



AN INCREDIBLE EPIC

Memoir of A Multi-Image Maestro

The “**Incredible**” History of Slide Shows

Together With

A Confabulation Based on The Author’s Autobiography

For Audiovisual Aficionados

By Douglas Mesney — As Told to Himself

File Under: Geriatric Narcissism

An Incredible Epic

continued from Volume Four

Scene from 1988 show, *Got to Be, S-AV*.



An Incredible Epic

Memoir of A Multi-Image Maestro

Volume Five

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The author has researched the information contained in this book to check accuracy.

The opinions expressed in this book are solely based upon the author's own experience.

The author assumes no responsibility for errors and inaccuracies.

Resemblances to persons living or dead may be coincidental.

Some names may not be real.

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¹ In *The Trip to Echo Spring* by Olivia Laing, confabulation is described as "so-called 'honest lying' or false memories." I would add that, we remember (and edit) selectively what we like and repress what we don't. Wikipedia defines the term as: "... a memory error defined as the production of fabricated, distorted, or misinterpreted memories about oneself or the world, without the conscious intention to deceive."

Notes to Reader

- *An Incredible Epic* was started ten years ago, in 2015. It is a work in progress; being expanded and upgraded as new articles and pictures become available. New versions are periodically published. You can see your Edition Number on the title page (iii).
- Volume Nine is filled with pictures that relate to the first six volumes. Volume **Eleven has even more, woven into a 1982 treatise called "Confessions of A Multi-Image Maniac"; that is a precursor to *An Incredible Epic*** about how to produce multi-image shows. **Volume Thirteen, currently in the works, is a 'catch all'** for additional material being continually re-discovered in my archives.
- Videos of forty-one Incredible slide shows can be seen on Vimeo (search for 'Mesney') or www.imcredibleimages.com, **threaded into an abbreviated biography.** Additional shows by other producers have been restored and curated by Steve Michelsen and can be seen at www.youtube.com/@AV_archaeology/videos.
- As the Epic has evolved materially, so too has the refinement of its style(s). Please **excuse the small inconsistencies you will encounter. And please don't fret about any** spelling errors; they are elusive little buggers; but let me know about them, please.
- The original Epic was split into seven parts when the size of the single volume overwhelmed Microsoft Word (I should have used Adobe InDesign). The index (Volume Eight) could not be split and ceased being updated. Thus, the index is of limited usefulness, covering only the content in the original manuscript – about 80% of Volumes One through Seven.
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¹ Confabulation has been variously described as **so-called 'honest lying' or false memories fabricated, distorted, or misinterpreted about oneself or the world, without the conscious intention to deceive.** I would add that, we remember (and edit) selectively what we like and repress what we don't.



In memory of these mentors, colleagues, and friends, who departed
during the production of *An Incredible Epic*:

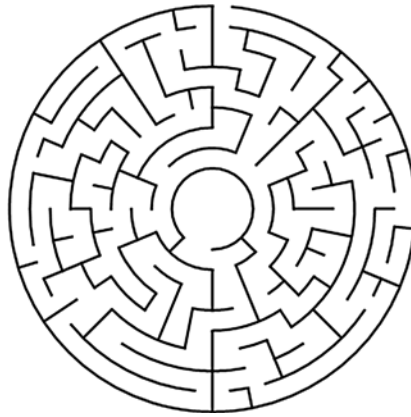
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Larry Spasic
Charlie Spataro
John Stapsy
Christine Ströman
Donald Sutherland
Randolf Taylor
Glen Tracy
Duffie White
Randy Will
Mike Yugas
Constantine Zacharius

With appreciation for their contributions
to my life and well-being.



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"You have to go where the story leads you."

Stephen King (PBS interview)

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Backstory

Volume One traced my life up to 1969, the fateful year I opened Mesney's Mad Medicine Show and committed myself to a career as a commercial photographer.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on January 28, 1945. **I'm an Aquarian with Scorpio rising, Moon in Leo and Venus in Pisces.** That should tell you all you need to know. But **there is more....**

Dorothy Mesney, my mom, was the daughter of a prominent New York judge, Franklin Taylor and Kathrine Munro, a socialite from Montréal, Canada. My dad, Peter Mesney, was the offspring of Roger James Mesney, the British chief engineer of the Anglo-Dutch Mining Corporation, and London actress Marjorie Unett.

I grew up in the affluent neighborhood of Douglaston, New York. Grandpa Taylor died when I was five; he had been supporting the family and after that they struggled. **Dad couldn't keep-up with mom's spending. From the age of eight, I worked at various jobs to** earn my own money, starting with door-to-door selling of pot-holders and jewelry that I made myself, then greeting cards and eventually pictures.



I was brought up by theatrical parents (left). Dad went to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts [London] and Mom was a piano teacher and singer of gospel, spiritual and folk music. I had piano lessons in grade school but switched to a trombone in junior-high and as a *Froshman* (cross between Freshman and Sophomore—I was in an accelerated junior-high-school program and did high school in three years instead of four) I was a member of the band and orchestra at Bayside High School until my trombone got stolen.

Six weeks after that, Grandpa Mesney (right) visited America from England and gave me a professional-grade Minolta SR-2 camera. I got hooked on taking pictures. My science class term project was a series of two dozen slides illustrating the growth of a bean plant from seed to sprout, including shots taken with a microscope adapter.

Then a neighbor, Glen Peterson, gave me a summer job at his photo laboratory in New York (Peterson Color Laboratory, favorite among New York's advertising agencies). **I learned about the** advertising business delivering work to Mad Men. I used the money to build my own darkroom in the basement of the family house.



I was mentored by my alternate father, Bob Banning and Life magazine photographer, Ted Russell. In my sophomore year at Bayside High School, I teamed up with David Nolte, a fellow student. Mesney-Nolte Photographers shot portraits, weddings, bar mitzvahs and whatever other jobs we could land.

I spent my first year of college at St. Lawrence University. I had a scholarship but had to borrow most of the tuition money (~\$15,000) because my folks were going broke. I learned all about the ravages of debt watching my parents flounder and quit St. Lawrence in favor of more affordable Queens College [City College of New York (CCNY)]. Tuition was only ~\$2,000 and I could live at home in Douglaston. I attended classes at night and worked days to pay off my student loan.

My first jobs were in the advertising business. I learned the ropes of the PR business from Louise Friscia first, then at **J. DeBow and Partners**. **After that I worked as a "board man"** for Seymour Levy at a little ad agency called J. Charles David, Inc. I enjoyed doing layout and paste-up work and Seymour let me take pictures for a few of his ads—a huge motivator. Seymour also loved to take pictures; he understood my passion for pictures.

Next I worked for an industrial advertising agency called Basford, Inc. where I re-learned how to write (think) under the tutelage of Burt Holmes, one of my top three mentors. Holmes also allowed me to photograph my own projects (fact sheets for the American Iron and Steel Institute). Throughout this period, my photo kit and expertise ramped up. I continued to do private assignments outside of the office and began selling pictures to magazines; Car and Driver became a steady customer.



As the Viet Nam War dragged on and the Beatles started dropping acid, so did I. Starting in high school, in 1959, I smoked weed on a regular basis. I led a double life; most people thought I was a drinker (I was that, too). My hair got longer and I grew a Fu Manchu mustache. That irritated Burt Holmes' boss, department head John Paluszek, who subsequently fired my ultra-efficient secretary because he was a black man (in a world where secretaries were normally female and frequently hired for their looks and other benefits). That was cause for my resignation.

By that time (1967), I was ready to move on. Paluszek had been getting on my case ever since Burt allowed me to shoot my own jobs; in his opinion, photography interfered with my work as an assistant account executive and copy writer. Then, stodgy old industrial Basford got bought by a dynamic young consumer agency called Creamer-Colarossi. *Vive la difference.*

Other account execs asked me to shoot for their projects, and that really pissed off Paluszek. **But I was sleeping with Don Creamer's secretary (so was Don) and she**

arranged for her boss to put Paluszek in his place. I did more and more photography and those assignments, plus time spent with other Basford colleagues in the art department, particularly Kurt Boehnstedt, reinforced my desire to be a photographer.

After Paluszek fired me, the agency's other partner, Ben Colarossi, arranged to get me an office space at small film-production company run by Bob Gurvitz at 346 East 50th Street—a prestigious address. I worked out of there for the first year. My wife, the former Leslie Shirk, supported me. We married in 1966. She had a cushy job as a systems analyst for a burgeoning young enterprise-computer-software company called Management Assistance Incorporated [MAI].

Along the way I met Justine Reynolds in 1969. She was opening a school for aspiring models called Justine Model Consultants. She offered me the opportunity to share a large loft space on 23rd Street and Madison—it was the heart of New York's so-called Photo District at the time, a perfect location and a great opportunity to expand into fashion photography, where there were big bucks to be made (and beautiful girls to be laid).

However, I couldn't do it without Leslie's financial support—and my relationship with her was dicey; she caught me cheating and subsequently ran off with a surfer for half a year. I convinced her to return and try again; she did and helped me build the new studio. On the night we finished, after the champagne toasts, she announced that she was leaving me and moving to Virginia with her boss, who two years earlier bought my Corvette. (!)

By then I was on my feet, generating enough income to support my newly expanded operation; but I was working my ass off to do it, days at my profession and nights screwing models.

As Volume One ended, I had just thrown a studio-opening party for Mesney's Mad Medicine Show called the Mad Ball. It was the kind of event you might see in a movie. Justine and I collaborated; the guests included a bevy of her beauties. The darkroom was set-up as a sangria bar; red, white and rosé sangria were mixed in and served from the 3½-gallon [~16-liter] stainless-steel film-processing tanks. Slide projections, color lights and a mirror ball illuminated my half of the loft; the shooting stage became a dance floor; **Justine's space was the chill zone. Business doubled shortly after the Mad Ball, and that's** where the story picked up in Volume Two.



Volume Two covered three transformative years: 1970-1972

The decade began with an influx of new business generated by my promotional efforts; those included the *Exposure* newsletter, Pixies, and most recently the Mad Ball. The work was dominated by automotive assignments. Working with Tom Ridinger (right) and Gene Butera, some of my best pictures were made for *Car and Driver* magazine and *Cycle*.

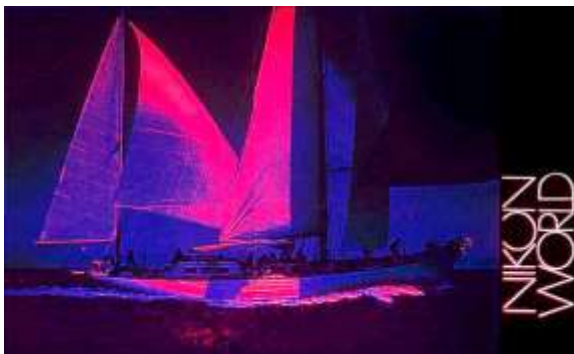


Ridinger and I collaborated with Art Gurero to produce an award-winning ecological ad campaign for the Motorcycle Industries Council.

One of five MIC ads. Model, Richard Faye



As my reputation spread, I got hired by bigger magazines like *Penthouse* and *True*. The editorial assignments generated interest from some of the heavyweights. I was hired by Ogilvy & Mather to shoot a Mercedes Benz ad campaign (above, right) and for Burson-Marsteller I photographed a Rolls Royce Camargue.

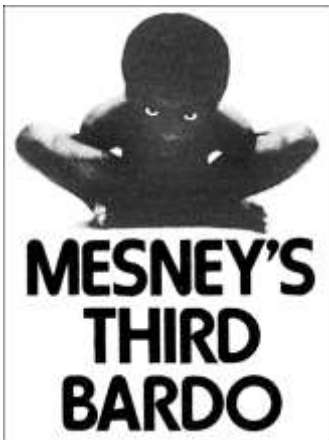


Following the same path, I launched my career into the boating business. When my pictures appeared in *Boating* and *Rudder* magazines, Nikon used my work for a promotional display at the New York International Boat Show and a spread in *Nikon World* magazine (left). That led to my first slide show, for the National Association of Engine and Boat Manufacturers [NAEBM], sponsors of the New York Show.



Burson Marsteller became a new client. Geoff Nightingale hired me to build a **model city for Armco Steel's Student Design Program** (left). That led to a widening stream of business from Owens-Corning Fiberglas.

Although business was good, it wasn't generating enough income to support both my apartment in Queens and the studio in Manhattan. I rolled the dice, ditched both of those and moved into a smaller space at a much classier address on Embassy Row: 23 East 73rd Street, the former Wanamaker mansion.



That was the smartest move I ever made. Business boomed after that.

I took over another floor in the building and convinced Tom Ridinger to leave Car and Driver and work with me.

The business was renamed **Mesney's Third Bardo**.

John Wanamaker

By the end of 1972, work from the Burson-Marsteller agency began to dominate our order book.

As Volume Three begins, I am on the cusp of an entirely new career, as a producer of multi-image slide shows and aviation photographer.



Executive Jet Aviation [EJA] ad, 1974.

Rapid growth characterized the rest of the 70s, as detailed in Volume Three.



1973 was the penultimate year of publishing. Ridinger and I produced more than sixty covers for Beeline Books while also packaging the design and production of Show and Gallery magazines and producing record album covers for Willie Nelson.



'73 was also the year of the Arabian Oil Embargo. The economy went into recession. Starved of advertising revenues, magazines that had been my bread-and-butter client base struggled; their assignments evaporated.

However, audiovisual business filled my purse, made possible by technological advances in slide-show control equipment, particularly by Audio Visual Laboratories, with whom I established a symbiotic liaison that enriched my technological prowess and reputation.



Falcon Jet, 1974



Character actor Jan Leighton in AVL Christmas ad.

Burson-Marsteller acquired new business from an array of aviation companies.

We produced both print work and slide shows for Executive Jet Aviation [now called Net Jets], Piper Aircraft, Falcon Jet, Alia Airlines and Arab Wings.



Yours Truly with Cyclopan camera at Yankee Stadium and Mystic Seaport.

Then came Cyclopan, a 360-degree camera that expanded my photographic capabilities and tied-in with the panoramic format of increasingly large slide shows. It became a unique promotional device, if not a profitable business segment.

Nearing the mid-decade, I had so much business that I hired Pat Billings to assist (right).



Within five years the staff grew to include 35 people at various points. The slide shows we made required more and more people as they got increasingly complex.³

Big AV projects for Burger King and World Book funded my company's rapid expansion into audiovisual production. I put the profits back into more gear and R&D (research and development). That investment—and my ongoing promotional efforts—paid off in spades. By the end of the 70s, Incredible Slidemakers became one of the top ten multi-image companies in the world.

In the latter half of the decade, the beauty industry became our dominant market segment. What started with a six-projector show for a Long Island salon called **Peter's**

³ Incredible Slidemakers at studio party. Left to right: Michael Chan, Lohn Leicmon, Tim Sali, Yours Truly, Jum Casey (kneeling) Fred Cannizzaro and Rocky Graziano.

Place led to prestigious shows for Vidal Sassoon, Clairol, Ardell, Zotos and InterCoiffure (an international association of elite hairdressers).



Working for The Village People also did a lot to raise the company's profile; celebrity sells.



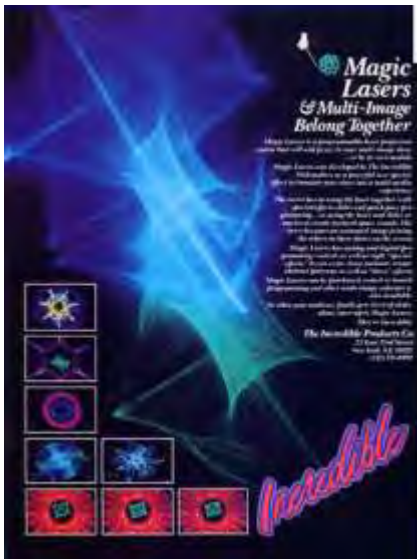
Winning awards at slide-show festivals became my passion; by the end, I earned more than 150 of them. The most prestigious prizes were awarded by the Association for Multi-Image [AMI].

Business on the whole was booming; runaway inflation pumped up the bubble economy. When it came to money, it was a case of use it or lose it. Companies spent fortunes on slide shows. By the late 70s, a fifteen projector show was nothing unusual.



Left, Yours Truly in projection room at 73rd Street studio.
Right, small part of awards display at Brussels studio.

Many of my award-winning shows were made for Audio Visual Laboratories, to demonstrate their cutting-edge gear. Those shows were creative expressions with no holds barred; I could do anything, as long as AVL founder Chuck Kappenman approved. In 1978, Incredible became AVL's defacto ad agency.



Near the end of the 70s, my pet project, Magic Lasers, almost bankrupted the company; I invested too little too late in a technology that was a black hole for investors; but it was fun while it lasted.

Left, ad for Magic Lasers. Right, Incredible Slidemakers stand at National Audio-Visual Association [NAVA] trade show in Dallas.

Purchase Point saved the day when I was hired to produce a launch show for Rank Xerox, in London. Getting away from my growing “family” of helpers for that summer-long stint was transformative. I got to compare the workings of my company with those of a bigger and more successful production company. Purchase Point hired above themselves, employing people smarter than them. I was too insecure to do that, I guess; or too proud (egotistical). Mom said: “You can do anything....” But it dawned on me that my propensity to hire beneath myself might not be a good idea.

At the close of Volume Three, Incredible Slidemakers were producing a show for a prestigious new client, The Washington Post.

By then, the Forox Department, under Fred Cannizzaro, had become a profit center of its own.

Incredible Slidemakers were leading the way when it came to the development of special effects graphics.

[Many Photoshop effects and their ilk derive from the pioneering camera work of The Incredible Slidemakers.]



Volume Four began in 1980, with *A Method in the Madness*, a high-profile conference involving the whose-who in the slide show business, organized by Yours Truly. More than any of my efforts to date, that event propelled me to the front pages of the trade press, and thus, the attention of the AV community.

With the new decade came more peaks and valleys during the international segment of my roller-coaster ride through life.



Incredible Slidemakers ended on the trash heap of history, taken down by Paul Volker's draconian interest rates, which did more to grind the economy into a halt than, possibly, the zero-rate and negative interest rate policies we have today.

I moved to Hawaii (right and below) and began a new life as a freelance entity. Things **didn't go according to plan. There was next to no production work in Hawaii and a local graphic designer tied-up the little there was.**



I should have known better; my mistake was equating staging and production. Everyone wants to go to Hawaii. Why would anyone hire a Hawaiian producer and deprive themselves of a trip there? **They wouldn't and didn't. But it wasn't a total loss. I met my future wife, Sandra Sande, on an inter-island Aloha Airlines flight.**



Together, we started a new business—Hawaiian Panoramas—selling framed Cyclopan pictures. That business broke even, at best. Just as I was going bust, Lindsay Rodda hired me to produce car-launch shows and **train his crew in "New-York-style" multi-image production.** Sandra and I ended up Down Under for a year.

Our Australian fortune was re-invested back in Hawaii. Twice unlucky, we found ourselves selling Hawaiian Panoramas on the streets outside of the Honolulu Zoo, where artists and hucksters were permitted.





