



Gigglebytes: The Perfect Survey

Professional Surveyors Magazine - November 2006

I could hardly contain my excitement as I sat down in my truck to go over my notes from the day's work. I have a routine I go through at the end of each survey, regardless of whether it takes a day or a week. I sit down in the truck, review the notes I've made throughout the course of the work to make sure I haven't forgotten anything, and then mentally review what I've accomplished to make sure I haven't left out some crucial item that will require an additional trip to the site. Extra site visits, as you all know, are budget killers. My excitement over this survey was so high I had to force myself to concentrate on my routine before I could let my emotions fly off the handle. Once I had finished, I let them loose. I got out of the truck and literally jumped into the air! What a day I had just had!

I had completed in one day what I had budgeted for three days! Not only that, I had a great time doing it! The property I was working on couldn't have been more beautiful. I had been catching myself all day long looking out over the scenery of mountains, plains, creeks, and woods. I kept thinking about how enjoyable it was going to be to work here for three days. I actually felt a minor letdown now knowing that I had completed so much work so quickly and wouldn't be returning for a while to set monuments.

The first leg of the traverse had been through open prairie along the base of a ridge, passing near wooded areas but not even remotely close enough to impair the sight lines. Wildflowers were covering the fields in full bloom. The aroma wafting about was soothing and absorbing. About halfway through the leg, I was watching some mule deer graze when a mountain lion jumped out from the woods chasing one of the deer. It was exciting! They ran about for what seemed like a long time but was probably only 30 seconds or so generally in a direction away from my position, thankfully. I had never witnessed such an event. The mule deer finally got away, and the mountain lion stopped and turned to look right at me with an expression that seemed to say "don't mess with me or you'll be next." Then he slowly meandered up the ridge away from my site and was gone. Wow!

Before the day was done, I would end up seeing a moose, grouse, bighorn sheep, a bald eagle that sat on a limb for over an hour watching me, a mother black bear with two cubs, and a rattlesnake that gave me plenty of fair warning so I could avoid it and enjoy it. I'm a former biologist, so this is my kind of heaven. And, I didn't see any skunks.

I found almost all the monuments I was searching for within a very small radius of my search locations. I even found an original stone monument set in 1887 with the mileage grooves still etched into it. In another location, I found a bearing tree that had been blazed and marked. The tree had almost completely overgrown the blaze. I was able to see original marks still barely visible in the middle of the overgrown blaze and carefully remove some of the growth to reveal the entire markings. During one short stretch I traversed through a fairytale aspen grove with the trees nicely spaced apart so I had fantastic sight lines. Whenever the property lines passed through wooded areas, there were hacks and blazes on the trees that made the property lines easy to follow. According to the BLM notes, some of the blazes had been cut nearly 100 years ago.

At one point, the property line crossed a substantial creek about 100 feet downstream of the most beautiful waterfall. I double checked the BLM notes and found that I had missed a small side notation written by the author that merely mentioned "waterfall 100' upstream." I couldn't believe that was all they had to say about it. If I had been writing those notes I would have filled pages just on that scene alone.

Even the weather was excellent. The sun shown brilliantly in the azure sky all day between the few billowy cumulus clouds overhead. The temperature stayed in the upper 70s. The breeze kept the soft green prairie grasses in constant wave-like motion. The hiking had generally been pretty easy, and when it was more difficult, I found I was enjoying myself so much I didn't even notice it took any extra effort.

When I broke for lunch I sat down in a spot that had a most extraordinary view of mountain ranges and plains. Halfway through my lunch, I noticed a patch of morel mushrooms in front of me. I glanced around joking with myself about what else I would find to supplement my meal but found nothing. I would just have to make due. I began to wonder if some exceptional astronomical alignment was happening or if all the karma I had built up working through the difficulties of my old surveys was finally being released in this one fantastic day. If so, it was worth all that time and effort. I'm happy to begin building up more karma knowing that somewhere in my future lies another day like this.

I had spent about 20 minutes standing outside the truck reveling in all this and was now once again sitting behind the wheel, but I just couldn't bring myself to turn on the ignition and leave. Suddenly the radio came blaring on all by itself. It startled me out of my euphoria. It was country music too, and I really don't like country music—just a personal preference. I couldn't fathom why my truck radio was tuned to country music. The thought finally occurred to me that the only time I hear country music is from my alarm clock/radio beside my bed. I have it set that way so I will be more motivated to get up and...my heart sunk. When I opened my eyes, I rebounded with the knowledge that even if it was only a dream, it was a great dream to have, and today was going to be a great day!

About the Author



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