

1975-1981

Before the 1st ACSM reorganization



Twenty-five years later, the former “Land Surveys Division” of ACSM, which vigorously pursued semi-autonomous status within the parent association right up to 1981, is now a nationally incorporated entity governed by a good deal of volunteerism, professional pride and commitment, and vigorous search for ways and means of further advancing the surveying profession. Some of its fights on behalf of its members are decades old, others reflect new reality; all are very instructive. Let’s now look back to the years shortly before 1981 and refresh our memory of some of the most profound thoughts and actions that preceded the first restructuring of ACSM.

Down the memory lane ...

In 1976, at the close of his opening address to the ACSM-ASP annual spring convention, A.O. Quinn, P.E., R.L.S., said: “We must be certain that our own professional standards, ethical behavior, and technical capabilities will continue to flow to solve the problems that are before us.”

Within that context, one of the urgent issues before the organization in those years was the classification of land surveying employees. Don Bender, an ACSM member, spearheaded a study on titles and descriptions used at state and federal levels, which provided the basis for two letters delivered by ACSM to four federal agencies—Labor, Census, HEW, and the Office of Management and Budget—proposing changes to the definition and classification of various land surveying positions.

Energy, it appears, was of national concern as far back as 1977, so much that “the need for development of domestic sources of energy fuels to maintain our current level of living in a free society” and “the support roles of surveying, mapping, geodesy, photogrammetry, and remote sensing” formed the topic of the keynote delivered by William A. Radlinski at the fall technical meeting that year.

Jon M. Leverenz, incoming ACSM president, said in 1978 that he saw the office “as a way of continuing to use my energies to interact with the many interesting and talented people in the cartography, control surveys, and land surveys professions. I expect to be working with you in a highly creative way to define jointly issues and problems and to aid in developing rational thorough solutions.

Several legislative issues affecting land surveyors were under review at that time: the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, the Brooks Bill, the ABA Model Procurement Code for State and Local Government, and the federal occupation definition and designation system.

A victory was scored when in 1979 the American Bar Association's Board of Governors formally approved ACSM's request to include land surveyors on an equal basis with architects and engineers in the ABA Model Procurement Code. Services were defined as "those professional services within the scope of the practice of architecture, professional engineering, and land surveying, as defined by the laws of this state."

Earlier that year, tracing the history of aerial photography and its use in defense at ACSM-ASP's convention in Washington, D.C., Lt. Gen. Tighe, USAF and director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said, "We are limited only by our ability to conceive new ideas." Congressman Trent Lott of Mississippi echoed his sentiments in his keynote address, by encouraging proactive attitude: "Remove yourself from observer and shape the future by policy making and decisionmaking."

Incoming ACSM president Urho A. Uotila (who passed this March) added a pinch of realism to the exuberance of those heady days: "Only in a dictatorial system can things be changed overnight—in a democratic system, progress is slower." Walter Dix' *Recollections* do not specify what Uotila may have been referring to in particular, but it may not be entirely a coincidence that deliberations on the first reorganization of ACSM into three semi-autonomous organizations commenced under his stewardship.

The change that ACSM was about to embark upon was not coincidental either. "More than science is the issue," said USGS' Rupert B. Southard at the 1979 fall meeting in Sioux Falls, S.D. "Technology must keep changing to meet the needs... the computer revolution allows us to do what we did before better, faster, and more of it. What I do, what you do, has a bearing on our success. It's the opportunity of a lifetime."

But it was not only new technology that was behind the changes rippling through the profession: the country was appreciative. "Now you surveyors have finally gotten the little black box you have always been looking for," said keynote speaker Maj. Gen. W.L. Nicholson III, USAF and DMA director, at the 1980 annual convention. "You have fostered some truly remarkable surveying; the country is indebted to you!"

And all along, surveyors within the ACSM have forged ahead with the issues they considered to be of utmost importance for the profession. They studied the pros and cons of offering certifica-

tion programs; they requested, and got approval from, the Accreditation Board for Engineering Technology (ABET) to expedite the implementation of new criteria for professional land surveying programs; and they encouraged the National Surveying Teachers Conference to initiate an exchange of information with practicing professionals. And they continued to play a prominent role in the proposed change of ACSM into an association of three professional organizations.

Several other actions, long under scrutiny, were advanced in 1980—a system of awarding and recording CEUs earned from workshops was approved, as was a new surveyors liability program, managed by the V.O. Schinnerer firm. The issue of conversion to the SI (metric) system in the U.S. struggled for support, with some surveyors being "dead set against conversion," according to Gunther Greulich, the author of the "Metric Corner" in the *ACSM Bulletin*. However, adding standards for water boundaries to the "Minimum Standard Detail Requirements for Land Title Surveys" was wholeheartedly approved.

Another watershed decision was the Board's approval of the names—National Society of Professional Surveyors, American Cartographic Association, and American Association for Geodetic Surveying—for the proposed new member organizations of ACSM.

In 1981, more than 3000 registrants participated in the ACSM-ASP annual convention in Washington, D.C. "Members of the three ACSM Divisions—Cartography, Control Surveys, and Land Surveys—arrived with mixed feelings about the restructuring that would occur during the week," wrote Dix. Perhaps sensing some of this ambivalence, keynote address speaker Rupert B. Southard of USGS' Mapping Division, said: "...one of the surest ways to lighten the burden of fear is with the force of applied knowledge, the muscle of technology ... The advancement of professionalism in all our fields comes from education and knowledge, and they must continuously be applied."

In the twenty-five years that followed, the National Society of Professional Surveyors has applied this maxim to every action and every program the organization has undertaken on behalf of its membership.

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[Quotes from *Recollections of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, 1941-1991*]