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Framing the Moment:

An Oral History with Santa Cruz Photojournalist Shmuel Thaler



Interviewed and Edited by Irene Reti

UC Santa Cruz Library

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For more of Shmuel Thaler’s photography see also: <https://www.shmuelthaler.com/>



iPhoneography

Introduction

“It has been my honor to have spent the last three decades making the images that have become the historic record of our community’s recent past. Through my pictures, I hope you see into the beauty and soul of a community I obviously love.”—Shmuel Thaler¹

For over thirty years, Santa Cruz County residents have opened up their copy of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* each morning and seen their lives reflected in Shmuel Thaler’s photographs. From triathlons to earthquakes, from clam chowder cook-offs to murder trials, from burning brush to breaching humpback whales—Thaler’s images record the dynamic nature of this unique Central California coastal community that we call home. His photographs fuse a recognizable artistic, graphical aesthetic with a driving documentary impulse. This oral history photobook captures the trajectory and philosophy of Shmuel Thaler’s photographic career.

Thaler’s choice to devote himself to documenting one community has not stood in the way of a national reputation. His photographs have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Forbes*, *Business Week* and many other publications. He has been honored three times with awards in the prestigious *National Press Photographers Association Best of Photojournalism* contest, most recently in 2015. He also placed first or second in the San Francisco Bay Area Press Photographers Association, the California Newspaper Publishers Association, or the

¹<https://santacruzmahorg/2016/2016-santa-cruz-county-artist-of-the-year-shmuel-thaler/>

Associated Press News Executive Council contests in each of the past fifteen years. Thaler has co-authored five children’s books, including *Pumpkin Circle*, which has over 120,000 copies in print and is held by every major library across the country. Recognized locally as well, in 2016 he was named Santa Cruz County Artist of the Year by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission. Thaler has also mounted solo shows at the Cabrillo Gallery, the Michaelangelo Gallery, the Pacific Grove Art Center, and other venues, and his work has been featured in many group shows.

The Special Collections & Archives Department at the University of California Santa Cruz’s University Library recently had the honor of becoming the home of Thaler’s photographic archive. The Library’s Regional History Project initiated this oral history with Thaler to contextualize his work and decided to publish an edited narrative form of the oral history as a photobook so that the images could appear alongside the narrative in a high-quality format.

Born September 20, 1958 at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, Shmuel is descended from Eastern European Jewish immigrants. His father, Alvin Thaler, was a producer and director at CBS News and his mother, Pat Koch Thaler, worked as a counselor and as dean of arts, sciences, and humanities in the School of Continuing Education at New York University and is also a painter. Both of his parents inspired his development as an artist. Thaler’s uncle, Ed Koch, served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1969 to 1977 and was mayor of New York City from 1978 to 1989.

“I thought I was going to be a photographer when I grew up. I mean, it was always just too much fun!” Shmuel told me as we began this series of three, two-hour

interviews conducted at UC Santa Cruz's McHenry Library in November 2017. Thaler's love affair with photography began at a very young age. He won the *Seventeen* magazine photography contest while still in high school, in 1974. Shortly after that, *Time* magazine photographers, Ralph Morse and Carl Mydans hired him to help cover President Jimmy Carter's inauguration.

Shmuel graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts film school (before NYU had a major in photography) and also studied art at SUNY Purchase. While at NYU, he interned with photojournalist Stephen Shames, gaining hands-on experience in all aspects of the life of a working photojournalist—from shooting assignments, to printing, to marketing. His photographs were also influenced by his affinity for the style of Edward Hopper, who painted just a few miles from where Shmuel grew up in New York State.

After graduation, Thaler climbed into an old Subaru with a close friend and journeyed to Santa Cruz, California, which was to become his new home. They walked into the quintessentially Santa Cruz Saturn Café on a day in 1982 and Thaler began to scrape together a living in Santa Cruz. He worked for Webber's Camera and held a variety of other jobs while establishing himself as a freelance photographer, embarking on assignments for *Monterey Life*, *The Santa Cruz Express*, and other local and national newspapers. He also briefly worked as staff for Photography Services at UC Santa Cruz and as a part-time staff photographer for the *Valley Press/Scotts Valley Banner*, where he first honed the generalist skills and flexibility required of a newspaper photojournalist, who must be able to shoot everything from portraits, to action sports, to landscape images. During this period,

Thaler also covered the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco and worked for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee on an archival project to document the Jewish community in Morocco. That endeavor resulted in an exhibit at the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion Museum in New York City.

In July 1987, Thaler began working as a part-time staff photographer for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, a job which morphed into a full-time position after the newspaper needed to meet the high demands involved in documenting the impact of the Loma Prieta Earthquake of October 17, 1989. In preparation for this oral history, I spoke with Thaler's longtime colleague and close friend, *Sentinel* writer Wallace Baine, who told me Shmuel seems to relish covering dramatic events such as earthquakes, storms, and fires, and keeps a rain suit hanging in his office so that he is prepared for every opportunity.

"He is never grumpy or grouchy," Baine also remarked. I must agree. In my own thirty-year career as an oral historian I have rarely interviewed someone who finds such joy in his work and radiates happiness every time I see him.

It was in a 2016 newspaper interview with Baine that Thaler said, "Photojournalism is really unique in that it exists at this intersection between art, telling a story, and creating a historical record, which is why I love it so much."² This oral history reveals the stories behind some of the photos Thaler has made in his *Sentinel* career; the images chosen represent what he considers benchmarks in his artistic development.

²<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/NE/20160518/FEATURES/160519714>

While working at the *Sentinel*, Thaler continued to pursue his own photographic projects, including an ongoing collaboration with Baine on portraits for the Gail Rich Awards, which honor and feature Santa Cruz artists. It inspired the publication of the book *The Creatives Among Us* (Angels Press 2015). Thaler describes his highly collaborative approach to portraiture in his book. He has also been the photographer for Shakespeare Santa Cruz (now Santa Cruz Shakespeare) since 1984.

Thaler and his wife, Kathy Cytron, have two daughters, Hannah and Kayla. Kayla attended Mount Madonna School and through this affiliation, Thaler became the volunteer staff photographer for Mount Madonna School's Values in World Thought, which leads learning journeys to India and South Africa that include conversations with Nobel Laureates His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Some of Thaler's images from those trips are also included here.

The final section of this book covers some of Thaler's other contributions to the photographic community, as well as his solo shows. He has taught photography at Cabrillo Community College and is one of the curators of Open Show Santa Cruz, an international platform which features social screenings where the community can "experience compelling visual stories and interact directly with their creators."³ In recent years, Thaler has begun to experiment with the creative possibilities of iPhone photography. We have included some of his favorite images made using that camera.

The transcript of this oral history (available on the Regional History Project's website) and this edited narrative

based on the transcript were both returned to Thaler for his review. I am grateful to Shmuel for his careful editing and quick turnaround on the manuscript and to his mother, Pat, for her eagle eye as well. It was truly a pleasure to collaborate with Shmuel on this endeavor and (full disclosure!) as a photographer myself I particularly enjoyed this project. I would also like to thank my colleague, Archivist Mary De Vries, for her help with several phases of this project. The book design is entirely mine.

The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Teresa Mora, Interim Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—Irene Reti
Director, Regional History Project
University Library, UC Santa Cruz
March 1, 2018

³ <http://www.openshow.org/>



Shmuel Thaler, age five, (left) with his camera. Photo by Alvin Thaler. [Plate 1]

Early Life

I was born September 20, 1958 at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan. My parents lived in Riverdale, which is in the Bronx. They took me home from the hospital and then six months later they moved to Rockland County, which is kind of northwest of New York City. My dad, Alvin Thaler, was working at CBS. Because he was in the television industry, there was a notice about it in *Variety* magazine. He said that it was a good thing that I was born on the weekend because he didn't know if he could take the time off to come to the birth. He was just kidding. I lived in Rockland County through when I graduated from high school.

My mother's father, Louis Koch, grew up in the shtetl, somewhere in Poland—Poland, Ukraine, Russia—the borders changed, and the Jews were not citizens wherever they were living. So he grew up in the shtetl, and as I understand it, from when he was about twelve to when he was fourteen, his family saved up every penny they could to send him to the United States. A lot of Jews were leaving Eastern Europe. They saved up money. He had had an uncle who had already immigrated to the United States and lived in Newark, New Jersey. So they gave him all this money and they bought him his ticket. He took the train to Hamburg to get to the boat, and while he was waiting in line to buy his ticket, his pocket was picked. All of his money was gone. And all these poor folks who were waiting to buy their steerage tickets pitched in and bought him a ticket.

But the story gets even better, because he goes across the Atlantic Ocean on this boat in steerage. It's probably an awful crossing. They come in past the Statue

of Liberty, and Ellis Island and all that. And his son, Ed Koch, grows up to be the mayor of New York City. So it's really an, "only in America" kind of story. I don't necessarily think it exists in the same way, the American dream, right now, although obviously people want to come to the United States because of the American dream. But back then, if you came to the United States, and you worked hard and you sent your kids to school, they could achieve more than you did. So it's kind of a great story.

My Grandfather Louis—he worked a lot of jobs. His brother-in-law gave him the coat-checking concession in this dance hall he had in Newark, New Jersey. It was this awful, awful existence. It was really a nasty place to be. Then he worked as a waiter. I remember him telling us about how during the Depression they would bring out chicken soup and they would have one or two chicken bones. They'd bring them back to the kitchen and put them on the next plate. There was no actual meat because it was the Depression and there wasn't a whole lot. He ended up becoming a furrier, making fur coats. At the end of his life, before he and his second wife (not my grandmother) moved to Florida, he was in charge of the fur coat storage area in Bloomingdale's. He was very proud of my uncle, who had become the mayor.

His wife, Joyce, also emigrated from Eastern Europe. I don't actually know how they met. It was a typical Eastern European Jewish family. I know she was a very independent woman who had a career, very strong. My mother, who is the youngest child of three, took that very seriously. I know my grandmother had a backroom, back alley abortion at some point. It was an awful experience and that's one of the reasons my mother is so involved in abortion rights.

On my father's side, both his parents: Samuel, whom I'm named after because he died shortly before I was born, and Yetta, his mother, also came from Eastern Europe. My paternal grandfather, Sam, had an egg and butter delivery business. My father worked in that some when he was growing up, and they had a truck and they would bring eggs and butter and maybe some cheese, but I'm not sure, to restaurants around, probably the Lower East Side.

We always belonged to a synagogue. In the beginning, it was a Conservative synagogue that my parents helped form where we lived. When they moved from Riverdale when I was six months old, we moved to Monsey, which is now a very mixed area, with a lot of Hasidim and a lot of Haitians. So it's an interesting mix. When we moved there, and even through when I was in high school, there were still apple orchards, and it was still rural, where rural met suburbs. Now it's much more sprawl. It's expanded. And we belonged to some synagogue, I don't remember what. But then when I was in fourth grade, when I was ten or something, we moved to Pomona, New York. It's in Rockland County, which is the county that is directly northwest of New York City, in New York State. And then shortly after that we changed and we became members of Temple Beth El in Spring Valley, New York. And that's—I can say—very Reform.

We had a very strong Jewish identity and when I was thirteen I got involved with this Socialist Zionist youth movement. And that became most of my life in high school. It changed my life entirely. That was my Jewish thing. In the movement, we were as close to being anti-religious as you could be. It was

a very secular, lefty kind of Jewish existence, based on the kibbutz movement and things like that.

My dad was a photographer when he was a young guy, starting out. He actually was an actor originally and went to Brooklyn College. So did my mother. They met on a blind date. Then he went to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts to become an actor. Don Rickles was in his class and Burgess Meredith was in his class. He was acting for a while. He did summer stock. And he hosted a variety show on CBS for a little while, which we haven't been able to find any clips of, of course, because it was produced live and it wasn't filmed. It was broadcast live. It was a Caribbean music variety show. It was all live television; there was no taping—and they would hand him the script right before they would go on air. Ignorant costume designers and scene designers had him dressed in a pith helmet and a jungle suit for a Caribbean music show. So what he would do is he would put his script in his pith helmet. When there was a pause, he would pretend he was sweating, wipe his brow, take his pith helmet off, and then look at his script.

But at some point, he realized he wanted to be on the other side of the camera, so he became a production assistant at CBS. And then, through the years, he became a producer and director at CBS news and he won an Emmy. While I was growing up, I'd go into the studio with him. He was the studio producer for election night for CBS, so he would control the whole studio with Walter Cronkite, then Dan Rather after that.

He also invented two things in television. One was, he was the first person to come up with the idea that they should have a mobile editing suite and also mobile transmission. Every TV station has these

vans now. That didn't exist then. CBS, at the time had unlimited budgets, and they bought a huge Cortez Motor Home and transformed it into a mobile editing suite. It would have happened whether he had done this or not, but he was the first person to do that.

And I'm not sure how he did this, but he also arranged to get the first live helicopter shot in television history. I think it was 1964, and there was a transit strike in New York City. He had this idea of getting a helicopter shot of the first subway train leaving the yard once the train service was restored. I don't know how he did it. Now the technology is really simple, but back then it was—I don't know how they dealt with the microwaves and whatever else they needed to deal with.

And while I was growing up, he would travel as a news, either director or producer, to all sorts of places. He was in Iran during the hostage crisis. He was in El Salvador during the civil war. He went to Poland when the Polish Pope went back to Poland. He was in the Falklands in Argentina during that war. So he traveled a lot and would also cover the primaries. He would be traveling around the country during election time.

I loved what he was doing. I visited certain of the remote locations when he was directing. I got to go to the William Calley Court-Martial, which was part of the Vietnam War, in Atlanta, and go cover that with him, and have dinner with F. Lee Bailey, who was a big-name lawyer. This whole idea of what journalism was seemed really appealing. I didn't know at the time that I was going to become a journalist.

He won one Emmy. It was for a show he produced for the religious unit at CBS News. It was with this guy

Marshall Efron. It was "Marshall Efron's Illustrated, Simplified, and Painless Sunday School." I would go to that with him. I have the very distinct memory of sitting on one of the cameras. They had three or four in the studio but they were only using two for this one particular scene. The script had to do with these red shoes that Marshall Efron was wearing. I think there were no other actors on the show. It was kind of fun Bible stories and stuff. I zoomed in the camera to the red shoes he was wearing. And they took that shot. They thought one of the cameramen was on that camera and they took that shot. I was like, wow! They liked that. And the union cameramen—they were all men, there were no women, so I call them cameramen—the union cameramen, at first they were a little taken aback because no one is supposed to be on the cameras. But then they just kind of let it pass. So he was really involved in visual stuff and translating how he saw the world into producing television. I think that probably affected me.

My mother, Pat Koch Thaler, had quite a number of jobs her whole life. She worked at the mental health clinic near us. She worked as a guidance counselor at my junior high. Then she ended up progressing to a career in continuing education at Marymount Manhattan College, running the department. Her last job before she retired was the dean of arts, sciences, humanities in the School of Continuing Education at New York University.

And besides that, she was also a painter. She always did different kinds of art. So I think that I partially got this artistic sense from both of my parents. My mother's art was an important part of her life, regardless of her work. Both my parents figured out what would

make them happy in their work and they did it. I think that was a really important influence on me.

They never had a lot of money but they always felt like we needed to do what would make us happy, my brothers and myself. Both my brothers are in the arts. One of my brothers is a lighting director at CBS and the other one is the director of graphics at CBS News. So they both went into the arts and both at CBS. I'm the oldest. My brother, Jon, is the lighting director. He and his wife, Marjorie, live in Scarsdale, New York, in Westchester County. They have three children: Jordan, Noah, and Perri. Perri is a high school senior now. So she'll be going to college. The other two have already gone to college. And my other brother, Jared, is married to his wife, Joy, and they live in a place called Edgemont, which is near Scarsdale in Westchester County, also. Their daughter, Sasha, just started college this year. She's a freshman. And their son, Ben, is a high school student.

My fifth-grade teacher was a guy named Mr. Bielski. I can't think of why he affected me so much, other than (and I think this is a common thing for a lot of people) he saw me for who I was, rather than having me try and fit into a particular hole or a mold. And where I grew up, in Rockland County, in Pomona, the educational system was very progressive, so I think he was encouraged to do that. And I had a teacher I think named Mr. Hirsh, at Ramapo High School, who also affected me and I think saw me for who I was. But by the time I was in high school, like I said, my life was really in this youth movement called Hashomer Hatzair¹ and that's what I was doing.

¹ <http://www.hashomer-hatzair.net/cgi-webaxy/item?181>

I had teachers later on, in college, who really affected me. And I did have teachers in high school who allowed me to do multimedia projects instead of writing a paper. I could do slideshows. I got out of high school probably without writing a paper. I remember one slideshow in particular. It was for social studies, I assume. I don't remember what the subject was, the unit that we were doing, but I did this show on poverty. I don't remember where I came up with the photos. I just went around and just shot things that looked like what I thought poverty was, I guess. One of the pictures was of this doorway with a shadow going through it and the stairs look a little tattered. My tenth grade English teacher—I can't remember her name—she suggested I enter it into the *Seventeen* magazine photography contest. I actually won that photography contest in 1974. It was a big, big deal. It was an affirmation that—oh, you can kind of do this.

First Photographic Work

I thought I was going to be a photographer when I grew up. I really did, although when I was in high school trying to figure out where I was applying to college, I also looked into cartography programs. That was my other interest. I love maps and I love directions and I love places. But there were so few cartography programs, and at that point there were no computers that were used for this, so it was hand drawing stuff. I'm an okay artist, but not to the level of where I think I would have needed to be as a draftsman to do that.

So I just thought I was going to be a photographer. I mean, it was just always too much fun!

I didn't have a darkroom in my house but I was always taking pictures. We'd process them. So I'd get the negatives and the contact sheets. I think my dad did set up a darkroom in my house in the basement when I was in junior high at some point. But I also took pictures for the junior high yearbook and they had a darkroom in my junior high school. And then at the camp for the youth movement that I belonged to, I did the photography club and we set up a darkroom there.

I took my first picture when I was five. It was with a Kodak Brownie and I have pictures of it. My dad took some pictures, where you can see me with the box when I opened it. And then I have a picture—I love this picture—my dad, one of the other things he covered for CBS was when NASA would launch rockets. So we went down to Cape Canaveral—now it's Cape Kennedy—to cover some liftoff. And there's a picture of my brother, Jon, probably he's three. He's crying and my mother is trying to comfort him and I'm taking a picture of it. I love it! It was funny, my photojournalistic sense of not involving myself in getting the picture. But then my dad was taking a picture of *me* doing this. [Plate 1] So he had the same kind of inclination. My guess is it's 1963, so I was five. I'm pretty sure five is when I got the camera. It was a Kodak Brownie. I have a Kodak Brownie, but not the original one I had back then. I got one again later.

