

FOREWORD

It's funny to look back on my 50th year as a professional photographer and realize it really started when I walked into the Don Waite Photo Center in 1973, at the age of 15, looking to buy a camera. It was a big purchase: a camera for outdoor adventures and to photograph my girlfriends.

I must have visited Don at his shop three or four times before deciding to purchase a Konica T3 Auto Reflex. I often look back on those days with a smile. I visited Don in the shop many times over the next few years, learning the basics of photography and buying equipment.

Don and I became friends over time, and I finally became a professional photographer in 1976, working part-time for the local newspaper, starting a career. When asked about how I got started, I tell people I just bought a camera, hung onto its straps and went on an adventure.

That adventure in photojournalism and photography over the past five decades has led me to live on two continents, travel to assignments in over 66 countries, and hold staff photographer positions at United Press International (UPI), Reuters, the Vancouver Sun, and the National Post. Winning several awards has twice been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and is a National Newspaper Award-winning photographer.

During my travels, I have covered Royal Tours, travelled with Prince Charles and Lady Diana, and with Presidents and Prime Ministers; and witnessed, through my viewfinders, multiple Olympics, Super Bowls, Superpower Summits, man-made and natural disasters, riots, and other conflicts.

It's strange to think it all started with my being a PITA 'pain in the ass' in the small Don Waite Photo Centre on 119th Ave in Haney.

Nick Didlick
Photographer



SHOPKEEPER & NEOPHYTE WRITER



FOREWORD

NICK DIDLICK

Gold Medal in Sports Photography of the World, 2025

SHOPKEEPER & NEOPHYTE WRITER

When Carol and I moved back from Ottawa to Maple Ridge, my \$1,200 monthly pay check as a cop was no more. As well, her \$1,200 income as a laboratory technician had already vanished. Besides, I had to buy my way out of the force and pay for our move back to Maple Ridge. Prior to leaving Ottawa, I wrote to Andy Hetherington, the supervisor of the Golden Ears Provincial Park, asking about a job and he was happy to hire me as bikers were often visiting the park 100 strong and causing havoc. I worked as a park ranger for a month while trying to get my ducks in a row before opening a tiny camera store. My job with the park service was \$600 a month. In less than two years our combined \$2,400 a month salaries were reduced to ¼ and now I was about to embark on becoming an entrepreneur hardly knowing a credit from a debit. Also, Carol was expecting our first baby in a few weeks.

The Don Waite Photo Centre opened 1st September 1971 in a tiny 12 ½' wide by 20' deep storefront but it had no inventory. For the first several months, I purchased stock discounted 35 and even 40% from one of the larger camera stores in Vancouver for cash naively thinking my purchases could be sold at list in my shop. My painted white cinder block and plank board shelving had empty boxes but the shop looked stocked and clients soon came to investigate. My first employee was even more naive than me as she agreed to work on a 10 % commission. There was nothing to sell! Carol had \$20,000 saved up to make a down payment on a home but it was quickly gobbled up to purchase inventory. Stores in Haney were not permitted to open on Monday so it was my day to drive into Vancouver to buy stock. A short time later the proprietor of the shop next to me retired so I punched a hole in the wall and put in a tiny portrait and wedding studio. I had custom red drapes made, and boy, did they clash with a bridal party in pale blues dresses. I started photographing full coverage weddings every Saturday and often arrived home after midnight. The store and studio work kept me away more and more and often I'd be washing floors and doing books at the shop on a Sunday rather than be with Carol and our baby daughter Michelle. It was a stressful period as there was never any money.

A short time after my opening, a realtor who was also an auxiliary policeman, directed one of his clients to me and that's how I met Englishman David R. Taylor. He had an expensive movie camera for sale and by an absolute fluke a chap wandered into my shop looking for the very camera. They exchanged a camera for a check and Dave gave me a 10 % finder's fee which was enough money to pay for two months rent. Things went awry when the buyer put a stop payment on the check and returned the camera. Dave got his fee back but despite this sad first meeting, we became friends. Dave had a James Bond story. His father was given the contract to build the volcano for the 1967 movie 'You Only Live Once'. Although only 17, Dave's Dad made him a foreman for the building of the steel structure at the Pinewood Film Studios near London.