Our ship was sinking, but Chris Korody threw me lifeline and we went to work for Image Stream, in Los Angeles. Those were my happiest days in the slide-show business. Image Stream was probably the best multi-image shop in the world, at that time; I did some of my best work there, producing with the support of the Stream Team (left).⁴

However, I was seduced away from Image Stream by a Vancouver producer who needed help with an Expo show for Air Canada. We left Image Stream and moved to Vancouver. **It was Sandra's home town and I loved** Vancouver from the first day I set foot there.

Said producer double crossed me and hired a local to produce the detailed plan that I **made on spec (speculation)**. Silly me; why didn't I know better than to reveal the core creative before getting a signed contract and retainer?

After a dreary winter of incessant rain and no work, pent-up in a North Vancouver apartment, we were at our financial ends again when the phone rang.

Sven Lidbeck was calling, from Sweden, with an invitation to produce a launch show for the Saab 9000 Turbo 16. Within a month we were living in Stockholm and working at Audio Visual Centrum AB (right). AVC gave us a sweet deal. Saab invited me to produce another big show and a two-month gig turned into nearly ten-year-long sojourn in Scandinavia.



During our second year there, AVC went bust owing me *beaucoup de bucks*. Returning to America or Canada held no prospects; I had no contacts there anymore; that network was **gone; and we hadn't the funds to return there, anyway. Instead, I stayed in Sweden and** opened my own company—Incredible Imagers AB—across the street from AVC. Saab and a few other AVC clients moved their business to my company; but Sandra moved out—**after catching me in an affair with AVC's foxiest secretary.**

Then came news that Image Stream went under; Korody succumbed to the same problem I had, five years earlier: overhead too high to withstand an economic downturn. John Emms, who I hired at Sonargraphics and who was subsequently hired by Chris Korody (on my recommendation), was a free agent. I convinced him to join me and together with my new girlfriend—Kodak account executive, Elisabeth Ivarsson—we grew the Swedish incarnation of my Incredible company into the most highly awarded AV studio in history.

⁴ The original Stream Team. Left to right: Ted Iserman, Susy Dillingham, Chris and Cathy Korody, Brad Hood.



Between 1986 and '88, three of our shows won consecutive Grand Prizes at the New York International Film & TV Festival, our trophy collection grew to more than one hundred and I was inducted into the AMI Hall of Fame.

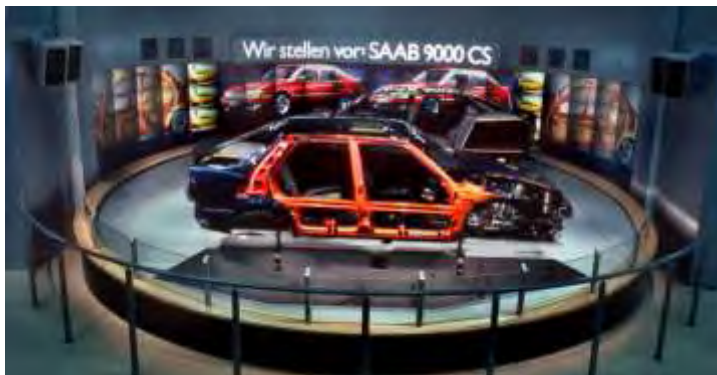
Flush with success, more and more of our business was coming from Europe. I moved Incredible's HQ to Brussels, Europe's emerging new capitol, to avoid expensive flights from Scandinavia.

To build the Brussels studio I borrowed (aka "leveraged") to the hilt. Svenska Handelsbanken matched my investment, kronor for kronor; and me not ever Swedish. (!) But business in Europe was booming, while America struggled to get out from under the crash of the S&L [Savings & Loan] banking crisis.

The Belgian company was named Incredible Imagers International. When I left Elisabeth behind, to run the Stockholm satellite sales office, she left me.

The Belgian business didn't last long. When US President George Walker Bush (the senior) went to war with Iraq, that crashed the European economy (not the American). I let the staff go and liquidated the Brussels company, salvaging just enough to start over.

Saab—my lost loyal client—came to my rescue with a 60-projector Image Wall for the International Motor Show circuit [Frankfurt, Turin and Tokyo], produced in Stockholm (right). Then, Max Bjurhem came through with another show for Scania Bus; and there was more. I was on a roll again, working frugally and mostly alone (camera and audio work were farmed out).



With the fall of the Berlin Wall, opportunities abounded to develop businesses in former Soviet satellite states. After an exploratory trip to Tallinn, Estonia, I tried to open a visitors' center and opened a company in Tallin—Incredible Imagers Estonia.



When I couldn't get financing (the Estonian Kronor wasn't in circulation yet and Stockholm banks did not deal in Rubles, which were the hold-over currency in the country), I decided to move back to the States, to a house I purchased on Vashon Island (left).

My last job in Sweden was producing a mindblower for Kurt Hjelte, the guy who brought me to Sweden eight years earlier. It was the end of that cycle in the grand arc of my international life. I was burned out on AV and wanted to go into the restaurant business.



Volume Five closed with me on the verge of emigrating to Vashon Island [near Seattle] but not before nearly turning an avocation into a profession.

My interest in the Culinary arts blossomed when I returned Stockholm. I built a mini-restaurant in my Stockholm flat and apprenticed at a bread bakery, first, then with Steffan Petersson, an award-winning *pâtissier* (left).

On the way back to America, I made a stopover in Seville, Spain, to visit the 1992 Expo.

1992 – Seville Expo – Waste of Time and Money

I took a circuitous flight back to the States, travelling via Spain so that I could see the Seville Expo. **I hadn't been to a World's Fair** (what they used to call Expos) in nearly 30 years, ever since I worked at the Sinclair Dinoland pavilion at the 1963-64 New York World's Fair. That fair was extraordinary. I was expecting to see a lot, but was sorely disappointed. The Seville Expo ran from April 20 to October 21, 1992; that was a big year for Spain; Barcelona hosted the Olympics; Madrid was hailed as European Cultural Capital. The Expo was held in and around the Isla Cartuja, which was completely redeveloped for the event; a new city was built from scratch. But neither the Expo nor the city was **finished the day after the Expo's grand opening, when I arrived. Unopened pavilions** outnumbered open ones by two to one; it was a complete waste of my time and money. *Me voy de aquis, baby.*

1992 – Vashon Island – New Neighbors

When I arrived on Vashon Island, the Lorentzens (Tom and Bea) were my new neighbors. We met the afternoon I discovered salmon berries. **I'd never heard of salmon berries** before Vashon; they are mild-tasting berries resembling yellow-orange raspberries. There were a bunch of them growing at the foot of my driveway, across from **the Lorentzen's house**. Tom came out when he saw me picking the berries, to see who I was and what I was up to (nobody picked salmon berries, he explained).



The Lorentzens lived in the house where Tom was born. They lived like pioneers. Except for a short spell living in Europe and some time in Seattle (when he worked as a principal in the Seattle public school system, and his wife was the nurse) Tom spent most of his life on Vashon Island; **and it looks like that's where he'll die.** [Update: Tom died in 2018.] I got to know the Lorentzen family well; they were raising three adopted children: Kaia, Rolf and Carsten.

Three more different siblings would be hard to find. Kaia (a name with Hawaiian and Scandinavian roots), the eldest of the three, was in her prime—a Viking-sized blonde beauty nearly six feet tall, with a personality just as big. Kaia was an Alpha woman⁵ with a reputation for being a wild one. She dominated the conversation wherever she went, frequently proved that she could outdrink everyone, and had any man she wanted.

⁵ Wikipedia: Type A and Type B personality hypothesis describes two contrasting personality types. In this hypothesis, personalities that are more competitive, highly organized, ambitious, impatient, highly aware of time management and/or aggressive are labeled Type A, while more relaxed, less "neurotic", 'frantic', 'explainable', personalities are labeled Type B.

Kaia's crowd were the *clay*, real people doing Vashon's real work, building the homes and infrastructure, tending to fields and farms. They were the gang that hung out at the **Sportsmen's bar (now called Sporty's) and Bishop's Pub**, a rowdier tavern across the street (that became a respectable family pub called the Red Bike). I was only a few years older than Kaia; thoughts went through my mind. I invited her out and took her to Happy Garden.⁶ By the end of the evening it was pretty clear that I was not her type; she chose brawn over brains and ended up married to Parker Taylor, a free-lance home builder who could have made a fortune as a male model. The two of them were a stunning couple and they parented two gorgeous daughters: Sacha [a Greek name, the defender of man] and Katchiana [a Pueblo name]. Like their mother and father, the two girls could have been photo models. Katcha will be 24 this year [2018]; her older sister, Satcha, drowned almost ten years ago, when she was only 19; on a dare, Satcha swam out to a far buoy in the shipping channel off Spring Beach on the southwest side of Vashon Island; perhaps the water was too cold, or the currents too swift for her. Kaia and Parker split up; that was probably good, given his inclination for alcohol and substance abuse. She was a heavy drinker, too—they were a super-saturated pair. After the split-up, Parker had a rough time keeping things together; he was high most of the time; eventually he lost his clients, his livelihood and his house. Before that, I hired Parker to make some improvements to my house, installing insulated storm-doors and a staircase on the north side of the front porch; Tom ended up helping Parker figure out what kind of storm-doors to use and driving him up to Woodinville to fetch them; the strain case Parker installed was off-kilter, ever so slightly; that was annoying, but not worth making him do it over. The upshot was that Kaia went through a couple of more marriages before finding a lasting relationship. [Spoiler Alert: Today Kaia lives with a new man—a sober one—far from Vashon, far from the memory of Sacha; Tom and Bea still support her.]

I learned a lot about living frugally from the Lorentzens. Bea did all her own baking and the two of them (four, if you include Rolf and Lisa) ran a half-acre vegetable garden; their preserved garden produce fed the extended family through the winter. Tom did his own field work; he cut 5 acres of field grass every week in high season, pushing a DR mower up and down his slopes. Whew!

Tom's son Rolf was everything Kaia was not; a serious man, all business; a *get 'er done* kind of guy; religious; a dedicated husband and father. He married a Mexican gal, Lisa; and fathered a daughter, Ava, and a son, Andreas. Lisa home schooled them both. For all **his good qualities, Rolf has had difficulty keeping jobs; I can't imagine why, but he generally lasted only a year or so, before being made redundant. He's gone through long spells of unemployment, when Tom and Bea had to support their family in addition to Kaia's; I don't know how they did it, they were both retired, living on pensions and Social Security.**

Carsten, the youngest son, was unemployed. When I first came to Vashon; he worked as **a clerk for a bank in Seattle; but that didn't last long and he never went back to work** again. Carsten was a real loner; he lived in his upstairs room, only came out for meals; never had much to say; never said anything unless replying to a question, cryptically.

⁶ Back then, Vashon's in crowd hung out at a hide-away called the Happy Garden; it was a Chinese restaurant and lounge that was popular in part because it was completely invisible from Vashon Highway; you couldn't see who was there without going inside, where a catacomb of high-backed, half-circle booths provided nearly complete privacy. Happy Garden was the perfect place for liaisons, for intimate tête-à-têtes.

Pam says she thinks he has a mild form of Asperger's.⁷ Carsten was yet another mouth for Tom and Bea to feed; the only thing he did to help out was to split firewood logs, which he did somewhat begrudgingly, a little bit at a time. Carsten spent four hours a day all summer running the splitter, to make the eight cords of firewood needed to heat both family homes. Tom bought his firewood in bulk, as 12-foot-long sections of tree trunks and branches, from Rick Midling, whose family had sold firewood on Vashon for three generations. Rick wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he was sly; I always felt that I was being shorted on the count; but didn't complain because I was lucky to get lengths—Rick didn't want to sell bulk firewood anymore; he wanted to earn more money selling finished firewood; he made twice the money that way. I paid \$160 per notional cord of lengths, whereas split longs were \$320. Anyway.... Tom sawed the 12-foot tree trunks, into 16-inch lengths, called *rounds*. Then it was Carsten's job to split them. For whatever reason, it was always Tom running the chain saw; I never saw Carsten do that. Cutting the rounds used to take Tom a couple of weeks, working alone. Then it took Carsten all summer to split the rounds. Sometimes, the splitting dragged on right into the rainy season.



Tom invited me buy a share in an expensive log splitter that three other families owned jointly and I bought a Makita chain saw. By comparison, with Pam's help, the two of us used to process four cords in four days.

Tom Lorentzen (above) and Yours Truly

All that to say that Tom and Bea Lorentzen were generous, understanding and empathetic. They took me under their wing right from the start. I think my "city-slicker" ways amused them. Tom taught me about living on the land, on Vashon Island. I loved hearing his first-hand accounts of times gone by; stories about Vashon Island's history, and his family's. His dad was a fisherman who immigrated to the States from Norway in the 1920s. He settled on a forested piece of land near the small harbor in Vashon's Cove district, cleared two of his five acres, dug a well, built a three-story house, a barn and two storage sheds while tending a one-acre vegetable garden, a small fruit-tree orchard, an apiary [bee farm], a flock of chickens, two horses, a cow, and a few other barnyard animals. Tom and Bea inherited pioneering genes. They grew the best vegetable garden I've ever seen. Tom lived for that garden year-round. Every autumn, after the first killing frost, his buddy Harold Mann would plow the garden under. Every spring,

⁷ Wikipedia: Asperger syndrome (AS), also known as Asperger's, is a developmental disorder characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests.

Harold would be back, to till Tom's black, fertile soil. (When Gil Hartness quit the tractor business and moved away, Harold mowed my field every August, after the grass dried and became a fire hazard.) Springtime would also see Tom atop an orchard ladder pruning the **dozen or so fruit trees scattered over his father's land and the adjoining five-acre farm** that he and Bea bought, for their adopted kids. The vegetable garden produced so prolifically that certain lucky neighbors, myself included, were invited to share in the bounty. I scored pounds of fresh basil (that I made into pesto) as well as more corn and apples than I could eat.



Tom was full of tales about the Vashon of yore. Every so often he'd wander across his pasture and climb the hill, up to my house, to say "hi," to see how I was... and maybe enjoy a wee bit of my Scandinavian snaps. *Skål!* Tom was still making hard cider then; he was no drunk but enjoyed a tipples now and then. I had a collection of snaps [schnapps] from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Austria (as well as the 12 liters of alcoholic fruits put up in Brussels). **Every time Tom visited; he'd try a new one. He said he** liked the Danish Aalborg Aquavit best. After a couple of shooters, Tom would take on a thick Norwegian accent and recount his life on Vashon Island. Tom recalled that when he was growing up, living on Vashon was an exercise in latter-day pioneering. Life was tough; in the winter, the family would live on salted fish, potatoes and produce from their family farm preserved in Mason jars. (They also made copious amounts of hard cider and Apfelkorn Schnapps—apple liquor.) Of particular interest to me, Tom knew the history of my house, inside out. His father originally logged a thirty-acre tract originally owned by Perry Hanson (another Scandinavian name)—**that included Tom's ten acres, my five, and** another fifteen belonging to neighbors north and east of my plot. He sold his timber to the nearby Shinglemill Saw Mill; they milled the lumber for his house and out buildings from those trees.

Over the years, a new forest grew while Perry Hanson platted his land and sold it off in five-acre tracts. My tract was the last to be sold to a young couple wanting to build a life on Vashon: Shane Carlson (yet another Scandinavian name) and his wife, Kathy. When they **first arrived, the Carlsons stayed with the Lorentzen's while the land was cleared. Tom and Bea moved into the neighboring house they had just purchased. The Carlsons stayed in the old one, built by Tom's dad, which Shane extensively refurbished in a gesture of thanks. Tom helped Shane clear most of Carlson's triangularly shaped, three-and-a-half-acre tract.** Fortunately, they left a nice patch of forest and enough trees around the rim for complete privacy. Shane built a 10 X 16-foot shack in the northeast corner of the land. Until the Lorentzens invited them in, he and his family lived in that unheated, unplumbed, un-wired shack while they built their house. Shane was the consummate carpenter. His day job was at Turner Construction—a major builder of **Seattle's skyscrapers.** The house got built in the long summer evenings of 1986. By winter **the house was sufficiently habitable that the Carlsons left the Lorentzens and moved into** their new home. Kathy Carlson, who was a talented oil painter, continued with a lot of the interior fine-finishing while Shane was working in Seattle. Then a funny thing happened. Shane was offered the opportunity to take over a neighborhood garbage collection business in Hawaii. Before the house was fully finished, he sold it—to me—and moved the family to Oahu, settling on the eastern slopes of the Pali, in Kaneohe. [Spoiler Alert: Just a couple of years after that, the Lorentzens related to me that the Carlsons had moved to Oregon, where they were building another house. Apparently, Shane had a tragic accident that bankrupted his Hawaiian business. The brakes failed on his garbage truck; it careened into a cul-de-sac house at the bottom of a steep hill, after taking out a few cars. Nobody was hurt but he was sued to death by the victims of the mishap.]

Knowing the Lorentzens was the closest I ever got to understanding what “family” is all about. Compared to the tight-knit Lorentzen clan, the Mesney family was more like a bunch of strangers thrown together by Life.

1992 – Competitor Turns Client – Isuzu Odyssey



Mesney Photography filmstrip logo, 1992-2006

I returned to America with a plan to start over in the restaurant business and pay for it doing commercial photography. I chose Vashon Island—located between Seattle and Tacoma, Washington—because my sister Kathryn lived there. I discovered the Island visiting her.

The natural surroundings of the Pacific Northwest were a lot like Sweden; that was a plus. **Vashon offered me the chance to build a studio in the countryside, like Gerd Rein's** workshop outside of Stockholm. My plan was to finance the restaurant with money made producing content for audio visual shows. **I was still getting calls; it didn't matter where I** lived; my client list was international, clients found me wherever I was.

For example, the day after I moved into the Vashon house I bought a phone. I had reserved a double-zero number—206-567-5800—that I ordered from the telephone company while visiting Vashon during a Christmas visit to Kathy and Lou. It was difficult **to get phone numbers ending in 00. I didn't mind paying for that number a year before I needed it, just to capture it. Anyway....** As soon as I plugged in the phone, it rang. I thought I was hearing things, then it rang again. With curiosity, I answered the phone and discovered Rick Sorgel on the other end, calling from Newport Beach, California. [Rick was a founding partner of the award-winning Sorgel-Lee multi-image studio.] It was flabbergasting to hear from Rick, after a decade overseas. He explained that he had left his partner, Brian Lee, and was working as a project generator for DCI Marketing, a point-of-sale promotion agency in Seal Beach, California [near Newport Beach]. DCI produced promotional signage and displays for Isuzu car showrooms. Rick was calling to hire me. Say what?



Indeed, Sorgel hired me for an epic assignment (well, epic for me) photographing case histories of fourteen satisfied Isuzu customers, from coast to coast.

It was the perfect assignment; I had years of experience **photographing "case histories"** for Car and Driver magazine.

Selfie taken in my Vashon field.

Rick trusted me; he was familiar with the Saab work I showed at AMI festivals; he knew I could successfully organize and execute the sizeable photo expedition.



