



Ken Jacques Values Honesty and Family



Photo: www.francistman.com

Ask why he pronounces Jacques as “Jakes” and Ken will tell you, “because my dad did.”

“Duncan,” his middle name, was in the family well before Ken’s birth in the Vancouver Island city of that same name.

His great-grandfather William Chalmers Duncan had a farm; in fact, he owned all the land where the present city of Duncan is located. When the railway ran tracks through his farm and built a station, they called it Duncan’s Station, later shortened to Duncans. In 1912, Ken’s grandfather led a delegation to Victoria to have the town incorporated. It was officially named the City of Duncan.

Ken’s grandfather Kenneth Duncan was the first Mayor of Duncan, the MLA after WWI, and a BC Notary Public. Ken had his grandfather’s Notary Seal certificate—issued in 1927—framed for display. You can see it on the photo above, beside Ken’s shoulder.

While Ken has a strong work ethic, he maintains balance in his lifestyle. I trust you enjoy his interview.

The Scrivener: *Where were you born, Ken? Where did you live growing up?*

Ken: I was born in Duncan and grew up there in what was, when I was a teenager, a very prosperous town because of the forest industry. There were five large sawmills—there is only one small mill left now, in Chemainus—and the pulp and paper mill at Crofton.

While attending university, I worked as a welder at two of the sawmills and the pulp mill. I was thus able to finish university with a relatively small student loan, in spite of our starting a family; three children were born in my second, fourth, and sixth years.

While growing up, I enjoyed living near the ocean and began a lifelong joy of sailing. Through all my teenage years, I was involved owning and racing a 16 foot wooden sailboat. I also started the habits of salmon fishing and hunting, which I still enjoy immensely.

The Scrivener: *Please tell us about the schools you attended and why you became a lawyer.*

Ken: I graduated from Cowichan High School in 1964. From 1965 to 1966, I took the 11-month welding course at the Nanaimo Vocational Training School—now Malaspina University College. I then worked as a welder full-time for five years. I started in the shipyards at the tail end of the time BC Ferries were building several ships and worked on what was, at that time, the largest covered barge in the

world; it was used to transport pulp down the Pacific Coast.

I also worked on the construction of the pulp mill at Gold River, which is ironic because, in the late ‘90s, my son worked and lived in Gold River as a professional forester; that was when the pulp mill was dismantled.

From 1969 to 1972, I attended the University of Victoria in an Arts program with an intended major in Economics.

I had no long-range plans to go to law school and really never gave it any thought until 1972. I actually may have entered the field of law more by accident. In hindsight, however, it was a great choice and I have no regrets at all. The law has presented a challenging and rewarding career.

In 1975 I graduated from UBC law school with a Bachelor of Laws degree and was called to the British Columbia Bar on May 14, 1976.

Later, while working at the Victoria Land Title Office as Registrar, I was a part-time graduate student from 1987 until 1993, when I received a Master of Public Administration degree.

The Scrivener: *Did you have a mentor?*

Ken: If I had a mentor, it was not until I became an articulated law student. My principal was Douglas Gray. If I have a hero in the field of law, it was Douglas. He received his legal training in England and was a barrister at Gray’s Inn. He had endless time for me as a student and after I

was called to the Bar, I often enjoyed arguing law with him. He was brilliant. But as well, he had a very well-balanced life and an immense interest and knowledge of a wide range of topics.

Time seemed to vanish during our discussions. He was a keen boater; I once drove to Bamfield and came back down the west coast of the Island to Victoria with him—fishing and talking for two days. I wish I could have had many more experiences like that with him but he died at 54 of cancer. A great relationship was cut short.

The Scrivener: *How did you become involved with the Victoria LTO?*

Ken: I first became involved with the Victoria Land Title Office as an articulated student in 1975. The law office in which I articulated was directly across the street from the LTO—in those days, it was called the Land Registry Act and Land Registry Office.

One of the first things a law student learned was that it didn't matter what you knew but who you knew and, accordingly, it didn't take me long to understand that it was important to get to know a couple of document and plan examiners because law school taught you only law—not procedure; I got a lot of assistance and learned a lot from the people who worked in the LTO.

