

KURT J. LUTZ



Kurt Lutz joined Robinson Aerial Surveys in 1987 as an Aerial Mapping Pilot and Aerial Photo Lab Technician. Throughout the years, his expertise expanded to include project management and quality control of all aerial imagery. As Director of Operations, Kurt was responsible for flight and office operations and oversees every phase of map production and project coordination maintaining Robinson Aerial Surveys' commitment to providing highly accurate mapping products with reliable turnaround times to our clients.

Mr. Lutz has been the final authority for all questions of photo interpretation within RAS. He was routinely called upon by property owners, surveyors, engineers, attorneys and environmental concerns to offer expert opinion on boundary and land use issues.

Kurt Lutz has been a project manager on over 3,000 jobs providing a full range of aerial mapping products to both public and private sector clients in the entire northeast region with clients that include the Port Authority of NY/NJ, NJ Transit, NJ and NY State Departments of Transportation, NY State Department of Environmental Protection, NYC Mass Transit Authority, NJ Turnpike Authority, several NJ counties and municipalities as well as major engineering firms and private developers.

Tell us about your educational background

I received a Bachelor of Science degree along with my Commercial/Multi/Instrument ratings from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in 1987. All my photogrammetric training has been "OTJ" (on the job) at Robinson Aerial Surveys Inc. by, I feel, some of the finest people in this industry. To reach my goal of being a Certified Photogrammetrist, I applied, and in the six months leading up to my test, I didn't go anywhere without a photogrammetry/remote sensing textbook in my hand (even the beach).

What inspired you to become a pilot, and what did you like the most about it?

I have wanted to be a pilot since I was about five years old. I guess what attracted me most at that age was the sense of adventure and the freedom of flight. As I grew up, I read anything flight related that I could get my hands on. I came to admire the vision, leadership, and self-reliance of Charles Lindbergh, Jimmy Doolittle, Billy Mitchell, Juan Trippe, and many others took aviation from its infancy to a global industry.

Now, as I gain a little more perspective on my nearly 40-year relationship with aviation, what still draws me to it is that same sense of adventure and the freedom as to when I was a young boy. Also, while I was growing up in the late '60s and early '70s, my grandfather worked for Singer-Kearfott, helping to produce the guidance systems for NASA. I have great memories of him telling me about the space program. While attending ERAU in Daytona Beach, Florida in the '80s, I had the pleasure of seeing many of the Shuttle launches firsthand. I witnessed the first launch in 1981 and later got to meet Astronauts John Young and Robert Crippen, as well as observing the catastrophic Challenger launch from the rear seat of a Cessna Crusader five years later. I am still a NASA geek to this day, and I'm enjoying the Apollo 11 commemorations this summer.

What made you decide to get involved in the aerial photography/mapping field?

I didn't as much decide on the aerial photography/mapping field as it really, just fell in my lap. It sounds funny, but before I began at RAS, I had never even heard of photogrammetry. When I graduated from ERAU, I fully expected to get a starter pilot position somewhere working just to build flight time, and then, eventually, apply to the airlines. About a week after graduation, I stopped by the "tower" at Andover Aeroflex Airport (12N), about 20 minutes from



I became a pilot in 1987, and beginning as a pilot helps me to develop a project from the initial planning phase through data acquisition and it gives me a unique perspective in this industry.

my home, and asked the manager if he knew of anyone hiring. He said he might know of someone and suggested that I return in an hour or so when they were expected back. That afternoon, I had an impromptu interview at the snack bar and a quick flight to see if I could land a Cessna 206. Growing up, I always had a fascination with geography and maps, in general.

How do you think being a pilot helped you to provide better services to your clients in the industry?

Almost every project begins with a flight plan. Beginning as a pilot and helping to develop a project from the initial planning phase through data acquisition gives me a unique perspective, even in this industry. Very few certified photogrammetrists have flown the projects they later compile. Now, as an Owner/ Partner focusing on Business Development, this experience allows me to walk a client through a project from the ground up (pardon the pun).

What project(s) do you feel the proudest of? Why?

Over my career, I have developed a fondness for transportation infrastructure projects. RAS has had the distinction of working on two of the most important projects in the northeast. In 2003, RAS became involved in the Access to the Region's Core (ARC), a commuter-rail project to increase passenger service capacity along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between New Jersey and Manhattan. The new infrastructure would include a new mainline, rail yard, and a tunnel under the Hudson River. The estimated budget for this project was \$8.7 billion. RAS stayed with the project team providing Low-altitude aerial mapping and digital ortho imagery over the next ten years, through the well-publicized cancellation by Gov. Christie, name changes to "the "Gateway Project" and THE (Trans Hudson Express) Tunnel. In conjunction with this project, RAS is also the lead survey and mapping firm for the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancements (PBCE) Project. It is said that without the Portal Bridge, all interstate rail traffic in the northeast effectively stops. The PBCE project has been an 11-year effort, from the environmental impact study, progressing to detailed survey and mapping, to this past summer's completion of the Individual and General Property Parcel Maps. I am very proud to have served as RAS' Project Manager for both these efforts and even prouder still, of my team.