The schedule for the Isuzu photo assignment tied-in perfectly with the time it would take the builders to add a 1,000-square foot (304.8 meter) south wing to my house. **Rick's** assignment required two months; it filled time that would otherwise be spent waiting for the house renovation to be finished and for my shipping container to arrive from Sweden. Normally, such a photo assignment could be done in three weeks, by flying from point to point. However, Rick wanted my photo trip to be the 15th **case history, about driving a '92 Isuzu Rodeo LS across 38 States, logging 10,000+ miles.** Talk about serendipity!

As luck would have it, I was able to do the job because I had all my camera gear with me. When I left Sweden, I hired my own air-cargo container from SAS Airlines. The airline agreed to send the container on the same flight that I took home. It was cheaper (and safer) than paying excess baggage charges for two dozen equipment cases.

The Isuzu trip was one of the top ten—make that top five—auto excursions of my life. I probably could have done it in six weeks; but I took advantage of the opportunity to visit as many old friends, colleagues, relatives and ex girlfriends as I could. My first wife, Leslie, and Max Lucero, her next husband, put me up one night at their riverside home, in Milwaukie, **Oregon. I hadn't seen Leslie for twenty years; she had successfully** transplanted herself from New York to Oregon and had a new career working for a roofing contractor. Next, I visited my cousin, Paul Taylor, he and his obese bride, Donna, put me up at their home in Geary, Oklahoma, a downtrodden town that could be the locale for a **Hollywood western. The last time I'd seen Paul was eleven years earlier when he lived in** Hawaii on the Big Island, before his wife Lelia died, after moving back to the mainland. Sandra **and I visited them during our tour of the Islands shooting "Hawaiian Panoramas."** Paul was a talented painter. In Hawaii, Taylor ran a successful sign business and sold paintings at a variety of galleries. In Oklahoma, he made ends meet renting dilapidated houses **and occasionally selling a painting at the town's one and only gift** thrift shop. In Florida, I had the chance to see what happened to the first girl I kissed. **My first "crush"** was on my (very) distant Canadian cousin, Bonnie Bonner; now, she and her husband were in the midst of raising a family in a Tampa suburb. I felt quite odd; one of their pre-teen daughters had terminal cancer; everyone was trying to keep spirits up, sometimes a **bit too hard. Driving north and then west, through the Florida "pan handle," into Alabama,** I found a country store specializing in ceiling fans. I bought two for the house; a white one for the living room and a mirror-bladed one for the pool room. In Denver, I stayed with Joey (Kimball) Porcelli; she helped me source a used trailer; it was a beauty, made from the back half of a Ford pick-up truck; I got it for a song, just \$250. The price made **me suspicious, but I bought it anyway. Later I found out why the deal was a "steal"—**you guessed; it was a stolen trailer (which explained the paint job). When the Colorado plates **expired and I went to register the trailer in Washington, the authorities couldn't find the** serial number, it had been mutilated. I came under suspicion; but, in the end they let it (and me) go, thanks to my sales receipt; that gave them someone else to go after. **Anyway.... In Los Angeles,** I visited Brad Hood and picked up my old Yamaha 750 motorcycle. Brad stored the machine for nearly a decade, I left it with him when Sandra and I left Image Stream **in 1983. Brad forewarned me that the bike wasn't in running** condition, which is why I bought the trailer in Denver—to haul the dead bike up to Vashon. I got back before the house was finished and received word that the container shipment would be delayed; that was terrific news because the builders were running late. The hardwood floors had yet to be laid; the house needed to be plumbed for gas; and a **propane furnace installed to replace an electrical one that didn't have enough output to** service the new wing.

1992 – Matrix Redux – Unessential

Wherever I went and whatever I did, I sent clients and prospects direct mail promotions – usually a photo post card - to tell them all about it. The move back to Vashon was no exception. However, that announcement was a letter, headlined: *9 Reasons to Hire the Incredible Freelancer*. The first response was from Arnie Miller, founder and CEO of Matrix Esstentials [see, 1976 – Ardell – Hennaluscent, in Volume Three].

Arnie **flew me out to the company's headquarters** in Solon, Ohio, and hired me to be a creative consultant for shows. Thereafter, for three months, I spent three days a week in Solon. The money was good but the job was fraught from day one, because Arnie was dying (of bladder cancer) and the vultures were already circling.

I've never worked in such a politically charged environment. Arnie's wife, Sydel, and her brother were already running things, behind Arnie's back.

I was privileged to be his trusted *confident*; that made me un-trusted with my colleagues, who did everything they could to ostracize me. There was already a capable show guy (another Ridinger (!)) and his work was damn good. To them I was **"unessential"**. **As soon as Arnie died, my contract was cancelled.** It was too good to be true.

Yours Truly with Sydel Miller at the Matrix Esstentials Christmas party. She sold the company to Clairol and moved to Palm Beach, Florida with a new husband in tow.



1992 – Unpacking A New Life – Playing House



The container's extreme weight proved to be too much to bear on my steep driveway; the drayage **tractor couldn't haul the container up the 20%-grade hill.** Nobody had planned for that. As nothing could be done that day, the big box was blocked on the hill for the night.

The next day another truck came to split the load and help push the overweight behemoth up the hill. Part of the load was transferred to the second truck and, after a few tries, they finally managed to get the container to the top. The next challenge was getting the big rig turned around in tight quarters, to be able to leave. Overshooting risked sliding down a ravine onto the Lorentzen's property.

When my ocean container arrived, I was there on the Vashon ferry dock with my camera, to document the arrival.

The ferry boat rose a foot (30 cm) in the water as the 69,000-pound container drove onto the dock.

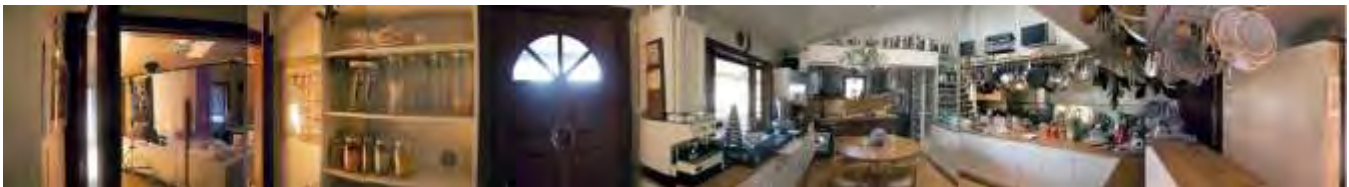


The maneuver—a twenty-point turn—took a half hour. According to plans, all packages were numbered and tagged for orderly dispersal through the ten rooms in the house. Well, because of the hillside problem, the movers had eight men on call instead of the usual three. With eight men unloading the container, things happened too fast for me to direct. So much for my plan. Instead of dispersing the goods through the house, the men packed everything into the new south wing.



As a result, the entire 1,000-foot (304.8 meter) space became a catacomb of disorganized boxes, piled 7 feet high [2.1 meters].

Getting around the pathways through the stacks; was like walking a labyrinth. Needless to say, the boxes were all mixed up. Without numerical order, finding a particular box in the **mix of ~400 was a chore. What didn't fit in the new south wing**—another 200 boxes—was stacked in the north wing, half in the den and half in the car-park.



360-degree panorama of Vashon kitchen; left side shows entrance to the living room; center left is the front door.

The plan was to build the kitchen first; that alone would eliminate 25% of the cargo. However, guilt prevailed and I redirected my efforts to getting my business facilities together, in the north wing of the house. The original den—~20 X 20 feet [~6 X 6 meter]—was converted in my office, production studio and image library. That set-up was straightforward as there was no construction going on in that space.



The kitchen was the most fun to build. I think I could write a book about assembling IKEA cabinetry, after installing 48 of them in the 400-square-foot [~ 37 -square-meter] former living room. There were ~ 200 square feet [~ 18.5 square meters] of butcher-block counters; one of the counters was further covered with Black Labrador Granite, for doing chocolate and pastry work. That counter boasted a picture-window with a westerly view of the Olympic Mountains (center right of 360-degree picture, above).

The crowning jewel of my kitchen was a six-top Garland restaurant stove with a griddle, salamander and twin ovens (left). Dave Nestor found the stove at a thrift store on Martin Luther King Way, in a blighted, predominantly black neighborhood. **Nestor's** buddy ran the store—a huge emporium of junk. The proprietor explained that he never **thought he'd be able to sell it**; certainly, nobody in the immediate neighborhood could afford the \$500 price tag. Geez, five Benjamins? That was Pocket change for me.



Getting the 800-pound [~ 363 -kilo] Garland into and out of my trailer without a fork lift required four guys. The store was happy to provide labor; they were eager to see the stove go. Driving back to Vashon—a 30 mile [~ 40 kilometer] trip—was a bit of a **nightmare. My trailer didn't perform well carrying such a top-heavy burden.** I almost lost it on the sharply-curving interchange between the I-5 and West Seattle Freeway. Back on Vashon, Dave Nestor, Randy Lamb and Trace Baron manhandled the beast onto the driveway apron where it spent a week being cleaned and refurbished. There was a reason the stove, which cost maybe \$5,000 new, was only $1/10^{\text{th}}$ that amount—it was in **dreadful shape; nothing was broken, but it was covered in a decade's worth of baked on grease.** Once the stove was in position (that was a haul) Nestor installed a new Garland twin-fan range hood and a quilted-stainless-steel enclosure made to measure at a sheet-metal shop in South Seattle.

Building the photo studio and darkroom was the next biggest chore. The original open-air garage was enclosed and a covered car park built. The new room was fully lined with IKEA Ivar shelving and set-up as a photo studio. Between shoots, the studio doubled as a ping pong room. I brought a Stiga *Privat Roller* collapsible ping pong table **with me from Sweden; it's** folded up, unseen, on the left side of the picture.





The original den bathroom was converted to a galley-style darkroom (right) with the addition of more IKEA counters and cabinetry along two sides and a 72 X 42 X 12-inch [~183 X 61 X 30-cm], free-standing, Leedal stainless-steel darkroom sink along the other.

Although the largest I could print was 16 X 20 inches [~40 X 50 cm], it was the most comfortable and efficient of the half-dozen darkrooms I built during my career.

I worked 18-hour days for long stretches; everything got done in six months, By Christmas I was doing my first catering job—a Christmas dinner for the staff of Law Seminars International, an Island-based business run by Hita Johnson. Hita was a close friend of my sister Kathy. She and I had been dating since July, when she hit on me during the Vashon Strawberry Festival.



Hita showed up for her company dinner wearing stiletto heels. In the madness of the moment—catering to a dozen people with an elaborate Eastern-European feast (Hita was born in Poland)—**I didn't notice** that her spiky heels were permanently pock-marking my brand-new hand-wood floors. **The next morn' there was nothing** to do but mourn. Despite sullyng my virginal floors, Hita could do no wrong. She was the only woman who ever pursued me; I was used to things being the other way around.

Hita took me totally by surprise the day we met. After the Strawberry Festival, we came **back to my place; during a tour of the house, she asked me, point blank: "Wanna fuck?"** One of our first dates was a weekend trip to Vancouver, to buy a pair of leather sofas for my living room. IKEA had the ones I wanted, but there was no IKEA in Seattle then, or Portland; the nearest IKEA was in Vancouver. We stayed overnight at the Sylvia Hotel on English Bay. The next day, returning to the States, they gave me a rough time the US border; they wanted to charge me duty on the couches because I was over my limit for such a short trip. However, Hita managed to persuade them otherwise. She had the gift of gab, for sure. **Dating Hita plugged me into the Vashon Island's art community.** She was a prime mover of **Vashon's art Zeitgeist.** She organized—and donated her studio to—Northwest Painters, a small group of friends that shared the costs of models, field trips and shows of their works. She showed at the Blue Heron Art Gallery and, for a time, her friend **George ran the Heron's Nest—the Blue Heron's retail arts and crafts shop.**

I met many new friends though Hita. Among the closest were Val and Ron Fahlberg. They invited Hita and I to join them at their time-share condo in Mazatlan, Mexico, for a week-long holiday. The condo was right on a cove-shaped, two-mile [~3-kilometer] beach. Each afternoon I ran the length of it. On the north end of the beach there was a club where locals came to drink and dance. Afternoons were spent at the poolside bar painting watercolors, drinking *cervezas* and wolfing down *pico de gallo*⁸ & chips. Most nights we ate in. There was a guy who paraded up and down the beach hawking fresh-caught (we hoped) shrimp and I made *gambas al ajillo*⁹ for dinner.



Hita gave us little paint sets and pads of watercolor paper. *Cerveza Sunset* (above) was my first effort to emulate Hita.

⁸ Pico de gallo ("rooster's beak"), also known as salsa fresca ("fresh sauce"), salsa picada ("chopped sauce"), or salsa mexicana ("Mexican sauce"), is made with raw tomatoes, lime juice, chilies, onions, cilantro leaves, and other coarsely chopped raw ingredients. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salsa_(sauce)]

⁹ Gambas al Ajillo: Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high until hot but not smoking. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly to keep from burning, until golden, about 1 minute. Add shrimp and chile de árbol to skillet and cook, tossing constantly, until shrimp are cooked through, about 2 minutes. Add brandy and cook, continuing to toss constantly, 1 minute; season with salt. To serve, divide shrimp among plates and scatter parsley over top. [https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/gambas-al-ajillo]

Sally and Glen Priest were also good friends for a while. Glen sold AV gear to schools, that gave us sort of a common tread. Sally Priest was a teacher and as much a grown-up hippy as her boyish husband. They were a lot like Hita and I; each could be serious but enjoyed having fun together. Glen was naturally high. One evening he invited Hita and I for a sunset cruise aboard his 25-foot power boat. Just after sunset, in the middle of the shipping channel, between Tacoma and Vashon, Glen explained to me that he had been having engine problems—**when he turned it off, sometimes it wouldn't turn back on. Then he said: "Let me show you..." and actually turned off the motor. I probably needn't tell you what happened, eh?** We paddled our way against a strong current to the Tacoma Yacht Club which, at midnight, was just closing. We were all starved. Nobody brought any **food 'cause we were planning to go to Sound Food** for dinner, after the sunset cruise. The **yacht club's accommodating staff invited us to sort through the remains of a banquet** that were still out. At 2:00 am we took the last ferry back from Pt. Defiance to Vashon; we hitched a ride to the Vashon Yacht Club, where I had the Isuzu parked. When we got home, I downed three martinis in a row. That pissed off Hita. We had the first of many discussions about my drinking.

Ann Spiers **was another close friend of Hita's. She was a poet who published her writings and drawings on paper that she made herself, by hand, following a Japanese tradition.** We went on three camping trips **with Anne and her son, Wiley (Anne's husband was never around; he was always off somewhere doing geology work).** Jesse Johnson, **Hita's son** came with us. (Jesse and I share the same birth date: January 28th. Hita and I both thought that was a serendipitous good omen.)



The first was a weekend hike to Second Beach, on the Washington coast.

The coast was littered with the sun- and sea-bleached skeletal remains of countless trees and there were sea mounds just off the coast.

We camped on the beach at the edge of the forest and lit an enormous driftwood fire.

Camping at Second Beach. Yours Truly, Hita von Mende, Ann Spiers and her son, Wiley.

The next morning, we took a walk towards Third Beach. After an hour someone noticed **that the tide was coming in and we decided we'd better head back. Half way, the rising tide blocked us; we had to scramble over huge boulders with waves crashing all around.** A change of clothes was required. Beach camping continues to be my favorite.

The second hike was a three-day trek in the Olympic Mountains. We started eastwardly along the Hoh River (that part was as easy as a proverbial walk in the park). Then through the Enchanted Valley to Hart Lake, where we camped. Thence over the mountains to the Brothers trailhead at Lake Lena, our second camp.

The Enchanted Valley was the most photogenic;
it's what you see in the travel posters.

The size of the old-growth trees was unbelievable and most of them dripped with moss and moisture giving the place a magical feel that was, well, enchanting.

However, I was preoccupied throughout that hike with the realization that I might be arrested.

[See: 2009 – *Strawberry Festival – Sour Grapes.*]

Each night, I wanted to be the one who saw the first star, who got to make the wish.

Hita, dwarfed by a giant cedar in the Hoh River valley.



The third hike was across the Cascade mountains, from North Bend to Stehekin, at the top of Lake Chelan. We rented cabins and stayed two nights, hiking locally. There was a fabulous bakery, near our cabins—the Stehekin Baking Company. They made authentic European pastries; it was like a Parisian café in a log cabin.

The Chelan hike was made especially exciting by a forest fire that burned nearby. I wanted to see the fire and maybe get some stock pictures. Under protest, Hita hiked up the mountain in the dark of night, following our noses—**where there's smoke, there's fire. We found it about a mile up, over the crest of the hills.** It was underwhelming, just some smoldering leaves that flamed once in a while. Too bad we forgot the marshmallows.





Standing, left to right, are: Renata; Bill Ferris; Sarah, Jesse and Hita (von Mende) Johnson; and Yours Truly. Seated are: an anonymous girl, Shirley Ferris and Ann Spiers, whose son, Wiley, sits between a tag-along British pair (names forgotten).

1993 – Québec – Musée du Fort

Lew Price hired me to consult with him about an idea for a show about the history of Québec City, in Canada. What Lew had in mind was a circular slide show in a Visitors Center located in the historical, up-market Batterie district of the city.¹⁰ Lew envisioned a ribbon-like screen hanging from the ceiling of a restored meeting house up the street from **his family's hotel. When I met him, Lew was well on his way with the project. He formed a company—*Entreprises de la Batterie*—to build and manage the Visitors Center; now, he wanted to develop his show concepts and get a production budget with which he would seek the necessary financing; that's where I came in.** My job was to tech-spec the space **and work out the best projection strategy to achieve Lew's circular design. Lew was** following in the footsteps of his father who, in 1992, built the Musée du Fort [Fort Museum] to stage a unique show about the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759. That **battle was an existential moment in Québec's history, when French Canadians drove back the British offensive.**

¹⁰ Wikipedia: The Royal Battery is a battery built in 1691 on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River , near Place Royale , Quebec City . Its construction is part of a vast site of fortification of the city ordered immediately after the lifting of the seat of 1690.



1990s - VASHON ISLAND FRIENDS | PLATE N° 1

Clockwise from top left: Bretta Matson, Joe Petta, Maddy Bertrand, Kaj-Wynn Berry, Mike Devoe.



1990s - VASHON ISLAND FRIENDS | PLATE N° 2

Clockwise from top left: George Wright, Eric Heffelfinger, Irene Otis, Gene Amondson.

The well-known Fort Museum show—still running today—is one of the “simplest” shows I have ever seen. Tony Price used a theatrical technique/style known in French as a *Son et Lumière* [Sound and Light]; the Niagara Falls light-show is an example of a “sound & light” show, as are performances that light-up castles and other famous buildings.

The Fort Museum show features a huge, table-top model—about 20-feet square [6.1 meters]—of the famous battlefield and Québec City. The battle is re-enacted by antique toy soldiers, nearly 100 little statuettes, four inches tall, made of lead and painted in great detail—real collectors’ items (they date to the late 1800s and early 1900s).

