

Miscellanea

THE FLYING GAME

The Collishaw/Furniss expedition into darkest British Columbia was not just a shot in the dark. There was really gold in there, and wasn't Ray [Collishaw] the son of a miner who had roamed the fabled fields of Australia, California and the Yukon?

The whole plan was based on newspaper stories recently published in The Vancouver Province by my fellow-worker and ex-RCAF pilot Ray Munro. Ray had picked up the age-old story of Slumach, a coastal Indian who had mysteriously turned up in New Westminster in the 1800s with gabs of gold which he said he found "just over there" in the mountains near Harrison Lake.

Munro and another reporter flew into the area, staked claims, wrote tantalizing newspaper stories, formed a company, sold shares—and did everything except find the lost mine of old Slumach.

It was this publicity that brought Collishaw to my door that particular day. "Munro's got the Slumach story right," he said, "but he's got the wrong place. I've examined the old records and I think I know where that Indian really went. So let's go in there, Harry Old Boy, and lay claim to fortune."

It was a marvellous idea and it got better with each successive drink, but in the end I realized that I just couldn't possibly afford to quite my \$45 a week job and go prospecting. Ray finally hiked in by himself, the air drops worked perfectly, he found the area Munro had missed, but damned if he could find any gold.

The next summer Ray [Collisham] went up to Barkerville... and found gold but it wasn't profitable. The following year he struck it rich, only this time it was a copper deposit. which became one of the countries largest mines.

From: Furniss, Harry, Memoirs-One: The Flying Game, Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2003

Publisher's note:

Harry Furniss started writing these memoirs about flying in the late 1980s to help Nanaimo, B.C. veterans in their publicity campaign to re-name Cassidy Airport in honour of a most distinguished native son, Air Vice-Marshal Raymond Collishaw.

Ray was the second-highest scoring Allied fighter pilot in World War One, right behind Billy Bishop VC, who Furniss also knew, so he wrote about him too. And then he wrote about himself, for Furniss was a pilot with the RCAF in World War Two.

Following a lapse of over 40 years, Furniss took up flying again and was able to contrast the old and the new of this most exciting profession in 'The Flying Game', the first of several volumes of memoirs to be published through Trafford.

Furniss, now in his 80s, lives on Vancouver Island.