

Surveying at Oregon Institute of Technology
Klamath Falls, Oregon
Earl F. Burkholder - October 2019

It was my privilege to teaching in the Surveying Program at Oregon Institute of Technology from 1980 to 1993. I enjoyed sharing the learning experience with many students and count those years as some of the best in my career.

Oregon Tech, as it is fondly referred to by many, was established in 1947 and graduated the first 2-year surveying graduates in 1951. I was teaching there in 1987 when we celebrated OIT's 40th anniversary. It was quite an experience as we enticed many alumni to return to campus with a program that included, among others, the "new" GPS technology.

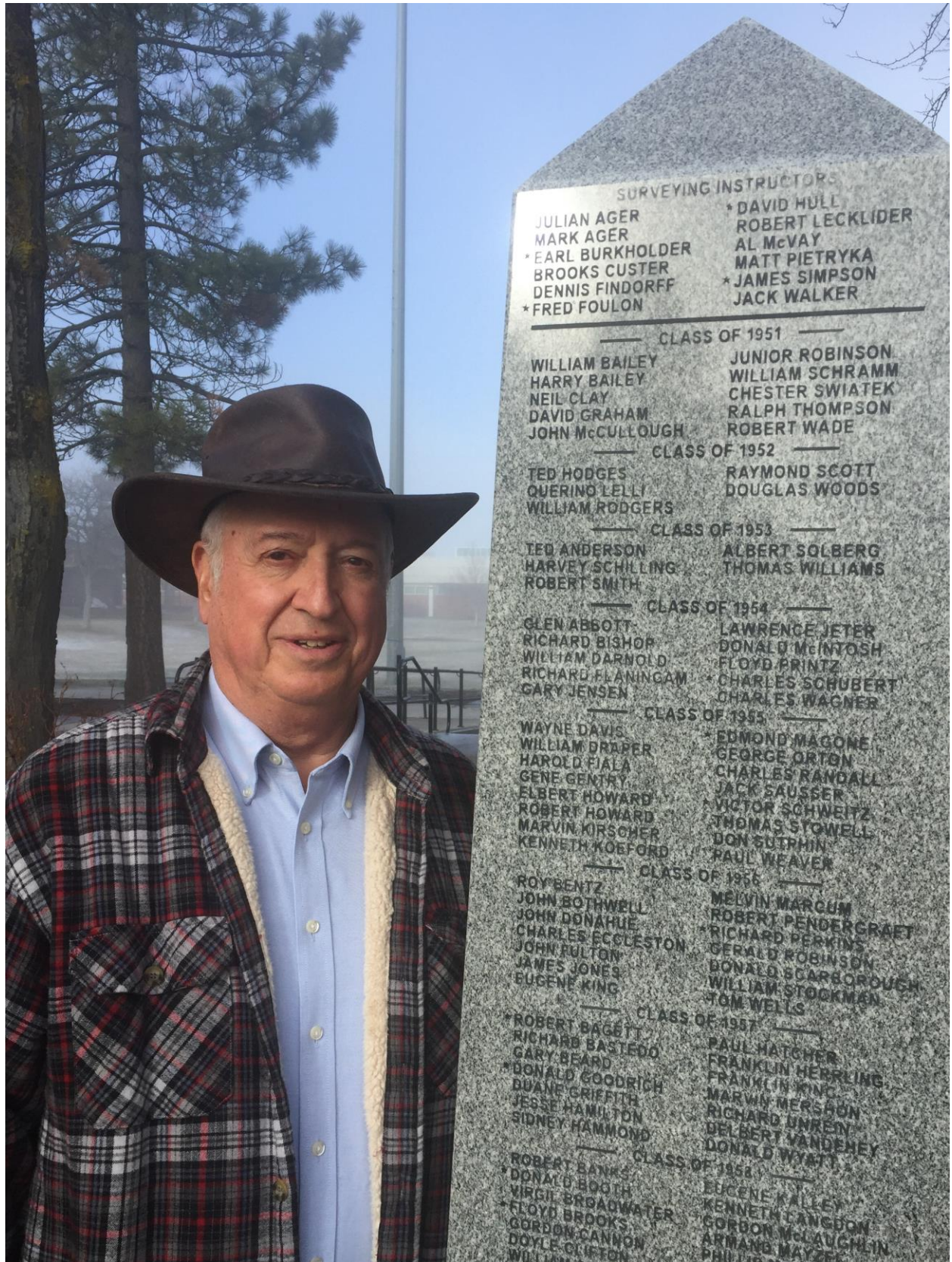
In addition to input from many students, I learned much about "practical" surveying and other valuable lessons in life from the Curriculum Coordinator, Professor David Hull. One way to describe Dave is to note the sign posted in his office "I'd like to help you out. Which way did you come in?" In his own way, Dave excelled at bringing out the best of others.

