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## **Company of the Month: Allen & Major Associates, Inc. - 40 years of staying viable as a business entity**

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By Anne Crooker, Allen & Major Associates, Inc.

Four decades of staying viable as a business entity is worth celebrating. For Jim Major, president of Allen & Major Associates, Inc., it is a personal milestone as much as a professional one. Finding success in an industry that covers the broadest of the engineering fields took years of careful planning, calculated decisions and, well, a little bit of luck. Making Allen & Major a recognizable name in an industry where the work can easily be overlooked because most of the time it's covered up, was just plain hard work. Major concedes his 40 years in the industry is like the quote by Harold Geneen, "In the business world, everyone is paid in two coins: cash and experience. Take the experience first; the cash will come later."

Major started his engineering career working for a Boston consulting firm. During his early working years he met Larry Allen and Ara Demurjian. When Allen, a land surveyor and his partner Demurjian, a structural engineer made the decision to start Allen & Demurjian in 1973 they brought Major on board as the civil component. The company officially became Allen & Major Associates, Inc. in 1990. When Allen retired in 1995, Major assumed the role of president of the firm. The three men's friendship endured through the years, although Demurjian sadly passed away in 2011.

Becoming a successful multi-disciplined firm evolved over the last forty years. Originally Allen & Major offered civil and structural engineering and land surveying, but as the business grew so did Jim's vision of what A&M could offer. Today, Allen & Major is a three office, multi-discipline firm specializing in civil and structural engineering, land surveying, environmental consulting and landscape architecture. Long gone are the days when the primary tools of the trade were slide rules, colored pencils and calculators. Each discipline is now highly specialized and utilizes some of the newest technologies, software and equipment in order to provide innovative design.

Essential to every project and the most heavily relied on division at Allen & Major is the land survey department. Land survey is required in the planning and execution of nearly every form of construction and is the base information that begins most projects. A survey can determine the precise location, access points, site orientation and any unforeseen obstacles. Allen & Major's survey group is able to offer services ranging from as-built surveys, property line determinations, land court surveys, topographic surveys, and ALTA/ACSM land title surveys. Other surveys performed include subdivision and condominium surveys, GPS/RTK control surveys, ground control for aerial surveys and interior building survey for fit-up or expansion. The extensive experience of Allen & Major's survey team is invaluable since so many solutions to site issues are based upon the surveyor's research and interpretation, along with fully understanding the procedures for resolving discrepancies if they arise.

Allen & Major's civil division drives the company with large projects like Cambridge Center, a

multi-phased project that spans 30 years of Allen & Major history, and Legacy Place in Dedham, an award winning open air lifestyle retail center that was one of the largest mixed-use developments in the Northeast, but it is the unassuming projects that keep it humming and Major likes it that way. Take the recently completed 3,235 s/f Enterprise Bank in Pelham, N.H. Not particularly a standout in a vast portfolio of bigger projects, but from an engineering standpoint it was a winner, literally. Located within three protected resource areas, Allen & Major's civil team provided an innovative design that not only pleased the Client but also took home the 2012 NH ASCE Outstanding Civil Engineering Award. It's this kind of innovative design and out of the box thinking that keeps Allen & Major relevant in a saturated market.

The structural engineering division started out as a specialty within civil engineering but has since grown into its own unique discipline. Allen & Major's structural division specializes in residential, commercial, institutional and industrial building evaluation and design. With services that include building design, industrial structure design, renovation design, site structure design, structural investigations, consultation services, feasibility studies and construction engineering the structural division is able to meet any development need. The role of Allen & Major's structural engineers involves a significant understanding of both static and dynamic loading, and the structures that can resist them. The complexity of modern structures often requires a great deal of creativity from the engineer in order to ensure the structures support and resist the loads they are subjected to.

Environmental consulting became part of the practice in order to meet the needs of the clients but was created more out of the philosophy of being able to offer safe and environmentally sensitive designs to the public as well as the communities Allen & Major serviced, a philosophy that is expressed to this day in the company's mission statement. With permitting being one of the biggest challenges to any project, having a thorough and complete understanding of the ever changing regulations and requirements is the most valuable tool to a successful project. Along with local, state and federal permitting, wetland delineation, replication, wildlife assessments, soil evaluations and construction monitoring are all part of Allen & Major's approach to offer safe and environmentally sensitive designs.

The youngest of the disciplines is A&M's landscape architecture division. The importance of this division is just starting to be realized in the industry even though Major saw its value years ago. "Think about the decay of the country's infrastructure, landscape architects are mastering the design of multi-modal transportation and pedestrian connectivity, they are reinventing ways to get from point A to point B while preserving our roles as environmental stewards." A&M's in-house landscape architecture team works in conjunction with their civil engineers to provide planning, design, preservation and rehabilitation of the natural and built environments for both the urban and rural markets.

Offering these many disciplines within one firm requires an exceptional management team and that is precisely what Major has developed. The company is represented by Kevin Kiernan, PLS, a twenty-five year veteran of A&M and head of the land survey division, Michael Guilmet, PE, LEED AP, who started with A&M as a co-op but now oversees the structural engineering design group, Timothy Williams, PE oversees the site civil engineering design group, Philip Cordeiro, PE who manages the Lakeville office and Robert Clarke, PLA, ASLA who oversees the New Hampshire office and the landscape architecture division, and of course Major himself. He's an engineer first, a mentor and a businessman. He runs a successful company and is an active member of a multitude of community and business related groups. Personally Major is a U.S. Army veteran, a husband to

Lynn, a father to Carrie, Katie, Kira and Denny, a grandfather of eight, and a friend of many. Major is also a quiet philanthropist and gives his time and resources to charitable groups around the Woburn, Lakeville and Manchester area as well as the New England Center for Children (NECC), a school for children with autism. As an enthusiastic golfer himself, Major made the decision to start the Allen & Major Golf Invitational, an invitation only event held annually to raise funds for NECC. As its gracious host, Major's invitational is now one of the most coveted invitations in the industry and will be celebrating fifteen successful years this fall.

Although it is plain to see that Major took the experience route and built an empowered organization that has the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to succeed, no one but Major himself can truly understand the payoff to forty years doing what you love.

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