

## A picture perfect ending

### News

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It's like an Oscar, but it's called a Benny, and it's another trophy for Thousand Islands photographer and publisher Ian Coristine.

Coristine, known for his padded, glossy books of scenic aerial shots of the region, will receive a Benjamin Franklin Award along with a Chinese printer for publishing his final collection, *The Very Best of Ian Coristine's 1000 Islands*, released last month.

It's the second Benny for Coristine, who shared the same award with Henderson Printing for a Thousand Islands photography book in 2007.

The Premier Print Awards -- presented by the Printing Industries of America/Graphic Arts Technical Foundation -- promote excellence in the print media. This year's competition attracted more than 4,000 entries.

Coristine will receive his latest award at a black-tie gala in New York City this fall.

Coristine is already busy working on a new book, a lighthearted autobiography about his Thousand Islands experiences. It will be similar in style to *A Year in Provence* or *The Olive Farm* -- except it will boast full-colour photo illustrations.

He will tell tales of how he discovered the Thousand Islands while he was on a random pleasure flight in 1992 from Montreal with a few friends, then in 1995 bought a rundown cottage where he changed his life, transforming from Challenger aircraft distribution company owner to scenic photographer and publisher.

"I stumbled upon a place that wrapped around my soul," Coristine explained in an interview at his island cottage, halfway between Brockville and Mallorytown Landing, as majestic great blue herons, cormorants and ospreys flew by.

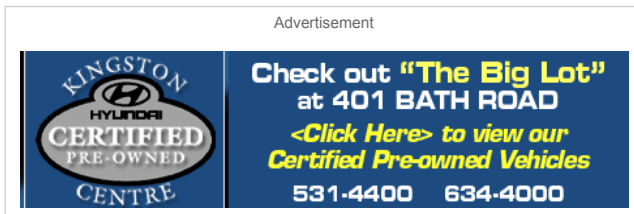
Since 2002, Coristine has published five photography books, choosing to self-publish in every instance.

He was once approached by a U.S. publisher who offered him only \$7,500 for his best 300 images, which he estimates cost him more than \$100,000 in airplane fuel and other costs to obtain.

Some images, captured at dawn by swooping down in his float plane and taking a wide-angle shot up close, took several flights to capture in the right light.



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"The magic comes only occasionally, and when it comes, it's so amazing."

Coristine never considered giving away his best 300 images for such a small amount.

"Three hundred images -- we're talking about the work of a lifetime here," he says, shaking his head at the memory.

By self-publishing, Coristine has been able to sell 62,000 books and sustain his dream lifestyle of spending summers on his island just west of Brockville.

His new book will be titled *One in a Thousand* and will be self-published.

"No question," he said.

He hopes to capture the magic of the region in both words and images this time. Author and editor Donna Walsh Inglehart is editing the text, which Coristine said will likely go through many more revisions before it is published.

He will include anecdotes explaining why he gave up aerial photography, such as one instance in which a U.S. Coast Guard vessel chased him after he had been making repeated low passes to capture a perfect image.

Coristine has always been relentless in his quest for the perfect image, believing it's necessary "if you are putting your name on it for all time," but he grew increasingly wary of U.S. aviation regulations about low-flying aircraft when border guards stepped up security following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

Two years ago, Coristine, now 61, sold his float plane and is enjoying a slower life without aerial photography.

"It's nice to have a life, and sit and have a beer," he says as he relaxes on his porch.

In the first six weeks since his final photo book was released, he has already sold 6,800 copies to bookstores, remarkable considering a book that sells 5,000 in Canada is considered a best seller.

As he looks at the stunning scenery around his island -- which includes a distant view of Singer Castle -- he knows why so many local people and tourists buy his picture books and give them as gifts. They are simply enchanted by the Thousand Islands, he says.

"People appreciate what I have done because they love it, too," Coristine explains.

Despite its rugged beauty, the Thousand Islands remain relatively unknown compared to tourist traps like Niagara Falls or Banff, Alta.

Cristine doesn't understand why the region hadn't been better promoted, given the rugged beauty of the islands and the Brockville's "amazing waterfront and incredible architecture."

"No other city in Canada has the assets that Brockville has."

Cristine is not concerned about the Thousand Islands being overrun with tourists.

"To be an imposition, to spoil the place, they really have to buy a boat."

"I really, genuinely do care about this place," says Cristine. "The books are to make people understand how privileged we are to have this."

As he sits on his cottage deck awaiting friends for dinner, he looks forward to capturing the beauty in words for his next book and spending some time with his family. Cristine has a 27-year-old daughter and 23-year-old son, and a wife, Mary, who is usually at their home near Hudson, Que.

Cristine spends all of his time in the Thousand Islands until late fall.

"I'm here until the ice pushes me out," he says, grinning. "Where else would I rather be than this?"