I left OIT at the end of 1993 to pursue larger interests in GPS surveying. Let it be said that my fascination with combining geometry with GPS results began at OIT. I've enjoyed an exciting career since then, but those years at Oregon Tech remain unequalled.

OIT celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the institution in 1997. Regretfully, I was not able to participate except to contribute to the obelisk project. The 4-sided monument showing names of all surveying graduates from 1951 to 1998 occupies a prominent place on campus. Donna and I were privileged to visit campus in the Spring of 2019 at which time I chatted with my successor, Professor Jack Walker, about the, now called Geomatics, Program. Point of interest - Mr. Walker was a Senior in the first geodesy class I taught at Oregon. He has done very well with the program since joining the faculty and when he retires, I'm willing to bet that the stories of his career and reputation will rival those of Dave Hull. Congratulation Jack!

Subsequent pages in this web page show me posed with the side of the obelisk naming the faculty and as well as views of all 4 sides of the obelisk. A newspaper account of the 50th Anniversary is also included.





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Surveyors leave lasting impression

by Kara Johnston

The last weekend in September, 54 graduates of the surveying program arrived in Klamath Falls for a reunion and technical meeting. What an impression they left behind. Here's the story . . .

Shortly after beginning my tenure as OIT alumni director, I received a letter from Tim Kent, BSVT '71. The letter was innocent enough - another alumnus wanting to have a reunion (that's what we do after all) and raise a little money for a project. I agreed to help in whatever way I could, not comprehending the incredible journey I was about to take.

A mere eight months later, I was fully baptized in the lingo and customs of surveyors, surrounded by their true-blue alumni spirit and overwhelmed by their generosity.

You see, Tim Kent is one of those alumni I had only read about . . . a super-alum.

At conferences I attend and in books I read, super-alumni are mentioned with a strict sense of reverence and awe. Super-alumni come from a very distinct gene pool of achievers and visionaries. It is akin to the legend of the Knights of the Holy Grail - you want to believe they exist only because their service is so noble and pure, but you don't count on actually seeing one up close and personal.

The first part of Tim's plan was to host a

reunion weekend for surveying graduates and former faculty, people best remembered for their tripod instruments and cold-weather resilience.

He enlisted the help of David Hull, a stern instructor fondly revered by all former students, to track down and enlist other former teachers. Lance Bishop, '82, volunteered to help plan a golf activity during the weekend and to track down friends and colleagues.

Three heads are always better than one, so the reunion was fast becoming a reality. This would not be a standard cocktail party rendezvous.

The plan was fairly simple - create something of substance and alumni will come. Throughout the summer, plans developed for various reunion activities.

Because everyone agreed that the reunion should offer a good mix of social and educational events, Tim began

recruiting fellow alumni to give oral presentations on their lives and careers.

He invited two world-renowned experts, also alumni, to present a technical meeting, allowing attendees to brush up on professional skills. Receptions, lunches and dinners were planned. Everything was falling into place.

But people can't come if they're not invited. This presented our biggest task-making sure the class lists were accurate and current. Tim and I spent many long hours pouring over yearbooks, commencement programs, transcripts and other sources verifying names, class years and other important information. But by the end of summer we were ready to go.

The schedule was finalized, and registration brochures were mailed. And we waited. Waited for people to say "Yes, I will be there". Responses trickled in at first, but soon we had a full-fledged event with 54 registrants. Excitement was building. And we waited. Waited for people to come.

The opening event was a small reception in the newly opened lodge at the Running Y Resort. Many alumni had not seen each other since graduation. (I'm sure you have attended a high school or college reunion and understand how hard it is to converse about 20 years of life in one evening.) It was a perfect time for people to casually catch up with old friends before proceeding into the full schedule of events. The evening proved to be a good omen of things to come.

The following day, attendees participated in a first-rate technical meeting, co-sponsored by the South Central Chapter of the Public Land Surveyors of Oregon, and led by two of OIT's finest graduates.

Bob Dahl '78 led the first half of the session with "The Surveyor, the Public Land Survey System and the 21st Century." That session examined the evaluation and documentation of boundary evidence with the caveat that the true understanding of the legal principals of boundary location are only understood by the presiding judge. Bob, currently with the BLM in Washington D.C., is considered an expert in this area of surveying.

