

THE EVOLUTION OF AIR PHOTOGRAPHY



B.C. LIONS 1983 CALENDAR

It's a whole new 45 ballgame



"I take air photographs to feed my body; I take bird photographs to feed my soul."

Donald E. Weira, 1983

FOREWORD

SAMUEL BERNIER-CORMIER

Photography Archivist at Library & Archives Canada

Foreword

Aerial photography has a fascinating history and has had a very important role to play in the development of the medium over the years. In many ways, flight and imaging technologies developed hand in hand. Not very long after taking flight, we found a way to strap a camera to the airplane. Its use as a method of reconnaissance accelerated at the turn of the 20th Century and was particularly prominent during the First World War. Cameras were mounted to balloons and planes in massive surveillance efforts on both sides of the war. As it goes with many other technologies, military applications lead to innovation, and we saw rather large advancements in silver photography around this time.

Aerial photographs, while taken for various other commercial purposes, can bring incredible value for archival research. Thus, my excitement when Donald Waite approached Library and Archives Canada with the idea to donate some of his studio's photographs. Such collections are a real well of information for researchers. The visual information contained in these photographs only becomes more valuable as time goes on and as the places depicted grow and evolve. These are snapshots in time that can prove to be crucial for historical research. While other Canadian repositories exist for aerial photographs, such as the National Air Photo Library, there is something particular about how Waite's photographs were taken.

Most collections hold photographs taken with the lens pointed straight down, creating flat images of the land below. The oblique angle at which Waite's photographs were taken brings a different element to the collection. The photographs are able to provide a high level of detail that will surely be appreciated by researchers for years to come. With enough oblique air photos, it is now possible to go back in time to perhaps 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020 years and show areas of some cities evolving from cow pastures to becoming a metropolis.

Donald Waite worked diligently to provide LAC with a selection from his negatives archive depicting various towns and cities across British Columbia and Alberta. He provided us with precise details for each photograph, allowing us to preserve the valuable resource that is this collection into the future.

Samuel Bernier-Cormier

Photography Archivist, Library and Archives Canada

A MEMOIR

AIR PHOTOGRAPHER

From Portrait Studio to the Sky (1980–2007)

DONALD E. WAITE

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1 • A Childhood Love of Birds

Bird watching with Kevin and Nathan

In 1980, I used to take my sons Kevin and Nathan bird watching a short distance from our home. We'd cross a main street and disappear into a forested area to look for our feathered friends.

One side of the road was residential while the other side was in the Agricultural Land Reserve. My boys were so young, I nicknamed them 'Me Up' and 'Me To' as they used to take turns piggybacking on my shoulders. Our residence was northwest of downtown Maple Ridge.

First aerial photography assignment

One day a neighbour asked me to take aerial photographs of a large parcel of acreage on the ALR side of the roadway. We talked and I suggested taking the photographs in the late afternoon on a clear blue sky day showing its proximity to the residential homes with the downtown core of Maple Ridge and Mount Baker for a backdrop. I didn't take any to the northwest showing ALR acreage. There was an eye-in-the-sky news reporter who flew a two-seater plane Monday through Friday during peak traffic hours reporting accidents. An excellent pilot, my first flights were with her. She flew out of the Pitt Meadows Airport and knew every air traffic controller on a first name basis as well as every intersection within a 50 mile radius. My neighbour managed to get his land out of the farm reserve and sell it at a good profit since properties taken out of the ALR were worth far less than residential properties. Commercial realtors doing their homework can extract large parcels ALR farmland into industrial properties making their clients and themselves super rich. realtors need to anticipate the hurdles from municipal, provincial and federal bureaucrats in order to move land from ALR to more profitable listings. It's a chess game and successful realtors have to anticipate questions and know the answers well in advance of meetings. It's challenging and top realtors have to attend meetings with their ears and eyes open and their mouths shut involving land movement. It doesn't hurt to befriend city planners and take them for lunch and pick their brains about anything to do with the direction of city expansion.

2 • Learning to Fly Without Flying

Early pilots

One day, a Maple Ridge pilot called explaining he had an offshore client who needed aerial photographs of the Meadow Gardens Golf Course less than a mile from the airport. We had not been in the air more than half an hour before my pilot had done a couple of circuits around the impossible to miss target. The golf course owners, anxious to make a fast sale to Chinese or Japanese investors, spent \$4,000 on photos. The price tag for the golf course shortly afterwards escalated from \$9,000,000 to \$13.5 million. My invoice was a drop in the bucket. My bill represented more money than I was making a month with family portraits and wedding photography, and so, I slowly started my transition into aerial photography. It's ironic the 160 acre golf course had only a few years earlier belonged to my future father-in-law's partner when they started up their home and apartment building company.

It was first a dairy farm, then a turf farm, and eventually the golf course.

Removing the aircraft door

A short time later the same pilot took me on a flight and I requested the door be removed. I did not have a headset while he had his perched on the side of his head so he could simultaneously hear the air traffic controller in his left ear and my yelling in his right. Without the door, it was noisy. While returning from a job, I saw dirt being turned on a piece of real estate directly underneath the plane, a sure indication it was a hot property. I screamed at my pilot to bank, and the aircraft went from flying level to banking 30 degrees in a heartbeat. I would have fallen out of the plane if not for my seat belt holding me back and saving me from a 1,500-foot free fall. It all happened in a split second, but during that time I dropped my camera while reaching for the doorjamb. Fortunately, the camera was strapped around my neck, but I sprained several fingers on both hands while the camera came back to smack me in the face. My pilot, realizing his mistake, overcompensated and promptly flipped me back into the plane and we smashed heads.

Close calls in the air

It was a warm sunny afternoon, and my armpits instantly perspired all the way down to my belt loops. We returned to the airport immediately as both my hands were giving me a great deal of pain. My pilot was laughing so hard he bounced the plane two or three times on the runway, possibly making this his very worst ever landing.

Once, the same pilot returned to the airport and there were tree leaves in the wheel well. Another time doing farm photography, a rookie pilot followed my instructions to the letter with my yelling, "Lower, lower, lower" until my looking up and seeing telephone wires a couple of feet under the plane. Newbie pilots and photographers can sometimes use up one of their nine lives without even being aware of the dangers. I had another close brush with disaster during these formative years when flying with a pilot who owned two-seater plane where the passenger occupied the back seat. As such, I sat directly behind him, unaware his control stick was coupled to mine. This aircraft was used for training purposes so an instructor can take over the controls if necessary from the student. When the pilot brought the yoke straight back, it struck me in my privates. He thought this was a great joke, but it became no laughing matter a few moments later.

I had asked him if it was all right to stow my lenses in the pouch attached to the back of his seat. He had agreed, never realizing the lenses for my medium-format camera system were quite bulky. After taking off, he attempted to push his control stick forward to level the plane's nose, but could not do so because my control stick got jammed against the lenses in the pouch. Consequently, the plane began to climb in a near-vertical ascent and seconds later would have caused it to stall and fall out of the sky. Luckily, the older pilot had the experience and presence of mind to cut the motor and land without power at the very end of the runway. At first, he was most upset with me until realizing he had been the cause of his own near accident. His partner crashed practicing aerial maneuvers and died and then his kid brother and a client went down into Pitt Lake. Both died. I accompanied the news pilot a few times a year before flying with friend Len Werner who also owned a two-seater-plane.

One time, he took me on a flight through the Indian Arm Valley to photograph a site for a client of a new subdivision development in Squamish, 50 miles north of Vancouver. We landed to take on fuel and have lunch. We experienced a bit of unsolicited excitement when a large logging helicopter landed and its rotor wash blew a small plane off the end of the runway into some small trees. We witnessed its owner jumping up and down for our benefit. As a precaution, Len decided to tie his plane down before we headed for a snack. He had a sixth sense explaining he was not licensed to fly for profit; hence, I never paid him for his service but did fuel his plane and also helped him add a new roof to his house. Sure enough, a rival aerial photographer tried to stir the pot by informing the police and a short time later a RCMP sergeant paid me a visit. A Bird's Eye View, 1982 I was very polite but after an hour asked him to leave and not to come back unless he had warrant. The time arrived when the Air Transportation Safety Board (ATSB) changed the rules, and all aircraft had to have a transponder, the instrument making it easy to pinpoint an aircraft's position not merely by longitude and latitude, but also by its height above sea level. They were costly and not many small planes had this device for the first several months. Hence, one pilot sometimes lied about his location, expressing even a blind man could see large passenger planes from 10 miles away. He fibbed to the air traffic controllers about our whereabouts when I needed to be in a certain location but was redirected to stay clear and fly in a circular pattern until it was safe. An old pilot told me he had once put a plane in the drink and, incredibly, was able to find a rope and tow it to shore. There are old pilots and bold pilots, but no old bold pilots.