A Picture in *Time* Magazine

We had a family friend named John Durniak.² He was the picture editor at *Time* magazine. He began as the

² See <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/04/nyregion/john-durniak-68-ex-editor-of-photos-at-times-and-time.html>

picture editor at the *New York Times*, a pretty well-known person in the history of photography. He was one of these people who really encouraged young, up-and-coming photographers to flourish and to grow. And so when I was seventeen, he gave me a couple of assignments to shoot for *Time*. It was pretty heady stuff, although I think at seventeen you don't realize how big a deal it is. But it was a really big deal. They were very open-ended assignments. One was about the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. I took some pictures of churches around where I lived. He was just really giving me a chance, because I was not very good and they didn't use any of my photos.

But then in January of 1977, he hired me to go to Washington, D.C. and assist two *Time* magazine photographers covering Jimmy Carter's inaugural. It was phenomenal. I guess I flew down. I have no recollection of how I got there. But they put me up in a hotel and I was working with two iconic photographers—I didn't realize at the time who they were—this guy Ralph Morse and this other person, Carl Mydans. Carl Mydans was a Farm Security Administration photographer. I didn't know that at the time. He's also the photographer who has the most famous photograph of Douglas MacArthur walking in the water in the Philippines. Ralph Morse—he'd shot a lot of sports for *Sports Illustrated*.³ I think he has a bunch of shots of Mohammed Ali.

I assisted them. They gave me this huge lens. It was an 800 millimeter mirror lens. The optics were just awful. It was an 800 millimeter mirror lens and they had me on a scaffolding to shoot the inaugural, to shoot Carter getting sworn in. Somewhere I probably have

³ <http://time.com/3623776/ralph-morse-photographer-spotlight/>

some of the slides. They're awful because with the mirror lens in general you have to be tack on with the focus. Otherwise, it's really soft. And these pictures are all pretty soft. I don't know if they could have been sharper, or if it was the lens itself. But it was really cool to be on the stand with all these photographers. I was eighteen.

I also had a camera with probably a wide-angle lens on it, or something like that. I was walking around and there was a guy sitting, holding a Georgia flag because Jimmy Carter was from Georgia. He was in a wheelchair. The Georgia flag had, at that time, the stars and bars of the Confederate flag. That picture ended up making it into the magazine. So it was really cool. I had a picture in *Time* magazine! It was funny, because a few people asked me how I understood the metaphor of George Wallace being in a wheelchair. And it's like, no, I just took the picture.

So John Durniak was really, really essential in my growth as a photographer, in giving me the confidence to think that what I was shooting was good. And it *wasn't* that good, but he had the vision and the heart to say that I should try. It was one of these things. He was a family friend. So much of what happens, I think, is the luck of who you are, and where you grow up, and who you meet, and as they say, what elevator you are in, so to speak.

The people in my youth group were all going to Israel. They were mostly a year older than me. So I went to Israel for a half a year. I convinced the counselors at the community college near us, Rockland Community College, to let me get college credit for what I was going to do in Israel. And they didn't have an international program then. Now they have a phenomenal international program. I was probably the first international student they had. We studied

Hebrew, so I got credit for Hebrew. But they gave me credit for sociology of kibbutz, for just being there. I didn't have to write anything. Anyway, those were my first college credits.

Film School at New York University and SUNY Purchase

Then I applied to NYU as a liberal arts undergraduate and got in. There wasn't a photography degree but there was a photography department within the film school. So I went to them with the work I had. Once again, I can't believe with what I had, they let me do this. But they let me take photography classes, even though I was a liberal arts student and even though generally you didn't cross over. I got to meet a bunch of really amazing photographers and teachers there that had a major effect on my life.

I didn't know until about January that there was a darkroom in the department, so I built a darkroom in my apartment. I lived way up in Washington Heights, which is near the George Washington Bridge, in a two-bedroom apartment with five other people. We had this hall closet that had no ventilation and I turned it into a darkroom. And then one day I'm going to class and I turn around and I see that there's a darkroom, a really nice darkroom there.

After that I went to the State University of New York at Purchase and I studied art there. I got in with my photography portfolio, but I studied drawing and sculpture. One of the teachers I had there was John Cohen. He was actually a musician too. He was one of the New Lost City Ramblers, which is this old-timey music. And he's Uncle John, from the song Uncle John's Band, from the Grateful Dead.⁴ But he was also a *Life* magazine photographer

⁴[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Cohen_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Cohen_(musician))

and, among other things, he photographed indigenous cultures in Peru and stuff like that. I took a class from him. I took a bunch of other photography classes.

It was really important to start trying to figure out what my photography was about. The first year at NYU my technique increased in terms of technical knowledge, being able to make a good print and things like that, but I had no idea what my pictures were about. At Purchase, I started getting this sense that lines and geometry and patterns were appealing to me. It had a long time yet to really develop, but it was the first inkling. The pictures that were successful that I did there were because of that. That was really, really essential.

After I went to Purchase, I went to Israel for about a year and a half. Then I came back and then I applied to the film school at NYU. They still didn't have a photography major. I think the year after I graduated, they initiated a photo major. But it was great. I think it might have even been in some ways more exciting than it would be now because I got in and there were seven of us who were, for all intents and purposes, photo majors within the film school. The film school is a really prestigious and famous film school. I kind of wish I had taken more advantage of learning about film. You had to take some film classes. I had to take screenwriting and film history and things like that, but almost all my production credits were in photography. It was a chance for me to start developing what mattered to me in terms of how to make images.

The faculty there was really great. I'm still in contact with Professor Tom Drysdale, who was really essential to helping me push where I was and trying to get to someplace else. I was living about a block from the photo department,

on Washington Place, right off of Washington Square Park. I also did work study there. I worked in what we called The Cage, where you give people equipment when they were going into the darkroom. All of us were doing it. The seven of us were working there and like living there. It was really awesome. I'm still in contact with a number of those folks. It really allowed me to continue to develop.

But probably the most essential thing I did was the fall semester of my senior year, I did an internship with this guy named Stephen Shames.⁵ He was a photojournalist. He did a lot of work for *Parade*. He did a lot of really meaningful documentary projects. And he still is. He's known in the photography world. He's totally dedicated to the projects he's working on and the people he's photographing. I worked mostly as a printer for him. I would print his stuff. He had a darkroom in the Twenties, off of Fifth Avenue. But I went on a couple of shoots with him too. I remember we shot one where we went and photographed one of the Guardian Angels—those guys who go on the subway with the berets—they had just made a big splash and there was a lot of animosity towards them, thinking that they were vigilantes and stuff. So we did an assignment photographing them. It was really important because I understood how committed he was to his projects and I also saw a bit of his business side, with how you invoice people, and assigning rights and all that kind of stuff. I didn't learn any of that in school. I wonder if they do that now because they have a photography department. But back then, I didn't learn anything about the business world. And after I left school I had to figure out a way to make a living.

⁵ <http://stephenshames.com/>

I just loved it. I really liked going to school at NYU. It was a lot of work. I took computer programming; I took physics; I took a bunch of other stuff. But while a lot of my other friends were up studying for their organic chemistry final, I was up cutting mattes for my portfolios. But I loved it. I had such a good time. I think the best thing that can happen in a school like that, and it did for me, is when you have other students—and there were some, not a lot—who are able to give positive critiques of your work, but honest critiques. You have to be able to be open to hear it, too. To be a photographer you don't have to go to school; to be a photojournalist you don't have to go to school. But that time to develop who you are is really essential.

And then also, at NYU, at least, and I think most places, the photography classes are art classes. So if you put your work on the wall, you need to be willing to talk about it and defend it. I was terrified of public speaking, I mean, beyond what you can imagine. So it really helped me in that way. I think interacting with people is at least 50 percent of what allows you to get a good picture, in what I do. So much is not the actual taking of the picture. I think NYU really helped with that.

I also grew up. I took basically two years off school in between to go to Israel, so when I was graduating from school I was almost twenty-four. So my last two years, when I was at NYU, I was twenty-three and twenty-four. I was in such a different place than I was when I was twenty or twenty-one. So I think getting older, too, was a really good thing for me.

How do you encourage someone to grow, but not want them to do what you do? That's what makes a great teacher. When I taught later at Cabrillo College, the way I did it

(which may or may not have been successful), was if people were saying things about other people's work and it wasn't useful because it was too complimentary, I would tell them to stop. Also, in my class when you were critiquing someone else's work, you couldn't use the words *nice* or *good* because that's useless. I would tell my students that if they want to get those kinds of critiques, their friends will do that and your family will do that. But if you want to get better—My experience with the students who cared about my class at Cabrillo was that they all wanted to get better. Sometimes it's a little hard when you bring in your work and you have it on the wall and everyone is not going wild about it.

Inspired by Edward Hopper

Edward Hopper worked in Nyack, New York, which is very close to where I grew up. The part of Edward Hopper that really resonates with me is the way he captures light. Partly, with him it's the times of day he was painting. They were usually either early morning or late afternoon, the golden hours, as we call them in photography. His attention to how light works appealed to me, and the scale of people in the spaces. They were really big spaces, much more lonely than I think my photographs are, but that kind of relationship between the people and the place. His paintings, while they are universal, they are very space specific and location specific, and I really like that about them. They are the kind of paintings that make you want to hear more about the story of the person involved. And I had work at school that was much more along those lines, that had that kind of dusk and these really saturated colors. At one point, I thought that was the direction I was going to go in. They didn't have anything to do with

geometrics, or lines, or photojournalism. They were just kind of documents about specific places in specific light. So I think that's the effect that he had on me. [Plate 2] We don't have too many original ideas. We just take what we've seen and take it a little further, hopefully.

Moving to Santa Cruz, California

I graduated from NYU. I knew that I didn't want to stay in New York City. I had no idea what I was going to do. I knew I wanted to be a photographer, but I had no idea what that even meant or entailed, or how I was going to do it. New York City was too noisy and crowded. It was insane! My career would have been very different if I had stayed in New York. And who knows if I would have been able to get a job as a photographer. There are a million photographers there.

Both my brothers also graduated from SUNY Purchase, where I went for a year. And my brother, Jon, the middle brother, had just graduated also. He's two years younger than me and I took two years off, so we graduated at the same time. I had that apartment near Washington Square Park. I traded him my apartment for his little 1974 Subaru and his sleeping bag. And this car was so small—I can't even believe it. It was the size of one of these tables. It was so small.

My good friend Cary—his name is now Cary Sunberg; back then it was Cary Goldberg—lived a few houses away from me, from when I was seven. He was in the Hashomer movement with me. He had just graduated from Goddard College. It took him two extra years also, because we were the same age. He didn't know what he wanted to do either, but he did have a college girlfriend who lived in Santa Cruz.

So we loaded all our stuff, with the exception of our records, I think, into the Subaru. And we just took off. We had friends who we saw. But other than that, we had the road atlas and we only stayed on the little gray roads. When we'd get to an intersection, we'd look at the atlas and we'd decide which way we were going to turn. We did this for the whole summer. We lived really cheap. We would look at about two o'clock in the afternoon and figure out where the closest county park that we could camp in for a couple of dollars was. It was phenomenal. We had no idea where we were going or how long we were going to be traveling.

In Nevada, the car started breaking down. At that point, no one had ever heard of Subarus in the United States. It was 1982. So the car starts having problems and the mechanics that we'd see would think they'd fixed it, but it would go for a little and break down again. The last breakdown that we had where they fixed the car was in Tonopah, Nevada. The car stalled at a rise. We'd been going all the way through Nevada. There's nothing out there. We went up from a place called Caliente, north, and there's no towns. It's just like wilderness. It's beautiful. We came west and the car died at the top of a ridge. We coasted down eleven miles, downhill, and where the car stopped it was the entrance and exit of a military base. When the car stopped, a shift was letting out. So all these cars were coming out and we hitched a ride to town. It was the only hotel we stayed in the whole trip. It was some casino or something. We knew we were going to come to Santa Cruz because his old girlfriend, who is now his wife, lived here. We sped through Yosemite. We didn't stop. They fixed the car, but we didn't think it was going to last very long. So we drove through California and we came to Santa Cruz. She



Inspired by Edward Hopper. [Plate 2]

worked at the Saturn Café. So we came to the Saturn Café. Eventually, she and he were partners at the Saturn, too.

We got here in August or September of 1982. I found a house that had a darkroom in it. It was way out between La Selva Beach and Watsonville, in the middle of strawberry fields. It was really cool in some ways and the house was really nice. When I was going to school in New York and going to the food co-op, anyone with long hair I'd feel an affinity for. There just weren't people there that felt like me. I got here and *everyone* is like me!

But I only lived there for a few months because it was in the middle of strawberry fields that they were spraying. Every couple of mornings we'd wake up and the house would be filled with the spray from the airplanes. It was terrible. But there was a darkroom in the house. I had a portfolio, such as it was. It didn't have much of a direction. But I took it around to every art director and magazine editor and advertising agency that I could find. Some of them gave me work, a little work, not a lot. I was really poor. I was living on the edge. But because of my family, I never felt like I was going to starve. It's very different than if you don't have the money for the rent and you don't have anyone who is going to help you out. I still had the Subaru and the tires were just totally bald and I was skidding around on San Andreas Road. And my brother, Jon, who had gotten a job as a stagehand already, sent me a fifty-dollar check with a note that said, "Live a little. Buy a tire."

A few people gave me chances. Jeffrey Whitmore, the editor at *Monterey Life* was amazing. He was so nice to me. And a designer named Andra Rudolph, who was in town, gave me some work. Then I started getting work at the local independent papers. After three or four

months of living out in the strawberry fields, I moved. I found a really cool room in a communal house on East Cliff, which was called the Roadhouse, which was later knocked down. It was great.⁶ There were like fifteen people who lived there and we played music every night. It was like, oh, this is my fantasy: I live in a communal house and we play folk music and we do all sorts of stuff. And we live across the street from the Monterey Bay. It was really amazing that I got that room in that house.

But I had to rent a darkroom because the darkroom at the other house wasn't mine anymore. The Ley family, who owned Santa Cruz Lumber—they owned this building on Pacific Avenue. It was next to the Cooper House. It was called the Neary Building. I think it's where Artisan's is now. It all got knocked down; it all fell down during the earthquake. They had a big darkroom space and you could rent darkrooms. There were probably six or eight darkrooms in this one place. I don't know how it ever came to be or happen. So I rented a darkroom there and lived in this house on East Cliff. And I would do stuff for the *Santa Cruz Express*, and the *Phoenix*—whoever would give me work. I was losing money on every job because at that point they were paying us, I think, ten dollars a photo. I was paying for my own film. I was paying for my own mileage. I was paying for my darkroom rental and the photo paper. You're losing money on every single photo and not making it up in volume. But it was really great.

And then, I ended up getting some work from the *Los Angeles Times*. I did some freelance assignments for them when they had assignments up in Santa Cruz, and also for the *Mercury News*, which at that point had an amazing

⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasure_Point_roadhouse

photo staff. David Yarnold was the photo editor. He later ended up becoming the editor. They must have had twenty-two photographers and they were sending photographers around the world and doing investigative journalism.

It was a really a great time in terms of journalism.

And my old friend, John Durniak, introduced me to Jim Dooley, who was the photo editor at the *LA Times*. They started giving me some freelance work. It still wasn't really well paying but I was starting to sort of make a living. I would shoot assignments for the *LA Times*, like covering the Cabrillo Music Festival. Or there was a period when the police were beating up homeless people in Santa Cruz, so I was doing a story about that. Things like that. And some of the stuff for the *Mercury* was just, if something happened and I saw it—I'd have my camera with me—and I'd sell it to them. I did that in New York too, actually. If I would see things, a fire or something, I would go in and take pictures. Then you'd go to the *New York Post*, or the *Daily News*, or occasionally the *New York Times*, and you'd bring them your film and they'd develop it, and then they'd look at the pictures and decide if they were going to buy them.

But at this time, I was definitely not making ends meet. So I was working at Webber's Camera, which was this camera store downtown on Pacific Avenue, right next to my darkroom owned by this German man named Klaus Meyerhof. I was just trying to survive.

Then I stopped working at the camera store. I was still doing photo assignments. I had met Paula Marcus, who is now the rabbi at Temple Beth El, playing music. We played music at East Cliff. She lived in a communal house on Chanticleer Avenue. There was a guy named Franco in our house and there was a woman named Margann in

their house. They had both lived on the Farm Commune together. So our houses started playing music together. I knew Paula also from the synagogue. They hired me as a temple school teacher. I needed to do any job I could but I was terrible. She was running the preschool at that time. I think Jackie Tuttle was the principal and she hired me. God bless her soul. And then Paula was the Hillel director at UC Santa Cruz. It wasn't official Hillel yet but it was the Jewish Students Coalition. She wanted to work more at the Temple, I think. She wanted to do Hillel part time and wanted to split the job with me. So she asked me and I said yes. So I was doing the Hillel job half the time and doing photography half the time. I did that for a year. I did it with Karen Shira Belford the second year I did it.

And then I met my wife, Kathy Cytron. She was the program director at Berkeley Hillel. We would meet in these regional meetings. Shortly after we got together, I had decided I'm going to try and be a photographer, and she applied for the job here at Hillel. It was more a full-time job with benefits and stuff like that. She got that. That's how she moved here.

But right after I did that, there was an opening at UC Santa Cruz as a photographer. It wasn't much photography. It was mostly making slides for science classes because there was no Internet and no digital anything. These science lecturers would make charts and diagrams that we would then photograph and turn into slides for them. That was the majority of what I was doing for a while. I loved working up here at UCSC. The photo department was in the Communications Building. So I did that for a year. We were living in Bonny Doon at the time, so it was an easy drive down to UCSC.

Staff Photographer at the *Valley Press/Scotts Valley Banner*

Then I heard about an opening for a photographer at the *Valley Press* and *Scotts Valley Banner*. They were the same weekly, but one was for the San Lorenzo Valley and the other was for Scotts Valley. Their office was in Felton. And they wanted, I think it was about 75 percent time, photographer. So I applied for it and I got that. I left UCSC. I went and did that. That was really phenomenal. I was shooting sports and portraits and stuff I had never shot before. I grew so much as a photographer. I never could have gotten the job at the *Sentinel* later on if I hadn't done this. It was really amazing. And the staff was really great. I think they had like four reporters, as many as the *Sentinel* has now. No, the *Sentinel* has a few more than four, but not many. I worked with Bob Linneman, who ended up working at the *Sentinel*; Terri Morgan, who I ended up writing a couple of books with.⁷ Judy Brenis, who is a member of the Temple that I know. Mike Lee, who was the public relations person for Dominican Hospital for a while. It was a great staff. It was really, really fun. It's not the same as working on a daily deadline, but working a deadline and working at a newspaper is great. When there's a fire or an accident or something big happens, or even a parade—you have this responsibility to do a good job to cover it. And I learned all of that. But I especially learned how to shoot sports. That was the thing I learned that I had no idea how to do at all.

