

Eye in the Sky on Barrie



Herman Koeslag has the advantage of a bird's-eye view when it comes to taking pictures.

After a decade of enjoying model aviation and photography as hobbies, he decided to combine the two into a business in 1996. He called it Eye In The Sky and uses a model helicopter with a camera attached to take aerial photographs. "The technology had come far enough for the helicopter to carry equipment and be safely operated," he said.

He purchased the 23 CC gas-powered model helicopter as a kit from a Michigan company and adapted it so it could carry a camera.

Because there are so few heli-cam operators in Canada, Koeslag estimates he is one of about six, there are no regulations concerning their operation. "We have to make sure that we maintain safety at the highest level," he said. While the helicopter weighs only 18 pounds, its roto diameter is five feet.

It's taken the past five years to build up the business and clients have included the City of Barrie, Township of Oro-Medonte and various industries interested in a unique photo of their business. Individuals have hired him to take pic-

tures of their home or farm and he's even used the heli-cam at a couple of weddings. "It's ideal for buildings," he said, "the heli-cam allows me to get close to the building." The photos can show the front of the building, as well as the horizon in the background.

His photos have been included on the covers of the Barrie Historical Society's walking tours brochures and the Barrie Automotive Flea Market calendar.

He is currently having a Web site created for his business which will allow customers to purchase pictures on-line as well as order his services. He hopes to have it complete by the summer and ready for E-commerce by fall.

Most of his work has been centred around the Barrie area, but word of his work has grown and he's receiving calls from as far away as Parry Sound and St. Catharines. It's getting to the point now, that he has had to juggle assignments or pass them on to other photographers.

The heli-cam is operated from the ground by remote control. Once it is in position, Koeslag takes the pictures, again via remote control. It's all done by sight as he cannot see what the camera sees when he takes the photo. "It started as trial and error," he said. "I've gotten it down to an art."

The heli-cam photography is only one aspect of his business. While he prefers the results he receives from the heli-cam, it is limited to about 300 feet above the ground.

For assignments requiring a higher vantage point, he climbs into a plane. He will also do standard photos including special events, landscaping and even weddings.

For more information on the business or to obtain rates, call Eye In The Sky at 739-1395.