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Surveyor provides valuable service

By Nikki Young

While just about everybody in the construction industry knows that those orange-vested guys and gals on the side of the road are taking pictures of property and calculating boundaries, it's not all that surveyors do – it's just the most visible. There is much more happening in advance of the crews going out – and then again after they return – than meets the eye as you speed past on the highway.

Commercial surveying can be anything from establishing lots in major subdivisions, topography, utility location, researching a chain of title from as far back as the 1700's, or geodetic positioning for the Federal Aviation Administration to install radar tower sites at the airport.

The complete field of commercial surveying is very much a comprehensive piece of the development and construction industry and is a professional service that **Keith Jimenez, R.P.L.S.**, owner of **SurveySA**, and his staff of 19 provide, along with a thorough attention to history and detail.

Keith began his career when he was just 14 years old working for his father,

Ernest Jimenez, R.P.L.S., as a *Rodman* (a person who helps in the field). After college, he became a *Party Chief* (the person in charge of a survey crew), where he had his first exposure to commercial surveying. Today, the Texas Department of Transportation uses one of his signature surveys as an example for all other surveys to follow in format, because he clearly displays all metric and imperial information.

Over the course of his career, Jimenez has been willing to face unique and multi-faceted, challenging projects. One in particular was that of the boundary retracement of Fort Sam Houston as established circa 1924 by Lt. Maybin Wilson. Jimenez incorporated years of history, research and surveying skills to complete the project, discovering numerous original monuments (or physical manifestations), which were used to mark each particular piece of land by the early surveyor. These discoveries helped to es-

tablish the original boundaries for Fort Sam Houston instead of what was "officially" recorded on the Bexar County plat.

"Challenges like these attracted me originally to the profession," Keith said. "I grew up on a farm and still like trekking around in the forests, jumping over stream beds and ant beds to find a certain tree or fence line, and the excitement of the historical 'paper chases' are mentally intriguing. I get to read original documents by sometimes-famous explorers and surveyors, reading their original intent, reviewing their drawings and figures. After checking their amazingly accurate measurements and angles with modern GPS (Global Positioning System) capabilities and signing the final survey for my client, I sometimes take an extra minute to read a few side notes about hardships they were enduring at the time, including snake, ant, and mosquito bites, sunburn, stomach ailments, and bone breaks. Well, then I find out that some things haven't changed in my profession at all!"



Relationships are Key

By Glenn Thomas

If you were to "shop" banks, you would learn that almost every bank offers the exact same basic services. In choosing your financial institution, you should look for a bank that believes all good business relationships should be seen as partnerships.

A quality necessary for a successful partnership is finding a banker who *knows* your business. Is your banker involved in the construction industry? Is your banker not

only a member of trade organizations, but also involved and active in the group? Does his bank sponsor events? Does your banker sit on boards that discuss issues specific to the construction industry? How comfortable is your banker in discussing these issues with you? Does he offer you advice that makes sense to you? Does the banker bring research findings and competitive industry statistics to your attention? Your bankers' involvement and ability to share knowledge with you is essential in establishing a long-term relationship.

Another quality present in every good relationship is open, truthful communication. This means no surprises. You should, for example, provide frank and early disclosure of any troubles on the horizon. In addition to any bad news, you should also share a well thought-out strategy for resolving the problem. I'm willing to bet that the vast majority of bankers go out of their way to find workable solutions for companies that are up-front with them and don't avoid discussion of painful topics.

There's an old saying that everyone wants to believe in the truth until it's not convenient. This does not apply to your relationship with your banker! Hiding business problems from your banker is a formula for disaster.

Communicate even when you don't need anything from your banker. And don't be afraid to ask questions. I'm not implying that becoming your banker's best friend will be all it takes to get you out of a hole when things go from boom to bust. But your best source for future capital is likely to come from your existing sources.

When times are tough, what you need is a fair hearing and a willing hand. And you'll be less likely to face reluctant lenders if you've worked hard to build relationships based on trust, respect and honest communication. In fact, your banker will probably prove to be your strongest advocate.



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