

Robert Podwalny, FASA and Life Member

Submitted by Jack Young, ASA, CPA, NorCal Valuation Inc.



Robert Podwalny, FASA and Life Member, passed away on April 16, 2018, at age 74 after a lengthy ordeal with cancer. He is survived by his wife Linda, sons Robert & Daniel, and his sister Alexandra; grandchildren Kayla, Evan, Emma, Lili and Lincoln, as well as many nieces, and nephews.

<http://www.lastingmemories.com/memorial/robert-b-podwalny?about>

Bob was a constant servant to others and to the ASA. He rarely spoke of himself and seemed to prefer taking an interest in others. His impact on the ASA was quite significant and best told by the memories of the folks he influenced over the years. You'll find some great 'Bob stories' and memories at the end of this article.

Here is a brief sharing of Bob's life, beginning with that interesting ring on his finger, which most of you probably noticed at one time or another....

Bob wore his grandfather's ring from the Russian Imperial Guard with a fair amount of pride. Before Bob was born, his parents fled Russia, where the Bolshevik revolution had made life unsafe for them. Along the way the family was captured by the Nazis and his father, an engineer, was forced to work in occupied Vienna. Bob always shared that he was the only person he knew with a swastika on his birth certificate—true story. After WWII ended, his mother was hired by the United Nations Relief Agency and the family lived for some years in Munich, Germany. The family moved to Oberlin, OH under the Displaced Persons Act when Bob was 6 years old. Bob was especially proud of his mother and her talent for many languages. She eventually taught in the foreign languages department at Oberlin College.

Bob attended Oberlin and left to begin his appraisal career with American Appraisal. He and his wife, Linda, moved to San Francisco in the early 1970s. Bob and Linda lived in the Bay Area and raised their two sons. Over his career he worked for many appraisal firms and banks including Marshall Stevens, Bank of America Leasing, Union Bank, and his own firm. Everywhere he worked, he attracted friends and admirers with his generosity, good humor and integrity.

Bob was an appraiser for nearly 50 years, during which time he was inducted into the College of Fellows with the American Society of Appraisers. He is the past International Education Committee Chairman, Emeritus Member and Past Chairman of the Machinery and Technical Specialties Committee, Past Regional Governor for Northern California, Past President of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter, contributing author to two Valuation of Machinery and Equipment textbooks, course developer and senior instructor of Machinery and Equipment Principles of Valuation courses taught through the ASA, and Past Vice Chairman of the Board of Examiners for Machinery and Equipment for the ASA for 14 years. He was designated as an expert witness by many courts.

Bob's contributions to education included teaching valuation courses throughout the US as well as in Mexico, Romania, Slovenia, Canada, Russia, Kazakhstan and China, as well as developing and teaching courses for the World Bank Economic Development Program and for the ASA. Most recently Bob served as an expert witness in litigation involving ad valorem tax appraisal for the Alaska Pipeline and supported the development of ARM 201 and 204 courses in the dialogue education format.

Bob developed those classes with me and I am forever grateful for his support and camaraderie. I am honored to provide this bio for the ASA and I know that this basic information about Bob cannot begin to express how dedicated, inspirational and innovative he was for so many people. So, those who appreciated his friendship and his professional accomplishments and contributions have shared their personal accounts, beginning with my memories of Bob.

I met Bob at an ASA NorCal Chapter meeting. I wasn't an ASA member at the time and wasn't sure if I wanted to be, until I met Bob. I came home that night very excited about the level of



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Robert B. Podwalny, ASA
International Education Chair

respect, professionalism and true mentorship in the ASA NorCal Chapter culture. Soon after that time, I worked with Bob to offer a report writing class for the chapter, in which I heard him say something that I think about every time I write an appraisal report: *An appraisal should tell a story. Accurate analysis is necessary and so is a clear and understandable flow of facts leading the user to a clear and understandable conclusion.* The ARM classes we developed together continue to carry Bob's message as well.

Bob and I worked on the chapter board for many years, updating the ARM curricula, and on the ARM Committee. While we didn't always agree on issues, we always operated within an environment of respect.

Bob was my teacher, mentor, role model and trusted friend. As I read the following memories that others have offered, I realized that Bob managed to be those things to many of us. I am struck by the words of Winston Churchill, "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." Bob's capacity for competency, generosity and kindness was broad and deep. He once told me that many years ago, he was complaining to his boss about the poor quality of appraisal reports he was receiving. His boss suggested that he do something about it, and he certainly did. Bob's contributions did more than move ASA into being the "standard of care" for machinery and equipment appraisals – he moved the entire appraisal profession forward. Bob's legacy, however, is much more than the educational materials he helped to develop. At the end of the day Bob was not about serving Bob, he was about helping other people and that is his legacy. That's what made the difference.