Within the first year the business began to be profitable and I hired two employees, one of which was a mother figure. She desperately tried to keep me on the straight and narrow with my runaway purchasing. Luckily, she was an accountant. One day, a client came into the store to purchase camera equipment to use on a horseback trail ride into the Chilcotin Country in the northeastern part of the province. There were eight in the group and they invited me as a tag along to take pictures. Always the dreamer, my plan was to submit the transparencies to National Geographic Magazine. My Chilcotin adventure kept me away from daughter Michelle's first birthday. Returning home, my adopted mother told me there was \$75,000 on the books. To me, it wasn't a problem as there was \$100,000 plus at my cost on the shelves. There certainly wasn't much in the bank and the Waite family sometimes lived from hand to mouth on liver, onions and macaroni. National Geographic rejected my submission.

One day, I visited the Burnaby RCMP Detachment and posted a notice on the bulletin, ' Ex-Constable Waite now has a camera store in Maple Ridge and offers good deals to members. Then, I began teaching night classes at the local high school. Most of the students bought cameras from me.

It's funny kids, aged 12 to 15, were constantly in my camera store being little more than PITAs (Pains in the Ass). I'm pretty sure they (or their parents) all bought their first cameras from me. I must have had a positive influence in their careers. Nick Didlick became Reuters photographer for many years and won 'Photographer of the World' in 2025. Steve Pelton, in 2023, won best photograph in the Professional Photographers of Canada. Tim Yawoski became the premier astronomy photographer in Canada.

About this time a representative for the Canadian Family Record Plan came into my shop to talk about the company she represented selling a package allowing its members two free portrait sessions a year with two free prints. The

CFRP sold a leather album worth \$50 for \$300. She explained successful portrait photographers gave away free portrait sittings twice a year with a free 8" x 10" print. It was left to the studio to sell extra pictures. In the beginning, I often photographed a single child and usually my customers walked out with their free picture. Besides, my portrait photography wasn't very good. She dropped by one afternoon and suggested we drive down across the line to Seattle to see a very successful CFRP photographer. He had four rooms with four photographers and his teams took multiple poses with four different backdrops. It was ingenious. There was no need to reinvent the wheel so instead of taking an individual child, entire families and sometimes even three generations of 15 or more people came into the studio resulting in every conceivable combination. One Christmas, by tweaking the studio layout, it was possible to put through a family portrait sitting every 15 to 30 minutes. Carol was an awesome retoucher and usually picture sales included frames bumping up monthly sales.

It's pretty amazing how my book writing evolved over the years from the time of writing the 76-page 100 copies of 'Kwant'stan (The Golden Ears). The first printing was accomplished by a few friends; a school teacher typed up the manuscript, two ex-cons made the Positive Mechanical Transfers (PMTs) to produce newspaper quality photographs, and a printer traded services with me to typeset, collate, staple and trim everything for sale. The two criminals had done jail time for trying to print counterfeit \$20 Canadian bills. The books cost 50 cents to produce, sold to a retail store for \$1 for resale to the customer for \$2. It definitely wasn't a huge money maker but there was a second printing of 300 copies before saturating the market. Still, it only generated \$800 of sales excluding printing costs.

Caught by the writing bug, I self published three 6x9" 96 page books between 1972 and the end of 1974 about local history, 'The Golden Ears (a reinvention of 'Kwanstan', 'The Fraser Canyon' and the 'Cariboo Gold Rush'. It was quite the learning process. One title had a pink cover! The colour was a 16-page signature in the book's middle. First lesson learned, put colour on the dust jacket and make sure the title is at the top to make it easy to find in a store's book rack. Lesson number two, aim for a larger audience. My last book was about 'British Columbia & Yukon Gold Hunters'. My 'Mr. Eagle Man' friend David Allen Hancock suggested writing a book on Canadian Gold Hunters.

Word got out about my writing endeavours and Phyllis Landale, a school mate of His Royal Highness Prince Philip's older sister Princess Theodora, came into my shop and asked for help to write her memoir. As well, "Old Man" John George Bruce began being a regular visitor in my tiny shop. He appeared daily at the store at 11:00 a.m. precisely. He had joined the Royal Navy at age 12 and quite possibly helped in the rescue of Princess Anastasia, the daughter of Czar Nicholas II of Russia and his wife Princess Alexandra, during the First World War.

Although not a part of my story, I've taken the liberty to include a few paragraphs of Phyllis' book, 'Islands of Beauty An Autobiography' as well as a story about 'Old Man' Bruce.