The enormous Plains of Abraham model sat in the middle of a large room. Audiences sat or stood all around it. The show started in darkness; the story was presented like a radio show, with plenty of sound-effects and mood music. During the narration, various parts of the model were spot-lit and/or highlighted by effects built into the model. Otherwise that was it; there was no projection of any kind; yet those toy soldiers managed to keep my rapt attention throughout the half-hour show.

Canadian multi-image producer Jacques Collin was the one who recommended me to Lew; Jacques realized that Lew’s ambitions exceeded his capabilities. Jacques’ knowledge was formidable; he ran the AV department at Québec’s Museum of Civilization). Lew learned a lot about multi-image from Jacques; that is how he came up with his vision for the semicircular show at his Visitors Center; he knew it was possible.

My credentials stood me in good stead for that prospective job. I had produced a semicircular show for a Saab Automobile trade fair stand [See: *1991 – Rescued by Saab – International Motor Shows*] and had a well-publicized reputation for large shows.

Lew flew me up to Québec City for the better part of a week; he put me up at the 5-star run by his family, Auberge Saint-Antoine, a graciously restored landmark in the Old Town right on the St. Lawrence river. Entreprises de la Batterie had their offices in the hotel; the Visitors Center was up the street, in an adjacent building.

After touring the theater space, I came up with a cross-projection design using 20 panels, each 3 X 2-feet [0.9 X 0.6 meters] for a 60-foot-long screen [18 meters] presenting a wrap-around view of 200 degrees. Each of the 20 panels would have had three projectors, for a total of sixty. That number **wasn’t by coincidence, I was reasonably sure that Entreprises de la Batterie could acquire the set of projectors that I used for the Saab show that toured Frankfurt, Turin and Tokyo** [See: *1991 – Rescued by Saab – International Motor Shows*].



Photo by Lew Price

After the motor-show tour, there was no further need for all the gear, that included not only the projectors and projection boxes but also the 20 AVL Dove dissolve units and two AVL Eagle computers used for show control. When I left Stockholm, I consigned the gear to Kjell Gustafsson, at AV-Huset.

They were having trouble selling such a big rig; the recession wasn't helping. I was hoping to snag the lot for Price; but, to my surprise, Kjell had found a buyer; the gear was gone. That changed the equation. I had offered Lew a lucrative deal on my gear. Purchasing new gear tripled the budget—and killed the plan. When I left, Lew was scratching his head, heading back to the drawing boards.

1993 – Malaysia Airlines – *Malaysia Fantasia*

"White men can't jump." Spike Jones



Shortly after I got the Vashon Island studio up and running, Thomas Leong (who passed away in 2019) called from Kuala Lumpur asking for help co-producing a multi-image spectacular for the Malaysia Tourist Promotion Board (MTPB), sponsored by Malaysia Airlines [MAS].

Thomas Leong (center) in a 2016 photo with Kenneth Cheung (left), AVL's representative until their demise and since then Dataton's Asia representative, and Electrosonics rep, Tony Clynick. Photo courtesy of Ken; photographer unknown.

Anyone who watched television in 2015 knows that MTPB aggressively promoted Malaysian tourism. Their memorable (and accurate) slogan was *Malaysia—Truly Asia*. As well, in the 1990s, MTPB toured a performing troupe of several dozen singers and dancers. VIPs and members of the travel press were invited to gala events staged at big hotels in major cities around the world; they were treated to a Malaysian-food banquet followed by an hour-long program of live entertainment. Possibly because of increasing competition from Thailand, MTPB decided to up the ante and beef-up their live road show with a multi-image module.

By this time the world was well past peak multi-image. Four years earlier, I was quoted in a Dataton advertisement **saying that, "Slides are dead."** Except for a few die-hard producers like Dave Frey [Sound Images, Portland] multi-image shows were on the way out, being replaced by video and (especially) PowerPoint—at least in the Western Hemisphere. But in Asia and Africa, slide shows were still *au courant*.



Thomas Leong was brought into the project by Saadah Shaik Mamood (left), advertising manager of Malaysia Airlines. Leong was one of only a few people making slide shows in Malaysia and was the best of that bunch. Leong told me that we met at an AMI **festival; but I couldn't remember him.**

Somehow, he found me on Vashon Island (**I hadn't** advertised my new address yet). As Thomas described the situation, the job was to produce multi-image content for a live multi-media performance. He told me that he could handle the slide making, that what he wanted from me was core creative; i.e., coming up with a theme, then writing the script, doing the screen design and programming.

We negotiated by fax and I ended up selling him my time wholesale—by the week; he bought a month. It seemed too good to be true. (And you know what they say about things like that, eh?)

Then, sure enough, two days later DHL delivered the tickets to my door, on Vashon Island. Packing for the trip, I concentrated on what I would need to whip together an effective presentation, to sell-in whatever creative Thomas and I agreed on.

As part of the deal, I got three days for sightseeing and stock photos; so, I brought a fairly complete photo kit—two Nikon bodies, four lenses (one super-wide and three zooms for a total range of 16 mm to 400 mm), a dozen filters, and 100 rolls of film.

The flight over—Business Class on Malaysia Airlines—was decadent; **that's the only word for it. There weren't more than a dozen other people in the business-class cabin;** each of the six flight attendants had only two guests to accommodate; I felt like I had a private stewardess, a very pretty one.

Three glasses of champagne took the edge off what had been a harrowing experience; when my stuff was X-rayed, a flashlight in my shoulder bag had triggered an alarm (it **was put in there to do just that, to be a "red herring"). Inspectors' usual reactions were, like, "Oh, it's just a flash light," and they'd usually let me pass; but not this time.**

This inspector took my bag apart, wearing rubber gloves. I tried not to sweat; there were a couple of hidden joints in there. I was glad I had taken the extra time to hide them really well, in a deep crease of the lining. However, she was groping in and around every part of the bag; it was as if she knew that there was something to find.

She went at it for a full five minutes, which seemed like an eternity. When she reached into a little side pocket, where the stuff was hidden, my heart skipped a beat. It was the last pocket; she looked me in the eye as she groped. I felt a drop of sweat forming on my brow. Then she matter-of-factly said: **"You may go, sir." Whew!**

Once airborne, the extravagant service began with cocktails; mine was Black Label scotch, neat, poured from a 1-liter flask, instead of 50-ml mini bottles. After a couple of those came chicken satay, **which was amazing; I'd never had that before, but I've had it many times since.** [Chef Phillippe Muller's recipe is in the Appendix.].

Langoustines were served for the main course, cooked scampi-style, washed down with more champagne. The chocolate mousse dessert was followed by a cheese plate; so, I switched to Cabernet Sauvignon. **And since a meal isn't complete without an after-dinner mint,** mine was served with a five-star Napoleon brandy.

I never made it through the movie I selected, to watch on my personal screen (those were new, as was the personal entertainment system which offered a choice of about a hundred movies and TV shows).

Two hours before landing [it was a 13-hour flight] I was gently awakened by my stewardess. She offered me a choice of champagne or orange juice, or both.

I took the champagne and ordered a hot, spicy Bloody Mary, (made with *Mr. & Mrs. "T"* super-spicy tomato juice); that went well with the full English breakfast that was served next. I could have chosen a fruit & yogurt combo, but needed something solid, after all that booze.

I received a gift bag on my way off the plane; it was a CD-music set, sponsored by Amnesty International. It gave me a warm-and-fuzzy feeling knowing that Malaysia Airlines was supporting the efforts of that organization. I would come to learn that the airline—a national corporation—sponsored good achievements of all kinds. Oh, and the music was dynamite—like a Claude Challe *Buddha Bar* mix.

Kuala Lumpur International Airport impressed me with its size, modernity and immaculate cleanliness. Thomas picked me up. We drove to the brand-new Istana Hotel, where I would be staying. It was a luxurious palace right in the middle of the city, a few blocks from the MAS [Malaysia Airlines System] building.

Thomas brought his wife, Chris, and their young daughter. They were feeling chipper and wanting to entertain me with dinner. I was shattered after the 13-hour flight. **I wasn't hungry (see above) but, couldn't say no. We got a table in the hotel's 24-hour café;** the main dining room was already closed for the evening. *Bak Kut Teh* (Pork Bone Tea Soup)¹¹ **looked interesting, so that's what I ordered, without realizing that it takes an hour to prepare.** [My recipe for Bak Kut Te is in the Appendix.]

Keeping the small talk going was agonizing; I just wanted to sleep. But when the Bak Kut Teh arrived I perked right up. With a second wind I managed to stay lucid until 4:00 am when Thomas decided that he should take his wife and child home. (!)

Finally, in my room, my eyes popped at the luxurious accommodations. The bath was a granite-walled suite of three rooms, featuring chromed plumbing and fixtures for every possible bodily function. My bed was big enough to shoot a remake of *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*. The vista view from my 22nd floor room revealed a city in transition—a mosaic of modern glass towers and rusted-steel shacks, vestiges of Malaysia's fading post-war colonial era.

In the early '80s, the Malaysian Prime Minister proclaimed a national revitalization and modernization program called *Vision 2020*. Malaysians were making great headway; still, they had a way to go.

[Spoiler Alert: That was then. Today, Malaysia appears to have accomplished the PM's vision; that, by 2020, Malaysia would be (already is?) a first-world nation.]

¹¹ Bah Kut Teh or Pork Bone Tea is a Chinese soup dish. Infused with herbs such as *Dong Quai*, *Cinnamon*, *Star Anise*, and loaded with pork ribs, dried Shitake mushrooms, tofu puffs, and heaps of garlic, this soup fills the kitchen with evocative scents. Bah Kut Teh needs a couple hours of slow boiling and the end result is concoction perfumed with a sweet herbal and earthy flavor. It's best cooked and served in a clay pot and eaten with plain white rice, *yau char kway* (Chinese crullers), a dish of stir-fried vegetables such as Chinese Greens in oyster sauce, and a small plate of chili plus soy sauce condiment." [http://rasamalaysia.com/recipe-bak-kut-teh-pork-bone-tea/]

Thomas picked me up the next morning. After a brief sightseeing tour around town, we headed to his studio. The farther we drove from the city, the more my apprehensions grew. When we arrived, **I knew we had a problem: Thomas' facility could never support production of major AV show; he had oversold his own capabilities; was he a dreamer?**

Even though his intentions were good, intentions don't get things done. Thomas was clueless; he had a camera and a film developing outfit; **he didn't even know that he didn't know, y'a know?**

We went outside, got some *long tea* and *roti canai* [a kind of Indian flatbread] from the street vendor. We spent the rest of the day going over what Thomas needed to do (and buy) if we were to produce the show at his shop. **He turned green and it wasn't from the food.**

As the sun was setting, Thomas saw the light: let Mesney produce the show in Seattle and pay me a fat **finder's fee**.

Meanwhile, I had the same problem as Thomas: no facilities of my own. The challenge became sourcing production facilities in Seattle. I was on the outs with Bruce and Charlie after I blew-up at them for giving away my projectors and AVL gear.¹² I turned to the only **other producer I knew, Bob Peterson; but, he wasn't interested in producing slide shows anymore.**

To digress for a moment, about Bob Peterson: My friendship with Peterson began when we worked together on the Boeing show. [See: 1983 – King of Slides – Plane & Fancy.] We were role playing then, as professionals are wont to do; it wasn't until a decade later, when it was clear that we were no longer competitors (as in my pictures are better than your pictures) that we became actual friends.

At the risk of jumping too far ahead, when I opened Fork Inn the Road [See: 1995 – *Café Berlin – Fork Inn the Road*.], that's when Bob saw me in a different light.

He was still working as a professional photographer and was a member of ASMP [American Society of Media Photographers]. Bob kept me up-to-date with the goings-on in the Seattle chapter. We both submitted work for ASMP's annual slide show, attended by maybe 200. People were more interested in schmoozing than watching the slide shows.

I bumped into Bob Rowan there. He was a fellow photographer and AMI colleague who moved to Spokane, Washington [280 miles due east of Seattle]. I hadn't seen Rowan for nearly a decade.

We were never close back in the day. Rowan marched to a different drum. He was what I call a technical photographer; kind of like John Emms. Rowan used large format cameras, particularly panorama-format ones. His pictures were well thought out and shot to perfection; but such discipline caps creativity. Or should I say, transforms creativity?

The time and tedium to achieve something can influence the core creative.

¹² Watts and Silverstein agreed to store my gack [equipment] while I was in Europe; but they dumped the stuff without asking; I learned about it when I got back to the States, went to collect my rig, and discovered it gone.



Bob Peterson was one of the first people I befriended when I moved to Vashon Island and one of the first visitors to my new studio. Peterson was kind enough to shoot a promotional picture of me, with a Toshiba laptop. The house is behind Bob; the west field is behind me.

The picture was used for the first in a series of promotional post cards, sent to clients and prospects from various places around the world. The first card announced my move to Vashon Island and my new business name:

The Incredible Freelancer.

(The picture demonstrates why wide-angle lenses aren't suited to portraits—Look at the size of my nose. Ha!)

Bob called his friend/client, T. Craig Martin, at Boeing, to ask which local outfit could best handle my project. Craig recommended Doug Ethridge and his company Avcon. When I met Ethridge and his wife, Sue, we hit it off right away; not only was Doug a competent producer, we both loved to cook.

Ethridge ran a first-class shop; he was way ahead of the pack, experimenting with video and computer graphics. Sue Ethridge ran her own successful graphic-design studio—Ethridge Design—servicing local blue chips like Alaska Airlines. Together they raked in enough treasure to afford a pricey waterfront condo. I was impressed with the Avcon studio, and with the fair deal Ethridge gave me, to sub-contract production of the MTPB/MAS multi-image show.

The idea was to produce a wide-screen travelogue with an original musical score, called *Malaysia Fantasia*. To make the show, I worked with stock pictures from the MAS archive, which was enormous. If anything, I had too many pictures to work with—I wanted to show them all, but the tempo would be so fast that nobody would see anything. Despite their multitude, the pictures were difficult to design with because there was no consistency of quality or style; they were a real *pot pourri*. Given the inconsistent ingredients, I opted for my tried-and-true mindblower approach. I wrote a lively, up-tempo song called *Malaysia Fantasia*; it was supposed to sound as if Malkit Singh had made it. You probably never heard of him; he was the number-one star of an East-Indian musical genre called *Bhangra*. **You probably never heard of that either; I certainly hadn't** until I heard Khalid, another popular Bhangra singer, perform at a disco on the Malaysian island of Lankawi.

Thomas had worked for Malaysia Airlines for some time. He was well connected inside the State-run airline and had long since mastered the art of using the system to his advantage. Thus, he organized a ~~holiday~~ scouting trip in Lankawi for his family and I.

The Leungs loved lounging at the beach; I did, too, but I wanted more. I was restless; Asian women really turned me on. One evening, after Thomas and his family turned in, I wandered along the beach far enough to discover where the locals went to have fun. The sound of music attracted me into a night club. Mine was the only white face in the place; I felt like a visitor from another planet; but the music was sensational.

Khalid was performing that night. I never heard music like that; I just wanted to dance and dance. I **bought Khalid's CD the very next day**. I was sold on Bhangra, it was the sound I wanted for the Malaysia Fantasia song. Later, during a hike with Hita, across the Cascade mountains, I composed, in my mind, a melody and lyrics for *Malaysia Fantasia*.

Having a theme and a plan, the next challenge was convincing the client that our concepts **were patent and that our price was fair; that's where salesmanship came in**—my forte. Instead of presenting our idea to MTPB in their Spartan government offices, I asked **Thomas to arrange for us to use the posh board room at Malaysia Airlines, the project's sponsor**. (You know what they say: Whoever signs the check, makes the rules.)

The boardroom at MAS was the most extravagantly decorated and equipped of any I had ever seen. A window wall, on one side, offered a spectacular view of the city. The walls on the other side of the table were teak boiserie, done in a modern style; the panels opened to reveal white boards; there were twelve of them spanning the twenty-foot length of the room [6 meters]. Those white boards were going to be my number one prop; I intended to cover every square inch with formulas and sketches supporting my arguments.

Everyone was used to audiovisual—canned—presentations; but mine would be live, with me writing on the vast expanses of white board, like a scientist scribbling formulas on a blackboard in a university theater. That is not to say that there was no audiovisual component to my presentation; I showed videos of *Rhythms of The World* and *Hawaii-Xanadu*.

But the real show began after the demo tapes were played, when I did my spiel. By the time I finished the pitch, I had written and drawn sketches over all the white boards. The MTPB people applauded my pitch; so did Saadah Shaik Mahmood—she was the one who would be signing my checks. After the client left, when Thomas and I were putting the room back together, I went to wipe the white boards clean. Do I need to tell you what happened?

I used a permanent marker by mistake; none of it could be erased. Ha! Thomas and I were scolded by Saadah; but we escaped, with the job.

I went back to Seattle and contracted with Doug Ethridge for his studio to produce the slide shows, under my direction.

Photo of himself taken in 2005: courtesy of Doug Ethridge.





At Ethridge's suggestion, I hired Walt Wagner to produce the song, *Malaysia Fantasia*. That was my first mistake. I should have had the song produced in KL [Kuala Lumpur]. Maybe I could have gotten Malkit Singh to record it, in New Delhi.

Photos: courtesy of Walt Wagner.

However, Doug Ethridge convinced me that his pal, Walt Wagner, could do the job. Wagner was a local heavyweight in the Seattle musical orb. He wrote for and performed with the Seattle Symphony, did solo concerts at Beneroya Hall and regularly played piano in the lounge of Seattle's prestigiously hip Canlus Restaurant. Well, as the Spike Jones saying goes, "White men can't jump." Walt didn't come close to capturing the Bhangra style that I was after. **I don't write music**; but I played the basic melody on the piano for Walt and played him Khalid's CD. **I had high hopes but was disappointed. Walt's attempt** at Bhangra was the culinary equivalent of a cake made of Jell-O. I would have said thank you to Walt and started over except that the clock ran out

An alternate choice would have been to let Evan Schiller produce the song; he was a musician who had a band called Sad Happy. Evan freelanced at Avcon; he ran the audio gear, recorded voiceovers and edited tape. In 1995, Hita hired Evan to play at a surprise 50th birthday celebration that she threw.

To digress for a moment about my 50th birthday: Hita's party was a huge surprise, I thought I had been invited to a family gathering. Instead, the huge fête was a "mad ball" (not literally); more than fifty of my friends and colleagues were there—Hita had somehow managed to secretly hunt them all down. Hita's painting studio was all pimped out with party decorations, candles and mood lighting; there was a bounteous table filled with pot-luck party food, and a huge cake; the bar was equally well stocked; Hita was still drinking then, so was I, but more so than her; on a typical day I'd consume two generous jiggers of scotch whisky and a half bottle of wine, or half a six-pack of beer. I lost count of the number of whiskies I had that night, but I know it was too many. Social situations made me nervous; I needed liquid courage to overcome deep-seated feelings of insecurity, of inadequacy.