According to Bob's wishes, the ASA Educational Foundation has established the Robert B. Podwalny Educational Fund. The purpose of the fund is to continue to expand the ASA knowledge base that Bob helped to build. The Fund will work with our senior appraisers to develop programs on advanced breadth and depth of educational topics in MTS and ARM, such as power feed wiring, process piping, when to depreciate and not depreciate installation costs, developing defensible cost to capacity exponents, functional obsolescence, defensible appraisal reviews for financial reporting and other uses. When addressing controversial topics, the goal is to clearly document current analysis and considerations and advance the discussion by providing useful and in-depth information to our members.

If you would like to contribute to this fund to commemorate Bob, please make your contribution payable to *ASA's Educational Foundation* – note "The Robert B. Podwalny Educational Fund" on the memo section of your check – and mail to:

ASAEF in care of ASA Headquarters
11107 Sunset Hills Rd, Ste 310
Reston, VA 20190

Enjoy the following memories offered by Bob's friends and appraisal colleagues. If you have stories or comments you'd like to share, send them to me and we'll find a way to share them. Rest in Peace, Bob. We'll miss you.

Ray Springer, AM

Bob and I shared on lots of jobs over the years, but I guess it all goes back to when we originally met in 1973. I was a totally green (2 months "experience") rookie. Two very nice young people in the Portland office, who had been trained in how to write appraisals 'the old-fashioned way', had trained me. The old fashioned way included counting everything including staplers and teaspoons. I found that level of detail excruciating and was discouraged enough to be looking for another job.

Bob and I met at a library in Butte County California where General Appraisal was engaged to write an insurance appraisal of all the county's buildings and equipment. Bob showed me the level of detail he required and some computer shortcuts that would serve the purpose, and let me list at a much higher level than teaspoons. In short, if he had not come into my professional life, I would likely be doing something else today.

We became good friends, supporting each other professionally, and looking for opportunities for each other. Bob was always available to discuss any appraisal problem I came across. He was an invaluable resource for a single shingle like me, because we all need a sanity test on occasion.

I will miss his friendship and our personal conversations as well as our professional discussions.

Bob made a difference in my life.

Art Narverud

I have had the great fortune to know Bob for over 30 years. When I think of Bob, the first word that comes to mind is honor - he was an honorable man. The second word that comes to mind is dedicated. He was dedicated to his wife, Linda, his sons Dan and Robert, his family, his friends, his colleagues and his profession.

It was through the appraisal profession that I first became acquainted with Bob. We met at an ASA San Francisco chapter dinner in 1985. We went from acquaintances to colleagues, and associates to friends, in short order. Not only was he a great friend, but he also was a great mentor. He taught me what it meant to be a true professional in the appraisal profession.

Over the course of the years, we worked together on various projects for the ASA. Bob was a 'doer'. Whenever he committed, he delivered. The MTS textbook would not exist if it were not for Bob. Much of the MTS coursework is his work. His latest endeavor with Jack Young, with the ASA, the ARM courses, are all revitalizing the discipline. From the local level to the international level, he made his mark as an ambassador not only for the organization, but also for the profession. One would be hard pressed to find many more deserving of the title FASA—Member of the College of Fellows.

During his tenure as Vice President at Banc Amerilease, I had the opportunity to work for Bob as a consultant on various occasions. Bob was very tolerant of my ignorance about leasing and guided me, so that my work met the Banc's standards. "Use the definition and language in the lease!" he would tell me. I would be amazed when I would go into his office. He would have piles of paper for all of his numerous projects stacked on every inch of his desk, table and chairs, not to mention the floor. It was "organized chaos", he would tell me. If there is any truth in the saying that a tidy desk is the sign of an idle mind, then Bob's mind was always in overdrive. He took on a lot, and he always delivered.

I will miss Bob for his wisdom, his kindness, his thoughtfulness and his overall positive energy. Like a star ballplayer, he made everyone around him better. And the glass was always half full. He was, and will forever be – an honorable man. Cheers, Bob.

David H. Cole, ASA

I first met Bob in April 1990 when I took the ME204 class he was teaching with Les Miles. It was Les' first time teaching 204, and Bob kept Les on track.

I got to know Bob initially through that class and by attending M&E Committee meetings. In 1992, I had the opportunity to travel to Slovenia with Bob and teach ME201 and 202 for CEEP (Center for Eastern European Privatization Network [I think that's right – CEEP I know is right]). Spending two weeks with someone on the road gives you a lot of insight into him, and yourself. Plus, we had a great day off from teaching in Venice, Italy.

