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The View from Andy's Desk

September 1, 2010-Andrew R. Cassano is a City/Regional Planner and Professional Land Surveyor with more than 41 years of experience in Northern California. He is CEO of Nevada City Engineering, Inc., a firm offering regional planning, surveying, and civil engineering consulting to the private and public sector since 1978

Surveying: The World's Oldest Profession?

OK, maybe it's the second oldest profession. But surveying goes way back. I found some internet research on surveying references in the Bible. One of my favorites was from Deuteronomy 27:17: "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen." I had a client paraphrase that same sentiment just last week.

Washington and Lincoln were surveyors. In fact all of the presidents on Mount Rushmore were surveyors at some point. In our Gold Rush history, hearty crews surveyed the original sections of land throughout the rugged Sierra. My wife Kathy commissioned the oil painting in my office from my friend and talented western artist, Steve Weir, showing such a survey crew on a rocky Sierra ridgetop morning. We recently retraced these guys in the steep South Yuba Canyon.

In our region, there were many important surveyors, including H.S. Bradley, Ed Uren, J. F. O'Conner, Jack Siegfried, T.H. McGuire and son Carlos, G. R. Beechel, and others. Their careers are forever memorialized in local maps, markers, deeds, and government meeting minutes.

I love surveying's mixture of science, measurement, mathematics, law, and physical demands. It's a white collar profession that challenges the mind to recall the formulas, complete the calculations, and apply the legal boundary principles. It's a blue collar profession that eagerly meets the physical challenges of hillsides, brush, poison oak, bees, rattlesnakes, hot sun, and

freezing winter days. It may be the world's most well rounded job with good measures of brains and brawn.

Traditionally, surveyors were born from apprenticeships, and until fairly recent times, college bachelor degree programs such as that available from Fresno State were non-existent. I started my career studying under Ken Baker, and supplemented my experience with college classes and self study of textbook methodology and boundary law. Finally, like all licensed land surveyors, I passed 16 hours of rigorous State exams. And continuing to stay abreast of law and technology is essential.

We thank all of the people that have trusted us with their surveying needs. We appreciate your patronage, and for what it's worth, we had fun doing it. Contact us for a free estimate anytime.



Our Surveying Coordinator, John Baker, surveys atop a cliff in the rugged South Yuba River Canyon. He is retracing the steps of Nineteenth Century surveyors using a highly capable, modern total station that is a precision transit, electronic distance measurer, and computer all in one. (Photo: Daniel Heinz)