⁷See Terri Morgan and Shmuel Thaler, *Photography: Take Your Best Shot* (Lerner Communications Company, Minneapolis, 1991); Terri Morgan and Shmuel Thaler, *Capturing Childhood Memories: The Complete Photography Guide for Parents* (Berkeley Books, New York, 1996).

The Democratic National Convention in San Francisco

Now, shortly before this, probably through my father, I was able to figure out a way to get a credential to get into the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in 1984. I got a day rate from the *Mercury News*, and a day rate from *Time* magazine, which John Durniak was still at. They both knew I was working for both of them. It was a very small day rate but they were going to pay me more if I got pictures. So I was just walking around. It wasn't an all-access credential, where I could go backstage, but it was phenomenal. In 1976, I had been to the Democratic National Convention, which was in Madison Square Garden in New York, but I wasn't taking pictures. So I knew kind of what the scene was like. It was wonderful. In 1984, there was a lot of turmoil because Jesse Jackson had run and a lot of people were optimistic that he was actually going to have a role in the party. It was a disastrous election for the Democrats. Walter Mondale was the candidate. It was Mondale-Ferraro. *Time* magazine asked me to cover Mario Cuomo's press conference. He was a young guy and he had given the keynote address the night before. And ironically, he had run against my uncle, Ed Koch, and lost the mayoral race against my Uncle Ed five years before this, in New York City.

So I go to the press conference. I am really not well equipped to know how to deal with this situation although, getting back to the Carter Inaugural, when I went, I learned a lot from these guys who I was going to the inaugural parties with. They were just bashing through crowds, not caring how they'd get there. They knew they had to get

where they were going to get the picture. I think I used a little more finesse. But it was a really good lesson. You can't just wait. You need to go and get your picture.

Anyway, so I go to this press conference in the atrium of the Moscone Center in San Francisco. I'm taking pictures of Cuomo. I probably got there late. Now I get every place early if I can. You've got to do research, and be there on time, and get your spot. I don't even remember the beginning but I felt so—I was like, what I am going to get here? All the Associated Press photographers were there. And at the time there was United Press International (UPI): they were there. I'm not going to get anything as good as them. And I didn't have great equipment at the time.

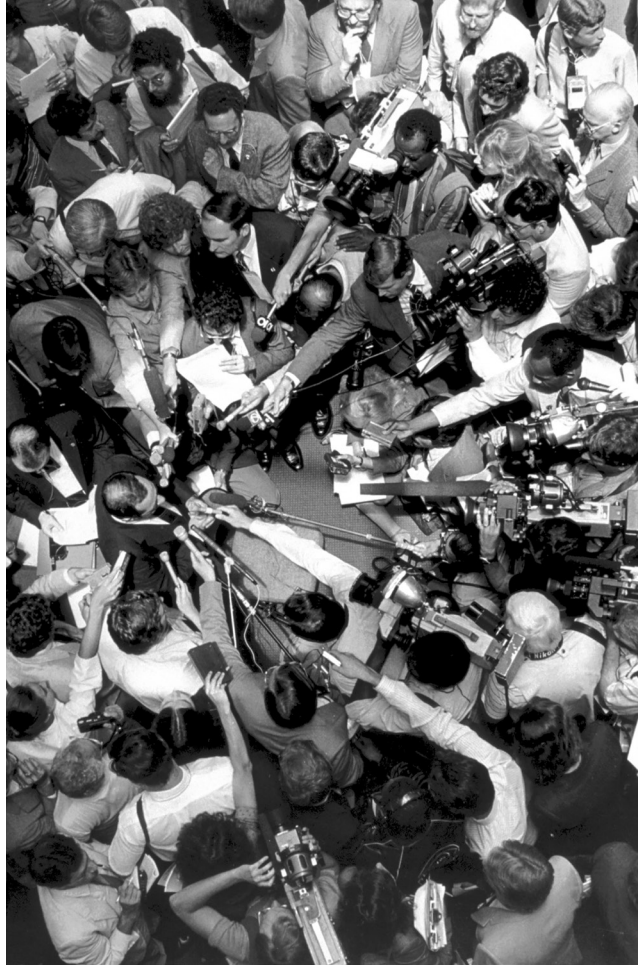
But I look up and I see that there's this kind of skywalk around the atrium. I think, oh, that looks cool. So I go up the stairs. I get up to the top and I'm looking down on it and the whole thing is like this geometric design. All these TV stations had these boom mikes. It was this seminal moment where these things I had been thinking about when I was going to school—how geometry works and ambiguous space and patterns—it was all there. It was all right down there. It's still one of my favorite pictures. And then, the next day the *Mercury* ran it as a three-column vertical. Like up the whole page! It was a huge thing. And I won a photo contest with it, and it's been on the cover of books, and people continually ask me about it. It was this moment where I was like, wow, I am seeing the world in this way and I can actually photograph to represent how I'm seeing it. It was something different. [Plate 3]

I couldn't figure out how I could do that in general, because it seemed very specific to that situation. But then when I was at the *Valley Press* I was assigned to

take a picture of this guy, Andre Lacouture, who had become the Scotts Valley Superintendent of Schools. I met him at Brook Knoll Elementary School for a portrait. I was trying to decide what I was going to do. Now, at this point in my career, if people know who I am they trust me, that I'm not going to make them look bad, and if I have an idea we can go with it. But if you don't know what someone's doing as a photographer, you don't know if you should trust them or not.

But he went with me, with my idea for a photo. [Plate 4] We went under a play structure. He went under it with me. And I was lying on the ground with a flash. We had all these kids pile on top of the play structure. The lines of the play structure became the pattern and the structure of the photograph itself. That photograph made me think, oh! It was really successful and it really worked. The context told you he was involved with education. And he's wearing a suit, so we know he's an administrator. It all worked together. I think what came of that for me is knowing that you might not be able to get a great picture from everything, but one of the important skills of being a photographer is to be a problem solver. How am I going to communicate this story in a way that's informative and is also interesting?

So I had that moment there where it was like, okay, I need to commit myself to really thinking hard about how to do this. Things aren't just going to come and appear in front of you. It's walking and finding a different angle, or being creative with your perspective or your viewpoint. I remember thinking while I was taking the picture: this is different, although since it wasn't digital, I didn't actually see it until I got back to the darkroom. Now you would look at it and go, oh, that's great. But back then, you didn't



Mario Cuomo's Press Conference at the Democratic National Convention, 1984 [Plate 3]

know what everyone's expressions were in the photo. I think as photographers it's really important that we know how to previsualize what we're shooting, in terms of how it's going to look. I knew it was going to run in black and white, so is it graphic enough to run in black and white? But I remember being there, lying on the ground at Brook Knoll playground thinking okay, I think I took another step in trying to figure out how to do what I'm doing.

Photographers who work on daily newspapers are different than any other photographers. There are better sports photographers than me; and there are better news photographers than me; and there are better food photographers than me; and there are better portrait photographers than me. But there's not that many people who can do all these things well. Like I said, I had never shot sports before. I love sports but I'd never really shot it before. I'm not a great sports photographer but I'm a decent sports photographer now. Now I feel pretty secure about what I do.

Working with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Morocco

Another thing that happened, there's an organization called the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. They're out of New York and they help provide social services for Jewish communities around the world. Their mission might have changed now because there are not as many of these Jewish communities. But one of these communities they served was the Moroccan Jewish community. So this was in 1984 or 1985, also, around that same time. Somehow I got connected with them

and they hired me to go to Morocco for three weeks to photograph the Moroccan Jewish community.

Once again, I don't think I made very much money. But I didn't care. They put me up in hotels and I was with another American who was in charge of the project. He was probably their communications director, Nathan Friedman. So they hired me to go do this project. Originally there were around 300,000 Jews in Morocco, before the state of Israel was established. Back in 1985, there were 30,000 Jews. But they still lived in the same way Jews had lived in Morocco for a very long time. So they wanted to create a historical archive of what the Moroccan Jewish community was like.

We went to synagogues and cemeteries and community centers and a lot of old age homes in Casablanca, Marrakech, Fes, Meknès, and a Jewish summer camp in the Atlas Mountains. And met some businessmen who (once again they were all businessmen, no women) were Jews. The Jewish community was really coming to an end, for a lot of reasons. One was at the time, and it may be the same now, but at the time all the universities were Islamic universities in Morocco. So Jews couldn't go to them. If they spoke French, they would go to the university either in France or in Canada, and then a lot of them stayed. And then also the Moroccan king at the time, his father had been raised with a Jew. When the king's father died, he commanded that he allow the Jews to live in peace and protect them in Morocco. But that king was getting old, so the next generation was not necessarily going to have that protection. I think that was another reason for the immediacy of doing the project. [Plate 5]

There were way more Jews in old age homes than there were young Jews running businesses. So it was kind of like



Andre Lacouture [Plate 4]



Jewish Girls in Morocco [Plate 5]

a *National Geographic* assignment, you know, going to all of these places and just taking pictures of all sorts of really cool stuff, and really interesting stuff, and exotic. The colors. I think one of the takeaways I had from that was allowing yourself to spend time doing a project obviously will create better photos. It's partially the more photos you take, the more chance you're going to get good photos. I do believe that. But just being someplace and looking and observing and not worrying about how much the film was costing. I mean, for me at the time, compared to what I shoot now—I would be shooting so much more now because it's digital. But in the three weeks I probably shot maybe seventy rolls of film. It was all slide film, so the exposure had to be really exact. Some of it was pretty dark. But the pictures are gorgeous because some of it's Kodachrome 64 and it's absolutely beautiful. Those slides are still beautiful.

I was still a pretty timid sort. But we would walk in these places and I'd just start taking pictures. You couldn't do that here and I wouldn't do it now. I just walked in. But the people who were showing us around were people who were involved in the Joint Distribution Committee stuff in Morocco, that all these people knew. If people did look at us, or me, they would look over and smile. I never had anything in that situation where people were trying to not have their picture taken. And my guess is, especially in the old age homes and stuff, no one was coming to visit these people.

Their purpose was to create a videotape that is in the archive. They made a video of the Moroccan Jewish community, kind of subtly as a fundraising tool to show what they do, using the photos. But then I approached the Hebrew Union College in New York, which has a

museum in the Village, to see if they would be interested in an exhibit. They said great. They got the slides and made the prints. It was a pretty big exhibit. It must have had fifty or sixty pictures in it.⁸ It was important for me, too. I was thinking, wow, I have an exhibit in a museum. It was pretty cool. I had an opening.

Part-Time Staff Photographer at the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*

I was working at the *Valley Press* and the *Scotts Valley Banner* three-quarters time. The Watsonville *Register-Pajaronian* was opening a Santa Cruz office. They were trying to expand, so they needed a photographer for just that office, a full-time photographer. The Santa Cruz editor was Guy Lasnier, who used to work at UCSC, and he worked at the *Sentinel* for many years. Guy had a photographer named Chip Scheuer and myself audition. We each worked one day for him. He said it was so tough to decide. He decided to hire Chip. As much as I am so grateful for this happening now, at the time I was destroyed. There are never newspaper photographer jobs. And I didn't get it.

But a week later Bill Lovejoy called me. We had known each other a little from covering events in the San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley. He had been at the *Sentinel* since he was in high school. My guess is Bill started at the *Sentinel* in the sixties. This was 1987, so he had already been there quite a while, and he was going to be there a while yet. The *Sentinel* had been owned by the McPherson family for many years. It was the longest single family

⁸ This exhibit took place April 21 to August 12, 1988 at the Joseph Gallery, Hebrew Union College in New York.

owned newspaper in the state of California. It had been owned basically by the same family since 1865. And then in 1982 it got bought by Ottaway Newspapers, which is a small company out of Middletown, New York that owned a bunch of small and medium-sized daily newspapers, community newspapers. Before that, the *Sentinel* didn't publish on Saturdays. It wasn't color. It was a PM paper.

Ottaway changed all that. They bought a new press, made it color. It was seven days a week. It was a morning paper. The original photography at the *Sentinel*, until sometime in the sixties, I guess, or fifties, was contracted out with Ed Webber, whose collection is at Covelo and Covelo.⁹ They would contract, so they didn't have a photographer. The first staff photographer hired was Pete Amos. Pete worked there from, my guess is the late 1950s, early 1960s, until about 1985. Bill started. And then, I think in 1979, Dan Coyro started work at the paper.

When Pete retired, they didn't actually replace him. Dan and Bill did the photography. But then when they went to seven days a week in 1987, they got money to hire a part-time photographer. I was just totally the right person in the right place at the right time. It was only hiring me to work Saturdays and vacation relief, which was about one-third time overall, because they each had four weeks of vacation. Bill, I guess had seen that I was able to do some sports, which is a big deal to him, and I think it's a pretty good judge of how you can handle a fluid situation. He had

⁹Ed Webber contracted as Covello and Covello Photography with the *Sentinel* from 1938-1969. He sold his business to Vester and Esther Dick in 1960. UCSC's Special Collections has a few images from Vester Dick but there are thousands of historical images available in the Covello and Covello/Vester Dick Stock Collection at <http://www.covellocovello.com/gallery/index.php?category/historical/>

me show him my work and then he offered me that job. I never would have taken that job, or even looked at it, had I gotten the job at the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*. The best thing Guy Lasnier ever did for me was not hire me, absolutely 100 percent. So I gave notice at the *Valley Press*. I probably didn't take any time off. I started at the *Sentinel* on July 27, 1987. It's my daughter's birthday. She was born after that but that's the only reason I know that it's July 27.

It was really intimidating. I was sort of ready for it but I was not nearly at the level that one would preferably be to be a daily newspaper photographer. It's really, really hard, and it's stressful, and there's a lot to do. I remember the black and white film you developed on your own in cans in the darkroom at the *Sentinel*. You would know, okay, I can develop four at a time, so I probably don't want to shoot more than four rolls of film, if I can help it. We also had a color slide developing machine. We'd shoot black and white negatives and color slide film at that time. The color slide development machine could develop nine rolls of film, so you could shoot nine rolls of color. At the time, we would shoot all the Forty-Niner games and the Raider games and you could shoot nine rolls of 36 exposures and put them all in the machine.

I remember the first time Bill showed me how to work this machine—which within probably a week after I started working there was like, this is simple—but I remember just freaking out, being so intimidated by the whole thing. Bill also told me that he had a friend who really wanted a full-time job, who he really liked and he grew up here, (I actually met him later) named Roy Musitelli, and if there was going to be a full-time job it was going to be Roy's.

I think within the first two years of being at the *Sentinel*—by spring of 1989, I won an award at the Associated Press News Executives Council, which is one of the contests we submit photos and articles and pages to every year—for this photo of the County Coroner, ‘Doc’ [Richard] Mason. It’s him posing with a body in the morgue but there’s just the foot of the corpse sticking out of the blanket, with a toe tag on it. And it won this contest, so it was really cool. Once again, it was this aha moment: Maybe other people will actually appreciate this.

I remember coming back a lot of times from assignments, and trying to get my really cool groovy pictures with lines and stuff. And not coming back with a pretty standard, safe picture, which was not that smart. The people in the newsroom, the editors, looked at them and did not understand what they were seeing because the photos didn’t communicate the story. I thought it looked cool. I was bringing that artistic sensibility. So I had a long period of growth to figure out how to do that better. If it’s to go with a story in the newspaper, you can’t just take pictures that look cool. You have to take pictures that communicate what the story is about. It’s photo-journalism. It’s journalism through photos. There are photos we run that we call freestanding pictures, feature photos. They can just be something cool looking.

And then people got used to me. Dan and Bill and I were this trio—very quirky, very different people in a department. So, little by little, I felt like I was kind of figuring out what I was doing there. I was still doing freelance photography because I was only working Saturdays and vacation relief. I was also still looking to see if there were other full-time newspaper jobs

around. But I still probably wouldn’t have been ready for it because my portfolio still was not at the level where, if I were looking at a portfolio now and wanted to see something good, it was not at that level.

The Loma Prieta Earthquake

Then the Loma Prieta Earthquake happened on October 17, 1989. I had to work full time for a while because we were the news source for the county. It was absolutely essential. It was kind of wild because there was no digital or online.

I was downtown and I was still the new kid at the *Sentinel* who was working part time and would supposedly never get the full-time job. I was in the public library when the earthquake struck. Books were flying across the room. It was pretty insane. When the shaking stopped, of the earthquake itself, I ran out to the *Sentinel* parking lot, which was at the old Sentinel building, now the Cruzio building, where ironically, we are officing again right now. The whole staff knew to come to the parking lot. We needed to cover what was going to be the biggest story of our lives and the biggest story in Santa Cruz possibly ever.

One lesson I learned from this experience was to never not have a camera with me. Because my cameras were at home. We divided up. Dan Coyro and Bill Lovejoy went with reporters downtown, where there was real extensive damage. I went with Guy Lasnier up to the San Lorenzo Valley. But first I had to go get my cameras. I lived on the east side of Santa Cruz at the time and it took a really long time with no traffic lights, and it was shocking to see the devastation. We had heard that people that people were concerned that the dam that

holds Loch Lomond was going to burst. So that was what we were going to look at in the San Lorenzo Valley.

So we went, got my cameras, then drove up to the San Lorenzo Valley, Guy and I, and started seeing all sorts of things that night. We went up to some wineries and saw the destruction there. I heard later there were some other things that sounded really interesting to photograph. There was a dentist working outside in Felton, which we didn't see.

For the next few weeks at least, we were working around the clock. They said, "We need you to work full time." And it was more than full time, dealing with all of the things—the demolition of things like the Cooper House, and we'd go into the mountains and see what was happening there. We'd go down to Watsonville. Every day was an adventure. A lot of the roads were closed. Highway 17 was closed for a while. It was really interesting to have this ability to go where no one else could go. I'd show my press pass and we'd be able to drive to roads that were closed, and houses that were falling down, and things like that. They let us closer. We never went into houses that were falling down.

I remember driving with a guy named Tom Long, who was a reporter at the *Sentinel*—I remember driving with him up Old San Jose Road. We had heard that there were a bunch of houses that had fallen down up there in the mountains near the summit. We were trying to get some sense of what was going on. It was really hard to get in touch with Caltrans [California Department of Transportation] people then. All their people were out working. But we couldn't get in touch with anyone. Tom and I were driving up Old San Jose Road and there's a guy in a Caltrans truck, and we thought, okay, he's not going to talk to us but at least we can find out what's going on

here a little, and find out who we can talk to, and maybe get a phone number. We didn't have cell phones then. We had some radios that we could use downtown to talk to each other. I think I had a pager already. Anyway, we pull off to the side of the road, get out of the car, and we say, "Hi, can we talk to you?" And the guy says, "Yeah." And it ends up he was the main Caltrans supervisor for the entire county! It was just these kind of wonderful experiences and coincidences. I think our job at that point was to really let people what was going on. We learned a lot at the *Sentinel* from this and we were way more prepared when we had the big fires years later.

