

Introduction

Surveyors are literate folk, and it has always seemed to me that the national survey magazines are several cuts above the typical trade magazine. So it's quite a privilege to have written regularly for two of them, *Professional Surveyor* and *The American Surveyor*. It's also a privilege to have worked with two fine editors, Marc and Jackie Cheves. With their encouragement and assistance, I was able to write and publish several articles that might have seemed unusual for a survey magazine – for example, I have written about the Asian board game go, mind-mapping, the poetry of Robert Frost, and the maverick architect Christopher Alexander.

I wanted to write about these things because it seems to me that surveyors share at least one trait that is unusual in other professions: an ability to mentally visualize and manipulate space, a spatial gift that they exercise almost daily. A common thread in my writing is an appeal to that gift.

I also believe that surveying is in something of a decline, especially when compared to the profession's status in the early days of our great nation. Surveyors were master planners and engineers, often the principals in charge of vast projects – the GLO

system being the most obvious example. As proof of their elevated status, surveyors often rose to high office, or even the *highest* office... but it's difficult to imagine a surveyor in the White House now. There are a lot of reasons for this, but one is that we've let ourselves be defined as technicians rather than scientists and creators.

I don't have a solution for this but surely *part* of the solution is for surveyors to reclaim an aspect of our identity that seems to have lapsed in recent decades – our role as intellectuals. Put simply, it's not enough to measure well, or even to apply case law well. We should be considerably more involved in policy issues. The debate over how this country is being shaped is still very active, but it's being conducted within planning and zoning departments, by government employees who are (sometimes) well-meaning but who often, frankly, lack the experience, gifts, and insight that come with a successful surveying career. Surveyors are well placed to influence this debate – we are the hub that connects government, corporate and private interests and we could also be the theorists that frame the debate, the *intelligentsia* if you will.

And that's the other thread that I hope runs through all my writing; surveyors are smart people and I've tried to write articles that appeal to, and amplify, that intelligence.

Thanks for reading my book. I hope you enjoy it.

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