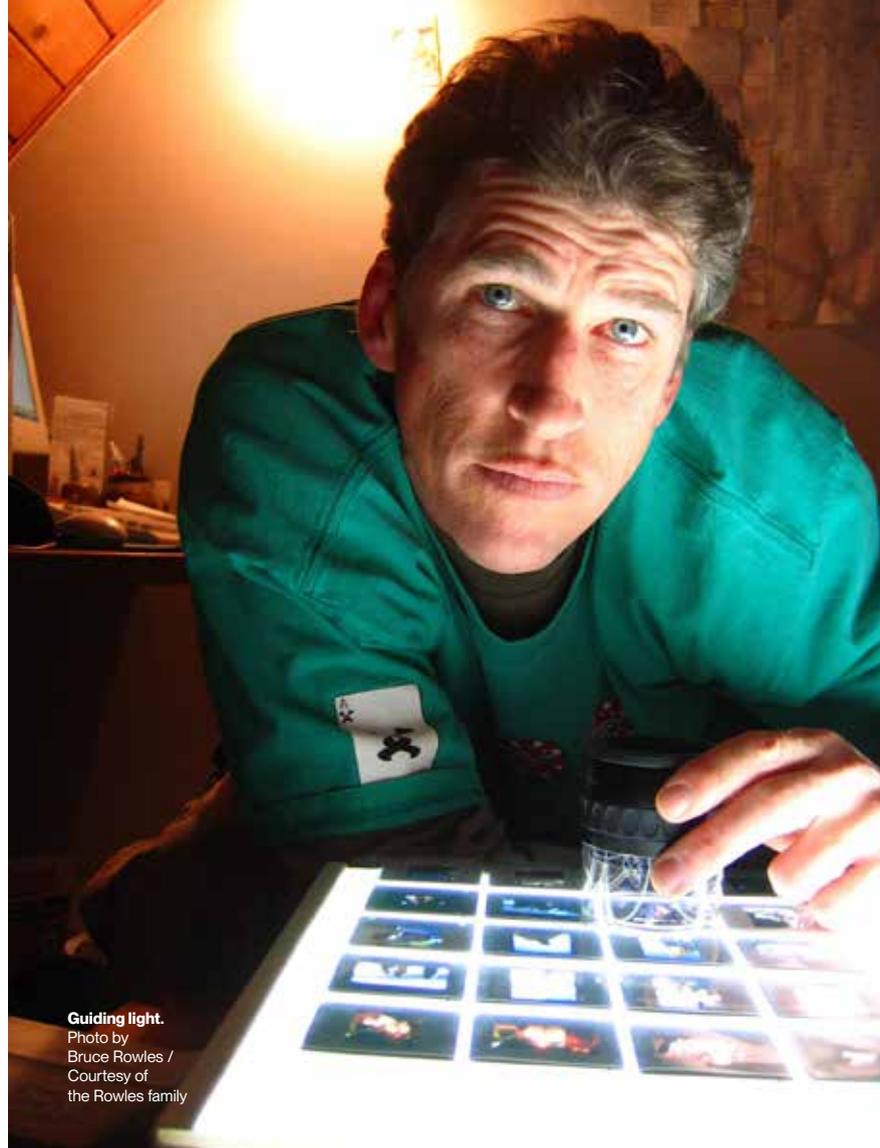


BETTER CALL ROWLSIE

Bruce Rowles was a talker. It could be mildly annoying, like when you were trying to thread a particularly nasty tangle of branches known as the Iron Curtain—which he of course had named, along with a dozen other features of the Powerline Disc Golf Course in Whistler, British Columbia—but mostly it was just interesting. Typically historical, Bruce's woodsy soliloquies sewed together waypoints—personalities and events, accomplishments and losses—of Whistler's heady ski scene over the 37 years he'd lived there. I learned more about the people and place I'd chosen as home from Rowlsie (as most called him) than any other source, and he was my go-to for what *really* happened with respect to anything I might be writing about.

Greater than his gift of gab, however, were Rowlsie's intertwined drives to document and create, whether through the airbrush and ink art he'd trained at in Vancouver's Capilano College, or the photography he'd taken up to record adventures with friends while working in a ski shop—and parlayed into a profession. Though he'd become known around the world for iconic shots of Whistler's ski culture, backcountry bravado or raucous summer glacier scene, Rowlsie was about both photographic quality *and* quantity—the latter supercharged by the digital age of no-cost photos. Indeed, there wasn't a single one of hundreds of rounds of disc golf played together over a 15-year span in which he didn't pull out a pocket camera to photograph *something*—whether a pine mushroom (which he once hunted and sold to restaurants as a



Guiding light.
Photo by
Bruce Rowles /
Courtesy of
the Rowles family

young ski bum), a chattering squirrel (who knows), or myself, attempting to navigate the Iron Curtain. Whatever the case, such personal moments of camaraderie and mirth taught me about the heart, soul and friend-to-all he represented.

I was as shocked as anyone to hear of Bruce's passing, in March 2022, from aggressive bile-duct cancer at the age of 61. Though he'd moved to Vancouver Island some two years prior, it immediately left a hole in the fabric of the Whistler community, where he had a storied history as a top skier, newschool ski revolution-cheerleader, and mentor to young athletes like Kye Petersen, whom I met as an 11-year-old when we all skied Blackcomb Mountain's DOA couloir. The scene of Bruce and Johnny "Foon" Chilton patiently coaching Petersen down the alpenglow-filled chute is forever etched in my memory.

Of the many other endearments in my professional interactions with Bruce,

dominant was his ever-helpful nature—the sense he was always on your team. Be it his massive annual submissions to magazines I helmed (no matter how often we'd counsel photographers to include only a few of their best shots, Rowlsie would inevitably send 500), willingness to bring ridiculous ideas to life in the early days of Photoshop (a Zamboni grooming an icy Ontario ski hill comes to mind), deep catalogue of iconic shots (none more so than JP Auclair's stylish mute grab in the Whistler backcountry, circa 1998, which was used for the cover of *SBC Skier's* tribute issue to the late Auclair and Andreas Fransson in 2014), or something as risible as a how-to-make-a-bong-from-a-snowball, when a last-minute hole in the magazine needed filling, we always had but one thought: Better call Rowlsie.

Because Rowlsie *always* delivered, and they just don't make them like that anymore. —**LESLIE ANTHONY**