The Responsible Management of Technical Staff

By Mitch Ettinger, ALS

Reprinted from "ALS News" - June 2011 - Volume 40-1

Alberta Land Surveyors are granted the right to practice professional land surveying by legislation and through maintaining membership in a self-governing professional association. Like all rights, this right comes with obligations. Each of us has a solemn duty to maintain personal professional competency, to practice in accordance with specified ethical standards, and to foster and maintain public faith in Alberta Land Surveyors and their work.

As we move through our careers, we usually become less field-oriented, less technically hands-on, and more involved in business decisions and the supervision or management of technical staff. These roles increase our level of responsibility because we must not only remain aware of current survey standards and requirements but also provide effective direction to technical staff. Our degree of competency is significantly defined by the extent to which we meet these two obligations.

The objective of the Practice Review Board (PRB) is to improve practitioner competency through the Continuing Competency Review (CCR) program. In the process of reviewing more than 98 practitioners under this new program, we have found that most Alberta Land Surveyors are competent, and that they provide a service in which the public can have confidence.

However, the CCR process has also flagged situations where practitioners have strayed off course or demonstrated one or more deficiencies with respect to competence. In my term as a PRB member, I have observed three recurring shortcomings, each of which is related to our professional obligation to manage technical staff responsibly.

1. Written Procedures

Practitioners often fail to provide sound guidance to technical staff through written procedures. The CCR process focuses particularly on written procedures for GNSS surveys and conventional surveys. Although these procedures should deal with redundancy issues, they should not stop there. Technical staff also benefit from (and appreciate) written standards, procedures, and structure for their workflow. Providing written procedures not only clarifies technical requirements but also increases productivity. The procedures need not be presented in "manual" form; they can often be in the form of a memo to technical staff prescribing effective workflow procedures and ensuring that these are followed.

2. Field Notes

Most practitioners stress the importance of good field notes to their technical staff. However, with the advent of GNSS, some field staff and their supervisors have come to believe that capturing digital data eliminates the requirement for well-written field notes. We have a professional obligation to ensure that field crews understand and accept the importance of good field notes, and the ideal way to communicate this is through a written procedures document. The Manual of Standard Practice provides good generic guidance and can serve as a starting point for written procedures, but many of us have "niche-based" practices for which we should also provide technical staff with specific guidelines and samples.

3. Checklists

I once avoided checklists because they seemed trivial and mundane, but I have come to appreciate how much difference they can make for both me and my technical staff. Checklists can improve effectiveness quite remarkably all the way through the life cycle of a project. Since implementing checklists, I've seen significant improvements in the quality and consistency of field notes, field work, and final survey products, and I strongly encourage other practitioners to use them too. Sometimes a simple tool can make a world of difference.

Every ALS has a professional obligation to provide accurate and reliable land surveying services, and this requires us to manage technical staff responsibly by providing written procedures, stressing the requirement for good field notes, and using detailed checklists for every project. Each of these practices can help us to maintain professional competency. The PRB assists us with this obligation through competency reviews. I encourage you to embrace the CCR process and use it to improve your professional competence, your business practice, and public confidence in the work of Alberta Land Surveyors.

Local Land Surveyors Trivia: Allan Wayne Shattuck

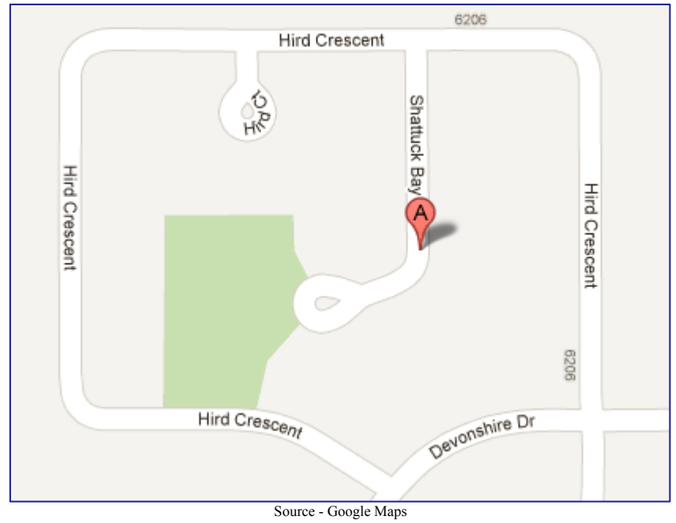
Compiled by Greg Hluska

Wayne Stockton let us know about a bay in Northwest Regina that is named after a former member of the Sask Land Surveyors Association. Shattuck Bay is named after Allan Shattuck (commission #084), who received his commission in 1935.

We did some research and found this Report of the Committee of Biography. Sources are unknown.

Allan Wayne Shattuck

Allan Wayne Shattuck died at his home in Kelowna, B.C. on May 30, 1976. He was 70 years of age. Mr. Shattuck is survived by his wife, Isabel of Kelowna, daughters Aileen Ouvrard and Linda Shattuck of Montreal, and son Douglas of Regina.



Source - Google Maps

Mr. Shattuck was born in Aberdeen, South Dakota, on August 8, 1905. The family moved to Mossbank, Saskatchewan, and he attended public and part of his high school there. He took his Grade XII in Regina and taught school for two years before attending the University of Saskatchewan where he received his Degree in Engineering in 1930.

Engineering jobs were non-existent when Mr. Shattuck graduated and he went back to teaching for a number of years at Assiniboine and Govan and worked in a department store in Regina.

He received his Commission as a Saskatchewan Land Surveyor on February 6, 1935, Commission No. 84.

From 1938 to 1942 Allan Shattuck was City Engineer for the City of Weyburn. He joined the Air Force at this time and served until his discharge in 1945.

After the war Mr. Shattuck was employed briefly with the Department of Public Works for the Province and in 1946 joined the staff of the City of Regina as Assistant Superintendent of Waterworks. In 1955 he was appointed the Design Engineer for the City.

While working for the City of Regina he carried out the initial service for the location of the Buffalo Pound headworks for the construction of a water treatment plant and was project engineer for the design and construction of the filtration plant. He was in charge of the installation of the Buffalo Pound pipe line and was a key witness in the Precast Pipeline case in 1952-53 which was won by the City. He served as President of our Association in 1950.

Mr. Shattuck joined the Ontario Water Resources Commission in 1957 as Chief Engineer in charge of construction. In 1972 he spent a year in Afghanistan as a consultant in a water supply project. He retired to Kelowna in 1973 and continued to work as a sanitary engineering consultant.

Allan Shattuck was an avid woodworker and enthusiastic hunter.

Canada Iron Ltd. have established an Allan Shattuck memorial bursary at the University of Waterloo in recognition of his contribution to his profession.