I was the last to arrive (as usual). I got delayed driving a model back home. I had spent the afternoon shooting Erica Eriksson, an attractive high-school girl to whom I passed my card on the Vashon ferry when I noticed her being very foxy with the boys accompanying her. When her mother dropped Erica off; I gave her a tour of the studio; she offered to stay, to "help;" I declined her generous offer, explaining that I didn't want Erica to feel inhibited. As it turned out, I should have asked her to stay.

When it came time to change outfits, Erica paraded around with virtually nothing on; at one point she came into the studio stark naked, asking if I thought she had the body to be a model. [She did.] Under other circumstances, I might have taken advantage of what seemed like an offer; but she was jailbait; I brushed off her provocations. After that, her demeanor darkened; when I drove her home, she was cold as ice. A chill went down my spine, like a premonition. It took me some time to shrug off that foreboding. After the party, Hita said I seemed distracted; I blamed it on the booze.

[Spoiler Alert: As mentioned, the surprise party was at Hita's spacious Northwest Painters studio. Hita shared the space—a derelict former gas station, on Vashon Highway, adjacent to her house—with a group of other painters who pooled their money to hire models and go on trips. Somewhat later, Hita rented the space to Todd Eugene, a prolific glass artist. He branded the place Studio-X and doubled the size of the space by building a 400-square-foot [37-square-meter], covered, outdoor workshop and an a 20-foot-diameter [~6 meters] yurt next to it (where he lived). Todd was happy as a clam in Hita's studio. I bought a lot of his creations, for my glass collection. He invited me into his circle of friends. Todd's artistic entourage would sit around his fire pit, smoke weed, and swap scuttlebutt. That's where I met Susan Bates, another glass artist, who I subsequently dated for the better part of a year. One day, Todd got caught up in the affairs of his assistant, whose wife was suing him for a divorce. Among other claims, she listed child endangerment. She swore out an affidavit claiming that her husband brought their child into a dangerous environment—Studio-X. To adjudicate the veracity of her claim, the Seattle Public Health sent an inspector, who condemned the dilapidated building and fined Todd for building an outdoor workshop and erecting a yurt without building permits. Todd was evicted on the spot. Overnight, he moved his operations, to Whidbey Island, where his mother had property. He tried to start over but ended up teaching English in Thailand, where he remains to this day, as far as I know. [Moral of the story? One just never knows....]

It was at my surprise 50th birthday party that I became aware of Evan Schiller's musical virtuosity and versatility. However, the MAS project was two years before that party—I was only familiar with Evan's musical work with *Sad Happy*. They played the kind of Seattle "grunge" music that I abhorred; so, I never even considered Evan for Malaysia Fantasia. Geoff Levin would have been another logical choice; either Evan or Levin would have topped Walt's rendition. On the other hand, perhaps I am being too judgmental about Walt. After all, the soundtrack was a challenging one; *Malaysia Fantasia* had 12 parts which, in addition to the Bhangra opening and closing, made a total of 14. To arrange a musical theme in a dozen different styles takes a special talent; some musicians excel giving other people's songs their special sound; they're called "arrangers."



1990s photo of himself courtesy of Evan Schiller.

Wagner was a good arranger. As a prosperous musician, he had the wherewithal to equip his studio with a library full of the latest digital *samples* of musical instruments [sampling was new tech in the '90s]; from the standpoint of instrumentation, he produced a very **rich and varied track; all it lacked was Asian "soul."**

While Wagner struggled with the soundtrack, Monte Cline had slide production under total control. Monte was like John Emms, driven to technical perfection.

For a rostrum cameraman, making duplicate transparencies could be hell, given the inconsistent color delivered by most film-processing laboratories. Labs had their own problems, keeping processing machines stable. Duping invariably involved color correction for any unwanted tints.

To digress for a moment, about color correction: Changes in temperature and chemical exhaustion produced color shifts during color film processing. Invariably, film batches would come back with one kind of tint or another. The worst was the green-magenta shift which could not be corrected because green and magenta are complementary (opposite) colors—to correct for one accentuated the other. Kodachrome processed on the West Coast was famous for green-magenta shifts.

Today it is easy to fix color shifts; but back in 1993 it was still done by using colored-glass or acetate filters that changed the color of the light used for duping photography. For example, a 10% yellow shift could be corrected using a CC10B—10% blue—filter (blue is the opposite of yellow; they cancel each other out).

Adding to the sport of duping, color-correction filters affected exposures. Every 10 points of color reduced the exposure by ¼ f-stop; a CC40B (40% blue) filter required an exposure adjustment of a full f-stop, doubling the exposure time.



On big jobs I travelled with >900 filters; eighty percent of them were for color control; the rest were for creative effects.

Like John Emms, Monte had all color correction down to a science. That was remarkable in that slide shows were on the way out, as mentioned earlier. **AVcon hadn't invested** anything in slide gear in at least five years; the rostrum camera Monte was using was a rudimentary, bench-top Marron-Carrel.

For graphics, Monte did the best anyone could be expected to do given the camera he had to work with and the artwork he was given by Doug Ethridge.

Dealing with Ethridge was another challenge; Doug had his own ideas about color schemes and graphics; they were inconsistent with the look I was after.

Working with a creative team can be a politically- and emotionally-charged undertaking. Sometimes I had to forget my opinion(s)—in the end did it really matter whether something was red or blue?

Well, yes, actually. For example, it has been proven that yellow is the most visible color and red the most powerful, which should explain the box design for *Tide* detergent. In cases like that, choice of colors matters, a lot!

However, I had to let things like that go; **I couldn't be** in two places at the same time. My job was to coordinate with the client and bring back the pictures for the show, culled from Malaysia Airlines' deep but disorderly picture file.

For the final approval of the show, we invited Saadah to Seattle. She gratefully obliged us and brought along Lye Kin Fong, her trusted side-kick.

Fong was manager of the MAS account at BSB Malaysia, the airline's ad agency.

Saadah and Lye Kin were a disappointed in both Seattle and Avcon.

They were expecting the Emerald City to be more like New York, LA or London.

However, in 1993, Seattle was still just a town with an arrogant attitude.



Every morning, the two ladies made a few little, token changes in the show. They doled them out slowly, legitimizing the extension of their shopping spree for a few more days. Ha!

With MAS's approval in hand, the trays were tidied up before I brought them to KL, for delivery to MTPB. Following Saadah's advice, the tourist board had been kept out of the loop during the whole production cycle. That turned out to be a big mistake. When I delivered the show: MTPB **couldn't play it**—they used Dataton equipment and the show was programmed with AVL code. To play the show MTPB would have needed to buy some new gear from Dataton, or, I would have had to re-program the show using Dataton code.

MTPB Director of Support Services, Ahmad Sarkawi, and Assistant Director, Fauzi Ayob, were furious. They insisted that I re-program; I flatly refused. There was a standoff; they blinked first. Nowhere in the contract did it say I had to use Dataton programming gear.

There was no going back to Malaysia Airlines for more money. Shahid Ali, comptroller of the advertising department, already thought my charges were exorbitant.



Shahid Ali policed my invoices with rigor, examining the details with a fine-tooth comb.

I dubbed him *Sheriff* and brought him a brass badge—the kind worn by lawmen in American western movies—with the word *Boss*.

He was genuinely amused by my gesture and reined in his cost accountant, K.K. Khoo.

Thenceforth, my budgets were scrutinized (somewhat) less intensely.

To digress for a moment, about business gifts: In Asia, it was customary to bring gifts; small tokens of appreciation, like the brass Boss badge I gave Shahid Ali. Anything too expensive was suspect.

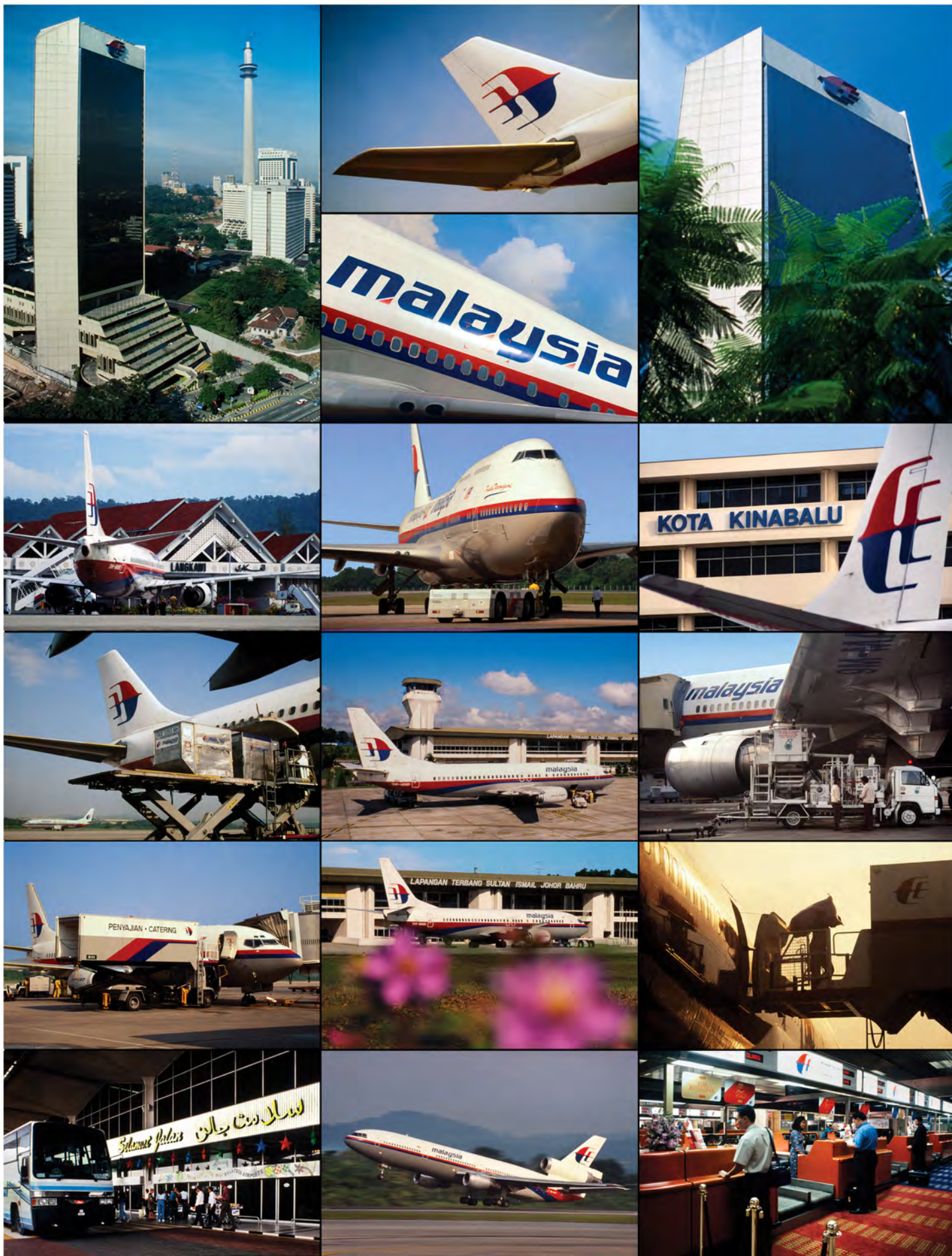
Whenever I returned to MAS from Vashon, I brought everyone in Saadah's office a pound of Starbucks's coffee—it was new then, and uniquely American.

For a special few I also brought smoked Alaskan salmon. One of those special few was Saadah's gal Friday, Aimi Ariffin. She kept me at the head of the line of those seeking Saadah's attention.

While the Dataton versus AVL episode may have kissed off the Malaysia Tourist Promotion Board as a future source of business, clearer heads prevailed at Malaysia Airlines.

Saadah ran a tight ship; she reported directly to the CEO and generally got whatever she wanted. That was probably because money was flush in those days, before the Asian Contagion.

1993 | Malaysia Airlines Collage | Plates N^{os} 1-2



1994 | MALAYSIA AIRLINES COLLAGE | PLATE N^o 1

Presented in approximate show order.



1994 | MALAYSIA AIRLINES COLLAGE | PLATE N° 2

Presented in approximate show order.

1993 – Travel Incentive – Asian Adventure

Saadah was chuffed at my keen interest in all things Malaysian, especially that I had Chinese-Malaysian cousins in Borneo;¹³ she rewarded my hard work on *Malaysia Fantasia* with a ticket to Kuala Lumpur for Hita, so she could join me on a Malaysian holiday.

Saadah met Hita during the week she and Lye Kin Fong visited Seattle, to approve the show, at Avcon. We supped together at Cutters, **Hita's favorite restaurant, the place she took her seminar instructors—Seattle's most important lawyers. The three ladies hit it off; as I've mentioned, Hita (aka Kate Johnson—her professional name) had the gift of gab.** I wanted to invite the two Malaysians out to Vashon Island; but Hita recommended against that idea, for the same reason she kept an office in downtown Seattle—to maintain a more cosmopolitan image.

Saadah put us up at the Istana Hotel for a weekend, then we headed out on our own. After a two-day sojourn in the historic port city of Malacca, we flew to Kuching, where I discovered the school where my great, great grandfather had been head master; **his name was carved in stone on wall a wall in the chapel; but I couldn't locate my cousins.**

Sabah was next; I would have liked to hike up Mount Kinabalu, to pan for some gold, but there was no time—we had reservations for a scuba-diving adventure on Sipidan Island, which I was keen for.

Sipidan was a famous dive site famous for its legendary "wall" diving. We flew from Kota-Kinabalu to Tawau on a small, regional aircraft; its slow speed and low flying altitude made the trip a sightseeing experience. After flying around the mountains, the route crossed over vast stretches of virgin rainforests and endless serpentine rivers; I could have shot a lot more pictures than I did, but I was saving my film for Sipidan Island.

Sipidan was a tiny island; we walked around it in fifteen minutes and across in less than five. There were ten thatched roof cabins, a dining hall, and the dive center.

We only had electricity for six hours per day, generated by an old Chevrolet engine mounted on cinder blocks out in the forest at center island.



¹³ BROOKLYN EAGLE, FRIDAY, OCT. 16, 1942 [Page 8]: “[Peter Mesney, my father] is a grandson of Archdeacon William Ransom Mesney, a native of Yorkshire, England, who was personal chaplain to Rajah Brooke of Sarawak, British North Borneo. Mr. and Mrs. Mesney will make their home in Brooklyn temporarily.” [See more in the Appendix – Mesney Family History]

Sipidan felt like our own private island; no more than forty people could stay there, **including a dozen support staff. With so few accommodations, it wasn't easy making** reservations; my connections with Malaysia Airlines helped considerably.

Compared to the others visiting the Island—serious divers—we were like fish out of water. **Hita wasn't interested in diving; she liked to make miniature watercolor paintings,** with a little painters kit that she toted almost everywhere.

I hadn't been diving for ten years, since Sandra and I got our certificates, in Hawaii. When I checked in at the dive center, they asked to see my certificate and diver's log; I didn't have them but smooth-talked my way past the regulations. They issued me a duffle-full of gear with instructions to muster at the beach after lunch.

The beach was a narrow, 20-foot-wide [6-meter] band of sand separating the palm-trees **and vegetation from the sea. Only a few feet from the water's edge, the Island's terra** firma dropped away abruptly and the bottom was a half mile [0.8 km] below—**hence "wall diving."**

A dozen of us were assembled on the beach that afternoon. The dive master went over the technical details of our excursion and invited everyone to suit-up. Geez was I embarrassed when the dive master called me out, for wearing my buoyancy vest inside out. He was the same guy who cleared me without a certificate; now, he really doubted me, but let that go, too. **"Stick close to me,"** he commanded.

A dentist from Houston, Texas, who was part of the group, got permission from the dive master to make a night dive. I pestered him to let me join him; he agreed because **nobody else wanted to go out at night and he wasn't allowed to dive solo.**

We stepped off the edge of the beach into the inky black water a couple of hours after dinner, to avoid cramps. We each wore a head lamp and carried a flashlight. All I could see was what appeared in those four cones of light; but what I saw was amazing. The ocean comes to life after dark—it is the complete opposite of life on earth, where most creatures sleep at night. Corals blossomed (who knew they did that!) and fish came out of hiding; the colors were astounding.

My guide, the dentist, had warned me to keep my eyes on the wall, not to look behind **me, or below; so, of course, that's where I looked, but only once. In the cone of light** I could make out sharks circling around us. OMG.

Obviously, I survived. Would I do it again? No. However, the experience made me appreciate the work of underseas photographers like Michael Patrick Wong. It was his book, about Sipidan Island, that brought me there; his gorgeous book was photographed in and around where I dove.

To digress a moment, about Patrick Wong and excellence: I met Wong in Saadah Mahmood's office, at Malaysia Airlines; he was there to seal a deal making his book a feature airline gift, for First Class customers. Over a lunch of BBQ pork (he didn't eat seafood) Michael enthralled me with stories of his diving adventures. He shot most of his pictures at night, for the reasons I just described, the added life and color.

Impressively, Wong dove alone most of the time. Solo diving was actually a taboo, which Wong dismissed with a shrug, explaining that it would be more difficult for two people to work discreetly and avoid spooking the creatures they wanted to photograph. Alone, in the dark, Wong would swim to sites mapped during daytime dives; he'd bring the gear necessary to get the shots he was after—shooting close-ups required different gear than wide shots and vistas. Wong's underwater studio gear included two or three cameras (you can't change lenses underwater) and up to four strobe [flash] lights, equipped with modelling lights (low-level tungsten lights used to preview the effect of the flash). That was a lot of gack [equipment]. I'd have had enough on my hands using that amount of gear on terra firma. But that's how he got those incredible results; it's why his pictures were selected to symbolize the Malaysia Airlines brand. And why I toted around so much gear—to get exceptional results.

Hita and I continued from Sipidan to Thailand, where Hita wanted to see Buddhist temples.

The trip started in Bangkok, where I knew a colleague, Chusak Vorhapitak, through AMI.



I arranged to meet Chusak (below, left), if for no other reason than writing-off part(s) of the trip costs as business expenses. To my pleasant surprise, he was enthusiastic about my visit and turned out to be a gracious host and tour guide.



Chusak's business was booming; we were chauffeured all over town in his **company's** air-conditioned limousine. After dinner and a stroll through Pat Pong Market, Chusak escorted us to the red-light district on Sukhumvit—just a few blocks from where we were staying, at the Nana Hotel (which has since morphed into the notorious Nana Plaza). We ended up in one of those clubs you hear about, where the girls do tricks with ping pong balls. (They did!).

A never-ending array of hot little cuties came on to us; I was embarrassed; Hita had a high old time; I seldom saw her laugh so hard. Was it a nervous laugh? **Chusak wouldn't** let us pay for a thing. I commented that the slide show business must be good in Thailand. He explained that he made his real money **manufacturing drivers' licenses**; back then, personalized, laminated licenses **with a person's picture on them**—what we now call photo ID—were a new thing; Vorhapitak cleverly captured an exclusive franchise for the manufacturing process, in Thailand.