3 • The Business Takes Off

Golf courses and Agricultural Land Reserve photography

Those first two assignments—one over Agricultural Land Reserve acreage and the other over Meadow Gardens Golf Course—revealed that aerial photography could become far more than an occasional sideline.

Discovering the commercial real estate market

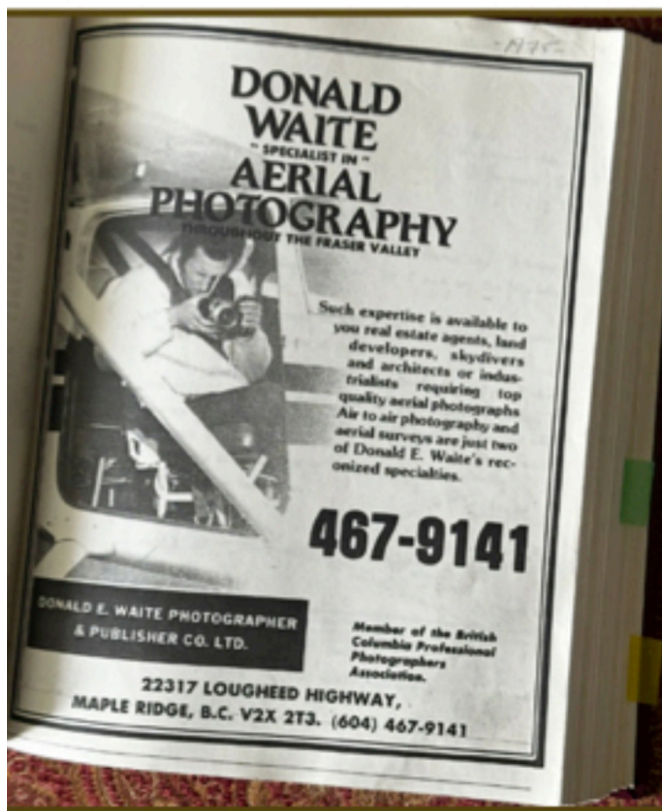
EXODUS FROM CHINA BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PIRANHA FRENZY In 1997, Britain agreed to return Hong Kong to China, resulting in a mass exodus from the communist country to other parts of the world. Many came to British Columbia's west coast, and the price of real estate in British Columbia skyrocketed as high-rise buildings in Vancouver, Richmond, and Victoria sprang out the ground due to their proximity to ocean and mountains.

It was a piranha frenzy, and top residential and commercial realtors were taking full advantage of the opportunity. The commercial high-rise builders needed aerial photographs in glossy brochures to promote their many projects. Top marketing advertisers catered to commercial realtors by turning out slick glossy brochures in foreign languages. Several times my photo lab printed negatives to huge 6-by-7 foot sizes which were tubed and flown overnight to overseas buyers.

One time the lab even produced a print in three sections for an eight foot by 12 foot wall mural. A few years later, brochures could be made into digital files capable of reaching a global market.

It was my opportunity to create globalairphotos.com making it possible for two realtors on opposite sides of the world to be able to look at the same photograph. I went up on crystal clear days with unlimited visibility and took stock photographs of any place where dirt was being turned, making sure my photographs had ocean, mountains, downtown Vancouver, and blue sky in the background.

On such days my pilot and I ate lunch while in the air and only landed to refuel and use the washroom.



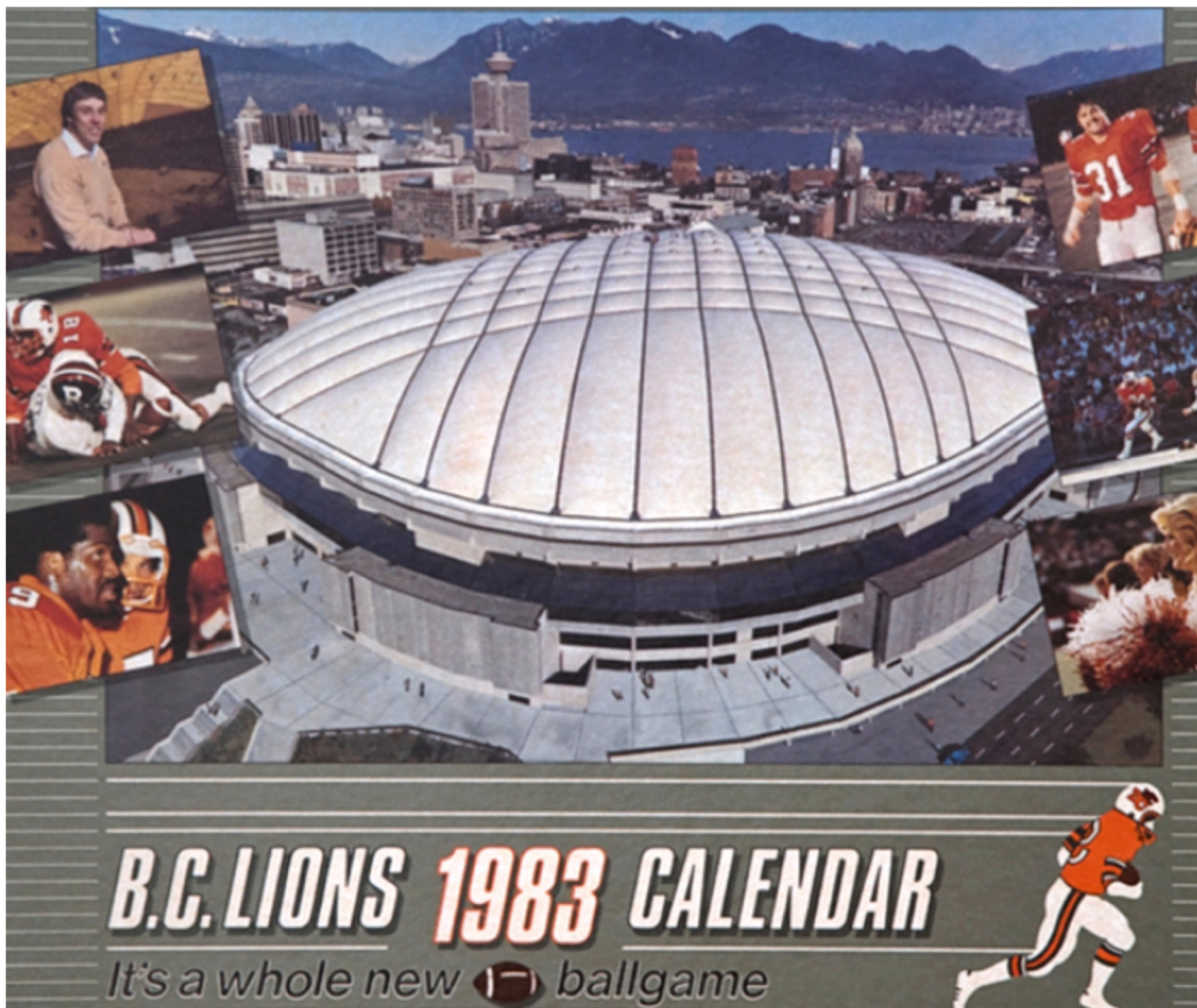
A Bird's Eye View, 1982

On one fabulously clear day I flew 14 jobs. Morning flights had the sun on my back shooting to the northwest towards Vancouver while afternoon flights mid-summer had the sun on my back with Mount Baker as a backdrop to the southeast. There was one very successful Chinese realtor who had an office in an upper suite in one of the high-rise towers going up on the north side of downtown Vancouver overlooking Burrard Inlet and the north shore mountains. Some suites nearer the top of the skyscraper took up an entire floor and were selling at ridiculously high prices to Asian buyers. He'd sit in a display suite on the top floor and wait for potential buyers. I started to affectionately call him 'Spider man' because he'd just patiently sit and wait for a fly to wander into his cobweb.

One time, I accompanied him to lunch with a Chinese entrepreneur who had the footprint to build shopping centres throughout the world. He had the floor plans to bring in store chains replicated in locations where the population growth justified buying up vacant land. My client was a big fish in a small pond while our luncheon associate was a big fish in a big pond. He invested his rich families' money in shopping centres throughout North America.

