

F8 AND BE THERE: A TRIBUTE TO PHOTOGRAPHER PAT MORROW

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An excerpt.

I first met Patrick Morrow in February 1976 — six years before the first edition of *Equinox* was launched — when he arrived at my office unannounced, hoping to have some of his hang-gliding photographs published.

At the time, I was a junior editor working for a semi-academic magazine in Ottawa, and Pat was an enthusiastic photographer just off a Greyhound bus from Calgary in search of assignments. He had bought a month-long bus pass so that he could travel to editorial offices in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto to show his work to as many editors as possible.

After eight months of sifting through lackluster photographs from contributors with few camera skills, I was bowled over by Pat's pictures. Not only were they bright, well composed, and in focus (three attributes that seldom occurred in any single photograph that we normally published), they were also exciting. They made me want to strap on a hang glider and slip off a mountain.

“What's it like to glide across mountain valleys?” I asked him. Well, Pat sheepishly admitted, he had taken a few lessons and decided it was too dangerous. Typically, he failed to mention his own mountain-climbing obsession.

Like everyone who met Pat in those days, I took him home that night, offering him dinner and a couch for his few days in Ottawa. In return, he gave a slide show for me that consisted of the best outdoor and mountain photography I had ever seen. His visits became an annual event, and we became friends, which meant I became the recipient of bizarre postcards from the remotest outposts of the world.

Five years later, I was still an office-bound editor, although my career prospects had improved with a move to the Kingston area and an invitation to become one of the founding editors of *Equinox*, alongside editor-publisher James Lawrence and managing editor Barry Estabrook. At the time, *Equinox* was one of several new magazines that were to change the face of the periodical scene, taking advantage of modern printing technology and a new generation of photographers who could not find a place on the pages of *National Geographic*.

Of the dozen top-notch photographers who regularly worked for us, Pat was the most charismatic — an easygoing, aw-shucks kind of guy with the spirit of an 18th-century explorer and the tools of the 20th-century photography. He maintained an address in Kimberley, British Columbia, at his widowed father's house, his boyhood bedroom

functioning as an equipment storage locker, but he was seldom home. Single and willing to work practically for expense money and a free airline ticket, he combined his photographic skills with his wanderlust to create a romantic, if financially modest career for himself...

...As an editor, I was typical of Pat's homebound readers — an adventure enthusiast who relied on the Pat Morrrows of the world to bring home our stories for us. But, unlike many of his peers, Pat has always maintained an understated perspective of his accomplishments. His good nature and interest in the successes of his friends have endeared him to everyone he has met. I have watched him accept photographic advice from Instamatic-toting grandmothers and ski tips from well-meaning flatlanders without a trace of irony or ridicule.

Modest of his own talents, I have also heard him give a crucial piece of advice to budding photographers. The key to his success, he claims, is best summed up as "f8 and be there." While his technical prowess is certainly greater than a midrange aperture setting, his desire to be there, wherever there might be, has certainly won him a place in the hearts of readers and editors alike.