The next day, Chusak turned us on to his favorite tailors, Keng and Boon at World Garment Company. We would never have found the place on our own; it was in the heart **of Bangkok's Sukhumvit garment district**; every other storefront was a custom-tailoring shop. World Garment was thrice as big as its competitors, about 3,000 square feet [279 square meters], packed floor to ceiling with more different kinds of fabrics that you could imagine. Hita and I spent the better part of the afternoon there, being measured and selecting fabrics. I had a couple of suits and a tuxedo made; Hita ordered a couple of business outfits. Somehow, the clothes were made overnight and were ready for us the next day.

Hita was of two minds about where to see Buddhist temples; the best choices were either Chiang Mai or Nong Khai. Each was about the same distance (390 miles [630 km], Chiang Mai northwest of Bangkok and Nong Khai to the northeast. We chose the latter. That was a mistake. The only way to get to Nong Khai was by bus; for Chiang Mai, we could have taken a train. The bus station was a chaotic mass of humanity sorting their way through twenty platforms and as many busses. Nobody spoke English. We found our bus just in time and got lousy seats, right under a blaring loudspeaker blaring Thai music videos. The bus was so cold and the music so loud that sleep was impossible.

We arrived in Nong Khai just after dawn, to discover that the whole area was a parched dust bowl—hardly the jungle paradise that we were expecting. We found accommodations at the Mut Mee Guest House; we were among their first guests, now they are famous; the **rooms were little huts, made of mud. There weren't many ruins. Julian & Pao**, our Mut Mee hosts, told us that most of the ruins were across the Mekong River, in Vientiane; **that's where most of their guests were headed. Aha.**



We didn't have visas for Laos and therefore **turned our attention to one of Nong Khai's** premier attractions: Sala Kaeo Ku Temple. Although hardly religious, it was impressive in other ways; the Temple is actually a sculpture park; what makes the place unique is that the sculptures are all huge, fabricated with concrete. My favorite was a three-story high [about 9 meters] Xiangliu, a multi-headed king cobra snake (seen at left). This trip was the high point of my relationship with Hita; it sealed the deal between the two of us. We knew each other so **much better, after traveling together. It's** amazing how fast you get to know people when you are living with them in the Now, without time to reflect. Somewhere I read an apt description of our consciousness, by Leonardo Da Vinci: **"In** rivers, the water you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of what comes, so with **present time."** Accordingly, what we call Reality is like standing in the middle of a stream; the future flows towards us; the past flows away; Now is the nanosecond of consciousness between the past and the future.

1994 – Malaysia Airlines – Photo Library

What started as one show grew into a steady stream of business from Malaysia Airlines. For almost two years, I commuted from Vashon to Kuala Lumpur.

On one of the trips I brought along a copy of the DHL International Photo Library to show Saadah Shaik Mahmood . Holding the 350-slide DHL binder in her hands, Saadah nodded approvingly; she could see what I had been telling her about unlocking the value of the disorganized MAS photo archive by transforming a heap of pictures into a streamlined library resource with easily accessible images.

Once she understood the concept, the sell-in was easy because the project made sense. I had a budget with me, and she approved it on the spot; thus, the Malaysia Airlines International Photo Library project came alive.

Like the Scania and DHL photo libraries, the idea was to reinforce global consistency of the brand image by distributing sets of pre-approved photos covering a full range of subjects including the airline—aircraft, maintenance, in-flight service, safety, destinations—and Malaysia's history, culture, arts, crafts, destinations, etcetera.

Binder-cover design by Doug Ethridge, Avcon.



The impetus for the project was *Malaysia Fantasia*. A lot of time was wasted sorting through thousands of disorganized pictures ~~stored~~ piled-up in a back room behind the **advertising department**. **Many pictures weren't even labeled. It seemed as if, every time they got in a photographer's work, they'd just pile it into the closet on top of the last one,** or wherever it would fit. Over the years, all those pictures added up to thousands upon thousands—a massive jumble of good and bad images, totally unusable. What a waste of resources.

I proposed that I be hired to sort through everything and construct a useful media resource. The existing library was long on sunsets, surfing, food, and nice flying pictures of MAS aircraft; but there were very few pictures of airline maintenance and flight operations, so I included in the budget a provision for new photography.

There were five parts to the project:

- 1.) Edit and organize the existing MAS photo collection (~35,000 pictures)
- 2.) Cull best 150 shots
- 3.) Photograph operations at all major domestic airports
- 4.) Edit best 200 operations shots
- 5.) Produce 50 sets of 350 slides (sorted, caption-labelled, filed in plastic slide pages, and organized into presentation binders).

Believe it or not, between Avcon and I we got the job done for less than \$100K (there were no travel costs).

The job was spread over three months. The highlight for me was the month I spent in Kuala Lumpur, editing and filming. MAS put me up at the ParkRoyal Hotel, in an upper floor suite. I was treated like a visiting dignitary, even though I was dressed like a guerilla (when shooting I wore all-black clothes; safari-style with lots of pockets).

Without the worry of excess baggage charges, I decided to bring my entire 35 mm photo kit to Malaysia for the big shoot; there were 12 Pelican 1600 cases weighing an average of 70 pounds each (the airline limit for passenger baggage). The kit included some exotic Nikon lenses: an 8 mm fisheye, 300 mm f2, 200-400 mm f2.8 zoom and 600 mm f4.

To be able to control light in any situation, and for effects work, I carried a set of nearly 900 filters (100 colors in 9 diameter sizes) to cover any lighting contingency on any of the lenses (see picture toward the end of a previous section, about *Malaysia Fantasia*).

To digress for a moment, about my ridiculously large filter collection: There were no commercially available filters for many of my specialized lenses; for those, I had opticians at Sevärt Optiks (Stockholm) make 22 mm-diameter, rear-attachment, bayonet-mount filters for the super-wide Nikon fisheyes (13 mm, 15 mm, 16 mm), as well as 39 mm rear filters for the longer telephotos, 200 mm and longer;¹⁴

The opticians removed the glass elements from existing filters and refitted the mounts with the colors I wanted—color-correction [CC] shades of magenta, cyan, yellow, blue, green and red, each in seven stepped values—05, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and 100—as well as the full range of color balancing “CB” filters: 81A, B, C, D and EF, 82A-D and 85A-D series. They were cut from larger available sizes to fit the smaller mounting rings. It was an expensive undertaking; however, there was no other way to color-correct or “colorize” original pictures; filters had to be used.

I also brought a pair of 250-exposure backs and a high-speed Nikon F2 camera that shot 10-frames per second; the high-speed camera featured a beam splitter instead of a mirror. The beam-splitter enabled continuous viewing through the lens [mirror systems blacked out the viewfinder during exposures; at 10 fps, the mirror was up most of the time]; that facilitated super-smooth swish-pans (aka streaks).¹⁵

¹⁴ Front-mounted filters can't be used with ultra-wide lenses without resulting in a “tube” effect, because of corner cut-off; filters placed in front of extra-long lenses kill their sharpness; rear mounting is the only alternative in those cases.

¹⁵ To shoot a streak pan, I kept the subject locked in one position in the view finder, while panning with (following) the moving subject, shooting with a slow shutter—anything from ¼ second to 1/15th; if there was too much light for a slow

All that to say, I was well equipped when I arrived in KL, ready to deal with almost any photographic challenge. However, getting all that gear from Vashon to Malaysia was another matter.

There were sixteen cases of gear with me when I checked in for the flight from Seattle to Kuala Lumpur.

Although my 700 pounds of equipment would be traveling free on the MAS flight from LAX [Los Angeles] to KUL [Kuala Lumpur] it turned out that their Star Alliance partnership with United Airlines **didn't extend to** excess baggage; the bill for that was quite a shock.

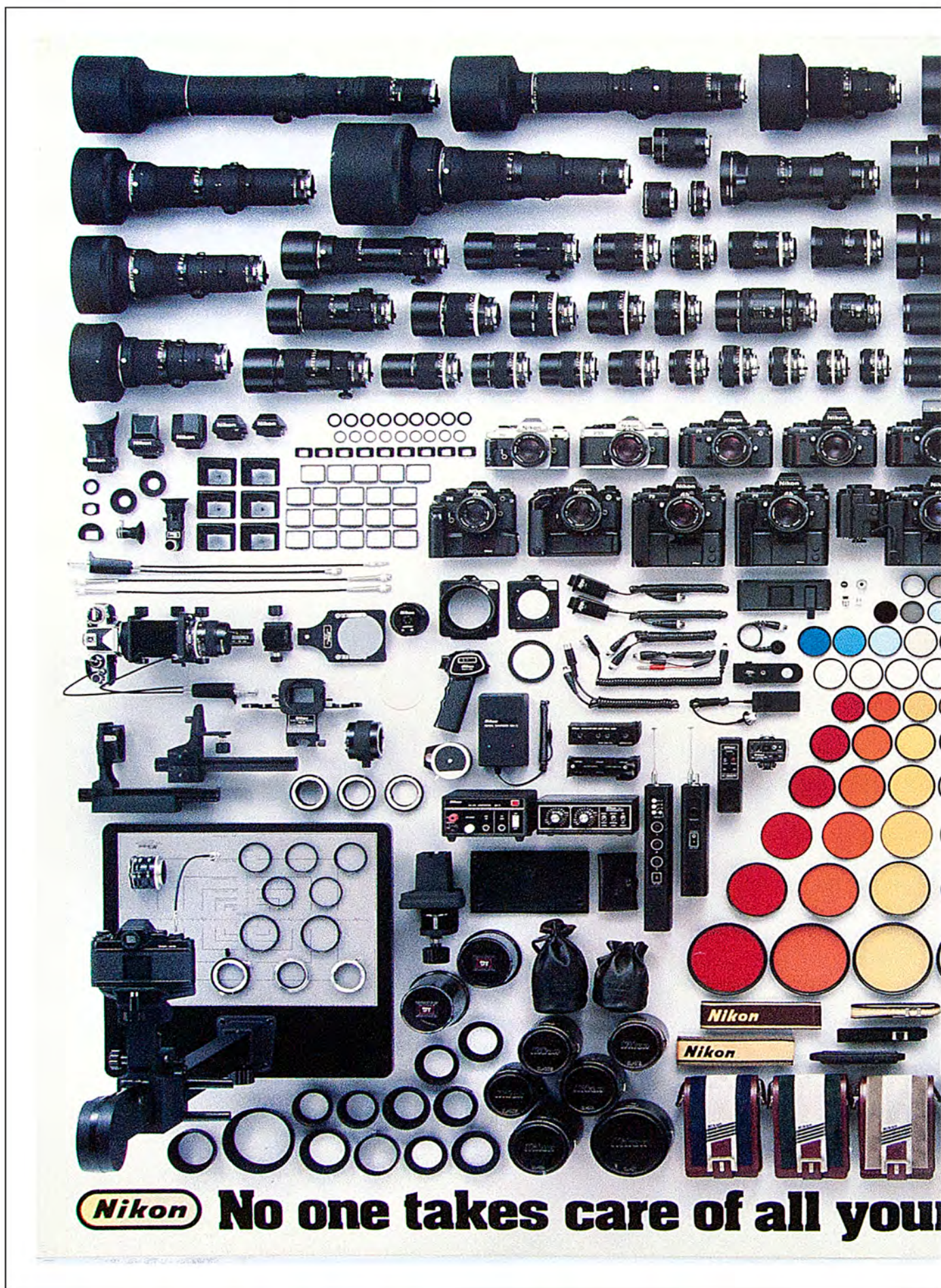


What was worse, United would not check my bags through to Malaysia; I had to fetch them all at LAX and move them half way across the airport to International Departures. The United Airlines domestic terminal was as far from the international building as you could possibly be; and the night I arrived there were no skycaps on duty; my choices were a really long walk or an insanely short cab drive. I opted to walk, pushing a train of seven baggage trollies ahead of me. I really got some looks, especially from the cabbies. Today you could never be able to do such a thing; the security people would get crazy seeing a guy with twelve black Pelican cases. At the MAS check-in desk things went more smoothly. Saadah had alerted the ground crew to be on the look-out for me. They expedited the baggage, got me checked in for Business Class, and pointed the way to the lounge.

My youngest sister Barbara and her partner John Graysmark met me for a drink or two (or three); they lived in LA and my 4-hour layover provided a rare opportunity to see each other. It was the first time I met John; I was astonished at his size, stature and commanding, narcissistic persona. Graysmark, the art director of *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*, was quintessentially British, full bravado and (mostly) himself. He was a hard-drinking man who had a story to tell about anything and everything; he could go on **for hours. Like my mother, Graysmark had to be the center of the conversation; I don't** think they ever met each other; that would have been interesting, to see who would out-talk whom.

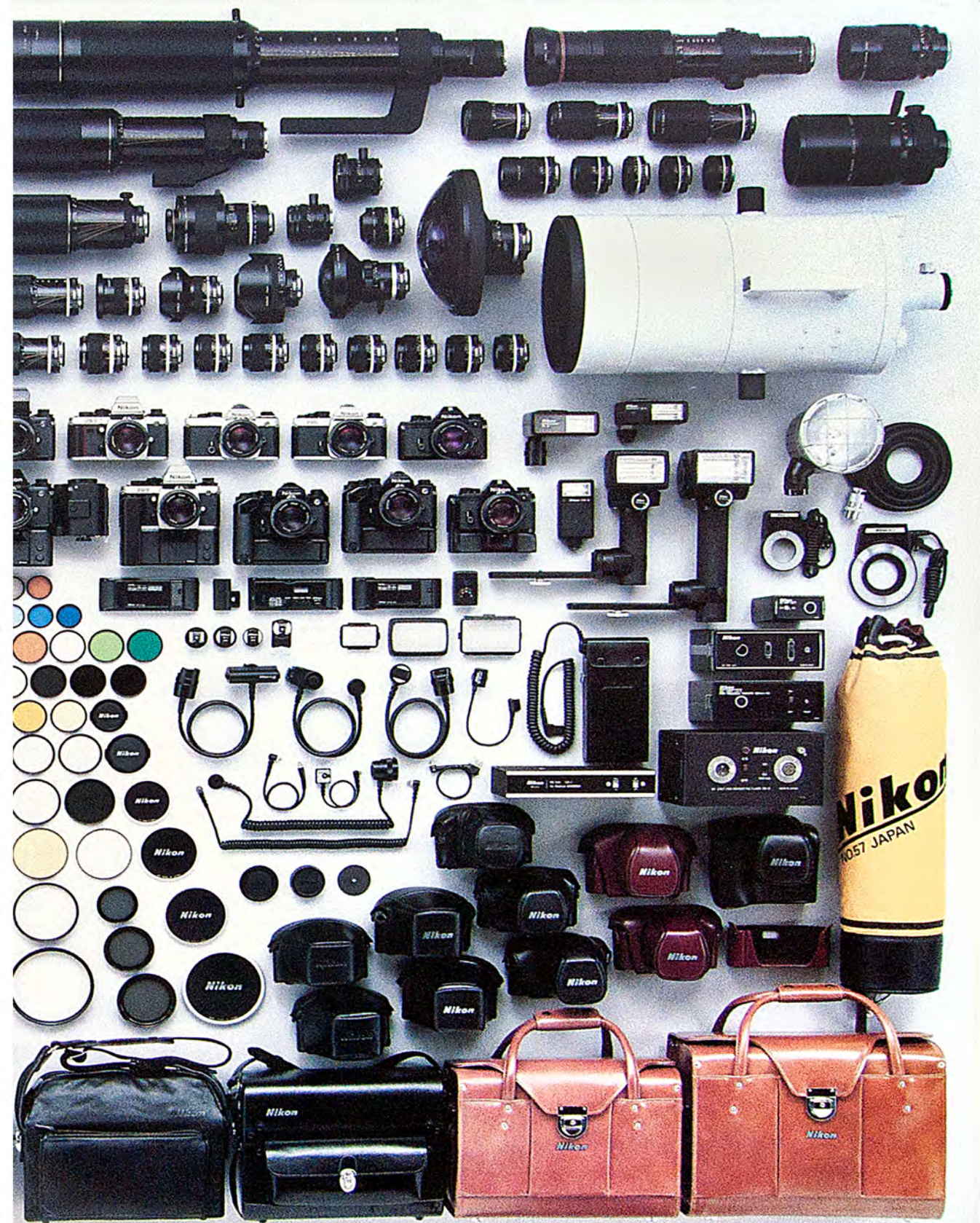
1993 | Nikon F3 Camera System Poster | Plates N^{os} 1-2

shutter speed, I would use neutral-density (gray) and or colored filters to cut the light entering the lens to the amount required for the slow shutter speed.



1990s | NIKON F3 CAMERA SYSTEM | PLATE N° 1

Poster was gifted to me by Bertil Aspkrantz, Fotoaffären, Stockholm, where I bought most of my gear.



r photographic needs like Nikon.

1990s | NIKON F3 CAMERA SYSTEM | PLATE N° 2

I once owned more than 75% of the items pictured, as well as equipment from Nikon's F and F2 systems.



I could see why my sister was attracted to such a man; he was the opposite of our father. John was powerful while Dad was ineffectual. The thirty years between Barbara and John **didn't seem to matter; she served him well and liked the** role.

My sister and I hadn't really kept in touch during the five years since she stayed with me at the Brussels studio. Something snapped between us in back then, when I moved her art station while she was out of town. She took it as some kind of sabotage. Now, all seemed forgiven; I was invited to her 50th birthday, in 2004.

John Graysmark photo: courtesy Graysmark family vis Google Images.

Time slipped away; soon I was on my way to Kuala Lumpur, enjoying 13 hours of pampering by the MAS flight attendants. At KUL, dealing with the various authorities took some time; they were curious about my unusual baggage. Then there was the matter of hauling the twelve cases into the city—I needed three cabs. And, you should have seen the expression on the face of the bell boy on duty at the ParkRoyal; he organized a small gang of bellhops to schlep the cases up to my 21st floor suite. I was a bit worried that so many people knew where so much gear was located; then I remembered I was in Malaysia, a land where there is almost no crime—because the kinds of punishments meted out by the Muslim regime were notoriously Draconian. Nonetheless, the first thing I did the next day was organized a secure storage space for the gear in a guarded MAS building near the airport.

Saadah organized a two-man team and a truck, to help me. The new photography began **with Malaysia Airlines' extensive operations at KUL (Kuala Lumpur airport), the airline's** home base. Everything was done there, from aircraft maintenance, to flight crew training, to meal preparations. Unlike most other airlines, who out-source inflight food and beverage services to contractors, MAS operated their own catering division. I took a keen interest in photographing the catering department **because, if you've read this far, you** know that by 1993 I was well on my way to becoming a restaurateur. I arranged to spend three days photographing in the kitchens, keen to shoot step-by-step sequences of Malaysian specialties being prepared. I was especially interested in satay and (of course) the pastries and desserts, many of which were made with pandan flavoring [Pandanus, aka screwpine (seriously)], a uniquely Asian flavor.

When I arrived at the MAS kitchen looking like a guerilla dressed in black, Executive Chefs Paul Meyer and Phillipe Mueller were not amused; they were afraid my work would interfere with their food-production schedules. They had never worked with a reportage photographer, like me; they were used to studio photographers who can take hours to set up food shots. However, once they saw how I worked they were eager to please, especially when I told them about my plans, to open a restaurant.