Having such a broad experience in the photogrammetry field, what do you think are the most pressing needs that should be met in the coming years?

Education! Education not only of the next generation of photogrammetrists but also continued education of professionals in the engineering and land surveying industries of how photogrammetry can reduce cost and increase efficiency in a projects base mapping. The advent of UAV/UAS has helped to refocus geospatial consumers on photogrammetry, but we need to ensure that new entrants into the industry have the training necessary to make accurate maps. This is a concern of mine.

What would you like to see the industry accomplish?

I would like to see, at least at the state level, the requirement for ASPRS certification (or Licensed Land Surveyors) for anyone producing geospatial products.



Training West Point Academy Cadets

How important do you think interdisciplinary collaboration will be for solving some of the challenges that lie ahead in infrastructure?

Interdisciplinary collaboration is invaluable. It is often said that "communication is the key." It is as true here as anywhere else. It is not possible to have a successful design project without a diverse team of professionals working together.

What significant changes have you seen in your field during your career?

When I started with RAS in March of 1987, the company was three months away from upgrading to our first computer-based mapping system. When I wasn't flying, one of my office tasks was using an ink pen to hand line mylar manuscripts for our stereometrograph and PG-2 plotters. I'm glad that only lasted a few months or I might not be answering these questions now. Happily, the larger portion of my non-flight office time was devoted to helping one of my first mentors, Jack Sherman, in the photo lab. I really enjoyed processing the film, making the photo products, working with the film archives. Around 2007, we transition to a completely digital workflow so gone are the days of the "wet lab." I have, quite literally, seen this industry (and RAS) transform from ink to digital.

PS: Happily, Jack stayed with us and finally retired in 2015 after 61 wonderful years of service.

When you're not working, what do you do in your free time?

I am an avid golfer, and I enjoy surfing kayaks on the Jersey Shore. Over the past few years, I have also caught the travel bug and have made a fair-sized dent in my bucket list trips across the country and around the world.

continued on page 624

analysis carefully explores important place-based concerns bearing on disease spread and treatment that properly highlight why geography matters.

Topics that might be added in subsequent iterations; more discussion of the “Spanish Flu” as it was truly one of the most important epidemics in modern history. This epidemic particularly lends itself to further spatial/geographical analysis given the manner in which the disease spread socio-political issues and the significant effect the epidemic had on modern medicine and public health. In line with this, more coverage of mid-twentieth century disease and geography would be helpful. Although not meant as a spatial statistics primer, presenting emerging work on spatial and temporal issues would have been useful

All told, CoD is a comprehensive and deep accounting of the history and current state of public health/medical geography.

Indeed, Koch argues successfully for the idea that place is an important constituent element for understanding disease and illness, no different than considering individual characteristics or those of the disease/illness agent (virus, bacteria, lead, etc). This normalization of geography as a unit of analysis on its own terms is well described in Koch’s accounting. Beyond the pedagogical utility of CoD for college and medical school students, an important achievement of this volume integration of geography as a constituent element of good public health and medical research. Koch has written a book, that because of its deep historical understanding, will not become obsolete. Readers and students can first learn of these important topics in this volume and return and grow with the depth of Koch’s ideas.

AN INTERVIEW

continued from page 620



At the Great Wall of China. “Traveling has become one of my greatest passions”

“Traveling has become one of my greatest passions”

What is the biggest open question in your field of photogrammetry that will require the most attention in the future?

As I mentioned earlier, the introduction of UAV/UAS has brought a large number of people into the field. Many of these newcomers have little if any, experience with the survey/mapping accuracies required for geospatial products. They are confident that by just using one of the new, very user-friendly software packages that they’ll deliver a high-quality topo. I say again that education is the solution. Educating the consumer on the right questions to ask and what to expect, educating the newcomers on standards, best practices, etc., and educating ourselves on the newest technology and how we can help our client and better our craft. I think ASPRS needs to be the leader in this effort.

Has ASPRS helped further your career? If so, how?

ASPRS has set the benchmarks for professionals in this industry and has made available the resources for us to learn and grow. It has also led me to a network of like-minded professionals with whom I (we) can share ideas, problems, and solutions. I would also like to add that I am very encouraged by the new leadership in the organization. I think ASPRS has a bright future.

ERRATA

To correct the authorship of “*Aerodynamic Roughness Length Estimation with Lidar and Imaging Spectroscopy in a Shrub-Dominated Dryland*” to include Venkataramana Sridhar, Ph.D., P.E., Associate Professor, Department of Biological Systems Engineering, Virginia Tech as one of the author. To reflect the following:

Aerodynamic Roughness Length Estimation with Lidar and Imaging Spectroscopy in a Shrub-Dominated Dryland

Aihua Li, Wenguang Zhao, Jessica J. Mitchell, Nancy F. Glenn, Matthew J. Germino, Joel B. Sankey, Richard G. Allen, and Venkataramana Sridhar

Ad Index

Advance Mapping Technologies

amtmaps.com

628

Resonon

www.resonon.com

Cover 2