



Gigglebytes: Those D@#\$ed Holidays! A Tale of Woe

Professional Surveyor Magazine - February 2008

Although you are probably reading this in February, I'm writing it in January just after the New Year. Of course I should be working instead of writing this but that is exactly why I'm writing it. I'm having a bit of trouble getting back into the swing of things here in survey land. Such is the winter of my survey discontent made even deeper and colder by my amazing facility for rationalization and procrastination.

My wife and I had a wonderful quiet Thanksgiving holiday at home with lots of food, drink, and football. We then went "back east" for a week following Thanksgiving to visit first my family and then hers. It was not a vacation. Although family are the "loved ones" it is still not restful to go back and visit because of all the old and well-established issues. The first kind of issues needs to be suppressed because it's such a short visit. The second kind comes out in the open because it has been so long since we've all seen each other. Those issues can't be suppressed, and when they air themselves they don't tend to do it quietly. Either way they wear you out. My family fits into the latter category while hers fits into the first. Suffice it to say that when we got back home we needed a vacation, and my survey work provided just that.

Lucky for us survey work during the holidays is slower than it normally is in the summer, as you can all relate to, I'm sure. We had a couple of weeks to decompress between our trip and Christmas, and it felt good to do just that. A reasonable amount of work and a reasonable amount of recovery were just what the doctor ordered. Then the Christmas/New Year holiday extension was upon us. Let's face it: It's really one holiday, right? The week between those two holidays has never been a productive one in the survey industry. Of course there are exceptions: I've done quite a bit of construction surveying in my career, and construction, like concrete, waits for no man. If it needs to be done it gets done, plain and simple. And there have been years, like the roaring 90s, when work never slowed all winter long. Those were exciting years. If this has been one of those years for you, I salute you. However, conversations with other local surveyors around here has shown me that work has been ... "okay."

For me work has been steady and sufficient since late fall, and that's just the way I like it in the wintertime. It gives me time to enjoy some winter activities (I live in the Rocky Mountains after all), the football playoffs (my home town is just outside Pittsburgh, PA), and many a good book. So from just before Christmas to just after New Year's Day I did a lot of reading and relaxing, except when the Steelers were on TV (there is no such concept as a relaxing Steeler game).

However, the ski slopes are way too crowded this time of year for a local to even attempt to go skiing, and the weather has been cold enough to procrastinate most of the field work with additional rationalizations about how the conditions will hopefully improve. So my wife and I went to a couple of holiday parties. We ate too much every other day. And we drank too much only once. We watched the ball drop in Times Square. We chatted about what a great year 2007 ended up being for us and the company. And we looked forward to more prosperity in 2008. So far that's looking good too.

Now we come to the crux of the matter. All that activity ended ten days ago. And I'm still finding my head and my body in "holiday mode." I'm still having the feeling that I ate too much and want to lie down for a nap, all day every day! My accountant said I had a good year, so instead of getting down to it and making this a better year, I'm thinking I can take more naps! Where is my head? It feels as though I left it back in those d@#\$ed holidays somewhere and I can't get it back. It's as if I'm an actor in a play practicing my lines and asking myself, "What's my motivation?" That ain't right. And I'm sure there are a few of you out there saying to yourselves, "That boy ain't right"! And you're right to say it! Because I'm obviously not!

It could be all the stagnant air from being inside buildings for so long and not doing any field work, but no matter what it is, I think something needs to be done about this long extension of all these d@#\$ed holidays. First, let's move Thanksgiving to somewhere like March or August where we can really use a break. After all, Thanksgiving is when "holiday mode" really gets started, right? I don't suppose we could actually move New Years without changing the calendar, but we could separate Christmas and New Years from each other. Christmas is more about marketing and economics these days anyway. The biggest shopping days are right after Thanksgiving, so let's put Christmas back there so they'll coincide. Then we could actually have three distinct holidays. Jesus wasn't born during the winter solstice anyway. Forgive me for saying these things about Christmas; I don't mean to be or sound irreverent or upset anyone's faith. I'm simply suggesting practical solutions to real problems. I can find some consolation in knowing that I have, at the very least, started my recovery process by completing the first step: identify my problem. Now it's just a matter of discovering some solution, formulating a plan, and putting that plan into action. But I think I'm too tired for that today. I think I may go home early and get a nap. I can work on the solution tomorrow. I should stick around at least until lunch time though. Then I can go home for the rest of the day.

Well, I guess I'd better get back to work before the boss catches me. Wait a minute... I am the boss.

About the Author



Earl F. Henderson, PLS

Earl is owner of Zenith Land Surveying, Inc. in Boulder, Colorado. He has been surveying in various states since 1989.