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# SIDE SHOTS

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**Doyle Abrahamson**  
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# In Memoriam

## Doyle G. Abrahamson, PLS

By John B. Guyton, PLS

*Editor's Note: I asked several members of the PLSC to send me a few sentences about Doyle Abrahamson for this article. Every person who responded sent much more text than could possibly be published here. For a version of this article with the full text of what people had to say, go to "This month on plsc.net" Thanks to everyone who contributed their thoughts.*

The Colorado surveyor community has lost another one of its most prominent and accomplished leaders, Doyle Abrahamson, PLS #13155. He passed away unexpectedly at the age of 60 on Saturday, August 28, 2010, while traveling on business in Florida.

Doyle was a longtime member and supporter of the PLSC, and served as its President. He was also named Surveyor of the Year in 1991. He held licenses in 15 states. His surveying career spanned more than 40 years, the last 31 of which were with Merrick & Company as Vice President of Surveying, where he worked with such high profile clients as Xcel Energy, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, and the Denver Regional Transportation District. His name is listed on the Merrick & Company plaque at Coors Field for surveying that included the correct placement of home plate.

He was born October 7, 1949 in Rolette, North Dakota and grew up on his family's homestead near the Canadian border. He had a degree in Civil Engineering Technology from Lake Region Junior College in North Dakota, and continued his education with the US Army, the University of Arizona Advanced Cadastral Survey program, and Metropolitan State College of Denver where he was a student and later, an instructor.

He was a recognized expert mineral surveyor, and a well known authority on the Public Lands Surveying System. His expertise was sought on many difficult boundary cases in Colorado.

His service to the PLSC was exemplary. He was a vital instructor in the annual Fall Technical Session workshops, as well as an instructor in the Metro State

sponsored PLSC Refresher Course on Colorado Law for surveyors, and will be greatly missed. He was generous with his time, with his knowledge and experience, and even his personal funds. He would always refuse any reimbursement for travel or other expenses associated with his PLSC roles, and if he received them, they would be returned or given to one of the scholarship funds. Doyle became a PLSC President at a difficult time for the organization, but through his leadership, he initiated reforms, restructured the organization, increased membership, and led it back to financial stability. He was also a founding member of the Central Chapter of the PLSC, which remains the largest chapter in the state.



Personally, I had great admiration for Doyle as a surveyor and a professional. He was a master of thorough preparation and research, always conducted before any field mobilization began. Once it did, he excelled at finding evidence on the ground. He was unfaltering, patient and persistent. I had the honor of being part of the team that conducted an expedition to retrace and remonument the 40th Parallel on the west side of the Continental Divide, which was documented in the July, 2007 issue of *American Surveyor*. After a long day of climbing and searching for a corner stone and bearing trees described in the 1859 survey notes, the group was about to quit for the day in frustration. Then Doyle said something I will never forget, "Gentlemen, I think you may be in the wrong place..." In an expanse of nothing but stones, he found the stone placed all those years ago, and then found the decaying stumps of the bearing trees. The nearly miraculous discovery of this monument was the last piece required to accurately reestablish the historic "Proper Summit of the Rockies."

For the February, 2010 issue of *Side Shots*, I asked Doyle for some encouraging words concerning this long recession, and how it compares to previous ones he experienced during his career. He wrote, "Surveying is always one of the first professions to pick up after our economy has had a downturn."

Here are some excerpts of what others had to say.

Tom Adams, PLS and President of the PLSC, said, "I first met Doyle when he took time to talk to me (a new PLS) at a seminar we were both attending in the early 1990's. I have had a number of discussions with Doyle on legal issues throughout the years, be it over a beer, over the phone or in any other setting. I will always appreciate all that I have learned from Doyle and his dedication to the profession."

Diana Askew, PLS and Executive Director of the PLSC, wrote, "Back when I worked for the City and County of Denver, I had a conversation with Doyle regarding how to prioritize my activities to provide balance between work, play, and my personal life. At the time I was working full time, commuting two plus hours per day, working toward my IT degree full time, and was the president of the CCPS Board. Doyle must have had that "knowing" smile on his face as we discussed my options. Doyle offered a solution that continues to work for me today; I needed to put things into perspective according to what was important to me, and there was no one better to know what was important to me, than me. Sometimes it is difficult to remain focused on my goals, but those few minutes of discussion with Doyle changed my life."

Roger Nelson, PLS, a member of the PLSC Board of Directors and Chairman of the Legislative Committee, distinctly remembers Doyle as the consummate mentor

and professional. "A knowing grin would appear on Doyle's face when an opportunity arose to teach a fellow surveyor. Too often I was on the receiving end of that knowing grin early on in my career at Merrick." Doyle would begin, "Mr. PLS, how would you handle the situation?" Then, I would eagerly respond as Doyle smiled and led me down the path to learning by asking probing questions regarding the foundation of his quick answer. This was Doyle's way to develop sound decision making abilities. As my career advanced under Doyle's tutelage, he witnessed this same instructional dance with younger surveyors and then realized what a blessing that he was given. Doyle quietly taught many lessons to surveyors over the years without the expectation of anything in return but knowing that he had advanced another surveyor's knowledge. Doyle gave selflessly his time to others that sought his professional opinion and advice."