One time a commercial realtor called me into his office explaining a builder of shopping centre malls was looking for suitable locations between Vancouver and Chilliwack. He told me he had a meeting lined up to see his client in a week's time and wanted me to sign a non-disclosure agreement to photograph several potential locations. I charged him an unreasonably high price saying I'd arrange for my pilot to be available until the job was complete even if I had

to shoot in the rain. Luckily for me, the weather was excellent and I got into the air to take the photographs the following day making it possible to order enlargements for presentation to his client. I often did work for the Canada Land Corporation, the real estate arm of the Canadian Pacific Railway, as they owned large parcels of land in Abbotsford, Burnaby, Richmond and Vancouver. The Burnaby site was in the Big Bend area abutting against the Fraser River. Years earlier it had been some of the richest farmland in all of BC and used for the growing of vegetable produce by Chinese farmers. My contact always wanted progress photographs a couple of times a year and asked me to take photographs almost straight down and this involved laying the plane over to almost vertical descent and falling out of the sky like a rock. It only allowed me time to take one or two exposures before my pilot had to pull out and climb out of his dives. The acceleration had something to do with 'G-forces' in flying jargon. I recall things getting a bit hairy every time my pilot did a steep roll over of his plane. I remember CLC doing a land swap with the City of Burnaby in order to build a golf course. The CPR real estate arm owned a large parcel of land on the south side of Sumas Way in Abbotsford between the Trans-Canada Highway and the Canada-US border at Huntington. It became the largest box mega-stores in the province.



Building a reputation

As mentioned earlier, Kenne Allen was the top gun in the sky. I called Kenne to have lunch and explained I was planning to slowly transition from portrait and wedding photography to become his competitor. Promising I would never undercut his prices; he showed me his fees to clients and I kept my word. This agreement would take me to be the number one aerial photographer in BC a few years later. It was during this period when Kenne telephoned me from the Vancouver General Hospital to say his drinking problem had caught up to him and he had been in a serious car accident. He asked me to photograph several of his sites for his many clients. Kenne was number one with me the runner-up in the pecking order of aerial photographers in the province. A few days after his accident I visited him in the hospital and he was curled up in a fetal position in bed, crying. He explained during his surgery the doctors found stomach cancer. Since we had become friends, he gave me his list of clients. I concluded despite my working harder than ever before, my sales were in decline. I bought several plastic milk containers; they were the perfect size to hold six three-ring binders. I also bought two big suitcases to carry binders up to my clients to sell photos.

I had all this paraphernalia in the back of the van and drove into Vancouver, waiting for calls from potential customers on my brick-size cellular phone and make cold calls on potential new clients. Tina's Dad had a saying, "If you want to become rich, take a wealthy man to lunch and insist on paying the tab". He also said constant advertising was the key to grow a business. With only four years of schooling, he sometimes had 60 employees working for his company building homes and later large apartment complexes. 1995 I flew with one gift pilot who spotted a large helium balloon ascending into the wild blue yonder and without even talking to me, he gave chase.

It was my opportunity to experience first hand what an air-to-air dogfight a pilot would go through during the First World War. He nailed the balloon with the propeller blade but then insisted on a return to the airport to make sure it hadn't been sucked into the motor.

It was a crystal blue sky fly day and I had several targets. He made me sick making it impossible for me to get back up into the air. His antics did not endear me with my clients as they wanted to know why I had not flown their properties. I told them the truth and none were amused. VAITEAIR PHOTOS INC In 1994 and 1995 I started placing aerial photographs of the larger cities on CD-ROM and selling them to the bigger land developers and commercial realtors. This was an expensive and laborious task.

4 • The Dangers of Aerial Photography

Near-fatal flying incidents

On the 16 July, 1999, pilot Sandy, wife Tina, and I flew to the province's interior to the Mountain Music Festival at Merritt. My pilot had a contract to tow an advertising banner over the crowd of thousands of spectators coming from far and wide to watch top country music singers.

On the flight up a broadcast came over the radio announcing John F. Kennedy Jr, his wife, and sister-in-law were killed when he crashed his light aircraft into the ocean on their way to attend a wedding. Our flight back was bizarre. Small white cumulus clouds began poking up under the plane looking like white cigarettes. The white pillars began small but quickly became larger and larger until everything under the plane was white. Above us was a clear blue sky while under us everything was white as snow. Sandy climbed higher and higher using instruments to take us back to Pitt Meadows. He asked an air traffic controller for advice and he suggested diverting to Victoria on Vancouver Island. There was a problem. We didn't have enough fuel. Everyone was nervous until we spotted a small hole in the clouds and Sandy dropped his plane down through it and we were able to see the ground. Tina recalls me saying, "Where the Hell are we?" I quickly realized we were over the Trans-Canada Highway and 200 Street in Langley.

In a few moments our plane put down at the Pitt Meadows Airport. Climbing out of the four seater plane, I kissed the ground for my very first time after a flight. As well as Sandy, I began flying with backup pilot Charles Rebstein in the beginning of the new century. Chuck had a 172 Cessna and eventually half my flights were between the two pilots.

Rookie pilots

Some of the greatest risks came from inexperienced pilots who had the technical ability to fly but had not yet learned the judgement required for low-level commercial photography.

Equipment failures

In the fall of 2001, the company won the contract to photograph several prisons across the province and the flight had some interesting moments that began within an hour of leaving the Pitt Meadows Airport. We were delayed due to an oil change. Chuck punched in all the prison coordinates on his Global Positioning System (GPS) in the plane and as a backup I purchased a \$2,500 Garmin Global Positioning System that was like an over-sized brick that weighed several pounds. Just before the flight Tina visited a bank in Abbotsford and mentioned to its manager that her husband was going on a province-wide flight. He told her he'd be interested in purchasing a large print of 2,500 metre high Mount Cheam near Chilliwack for his boardroom wall. We climbed to the right height and just as I was carefully opening my window, Chuck opened his window and my GPS instruction booklet flew out his window. By coincidence, 10 years later the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake Society group, now involved in the making of the 'The Curse of the Frozen Gold' TV series, gathered to talk about the upcoming four months in the wild environs of the Upper Pitt River. An avid mountain climber chatted with me and said some idiot hiker must have packed a heavy GPS unit to near the top of Mount Cheam as he'd found its instruction booklet. I then told him my story. As we put down in Nelson to take on fuel, the red oil button started to bleep and upon landing we saw black oil all over the belly of the plane. The mechanic had not tightened the oil plug. The weather was absolutely clear but we had to wait a couple of days to have parts flown up from Vancouver and to have a mechanic do a costly repair.

My plan was to shoot additional stock to add to my inventory was to include Calgary and Edmonton. We departed Nelson on a miserable morning and started to climb over the Rockies but a downdraft kept pushing the small plane back down into the valley. Chuck kept circling and

climbing until we managed to gain enough altitude to drop down into Alberta. We'd pretty near finished flying all the prisons and put down in Terrace for the night.

In the early morning Tina called and told me to turn on the television. I did and saw the two planes hit the Twin Towers in New York. Security became so tight guards initially refused to allow me to go to the plane to retrieve both my exposed and unexposed film from my ice box. The flight had an extra bonus when the Terrace council agreed to pay me \$2,000 for photographs of their town. Due to flight restrictions my pilot and I were stranded four days in the town of the white Kodiak Bear. It's funny I made these long flights and never considered the possibility of any breakdowns of the cameras. The flights over the Rockies to photograph Calgary and Edmonton and the flights to photograph all BC prisons took a couple of weeks. My medium format cameras were famous for curtain drag left half a negative properly exposed and the other half receiving only a partial exposure. A second flight could have easily cost me a month's wages.



George Allen's photo of Second Narrows Bridge (later Ironworkers' Memorial) over Burrard Inlet, two days before its collapse.
Photo by George Allen Air Photos Ltd

Lessons learned

Every close call reinforced the same lesson: preparation, clear communication, experienced pilots, secure equipment, and respect for weather were never optional.

5 • Mentor and Competitor: Kenne Allen

Meeting British Columbia's leading aerial photographer

When collecting material for the book 'Vancouver Exposed A History in Photographs, I visited Kenne at his Granville Island condominium and did a taped interview about his father George and their 50 years of dominance of the aerial photograph industry in British Columbia. Kenne's father George joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in Nova Scotia a few days after the A May 1919 aerial photograph by Stuart Thomson, facing east down Georgia Street from Denman Street, Vancouver. declaration of war and after the hostilities the government offered veterans an opportunity to get an education. "Dad decided to get into aerial photography in BC.

In the beginning, he used a 4-by-5 inch Crown Graphic with 16 black and white film packs. Dad bought Western Canada Airways's 8-by-10 inch collection of 1,900 nitrate negatives taken between 1926 and 1932. I re-bagged and catalogued the nitrate collection so Dad could donate them to British Columbia Provincial Archives.