We drive up and we see this house that was definitely askew and was destroyed, but was still standing. We're trying to figure out: how can we find out about what this is, and this woman comes out in her bathrobe and she starts talking to us about how she was born in that house. She was an older woman and her dad built the house a year before the San Francisco Earthquake, in 1906. He was in San Francisco during the earthquake. He walked home from San Francisco. It took him about five days. But from that house they could see the glow of the fire from San Francisco. Her name was Pearl Sears Lake.¹⁰ So I got one of my better pictures from the earthquake, of her in front of her house. [Plate 6]

You know, I think one of the things that was really interesting about the earthquake, at least for me personally, was that it helped me understand how important what we do as journalists is: creating this historic record of that event. There were a number of photographers around, but

¹⁰ See 5:04 p.m. *The Great Quake of 1989: A Pictorial of the Devastation in Santa Cruz County*. (Santa Cruz Sentinel Publishers, 1989). p. 78.



Pearl Sears Lake by her house damaged in the Loma Prieta Earthquake [Plate 6]

people will be looking back at five or six photographers' pictures to see what the Loma Prieta Earthquake was like in Santa Cruz County. We also have this ability to help people understand what is going on, by being kind of the bucket that all the information is in. It's much easier now because it's online. Back then, it was really hard. You had to go get a paper. But we published the paper the next day after the earthquake. Our press was damaged, so a few editors, and I think reporters, drove over to San Jose. We were not owned by the *Mercury*, but they, in collegial cooperation, offered to print our paper. We covered the earthquake as our main story for probably a year—every day—when the pavilions went up downtown, and reconstruction, and Vision Santa Cruz—and all these different things.

Shortly after that, in 1990, they got the budget to turn the part-time photographer position into a full-time position. At that point, I think they felt like they really needed to offer the job to me. I had learned so much by then. I had become a much better photographer. I can look at my work from the earthquake and see that I was able to figure out how to get good pictures, and meaningful pictures, and informational pictures better through the process of covering that. So it was this event that kind of forced someone covering it to, I think, get better and learn how to communicate what was going on, be more intentional. I still think I'm getting better. That's one of the great things about photography. You continually improve.

There's this real nice balance of right brain—left brain. Thinking about taking pictures is a problem of how do you tell a story. How are we going to do that: conceptually; in terms of the composition; and in terms of the content? But there's also this sense of responding to what you see

that's really important. I think I tended to do a lot more just responding to what I was seeing before, and not allowing enough of: let's make sure I'm telling the story. The challenge is to not over-think what you are doing. But now it's natural for me, when I'm driving to an assignment, to think what might be there and how it might look, and to start planning for the kind of angles, or the kind of shots I want to get. But you don't want to be stuck in that because a lot of times you get there and it's really different than what you thought. So it's that balance. I think driving around and shooting important stuff every day forced me to do that.

After the earthquake, my wife and I were sleeping in our car because the house we were living in did not feel safe. This was a house we rented on Capitola Road Extension. It was this little cabin. It was very nice. It was in someone's backyard and they were a really pleasant couple to rent from. But the house was old and shook a lot with each aftershock. So we slept in our car. It was easier. I think we slept in the house the first night and then it was like, "Let's just sleep in the car," because then if we had an aftershock we could say, "Okay, it's just an aftershock," and go back to sleep, "Hey, the car is moving."

There's also this challenge. It's this really traumatic time and it's time for me to go away and cover the event, even though we as a couple, or a family, are dealing with this trauma. That's really a challenge. A good friend of mine, Kent Porter, just had that experience.¹¹ He lives up in Santa Rosa and he was one of the great photographers

¹¹<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/7840010-181/chris-smith-kent-porters-fire>

in Santa Rosa covering the recent wildfires.¹² And his wife and son, they understood that he needed to go do this, even though many of their friends and colleagues lost their homes. He was out constantly working on the fires, and hopefully not in too much danger. There's no question. You just need to go and do it.

But I think—and I've heard this from other people too—that the camera becomes a bit of a shield because you're seeing the thing happen in a viewfinder that looks a little bit like a television or a computer monitor. Mostly, you're thinking: oh, I hope the picture is all right. How is the exposure? Those kind of questions. I've been to some really hard situations, but if I look at photographers that I've known that have shot in war zones, or things like that, it seems pretty minor, in a way. There's got to be some emotional toll and I don't know if I can conceptualize for myself what that is. I feel like I'm doing my job and I haven't, luckily, seen too many dead bodies.

It's sometimes hard because you know, when someone's in a car wreck, they don't want to have their picture taken, generally. And there are issues of privacy. My feeling is, you know, it's news. We have the right to cover it. Our tax dollars are spent on firefighters and paramedics and cops and sheriffs and highway patrol officers, so we have the right to see what they're doing. We generally won't run pictures of dead bodies in the newspaper, so that's a consideration. But then again, I also think that in many situations where something might not be usable in the paper, it's better to take the picture and then we can make the decision later. In those situations, I really

¹²<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/10/09/santa-rosa-fire-how-a-sudden-firestorm-obliterated-a-city/>

try and be respectful. I try not to be in people's faces and I certainly don't get in the way of the firefighters.

When we have forest fires, I wear turnouts that protect me from the fire. It was the gift of a friend of mine who is a firefighter. So I look like a firefighter. I have a hard hat and I have goggles and a respirator mask and a jacket and pants and boots. I keep them in my car. You learn this. I have those and wear them because, first of all, it lets the firefighters know that I understand that there's danger and I'm respectful of that and I don't get in their way. Also, if something were to happen to me, it's bright yellow and they'll find me. And it's less likely something is going to happen. And you learn other things. I've seen too many pictures of burning news vans. I always park facing away from the fire and I make sure that it's a place that I'm not going to get trapped in by the fire trucks. But this kind of stuff—except after the earthquake—is a really small percentage part of what I do.

It's an incredible privilege to do what I do. In some ways, I can't really understand how it happened. Santa Cruz is a really special place. I think a lot of people who live here choose to live here because it's such a special place. You could live a lot less expensively in other places, and you could make more money in other places. But the community itself and the natural beauty combine to make this place spectacular. For me, when I came from New York City to here, I came here (and I don't think this is unique to me) and felt like: This is an amazing place. I want to stay here. I think that is true for so many people. You just came here—

And it's a little different now than it was. I think we're losing a little of that, honestly, because a lot of artists can't

afford to live here anymore. I do wonder if I was making that trip now and I was twenty-four years old and I stopped here, whether I would think the same way. I think I would. But I don't know. It was a much sleepier, less trafficked town than it is now. But I'm thankful we still have a very progressive political heart. I have this privilege of creating these images of how we see ourselves. People tell me that they look forward to opening the paper every morning to see what picture it is. I think, you know, trying not to get too swelled a head here, that the pictures I take and the people who see it in the paper, and the 3000 people who see it on Facebook every day, contribute to the sense of who we are. That's a major privilege and it's a major responsibility.

That's why some days it's hard. Some days there's not a great photo for a long time, and I feel like I need to keep doing it, keep driving, or keep walking down the beach further, or whatever it is. Now I usually have one or two assignments, either for sports or news or features or whatever. I'll know I'm going out in some direction, so I'll drive around there. I know the roads of the county really, really well. We put a lot of miles on our cars as *Sentinel* photographers. When I was working full time, it was about 1500 miles a month just in Santa Cruz County. Going from Davenport to Watsonville is a long way. It's not real easy to plan.

But people call me. It's great. People call and say, "Hey, there's whales today!" I probably spend too much time trying to get pictures of the beach and the cliffs, but I love it and the paper doesn't care. They just want nice pictures. I also love taking pictures of field workers. And as long as I make each photo look different—I try to not have the same picture day after day. If I'm in Watsonville, I'll oftentimes

drive out on Beach Road to San Andreas Road, and drive up San Andreas Road and there's tons of beautiful fields there.

A lot of it is just to be aware of where you are and be constantly looking. Just last week I was heading from my house to Trader Joe's in the morning before my shift started. I was doing the shopping. I'm driving down King Street and I see this kid pulling this wagon with two other kids in it. I turn around. I have my cameras with me. I go and ask the parents if it's okay to take the kids' pictures. Then I get this picture. It was one of my favorite pictures that I took in a while.

The Gail Rich Awards

Wallace Baine and I have collaborated on a lot of different things, a lot of different projects, but most notably the Gail Rich Awards. Twenty-two years ago Wallace came to me and said, "I have this idea. How about if we honor some people?" I said, "Okay." And then he goes, "Well, you know, we live in this amazing artistic Eden here, all these artists from different disciplines, and we have patrons of the arts who are amazing, and we have painters and sculptors and poets and writers and photographers and dancers. I have this idea to create a gallery." This was such a compliment. He said, "I want to do this to create a gallery for your photos." He said that in the book, so I'm not just making it up.

I said, "Oh, that's great." Portraits for me are different than any other picture I take for the paper because the reader, or the viewer, understands there was an interaction between the subject and the photographer. Ansel Adams said, "There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer." I think in a portrait there's

actually three. There's the subject, the photographer, and the viewer. I think when it works well, we're all changed by the experience of taking the picture, being in the picture, or seeing the picture. So one of the freedoms that taking portraits allows me, in my way of ethically thinking about things, is I feel like I can change things around and we can conceptualize a little of what the photo is. Because if I'm taking a feature picture of kids pulling a wagon, I will not tell them to do anything. Oftentimes they'll say, "What do you want me to do?" I'll say, "I don't want you to do anything." Now, by being there, the photographer changes the whole situation anyway. But I'm not going to change anything, and I'm not going to move anything around. I'll go to a different angle, or I'll put on a different lens, or choose a different shutter speed, or depth of field, but I'm not going to change anything in the scene itself.

But with a portrait, I feel like we can set—you know, if it's a picture of someone in front of a wall of books, we can choose which books are going to be there, or we can organize it, right? Although a mess is usually good. Sometimes when I'll get to someone's office to take their picture and they'll say, "I cleaned up because you were coming," I'll go, "No!" Because it's the mess, the little details that tell you who the person is, right? We call them environmental portraits.

In any case, with the Gail Rich awards, the first year we did twelve. They're named after Gail Rich, who was a *Sentinel* arts correspondent that Wallace had gone to when he was conceptualizing the idea of these awards and asked for her help in choosing the recipients. Then she passed away before the first awards were published.

I call the people who are the subjects, who are the Gail Rich award winners, and they're all thrilled that they're Gail Rich award winners, although that wasn't the case right in the beginning because they didn't know what it was. But I call them usually significantly before we're going to take the picture so that they can start conceptualizing with me what the picture is. Some people are really good at it and some people are not as good at it. But it allows us to collaborate to create the picture.

Now the Gail Rich awards are a much bigger thing than they were when we first started. I mean, there wasn't a Gail Rich award ceremony at the beginning. The first year we just ran it in the paper and it was really nice. It was a very nice spread, actually, in the arts section. We always did it on the first Sunday of the year and we had this huge spread. I think each one of those twelve photos had its own page. I actually shot them in film with my medium format Bronica. I made these gorgeous prints on fiber-based paper, archival. And then we had to scan the prints that I made. I realized after that that there was no reason to do that anymore, because we were going to lose the advantage of that.

I think about the third year we were doing it, the second or third year, the Arts Council decided they wanted to be involved and help change what it was into something bigger, and they created the Gail Rich Awards ceremony. So now, when I call someone and they've won a Gail Rich award and we tell them, it's a big deal to them. It's a huge deal. But it's funny because the first time I would call people it was 1996, so I had been at the paper for ten years. A lot of people knew who I was but a lot of people didn't. And it was, "Okay, sure. Come take a picture." (flat voice) I think now that people know

me, there is a trust there. I can ask them to do things that they might think won't look good, even though they can't understand how I'm visually seeing the image, the pre-visualization of what it's going to look like. We've always done them in black and white, too. We've just decided to do that and we've never thought about changing.

I've done 152 of these now. It's a lot. There are 190 people in the book, in 147 pictures. Some of them have two or three or four people in them. So one of the pictures I wanted to talk about is the picture of Phil Collins. He's a composer. I had known Phil a little before because he was a *Sentinel* correspondent many years ago. He's a modern classical composer. I was trying to figure out, what photo are we going to get for a composer? There was this lamp that's over the table he works at and it had a torn shade. Just looking at it, this idea of the light bulb as this creative metaphor came to me. And then there's this circle of the lampshade and the lines of the staves of the music. Phil was like, "Okay, this is great. Let's do this." And then there was the light of the lamp, which lit him too. I don't think I've lit any of these images in the last fifteen years. They are all available light. I don't bring in strobes. But it was one of these things where I realized, we can do something that goes beyond just creating a picture that tells a story. This can be a picture that involves metaphor in designing it. And luckily, the subjects when this happens are patient because sometimes it takes a while to make it look right. I think the most important thing, in terms of creating a good photograph, is transforming three-dimensional reality to a two-dimensional frame. That's what I feel like I continue to improve: to realize how space works and

how our eyes see one thing at a time, but a picture sees it all. And the stuff in the background really matters.

This book, *The Creatives Among Us*, came about totally because of the effort of Jana Marcus. A few people have said to me over the years, "You should do a book," some specifically about the Gail Rich awards and some about my photographs in general. But Jana came and said, "Let's do this." She's a very accomplished photographer and publisher in her own right. She put it together and she laid it out. She really did the work to make this happen. I needed to rescan a bunch of the negatives to make the file size big enough. But it's really her work. She did the heavy lift here.

I want to talk about this photo of Keith Greeninger. [Plate 7] He was a friend of mine that I had played music with. I've known Keith for a long, long time. He's an amazing singer-songwriter. He's the guy who made me realize how hard it is to make a living as a musician. He's an incredibly talented guitarist, singer, songwriter, has amazing stage presence. He and his wife have great business sense. And he was still working as a contractor half the year until not that long ago.

I went up to his house in 2003. He was living in Happy Valley at the time. They had this hammock. I said, "Do you guys hang out there?" He just hung out with his kids in the hammock. This portrait of him and his kids that went above and beyond just a picture of him. It says so much about him. He's really involved in environmental causes and stuff like that. I think that that was really a moment that was like, okay, this can work. There are these epiphanies.

And there's this picture in 2000, from the third year of the Gail Rich awards, of Larry Hosford.¹³ [Plate 8] It's the only picture taken outside of Santa Cruz County. He passed away last year. He was a really interesting guy. He lived in Salinas and he would play at the Windjammer every week, down in Rancho Del Mar. A really wonderful musician-storyteller. We were trying to figure out what to do for the photo. I think he's lived a pretty hard life and he has a really gnarled face. We were trying to figure out what to do. His songs kind of make me think about the old hobos and railroads and that kind of thing. Then we went out to the railroad yard in Salinas and as soon as I saw it, I knew. I knew this was the photo we were going to do. I had no doubt that we would.

But then there's other times, like this picture in 2004 of Laurence Bedford, who took over the Rio Theatre. [Plate 9] It's amazing what he's done there. I was trying to figure out what we were going to do because he's sort of a concert promoter, venue producer, whatever. So I took him out in front of the Rio and they had the ticket booth in the background. It was an okay picture and the light was nice, but it just wasn't really working. But then his daughter just went into the booth and kind of put her head in her hands and it transformed the picture to more than just about that. And there's this really nice reflection. I love this picture of Laurence but I'm not sure that it says who he is. But I love the look of it. Once again, I'm really concerned with how it's designed, how the angles work and how the lines go to the corners, and things like that.

¹³<http://www.montereyherald.com/article/NF/20161130/FEATURES/161139979>

Amber Sumrall is a poet and she has this fake bird, a raven? She wanted that in the photo. And from there we worked together—and this is at her house on Glen Canyon Road—using the boards behind there. But she came up with that. [Plate 10]

And then Clifford Henderson and Dixie Cox, who run The Fun Institute—they help with improv and things like that. And they thought of, “Hey, let's go play.” So we worked together and we went to Louden Nelson to the playground to do that. That was really, really fun. Now we're at 2014, so the Gail Rich awards had been going for seventeen years, and people have a sense that if they trust me, I'm going to make them look good. [Plate 11]

I like a lot of them. People often say, “What's your favorite picture?” I have new ones. I have some that seem to stay and last, but there's always new ones, otherwise it would get really boring.

When we did Robert Kelley and Diane Cypher at the Santa Cruz Ballet Theater, they were really involved in helping get the photo together. We talked about what we wanted to do. I did have this idea of creating this forest of legs. So, that took cooperation and making sure there were a bunch of ballerinas there and that kind of thing. [Plate 12]

This next one here—Kirby Scudder. He's an artist. He lives at the Tannery. He's really into cows. I said, “Well, what do you want to do?” He totally came up with the idea. He painted the cows' design on a jacket, and on a background, and on his sunglasses, and his hat—I just had to show up and take a picture. It really is collaboration. [Plate 13]

This one of Harmony Grits is fun. [Plate 14] It's from 1994, a picture of Jim Lewin and Mike McKinley, really great musicians. I had kind of known them, been friendly



Keith Greeninger. [Plate 7]

with them. It's country, bluegrass, singer-songwriter. I thought it had a Western, big sky Montana feel and I was trying to figure out what we were going to do. Jim taught guitar over at Sylvan Music. So I met them there. This picture was taken on the Bay Street side and the light was gorgeous. It had that Western feel to it. And then this guy is walking across the crosswalk, and I don't even know if it has anything to do with the content of the photo, but I love this guy. They're just playing their music, and he's walking, and it just all comes together.

This one of Audrey Stanley [Plate 15] worked out great because this was the Gretl and Hansel set; the winter show was set up on the stage. I think of her as very playful and impish. She was Puck one year in "Midsummer Night's Dream." I love the photo and I love how it looks. But unless you know that they did Gretl and Hansel, you're like, "What is this?" But it's really important for me to look at it and make sure it looks good, how it's designed, and that the lighting is okay.

Most of these people, you can tell what they look like. Not all. There's a few where it's because they have a magnifying glass to their face. Or we did this shot for Chip and he was the stage manager for a Tandy Beal show and I cut him off right at his eyes, so you can't necessarily tell. But I think it's really important to make sure that the pictures stand on their own as photographs. And hopefully they say something about the person.