Over the years I had the opportunity to work with Bob on several projects for Bank of America as well as work with him on the M&E/MTS Committee, and as a governor, education chair and on several committees. Bob and I didn't always see eye-to-eye on all issues, but we were always able to discuss matters and remain friends, even when we disagreed.

We enjoyed sharing stories about our families. Bob was always happy to talk about his family.

I will miss his insight, sense of humor, and his no-nonsense approach – he was a friend.

Joseph Orlando, ASA

For the little time I knew him, I was blown away by his knowledge, friendship, humility and willingness to give of himself and his time for a fellow ASA. My last bit of time spent with Bob was typical of his personality and goodness. We were both heading out of an ASA function and I was heading in Bob's direction to BART and asked if I could walk with him. Knowing Bob's

condition, I knew that it might likely be the last time we spoke. We walked slowly because of his condition and he, of course, apologized to me for slowing me down. I asked him about his condition and he said he felt good and was lucky that he was progressing well with his treatment but I could tell from his labored breathing he was putting up a positive front. He updated me on his favorite subject—his family, and gave me a few updates on his pipeline of work. He was so easy to talk with and a true professional in terms of his expertise and his willingness to share it with others.

I really wish I had more opportunities to talk with him and take that slow walk again.

Joel D. Gonia, ASA, ARM-MTS / M&E

Bob was my first appraisal instructor back in the early 90s when I took the M&E courses. There he was, like a SuperHero to this youngster, and yet he always made time to talk and lend a hand. We became friends after a while, as I guess he didn't have much of a choice with me hounding him all the time, asking questions about various appraisals. Recently he told me he was on borrowed time and wanted to say goodbye. Said he had a good run but his time was up. We talked about his family, the ASA, and the Alaskan Pipeline one more time. And I thanked him for his friendship and counsel. Typical Bob, he just smiled and said “pass it on”.

Dana Teicheira, ASA

I knew Bob as an instructor in ME204, which was one of the most difficult courses that I have ever taken. Bob did a great job presenting material that was difficult and somewhat dry. To top it off, the course was held in downtown Chicago which is one of my favorite cities to play in during the summer. It was a brutal 4 days. I did not get a chance to know Bob as a friend or colleague, but I wish that I had.

David Eichner, ASA

I spoke to Bob last Thursday while he was at hospice and he had great difficulty talking through the drugs. We had been working on a big lease-back assignment and he wanted to offer advice on the deal. That's the kind of man he was, giving always—even in the midst of his medical struggles. He was an extraordinary servant to ASA and to those of us lucky enough to call him friend.

Dave Mendenhall, Bus Solutions

Bob was a mentor who loved the science of valuation. He taught and challenged me to think in ways that never occurred to me. Bob was always excited to hear about the world of buses when I went to him with a value question or problem. Most importantly, Bob was a friend—a friend that I could call on professionally. He always asked about my family and was concerned about my well being.

Bob will be greatly missed by his friends here, as I am sure he will be through out the ASA organization.

Capt. Joseph W. Rodgers, CMS, ASA

Bob Podwalny was my ASA mentor and formidable teacher. Over the years, Bob also become my respected friend. Bob instilled in me the importance of doing a good job and taking pride in the work that was being performed.

Not only did he drill into us the uniform standards of our profession but he showed us how to perform our professional duties with a sense of humor, and of course, much grace.

When Robert was working for Bank America lease Company here in San Francisco. He hired me as a young appraiser to go down to Louisiana to look at a menhaden fishing boat, on which the bank had lent money. Being sent down to the Deep South was a real eye-opening experience for this Nor-Cal boy. I can remember the look some of those rough and tough Louisiana folk when I first walked into the fisherman's bar in Dulac, LA, looking for my client that Robert had referred me to meet. The music stopped at the bar; folks looked around at me. I was not sure whether to run out of the door or jump in the bayou. So, I called Bob on the pay phone and he told me to order up some beer and food for the crew. Next thing you know, the music started up again and we were eating oysters, crawdads, drinking beer and having a good old time. After lunch (and a nap) I was able to get to work. Anyway, my appraised value on the craft was very low and the bank was a bit upset for they lent quite a bit of money on this particular vessel. When Robert asked me why the value was so low, I simply informed him that the price of the fish at the time had fallen and the whole fleet was for sale with no buyers.

A perfect defensible conclusion based on the reality of the market at the time of the appraisal of the vessel in question.

Robert would sometimes refer to this basic valuation scenario when speaking of appraisal practices and, of course, the importance of the oysters, crawdads and beer—and having a good time in developing defensible opinions of value.

I thank Bob Podwalny for inspiring a young appraiser like me.

And now that I am becoming an old appraiser, I wish I had paid more attention to the likes of him. He will be missed.