It was a chore since the acetate negatives gave off a gas and the emulsion decomposed making them stick to the envelopes. Some were gooey".

In 1957, George got a two year monthly contract to photograph the construction progress of the Second Narrows Bridge across Burrard Inlet connecting North Vancouver to Vancouver and Burnaby.

On June 17th, 1958, a crane stretching from the north side of the new bridge across Burrard Inlet to join the structure on the opposite side collapsed leaving 19 iron workers dead. George flew past the bridge two days before its collapse and snapped two shots.

One picture was printed in four foot sections 4-by-4 feet resulting in a stitched 16-by-4 foot print for a Royal Commission inquiry. The bridge's collapse was attributed to miscalculations by bridge engineers. George also took monthly photographs of the building of the Deas Island Tunnel passing underneath the Fraser River connecting Richmond to Delta.

It was the first concrete immersed tunnel in North America and the second of its kind in the world. "Dad processed the big film and when I got involved we'd print together in the basement. I was just 10. Dad had an 8 x 10 enlarger in the basement with no headroom. We cut the bottom off the enlarger and I'd do all the printing sitting on an orange crate a foot off the ground. He printed and I'd do the tray work. Dad had his first strokes between 1974 and 1976 so I took over the business and changed its direction into real estate photography. I purchased the very first medium format Pentax 6 x 7 centimetre camera in all of Canada in the early seventies and that changed the quality of oblique air photography. I bought all the wide and telephoto lenses. I was a one man shop and often worked 16 hours a day. There was no time for a holiday.

It was work and sleep. I took the adage from my Father if you wanted something done right to do it yourself." "The business really took off in the early eighties as there was really no competition until you came along. I got a two year bi-weekly contract to photograph both Canada Place and the Expo 86 site between 1984 to 1986. They needed hundreds of photographs every two weeks for their press releases.

One shot was even used as a line drawing on a stamp published looking south with Canada Place and the sails. By this time I was making \$250,000 plus a year. My best year was 1988."

In 1991 Tax Save, a large accounting company in Toronto called Kenne and explained he'd been paying a 13.5% federal goods and services tax for the previous two years for being a manufacturer. He wasn't because by this time he'd.

George Allen's photograph of the Second Narrows Bridge, taken two days before its collapse.

been sending his film to a colour laboratory for processing and printing. Tax Save picked him because he was the sixth highest paid photographer in all of Canada. He got a huge refund.

Price agreements

It was during this period when Kenne telephoned me from the Vancouver General Hospital to say his drinking problem had caught up to him and he had been in a serious car accident. He asked me to photograph several of his sites for his many clients. By this time, Kenne was number one, with me the runner-up in the pecking order of aerial photographers in the province. A few days after his accident, I visited him in the hospital where I found him curled up in his bed crying. He explained that during his surgery the doctor had found stomach cancer. Since we had become friends, he gave me a list of all his clients. He donated his father's huge negative and preview collection to the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria and his collection to the University of British Columbia's Geography Department for a huge tax receipt.

Friendship

With success the high flyer's drinking became a bit of a problem.

It was party time and wife Gael and he were able to take several holidays to destinations like Greece, China and Mexico. They flew to Mexico 6-7 times in 1991. "We even flew to Hawaii for an Easter weekend."

It was the calm before the storm. It wasn't to last and in December, 1992, Kenne got into a serious car accident and landed in the Vancouver General Hospital. He was charged with impaired driving.

During surgery, the doctors found inoperable life threatening stomach cancer. He went to a recovery house in Surrey the following March and asked God for help. He had a spiritual or religious awakening. "It felt someone had taken two 45 gallon drums off my shoulders and for four or five minutes had an incredible high potency electric ether thrown at the back of my head and it hit me at the base of my right side and went all through my body down to my toes. I felt an incredible peace and ecstasy and a rapture and a cleansing and all the guilt and all the shame and

everything in my life was kindness with an incredible knowledge I never had before with a sense of purpose. Everything radiated in colour.

It was high contrast and radiating glowing light. I saw the light. talked with my therapist and she called my experience compassion. It's about asking with complete abandon. There was no sense of weight. There was no sense of mass."

In 2010, Kenne took the Vancouver City Archivist to lunch offering to donate his, 1000,000 negative collection for a tax receipt explaining the University of British Columbia Geography Department was also interested in the collection.

In the end Kenne split his collection between the university, the city and the British Columbia Provincial Archives. Kenne passed away in 2011.

The history of aerial photography in British Columbia



French photographer and balloonist Gaspard-Félix Tournachon took the first air photograph from a tethered hot air balloon over Paris, France, from a height of 1,600 feet in 1858. For some reason, known only to him, he took a complete darkroom in the balloon's basket and processed the film before returning to the ground. Over the next few years, photographic technology continued to advance.

In 1860, photographer James Wallace Black, accompanied by his navigator, made eight exposures from a balloon tethered at 1,200 feet above Boston, Massachusetts. Only one image

was successful and it's the earliest surviving aerial photograph. Douglas Archibald, an English meteorologist, was able to capture the first successful aerial photograph using a string of kites in 1882. A few years later, Arthur Batut was able to attach a timer to a camera and set it to trigger the shutter within a few moments of launching to photograph his hometown of Labruguière, France.

In 1897, Alfred Nobel, the famed inventor who later established the Nobel Prize, successfully mounted a camera to a rocket. Seven years later, Albert Maul used a rocket to take an aerial picture from 2,600 feet. The camera was then ejected and parachuted to the ground.

In 1906, George R. Lawrence used a string of kites to lift a heavy camera 2,000 feet to aerially capture the San Francisco, California, earthquake and raging fires. Strange but absolutely true, there is a story of Frederick (Lou) Gagnon, a former Canadian Pacific Railway migrant worker and afterwards a trouble-shooter with the Nickle Plate gold mine at Hedley, building a steam-powered flying machine at Rossland, another gold producing town in British Columbia. Built in 1902, his two-engine machine was perhaps the world's first helicopter. Its main feature was an overhead rotor blade powered from a steam turbine. A horizontal push-propeller was geared to a cylinder engine with a pivot vane to act as a rudder. Mr. Gagnon drew from his own intelligence, his experience, and his vision to construct an aircraft thus making him worthy of mention in the history of aviation. His timing of the invention, its overhead rotor design, and use of steam power all deserve respect and recognition. His co-workers, said he "kept his invention secret". According to sworn testimonials, the whole contraption lifted straight up skyward. Apparently the machine was named for its resemblance to a steam shovel and its purpose was to fly gold ore off the top of a mountain. After an aviation misadventure, he went to work at a men's clothing store in Spokane, Washington, before joining a road show as a vocalist before returning to railroading. All this took place just before the Rosslanders taught a pig how to fly with heavy payloads!

On 23 February 1909, more than 100 people witnessed the first successful powered flight in Canada as the Silver Dart lifted off the ice at Baddeck Bay, a small village in northeastern Nova Scotia and flew 800 metres. Piloted by John Alexander Douglas 'Doug' McCurdy (1886-1961) it reached a speed of 65 kilometres per hour before making a smooth landing. Designed and built by the Aerial Experiment Association, founded by Mabel and Alexander Graham Bell, the Silver Dart was the accumulation of a group of aeronautical researchers. Their success heralded the coming of age of aviation in Canada. Bell was credited with patenting the world's first telephone.

In 1909, American inventors and aviation pioneer brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright travelled to Rome, Italy, The Silver Dart lifting off the ice at Baddeck Bay, Nova Scotia. and flew the first gas powered aeroplane for the purpose of marketing planes to the Italian government for war purposes. His Majesty King Emmanuel III watched a passenger take both still and motion picture footage of the flight.

During the First World War, hot air balloon pilots were accompanied by a photographer to communicate enemy positions to soldiers fighting in the trenches and to take pictures of movements on the battlefield. The pilots steered the balloons minus an engine by relying entirely on wind currents for horizontal movement to maneuver the craft over men fighting in foxholes

on the ground. The balloons had to have their sides and bottom reinforced to withstand bullets being fired by the infantrymen. The navigator would write down enemy positions and drop a ribboned rock with notes to his commanders below to give them a one up on the enemy. The photographer would take pictures of the terrain and on being brought back to earth process the film and get prints as quickly as possible to platoon leaders. Although safe from sharp shooters in the trenches, the balloons were sitting ducks and an easy target for pilots in one-seater planes and often a balloon navigator, his photographer, and his mode of transportation went down in flames. Nearing the end of the war, cameras were specifically designed for airborne use, but stability and slow shutter speed continued to be a drawback resulting in fuzzy pictures.

