

Introduction

IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME 45 years ago, when I arrived out in Burnaby from Ontario as a rookie policeman, that I'd one day attempt to produce a "picture" book on Vancouver. It would be wrong to say that I wrote a book on the "Terminal City" or "Saltwater City" because, luckily for me, several friends and associates agreed to do most of the writing to free me up to sleuth for pictures. A Vancouver photographer once said, "I am photography, and thereby I am history," and that's exactly how I felt on a cold day in November 1982 when I sat half-frozen but exhilarated in a helicopter 2,000 feet above ground taking photographs of the inflation of BC Place Stadium. It was at the time of Expo 86 that the idea for a book titled "Vancouver Exposed" was first formed, and it has taken until 2010, just slightly ahead of the city's 125th anniversary, to make the dream a reality.

The City of Vancouver had some incredible landscape and portrait photographers in the early days, and fortunately over a million of these images have survived in the Vancouver City Archives and the Vancouver Public Library. It's been very exciting and rewarding for me to go through their archives and select photos that I subsequently restored for this book.

Many outstanding photographs are still in the possession of pioneer Vancouver families, and I thank them for allowing me into their homes to scan photographs or photograph heirlooms. A "history in photographs" of Vancouver can never be complete. On the one hand, there are too many images to choose from, many depicting the same subjects, and on the other hand, there are gaps. So rather than trying to produce a photographic record that couldn't be complete, I have selected images according to the following criteria: first, I feel the photos should be visually rewarding; second, I chose images that have previously not been widely distributed; and third, my priority lay with pictures that are interesting in the sense that they have a story to tell. The result is doubtless a very personal selection, but one I hope the public will appreciate.

Although the photographs on one level speak for themselves, I felt that some readers would like to know the related stories in words as well. And here I chose the same approach that I used for the pictures: I am not trying to present a new complete history of Vancouver, but rather I selected stories that go with the photographs I found interesting. Wherever possible I included personal accounts, as they, like the pictures, create the liveliest images in the reader's mind.

Although the seed for this book was planted more than 25 years ago, it began in earnest only two years ago, and since then I've collected almost enough material for two books.

I am happy to say that the production of this volume has been one of the most enjoyable projects of my life—and the people with whom I came into contact as a result, some of the most interesting in all of Canada.

Donald E. Waite

Maple Ridge, July 2010

BC Place Stadium when inflated on 14 November 1982 was the largest air-supported dome stadium in the world. On that crisp and cold winter day the author was seated in a helicopter hovering over False Creek and snapped photographs. The top half of this image from the BC Lions 1983 calendar is an air photo, while the bottom half is artwork.