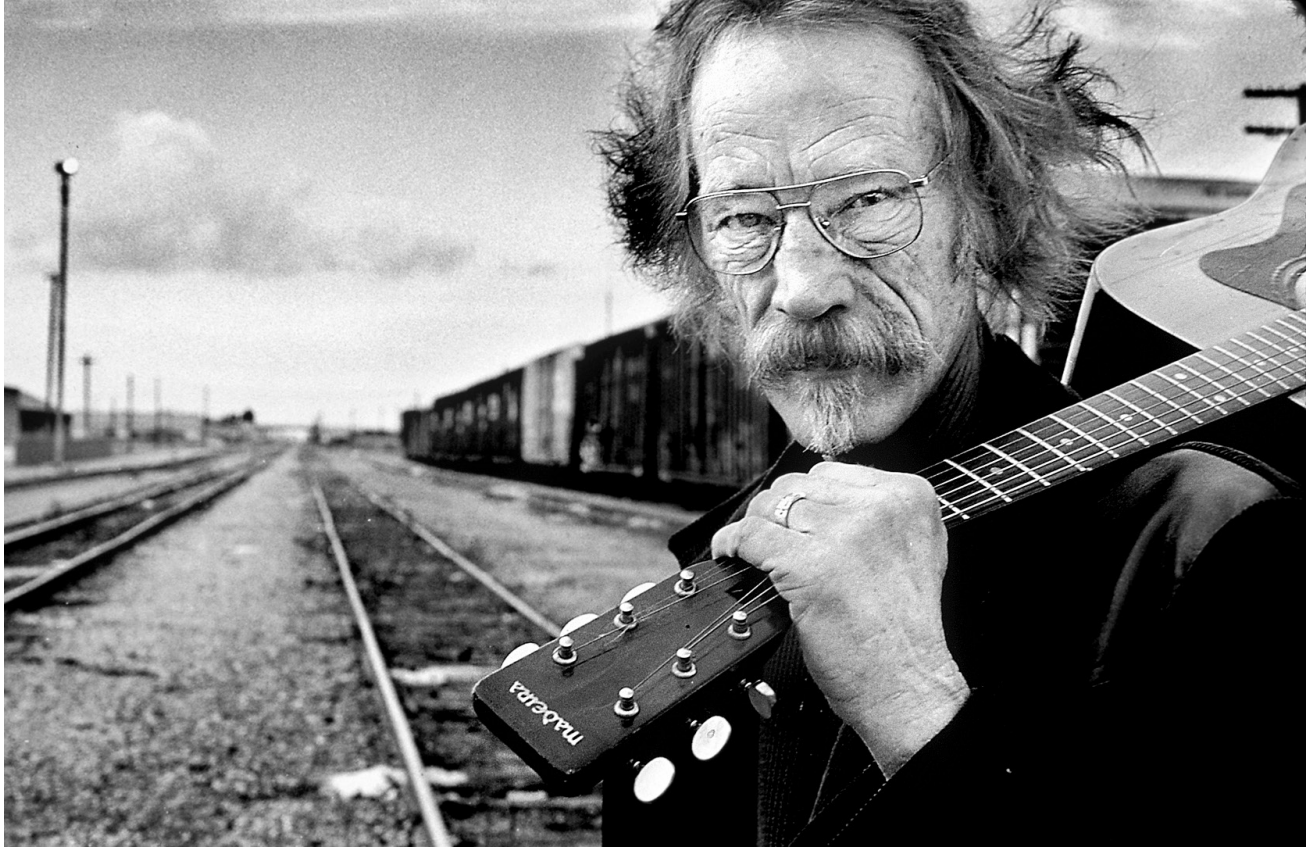
I said to Audrey, "Let's go to the theater." Almost all the people in here—I mean, there's been a few exceptions—but almost all have been incredibly generous and trusting in terms of creating compelling portraits. Obviously, the subjects have a stake in what it turns

out like. And then the other part of this project is what a privilege and a pleasure to hang out with these people for a while. These are all amazing, amazing creative people. That's why we give them the award. But it's really such an honor to hang out with them.

This photo of Neal Coonerty is in Bookshop. [Plate 16] We moved the books to leave a space so we could see Neal through the bookcase. I know that we specifically picked a particular book to be here, but it's out of focus so you can't see it. But this is one of those tricks of using a telephoto lens to get the space to be compressed. It doesn't really look like this. It is close but it's not as close as it looks. It's not lying, but if you shoot with a telephoto lens, space gets compressed. If you shoot with a wide-angle lens, it spreads out. That's just how it is.

Wallace Baine

Wallace and I have a really unique working relationship and friendship. I love him and I think he is a jewel and an amazing writer. Our community is so lucky to have him. He could be writing anywhere. He's that good and he's that insightful. I can't say enough about how much I respect him and enjoy working with him. It's been one of the pleasures of my time at the *Sentinel*. And now, it's very sad. At the end of this month he's retiring. I don't know where that leaves arts coverage in Santa Cruz because he has given voice to so many artists, singers, songwriters, musicians, painters, writers, poets, playwrights, theater companies. He's been the person who has spread the word. I'm very, very sad to see him go. But we're working on some projects together. I would never let that relationship go because it's too valuable.



Larry Hosford [Plate 8]



Laurence Bedford [Plate 9]



Amber Coverdale Sumrall. [Plate 10]



Clifford Henderson and Dixie Cox [Plate 11]

The two of us did three nights of photos and words, produced by John Sandidge, at the Kuumbwa. My part was easy. His part was really hard. Wallace and I sat on the stage and we projected pictures and we talked about them. We're sitting in the dark. And Wallace comes to the podium, and for each one of these three evenings at Kuumbwa, he has written something in particular. I feel like writing is such a different thing than photography. You're laying yourself bare. You're laying your soul bare. You're making yourself really vulnerable. I've always thought this about writers reading at booksigning events or whatever. It seems so nerve-wracking to just lay it all out there. So we did that three times. One was called "A Picture and a Thousand Words."¹⁴ Then we started getting a little more irreverent, making fun of ourselves a lot. Anyway, I really couldn't say enough nice things about Wallace.

Other Colleagues at the *Sentinel*

I also worked with for many years with Peggy Townsend. She's a great writer. She's retired, mostly, and she's writing now. She's working on novels. We would do some amazing, amazing projects together. She had this vision: our job with the paper was to do these projects to bring light where there's darkness. We found a young boxer, who was named Martín, down in Watsonville. He was sixteen or seventeen and he'd wake up every morning and put in his ten-mile run before he went to Watsonville High School. And in the middle of this courtyard of the barrio he had a punching bag. So we followed him for a while, what his dreams were, things like that. We did all

¹⁴This event took place November 12, 2010 at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz.

sorts of projects. Some of them were a more quiet portrait of someone. She has such a great sense of what makes a good story and how to write a good story. Her writing puts you there through the details and the pacing of it.

We did another one where we followed a woman—actually it was both my daughters' kindergarten teacher, Diana Rothman, whose husband, Don Rothman, taught at UC Santa Cruz. We followed her journey through a year of battling breast cancer. We saw some really hard stuff. One of the amazing things that we made happen was I approached Bob Semus, who was the director of the Dominican Hospital Foundation. And I said, "We want to do this breast cancer story." It was like six pages, including a double spread. And I said, "But you know, what I really want to do is I want to put a self-exam shower hanger in each paper." So I approached the paper and they said they could do that. And I went to Bob at Dominican Hospital. He said, "How many do you need?" I said, "Thirty thousand." He goes, "Okay." So the day the story came out, there was a shower hanger in the paper. So maybe one person found a lump—

Another woman who worked at the *Sentinel* for a while, that I did some also memorable stories with, was Tracie White, who now works at Stanford. We had kids the same age, so sometimes we'd go out on assignments and we'd each bring a kid, her daughter Kaily, and my daughter Kayla. And then we've had some great news reporters. Martha Mendoza, who won two Pulitzer prizes, worked at the *Sentinel*. A woman named May Wong. Dan White, who now works up at UCSC. It's been really amazing. We have had great sports writers; we've had great news writers; we've had great editors, city editors. Royal Calkins, Marc DesJardins,



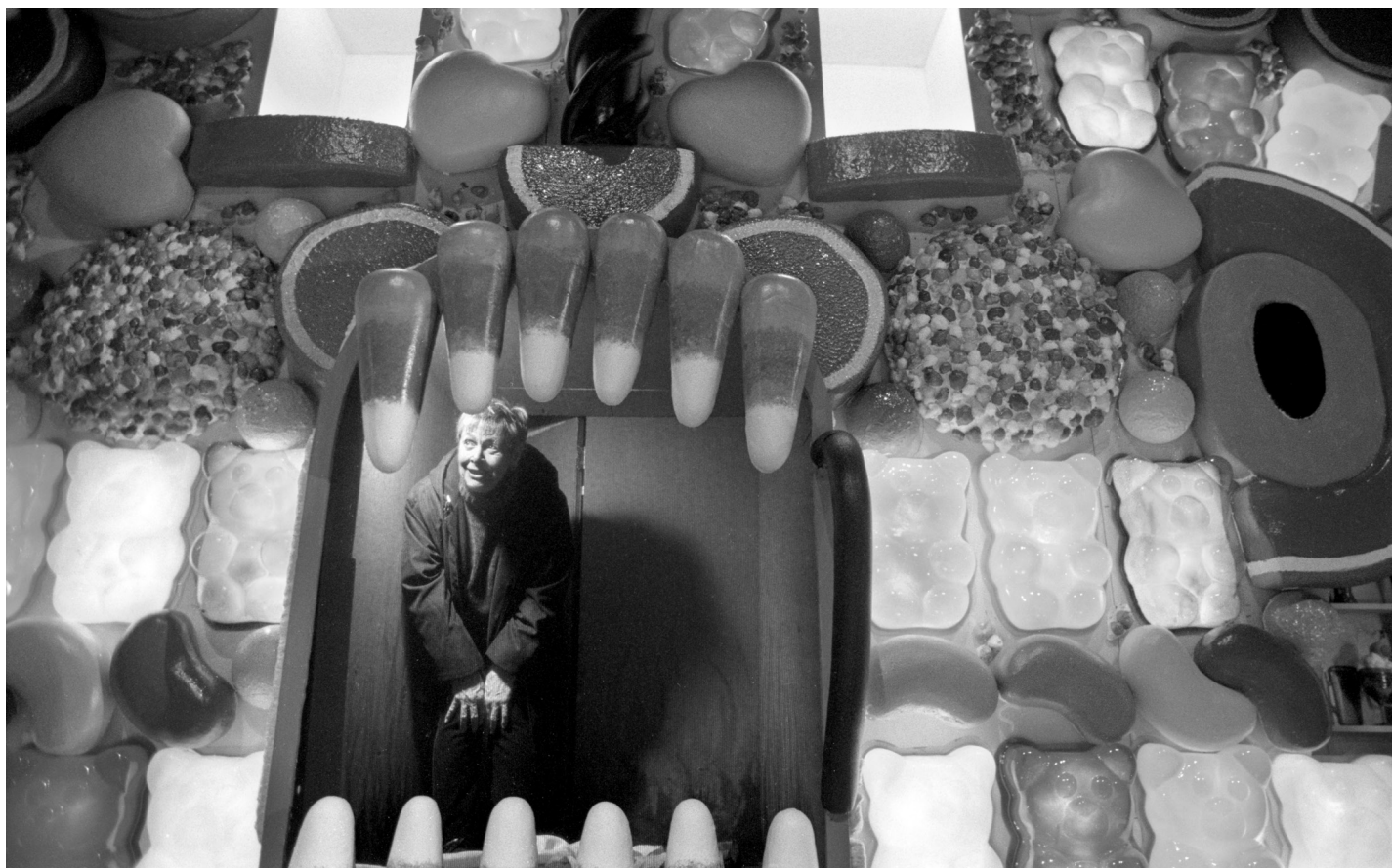
Robert Kelley and Diane Cypher at the Santa Cruz Ballet Theater [Plate 12]



Kirby Scudder [Plate 13]



Jim Lewin and Mike McKinley of Harmony Grits [Plate 14]



Audrey Stanley [Plate 15]



Neal Coonerty [Plate 16]

who now works up here. Julie Copeland. I've had some spectacular people to work with, people who really care.

A Selection of Photos

Let's talk about a selection of my photos that I think best illustrate turning points in my career. This first one [Plate 17] is a firefighter walking through, looking for hot spots at a small wildfire up Old San Jose Road in Soquel. I love the light. We call them God's Rays. But when I pulled up to the scene, I picked up my camera and there was a plane that made a drop of fire retardant. I thought, okay, great. I've got this. I'd say it was less than thirty seconds after I got out of my car. And it was right in front of me and it was clear.

But then I decided to start walking around the fire. It was pretty safe. I put on my fire clothes and I go and walk around. A lot of the firefighters know me. This picture was so different than anything I had seen. It taught me about walking around and really working a scene. I think that no matter what the assignment is, you can always get a great picture. It's just a question of whether you have enough time (sometimes I don't), or you don't have enough desire and you think, okay, I'm done. So this really stuck with me as this exceptional picture that's different than whatever else I had shot before, and different than what other people have seen from fires. And it was only because I stayed to put in the work.

For this next picture, I went down to Moss Landing, where they were converting the Duke Energy plant from fuel oil burning to natural gas. [Plate 18] So they were removing the fuel oil tanks and someone,

while they were doing that, used an acetylene torch to cut a hole in the tank to try and take it down. When you empty the tanks, there are still millions of gallons of sludge at the bottom, so of course it ignited. We heard it was happening, and it was filling the Pajaro Valley with this nasty smoke. When I first got there, we couldn't get anywhere near it, and the firefighters weren't anywhere near it because there were acetylene tanks that were still in where the fire was, and one by one they blew up, shook the ground, a big fireball blew up. I mean, really exciting. No one was hurt. So I was there for a while and took pictures of the fire. Finally the firefighters could get in and I took pictures of them doing what they were doing, although it wasn't that exciting in terms of a picture.

So then I was leaving. I was pulling away and I looked in my rear-view mirror. Originally the smoke had only been going to the north, which is to the right in this photo. And then the wind shifted, so it started going to the left too. It started going south. It had this weird, otherworldly look, almost evil look, of the smoke. And then, in my rear-view mirror also I saw these cows. It was this fortuitous moment of juxtaposition. It's surreal. And then I found out these cows—we were able to put it in the caption—these cows belonged to then-Monterey County Supervisor Lou Calcagno. So we even knew whose cows they were. But it's just this juxtaposition of this bizarre scene, with the fire, and then these cows looking at the camera. One of the things that I was able to learn from this was it was because I looked in my rear-view mirror as I was leaving: once again, one last check. Now, the challenge with that is oftentimes I stay for longer than I would prefer because

I keep thinking maybe there's one better picture. If I'm shooting surfing it's like, the next swell will be the best one.

When we had more reporters at the paper, we were generally shooting as a photographer, four, five, six assignments a day, sometimes ten. And so, there was really the necessity to choose which assignments were the ones you were going to spend more time on. That rarely happens now because I'm shooting fewer assignments.

This picture [Plate 19] is of the ship called the *Hawaiian Chieftain*, which is a replica ship. It's a high-masted sailing boat and it comes to Santa Cruz every couple of years. Rather than waiting for it to be at the harbor and just going into the harbor and coming after it docked, I decided, oh, I'll get it coming through the harbor, more of an action shot. It just so happened that day there was a swell at the harbor—this was right near the harbor mouth—and this surfer comes up and catches a wave as the ship is coming in. So what I learned from this is about being prepared, getting there early, and then just being ready if something lucky happens. This is pure luck, but people who aren't experienced in taking pictures can't always grab the luck. Things happen in front of all us all the time, and to realize that that's a moment and then see how to frame it all at the same time: that's the magic.

Part of it is too, knowing what shutter speed to use because you have to freeze the guy. And maybe I pushed the ISO up high because I wanted to make sure that I would have both the surfer and the boat in focus. This is one of those situations where I was shooting with a motor drive and shot, I don't know how many pictures of him surfing, but there's only one where he's in the right place and you can still see the boat. I'm sure I

was shooting my 70-200 mm here, so it's probably all extended to 200, and it's probably cropped too.

This is Russell Smith, who is a Santa Cruz surfer, surfing at Maverick's. [Plate 20] I shot the Maverick's surf contest once from a boat. He's actually about to fall. He's losing his footing on his surfboard. You can't see the surfboard at all and that's what I love about it. Because it's a shot about Russell Smith surfing, but from my perspective it's more of a shot of the structure of the wave and how it creates this whole other reality. It also talks to me about the privilege I have to go out there and shoot this. Most people don't get to do that, and it's because of my job that I get to do that. I got to shoot a Superbowl; I get to shoot the Tour of California. It's really spectacular.

I love this picture. [Plate 21] This is a picture during a trial. It was a murder trial and the jury and the attorneys and the defendants and the judge went out to see the murder scene. It was a rainy day. When we do get permission to shoot in court, which we don't always, but when we do, we are prohibited from shooting pictures of the jury. It's only the defendant, the lawyers, or the people who are testifying. And sometimes not even that. Sometimes we don't get to shoot at all. So, this is in Watsonville on Rodriguez Street. I was with the jury and they were looking at stuff. I did get a decent picture—there was a puddle on the ground of them all reflected, but you couldn't recognize who all the jurors were. And we ran that.

But then I looked across the street and there were these three alcoves, which the two lawyers and the two defendants—who are father and son, the Magañas—are in. (It's funny because now I know Mark Garver—he's the lawyer in the alcove on the left—and I play basketball



Fire on Old San Jose Road [Plate 17]



Burning Fuel Oil Tanks. Moss Landing [Plate 18]

with Doug Fox, who is the lawyer who is in the alcove in the middle.) I'm really restricted in what I can show here. But if I hadn't been, I might not have seen this picture and this is a far better picture than what I would have gotten otherwise. Once again, it's about looking around and really seeing what's there, and not getting myopic. I don't know if I had to do this with this image, but when I have a picture with all these lines, when I'm preparing it in Photoshop, I make sure that all the lines are straight and the horizons are straight. I don't always shoot them so straight.

This picture is was taken at the beginning of a triathlon on Main Beach in 2008. [Plate 22] I've shot a lot of triathlons. For me, almost always the water entry is the best picture. It's better than the bike riding. Because they all leave at the same time and there's usually five or six waves of people of different ages, so you get a lot of chances. So you can try doing blurry stuff. You can make mistakes. But then I saw this moment of this reflection, and color, and light. It transcended just being a picture of a triathlon. It *is* a picture of a triathlon, but it doesn't necessarily matter that it is. It's beautiful. Once again, the color and the light are just really stunning. This picture actually hangs—there's a 30x40 that hangs in the entrance to the podiatry office at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation right now. They wanted it because of all of the feet. It looks like a ballet and that's kind of what it feels like out there too. So it's kind of like, how do we translate what's happening to photos? Also, the wet-suits help make it. Otherwise they'd all be wearing different color bathing suits and it would not be nearly as uniform, which I think helps it out, the rhythm of it.

This was a shot in 2010, the morning after there was a rally of May Day, actually the night of May 1 downtown.

