaving projects in city history.

And so the destruction continues.

—Mike Pallamary, PS 