By the end of the war, Sherman M. Fairchild developed a camera with the shutter located inside the lens which took pictures at faster shutter speeds. Sometime after the war, Fairchild used a series of overlapping pictures to create an aerial map of Manhattan, New York. Fairchild's camera technology was the standard for aerial cameras for the next 50 years.

Because balloons were easy to shoot down, some armies resorted to using homing carrier pigeons. German inventor Dr. Julius Neubronner designed a lightweight breast-mounted camera which was harnessed to muscle bound pigeons. The miniature camera was set to snap photographs at 30-second intervals along the bird's flight path. The camera weighed almost as much as the pigeon. The bird's flight was a beeline from the sender, over sometimes a square mile or more war zone, and back home. The "bird's eye view" images proved almost entirely useless because the slow and low flying pigeons, laden down with the cumbersome camera, often flew away from any war zone. When they did fly over the trenches, enemy soldiers armed with shotguns were able to blow them out of the sky turning some into pigeon pot pie.

During World War II, overlapping ortho (vertical) aerial photographs of the war front, taken from the belly of a plane was commonplace and featured in newspapers. By this time, aerial movie footage was being used in theatres to spread propaganda. A Bird's Eye View Some of the most well known aerial reconnaissance efforts using photography occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. President John F. Kennedy asked the Air Force's top pilot to streak over Cuba with a spy plane to determine if the Soviets were setting up rocket launching pads in Cuba. They were. Kennedy confronted Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The two made a pact to reduce armaments. Simply put, aerial reconnaissance photography possibly prevented a Third World War.

A short time later astronauts began photographing Earth from space and in 1969 Commander Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed the lunar module Eagle on the moon. Neil used a Hasselblad camera to take images of Earth, the big blue marble.

It's been my good fortune to have been around when McElhanney Engineering of Vancouver commissioned straight down overlapping photography covering a 40-mile-wide by 80-mile-long section of British Columbia from the northern mountains to the US/Canada border and from Chilliwack to Vancouver. The black and white negatives, taken with a 5-by-4 inch camera were stitched together into one humongous digital file.

Now, this is where Artificial Intelligence and archival aerial photographer merge making it possible to use archival aerial photographs to show the transition from farmland to city metropolises with 60-storey high-rises. When it comes to aerial photography, the sky's the limit!

In May, 1919, Stuart Thomson became the first aerial photographer in British Columbia by taking a set of 15 photographs of Vancouver. Captain Ernie Hoy, a World War I flying ace who was pioneering air mail at the same time, was his pilot. Ernie had the distinction of downing nine enemy aircraft and two hot air balloons during the war. Thomson sat in the back seat of an open cockpit two-seater biplane, and twisting backwards, was able to take the images shooting back over his shoulder.

One time I visited Kenne at his Granville Island apartment with a tape recorder and he gave me the early history of aerial photography in BC. He talked about his dad George, a Second World War aerial photographer, and his transitioning his business over to Kenne. After the interview Kenne took me down to the wharf and introduced me to Frank Ogden or 'Dr. Tomorrow. Frank was a legend who predicted the Internet long before Steve Jobs and Bill Gates were household names. Three decades earlier Frank had broken a world record by flying a single engine plane to over 19,000 feet until running out of fuel and gliding back to earth. He was also a big proponent of Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). The last time I saw Frank was the end of December 2012 when visiting a friend in the Maple Ridge Hospital. His name was on the door adjacent to my buddy's room. We talked and although his body was worn out his mind was sharp as a tack. We sat in the visitor's lounge and he began to reminisce about being an LSD therapist at the Hollywood Hospital in New Westminster. He talked about importing pure LSD from Switzerland and using doses 100 times more potent than drugs being used at the street. His name would appear in my chapter on mental health. Just before my retirement in 2004, A. R. 'Bud' Ryckman hired me to do a flight from Coquitlam Centre, up the Indian Arm River Valley, to Squamish. He insisted on coming along on the flight and we flew tight circles at 3,000 feet. I became sick. When we returned to Pitt Meadows for lunch, I asked him for the purpose of all those tight circuits. He swore me to secrecy and explained he had assembled a group of Canadian financiers to build an alternative route to Whistler, called the Indian Arm Highway Project, to serve as a backup in the event the Sea-to-Sky Highway was shut down during the 2010 Olymphotograph and Paralymphotograph Winter Games. He had raised the \$20,000,000 in private capital with 100 shares at \$200,000 a share. It would follow up the British Columbia Hydro right of way along the eastern shore of Indian Arm. He had taken Premier Gord Campbell and Jack Poole, head of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olymphotograph and Paralymphotograph Games, along a dirt road from Squamish to Coquitlam Centre and explained that he needed a package for presentation to other potential investors. Jack was the businessman who co-founded Daon Developments, the second-largest real estate development company in North America. Jack had hired me years earlier to take aerial photographs of a large parcel of land in Abbotsford. Being a rookie at aerial photography, it turned out to be a disaster. We talked at the airport café, and I suggested we climb to 10,000 feet and show the complete story with one single photo. We became good friends, and I helped him put together a package to present to several politicians, three of which were Members of the Legislative Assembly.

6 • Building an Aerial Photography Business

Cataloguing thousands of images

Sometimes I would call Tina on my brick-sized cellular phone and arrange to meet her at some restaurant for supper around six o'clock after which I quickly had to get home to fill orders. When I flew, I would have to organize photo previews and get them into binders by city and date to show to prospective clients. There was a major problem in that quite often the weather would unexpectedly improve and I'd have to cancel appointments on short notice, scramble to find a pilot, and get up airborne to take pictures.

The Fraser Valley grid system

It's amazing to study the land uses of land over 100 years.

One very good example is the Burns Peat Bog in Delta.

During the early history of British Columbia, Dominic and Pat Burns had the largest meat

packing operation in Canada. Beef cattle were raised in the province's grasslands interior for shipment west to Delta for shipment back east. Dominic owned the Peat Bog in Delta with the idea of finishing off the animals but the wetlands were unsuitable.



During the war years, the bog was harvested for its peat for use in the making of incendiary bombs for the Second World War. Labourers delineated trenches by cutting vertically to a depth of about three feet into the peat with chain saws. Peat blocks, each 14 x 12 inches square and

six inches deep were then hand-cut with shovels that left a three-foot trenches. The water table was kept as low as possible by digging ditches to drain the water out of the peat. The blocks were stacked or stoked in the field, much like sheaves of grain but on wooden platforms, and left to dry in the hot sun during the summer months.

Once the drying process was complete, the blocks of peat were transported in from the fields on a narrow-gauge railway to elevators that conveyed them into the barns.

During the winter months labourers forked the blocks of peat from a loft down a chute to a thrashing machine. It came out soft, fluffy and bulky. The next phase was the baling process. The fluffy peat would be forked into a baling machine that produced 2x2x4 foot bales of peat. A plunger would squeeze these bales, then they were cinched up really tight into compact 75 to 100-pound bales. These bales were then loaded onto trucks that transported them to boxcars

sitting on a Canadian Pacific Railway The loaded boxcars then travelled south to Henderson (near Reno), Nevada, for the making of magnesium incendiary bombs for the war effort against Germany and Japan. The US munitions production required 700,000 to 1,000,000 bales (about 800 boxcars) of sphagnum peat per year for the war effort.

Once the war was over the peat bogs were used for the growing of blueberry and cranberry crops. Much of the site was later used as the Vancouver dump. Much later the sold to Ducks Unlimited.

Computerization

One day I took the planner for the City of Surrey for lunch and noticed advertising on the side of his vehicle offering website design. I asked him about the signage and he grinned saying the business belonged to his 15 year old son. I drove out to Chilliwack and over the next several weekends his son built me a simple website under my supervision that actually began to make money. I very slowly began placing aerial photographs on the Internet confident this medium would eventually have far greater potential than the aerial photograph picture books or the CD-ROM packages.



A portable 12x8 foot display offering land for sale in Terra Rosa, Richmond, immediately south of the Vancouver International Airport and the City of Vancouver, 1992

Selling stock photography

Once a realtor phoned me saying he had an urgent request for photographs for a meeting before the weekend. I lined up a pilot at Delta's Boundary Bay Airport, drove there from Vancouver while Tina drove to the airport with my camera case and film. He had prints later the following day. This kind of service was unheard of prior to the coming of age of digital cameras.

7 • Technology Changes Everything

Macintosh computers

Macintosh computers changed how I organized, presented, and eventually marketed an expanding photographic archive.