The rioters ran around and broke windows. I was trying to figure out what to shoot and then I saw this broken window. It was in the Rittenhouse building. Someone was there trying to secure the building with plywood and stuff. I said, "Hey, can I go inside and shoot?" I thought it would be really great to shoot the window from inside looking out because the light coming through it helps illuminate all the breaks and the fissures in the glass. Right in front of the building, the rioters had thrown paint on this woman's car and she'd just come to start cleaning it up. What I really love, and one of the things I try and do, is to create the structure of the photograph graphically. And this did it, the fact that there was one little opening. I had to move around a little to get her in the right place. It's pretty spectacular. And the fact that there's also the Caution Police Tape helps the composition. It's about the structure of the picture and making it go beyond just a photograph. [Plate 23]

And I just love this picture. [Plate 24] This is a mural by Ann Thiermann of downtown Santa Cruz in the 19th century.¹⁵ And the woman, Josephine McCracken, coming out of the door in the mural—she's coming out of the *Sentinel* office, actually. That was downtown. She was a columnist for the *Sentinel*. I just waited and waited and waited. They sent me to get a picture of a rainy day, and I just waited and waited and waited for someone to walk by. Finally, this guy walks by with a red umbrella. I really think of this picture as another example of the importance of transforming our three-dimensional reality into a two-dimensional screen or image. Because where the man's walking—that's kind of far away. And if I didn't choose

¹⁵<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/zz/20110728/NEWS/110727400>



Hawaiian Chieftain, Santa Cruz [Plate 19]

Russell Smith Surfing Maverick's
[Plate 20]



to have deep depth of field, he would be out of focus, or the mural would be out of focus. It's just creating this one plane on which it's all there. But what's really cool is this is a picture about a rainy day, but it's so much more than that. I couldn't have at all chosen who was going to walk into the frame. It's just waiting and waiting.

This next photo is of this girl named Gabriella Cosner, who had a particularly nasty form of cancer. [Plate 25] Her mother formed an organization: Cookies for Kids' Cancer¹⁶. They are raising money for cancer awareness. We were doing a preview to the event and I went and got a picture of her. But then there was this moment where she held her grandmother's hand. This young girl has so much poise. She's smiley, but there was this one moment where I felt like she let down her guard, even as a young girl. This is, once again, one of those moments where you just need to be in the situation. You need to let things happen. You need to not be directing what's going on. Even though oftentimes I'll get someplace and they'll go, "What do you want us to do?" I say, "I want you to do whatever you would be doing if I wasn't there." Sometimes I cheat a little, "Okay, if I wasn't here, what would you be doing?" "Okay, well I would—" And then we'll get the picture. But this was such a quiet moment, compared to this whole getting ready for this event, but I think it says so much more about her. The picture speaks a thousand words.

This one is of a Pacific Collegiate School swimmer, Maia Kamehiro-Stockwell, doing the back stroke and making her turn in the Santa Cruz High School pool during her practice. [Plate 26] I find swimmers really hard to shoot. If they're doing the butterfly or the breast

stroke, they're out of the water a bunch. If they're doing the freestyle, they're out of the water a little. The focus for me is really challenging, to get it all in focus. I was photographing her a bunch and then I realized she was making these turns, and when backstrokers make the turn, they kind of twist, make the turn, and then they come and they push off, facing up, because they are about to do more back strokes. I love the lines. It reminds me of David Hockney, who has a lot of pictures of pools in Los Angeles, with the faceting of the light coming in. I love that and I could see that. But I didn't know, until I got back and looked at the photo in the computer, the bubbles that were coming out. It just made the picture. And also letting it breathe, in that there's a lot of room on either side of her. I shot a lot of pictures of her doing this, hundreds of pictures of her swimming, but this one stood out.

Sometimes things happen right around you and you don't even know it. I was down in Capitola. I had shot a restaurant review, I think. I was coming up Bay Avenue and then I see these cops with their lights on, speeding by me. So I pull over and I go to my phone. I have a way to look at what all the police calls are. So I look and then I realize I'm looking at my phone and the police call is a block away from me, right ahead of me. So I look up and I see it. Well, what happened was there was a woman hit in the crosswalk, which is closer to where the picture is taken, where I'm standing. There are people attending to her. And there was a motorcycle policeman from Capitola who was responding to the incident. Then the driver of this truck wasn't paying attention and he hit the motorcyclist. So this is the moment that he hit the sidewalk. This is one of those ones where I just turned my camera and started shooting.

¹⁶<http://www.cookiesforkidscancer.org/>



Lawyers and defendants, Murder Trial, Watsonville [Plate 21]



Triathlon, Main Beach, Santa Cruz [Plate 22]



Aftermath of May Day Rally [Plate 23]

Luckily the auto focus was working and it just happened. This photo is about just being there at a particular moment and that's the only reason why I got the picture. [Plate 27]

This is a photo from court of Alex Tichelman [Plate 28], who was called the Harbor Hooker. She was being held in the death of a Google executive, which happened in a boat in the harbor. She was a prostitute and had injected him with drugs and he died. It was an overdose. It was a big deal. I don't totally understand why, but it was a huge deal. People came to cover this from all over the world. All over the world. There were hundreds of media for her appearance in court. I guess it had to do with the Google exec, and she was a prostitute and he was a family man.

So this was her first appearance in court. Most of the time we don't know if we're going to have permission to shoot in court until the judge rules when the defendant is in court. And so, you can't shoot them coming in, usually. And then oftentimes they're looking away, and they specifically don't want to have their picture taken. She's not like that. She was fine having her picture taken. But I know that there's always this moment where 98 times out of 100, the person just walks out the door. But 1 or 2 percent of the time, the defendant looks back at their family, or something like this. I don't have anything else to do at the end of the trial. The reporter needs to go out of the courtroom because they need to talk to the attorney right then because they'll leave. But I always stay. There must have twenty-five or thirty TV and still photographers in the courtroom, and they all left. A lot of them had to shoot video of the lawyers talking. So I always wait when I can. And then she just did this hair flip, flipped her head as she was going back to jail.

Well, that's one of those things about doing it for so long that it pays off. It's the same way as if you shoot a baseball game: you know it's most likely that something's going to happen at first, second, third, or home. You might get lucky and get someone fielding something, or running after the ball, and you can always get a shot of the pitcher. But the best pictures are generally going to be there. Or, if you're shooting soccer, to know they're heading up field and they're probably going to kick it to the striker. Knowing what's going on is a big part of trying to increase your odds of getting something that's good.

This one was really interesting. This was back in 2014. I'm driving along Water Street. This is right on the lawn near the Courthouse. I see this guy yelling. I was about to drive on, but I thought—no, I should pull over and get my camera out, I'm a photographer. Then it turned into this really intense confrontation. I got out of my car. I got my camera. He was being really belligerent to the cop. What happened was the police officer had pulled a motorist over and was talking to her and this gentleman became belligerent. His name is Oliver Howard. And so, they got into this confrontation and the cop tried to tase him. The taser sends out a wand that hooks into your skin, if it's successful, and delivers electricity. But it hooked into his sweater. So, then he took off his sweater and he started gesturing and acting very aggressive. Finally, they did arrest him. But it was just about being there and saying, okay, I'm going to pull over. And in the end this gentleman's father called me, Oliver Howard's father called me. He said, "I'd like to know, what did you see when that happened?" They had kind of lost touch with their son and he apparently, from what the father said, he helps people in the medical



Mural, Ann Thiermann. Downtown Santa Cruz [Plate 24]



Gabriella Cosner [Plate 25]



Pacific Collegiate School swimmer, Maia
Kamehiro-Stockwell [Plate 26]

Traffic Accident, Bay
Avenue, Capitola [Plate 27]



marijuana business and he sorts marijuana but he doesn't use gloves. And around this time of year he always has some incident. I get a call from his dad and I think he's going to be really pissed that we put the picture in the paper. But he wasn't. So that was really fascinating. [Plate 29]

So this was one of those moments. [Plate 30] This is a coot in the San Lorenzo River, across from the Boardwalk, along San Lorenzo Boulevard. I was just walking along. I was looking for a feature shot. Got to find something. We needed it. Then I saw the reflections and I knew that there was something there, that it was beyond just a picture of this coot in the water. So I framed it so that the reflections became the main thing. And it ran in the paper in color and it wasn't nearly as successful as the black and white. It has this psychedelic kind of feel to it. One of the things I really like is it's just a bird moving in the water. There are reeds and the reflection has gotten disturbed, so they get all squiggly. I was watching it for a while. So it's really about waiting, because it took a long time for it to look like this, although I started seeing it. And then, it's also about how you don't need to be photographing something exceptional to get an exceptional photograph.

I remember reading about Alfred Stieglitz back many years ago. He got these amazing pictures of people coming out of steerage on a boat. And there's one of the smoke coming out when they're turning around a cable car in New York. People were saying that he was just in the right place at the right time. But for a bunch of years he photographed almost exclusively clouds, in this series he called "Equivalents." And they are amazing pictures. I just saw them recently at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. It was because he saw them and how he saw the world. It

wasn't because they were there. Those clouds were there for everyone. I really believe that. I don't think it's me being exceptional at all. I think it's just me paying attention.

We shoot rain pictures all the time. And I just love this picture. [Plate 31] It's a little pixelated but that kind of adds to it. My favorite part is that the woman in the middle is wearing high top Converse. I love that about it. It just has this feel. I worry sometimes with a picture like this because it's sharpened a bit more than most of my pictures, that the newspaper might not want to run it because it looks more painterly. But I love it. I remember this day. It was really pouring that day. I spent two or three hours shooting rain pictures. This was the one I really liked, but I had other ones. It reminds me of the days when I first started and I'd give them pictures and they would be like, "*What is this?*" But, giving them credit, I'm way better at it now than I was then. And now I always try and get a safe, more traditional picture because the other ones don't always work.

As I'm looking at these photos now, I think I'm getting better. These are getting refined. These are all much more recent. This was in 2016. This was covering the clam chowder cook-off at the Boardwalk. [Plate 32] This is the way I see the world. And they ran this picture. Now, I don't think it really says anything about the clam chowder cook-off. I'm willing to admit that. The angles were so good and the shadows were so nice. But this guy with the straw hat had to walk by to make the picture. He's walking and his shadow we're not seeing. We're seeing the shadows from the people that are, in relation to the photo, coming from above. And that hat being there, floating in the shadow, makes the whole picture. But I waited a really, really long time. I remember thinking, these shadows are so cool, and



Alex Tichelman [Plate 28]

Confrontation
on Water Street
[Plate 29]





Coot, San Lorenzo River [Plate 30]

then the people who were creating the shadows would move someplace else and then the shadows changed. I was just waiting for this guy. I don't know if it's a thought or a desire, but yes, I had a hope that someone would come. And you know what? The other beautiful thing about working for the *Sentinel* is that we'll put out a paper tomorrow, no matter what. So if it doesn't work out great, I'll have another chance tomorrow to do something else.

When they awarded me the Artist of the Year in 2016, I was thinking it's pretty amazing because mostly people see my pictures and then they're in the recycling bin, or under the cat box or the bird cage, or they're two seconds on Facebook and then they're gone. As opposed to a painter—their paintings are meant to be on people's walls. And mine are some, but not in the same way, you know? I think there's energy behind the fact that we're putting out a newspaper every day. It's kind of a miracle, even at the level we're at now at the *Sentinel*—we put out a newspaper every day! And you can find out thirty or forty things in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* about our community that you couldn't find anywhere else, in one box. I love it. Go do it again tomorrow.

I actually am willing to let the shadows go in this photo of the hat because I don't care if there's detail in the shadows. But I needed to get the hat darker. The equipment is amazing now, what it can do and how it can maintain stuff and how much detail there is. But shooting jpegs as opposed to RAW, if it's blown out there's no pixels there.¹⁷ I don't know if I should say this. I've shot one RAW picture in my life. I would like to shoot RAW but for the paper it

¹⁷RAW is an uncompressed and unprocessed (by the camera) format that allows for greater flexibility in post-processing (editing) a photo.

doesn't make any sense at all. They take longer to process. At work, I'm using Photoshop 7 still, not CC [Creative Cloud]. I'm using Photoshop 7, which won't process RAW photos. And the cards need to be bigger. There's a lot of reasons why we wouldn't do it. But I know lots of photographers shoot pictures in RAW and they swear by it, and I understand. I feel like for me it works out fine.

This picture is also from 2016. [Plate 33] There's an event called Dancing in the Streets downtown. It's the beginning of Santa Cruz Dance Week. I love the light. I love the color. I love everything about this. The design on the dresses. This ran on the front page as the main art. It's not people dancing, but it still, I think, speaks to the preparation of what it takes to be in one of these dance troupes. I saw their costumes and I shot them dancing. It looked great but then when I saw them standing around afterwards with these red hats, it was just too good. It was one of these great moments.

I went up to San Lorenzo Valley High School to shoot a portrait of the new cross country coach at San Lorenzo Valley High School. I was walking back. I had finished taking my pictures. They had been on a run in the woods and I took some pictures of that and they were doing some warm ups. I just loved the shadows. We didn't run this picture for that story. [Plate 34] We ran it later on just as a feature shot. I feel like this was a picture I'd been wanting to get for a really, really long time. I'd been in a lot of situations where it almost worked, and it didn't. This one finally really, really did. I love the fact that the whole frame is filled with the terra cotta color of the all-weather track, so it's very clean. And then that one foot of the runner—that's also what makes it. It's like the hat at the Boardwalk. Without

that, it's okay. But with that, it changes it. And you kind of wonder what's going on. It's about the light and the hard shadows and the rhythm. It's a lot about rhythm, actually.

This was one of those things where I wasn't working and the Loma Fire had just started up at the summit in 2016, in September. It was at night and I said to my wife, "You know, I think we could see the fire from the end of the wharf." I had my camera at home. I just said to my wife, "I'm leaving. I want to go see if I can see the fire." I just figured it was too big a deal to not go out to. I was really glad I did. She's great. Kathy is wonderful. She's very supportive of what I do.

So, I went out to the wharf and I could see the fire, although this was one of those things where photographically it looked better than to the naked eye. It looks like the fire is right on top of the Boardwalk and apparently the Seaside Company was getting calls after this ran: "Are you guys open?" This fire was many miles away. This is our town, the Boardwalk—everybody knows the giant roller coaster. And then the fire being at the mountaintop. Also, I've always been amazed at how, when fire is there at night, the light fills the smoke with that orange. This picture [Plate 35] ran in the *New York Times* and it was shared from my Facebook post I think 5000 times. These pictures get legs. So there's a responsibility to what you put up, too because you don't want to be egregious. You don't want to make mistakes. I'm really careful about crafting the captions too, to really say what they are and make sure they're accurate. But it's interesting, this picture and the dancers and the hat at the clam chowder cook off—they're all taken within a few weeks of each other. I was on a roll, I guess.

In 2017, in August, we had more humpback whales than I ever recall seeing. This was taken August 16. I think on August 14th I had photographed some whales from a little farther away. And then I had heard they were coming back to the Seacliff area, so I decided after I had an assignment in Watsonville, I was going to go back to Seacliff Beach and see if I could find them. I'm driving around. I went to this area called Platforms. It's actually south of Rio del Mar. You go to Rio del Mar and then you go down the road along the coast there. Then these whales just started coming. And this woman and her kids were boogie boarding. Through using a telephoto lens—this does look closer than it is because it was shot with a 100-400 mm lens and I'm at 400mm. These whales, when they're coming up there's all this water coming out of their mouths. And then when I got back on the computer, I see it's anchovies flying around in that water. It was just spectacular, although I did get attacked on the Internet. There was this one woman who was talking about how this picture couldn't have been real. I subscribe to the National Press Photographers Association code of ethics. I don't put stuff in or take stuff out. But we're at a point where so many people do that, that people assume it's been done, that I put the boogie boarder in this photo. But I didn't. And even without it, it's still really cool. But with it, it's—

A bit more on ethics. I took photographs of local political candidates before my job at the *Sentinel*. I actually really liked it. I was pretty involved in progressive politics and it felt like I could be useful in that way. But once I got on staff full time at the *Sentinel*, I felt like it was a conflict of interest to do any political work, much less politics that I believed in, like progressive politics. I need to be able to



Rainy Day. [Plate 31]

be fair and cover these people, although it's hard because I'm friends with a lot of those people. I play basketball with a member of the city council. I do all sorts of things with people and I'm friendly with them. And also, in our town most of the people are progressives anyway. It's Santa Cruz. It's why a lot of us live here. But there's also journalistic integrity. You're not supposed to, in general, work for the people you're covering. And you're not supposed to take gifts beyond a certain amount from people. You're not supposed to be some place and someone offers you something—even if they're doing it because they're a lovely person, you don't want to have the appearance of a conflict of interest, of covering someone better or differently because you have a relationship with them. And there are rules about the specific amounts of how much you are allowed to take. If someone offers you a meal, you're allowed to take it. But there are levels you can't go beyond. And you know, I would never consciously cover someone differently, but it's good to not go down slippery slopes, to not get into gray areas.

Relationship with Mount Madonna School

My relationship with Mount Madonna started when my older daughter, Kayla, started attending Mount Madonna School in the year 2000. She was there for about six years, I think. I really, really love what they do there and believe in the philosophy of the education, which is about public service as a valuable thing. They produce an ethics-based education, which I really believe in.

At Mount Madonna, I taught high school photography as community service and advised the high school yearbook students for a while. But the most important thing was I developed a friendship with a fellow named

Ward Maillard, who created a program at Mount Madonna called Values in World Thought, which is based loosely on Bill Moyers' work.¹⁸ It's for high school juniors and seniors who are finishing their time at Mount Madonna School, and it's asking important questions of all sorts of people in a lot of different fields: in politics, in the arts, in public service. They're respected as the absolute best high school program to go to Washington, D.C. in the country. Really spectacular. I've gone with them twice, once in 2002 and once in 2016.

