

## Hell's Bells



BC/DC singer Brian "Bon" John-Scottson stands and delivers at the annual Slush Cup event held at Sunshine Village Monday (May 21). The day's events marked the end of the ski season. MICHAEL BUCKLEY – PHOTO

## New owners breathe new life into publishing biz

ROB ALEXANDER – BANFF

Summerthought.

While that may evoke dreams of long summer days – especially after a wet and miserable Victoria Day long weekend – long-time Bow Valley residents in the know would recognize the name as the publisher of a seminal guidebook of the Rocky Mountains, *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, written by Brian Patton and Bart Robinson.

Since its inception in 1971, Summerthought was the quiet, behind-the-scenes publishing arm of the Banff Book & Art Den.

But now that husband and wife team Andrew Hempstead and Dianne Melton own the rights to Summerthought's books, having purchased it in early 2006, they have embarked on a plan to re-release some of the classics from the publisher's roughly 15 titles and release new titles as well.

With two newly re-released titles, the eighth edition of the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, the first book of its sort in this region, and *Robinson's Banff Springs: The Story of a Hotel*, now in its fourth edition, Hempstead and Melton are ensuring a tradition begun in 1971 of publishing locally-produced and locally-relevant books continues.

*Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* continues to be Summerthought's flagship book, selling over 230,000 copies to date.

"They say it's one of the best-selling books in Canada," Hempstead, the author of eight Moon Handbooks said Monday (May 21).

While updating and re-releasing the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* was an easy choice, deciding what other Summerthought titles to bring back has been a more difficult decision.

Hempstead said they are constrained by the fact their choices are made, in many ways, by what the market dictates.

As a result, Summerthought is planning a half-and-half approach: half new commercial-type products and half more traditional histories that, while worth publishing, may sell only a few hundred copies.

Some of Summerthought's titles though will likely never see the shelves again; a book of poetry written by Banff-born writer Jon Whyte, for instance. Reprinting it is not feasible because of the small market available for a book of that nature, Hempstead said.

And rather than starting from scratch as a new publisher with a new guidebook, Hempstead said it made more sense to buy into a well-recognized product.

"Name recognition is a mile above everything else. You come in with a new book, but no one knows you. (The *Canadian Rockies*) sells because the public is familiar with it," he said.

The goal from the beginning was to start slow and build on the momentum, resulting in two books released this spring and four books next spring, including Eleanor Luxton's *Banff*, *Canada's first national park: a History and a Memory of Rocky Mountains Park* and Patton's *Parkways of the Canadian Rockies*.

"We said we were never going to publish six books at once and be lost in the process.

"It's a learning curve," said Hempstead, an experienced guidebook author of at least six titles, including the *Moon Handbooks Canadian Rockies*.

As Hempstead and Melton grow their newest enterprise, they plan to continue to nurture the older titles Summerthought helped to establish as Rocky Mountain icons. "In the long term, we are going to try and cover each base; history books, how-to guidebooks and coffee table books," he said.



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