Digital catalogues

The binders that once filled the van gradually gave way to digital catalogues that were easier to duplicate, carry, and place in a client's hands.

CD-ROM collections

In 1995 the largest non-military campaign in the history of Canada took place near 100-Mile House in the Cariboo, which came to be known as the Gustafson Lake Stand-Off. RCMP officers ended up in a firefight with indigenous First Nations over land rights.

Early Internet marketing

Unfortunately, he became less interested in computer sciences and more and more interested in becoming an auto repairman.

It was during this period a top commercial realtor in Vancouver switched careers and began to embrace the Internet with anything to do with real estate. He suggested I 'piggyback' on his site explaining his website got thousands of visitors a day. About this time a salesman approached me saying he'd put together a group of businessmen who traded services excluding government bureaucracy.

It was a great idea and I did several flights in trade and was able to hire yet another web designer. He was certainly better than the first one.

It was about this time Susan Frye, the owner of Aerolist Photography Ltd in Seattle, Washington, contacted me and participated in the cost of the designer. He unfortunately jumped ship to go into a totally different type of work and passed me off to another web designer who couldn't take the site to a be workable again leaving me in the lurch. Besides, the person in charge of the server was holding me ransom and charging an exorbitant monthly fee.

It was always money going out with little or no return.

8 • Flying British Columbia

Commercial developments

One day, I took my realtor to visit a long time friend who owned a large parcel of farm land in Pitt Meadows not far from the intersection of Harris Road and the Lougheed Highway. I brought along my rolled up topographical aerial photograph map of the Lower Fraser Valley. He studied my map spread out across his kitchen table being held in place with four cups and rightly concluded a blind man could guess a new Fraser River crossing linking the industrial parks of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows on the north side of the river and the Langley and Surrey industrial parks on the south side of the river. He told us land would continue to escalate in value because there was getting to be less and less of it to sell.

It was during this time a farmer requested I fly his 160 acre farm that he had just sold to land developers. When I delivered my preview photographs to his mother and him, I asked why he hadn't sold off only a portion of his property. The cash from the sale of only a quarter of the farm would have easily provided his family and him with enough cash to last out the rest of their lifetime. He didn't have an answer but his Mom quickly realized her grandchildren had possibly missed out on a huge inheritance. Tina's family owned commercial property and after her Dad passed away in 2001, the family decided to sell and she became its new president. A housewife and apartment manger, she set up a meeting with her Dad's former partner's son and a commercial realtor to sign off and give him the listing. Dad's partner's son was a no show and sent his wife in his place. I came along as a fly on the wall. We ordered meals just before the proxy and realtor made an appearance. Seeing us midway through our meals, the realtor started making his pitch to get the listing. The going rate for selling commercial property was about ½ commission charged for residential. Upon leaving Tina asked what he charged for marketing the property. He gave the residential rate and Tina didn't sign any documents. He lost the listing.

Shopping centres

Shopping centres became recurring targets, from proposed sites in the Fraser Valley to completed properties photographed for owners and national real estate clients.

Golf courses

Golf courses remained valuable assignments because one strong aerial image could show the course, surrounding development, transportation routes, and mountain backdrop at a glance.

Municipal projects

Municipal planners and public agencies also needed aerial views to understand growth, infrastructure, land use, and the relationship between one property and an entire region.

First Nations assignments

One officer was shot in the back, who if not for his bulletproof jacket, would surely have been a casualty in the conflict. With the death of Katzie Chief Joe Pierre his wife Agnes took over his post until a replacement could be found. Since I went into Vancouver once a week to purchase inventory, I would pick Agnes up to drop her off at the Department of Indian Affairs.

Because of her intelligence, she became a spokeswoman for her people and often travelled to the nation's capital to negotiate with federal politicians. She wanted me to be a part of her delegation, but it interfered with my business.

One time she hired me to perform a flight to the source of the Pitt River and take photos as they were required for her meetings with the officials in Ottawa.

One of Agnes's concerns was the extraction of gravel from Cougar Lake on the Upper Pitt River, which was then barged down the lake to be sold to a concrete plant in Richmond. She was concerned about the impact of these activities on fish spawning. Some of these photographs were later enlarged and used in the accounts of the Slumach Lost Mine of Pitt Lake by movie producers in the making of 'The Curse of the Frozen Gold' and 'Deadman's Curse'.

9 • Across Canada by Air

Alberta telecommunications contract

In 1996, the company won a contract to photograph the cities of Calgary and Edmonton for a multinational telecommunications company required low-level flying so they could determine suitable locations for their towers. The vice-president wanted to come along to enjoy a flight over the Rockies. My pilot was a newbie who needed the hours for his application to fly the big passenger planes. The three of us departed from Pitt Meadows Airport on a gorgeous blue-sky morning with the VP sitting up front while I slept in the back seat. I don't even recall the pilot putting down to take on fuel at Nelson. We landed in a snow storm in Calgary. The VP took a commercial flight back to Vancouver. The pilot and I were stranded for a week until a Chinook melted all the snow, after which we photographed the two cities. It took us 10 days. The telecommunications company was happy with my Alberta assignment and asked me to repeat the task for Toronto in December. I explained it was a bad idea due to snow and inclement weather, but they insisted. My client even allowed me to bring my own experienced pilot and we flew first class to Toronto. Sure enough, the weather was awful, and I never tripped a shutter. The telecommunications company wanted my pilot and I to fly São Paulo, Brazil, but the assignment would have kept us away for several months so we decided to pass on the once in a lifetime opportunity, concluding the language and logistics barriers would likely have resulted into a similar experience to Kenne Allen's flight to Hong Kong.

Ontario assignments

My plan was to travel Canada coast to coast to gather photographs and take interviews about gold discoveries in Canada. It would be a business venture and an opportunity to offset some of the expenses. I agreed to work part time for my son and in 2006 he won a contract to take aerial photographs for the largest real estate trust in Canada. They had about 25 shopping centres located in the bigger cities between British Columbia and Ontario. Since I had wanted to drive across the continent to collect family and gold history anyway, it only made sense for me to rent planes and shoot my way back to Ontario.

I discovered there are many useless pilots who couldn't line up a plane, a shopping centre, and a suitable background for love or money. I got the job done but it was a challenge. This was

the first time I used a digital camera, and I would burn the photographs onto a DVD and courier them back to Nathan overnight. The job paid for a three-and-a-half month working holiday that allowed Tina and I to stay in luxurious hotels and motels. Before leaving on the trip the Vice-President of the Canada Land Corporation told me he'd buy photographs of Toronto's downtown if I had all the right angles.

One day I got up with unlimited visibility and got all the right shots and his company spent enough money to cover several weeks of our time on the road.

As mentioned earlier, something weird happened to me on one of my flights out of the Arnprior Airport located a few miles west of Ottawa.

On a flight, on a whim, I asked my pilot to fly over my hometown of Renfrew, my parents farm, and my parents' birth places.

My plan was to incorporate the photographs into a family history booklet for my children and grandchildren. Mom was born in Cobden while my Dad was born in Foresters Falls. Both places were tiny villages. As we came up on FF another small plane was doing circuits and I remarked to my pilot it was quite the coincidence for two planes to be in the same air space at the same time wanting to take aerial photographs of the Falls'. That evening I received an email from a relative explaining he'd found my website about Waite family history on the Internet. My great grandfather John Edward Waite had come out to Canada from England with his wife, their young family, and with great grandpa's sister and her husband, a chap by the name of Windle. The email was from 'GW' Waite. He went on to explain his name was Grant Windle Waite but he didn't know before reading my history about the origin of his middle name. He'd found my history interesting in that JE had a short time after his arrival in Ontario formed a partnership with his brother-in-law and a school teacher from Renfrew by the name of Hollinger. The three entrepreneurs started the first large brickyard in the Ottawa Valley in Pembroke.

It was called the Windle, Waite and Hollinger Brickyard. Years later Hollinger's son Benny discovered the richest gold mine in all of Canada in Timmins. Along with his email, he sent along a photograph he'd taken earlier in the day of 'the Falls'. I sent him one of mine. Both photographs had the same clouds over Aunt Muriel's and Uncle Orin's farm. Since I was trying to collect photographs and written material for a book, 'Canadian Gold Hunters: A History in Photographs, I drove a few hundred miles to meet the descendants of Benny. They had a Hollinger family history and loaned it to me to take to a print shop for photocopying. If the Canadian Gold Hunters title had come to fruition, the Hollinger Gold Mine would have easily accounted for ten percent of the book's content. Eventually, a book publisher took on my title, 'British Columbia and Yukon Gold Hunters: A History in Photographs. Tina's and my trip to Ontario was one of the happier times of my life but it was not to last as a devastating chain of events caused me to have a mental breakdown in the summer of 2007 curtailing my dreams to help take Nathan's business on his website to another level.