Gene Kooper, PLS and former Executive Director of the PLSC, wrote, "Several years ago, I was involved with a mineral survey retracement that had some interesting twists. I phoned Doyle and asked if I could get his opinion on what I had uncovered. The "plan" was to visit for an hour and then have lunch. I arrived promptly at 11:00 AM and before we realized it, almost 3 hours had elapsed. Lunch had to wait for another day. One of my lasting remembrances of Doyle will be of a land surveyor that always took the time to assist another. Thank you, Doyle!"



Bryan Clark, PLS and a member of the Board of Licensure for the AES Board, wrote, "I first met Doyle Abrahamson in the fall of 1975. Doyle and I remained good friends through the years. I last saw Doyle July 31 of this year; he and his lovely wife Cindy were having breakfast at a café in Estes Park. When he saw me, he broke into that big smile of his. Doyle, thanks for being my mentor, more importantly, thanks for being my friend."

Lisa Isom, President of Assurance Risk Managers in Aurora and former PLSC Executive Director Assistant to Art Hipp, wrote, "Doyle was one of the most giving of himself and to others regarding his knowledge and love of the profession. As I have known him for over 20 years and starting with PLSC, I really knew nothing from the surveyor's side of the business. He was always willing to sit down and explain any question I would have and in a manner that I could understand it. He was that ray of "sunshine" when you were in need; he was always there to help with that smile that will be remembered forever. A few years ago, he came into the PLSC library and we sat for hours talking about stories he had with fellow surveyors, farm life and family experiences and of course the famous Longs Peak climb. I am proud to have known Doyle and prouder to call him a friend; he will be greatly missed."

Larry Connolly, PLS, a former member of the PLSC Board and current member of the Board of Licensure for the AES Board, wrote, "Doyle hired me in 1985 fresh out of school in Idaho with 3 months experience with the Salmon National Forest cadastral survey. I worked with Doyle from Coors Field and the Union Pacific Railroad property surveys downtown to riding with him in a helicopter to reroute a transmission line north of Silverthorne. After moving to Durango 18 years ago, Doyle and I have always kept in touch to swap stories and scenarios and to work on some common projects together in southwest Colorado. I was deeply saddened to hear of his passing. He was passionate about land surveying and was a great mentor to me. I am personally going to miss "Ahhhhhhhhhhh, Mr. Connolly" when Doyle spoke to me. Rest in peace, my friend."

Geof Stephenson, PLS of the Lund Partnership, wrote, "If not for Doyle we would still be looking for the small chiseled x. I will miss Doyle; for me his legacy will always carry on, not only through his surveys, but also through the beauty and peace of the high mountain tundra he so loved."

Steve Brosemer, PLS, the Kansas surveyor who was part of the 40th Parallel group, wrote, "I am very saddened to hear this horrible news. I saw and spoke with Doyle by chance at the Denver Marriott downtown on Thursday the 19th while attending the NCEES convention. He was there to see Bob Dahl who had spoken earlier. I introduced him to a friend of mine as my "guardian angel" for his friendship and perseverance in getting me up the mountain. I meant this figuratively. I am forever grateful and at a loss for words."

Dave DiFulvio, PLS, WFPS Delegate and another former PLSC President, said that "Doyle was passionate and devoted to the surveying profession unlike anyone I know. He was always teaching and mentoring others in the profession, even sometimes when they didn't know it, in a way that demonstrated his love of the profession. Sometimes it was a friendly suggestion, or comment, or a very definite and deliberate statement in support of or opposed to an issue, but always with the respect and dignity that professional surveyors aspire to. I remember always seeing Doyle with a smile on his face, even when those around him did not. He was a great surveyor, a great leader, and a great man. The surveying profession, especially in Colorado, will not quite be the same without Doyle."

Randy Bloom, PLS and Chief Cadastral Surveyor for Colorado at the BLM Colorado State Office, wrote,

"It was his knowledge and the respectful way he imparted that knowledge.  
It was his smile in the face of adversity.  
It was his style that did not allow for petty remarks about his fellow surveyors.  
It was his work ethic.  
It was his stone-courageous attitude that allowed him to go to work each day.  
It was his shining pride when he spoke of his son Justin finding an old stone corner on Father's Day.  
It was the sum of the man that I admired and will never forget."

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Doyle took on some demanding personal challenges with the same passion as he took on projects at Merrick. On August 19, 2005, Doyle climbed Long's Peak, in spite of his life-time struggle with diabetes, earlier knee damage, and his fear of heights. He said, "In years to come, when I have a hard time just getting into my recliner chair, I want to be able to tell my grandchildren that Grandpa climbed that mountain," which he could see from his home in Estes Park.

Doyle enjoyed hiking, fishing, hunting, gardening and photography. He made annual visits to the family homestead in North Dakota to maintain a close link to his family, which was very important to him.

Doyle is survived by his wife Cindy and their three sons: Justin, Paul (Skipper), and Matt.