They do absolutely no sightseeing. What they do is they prepare for two years and they create interviews with people who will talk to them—everyone from John Lewis, to Sandra Day O'Connor, to people in the State Department. Republicans and Democrats. Jeff Flake. Lots and lots of different people. When I've been with them, there is this inquisitive, intelligent conversation that the students have with these people in Washington, D.C. They practice with interviews with Sam Farr and John Laird and people like that, who are friends of the program.¹⁹

In 2006, the Dalai Lama Foundation was trying to find a group of U.S. students to create a curriculum based on the Dalai Lama's work from his book *Ethics for the New Millennium*. They had heard about Ward's program. They came, sat down in his classroom, saw what he was doing, and immediately said, "You're the guy." They teamed him with Tibetan students in India from a Tibetan children's village; and a group of students from Nigeria in this program [Creative Minds Academy] with this amazing teacher named Emanuel, in Nigeria. Ward said to the

¹⁸<http://billmoyers.com/series/a-world-of-ideas/>

¹⁹<http://values.mountmadonnaschool.org/category/blogs/dc-2016/>



Clam Chowder Cook-off, Santa Cruz Boardwalk [Plate 32]



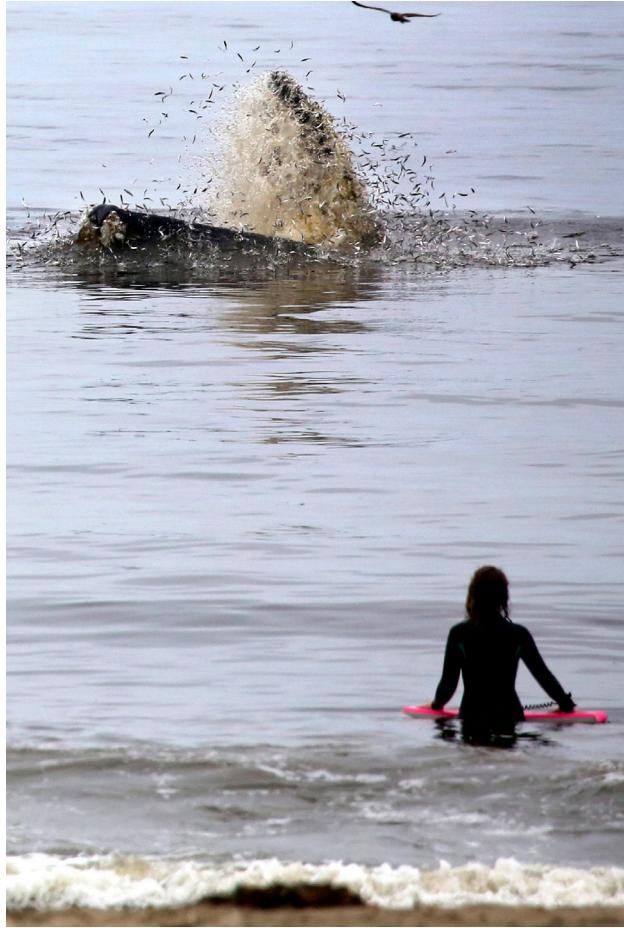
Dancing in the Streets, Santa Cruz Dance Week [Plate 33]



Track, San Lorenzo Valley High School [Plate 34]



Loma Fire [Plate 35]



Humpback Whale, Rio Del Mar [Plate 36]

Dalai Lama folks, “This is great. We’ll do this. I’m happy to do this.” They were trying to create a movie, which came out later, called Project Happiness.²⁰ Ward said, “Well, if we do this project we have to be able to interview the Dalai Lama.” They said, “Okay, we can do that.”

Ward is very, very media savvy. His father was the last Republican congressman from San Francisco ever, I’m sure. And his aunt married George Schultz. So he’s very well connected and understands politics, understands publicity. We had this really nice friendship. He doesn’t bring parents of kids along on any trips, but he asked me if I would come along because he knew, I would be a chaperone when needed, but the rest of the time I would be taking pictures. And these kids—whatever trip they’re on, they’re blogging every day. It’s kind of a structured system, where they write every day in their journals and publish the blog every day they’re gone on these trips. So my main job is to have photos to accompany the blog writings.

So he asked me to come along and I was honored. The first trip was in 2007 and that was the trip when we interviewed the American ambassador to India; we interviewed the Indian president, Abdul Kalam, at the time. Then we got to interview the Dalai Lama. And what was supposed to be a fifteen-minute Meet and Greet turned into a two-hour conversation. The Dalai Lama’s people kept saying, “Okay, you need to move on.” And he said, “No, I’m really interested.” He liked the earnestness of the kids, the engagement of the kids, and the curiosity of the kids. And the Tibetan kids were there, and for the Tibetan kids to be in the presence of the Dalai Lama was a phenomenally big

²⁰<https://values.mountmadonnaschool.org/category/blogs/india-2007/>

thing. You can’t even imagine how big it was. They were asking him questions: “What is happiness? What makes you happy? Why should we care about these things?” He was very, very engaged. It was a fascinating conversation.

Mount Madonna Center has a relationship with India because Baba Hari Dass, who is the spiritual inspiration for Mount Madonna, is an Indian guru teacher. And Mount Madonna in the 1980s started an orphanage outside of Haridwar, India. Every trip we’ve taken to India since, we go and the kids see, and it’s a spectacular place. It’s more of a home for abandoned children than it is an orphanage. They adopt kids into the orphanage who are abandoned, mostly as babies, and mostly girls, because those are the kids who are abandoned in India. In India, where in many places the caste system still is prevalent, these kids would be scavengers, or they would be in the sex trade. Of the kids who have been adopted from the orphanage, one became a Gates Millennium Scholar; one’s a dentist; a bunch are nurses. This year their under-eighteen field hockey teams—both boys and girls are the national champions of India. It is an amazing, amazing place. I call it my happy place. It’s my favorite place on the planet because it’s how love can change people one person at a time.²¹

And so, from the first trip, which was just exciting—go to India and see the Dalai Lama, maybe (we weren’t sure if I was actually going to get in), to see the work that’s happening and allowing it to have legs well beyond what it might without good imagery. I was hooked. He brings me along. I do it on my own dime. I volunteer for that.

²¹<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/NE/20160507/NEWS/160509840>

Shortly after that, Ward had had some kind of interaction someplace with some folks in South Africa. In 2009, maybe, we took our first trip to South Africa with Values in World Thought. We got to interview Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who we've interviewed now five times. And we interview a lot of other folks. The South Africa trip is different than the Indian trips we've taken, in that there's a lot more interaction between our kids and their high school peers in South Africa. We've now got it where every two years we go to both these places. We take the seniors to India in March and April, and then about the middle of June we take the rising seniors, the kids who will be seniors next year, to South Africa. And our kids combine in a choir with a bunch of kids in a really poor area called Tembisa, where they combine and create a festival over three days and have these big community performances.²² In South Africa, we have a very nice relationship with an AIDS orphanage that we go to, called Botshabelo.²³ We do all sorts of really amazing things. In India, we've taken the kids to serve lunch to widows who have been abandoned. It gives these kids a very different perspective on the world. My photos can kind of amplify this message. I think we can't do that enough, especially these days, to having what's good in the world be publicized as much as possible.

Photographing the Dalai Lama obviously gets my adrenalin pumping. But then it's just this guy sitting there because when you're in this room with him for

²²https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-iry-fullyhosted_011&hsimp=yhs-fullyhosted_011&hspart=iry&p=tembisa+south+africa+mount+madonna+school#id=1&cvid=8bb0d659de775eae df42806b47eaf500&action=click

²³www.botshabelo.org

two hours you're just trying to get great pictures. But I think it was our first trip to the Dalai Lama—we've interviewed the Dalai Lama three times now, in 2007, 2011, and 2013—I think it was the first trip, I tripped over a light cord and unplugged one of the lights. We film all of these interviews. Ward has this really nice setup. We have a videographer who is a Mount Madonna graduate, Devin Kumar, who does spectacular videos and he comes on every trip. He's a Berklee College of Music graduate and a Mount Madonna School graduate. And some of the students hold the boom mike, or work the other cameras. Anyway, so there are lights, and I trip over the cord. And the Dalai Lama looks over and he says, "The photographer needs to be more mindful of the cords."

The Dalai Lama walks in the room and the room changes. Here's this person who was named as a baby to be the Dalai Lama, and he's so wise and so insightful and so smart and so funny. He has this amazing laugh. But going in, you know, it's like going to see a head of state. You go through all this massive security at the Dalai Lama Temple and residence up in Dharamshala, which is between the foothills and the Himalayas. And it feels like a total pleasure. He makes everyone feel comfortable too. The Dalai Lama really understands the value of good publicity and getting the message out through social media and through all sorts of stuff like that.

We last interviewed Desmond Tutu this past July, in July 2017. He's getting older. This time was more of a meeting with him and hanging out with him in his office in Cape Town. Our students always learn some South African songs and they sang for him. He has this amazing laugh also. In past times, it's been a little more of an interview—asking



Images from India

him questions, but he's of the age where I think that's something that we probably won't be doing with him anymore. He doesn't see very many people now and it was an extreme privilege that we were able to see him.

Both the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu have this history of experiencing horrific, horrific things done to their people. But at the same time, they're incredibly optimistic and positive, while owning what has happened and making sure that they do what they can to change it. For both of them, it relates back to my work at the *Sentinel*, that it's this historic record of these guys. Not that my pictures will be the ones that people will remember, because there's millions of pictures taken of the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu. But I think we have a special, special place in that history.

I send the *Sentinel* pictures and write a story or two from each trip. And it's easier than in 2007. In 2007, we didn't have the digital structure by which I could get pictures into the editing system easily from India or South Africa. The first trip to India, I remember we'd have to go to an Internet café because there wasn't Wifi. Wifi didn't exist there in 2007. And getting photos uploaded was endless. I would have to email pictures to people and then they would put them in the paper. Now I can just put them right into the *Sentinel* editing system because that happens online. So it's made it way easier. It's this amazing thing to be at a computer in an orphanage in rural India and be able to upload photos that will appear in the *Sentinel* tomorrow.

I believe that amplifying the message of what these kids are doing is important. We do get letters to the

editor about, "Why are you covering Mount Madonna School so much?" And there are a few answers to that. One is just because they do some really different things than any other school does. I do put pictures from the trips in. I actually even remember one letter to the editor saying, "Why is the paper paying money to send a photographer to India?" That's really misinformed. I think that there's an amazing value in that project. I think a lot of the kids who go don't even understand how important that experience is to them until years later. And who knows how many more we will do. Maybe we'll do more and maybe we won't. I assume we will, but—

When I taught high school photography at Mount Madonna, they had a few cameras, 35 mm film cameras. And because I only taught once a week, I would get their black and white film developed. Half the students would be out shooting pictures each week and half of them would be developing. They had a really nice darkroom. So it was great. It was really fun. High school photography is always fun for kids. It was fun and I really enjoyed it, except occasionally I would have a kid—they are high school seniors and juniors—and they would have senioritis. Spring semester of senior year not a whole lot gets done.

When I taught high school photography, the most important thing was to get the kids excited about photography and to have them understand what they could do with a camera, and that part of artistic expression. Some kids really blossomed but they didn't have any idea they were photographers. I think now, with cell phones—because this was a while ago—now with cell phones, everybody takes way more pictures



Images from Mount Madonna School Trips to India

than they used to, so I think that their talent comes out. But still, when you're doing it as a structured class, you can learn things about your photography that you couldn't learn just posting pictures on Facebook.

Teaching at Cabrillo Community College

My teaching experience at Cabrillo was very different than that. That was photojournalism specific. It was community members and college students. It was a much more structured class. That was: I'm going to do a lecture about shooting portraits on Wednesday. And when you come back on Monday, you'll have shot an assignment shooting portraits and you'll show them to the class. So it was much more specifically photojournalism, although I think it relates to any kind of photography, or many other disciplines as well, where the students need to concentrate on how to write a caption, and syntax, and how to think about what their photos are saying. So they were able to think, maybe in different ways than they had before, and see the world in different ways. And that, I think, allowed them to succeed in other areas. I think if you can write, you'll succeed in a lot of places. Writing is an essential skill, whether or not you're going to be a photographer, or you're going to work collecting oral histories, or whatever else you're going to do. So it was very satisfying, especially when I started the class.

More than half the class were community members—they were college students, but they weren't full-time college students. They were taking one class. So I had section one, which was this basic photojournalism class, where they would shoot assignments of portraits or sports, covering the event, and show their work, learn to write captions.

We did a lot of exercises about photographic ethics. Everything from securing releases, to not removing things with Photoshop. Because people do that. But if pictures are in the newspaper as journalistic images, I believe that the viewer believes it was a real moment. That's the agreement we have. These days there's very few agreements with readers. I think that's the one that remains, that we don't Photoshop in or out objects in the photo. If there was garbage on the street, there was garbage on the street. Maybe you needed to move to a different angle—

The history of taking things out of photos goes back to the beginning of photography. The Russians used to—when a politician or a general would be out of favor, they would airbrush them out of a photo, you know, in a parade scene. There's a lot of very prominent examples of this in history. Now it's easy. Everyone takes things out of their photographs. You don't need to know how to use Photoshop to do that. So the question is, how do you make your pictures better without relying on that. And also, we just don't *do* that. So we studied examples of where news photographers have done that, and when they've been found out they've all gotten fired. I'm a member of the National Press Photographers Association. To belong to the National Press Photographers Association, there's a code of ethics that you need to subscribe to.

So Cabrillo was really fun. I had a second section of the class, which I was really happy about, but it kind of flamed out after a while because I wasn't getting enough students. The students who had taken the first section of the class and had some understanding of how to take pictures and what assignments meant and things like that—the second section, the second semester, was finding a nonprofit and



Archbishop Desmond Tutu:
Images from Mount Madonna School Trips to South Africa



Images from Mount Madonna School Trips to South Africa

creating either a website for them, or a photo archive for them, a social media presence. It was really great. It was a win-win-win. The nonprofits loved it. Cabrillo got a nice name in the community for it. I had a student doing Native Animal Rescue. My student, Lisa Rose, chose Native Animal Rescue. And now, her retirement is spending four days a week working for Native Animal Rescue, through that. The Homeless Garden Project. All these different things.

But what happened was, I'm not sure why, but enrollments started declining for that class, so I didn't have enough students to continue it. I needed to have eighteen to twenty students to make that work well. The students would show their work but it was more of an independent study, in a way. They'd go out every week and get pictures, or whatever they were doing for the project, and then show the class what they were doing. The students needed to take the initiative. If someone didn't, I could find something. But I really wanted it to be something that the students were passionate about.

Those were the only two classes that I taught. Originally when I was offered the job by Brad Kava, who is the journalism instructor at Cabrillo, I had this vision that I'd teach part time as kind of my retirement. But what ended up happening was towards the end when I was teaching, I was working about forty, forty-five hours a week at the *Sentinel*, full-time plus. And then I was teaching about fifteen hours a week at Cabrillo. Plus, there was the drive in traffic. It was just too much. Then, Cabrillo asked if I would teach another class. And at that point I was able to realize that I wasn't ready to give up my job at the *Sentinel*, which I'm still not, for now at least. I don't see

retiring in that way, unless I'm forced to, or there's no more newspaper or something. So I declined to continue teaching at Cabrillo, after doing that for five years or something.

And then, when I got back to the *Sentinel*, I realized that I'd been there long enough that I could reduce my load to three days a week, to just working Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, except when I have to fill in for vacation relief. But it was a great experience to teach at Cabrillo. I have this great curriculum that I designed. I envision actually that at some point there could be classes taught at the Tannery Arts Center and have it be this vibrant place of arts and education. I think about teaching again. Someday, probably.

Solo Shows

I did a show organized by Judy Stabile and Liz Reed and a bunch of other folks at the Pajaro Valley Arts Council, which is over on Sudden Street in Watsonville. It's at this wonderful old house that been converted to a really nice gallery. Judy and Liz approached me with this idea of a journalism show. Together we came up with the idea of "Witness." So there were pictures by Bob Fitch, who photographed these amazing times in history with Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King. His pictures are really inspirational. His archive is now at Stanford²⁴ and he was a Santa Cruz County resident. So Bob Fitch. And then Sam Vestal, who was the photographer at the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* until the early 1980s. He photographed some really classic moments in Santa Cruz and Watsonville history. And he has a really pretty well-known picture, a shot of John F. Kennedy with the crowd reflected in his

²⁴<https://library.stanford.edu/collections/bob-fitch-photography-archive>

sunglasses, these Ray Ban sunglasses.²⁵ And that was really nice because when I first came to Santa Cruz in 1982, I lived out near Sunset Beach, towards Watsonville on San Andreas Road. And there was a fire along there that I got a picture of. I was just trying to sell it and I went into the *Register-Pajaronian* with these pictures and Sam Vestal was the person who processed them, and he published my first picture in Santa Cruz. So that was really cool. When he was at the *Register-Pajaronian*, they won a Pulitzer Prize. And they were, at that time, the smallest paper ever to win a Pulitzer Prize. It was a corruption scandal. Sam's pictures were a big part of what made that story so strong.

And the other photographer was Joel Ravetz, who has photographed a lot of homeless people in LA. He was originally from Santa Cruz and he passed away also. The families of the two deceased photographers helped get their work there. And then Tarmo Hannula²⁶, the *Register-Pajaronian* photographer and myself were both in the show and we agreed that we would share our space. So it included all sorts of pictures of what's happened in Santa Cruz County over the last twenty-five years.

The really nice thing was that they hung the show. We just delivered the work and they told us how many pictures we could have. So that was really, really great. The pictures were not under glass or mounted. They printed them actually at Costco, really nice pictures on a backing. They were just hung on a wall without the reflection of glass, or the separation of the frames. But the show also had quotes about photojournalism in it. Tarmo and I

²⁵<http://www.mercurynews.com/2013/11/18/from-jfk-to-hitchcock-photographs-taken-by-sam-vestal-are-making-a-comeback/>

²⁶ <http://www.tarmohannula.com/about.html>

gave the curators all of our press passes from years and IDs, so they were in a case. I had my dad's Nikon F on display, as well as my first digital camera, which was a Canon 1D, in 2003. So it was a really successful show.

Two other shows that come to mind were the show when we did the Gail Rich awards book, *The Creatives Among Us*. Rose Sellery, who runs the Cabrillo Gallery, came to me and said, "Let's do a show." I said, "Okay." I had no idea what it was going to be because at that time it was the 20th anniversary of the Gail Rich awards and there were 147 pictures. So it was a lot. Rose got a grant and Bay Photo discounted the printing. I just gave her the files. They had them printed at Bay Photo and matted on gator board. I asked Rose, "Do you want me to help hang it?" And she said, no, which was really my preference anyway. I picked up the pictures at Bay Photo and delivered them to the Cabrillo Gallery and we made sure they all looked okay. I identified who each person was. Then I left and came back two weeks later and the show was hung. Originally, they were going to do it chronologically, but that didn't work, so they re-hung it. They did an amazing, amazing job. It also included text by Wallace Baine.

It was a spectacular show. For the opening, so many of the people who were in the pictures came to see the show. It was special to have all these people. A lot of them were taking pictures of themselves in front of their picture on the wall. Then there was a show at the Crocker Theater to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Gail Rich awards, where all these Gail Rich award winners played in the Crocker Theater at the same time the show was at the Cabrillo Gallery. So it was this amazing, collaborative cross-fertilization.

Changes in Technology: iPhones and Mirrorless Cameras

I used to not travel without a [DSLR] camera. And then I realized, when I was traveling, not for work, but on vacation with my family, that the sensor in the phones, the photo sensor, is now good enough or was good enough, to take an acceptable picture. If the spaceship were to land in front of me, I could get a decent picture. My phone can't replace everything my cameras can do. I'm using an iPhone 7 Plus now. It can zoom 100 percent but it can't go beyond that. It has a dual lens. The Plus ones do. I don't know about the newer iPhone. I'm going to get into an area I'm really ignorant about here. But at least mine does. It has an optical zoom. It can be two times the size of the image. That's an optical zoom. The burst doesn't work the same as using a motor drive and stuff like that. But it's still good enough for me oftentimes to just be traveling with my phone, which I'm really, really happy with.