I'll begin with Phyllis' epilogue, "One day I was amazed to read in the newspaper Princess Theodora of Greece was spending the summer on one of the small islands between me and the sunset, not more than five miles away. I wrote to suggest she come over and visit me, but my letter wasn't answered. Disappointed, I told myself a childhood friendship with the sister-in-law of the Queen of England could hardly be expected to survive a gap of nearly 50 years. But six weeks later, I had a reply from her home in Baden-Baden, where my letter had finally reached her. She wrote, "My husband has just purchased Twin Islands and I think it is the most heavenly place on earth - barring Greece, of course!" She gave me news of all her family and asked after mine - telling me she owed her ability in English to my father's good teaching - and how sorry she was to have missed me, and hoped we would meet again next summer. Sadly, she died before spring and so we never met again, although that one summer we were so close we could have seen each other's lights across the dark water."

Twin Islands are located at the extreme north end of Georgia Strait and due east of Campbell River. When Phyllis penned her letter to Theodora, she was living with her son at Lund, and as she said not more than five miles across the waters from her friend's sometimes summer home.

When helping Phyllis line up a printer, she showed me a letter from long ago written by Princess Theodora at the age of five. I made photocopies. Twenty years later, the World Wildlife Federation contacted me enquiring about a leather bound copy of 'The Art of Photographing North American Birds' to present to Prince Philip. The book had been published in 1984. I gifted 50/50 to Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip and in it enclosed a letter of explanation with a photocopy of Philip's sister's childish handwritten letter from years earlier. Ironically, I made a trip to Triangle Island, a seabird reserve north of Vancouver Island, in 1981. Dick Canning, a professor at the University of British Columbia, accompanied me on the trip. On one of Prince Philip's many trips to BC, Dick gifted a book to his Royal Highness. Dick told me, "I took Philip to Iona Island in Richmond to look at birds and gave him a copy of your book. Philip said, "I