Mark Smirnov '78, taught the afternoon "Water Boundaries" session. Mark led the



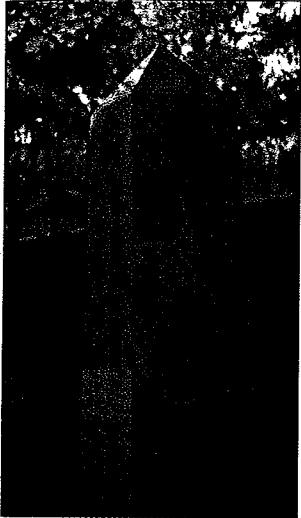
Victor Schweitz '55 and Edith Forkner '98 unveil the monument



Once the monument arrived on campus, the next step was to move it from the transporting flatbed to the prepared site.



Tim Kent '71 and Assistant Professor Dennis Findorff drape the newly placed monument.



The obelisk is shaded by a canopy of trees.

class through a study of the sometimes perplexing area of water boundaries and specific case law examples in Oregon. Mark, also a respected expert in his field, currently resides in Boise where he is a riparian boundary specialist with the BLM.

After the technical meet-

ing, attendees enjoyed a western supper with all the fixins' at the stunning Running Y Resort. The food was good, but the conversations were better.

Many alumni and faculty shared their stories and memories of life at OJT. For one solid hour the room ebbed and flowed between tear-inducing humor and poignant remembrances. Everyone had a great story about a professor or a classmate or "how things were back in the old days" (you know, before GIS). It was an engaging trip down memory lane.

The reunion was proving to be a success, and the best was yet to come. The second part of Tim's plan was slightly precarious. He wanted to construct a 7-foot granite obelisk on campus, funded entirely by alumni donations and inscribed with the names of all surveying graduates and faculty since the start of the program in 1951.

He envisioned the monument as a permanent testament to the legions of students who passed through OIT's doors, many of whom now provide the backbone of the surveying industry in the Pacific Northwest and other areas.

This monument would speak volumes to current and future students - whether or not they were surveying majors - about the vision and vitality of alumni. Visitors to campus would see the monument and realize the alumni loyalty our school enjoys. Prospective

students would see first-hand that a college decision is not just for four years, but for a lifetime.

"Hmmm . . .," I thought. "A little piece of granite can do all that?" Indeed it can.

The unveiling ceremony proved to be the highlight of the weekend. President Martha Anne Dow, EIT Dean Walter Buchanan and Department Chair Howard Thurston gave inspiring remarks and thanked alumni for their tremendous support.

Victor Schweitz '55 and Edith Forkner '98, representing the oldest and most-recent graduates respectively, were asked to do the honors.

After a human drum roll and the peeling away of the blue and yellow covering, the monument was revealed to silence from the audience, then a few ooh's and ah's, and finally applause.

It was spectacular. The obelisk had gone from Tim's mind, to an image on paper, to reality. Here it was—right before our very eyes. Alumni silently approached the monument as



Bob Dahl '78 leads a session on PLSS issues.



Surveying alumni proudly pose for a group photo.

if it were an altar made of gold, gently feeling its smoothness and searching for names. Some rubbed their names on paper with charcoal to memorialize the occasion. Everyone present—both alumni and friends—were moved by the significance of the monument and the moment.

Although I am not a graduate of this great institution, I was very touched by the overwhelming response to one man's vision.

Tim proved that anything can be accomplished if you set a goal and never take no for an answer. It wasn't long before word starting

"Tim proved that anything can be accomplished if you set a goal and never take no for an answer."

spreading around campus about "those surveyors" and their amazing weekend.

The reunion will serve as an inspirational model for other alumni, programs and

departments. But great historical events can never be duplicated. It's the stuff of legends. I was honored to experience it. Thank you, Tim Kent, for teaching us by example what it means to be a loyal and proud alum.

Visitors to campus can see the Surveying Monument on the northside of Owens Hall. Don't forget to bring a sheet of paper and a piece of charcoal. If you would like to speak to a staff person about your own reunion ideas, please call us at (541)885-1132, or e-mail alumni@oit.edu.

Super-alumni are achievers and visionaries, and Oregon Tech can now add another one to its rosters. I am sure over the years that a few other super-alumni have risen above and beyond the call of duty for OIT—you know who you are.



Waiyen "Yogi" Yee '77 points out his name.