Photographing Canada's prisons

The 2001 prison contract took the company across British Columbia and turned a demanding itinerary into one of my most memorable long-distance assignments.

Flying through the Rockies

Crossing the Rockies in a small aircraft brought its own dangers: snow, downdrafts, mechanical trouble, and the constant need to find safe altitude over unforgiving terrain.

10 • Expo 86 and the Vancouver Boom

Hong Kong migration

The approach of Hong Kong's 1997 handover helped drive migration to British Columbia and accelerated demand for property, development, and compelling aerial marketing.

Real estate explosion

As towers rose in Vancouver, Richmond, and Victoria, land values climbed and aerial photographs became essential to glossy sales packages aimed at buyers around the world.

Developers and investors

Developers and investors wanted more than a picture of a building site. They wanted the whole story—roads, neighbourhoods, mountains, water, downtown skylines, and the land's future potential.

International clients

Large prints and, later, digital files allowed the work to travel overnight and eventually around the world, long before most businesses understood what online image delivery could become.

11 • GlobalAirPhotos.com

The original vision

Sometimes a person gets only one shot at making a good impression, and so it was for me building the Globalairphotos.com website that started back in 1989 when my father-in-law saw the potential of my dream and loaned me the necessary capital to hire the best web designers on earth. Ironically, the company I chose was based in Montréal and had built the Kodak and Disneyland sites.

Early website development

Unfortunately, they didn't know their butt from elbow and money went out with no return. Many web designers tried for several years but they didn't have the knowledge to take the site to the next level.

In all fairness, the Internet was new and many tools back then didn't even exist. It is often plain luck that brings two minds together with a single purpose, and lucky for me a web guru came into my life who was able to take the project far beyond my wildest dreams.

Technical frustrations

One day, Nathan asked me to fly Kelowna, Quesnel and Prince George but due to my bipolar condition the flight was a total disaster and not a single photograph could be used by his clients. He had to fly the targets a few weeks later. Although I no longer took to the sky, I began to organize Nathan's 50,000 digital aerial photographs to hopefully one day place on the Internet and consequently spent several hours a week in 2008 and 2009 but the site was under construction and incomplete and generated very little money. It had been my baby, and although retired, I was hoping to get it up and running. Due to my illness, I put too much pressure on my designer and he dropped me as a client. Although the site brought in almost zero revenue, I continued to pay a monthly fee for hosting and over 15 years of inactivity paid out \$35,000. Sadly, the site sat on a server in Iceland and ran like a slug. It took a long time to find a web guru willing to migrate the website to another server, fix broken links, and take everything to the next level. I'd reached out to designers and all but one replied that without the script from the original designer they would not be able to help me to make the site fully operational.

The first item on the agenda was to move the site from a slow-as-Methuselah server in Iceland over to an Amazon server that ran at warp speed.

Originally the site's server was in Iceland and took forever to display files.

Fast forward to 2022, when a helicopter pilot took a newcomer aerial photographer and I up in a four seater helicopter to blitz an area 60 miles by 40 miles in over six hours. The president of the helicopter company had cut his teeth flying and reporting accidents for morning and evening rush hours, but unfortunately, due to him having to fight forest fires at the time, the flying was done by an employee who was unfamiliar with the targets; and consequently the flight was a disaster. To make matters worse, a web guru who thought he knew everything but knew very little unintentionally made an error when accessing my website which made it impossible to upload the photographs and we only managed to process the Abbotsford photographs, one of 15 cities, before the site became totally wrecked, resulting in a zero-dollar return. I'd thrown a lot of money at the website over the years and now hopefully is the time to reap the rewards for spending and dreaming. With servers capable of running at warp speed and being able to display several hundred thumbnails to the page and with marketing and the ability to turn out 40 by 60 inch wall murals with incredible detail due to current software programs and old dreams were within my grasp. The web is, by its nature, worldwide. If other worldwide aerial photographers are given the chance to place their archival and up-to-date images on the website with the understanding that they pay back a fair amount of money for that privilege, will they buy into the concept? Would commercial and industrial realtors pay to advertise their listings on the site? What about graphic designers? What about who else? The opportunity only requires imagination. Imagine a Board of Directors brainstorming the possibilities.

Building a worldwide archive

It was a truly worldwide endeavour, and initially two aerial photographers from the United States came on board.

It was KISS - keep it simple stupid. The cost of storage with Amazon was peanuts to what was offered 30 years ago and everything could now run at incredible velocity.

It was often down. There had to be value in aerial photographs going back 70 years as the aerial photographer in Washington State owned a large black-and-white collection of negatives going all the way back to the 1950s. Her pre-digital collection was 800,000 negatives.

As an added bonus, globalairphotos.com was designed such that participating photographers anywhere in the world could upload their own photographs.

A Vancouver architect purchased a RAW file and made a six foot high by four foot wide print showing every high-rise in the salt water city while a Chinese realtor used a RAW file of downtown Richmond the same size to show its proximity to Vancouver.

A Maple Ridge accountant purchased 2 images of Maple Ridge, dated 1997 and 2017- 20 years apart, for display at the entrance into his office. The change from rural to city was incredible.

12 • Business Adventures

Canada Land Corporation

Canada Land Corporation became a recurring client, commissioning progress and development photographs of major holdings in Abbotsford, Burnaby, Richmond, Vancouver, and Toronto.

Indian Arm Highway proposal

One became quite excited about the project and raised the possibility of blasting a tunnel through a mountain near Mamquam Mountain so northbound travelers emerging from it would enter a village comparable, if not better, than Whistler. Using my photos, a professional engineer put together a PowerPoint presentation to take to Chambers of Commerce cities. The games would attract athletes and visitors from around the world. The plan was to establish a toll booth at the midway point to recover the cost of the road. His project piqued my curiosity and I agreed to roll the dice in the venture. Like me, he was an enthusiastic dreamer and gambler, and his project had only the remotest possibility of coming to fruition.

It was the time of the public-private partnerships (PPP) between private companies and the government for the financing of huge projects with the resulting profits coming from long-term capital to the investors upon completion. The entrepreneurs wanted to build a good quality, all weather, two lane highway with a third lane for passing on uphill grades with equal to or superior to government standards. The financial viability of the project would be dependent upon acquiring a crown grant adjacent to the highway for future development. The big question would be the government going for a PPP or deciding to leave the financiers out of the loop.

In any event, my name and logo appeared on each and every presentation slide to land developers and top government officials. That was better than expensive advertising. He used to come to my place, and we slowly and methodically began to put the packages together while his wife Maggie read in the living room or chatted with Tina. He was not going to reinvent the wheel as years before British Properties came into existence in West Vancouver and prior to the Second World War, investors including Great Britain's King and Queen, and the Guinness family, the

beer titans, invested heavily on a gamble a bridge across Burrard Inlet would add tremendous value to what would come to be called British Properties. Alfred Taylor, after whom Taylor Way in West Vancouver is named, and William S. Stephenson, the man called Intrepid and the real James Bond, Agent 007, put the deal together with a very naive or perhaps very clever West Vancouver mayor and council. The British Royals and the Guinness family would build the Lions Gate Bridge, collect tolls for years, but also be given the entire mountainside above the fledgling city. The city politicians screwed up and gave the British investors five times more than their request. Little wonder that Stephenson played a big part during the Second World War being the only person with 24/7 access to King George VI, Sir Winston Churchill, and President Harry Truman. This was my very first time to hear the name William S. Stephenson, who a few years later seemed to dominate me for the rest of my life. Bud and I were both historians and we used to trade stories about how jigsaw pieces fit together to explain why towns and cities evolved from forests to metropolises. He wanted to draw up a similar contract with the BC government for land for a village.

It was a grandiose scheme which proved just too ambitious not to be pie in the sky. The gigantic project may have succeeded, but it was situated in a park with the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations owning the land at both ends of the proposed highway. They were not going to be excluded from the deals being cooked on a back burner as they remembered the Canadian Pacific Railway had moved the Musqueam First Nations living in Vancouver to Squamish in a land swap and very little cash when the first train finally arrived on the west coast. They rightly wanted their piece of the action.

