

Photogrammetric Pioneers

Talbert (Ted) Abrams



(ABSTRACTED FROM A RELEASE BY THE ABRAMS COMPANIES, 29 APRIL 1967)

TED ABRAMS was born in Tekonska, Michigan on 17 August 1895. His start in Photogrammetry, in his own words, begins: "in 1917, . . . enlisted in the Aviation Section of the U.S. Marine Corps, taking along my 'Box Brownie', . . . I knew that people would buy pictures and that they might have a military value. I planned . . . snapshots for the folks back home and . . . , pictures having a military interest and value, . . . the government took a dim view of the procedure; and I have to report something less than . . . overwhelming . . . success."

After service in World War I in Europe, Ted went to the Caribbean, where aerial photos of areas in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic helped the Corps keep track of guerrilla activities.

In 1920 Ted was engaged in carrying air mail, but in addition did some barnstorming, taking aerial photos which laid the ground work for a business yet to come. He found that there was a better market for aerial photos than for aerial sight-seeing rides. He says, "At that moment a business was born, and we have been selling aerial pictures ever since." Engineers proved to be poor customers for photos not to map scale. "This forced us to make ground measurements, and to enlarge or reduce the pictures to a required scale." A wooden box with mirrors provided their first stereoscope and a dot or line grid on glass provided a means of measuring relief.

The company incorporated in 1923; as Ted says, "It was cheaper to incorporate and limit our liability than it was to buy insurance." In the 20's they purchased new airplanes and new cameras, and found new customers for flood control, highway, power lines, land use, and other studies and maps. Near the end of this period the company received the first Geological Survey mapping contract let to a private

firm: mapping Isle Royal in Lake Superior. This also marked a first—a land plane flying over water to photograph an island.

In the thirties, with little money for purchase of equipment, the company began to manufacture cameras, mounts, and lab equipment. Two new companies were formed: the Abrams Instrument Corporation and the Abrams Aircraft Corporation. Among the instruments developed were the well-known pocket-size magnifying stereoscope and the Height Finder. The special photographic plane "Explorer" was designed and built.

In the 40's the companies supported the war effort with equipment to support the Trimetrogon system, operated the Abrams School of Aerial Surveying and Photo-Interpretation for the Marine Corps, and built radar cameras, gun cameras, and intervolometers. After the war the Abrams Instrument Corporation was selected by the Government, to manage the distribution of surplus war materials.

The Abrams Aerial Survey Corporation re-equipped with twin-engine planes and Multiplex. In the 50's a double-projection anaglyphic instrument was designed, built, and used. These were later replaced with Galileo-Santoni first-order instruments.

Early in the 60's the Abrams Instrument Corporation was sold to the Curtis-Wright Corporation. Airlandia, a corporation owning lands and buildings connected with aviation, was formed.

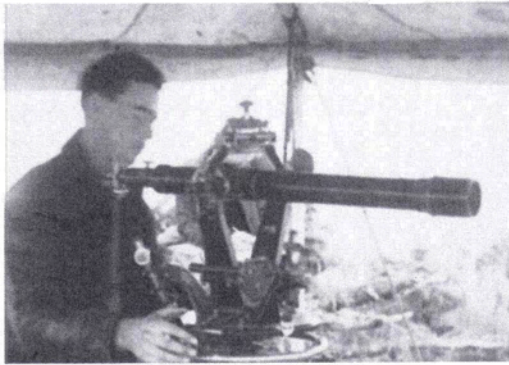
Ted has retired from active management and still resides in Lansing, Michigan. He and Leota, his wife, founded the Talbert and Leota Abrams Foundation, Inc., and gave a Planetarium to Michigan State University. He is a Past President and Honorary Member of ASP, and has many other honors resulting from his work and travels.



Claus M. Aschenbrenner is shown here with his family on a walk in the open country. The little boy on his shoulders is his son Bert, who quite a number of years and a fullfledged world war later won the Society's Bausch & Lomb Award.



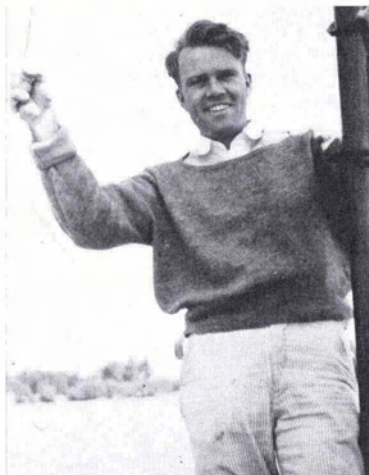
Victor L. Bellerue a few years after 1934 in Lima, Peru, as Chief Engineer in Servicio Aerofotografico, National Of. Peruvian Air Force.



Carl M. Berry as Chief of Triangulation, Grand Coulee Dam Project, USBR, he is shown establishing the precise control grid for the dam. The instrument shown is a 12" Gambey direction theodolite, on loan from the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey.



Paul Blake is on the extreme left, bottom row. The photo, taken in Fall, 1933, shows a survey party doing plane table mapping in Shiprock, NM.



Allan C. Bock is shown here sailing on Lake Geneva, Illinois, during the summer of 1934.



A. J. Brandenberger as a graduate in Surveying, Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland.



Herbert L. Brantley. Near the house where we lived in La Grange, MO., from 1932-1934. Herbert Lee, Jr., the little guy with the wagon, was 52 years old Nov. 28, 1983.