



FSMS Pioneers

A series that honors the legends of surveying in the state of Florida



Robin Petzold, PSM 4567

Robin Petzold, PSM 4567, was born on May 11, 1953, in Passaic, New Jersey. He grew up in Ringwood, New Jersey where he graduated with the Class of 1971 at Lakeland Regional High School. After graduation, Mr. Robin attended Fairleigh Dickenson University and achieved an Associate degree in Business Administration. Early in his life, Robin had an interest in helping and working with animals. This led him to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science. Robin is married to his wife, Susan, and he has two children, Kristen and Joshua, along with one brother, Harold, and one sister, Lynn. He also has a nephew who is a Party Chief for Moorhead Engineering in Ocala, Florida.

Robin returned to school at Palm Beach Junior College in 1981 to

obtain a degree in Surveying and Mapping. While attending PBJC and working full time, Robin served as an adjunct faculty instructor at Palm Beach State College (PBSC) in the Surveying Program from 1982 to 1994, teaching project layout, basic surveying, route geomatics, and measurement science.

Robin retired after forty years of surveying in the profession. He was a senior partner with the firm of Wantman Group, Inc. (WGI) headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida, with offices located throughout Florida and later other states throughout the country. In addition, Robin served on the Board of Professional Surveyors and Mappers (BPSM) from 2010 to 2018 and continued to serve on the Probable Cause Panel as a past Board member for three additional years. Robin continues to serve on the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) and has served on the EPS committee, but has served on several others committees throughout his career, including the Surveying Task Force, PAKS, Education, and National Surveying Award. Robin was also a recipient of the 2021 Distinguished Service Award by the NCEES and holds surveying licenses in Florida, Alabama, Ohio, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

When asked how he originally got into surveying, Robin answers, “my strong points were always in mathematics, and with concerns about my future in the world of exotic animals, I chose to return to college and pursue a career in surveying and mapping. I enrolled in Palm Beach Junior College. I secured a job as a rodman with then Wantman and Associates, Inc. in February of 1981 and began my surveying career. I spent several months as a rodman before moving up to instrument operator and another 3 years before becoming a Chief. I moved into the office in March of 1984 and by 1987 I was running 14 field crews on a variety of different projects.”

In July of 1988, Petzold received his professional surveyor’s license and was forever known as PSM 4567 amongst his peers. His first surveying job was a land development project called Sherwood Lakes south of Lake Worth Road in Palm Beach County. He recalls having many varied responsibilities including vertical construction, roadway construction, and numerous boundary surveys. Some of the most prominent survey projects he was a part of include: the Jamaican North Coast Highway(267 kilometers, GPS control, and 338 stations in 1993), Kuwait airbases(Salam and Jaber, GPS controls, cost estimating and site planning), Everglades National Park, “Hole in the Donut” 11 years of topographic control, and River of Grass(SFWMD) 100,087 acres of boundary surveys. The surveying firms he has worked for throughout his career are Meridian Surveying & Mapping(which became Stanley Wantman and later Stanley Consultants), Mock Roos & Associates, and started Petzold & Associates(merging with Wantman Group, Inc. in 2000).

Mr. Robin's favorite thing about surveying is all the technology involved, along with the mathematical principles and applications used when operating within the profession, as well as the diversity in the day-to-day assignments, activities, and responsibilities. When asked what his least favorite aspect of surveying is, Mr. Robin responds with, "the lack of respect from the engineering profession and contractors. You prove yourself on difficult projects to gain that respect, but there are still those in the profession that give the profession a bad name. This is one of the reasons that I chose to serve on the DACS Board." Gaining respect from new clients has also been a challenge at times throughout his career, and he believes more professionalism throughout the industry is a much-needed change for modern surveyors and mappers.

Petzold's favorite types of surveys are horizontal and vertical control projects. When asked what has changed the most about surveying during his time in the field, Petzold replies, "WOW! I started surveying when we had tape and transit and if lucky a part-time EDM. I finished with GNNS, Hydrographic, Laser Scanning, Mobile Scanning, subsurface utilities, ground penetrating radar, and Drone technology to name a few. That sums it up. It was the Electronic Era." As far as if he had any mentors that influenced him, Petzold lists Carl Purtz at Palm Beach State College, Drs. David Gibson and Bon DeWitt at UF, and James Collins at GPS services in Rockville, Maryland. What has surprised him the most during his time surveying in the profession has been the reluctance of some firms to adapt to the evolution of technology and be willing to embrace it.

When asked if he has a favorite memory from his time in the field surveying, Robin answers, "By 1987 I began to see the transition to the electronic generation of surveying. This began with the Global Positioning System which led to hydrographic, Laser scanning, Lidar, Drones, etc. Realizing that this was the future, I jumped into this arena at an early age and did my first GPS survey in January of 1990 on the south Kissimmee Chain of Lakes for the South Florida Water Management District. This led to many exciting projects throughout my career. I was registered in 5 states by the end of my career. If there was some advice I could give surveyors, it would be education, education, education. When combined with practical experience you will excel in the profession now and into the future. As many are aware, I taught as an adjunct for 12 years at what is now Palm Beach State College, I taught seminars in the mathematical arena to what is today many of the business owners, I finished my career as an adjunct at UF stepping down only last year. Education and practical experience are the keys to success."