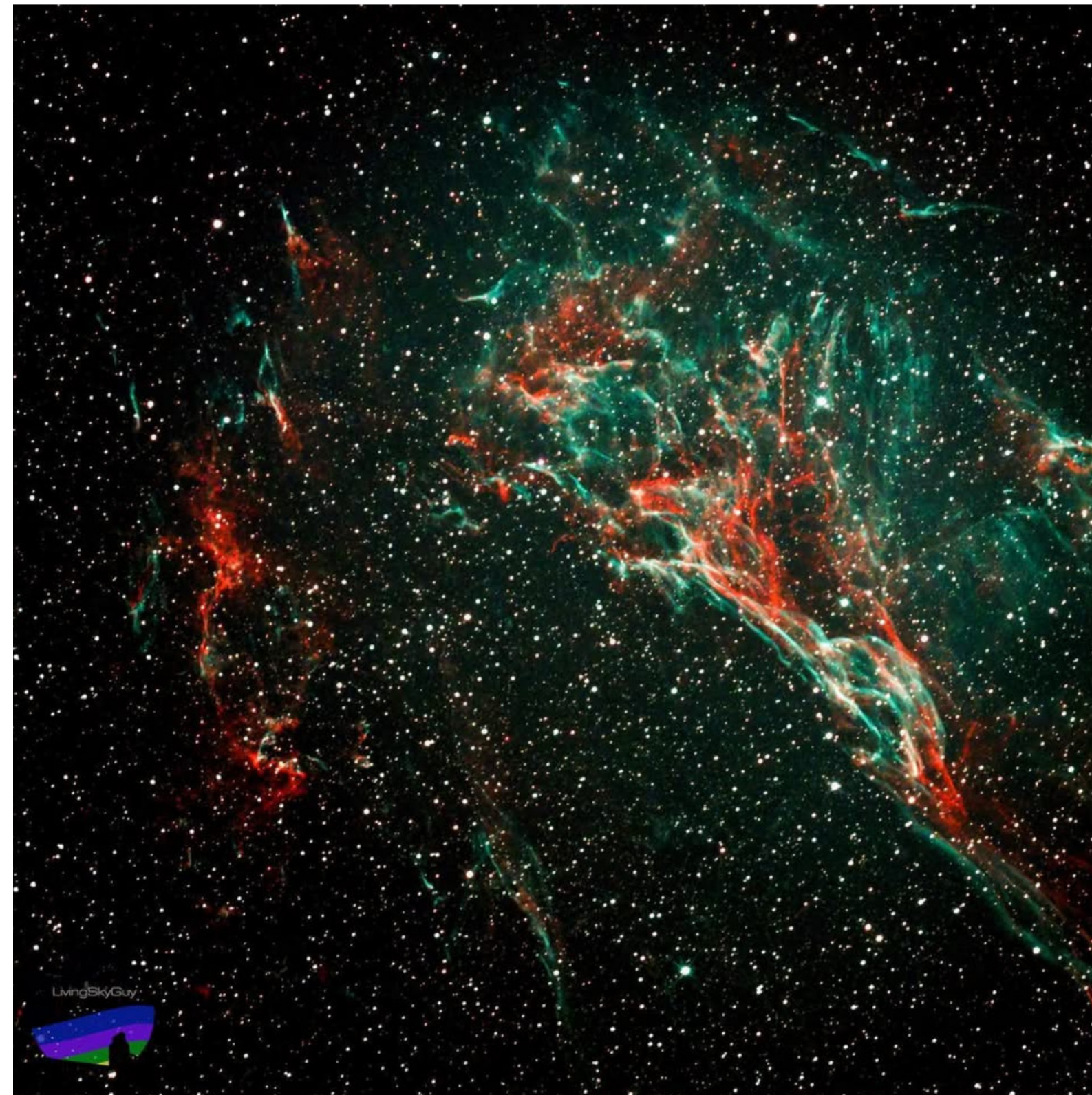




Tim Yaworski is in Saskatoon, SK.

Aug 10, 2022 · 🌐

Last night I continued my adventures in the [#VeilNebula](#). This section, [#NGC694](#), only consists of 81 minutes of exposure as the clouds rolled near 00:15hrs. [#astronomy](#) [#astrophotography](#) [#deepskyastrophotography](#)



could see these birds in my own back yard”.

Here’s more comments from Phyllis’ book:

“My brother Wilfred was six and I was nearly five when we were invited to tea at the Royal Palace by King Constantine. I was excited, but a bit nervous because my father had not been able to come with us. I had to wear my party dress, all lace and ribbons, and Wilfred wore his grey suit with the long pants. As soon as we were dropped off at the courtyard gates, the Palace Guards came out of their pillboxes and shouted at us, pointing their guns. We ran as fast as we could to the big front door on the side of the palace and called out for help. Much to our relief, it opened right away, and we were taken up to the drawing-room and our friends, the Princesses Margarita and Theodora.”

“A few minutes later their grandfather, old King Constantine, came in with his little dog. We were very surprised to find he didn’t wear a crown like the kings and queens in our bedtime stories, and looked, in fact, much like anyone else. The maid brought in trays of lovely iced cakes and tiny teacups full of tea. I remember being afraid I would spill my tea, as I tended to be clumsy. Just then the King’s little dog came up to me and started barking. Perhaps he was hoping I would give him some cake or spill some crumbs. To my amazement, the King shouted back, “You go to hell!” And looked back at me with a smile. After that, I wasn’t so nervous. When the king smiled, he looked just like my favourite uncle who had always loved to tease me. He was probably amused to think the little daughter of Reverend Mr. Gardner would never hear such swearing at home even though she might hear quite a bit about Hell.”

“When tea was over we said goodbye to the old king and went downstairs with the princesses to find the Royal Carriage at the door. We were told about some kind of public celebration going on, and the princesses were to be driven through the streets of Athens. The sidewalks were filled with people waiting to see the girls go by and my brother and I were invited to come with them.”

“Wilfred and I were seated on either side of the royal nanny Miss Roos, facing backwards. I was disappointed not to be able to see the Royal Coachman in his grand uniform. Margarita and Theodora, of course, had the good seats, where they could look out at the cheering crowds and wave back at them with that special wave royalty uses. I tried it myself, even though I knew the crowds had no reason to cheer me, but Miss Roos slapped my wrist angrily and said, “You’re not to wave Phyllis!” It was as if I had done something shocking.

“This didn’t bother me as much as it might have done, as only a few days before she had reprimanded the princesses for their bad manners, and said, “Look at Phyllis, she’s behaving properly!” That occasion was one of the many times in my childhood when I noticed how nannies will make use of any possible excuse to put you in the wrong. We had been at the beach all afternoon, and on the way home in the streetcar Margarita and Theodora, who were wearing sandals, began to scrape sand from between their toes onto the floor. The reason I behaved “properly” was because I was wearing running shoes! Even at that age I could see how unjust Miss Roos was, but unfortunately was too shy to point it out later.”

