

Remembering Ron Bolton (1933-2005)



Ron Bolton became involved with NACIS early on in the Society's history. He was not at the organizational meeting in Milwaukee in 1980, but submitted an abstract for a paper on "Cartographic Information Systems" for the 1981 Gatlinburg meeting. Although he didn't present his paper and apparently didn't attend the meeting, he was involved

in the 1982 Alexandria meeting, where he became Vice President.

It was at this time that I really got to know and appreciate Ron. Since Milwaukee was chosen as the site for the 1983 meeting, I ended up being heavily involved with the conference. I well remember a phone conversation with the then NACIS president (who shall go un-named), in which he expressed the negative sentiment "I don't know about this guy Bolton." Well, that guy Bolton was soon the acting president when the afore-mentioned jumped ship in mid-stream. Ron turned out to be a tireless program manager who was on top of every detail, conversing with me by phone several times a week, and, making it to Milwaukee for at least one site visit before the meeting.

After his presidency, Ron was recruited to be the first executive director of NACIS. It was during Ron's tenure as president and then executive director that NACIS became the strong, vital organization that it is today. At the annual meetings, as well as the semi-annual board meetings, you could always count on Ron to be there and to be involved.

Shortly after I became executive director, NACIS planned to hold its annual meeting in Silver Spring, and once again, Ron was called into service to assist with local arrangements. On March 13, 1993 the board met at the conference hotel. On that day, what came to be called the "storm of the century" hit the East Coast, closing airports and paralyzing traffic. Therefore, for the most part, the participants at the meeting were those who had managed to arrive the day before. Only two people from the DC area were able to attend, Susan Nelson, the local arrangements chair, who lived relatively close by, and Ron. Ron's office was nearby, but he lived way down in Virginia and always had a long commute. But, determined to make the meeting, he started out super early to be with us that day. The details of that meeting are long forgotten, but the weather and the return home were memorable for all involved.

Ron was for years the head of NOAA's Aeronautical Charting Division, responsible for the charts and other navigational data used by pilots. Accuracy and

currency were of vital importance to him because an error could, literally, mean life or death. Ron was always very proud of his division's safety record, and was eager to point out that in all the times that he was required to testify in cases against the government, he had never lost a case for them due to charting inaccuracy or error.

Ron's tenure at NOAA was a period of great change in the cartographic arena. It was his mandate to automate his division—a task stressful enough in itself, but to do that while maintaining accuracy and a demanding revision schedule was a formidable undertaking indeed.

Somehow, in addition, he managed to find time to be a NACIS officer, or executive director, to present professional papers at nearly every meeting and to teach cartography at the college level. Furthermore, Ron always had time to sit and chat, or to go to lunch. From my point of view, NACIS will never be the same without him.

Chris Baruth, AGS Collection, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Ron Bolton passed away September 3, 2005, in an untimely accident. I worked for him and with him during the 15 years I spent in Aeronautical Charting at NOAA, now a part of FAA. I remember that he fought tirelessly for his employees (300 cartographers), and in ways that were frequently transparent to them. He was instrumental in raising the salary level of those in the cartography series at NOAA from GS 9 to GS 11. He protected us from the A76 process that would have opened options for contracting our jobs. He encouraged attendance and participation in NACIS activities and generously approved leave for his employees in that respect. I am sure that the high percentage of NACIS members in government in those early days was due to his support. He also promoted fun at NOAA and, I suspect, encouraged fun at the early NACIS meetings. After work at NOAA, we held annual and sometimes biannual potluck parties with a DJ and dancing. It promoted cohesiveness among colleagues and allowed us to meet our colleagues' significant others. I didn't realize that was unusual until I left the organization. I left Aeronautical Charting at NOAA 10 years ago but still remember Ron's laugh.

*Susan L. Nelson
Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office
Mapping Sciences/Aerial Photography*