On my many flights, I slotted his requirements into my agenda shooting stock for my ever growing inventory. My father figure had been an avid skier in his youth and knew the best hills in and around Whistler like the back of his hand. He even worked as a youth in an underground copper mine near Whistler before the ski resort even existed. Miners had to gain access to the mine by boat. He explained his route provided access to the Mamquam Cirque (half-open steep-sided hollow at the head of a mountainside formed by glacial erosion) which was equal if not superior to Whistler for ski conditions. He called his route the Indian Arm Highway Project, envisaging it as part of an even greater transportation scheme. The Golden Ears Bridge across the Fraser River between Langley and Maple Ridge was to be completed in 2009 to be ready for a large influx of Americans coming to the games. They would cross the border at 176 Street and travel north toward 200 Street to connect with the new bridge. The Indian Arm route would shortcut the existing Trans Canada Highway, the Port Mann and Iron Workers Bridges, and access the Upper Levels to Squamish before continuing to Whistler. There was a lot of talk about a new bridge becoming part of a route through Pitt Polder and crossing the Pitt River far north of the already existing bridge to hook up with the under construction David Pathan Connector in North Coquitlam. This brainstorming idea put the farmers in North Pitt Meadows and the Pitt Polder into hornet mode. They conducted a meeting that included me presenting a large vertical aerial photograph of all possible routes. They wanted to know if a road through their farms would increase or decrease land values. To link all these elements, an interchange would need to be built between the Meadows Golf Club and Pelton Reforestation. The tree farm was located just to the northeast of the golf course.

It was rather ironic I knew Norm Pelton, the owner of the large tree farm, from way back in 1972. He had hired me to take ground level photographs of his business in readiness for a meeting with the Minister of Forestry the following day. His tree farm, over many, many years sold more seedlings than any other tree farm in the world. Norm's son Steve became the recipient of the most prestigious award from the Professional Photographers of Canada in 2020. Norm's grandson and Steve's son Colin, an eye in the sky helicopter pilot for several years, built up a fleet of helicopters to fight forest fires across the province.

Years later, Steve volunteered to help me take the globalairphotos.com website to a whole new level. The Indian Arm Highways Project took me several months to fly many of the required photographs. Quest University was to be completed near Squamish in 2007 to cater to foreign students. My father figure made several presentations to city and municipal councils during this time.

It was almost unbelievable a second Whistler Village could be built a mere 20 minutes north of Coquitlam Centre.

It was only a matter of time, but it was not to happen any time soon.

Unfortunately, Father Time took my friend's wife Maggie from cancer and her loss took away his will to live as she had been the love of his life since she was fourteen years old. Soon afterwards, he too passed. A bird photographer visited me and, learning about my aerial photograph business, she suggested I get in touch with her brother as the family owned a quarter section of prime commercial property.

Lilly Point Estates

It was called Lilly Point Estates and was located in Point Roberts, in the United States, just south of Delta. I took a very successful commercial realtor with me and we visited her brother and he explained he had already had the site flown from 3,000 feet. I looked at the photographs and, sure enough, the aerial photograph were mostly blue sky at the top of the picture with Vancouver and the north shore mountains looking a million miles away. To make a long story short, we shook hands and he gave her the listing agreeing we would each get 1.5% of the \$14,000,000 American listing if sold. I rented a two seater helicopter and the pilot climbed to almost 10,000 feet for me to get the perfect picture on a day with unlimited visibility.

It was a real challenge as the air got thin and without a door it was very cold. I built a website for the property which piggybacked on my aerial photograph website. My realtor friend nearly made a sale that would have paid out over \$300,000 to each of us but it went sideways because of water issues. She later got the listing to sell the family mansion, and she paid me part of her commission.

Working with commercial developers

Commercial development work taught me that timing, discretion, local knowledge, and the right viewpoint could influence negotiations involving properties worth millions of dollars.

13 • Passing the Torch

Nathan joins the business

In 2002, I held a family round table meeting and explained I wanted to retire in two years as I would be 60, and I wanted to know if any of them cared to take over the business. My younger son Nathan had a job but arranged to get one day off a week to learn the ropes. He soon began working full time. Instead of having my lab scan negatives, I purchased an expensive drum scanner and Nathan spent first several months scanning negatives for placement on the Internet.

Selling the company

In 2004, I sold my business to my younger son Nathan. As a farm boy, I'd done hard work from age 10 to joining the RCMP at 19 followed by running my own business. After 45 years working, it was time to retire and enjoy the fruits of my labour and travel with wife Tina.

Retirement

Retirement did not mean stepping away completely. I continued to fly selected assignments, organize images, support Nathan, and pursue the website that had become my unfinished dream.

14 • The End of an Era

Digital photography

Digital photography transformed delivery. On the 2006 cross-Canada assignment, I could burn each day's photographs to DVD and courier them to Nathan overnight.

Google Maps

For years my bipolar condition often left me delusional but other times I was totally rational and able to carry on with big projects. I talked with one commercial realtor who had managed to tie up a huge parcel of land that was in the ALR and with a negotiating expert could perhaps have the acreage changed into commercial property worth several times its current value. The math was astonishing.

It was certainly worth hiring a commercial real estate specialist but many times land owners pick the wrong horse to move ALR land into a commercial listing. The removal of ALR land needs to go through municipal, provincial, and federal loopholes. The players all want something in return for cooperation. A city mayor and council may agree to a highway overpass linking parcels of ALR lands to residential properties. Provincial bureaucrats may want buildings with green earth rooftops that could possibly be both ALR and commercial while the federal government may want easements along fish bearing creeks. Moving land depends on a participant's imagination and one who can think outside the box or as my Dad used to say, 'There's more than one way to skin a cat. It's interesting to study topographical maps and see the changes in land use over a number of years. It doesn't take a brain surgeon to predict future land uses. With Google's ever perfecting world mapping, pilots are using a very complex camera mounted in a plane's belly to take straight down vertical pictures. The expensive cameras rotate side to side during beeline flights east to west. These digital images, when stitched together are

designed to show oblique images showing even the different levels in high-rise towers. It's most impressive and many successful aerial photographers chose to get out of the game, rather than compete with Google Maps and drone photography. Artificial intelligence (AI) is another new word being bantered about on a daily basis, eliminating many businesses that have been around for eons.

Drones

Drones lowered the cost of local aerial work and made routine property photography accessible to far more operators, further changing the market for traditional aircraft-based assignments.

Artificial Intelligence

Two things are certain, Google Maps can't provide up-to-date images able to compete with digital cameras that take high resolution images between the 1,500 and 3,000 foot level nor can AI go back in time to show oblique aerial photographs taken as far back as 10, 20, 30, 40 and even 50 years ago. The challenge now is to highlight a sampling of their old aerial photographs to potential buyers.

Preserving historical aerial photography

I've had incidents in my life that have to be more than just coincidence. It's certainly more than serenity. It's downright weird. My flight over my Dad's place of birth was one example.

I visited the Internet's realtors.ca in an effort to learn the names of high profile commercial realtors with listings \$30,000,000 or higher.

One name kept popping up. My son-in-law visited me and we discussed the realtor and when he left, I checked my email and that very realtor had purchased an aerial photograph online.

It was the site's first sale in ages. I called him to confirm he'd gotten the picture and we talked with the understanding we'd have a face-to-face chat in the near future.

A day later, I visited a downtown Maple Ridge shopping centre and saw a billboard advertising a large parcel of property and decided to take a photograph on a drive by to discuss with the realtor. I did not take the time to determine the name of the realtor.

Once home, I checked the photograph and be darned if it wasn't that realtor's listing!

We did have the face-to-face meeting and he tried to buy my website.

15 • Looking Forward

The future of GlobalAirPhotos

The future of GlobalAirPhotos rests on what the largest mapping platforms cannot offer: high-resolution oblique views, local knowledge, and a historical archive that reveals how communities changed over decades.

Dreams still unfinished



COSMO PLAZA: Unique Retail and Office Ownership Opportunity In Richmond's Vibrant and Expanding Aberdeen Village

Vancouver International
Airport (YVR)
温哥华国际机场



McArthurGlen Designer Outlet
亚瑟格兰名品奥特莱斯

River Rock Casino
河石赌场度假酒店

Aberdeen Skytrain
Station
时代坊天车站



Aberdeen Centre
时代坊



COSMO PLAZA
柏丽广场

Cambie Road

Lansdowne Mall
兰士登商场

Kwantlen Polytechnic University
昆特兰理工大学

Central at
Garden City
列治文最大购
物中心

Garden City Road

Downtown Vancouver
温哥华市中心

Costco

Hwy 99
99号高速公路

柏丽广场，列治文：
商铺和写字楼购买机会
坐落于充满活力不断发展的时代坊社区