

Leta Best

Where Shall I Go Today?



Photo: www.farcestitman.com

Recently it was my pleasure to speak to the Notary Class of 2004; I had a chance to reflect, with them, on the changes to the our industry over the past 38 years. As the focus of this issue of *The Scrivener* is about the changes at the Land Title Office, I would like to share with you my images and impressions of that part of our profession.

My first contact with the notarial profession was in 1966. At that time, searches were written by hand. I can still see the pink search pads that we used to copy the title searches.

First we would go to the index books to get the certificate of title number and basic information, then go to the shelves, pull the volumes, and copy the information in longhand. The final step was to conduct a search in the judgment book and, if the property was free from financial encumbrances, conduct a physical search of the title delivery book and/or vault to determine whether or not the duplicate certificate of title was on file.

Copies of documents on title were in the vault; we would either photocopy this information or again, handwrite the details

for transmission of the information to our clients. The searches were then mailed to our client or, if he or she required the information faster, we would Telex the search. The Telex is a whole different method of communication that I won't get into today, but believe me, it was very, very slow and awkward.

The day the Land Title Office allowed us to photocopy the certificates of title was

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a huge step forward to the future. We requested the volumes that contained the particular titles we wanted searched and a land title clerk gathered them for us on a hand trolley. We then photocopied the pages and proceeded as before to complete our searches.

In the '70s, documents began to be microfilmed. By the '80s, the fax became a common communication device in our offices and in the '90s, when ALTOS 1 and 2 were introduced, documents began to be converted to electronic imaging—first the certificates of title, then some of the documents that were registered on those titles. These documents then became available for us print in our offices.

The ability to search titles from our office was a vast improvement but still somewhat cumbersome and—if you had a



Microfilm Cabinets

Photo: Debbie Larson

dedicated line—expensive. I think back to that time and realize that the cost of my connection to the Internet today is 10 percent of the cost of having a dedicated line to the Land Title Office when ALTOS was first introduced.

My time in this profession goes back to manual typewriters, carbon paper, handwritten general and trust ledgers, and of course the eraser. But you know, a funny phenomenon occurred with the computer. We did not become a paperless society. We became a paper-consuming society. While we would do anything in the typewriter day to have to do a document or financial statement only once, today we will do as many revisions of documents as are necessary to make our work-product perfect. We no longer throw away one or two pieces of paper if there is an error; we throw away 20 or 30 pieces of paper to correct our work.

In the '60s we worked a 44-hour work week: Monday to Friday and a half-day on Saturday. By the late '70s, we had reduced the work day to about 6 hours and often only worked four days a week. Now our profession works seven days a week, often 12 to 14 hours a day. Today, this grandmother travels with a cell phone, laptop computer, battery-operated colour printer, calculator, and of course the a wireless Internet access card. I have a cell phone in my purse, one built into my car, and can now access the Internet and my office from my laptop while in my car. When I bought my new car, the first question my grandchildren asked me was: *where is the TV?* Will the TV be next?

Our Society of Notaries has developed its own conveyancing package, soon available to not only our members but to the members of the Law Society of British Columbia. We will be able to work on our files from anywhere in the world that has access to the Internet; our offices will be able to access these files at the same time in BC. After staff members prepare the documents, the Notary can review the file, affix his or her digital signature, and register the documents.

I listen to my grandchildren while they are on the computer and hear them say: *where shall I go today?* I wonder where our profession will go today and tomorrow. What will the next 38 years bring? ▲

KEYNOTE

Val Wilson

The Future *is Here*

Learning is like rowing
upstream: not to advance
is to drop back.

Chinese Proverb

For professionals who want to stay sharp and at the top of their game, continuing education is essential.

The recent availability of electronic filing for land titles in our province is providing legal practitioners with the opportunity to advance with the times and to save time and money, too.

As Wayne Braid notes in his column, Kelowna Notary Melody Aubin was the first practitioner to actually register a document under the new electronic registration system; Notary Martin Kastelein was not far behind . . . and his office is just around the corner from the LTO in New Westminster. Paul Scambler, QC, who was involved in the EFC and the Pilot Project, is across the street.

The key person in the EFS e-filing project is Darcy Hammett. With close to 30 years' experience, Darcy has worked in every capacity and level within the Land Title Branch. From 1993 until its implementation in 1996, he was the Business Architect for the development of the Automated Land Title Office system and the imaging subsystem. He is currently acting in the role of Project Director and Business Architect for the development of the Land Title Branch electronic filing system.



Darcy says, "I have always expected that Notaries would make the adjustment to electronic filing early. Today the competition for conveyancing business can be fierce. The general willingness of Notaries to accept change—combined with the advantages of electronic filing—make EFS a natural for Notaries competing for and maintaining their position in the conveyancing business."

According to Ron Usher, BC Law Society Staff Lawyer and VP/CEO of Juricert Services Inc., "From the beginning, an important design goal of the EFS was to preserve the key features of conveyancing in BC. As a result, on close examination, practitioners are finding *there is less here than meets the eye*."

"After the first experience with digitally signing a document, the typical reaction is: *Is that all there is?* I'm impressed with the way many Notaries and lawyers are using EFS and the practice improvements it facilitates to improve customer service and simplify their own business processes."

Ron quotes one conveyancer, "EFS allows me to complete more transactions with less stress. I've never had so much time to carefully work on files and consult with others in the office."

EFS is creating a win-win experience for practitioners and the people of British Columbia. ▲