“Later that summer we were invited to go to lunch at the Royal Summer Palace at Tatoi, on the outskirts of Athens. Wilfred and I were taken to the station and seated in our little open air train. From then on we were on our own, and so enjoyed the ride immensely. At Tatoi we were met by a carriage and driven up a driveway lined with huge trees to a white building so lovely it hardly seemed real. I remember little else about the afternoon except we had a wonderful lunch of mashed potatoes.”

“When Dad met our train back at the station in Athens, we told him all about the wonderful potatoes. Mother asked if King Constantine had been home and seemed disappointed to hear he was away. Wilfred and I didn’t tell her we had actually been rather relieved not to be on the best behaviour all afternoon. We always felt Mother was not much interested in what we had to say anyway.”

“That was the last time we spent the afternoon with Princess Margarita and Theodora. I know now the war had begun to threaten all the British people in Athens, and the princesses and their family were preparing to leave.”

As mentioned earlier, John George Bruce was a regular at my tiny camera shop and was always telling stories about his life full of adventures. Bruce had joined the British Navy in 1900 three months short of his 13th birthday as an able-bodied seaman and by the Second World War was a corporal and deep sea diver. John’s life was full of adventure. He watched pirates throw slaves off ships off the coast of Africa and witnessed a mandarin line up a group of suspected pirates and then chop off their heads. The captives had been forced to get down on their hands and knees and extend their heads in preparation for their own execution by the mandarin. None broke rank and all had their heads chopped

off at 10 second intervals. Bruce was present at the Suez Canal when American, French and British Navies intercepted the Russian Fleet en route to engage the Japanese in battle in the war of 1904/05. The British denied the Russian Navy access to the Suez Canal and forced them to take the longer route around the tip of Africa. This resulted in the Russian Fleet going into battle with no fuel. The stall tactic gave the British time to provide the Japanese Navy with state-of-the-art ships resulting in the Japanese winning the war. Upon leaving the navy and after logging for a spell in the Skagit Valley in Washington State, Bruce came to Canada. Here, he went back to diving and participated in the building of the Lions Gate Bridge and fish ladders at Hells Gate in the Fraser Canyon.

Among his more colourful stories was the claim he physically carried the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, the mother of Czar Nicholas II of Russia, and his daughter Anastasia, off Russian soil in their escape from the Bolsheviks. In a 1972 interview, he remembered the incident as follows:

”Commander Isaacson called me over and pointed to a piece of land and said, “Now Bruce, I have a job for you and there might be a little bit of danger in it.... (This is covered in detail in the chapter ‘The Dowager Empress and Anastasia.’)

One day, I happened to visit the Fort Langley Centennial Museum and its curator mentioned the municipality was looking for someone to write its history.

In the fall of 1974, four other tiny camera store owners and myself formed a loose partnership to compete with the larger chain stores by forming a cooperative to buy inventory at lower prices. We attended a camera trade show to see the latest products. They put me in charge of purchasing and one afternoon I bought \$250,000 worth of stock without so much as a signature and the terms were interest free and not payable until the end of January. It was the equivalent to another 10 % in savings.

By this time, I’d opened a second shop in the City of Abbotsford, 20 miles from Haney and left my English buddy Dave and another employee to sell cameras and film. The store had the perfect location as it was directly across the street from the post office. Dave and I came to an arrangement. He would buy any remaining inventory after Christmas and buy the business. Things became a little scary by December as sales were slow and most of my huge inventory was still stored in the basement of the house. We got lucky. The Fraser Valley had a huge four foot drop of snow one night making travel by car impossible. By this time I had three employees in the tiny shop. It was crazy and every few hours I’d have to have friends push my car through the snow to bring back inventory. Everything worked out in the end. Two students from my night class course in photography bought the business. Everyone in the co-op came through and my suppliers were paid in full.

I embarked on a new career as a writer by taking a contract to write the history of the City of Langley. It was supposed to be 96-pages and half photographs and half text and take six months. Instead, it took two years and ended up being 300 pages. The city was 10 miles square resulting in 100x4 = 400 property owners of 160 acres. I went to the Land Registry office in New Westminster daily for several weeks and learned the original pre-emptors of every parcel of land up to 1900. In most cases, I didn’t go to archives to do my research but instead crossed the Fraser River from Haney to Langley five days a week to interview the pioneers about their parents and grandparents and went to the extreme of doing their family trees. I’d do one taped interview in the morning and another in the afternoon. Returning home, my evenings were taken up transcribing the tapes. And then came the book. I’d type 14x8 inch pages, cut them up with scissors, and arrange things in chronology on the floor. I did all this for a \$12,000 loan from the city. It’s a long story but things worked out in the end by selling the city 100 leather-bound and sleeved books plus 1,000 hardcovers at discounted prices. The other 2,000 books were in soft cover and quickly sold out to book stores.