Photography got done efficiently, leaving plenty of time to jawbone with the sous chefs **and cooks. I picked up a lot of tips, the kind of stuff you don't find in cook books. As I was leaving, Phillipe gave me his chef's jacket and Paul gave me his hat; I have them both to** this day.



Shooting in the maintenance hangar **was a challenge. I wasn't allowed to just walk around** clicking shots; things needed to be organized; people needed to be positioned in the right places, wearing the right clothing and appearing to be doing things. I say *appear* because, as in the theater, actions being photographed needed to be exaggerated.

More simply put, the shots had to be set-up and the people in them posed. However, **workers generally don't go for posing. To avoid any dissention, my solution was to shoot** the bosses first, to get them involved. People are vain, if they think you are going to make them look good, they are all yours.

I made it a point to photograph the CEO and his executive staff in the maintenance hangar; the resulting shots had an industrial look, a feeling of strength, appropriate for **the airline's top brass. From that point on, everyone working in the hangar knew who I** was and who I was working for, so things went smoothly there.

The only significant challenges occurred during day trips to the various domestic airports all over the country. I was on my own for those. All that gear I brought was more a **hindrance than a help, given that I didn't have a crew to assist me.**

I had planned and budgeted the MAS shoot based on the photo shoot that Lars Hellquist and I did for the domestic arm of SAS (Scandinavian Airlines). For that shoot, we followed a plane around and were able to photograph two or three airports a day. However, with all my gear, I could only shoot one airport per day; that doubled the shooting time.

The extended schedule was no problem for me; my budget was all-inclusive; money **wasn't an issue. The only (sizeable) extra cost was for the ParkRoyal hotel; but, Saadah didn't seem to mind putting me up for the extra time; she was most generous with MAS** hospitality.

Air pollution and tropical humidity also slowed me down. Those conditions robbed scenes of their colors and turned blue skies gray. No amount of filtration could restore what **wasn't there; all I could do with colorless scenes was colorize them (add a color cast).** I was happy to have my extensive set of color filters along with me.

Dealing with authorities and ground crews created further delays, mostly because of language issues. **People outside the capital didn't speak much English. The farther I got** from KL the more difficult it became to communicate with others about even simple things. Adding complexity to those communications challenges, I usually wanted to go to restricted parts of the airport, e.g., on runways and taxiways. There was a lot of red tape to deal with; that chewed up even more time.

While I was away shooting airport operations **Saadah's assistant, Jason Fong**, got the **existing library consolidated in one small room that became my "office" for the next two weeks during the editing phase.**

Living in Kuala Lumpur widened my horizons. Every day, after work, I explored a new part of town, in search of professional cooking gear. I brought back some totally unique equipment including two street-vendor-style woks (on stands); an ornate, hand operated *ice kacang* (shave ice) machine; a special pan for making roti canai (a flatbread specialty served with curry sauce for breakfast) and a dozen specialty-cake and muffin pans. I had to have shipping crates built for all the stuff I bought; but everything was so inexpensive that anything was possible. Saadah caught on to what I was doing early on when Shahid Ali presented my first overweight baggage bills for her approval. When asked about those charges, I confessed that I had fallen in love with Malaysia and planned to feature Malaysian cuisine at the restaurant I was going to build on Vashon Island (Fork Inn the Road). Saadah was so amused with back-street shopping adventures that she wrote off my outrageous amounts of personal excess baggage.



In the middle of it all I met a young French waif, called Lutzia Donic, at a food court. It was crowded and there was a spot available at her table. We kept to ourselves until I noticed she was crying. She explained that she had missed her flight back to France, had to go standby, and had no money left to afford a place to stay. Lutzia ended up staying with me at the ParkRoyal for the better part of a week. Nothing transpired between us, although the front desk staff were certainly curious.

Lutzia knew the KL club scene pretty well. One evening we went to a Malkit Singh concert and that was certainly a highlight of the trip. Between seeing Khalid perform in Langkawi and Malkit Singh in KL, I was totally hooked on Bhangra and the North African groove (still am; right now, I am listening to Natasha Atlas).

During production of *Malaysia Fantasia* and the MAS International Photo Library I had a lot of interaction with Backer Spielvogel & Bates [BSB], **the airline's advertising agency**; Saadah had them watch over my shoulder to coordinate branding. [Usually *branding* meant conforming to corporate style guides for logos, emblems and graphic design, in order to maintain a consistent look, a universal corporate identity.] My primary contacts were with Lyekin Fong and vice president Bob Vines, an ex-pat Australian (below).



Bob was eager to have me join his little group of ex-pats and I was just as eager to make friends in Malaysia. When I returned for the International Photo Library job that friendship grew.

I got to know Bob's wife Julie (Jules) and their British friends Kay and Andy Ford.

Advertising people are heavy drinkers, as you probably know from watching *Mad Men*. In that regard, I got along well with them.

One night we all went out to a karaoke bar; I had my usual few rounds at the hotel before **joining the group at the club. It was Jules' birthday and Bob was buying. We started with Champagne and then switched to Scotch.**

When it was my turn to sing, I couldn't even see the screen, let alone sing the words. I had to excuse myself and taxi home, tail between my legs. Embarrassing!

The food in Malaysia was an epicurean dream come true. Malaysia was a nation with three dominant cuisines: Malay, Chinese, and East Indian. There was a plethora of eateries from high-brow to food courts.

I found the best Chinese food at Soo Kee Mee [14 Medan Imbi] cooked by Thompson Hon. I ate there a half-dozen evenings. I ordered so much food every night that Hon came over to meet me.

He was flattered when I asked to photograph him (below), and even more flattered when **I asked if he'd be interested in being the chef of a restaurant on Vashon Island.**



My other favorite place was Bangles, an Indian restaurant. I ate there the better part of a week. Like the Chinese place, the chef came over to see who was ordering so many different dishes. I took pictures of Bangles (next page) and on my next trip brought them a nice set of prints.



They were so pleased, they let me hang out in the kitchen, to watch and learn. Grandma (upper left) was in charge of the kitchen operations.

I'll never forget watching her reach into big sacks of spices and toss entire fistfuls into her curry sauces; since then, I don't use measuring spoons anymore for Indian cooking.

During my long stays in KL, I became enamored with Malaysia and decided to pitch some other companies for new business. I wanted to build a future in that richly exotic country.

Aiming for the top, I researched and pitched a speculative project for Genting Highlands, a Disneyesque amusement park on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur.

The humongous project was backed by a Chinese development firm called Resorts International. I pitched their senior casino marketing manager, Roger Tan, on the idea of making a 360-degree version of *Malaysia Fantasia* (I owned the rights to the song).

It may have been the right idea but it was to wrong time; they were still preoccupied with park infrastructure.

1994 – Indian Odyssey – Neoteric Perspectives

Lyekin Fong invited me to join herself and a half-dozen agency colleagues on a one-month tour of Rajasthan, India. We all got together at Vernon Emuang's apartment [he was Creative Director at the Bozell Jabobs ad agency, a competitor to BSB]. The group included Lyekin's good friend, Belinda Lee, as well as others in their advertising agency clique including KK Khoo from BSB and "CK" Tang of Region One agency.



Top row, L to R: KK Khoo, CK Tang, Vernon Emuang, Yours Truly. Lower row: Unknown, Lye Kin Fong, Belinda Lee.

Fong was the trip organizer; she had done all the research and made arrangements for a **privately chauffeured mini bus**. Our chauffeur's name was **Narbdeshwar Pandey**; we called him Pandey, for short.

Pandey mapped out a three week trip around Rajasthan including Ranthambore National Park, Amber Fort, Mehrangharh Fort, Hawah Mahal, Jaipur City Palace, Jaisalmer Fort, and Udaipur City Palace. There was also a requisite side trip to see the Taj Mahal.

Pandey called me *Mr. Fast*, *Mr. Last* because I rushed around taking pictures and was always the last one on the bus.



While he took us to all the right places, Pandey wasn't much of a tour guide because his English was unintelligible most of the time. The bus was built for a dozen people but there were just seven of us. It was comfortable and there was plenty of room for all the trinkets and treasures we all bought as souvenirs.

Pandey kept telling everyone not to buy anything because he knew a better place that he would take us to later, but some of the shops were just too irresistible. I bought a bronze Ganesha and got chastised royally by Pandey when I brought it back to the bus. A week later we found out why Pandey had said to wait. He took us to a remote spot in the desert where there was a factory, called Sun City Art Exporters, that made every conceivable kind of statuary, carvings, and “antiques.” The choices there were as bewildering as the bargain “wholesale” prices.



At the antiques factory, there was a Ganesha three times the size of the one I had already bought, at half the price I paid. While I was drooling over the big Ganesha, I could see, out of the corner of my eye, that Pandey was having a good chuckle at my expense.

Somehow, I managed to talk the factory owner into taking the smaller Ganesha (seen in the center of the right-hand picture, above) as a trade-in for part of the price of the big one (left picture). He also agreed to crate the statue and ship it back to Vashon Island. (I had little choice, it was way too big and heavy to take on any airliner.) I was concerned about leaving with neither Ganesha nor my money; but Pandey assured me that I was **dealing with a reputable business. When I got back to Vashon, the shipment didn't arrive for nearly six months. I figured that I'd been had; but my faith in humanity was** eventually restored and now (1994) the big bronze elephant sits near the front door of my flat, welcoming visitors.



In contrast to the Sun City art factory, Pandey took us to the remote settlement of Sikar where I bought one of the huge steel bowls hand-crafted by the village blacksmith. It cost 1,000 rupees, the equivalent of twenty-eight bucks, for two days of his labor.

My mission in India was two-fold: first and foremost, I was after good stock photo opportunities; I was also after Indian cooking gear and spices, especially saffron. Pandey was helpful guiding me through the back streets until we found local vendors with the stuff I wanted. India is nothing like the West. Outside of a few big cities there are no shopping malls. In the towns and villages shopping is done at small, specialized stores—one sells pots, another pans. Although most spices were plentiful and available everywhere, saffron was not. The aromatic seasoning was high on my list due to its high price back home—on a weight basis, saffron is more expensive than gold; just a pinch of the orange threads can set you back ten bucks. Pandey told me he could get me saffron, but I noticed that even he was having difficulty. Finally, one night after dinner he beckoned me to the bus. We drove deep into the small town where, on a dark back street, he disappeared into a disheveled building. It felt like we were doing a drug deal on the wrong side of the tracks. After what seemed like too long, a smiling Pandey emerged with ten little plastic boxes, each sealed and tied with golden string. Each box contained 5-grams of pure nasturtium saffron threads (not the imitation kind, made of marigolds).

I got the lot—50 grams (a bit more than an ounce and a half) for US\$300. Gold was selling for about the same amount then, so I saved \$150 in those terms—but I saved more than \$1200 compared to retail saffron prices back in the States. For years, I impressed people serving saffron rice with Asian meals and making Swedish saffron buns at Christmastime (see recipe in the Appendix). Today (2019),

I have two boxes left; one to use (it's still good enough, although time has robbed a lot of the flavor) and one I'll keep unopened, just for posterity.



Days were spent doing photography and evenings were spent in quest of culinary equipment. One night, when I went out on my own to take pictures, I found a shop selling stainless steel Indian *thalis* (plates) and other dinnerware. **I hadn't found them anywhere else and wanted to bring home service for ten.** Trying to buy the stuff without Pandey was an amusing experience that took the better part of an hour. During the transactions, the **entire town's lighting system crashed a dozen times, leaving us all in the dark.** Pandey later explained that blackouts are common. Many villagers and farmers live in homes without electricity. They clip their own leads onto the main lines to get power. When too many do that the system overloads and the lights go out. Nobody in the shop was fazed by the outages. They just brought out candles and we carried on. Language was a big problem; they spoke not a word of English other than a few words like *hello* and *Coke*. Although we managed to communicate numbers using fingers it was difficult to know what the numbers were for. It took them a long time to fathom that I wanted 10 pieces of everything they had for sale. When they finally got it, their eyes glazed over as the size of my order sunk in. That was followed by organized chaos as the shop owner and all his 6 children ransacked the shelves to fill my order. It was a bit harder getting them to understand that I needed the sixty-something pieces packaged. They sent one of the boys down the street. He came back with supplies and packed everything into two heavy boxes; a few bucks more encouraged both sons to port the packages back to my hotel. I was glad they accompanied me—a small crowd had gathered and watched the spectacle of a western shopper doing his thing. It was clear that I had a lot of money. What with the blackouts, walking the main street of town could have been risky.

And what a street it was—a dirt road traversed by man and beast alike. Getting squeezed between a cow and a goat in the dark is a strange feeling.



Driving through Rajasthan was a hair-raising experience. The main highways were mostly single-lane dirt roads, forcing drivers to **play “chicken” with any** oncoming traffic. The sight of burned-out wrecks at the sides of the road, left by those who lost, were sobering.

Pandey had nerves of steel; rarely did he give way. He just leaned on the horn and blasted his way through. I rode shotgun, to get pictures; my heart was in my throat half the time. None of the others wanted to ride up front, it was too scary.

The hotels we stayed at were former palaces, **along the lines of Hollywood’s *Best Exotic Hotel Marigold***; in every respect except, in most cases, being in greater need of refurbishment. One such palace was on the perimeter of the Sariska Tiger Reserve, where a diminishing population of tigers still managed to make a living. A day-long safari into the park awaited us the next day. In the hotel, there was a guest register, a place for **people who actually saw a tiger to sign their names. I couldn’t help noticing that** documented sightings were infrequent. The tiger safari bore out that documentation—we **didn’t see any tigers**. However, I got to sign that book, after an encounter with a tiger mother and cub, during a sunset run along back road adjacent to the hotel. My runs were about 5 miles in those days; I got deep into the woods. Along the way, I passed scores of monkeys who sat at the edge of the road hissing at me and making threatening gestures. Later I learned that they were waiting for the food truck and probably annoyed because it was late. Near my turn-around point there was a rustle and some movement in the bushes at the side of the road. Through the dense foliage I could make out a big tiger and **a little one. Oops... time to head home. At dinner, hearing my tale, the rest of our group turned green, and it wasn’t from the food. Later that night, I found another tiger in my room; Belinda came by for a nightcap and decided to stay on, to monkey around. However, she was nothing but a tease and probably doing “undercover work” for Lyekin.**

In New Delhi, CK wanted to buy an Indian rug. He was some kind of expert in the art of oriental rug-making; he knew what to look for how much it was worth back in KL. He was also experienced in the ways of rug merchants and how to negotiate with them. I went along for amusement and ended up buying a small rug. Even in India, they were pricey. The whole process took four hours. First, the merchants pulled our selections from huge piles of rugs, for closer examination. That was the hardest part—there were so many, and each more beautiful than the others. Tea and snacks were served throughout. When final candidates had been culled, the negotiations began. Tang bantered back and forth with the two salesmen. He negotiated about little technical faults that you and I would never notice. With each little defect that Tang discovered, the price came down. After two hours, the group was bored and left to take pictures of the city.

But CK stuck it out and got his rug for a quarter of the original price.

He said he could have shaved the price more but felt guilty about squandering our limited time in the Indian capital. I paid full price for mine (right) and got roundly chastised for that by CK and Pandey. They

said that people like me ruined the market, disincentivizing the merchants from making deals. Their point was well taken; but frankly I **haven't got time for such hassles; time is so much more valuable than money**. Besides, the rugs were worth every penny of their price—much more actually, if the price were measured by the amount of human toil involved making oriental rugs.



The carpet shop in New Delhi made their rugs in a back-yard factory. It was a rare opportunity for unique photographs. I was given full access and spent an hour taking pictures of two dozen old women and young girls making rugs—tying multi-colored threads with thousands and thousands of knots. They explained that a small rug, 36 X 60-inch [~90 X 150 cm], like the one I bought for \$200, took one of the women two months to tie together. **The unfortunate thing was that the Indian shop keeper couldn't charge much more than he did because, at a certain price point, buyers opted for machine-woven Chinese rip-offs. Most people can't tell imitation oriental rugs apart from the real thing.** [My glass-artist friend Susan Bates had the same problem with Chinese imitations; buyers would balk at her \$50 price for (very) fancy hand-made beads. If she matched the \$5 Chinese price, she would find herself working for less than 10¢ per hour.]

Pandey took us to see the Taj Mahal at the very end of the trip. To the chagrin of most in the group, I insisted that we arrive at the Taj before dawn. I had quite a bit of setting-up to do and wanted to be ready when before sun-up. Photographers call sunrise and **sunset the "golden time"** because everything looks glorious in warm orange-yellow light. I intensified those colors using a filter combo comprised of CC30Y (yellow) + CC20R (red).¹⁶



Thankfully, the group accommodated my wish and got up at 4:00 am. They had watched me at work for three weeks; they knew that I was like a commando on a mission when it came to pictures. We arrived at the Taj about 5:00 am, preceded by a flotilla of other tour buses and hoards of tourists.

¹⁶ I preferred to shoot intensified colors because I believe that is how people see and remember things. Did you ever notice that, while your snapshots often look washed out, postcards don't? Your snaps are unadulterated; they show what was actually there. It's your eye (your mind) that adds the color you think you saw. Postcard photographers beef up the color using filters when they shoot and more filters when they process the pictures.

I looked very official, dressed in blacks and lugging heavy gear; people made way for me. At the front gate, I paid extra fees for use of a tripod on the grounds. (I guess that was their way of determining who was a professional, who was making money off their monument. Fair enough, my intentions were indeed monetary.) Once inside the Taj grounds, I snagged the sweet spot—centered at the end of the reflecting pools. Fortunately, nobody challenged me for that prime spot. With the camera in position, I began composing the shot, wistfully wondering how many thousands of other photographers had stood in that exact same place before me, to photograph the crown jewel of Indian culture.



The illustration *Taj Reflections* was put together in 2009, as part of the India Collection.

Lining-up the Taj in the camera viewfinder took far too long than anticipated and drove me crazy—I **couldn't get the shot to line-up**, architecturally. When I got the four towers vertically aligned, the building perspectives were distorted, appearing as if I were looking up at it. I swore I would never drink again. In the end, I gave up and (fortunately) lined up the shot on the Taj building, not the four towers. That turned out to be the correct perspective because, I found out later, the four towers actually are out of kilter; they intentionally lean outward so as not to fall on the Taj in an earthquake or war.