The same principle applied at the company's office and court registry but I received the most valuable info from those I got to know at the LTO. As well, in those days law firms didn't use agents as much; we had our own in-house agent. Whenever our in-house agent went on holiday, it fell to the articulated student to do all the searches and registrations.

We had a very busy real estate practice in those days, about 120 transactions a month. I had to see all the vendors and get them to sign (in those days) the transfer of an estate in fee simple form and go over the vendor's statement of adjustments. As I often saw the documents on short notice, it encouraged thinking on your feet and absorbing a lot quite quickly.

My relationship with those at the Victoria LTO continued, flourished, and matured after my call to the Bar—in particular, during my last two years of practice ending in 1985—because I became a sole practitioner and often leaned on my friends at the Victoria LTO as a tremendous resource for advice and precedents.

In 1985 I became Registrar of the Prince Rupert Land Title Office; after six months, I won the competition for Registrar of the Victoria Land Title Office. This was a challenging and highly rewarding job because it allowed me to continue to enjoy a close relationship with the conveyancing bar, to practise law in an area I enjoy, and it presented the challenges of management.

From 1985 until 2000, in addition to being Registrar of the Victoria Land Title Office, I was Registrar of the Vancouver LTO (1987 for one year) and of the combined Victoria and Prince Rupert office for two-and-a-half years and New Westminster Land Title Office for a year-and-a-half. Staff there were excellent; I still continue to enjoy their friendship. For the last two years combined, I was the Registrar for Victoria and Kamloops. I should also mention that the staff in Kamloops are a great and professional group.

What I enjoyed most about working at the Land Title Branch for over 18 years was the people I worked with and met and got to know.

For my last three years with the Land Title Branch, as well as being Registrar of Victoria and Kamloops, I was Director of Land Titles.

And in my entire time with the Land Title Branch—1985 to 2004, mostly with Victoria—I do have to say that the best part was working with the greatest government employees on the face of the earth. They didn't just care about the public and their work—they were *passionate* about it. They deserve all the credit and they made me look good.

The Scrivener: *When did Technology enter the Land Title Branch?*

Ken: Technology entered in the early 1980s when the ALTOS (Automated Land Title Office System) system was first conceived. The full implementation of ALTOS happened from about 1987 until 1989. This was a very interesting time to be at the Land Title Branch.

When I started in Prince Rupert, we were 100 percent paper; at the end of each day, I had to sign each paper title that had been issued during the day. Gradually over

the next two years, the over 1 million titles in BC were converted to the database. This meant that titles could be searched, retrieved, and updated much more efficiently and easily than using a paper-based system.

As well, this was the beginning of a large impact on staff. In 1972 there were 72 staff at the Victoria Land Title Office. When I came to the office in 1986, there were 56; today there are about 20 and we handle twice the volume we did in 1986. This efficiency is all due to technology.

In the early 1990s, ALTOS2 was architected and implemented along with image technology. ALTOS2 is more efficient and faster and, with the move to image technology, came a nearly paperless system.

Examiners no longer look at the paper documents; our space-saving is immense. In January of 2004, the Land Title Branch implemented electronic submission of documents; this will see a great change over the next couple of years, particularly when combined with electronic plan submission, which is probably not more than 18 months away. This will make the land title system accessible from home and the golf course and allow lawyers and Notaries to achieve greater efficiencies.

The Scrivener: *Please describe your current job responsibilities.*

Ken: In January of this year, I made a career move; I am a staff lawyer with the Legal Services Branch of the Ministry of Attorney General. This is presenting new challenges and a renewal of my dedication to my work. I think everyone should move jobs once in a while, to renew the satisfaction and rewards of work.

The Scrivener: *What do you most enjoy about your work?*

Ken: What I enjoyed most about working at the Land Title Branch for over 18 years was the people I worked with and met and got to know. And I always believed I was making a difference.

The workplace has seen a great shift . . . from a place where managing was directing from the top down to more collaborative circumstances, where staff take responsibility for managing their own workplace.

I also believed I was making the Land Title Office a more user-friendly place for the public and the lawyers, Notaries, surveyors, and agents who used the Land Title Offices.