There is an additional tidbit to the book business as William Crozier Blair was the mayor and also a Holstein Friesen dairy farmer so we were able to talk cows until the cows came home. He went to bat for me and voted to give me an extension for the completion of the book. Part of his family were Crozier and related to our neighbour Cecil Crozier who lived adjacent to Dad and Mom’s farm. Evelyn Coates was the city’s secretary who made up the contract. She was Ed Coates’s aunt. Ed owned Lordco Automotive, the largest car parts dealer in the city. In 2008, looking for advertisers for my ‘Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows’ book, I visited Lordco’s head office. It was in Maple Ridge. When talking to the secretary, Ed walked past and said, “Who are you?” I told him my name. “Oh, I know you through Aunt Evelyn’. He told his secretary not to disturb him for an hour. We talked, he grew up in Fort Langley and used to trap muskrats and skin them for income. So did I. He purchased 100 copies. The city bought 500. More recently, I went for a walk along Kanaka Creek and observed an old gentleman trying to get his key into the driver’s door of his car. Both his dog and he were older than dirt. Somehow, and I can’t remember how, Lordco came up in conversation. He glanced at me and said, “Do

SIR JAMES BOND II GOES CRAZY

you know where the name Lordco came from?" I replied, "I think Lord was Ed's original partner'. He glanced at me with a big smile, "I'm the Lord".

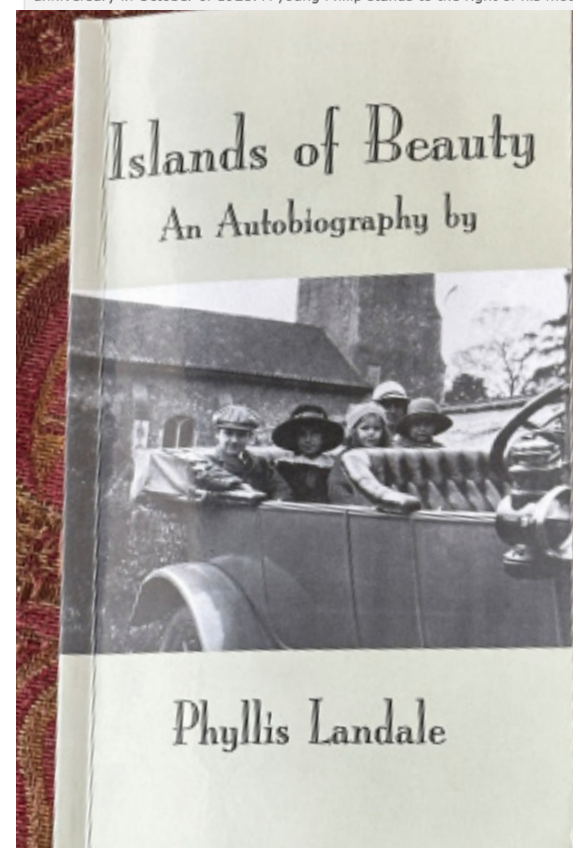
In 2010, I contacted Roger Touchie, the President of Heritage House Publishing, about taking on my "British Columbia & Yukon Gold Hunters' title. We struck a deal. Heritage would take 5,000 copies without advertising and I'd take 1,000 hardcover books with advertising. It worked out for everyone. My advertising took up 16 pages of ads after the index and wasn't involved in any way with the book. Ed Coates bought 1,000 books with 8 pages of advertising in the final 16-page signature. His payment covered the cost of my 1,000 books. It was a win-win for everyone.



Prince Philip poses with his family for a photograph to mark his parents' silver wedding anniversary in October of 1928. A young Philip stands to the right of his mother, Princess



Theodora of Greece and Denmark



SIR JAMES BOND II GOES CRAZY

Andit am que magnati busdam, officem dipsam hicipsa velliquam ad experis debit doluptateni as il esequis et lab inciumquiate dis id quiaectore reiume solorest faccabore core modit officur? Sedipidunt pedipid quamus ellessi volupta sime pratiores as eum hario beaquodis aut quam dolla nimi, omnien-dit, aut opta parumet maxima culparum entiorp orrovitiant ut accum es nem ea porum entem ex ex eum



GOLDFINGER