

Seeing Life through a Different Lens

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It was hot and dry under Yemen's relentless sun. Sweat and dirt slid down his brow and into his eyes, causing his vision to blur. Hugh Anderson was on his way to measure a borehole, a narrow shaft drilled into the ground for the purpose of extracting water, to aid in a local project's mission to find water in the Marib desert. It was 9 a.m. when Hugh, driving a Land Cruiser across the sand, heard a sharp crack.

"It sounded like an iron bar being broken. I saw a figure in robes bounding over the top of a sand mound," said Hugh.

The man approached Hugh's car and started firing a rifle into the car floorboard. Hugh realised the man spoke no English, but after translators arrived at the scene, it was determined that the gunman thought it was Hugh's fault that the borehole wasn't producing water.

"Somehow I managed to convey to him that we were sent to measure where the boreholes were, and had nothing to do with choosing where they were placed," said Hugh. "We all ended up the best of pals and drank coffee together that afternoon."

This was just one of the many adventures Hugh encountered during his career as a land surveyor. Following his training in the United Kingdom, Hugh, born and raised in Kenya, began working on projects to create accurate determinations of positions, angles and points on the earth's surface. His career would ultimately take him around the world.

"One of the reasons I enjoyed being a land surveyor was the travelling that was involved," said Hugh. "I went to places that many people didn't know existed in the 70s and 80s."

This passion served Hugh well when he joined Leica Geosystems

as a Support Specialist in the 1990s to lead the establishment of LISCAD products in the UK. With expertise in AutoCAD and Leica's GeoCOM, Hugh was responsible for providing modern solutions and technical support and training to customers involved in major national and international surveying and engineering projects. For 25 years, Hugh brought his extensive knowledge and experience in customer service to Leica Geosystems.

Hugh's love of the lens is not limited to surveying equipment. After finding a camera in his father's trunk as a child, Hugh knew he would travel the world behind his lens. His appreciation for photography and travel would later prompt him to create an optic that instantly photographed a 360-degree horizon. In 1976, Hugh's innovative panorama was assigned a UK patent.

Although Hugh is recently retired, his exploratory spirit is still very active. Today, he volunteers his time with the British School's Expedition Society (BSES), a group dedicated to providing young people with the experience of scientific expeditions around the globe.

"Experiences like mine are life-changing for people," said Hugh. "The world isn't as bad a place as it is made out to be. This is why I'm involved in the BSES."

From getting shot at in Yemen, stealing back his passport in Saudi Arabia, having an unnerving encounter with a rhino in Kenya, flying with a Saudi prince to Bahrain or leading an expedition through East Africa to an active volcano, all in the name of land surveying, Hugh Anderson has been granted an opportunity not afforded to everyone – the chance to see the world through his own lens. <