

Surveying 'Da Situation



By John D. Matonich, LS

John Matonich is President and CEO of Rowe Incorporated, and is a licensed surveyor in Michigan and Ohio. He currently serves as Chairman of the Joint Gov't Affairs Committee for ACSM, and Chairman of the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee of NSPS.

Memories of Dad



Dad's Garden

In order to feed a growing family, my father kept a vegetable garden behind our house. One year he received permission to plant an additional garden on a vacant city lot we didn't own. I think the reason Dad got permission was because the lot was severely overgrown and the owner knew my father wouldn't rest until the lot was cleared and the ground was ready for planting. My father took his gardening very seriously, but I know it was always a labor of love. He worked every day on this lot for several weeks before he could till the soil and plant it. He then spent all summer picking rocks, weeding, and caring for the vegetables growing tall and strong.

As it turned out, this particular lot was located on a route used by one of the local parish priests for his daily stroll around town. He couldn't help but watch the hard work and progress Dad made on this garden spot. In the early fall, the fruits of his labor were ready to harvest and Dad had stepped back to admire the garden just as the priest walked by. "Poncho," the priest called to him, "You and the Lord certainly have a beautiful garden." My father hesitated for a moment and replied, "Thank you, Father, but you should have seen it when the Lord had it all by himself." It took a while for me to stop laughing because I know that was how my Dad would've handled the situation.

It was great to hear a new story that evening. When I asked the teller why I hadn't heard it before, he said a previously told tale jogged his memory and knocked the story loose. I'm glad it did—I know it won't be the last time it gets told.

And that's the situation as I survey it . . . *AS*

As I continue to mature (or *age*, as my kids point out), certain events or smells trigger memories of times past. Recently some friends and I embarked on a sausage making day. We used some ground meat from a previously successful hunt and a recipe my father received from an old family friend named Jimmy who had passed away many years ago. We used to make it often when I was growing up at home, but hadn't made it in a while. As soon as we mixed the spices together, their familiar smell flooded my mind with memories of growing up around Jimmy. My dad and I would go to his cottage almost every Sunday morning in the late spring and summer. Dad would help Jimmy with whatever projects he had going and I got to fish for Northern Pike off his dock. Besides almost always catching some nice fish, the highlight was at noon when we all came in and sat down to a

big dinner of spaghetti and meatballs prepared by Jimmy's wife, Margaret. It was about the best spaghetti I've ever had. Both Jimmy and Margaret came to America from Italy and were very proud of their heritage, but even more proud to be Americans. I spent many hours listening to stories about their "old country" customs and traditions. It amazed me that simply smelling those spices again would trigger all that reflection. It certainly had been a long time since I thought about those days.

I guess "getting older" causes this kind of reflection as well. I'm finding this to be true when I gather with friends from back home, especially at camp. It seems at least one night is spent reliving some past events. Many of them are old favorites and get told every year. Occasionally, someone will come up with a new one that I haven't heard in a while or perhaps have never heard before. That was the case this year when I heard a story for the first time involving my father.