I took great joy each day serving one

customer on the counter and seeing if I could go out of my way to make that person's experience at the Land Title Office an interaction with government that he or she would remember positively. As Registrar, I once received a letter from a satisfied customer who commended me for my staff person "Ken," who had given her service beyond her expectations.

The Scrivener: *What do you see for the future?*

Ken: For the Land Title Branch, I see a healthy and strong future, particularly when the branch is moved into an independent not-for-profit authority. This will put the finishing touches on what is believed (by those such as myself, with an unbiased opinion) to be one of the best land title systems in the world and certainly North America.

For myself personally, retirement is not too far in the future and I look forward to it as an exiting adventure. There is much I still want to see and do.

The Scrivener: *What community service have you enjoyed?*

Ken: In the past, I was an elected Canadian Bar rep for the County of Victoria for the BC Branch of the CBA. I have been a member of the Business Practices Hearing Subcommittee of the Victoria Real Estate Board for the last 10 years, was on the Board of Directors of Big Brothers and the Cowichan United Way, and was elected to Duncan City Council in 1979.

I particularly enjoyed the many challenges that went with being a City Councillor but gave it up to return to Victoria to practise law. I was a member of Gordon Head Kiwanis for several years and have been on the Editorial Board for the *Land Title Practice Manual* since 1991.

I am not involved in a lot of community service today; I now find it more rewarding to spend my time with my grandchildren.

The Scrivener: *What are your special interests and hobbies?*

Ken: My greatest interest is my grandchildren. I have four, with another arriving this summer. I get a special joy taking the time to watch as they grow from one stage to another. I have found this to be an opportunity we often don't take enough advantage of when we have our own kids. We are too busy establishing

ourselves in our profession to be able to take enough time to be with our kids.

By the time you have grandchildren, you realize this is the most important time—both in your life and theirs. I am also looking forward to going fishing and camping more and including my grandkids. Fishing, hunting, camping, sailing, and furniture refinishing are the things I enjoy in my spare time.

I am taking three months this summer to drive and fish my way with a truck and camper from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic Coast. This is an opportunity we rarely take advantage of. Too often we talk about a number of things we want to do and just never get down to doing them.

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The Scrivener: *What books have you most enjoyed reading this past year and why?*

Ken: The two books I have most enjoyed reading this past year are *The Mystery of Capital* by Hernando de Soto and *Gypsy Moth Circles the World* by Sir Francis Chichester.

The first deals with Hernando's thesis that no country can fully develop unless it has an advanced land title system. He reasons that capital in the form of real estate is really dead capital if it cannot be levered to create capital; this can only be done through a land title system in which everyone has confidence.

I believe this thesis may become very important to First Nations as they settle their land claims and become the stewards of large tracts of land. Only through having a land title system recognized by all and in which there is confidence can these lands create capital and, in turn, prosperity and independence.

The second book deals with Chichester's circumnavigation of the world single-handed at the age of 65. It takes a particular dedication and resolve to overcome the many challenges that face an individual alone at sea and I have a great respect for this type of personality. This is even more apparent when reading a book

such as *The Godforsaken Sea*. I would like to do some offshore sailing one day but I know I would never do it alone.

The Scrivener: *What is most important to you in life?*

Ken: The most important thing to me in my life is honest dealing between people. I want to know that I can take someone at his or her word. When I know that I can, I would do anything for that person. This is the one trait I have tried to instill in my own children and I think it has worked. ▲

PS:

Since taking on the Director's position after Malcolm passed away, Ken Jacques has steered the Branch through major change with a large systems project running in parallel.

As one might imagine, this required an inordinate amount of effort and finesse. The complexity can not be understated. Changing ministries, budget reductions, the closing of the Prince George office, and legislative changes to support EFS are only a few of the issues Ken had to address.

Dealing with all of these in such a compressed period of time required a talented manager.

The best compliment I could pay Ken would be to say that Malcolm would be proud of what he accomplished during this period, while at same time realizing Malcolm's original vision for electronic filing.

Darcy Hammett

Working with Ken was never boring. His sense of humour made it a pleasure to come in to work in the morning.

In addition, if one of his staff had any concerns, Ken always took the time to listen and offer helpful advice.

Margaret Olson
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