



NO. 5 ON THE LIST: PAGETECH LTD.

Documenting final space shuttle missions

BY JEFF BELL



After 30 years, the team at Pagetech Ltd. has built an impressive resume in the live-event and video-production business, including the White and Powell and the Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus, Missouri, but it was the opportunity to document the end of the U.S. space-shuttle program that's closest to Pagetech's heart.

Working with aviation photographer Dennis Belski, Page and some of his employees documented the final shuttle missions by the Discovery, Endeavour and Atlantis in 2011.

The result is an eye-popping collection of photographs and videos that have been used to exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Titusville, Florida, San Diego Air & Space Museum, Museum of Flight in Seattle and the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in New York City.

The assignment was a dream come true for Page, who built rockets as a boy growing up in Illinois. Then he moved up to what he describes as "high-powered rocketry" when he was learning the live-event business on a stage hand.

"You always had a fascination with space and rockets," he said. "I guess it's kind of a far-flung guy."

Page recently talked with Columbus Business First about his company's role in helping chronic the end of the space shuttle program. Here are excerpts from the interview.

How did you become involved with the "Last Shuttle" project?

Dennis Belski is a business partner of mine and he approached me. He was seeking help in capturing the logistics of chronicling the end of the space shuttle program for the Smithsonian. He has a relationship with the Smithsonian and had taken the historic photo of almost all of the historical aircraft at the National Air and Space Museum as well as the Urban Huey Center in the Washington, D.C., area. I said, "I'm all in," and began to help formulate both a team and a plan to execute. What made us different from the other media covering it was that we did videography, still photography, 360-degree virtual reality photography, 3-D photography and videography, audio and interviews. We wanted to help the Smithsonian tell the story of the shuttle program... and focus on the people stories (from the missions).

Can you talk about the planning and execution that went into shooting those shuttle missions? Anything you do in relationship to the space program has to have permission from NASA. We coordinated that with requests on things we wanted to see. That could be very challenging, and they don't always approve it. I applied for visas for a shot inside the interior of one of the shuttles. The first time I applied, the visas actually were silent and the gentleman (from NASA) said, "You're not serious, are you? You can't even [like] stand about going inside a space shuttle after it lands to take pictures." I explained to him



THE LAST SHUTTLE PROJECT

Pagetech Ltd. and founder John Page, far right, were the first to work on the Last Shuttle project with NASA and other partners, filming and photographing the final U.S. space shuttle missions in 2011. Discovery on its way to the launch pad, above, at Cape Kennedy, Florida. 1 Below from left: A NASA worker inspects Discovery's main engine. 2 Endeavour ready for launch with the military air transports use to enter the shuttle in the hangarward. 3 A photographer grabs a quick shot of Discovery on the launch pad. 4 Pagetech was challenged to secure unprecedented access to photograph the interior of the shuttles.



that NASA always test-out the telemetry and some of the science experiments almost immediately after landing, so there had never been an insertion shot of an actual launch spacecraft before they started testing it again. With Atlantis, the final mission, they approved it and we shot it.

Did you have any equipment on board during these flights? So, you applied for that and did some testing, but for any equipment on a shuttle, you have to provide a duplicate of it in advance to NASA and they do all kinds of testing to make sure it's not

going to interfere with what they're going on. But there was another gentleman who was able to do this through another entity and we were able to share some of that (see right) footage. We were able to shoot continuously in the orbital processing facility and vehicle assembly building. We also would set up to 20 cameras on the launch pad at locations around the Kennedy Space Center. Then we would shoot not only the launches but every floor of it, from the assembly of the shuttle to the landing and reconditioning and refurbishing of the equipment.



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Discovery's last crew: Steven Lindsey, Eric Boss, Alvin Blevins, Mike Rogers, Michael Barratt and Wendie Gott. After a scorching accident, Rogers was replaced at the last minute by Steve Swenson, not pictured.



PHOTO BY JEFF BELL



PHOTO BY JEFF BELL

Besides getting NASA approvals, what were the most challenging aspects of the production process? One of the things about the launch pad photography was that we weren't allowed to be anywhere near the pad within a 20-foot radius of the launch. So we would set up the cameras the day before. We had a camera operator and three. We also had a flight attendant who would back into the frame when the cameras so they wouldn't go to sleep and would operate in the manner we needed since they started shooting during the launch. Once the first loud boom occurred during a launch, the camera would shoot

continuously until the battery ran out or the card was full of data. During the landing phase, roll over and roll back, we would have photographers on site.

As a former rocket boy, how did it feel when you first got to view your shuttle every being deployed publicly? I had an intimate view of public that future generations will be able to see the small part we had in preserving this history. The first time I hit the news when I stood on the launch pad so close to the shuttle that it felt like I could touch it. I was overcome by emotion. "The space shuttle symbolizes the best

part of America — our innovation and ingenuity. It was a thrilling, poignant and historic builder for the nation when we were first able to successfully launch a rocket into orbit and land like an airplane. To have been a small part of that is beyond words."

Where can people view the photos and videos shot during "The Last Shuttle" project? Visit TheLastShuttle.com, Smithsonian Air and Space Museum or Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex.

Jeff Bell is a freelance writer.

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST



COVER STORY

WHAT IDENTITY CRISIS?

The city's Short North has witnessed waves of change, but there's no shortage of indie retailers as it grows up.

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Maren Roth, owner of Rowe
PHOTO BY JESSICA STANLEY



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With partners, NASA and the Smithsonian, it's the project Pagetech will remember forever. Page 18

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COLUMBUS
BUSINESS FIRST

December 22, 2019
Vol. 32, No. 16, \$4.99

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