And the other thing I got last year, was I got a little mirrorless camera. When I went to India in 2016, I only brought the mirrorless camera with one lens. I wanted to simplify my life. It's a Fujifilm XT1. The sensor is phenomenal, although I don't use most of the controls. My brother, Jon—who is a really great photographer and well versed in the techniques and the technical aspects of the cameras—he's the one who recommended the camera to me and I got it. He adjusts the F stops and depth of field and shutter speeds. I don't. I just shoot it generally in automatic. There's an exposure compensation setting that I use to make it lighter or darker. It's really nice because it's a mirrorless camera, so you can actually see in the viewfinder

how dark or light it is, so it's different than using a DSLR. But it's a lot lighter in weight, and I actually put black electrical tape over the name of the camera, so it looks like I got it out of a cereal box. It's a lot less likely to be stolen, and if it was, it's not as big a deal. And it's super light. It's just great. And probably there were—in that trip to India, which was a twenty-four day, part Buddhist pilgrimage, part tourism, part personal exploration that I took with my wife, Kathy, and other friends of ours from Santa Cruz—there were five or six times I wished I had a telephoto lens. But in twenty-four days that's not bad. I feel like I can make do with what I have and see the world through that.

I don't think it was with my 7 plus—I think it was an iPhone 6—but I was taking a picture election night in 2015. I was outside of Lupulo, the craft beer house in downtown Santa Cruz. It was very dark outside and there was light coming through the windows. I shot a picture with my Canon 5D Mark III—the best camera I have. And I shot a picture with my phone. I didn't have to shoot a lot of frames in a row, where something was moving. It's not like I was shooting a soccer game, where I needed to have the exact moment. A number of moments would suffice because it was just a bunch of people through the window, celebrating election night victory. And the photo I shot with the cell phone was a better photo. It had more dynamic range and there was more detail in the highlights and in the shadows. That's the picture we used on the front page of the paper. I'm often prone to say that the equipment is far less important than your eyes and your brain and your heart. But there are certain limitations to every set of equipment.

I think people are so inured to seeing people taking pictures with their cell phone, they don't even pay attention

to it. There's something really freeing about that. And with the mirrorless camera too—much less than the DSLR. But on both my mirrorless and my phone, there's a slight delay from when the picture is taken. That's really hard for me. If I see moments where everything is aligned in the right place—a person is walking in front of a puddle and there's a shadow—whatever it is, the geometrics of lining up the sun and their shadow, I have to do a lot more anticipating with the phone to hope to get it at the exact right moment, to get that Cartier-Bresson “decisive moment.” So it's not there yet. I assume eventually I'll just use the mirrorless camera and I'll use my phone. Because the mirrorless cameras are great, so light and it's easy.

When we went digital in 2003, the *Sentinel* bought me one camera. They bought me a Canon 1-D and then a 70-200 2.8 zoom, a 16-35 2.8 zoom and then a flash. And they eventually bought me a Canon 20D. It's hard to believe that I shot with that camera. The cards in these cameras were 256 megabytes. It was really freeing to be able to shoot digitally but it couldn't shoot very high ISO. Even 800 ISO was really noisy. And then, as time went on, the *Sentinel* has bought me some more equipment, but as of the last few years, most of the equipment I'm using is mine. Actually, the *Sentinel* eventually bought me a Canon 7D, which is a crop sensor camera. I think the paper bought me that about six years ago. So right now when I go out and shoot, I have my Canon 5D, which I bought; the Canon 7D, which the *Sentinel* bought. The 7D has my long lens on it, which used to be the 70-200 that the paper bought, but now I shoot with a Canon 100-400 that I really like. I bought that. The 16-35 lens that the *Sentinel* bought is too

wide for a full frame camera, the 5D. (This is getting a little geeky here.) So I have to shoot with a 24-70 that's my lens.

So many people are shooting pictures through their cell phones. The principles of what makes a strong photograph are the same, regardless of how you shoot it. The cell phone is bringing a really healthy democratization to photography because it's not about what equipment you have. But if you look at pictures on social media, some people really understand what a good picture is and some people don't.

I've had one-person shows at the Michaelangelo Gallery in the last couple of years. And two of those shows have been just iPhone photographs. The last show was iPhone photography in one room and travel photography in the other room shot with a DSLR. It's across the street from the Tannery. Angelo Grova runs that gallery. He's a really sweet, sweet man and a wonderful artist in his own right. He's the one who has run FashionArt Santa Cruz for years. So I did a little workshop. Because I don't believe there's any secrets. I was really helped by a lot of people as I went into the business, and throughout my career, and I'm really happy to share whatever I do. It's not magic and it's not brain surgery.

The iPhone photos—almost all of them were processed through Instagram. I just do a couple of things on Instagram and then they're out. And I don't spend too much time on them. To blow them up big enough—because I make them 20x20 (20 inches by 20 inches) when I frame them—they get put into Photoshop, but I generally am not adjusting them too much in Photoshop. I'm just making them bigger. You can print 20x20 and print them at Costco and they look great.



iPhoneography

Changes in the Stock Photography Market

Years ago, before I started at the *Sentinel*, there were some folks in Santa Cruz—Steve Kurtz, Susan Kurtz, and Mark Silva—who started a little stock agency called Pacific Light Views. It was this really delightful arrangement with the three of them. Stock photography is where your pictures are in a library of images and people can buy usage or buy rights to the images. It was really a nice, nice arrangement we had. And then when they ended Pacific Light Views they sold it to another agency. I think it was called Telephoto. Telephoto had my pictures for a while and I would keep adding to them. These were all slides. It was before digital. And then eventually Telephoto got bought by Index Stock, which was a pretty big agency, and they grew and grew. And then, as of about eight years ago, Index Stock was purchased by Getty. So Getty has a bunch of my pictures. But I don't add to them. Stock, like a lot of other things has changed. A lot of photographers used to make a decent living on stock photography. But now what's happening is that the percentage that the photographers get, compared to what the agencies get, is all out of whack. The photographers get a tiny percentage of the fees and royalties paid to the companies like Getty. And also, the rights are totally different. Getty maintains a lot of the rights to the images once you allow your images to be in the Getty files. But they have a really wide reach, so I guess there's an opportunity to make a living. I think it's much harder for photographers to make a living these days. There's just fewer players, so there's not as many choices. It's concentration of corporate control. Another one of these depressing historical changes.

But there are some agencies that are independent agencies. There's one that's called Stocksy. I think they are cooperatives, so that photographers are getting a much greater percent of the profits, and so there is an income stream that's possible there.

Curating Open Show Santa Cruz

About a year ago, Allison Garcia, who is a local photographer and a retired UCSC employee, approached me and told me about an event she had gone to in San Francisco called Open Show, where photographers show work to a gathering of other people who are mostly interested in photography. It sounded really interesting. It harkened back to the salons.

So Allison introduced me to the concept of Open Show and we accepted that we would try and make it happen in Santa Cruz. We applied for, and got a grant from the Arts Council, and we subscribed to the Open Show format and structure.²⁷ I think it's an open source platform to use. They have rules, but basically what it is, is that online we start accepting submissions from photographers or videographers for a portfolio of between fifteen and twenty-five images. Once they're all submitted, we curate and go through and figure out who we're going to accept. We try and make it a pretty diverse set of photographers because the idea is that we're trying to create a photographic community. So we'll have people doing birds, or we'll have people doing street photography, or we'll have art photography.

The response has been amazing. So far we've been doing it every three months, four times a year. This year we did it four times at the Radius Gallery, which is over

²⁷ <http://www.openshow.org/>

in the Tannery. We fill the room, so we usually have about eighty people there. It's a format. You're not doing a slideshow exactly. You're presenting your work; it's being projected behind you and the audience is encouraged to ask questions or make comments, which can be a little jarring as the presenter. Everyone presents for ten minutes. There's this real nice synergy in the room. Every time we are getting more and more submissions. It's a way for people to show their work. Their work is seen and their work is commented on, and in a pretty kind way, I think.

I presented at the first Open Show but I feel like I don't have as much of a need to have my work shown because it is exhibited almost every day. It's on your doorstep in the morning. But there are not very many opportunities for people to be able to see someone's work and to hear what the backstory is, or what their process is, or what their mindset is, or what they're trying to accomplish. There's such value in that as a photographer, and also as a fan of photography. It's a real pleasure.

And now we've brought on board in our committee that runs Open Show, Angelica Glass and Samuel Torres, who are both local photographers. So we all curate the show together, and figure out which photographers we're going to choose. And then we all help organize it. Allison introduces it and I emcee. It's worked out really, really well. We're trying to figure out if we're going to move to a bigger space because we're filling that space.

Open Show started in San Francisco. There are pretty active chapters, I think, in New York, Boston, Los Angeles. But all over the world—on the website it looks like there are sixty or seventy places where it exists. When you open the Open Show website as an administrator, you get to see

a spreadsheet of how many submissions they have in each place. Some places are obviously trying to make it work but they haven't gotten there yet. It's mostly in bigger cities.

Changes at the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* and in the World of Newspaper Publishing

But once again, that's what makes Santa Cruz special, right? It reminds me of years ago when I was at workshop at the Poynter Institute on documentary photography. One of the teachers of the workshop was this guy named Torsten Kjellstrand.²⁸ He was NPPA Photographer of the Year, back in whenever this was. He went to work at this little paper in Jasper, Indiana called the *Jasper Herald*. This paper, for some reason, had this tradition of photo stories and photojournalism, and every Saturday their paper was one photo story, the whole paper. It was really amazing, a really amazing thing. One of the things he did when he was Photographer of the Year was this story called "The Brothers."²⁹ There were these two brothers who never got married and they lived on the same farm they grew up on. And they lived in the same room and they farmed together. It was really a great story. But he talked about how he, in Jasper, in the community, would be driving around and coming to take a picture of a pig farmer. And because of what the newspaper was there, the pig farmer would start talking to him about the tonality of his photographs.

I think we have the same thing here. For the size of community we are and the size of newspaper we are, we have a very, very sophisticated readership, which mostly is

²⁸ <http://www.kjellstrand.com/>

²⁹ <http://blog.kjellstrand.com/>



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great. It cuts the other way sometimes, where people expect us to be the *New York Times*, or even the *San Jose Mercury News*. And we're not. I don't know what we are right now, but if we try and be the *New York Times*, we're going to fail really badly. And even being the *San Jose Mercury News*, we're going to fail. We need to be the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* if we're going to survive. We need to cover local sports and we need to cover all sorts of things. One of the challenges is we have way fewer reporters than we used to have.

It's a little depressing to talk about. Back in the nineties, the *Sentinel* totally kicked butt. We were a great, great newspaper for the size of the community we were in. There were still members of the community that hadn't read it since the seventies, and still thought we were not a very good newspaper, but we were. When Wallace and I did one of our evenings at Kuumbwa, he said, "I don't want to hear one person say 'The Senile.'" But a lot of the people who said that hadn't actually read the paper in years. The *Sentinel* was a really conservative, old-boy network kind of newspaper back before the 1970s, as Santa Cruz was that kind of town before the university.

I think we did a really, really great job at covering the community. And I think we still did that until not that long ago. But the paper is owned by a chain, which is owned by a Hedge Fund. It's very sad to me, because I think that the Hedge Fund, Alden Global Capital, really is just trying to make money from holding onto these newspapers. We're still profitable, so they haven't closed us. But the *Sentinel* had 146 full-time employees years ago. Some departments are now elsewhere. So we don't have a press. And they were all men—all the pressmen—they work elsewhere now. But we don't have a copy desk with people laying out the paper

in Santa Cruz. They're in Chico. But even with that—after we got bought—they sold the old *Sentinel* building, which is now the Cruzio building, and we moved to an office park in Scotts Valley. And then recently our ten-year lease expired in Scotts Valley and we moved back to Santa Cruz. Now our temporary location is in the old *Sentinel* building.

I think we have twenty-three employees now. We have two people working in the ad department. And we have a few reporters. We have a little sports department. We have one full-time photographer and two part-time photographers. We have one managing editor. It's just this tiny, tiny little staff. So we can't do as good a job as we used to be able to. And I wonder how long advertisers will keep paying for ads in a paper that's getting smaller and smaller.

I think that democracy suffers if there's no journalistic endeavor with integrity. I think it is really important because if it wasn't for the *Sentinel*, as small as it is, you wouldn't know what is happening at the city council, necessarily. You wouldn't know what is happening at the board of supervisors. You wouldn't know what is happening at the school boards, in one place. So there's clearly a place for it. And maybe it will just be online eventually and maybe someone else will start something that will be your Santa Cruz newspaper in the future.

But the other part that's not going to change back to the way it was, but is germane to the conversation, is that the way you read a newspaper online and the way you read a physical paper newspaper are really different. That's, I think, a challenge to democracy as well. When you read a hard copy of the newspaper, you see all kinds of things that you wouldn't have clicked on. When you read news online, you click on what interests you. So when you have a hard copy



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of a newspaper, an editor will say, “Let’s put these stories on page two because people should see them.” But if you were reading online, you wouldn’t click on those stories.

That’s a horse that’s left the barn, so to speak. That’s never coming back. People are going to read news online. I think that’s one of the problems of having an ignorant electorate, that people only read things they think they’re interested in and they don’t read things that they might see if they were reading the hard copy. I don’t think most people read it as a PDF. I think people click on the links. And if you’re seeing it on your phone, you’re not going to see the whole page. Yesterday I was listening to a story on NPR that said this is the first year that more people are doing their holiday shopping on a phone than on a computer. It’s a little tiny space, even a big phone. Even an iPhone 7 Plus is little tiny space. I look at my daughters—they are on the computer some but they’re mostly communicating on the phone. I think most young people are. It’s a miraculous technological revolution we’ve had, but there are downsides to it.

I do think that people, when they’re looking for specific photos, they enlarge them and look at them. But it’s not the same as seeing them on a desktop computer. It’s just not. Or a laptop. Oftentimes, those actually look better than they do in the paper, which is nice, printed on newsprint. But the phone, they’re okay. That’s the world we live in. That’s not going away. That’s not changing. I have to adapt and photographers need to adapt to the new way that people are looking at their pictures. They’re just smaller and you need to have more dynamic images because people are seeing *so* many pictures. And also, you need to know what pictures are going to look like on a phone, so

you make sure they are toned so they have the most pop. Subtle pictures, quieter pictures, are not going to be seen as much. Maybe that’s not important. Maybe they don’t need to be seen as much because they’re seen by so many more people than they were in the old days anyway.

Selfishly, I’m happy that I’m towards the end of my career rather than the beginning of my career. I’ve had this opportunity to do all sorts of spectacular things and it’s been an amazing run. And on the other hand, the technology is developing to the point where the potential to mix video and stills and audio and do really dynamic multimedia is increasing. And it’s easy for people to do it. In the same way as before Photoshop, if you needed to do something in your photo, and you needed it airbrushed, or you needed to spot out dust spots, it was a very, very labor-intensive thing. Now it’s easy. In the same way as before, if you were making a video before Premiere or Final Cut Pro was as easily accessible, or iMovie was easily accessible, it was an arduous process, very hard and very expensive. Now you can make a great video easily on your phone, or certainly on your computer. So there’s all this opportunity and more people can see it. And that’s great.

So I think it’s really a mixed bag. It depends on what happens. It depends what happens with net neutrality, what happens with all sorts of things that allow people access to the content. I think there’s this other challenge. Search engines like Google don’t want to gather create the news. They want to collect stuff that other people have found and reported on and present it. So if we’re all out of business, newspapers—where’s the information going to come from. Where is content

coming from? It allows for more single-issue, totally unfair positions to be represented, and unfounded.

Follow Your Passion

When people ask me, “Should I go into photojournalism?” my response is, “You should follow your passion. If you care about something, you should explore it. Otherwise you’re going to regret that.” Passion accomplishes a lot, but it doesn’t accomplish everything. Certain fields are more demanding in terms of hours and lack of economic compensation than others. So you need to make those decisions based on trying to figure out what you want to do with your life. I really think people need to learn how to write. That’s the number one skill, whether you’re going to be a photographer or not. But as a photographer, it helps you think about what story you’re telling, as a journalist. I also think that it pairs really nicely with photography, in that more people doing journalism are going to be need to be taking pictures, and/or video, and writing. Because there are fewer staff positions, someone who has both of those skills is going to be more valuable.

If I knew what the future was, it would be much easier to say what advice I would have. I’m also not big on giving advice, as much as I am willing to speak my truth and what’s worked for me. My path has been circuitous and it’s unlike most people’s paths to get to where I am. But that worked for me. It’s hard to find other people who at age five started knowing what they wanted to do with their lives. I think it’s worth exploring all sorts of options. I think it’s really worth getting a liberal arts education, to be as well-rounded as you can.

I look back on my life and know that there was this clear passion for, and affinity for taking pictures. And at some point, it became obvious that it was photojournalistically oriented. I can look back and say that all these things were leading me to the place I ended up going, which I guess is true of everyone, whatever you came from is how you got here. But for me, it’s really clear that it was photography from a very young age.

It’s interesting that Ansel Adams was a concert pianist. When he was systematizing photographic technique in the zone system, which is one thing he helped identify and develop, he found there was a real strong correlation between music and photography, in terms of tonality and composition. I think there’s something to that. When I play harmonica, I’m just experiencing it while it’s happening. That’s really similar to a lot of what I do as a photographer, where I’m doing more problem solving, and I’m more conscious of left brain, right brain when I’m doing photography, but there’s this sense of being there, experiencing it, being with it, taking it to the next level, and kind of going with it. I think that all the time, whether it’s shooting pelicans on the rocks at Natural Bridges, or shooting bicycle racers on the Tour of California. There’s this sense of just being with it and being in the flow of the moment.

As long as I can, I’ll keep doing what I’m doing at the *Sentinel*. Because we have fewer reporters and fewer stories, so much of my job is driving around looking for cool pictures in Santa Cruz now. So that’s pretty amazing. It’s a good life. I also feel that the stuff I’m doing with my iPhone photography will continue to grow. I’m getting better at that and I think that technology will improve, too. One of

the things that I really like about the iPhone photography, which is probably what I'll do more than anything else, is to continue producing pictures that don't really necessarily tell a story. They just have this interesting, or dynamic, or beautiful graphic sense to them. I like the impermanence of it. They're there and then they're gone. People look at them and they comment on them. They like them. Or they just see them and then they go to the next thing.

I don't want to sound like I'm dying here, but it's been an amazing life. I've had the privilege of doing what I've been doing professionally. So as long as I can keep doing it, I'll keep doing it. I don't see it actually changing. The technology will change. But it's way too much fun to stop doing.



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About the Interviewer/Editor:

Irene Reti is the director of the Regional History Project, where she has worked since 1989 conducting and publishing oral histories. Reti has a B.A. (Environmental Studies and Women's Studies) from UCSC and an MA in History from UCSC. She is also the publisher of HerBooks/Juniper Lake Press and is a landscape photographer, writer, and small press publisher.



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