Getting the right perspectives for people pictures was equally challenging. Photographing life in India (or any impoverished country) is a bitter-sweet experience—they have so little, we have so much. I liked to tip or buy things from the people who appeared in my pictures—**without them, I had no pictures. What do they say, “Money talks?”** With a token payment of one dollar, I could buy the full cooperation of my photo models. However, conferring such gratuities could be problematic: If I was seen paying someone even a dime, a dozen more were soon tugging on my sleeve, begging. More than once, I was **besieged by crowds of kids who would surround me and “pat me down” in search of booty.** The only way to disperse them was to get tough, to shout at them, make mean faces and threatening gestures. Over the years, I learned that it was best to look like a soldier; if you dress like that, people treat you with respect (fear). As mentioned, my outfit consisted of black safari shirts, trousers and jackets with plenty of zippered pockets (with button-down (or Velcro) flaps covering the zippers). Over those garments, I wore a **black photographer’s vest, with pockets designed for film and lenses. Those vests also had zippered pockets inside that are invaluable for travel papers and money.** (I always kept enough cash in my pants pockets that I never needed to pull out and reveal my wallet.) Of course, it was impossible to hide my camera and take pictures at the same time. Cameras were beggar magnets; the bigger the lens, the faster they would come a-**runnin’**. Actually, *running* is an inappropriate metaphor because, in India, most of the beggars are crippled, many with gross deformities that really tugged on my heartstrings. In those cases, **all I could do was leave and hope they didn’t follow me.**

1994 – *Aurora Experience* – Canadian Connections

Doug Ethridge returned my favor (the Malaysia Airlines jobs); he got me involved in an RFP [Request for Proposal] he received from Holland-America Lines (HAL). The well-known cruise-ship line was one of Avcon’s **biggest customers.**

They were looking for a solution to a problem they had with an Alaskan tour that was a ship-and-shore combo excursion from Seattle to Fairbanks and back. The itinerary called for a bus stopover in a remote part of Alaska where there was nothing to do, especially in winter when night fell in the early afternoon. Guests needed to be entertained during their over-night stopovers and HAL were looking for solutions. I came up with a grandiose plan that Doug Ethridge eventually supported.

The plan was to produce a multimedia theater to stage an extravaganza show called the *Aurora Experience*. The audience was to be seated around a campfire in a snow-covered forest glade, able to look up into a starry sky (fairy lights in the ceiling) and see the Aurora Borealis (simulated by lasers); they would also see a 30-projector, multi-image "infotainment" [aka "edutainment"] show about the aurora.

Baited by a broad-stroke concept outline, Holland America bit the hook; they paid to send us to an aurora research center at the University of Fairbanks, to do research for the proposed show. As the show plans developed, so did the budget, to the point where Ethridge feared that his client could never bank-roll it. To make the numbers work, I turned north, to Canada, where one US dollar bought nearly half-again more given the 1:1.4 USD-CAD exchange rate.

On my own dime, I drove up to Vancouver with Hita von Mende to search for suppliers. (Why not combine business with pleasure, eh?) We spent the weekend sightseeing and I arranged to have a business lunch with Trudy Woodcock, at the water-front Boat House restaurant in English Bay, near the historic Sylvia Hotel, where we were staying.



Over lunch with Trudy, I outlined the plans for the Aurora Experience and asked for her help finding the right team of talents to produce it. I knew that through her work with Gary McCarty at Creative House and Paul Smith **at Producers' Workshop**, that **Trudy's Rolodex** had all the contacts I needed. (When **I met her, Trudy was working for Paul Smith's AV** production company, Creative House.)

Trudy explained that she was working as part owner and researcher for a stock photo agency, Image Network and longer had any AV axes to grind. With **Trudy's help, I assembled a Canadian team of** construction, electronics, scenery, lighting and special-effects [SFX] experts. Using their expertise, I fleshed-out the details of production.

Unfortunately, the nominal working budget expanded to USD \$5 million [\$10 million in **today's money**]. **In the end, Holland America choked at the costs and nothing came of it.**¹⁷ It was right after the *Aurora Experience* proposal that Monte Cline left Avcon to go out on his own, freelancing for Proline Video at first, then Maverick Productions.

¹⁷ I kept the proposal; I still think it's a viable concept; let me know if you are interested. Ha!

1994 – Digital Gurus – Hedging Bets

Monte Cline was pretty-well-set financially; his comely Korean wife, Bo Cline, was a creative director at AOL, one of the big internet tech companies (*You've got mail!*).

That liberated Monte to go freelance and work (primarily) on Microsoft shows for Jim Angelo at Maverick Productions (Seattle). Maverick competed with Avcon for meetings- and events-content business.

Like his former boss, Cline was more interested in video and digital imaging than in slide shows. Even at this early stage, Monte was fully versed in digital slide scanning and Photoshop.



Photo of himself courtesy of Monte Cline.

As I lacked digital-imaging gear, Cline generously put together a digitized portfolio of my best images. He also became my digital guru and gave me my first lessons in Adobe Photoshop, Version 2.0. The two of us schemed about putting our images on line, and building a photo search engine. Those were very early days; Lycos had just gone online and Google was still a few years away. We deluded ourselves into thinking that we could actually make a viable search engine. We lost touch when I went to work for Watts-Silverstein.

Scott Maslowski replaced Monte Cline at Avcon. Maslowski was a work horse, always willing to help and generous with his time and talents. Scott also accepted criticism and guidance without attitude or argument. That was more than I could say for Cline; he had **a streak of "Holier than thou."** **Scott and I didn't really get to know each other until after** Doug Ethridge re-purposed Avcon. Ethridge saw the future; he was smart enough to prune his plant, knowing it would grow better. Ethridge eliminated just about everything and everybody, save some cherry-picked video and photo gear. His space was downsized, too; he moved out of the big loft on Washington Street, eventually into another condo in the same Union Street building where they lived and where Sue worked.

I understood Ethridge's move and motivation, having done the same thing with Incredible Slidemakers fifteen years earlier. I cut myself loose from the shackles of a company, to do my own thing; Ethridge was making the same move. I inherited some of Avcon's slide gear; I asked for all of it but Doug had already given the projectors to Bob Wager, Avcon's original AV guy. I ended up with some AVL Dove dissolves and Chief alignment stands. [For more, see *From Douglas Ethridge* in the Appendix.] Taking on more AV gear was counterintuitive. I was hedging my bets, living in cognitive dissonance—unconvinced that slide shows were dead. Or maybe it was denial.

Bear in mind that I had two steamer trunks stored in the back shed at the Vashon studio full of AV gear from The Incredible Slidemakers, including two ShowPro V programmers and a dozen Mark IV and Mark VII dissolvers. **That gack was way past it's use-by date,** but functioned perfectly when I boxed it up (in 1978). My rationale was that, I might be able to repurpose the gear in the future—and if I didn't have the gear, I wouldn't have that option.

In addition to that stuff, I also stored a variety of AV equipment brought from Stockholm, as below:

ACCESSORY	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DATA BOOSTER ISOLATOR	1	120-VOLT
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DATA BOOSTER ISOLATOR	1	120-VOLT
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DATA BOOSTER ISOLATOR	1	120-VOLT
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DATA BOOSTER ISOLATOR	1	120-VOLT
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DATA BOOSTER ISOLATOR	1	120-VOLT
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	SIMDA ADAPTER (SAV)	1	SAV
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	3-DRIVE HUB		
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	POWER CONTROL BOX	2	
COMPUTER	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	GENESIS	1	01106F01M0R0034
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	KEYBOARD	1	K-69 VERSION B
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	MONITOR	1	2900003M00R00
DISSOLVER	AUDIO VISUAL LABS SUPER DOVE		1	01106F01M0R0027
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS SUPER DOVE		1	01106F01M0R0027
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS SUPER DOVE		1	01106F01M0R0027
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DOVE-X	1	
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DOVE-X2	1	
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DOVE-X2	1	
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	DOVE-X2	1	
I/O	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	SUPER GENESIS	1	
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	SUPER GENESIS	1	
I/O	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	CX-120 EXPANDER	1	01001F00M0R0030
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	CX-120 EXPANDER	1	01001F00M0R0030
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	CX-120 EXPANDER	1	01001F00M0R0030
	AUDIO VISUAL LABS	SUPER-SWITCHER	1	
LENS				
	BUHL	1-INCH LENS	1	
	BUHL	2-INCH LENS	3	
	KODAK	2.5-INCH LENS	2	
	KODAK	3-INCH LENS	2	
	ISCO	4-INCH (100MM) LENS	1	
	KODAK	7-INCH LENS	8	

Although just a fraction of the gear I once had, the remnants of that collection still took up a lot of storage space in the Vashon photo studio. The funny thing is that I never used any of the stuff, never even set-it up. **It just sat, for decades, gathering dust ... just in case.**

Remember that, in 1994, digital imaging—digital anything—was in its infancy. The trend was toward digital; but the reality was that most professional image makers were still using traditional film media. **The kinds of images that can be made digitally now couldn't** be imagined back then. Film was still the only way to project high-quality [high resolution] pictures. Anyway, the gack still worked and I had space enough to store it.

Despite the implausibility of my cognitive dissonance, I also acquired a Marron Carrel MC-1600 rostrum camera from Dan Davenport, at Minolta. He was disassembling his former multi-image studio; that Dan was doing so should have told me something.

There was no place to set up the MC-1600 in the Vashon studio; however, the rostrum camera was the missing link to my contingent self-sufficiency on Vashon Island. Theoretically, I had everything needed to open a traditional multi-image-slide-show production studio—including a third steamer-trunk full of art cels from the Forox department at Incredible Slidemakers and a fourth containing the Everything Books. I had visions of myself working with those archives to produce new images, not necessarily for slide shows.

However, the MC-1600 took up so much of the photo studio that the space became a de facto storage room. **Another “white elephant”** was a Forox SSA Animation Compound, aka *stage*, another relic from The Incredible Slidemakers. In the remaining space, two rows of IKEA *Omar* shelving were installed—each row was 9-feet long [~274 cm} fourteen inches deep [~33 cm] and 6-feet high [~174 cm] with five levels of shelves, providing ~90 square feet [~10 m³] of additional, organized, accessible storage space. Thenceforth I dubbed that room, *The Warehouse*.

[Spoiler Alert: In 2013, I was lucky to find a buyer for the MC-1600—a film school in California asked for it; they were chuffed to receive such a big donation. A couple of well-tanned, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Californians showed up in a van and schlepped it away. The Forox stage was another story, involving a hippie. His story is worth a short diversion:

[The guy showed up just after sunset on an Indian-summer evening; he was six hours late, but his ride explained why—it was the most run-down rig I'd seen in a long time, maybe ever—a zombie Ford F-150 pick-up truck with a home-made cabin. Apparently, his **engine blew hose on the ferry; he had to get towed to town; didn't have enough money** for the parts, etcetera. But there he was.

[Under other circumstances, I might have refused to give him the Forox stage; what on earth was a derelict artist going to do with such a precision instrument? However, I had exhausted all means of finding a proper recipient for my donation. Resources like eBay **and Craig's List** were a few years away. If I remember right, this guy responded to an ad in *The Stranger*, a Seattle fringe weekly that I used in the past to solicit nude models.

[Instead, for the next three hours, I built an improvised shipping crate out of a dozen banana boxes and helped him strap the stage to the top of his mobile home, fueled by a half liter of scotch. When last seen, the Forox stage was lurching rather violently from side to side as the happy hippy rocked-and-rolled down the mogul maze I called my driveway. It quite literally disappeared in a cloud of dust.]

Scott Maslowski **inherited Avcon's video**-editing equipment, a huge suite of gear that he installed in the living room of his Kent (Washington) home, 21 miles (33 km) south of Seattle—just far enough away to be inconvenient. Video was peaking during those years. **Digital media were coming on fast but didn't have much market share (yet).**

With Avcon's gear, Scott started a one-man video editing business, Site 5 Media. That was when we got to know each other. We never talked much while he was working for Ethridge; he came in on the tail end of all the projects I had Avcon involved with.

With Avcon out of the picture, Scott handled my various video needs [mostly video copies of my slide shows for the better part of 6 years. Because his office was former the living room of his home, I also got to know his wife Wendy, their young son, Dakota, the apple **of Scott's eye, and their infant daughter, Lexi.**

I regularly socialized with the Maslowskis over dinner at their Kent home or ours on **Vashon Island. Scott's wife, Wendy, eventually left their kids with him and she took off** with her boss.

The last time I saw Scott was at a memorable campfire behind the Vashon house. There **was a fire pit behind the pond. Maslowski's date was Natalie Luke.** She was the stunning result of crossing Chinese and German genes—big and beautiful. Her demeanor matched her physical dominance. Natalie was a real go-getter; her company—I design-Seattle—was **Scott's number one client.**

Staring into the flames, I reflected on the vagaries of life. A year earlier we were both **"happily" married men.** As a column of sparks rose into a star-studded night sky, I felt a nostalgic premonition, knowing that we were all at crossroads. An 8-inch-high [20 cm] holly tree **that I rescued from one of Scott's landscaping projects, when we first met, had** grown to 8 feet high, by then.

[Spoiler Alert: I lost touch with Scott when I resettled in Vancouver and gave up commercial work—but managed to get in touch with him, fact checking parts of this **memoir. Scott isn't in the media business anymore; he does IT work for Seattle Lighting,** an up-market lighting fixtures emporium; he still lives in the house where he grew up; his kids are all grown up—Dakota is twenty-two this year [2018], graduating from the University of Washington business school in May; Lexi is seventeen, a senior in high school who has been taking college-level course at Green River College with only a few credits left for a two-**year degree. I didn't ask about Wendy.]**

1995 – Australasia – Upside Down

Flush with cash and air miles to burn (I racked-up bazillions of them commuting to Malaysia), I invited Hita von Mende on an Australasian adventure, to celebrate our birthdays (my 50th, her 53rd).

Hita had never been *down under*, but I had colleagues in Australia and was anxious to visit New Zealand.

However, why we chose Australasia was zanier—we saw the 1994 Australian film, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*,¹⁸ and decided to make our *vacilando*¹⁹ the Palace Hotel, in Broken Hill, made famous in the film as *Lasseter's Hotel Casino Resort*.



Our trip started in Melbourne, where I reconnected with Lindsay Rodda, **who I hadn't seen** or heard from in 14 years. When he heard that I had plans of starting a restaurant, he arranged for us to have dinner with a good friend, who ran a successful eatery just off St. Kilda Road.

At dinner, we got into a bit of a brouhaha about how restaurants should be run. Lindsay reckoned he was some sort of expert on the subject—Lindsay was what Lasse Hellquist called an *expert overalt* (know it all); although meaning well, he could be quite belligerent and annoying.

But I had my own, contrarian ideas, and I can be belligerent, too. We really butted heads. I had a bit too much Australian wine **and got a bit hot under the collar. Lindsay's friend** did his best to mediate; he largely corroborated what Lindsay was saying, that a restaurant should focus on a single kind of cuisine, e.g. Italian or Mexican, and should not try to be all things to all people, which was my inclination.

¹⁸ Wikipedia: *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* is a 1994 Australian comedy-drama film written and directed by Stephan Elliott. The plot follows two drag queens played by Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce and a transgender woman, played by Terence Stamp, as they journey across the Australian Outback from Sydney to Alice Springs in a tour bus that they have named "Priscilla", along the way encountering various groups and individuals. The film's title is a pun on the fact that in English speaking cultures, "queen" is a slang term for a drag queen or female impersonator.

¹⁹ Vacilando is defined by the Urban Dictionary as the act of wandering, when the experience of travel is more important than reaching the specific destination.

Outnumbered, I turned to Hita for support, only to find her siding with the other two. It **was an exasperating evening; I'm afraid my temper flared. I insulted Lindsay and never heard from him again.**

[Spoiler Alert: About ten years ago, just when I was ready to make amends, to tell him that he was right, after all, I got an email from Bette Murray, his former partner, informing me that Lindsay died on March 27, 2006.]

I rented a car and we drove north to Sydney, making the 545-mile [878-kilometer] trip in one long haul. We stayed in a three-star, economy hotel in Surry Hills, behind Darling Harbor; it was a fair hike into town; but, Sydney is a walkable city.



Photo by Hita von Mende

Unfortunately, the weather took a turn for the worse—cold, foggy and wet; what a drag.

I was hoping to get some updated pictures of the city, for my stock.

Nonetheless, we had a look at the Sydney Opera House and took a Sydney harbor cruise, which included a stop at Goat Island.

We got an early start the next day and flew to Broken Hill, our vacilando; it was 710 miles [1,143 kilometers] due west of Sydney, a bit too far to drive, considering that for the most part, everywhere in southern and western Australia looks pretty much the same—all **you see is mile after mile of sheep grazing land. Unless you're driving along the coast on the Great Ocean Road, or crossing the Blue Mountains, driving around Australia is boring.**

We got the first plane out of Sydney and arrived at Broken Hill just under three hours later, in time to rent a car and be at the old Palace Hotel [built 1889] in time for lunch. Although not as pimped as it appeared in *Priscilla*, **the hotel's kitsch murals** were an unmistakable link to the movie—permanent attractions covering every conceivable wall, nooks and crannies included.

Broken Hill is in mining territory; **the area has one of the world's largest deposits of silver, lead and zinc.** Although this was way before I became interested in precious metals as investments, we took a group tour of the Day Dream Mine in nearby Silverton.

The highlight was descending a rickety, wooden elevator deep down into the cave-like abandoned mine. The big surprise was how hot and humid it was—and how dark. As a photographer, I was used to operating in the dark, but some folks got spooked.



A highlight was taking camel rides near the Mutawintji National Park.

After a week in Australia, we flew to Auckland, New Zealand. That city lies in the middle of the North Island. I was hoping to catch up with John Brand, a former colleague I knew through AMI.

Brand ran an AV staging company—Brand Projection Service—in San Francisco.

His claim to fame was running the light show at Bill Graham's Fillmore Auditorium.

He was clever enough to sell his company and get out of AV while the going was **good, in the late '80s, at the height of the slide-show business.**



John Brand comparing AVL Eagle (top) and Sprindler & Saupee Director 24, 1974.

Expecting to receive a 10-year income stream from the new owners of Brand Projection, John spent his fortune on an ocean-going sailboat and set off on a voyage around the world. Like most of his other colleagues, I was stunned by his bravado—and way jealous.

However, a few years later, when people started using email, I heard from John that his boat had broken down on some remote island and that he sold it, moved to Auckland, and married a girl he met in Hawaii, who he took with him on his ill-fated round-the-world sailing odyssey.

After re-settling in Auckland, John took a job running the audiovisual department at the University of Auckland. Unfortunately, school was in recess when Hita and I visited Auckland; and John was away on holiday.

To digress for a moment: John recently contacted me, three decades after we lost touch. His email was a serendipity; I had been thinking about him, in terms of this book; suddenly this arrived:

----- Original Message -----

Subject: For absolutely no reason your name popped into my head today.

It wasn't hard to find your website.

Date: Sun, October 22, 2017 6:35 pm

To: douglas@mesney.com

For absolutely no reason your name popped into my head today.

It wasn't hard to find your website.

Like you, I have been an expat for most of the last 25 years, first sailing in Mexico then the South Pacific ending up in New Zealand in 1997.

It was to be for a few months. But I had the life changing experience of becoming a first time [sic] father at 50.

I now have two teenage sons. I continued doing audio visual work but shifting to design and installation. As typical, a few large clients rather than a lot of small ones. Now I am mostly retired but still helping out at the AV company of a former technician of mine. It's fun but, as President Clinton says about his retirement, "I'm tired of always being the oldest guy in the room".

I wish you well and loved reading your slide show memoirs [at www.incredibleimages.com].

John Brand

Brand Presentation Services

+64 27 243 2750

Auckland, NZ

[Read (a lot) more about John and Brand Projection in the Appendix—*From John Brand*]

Hita and I didn't spend much time in Auckland after discovering that John Brand wasn't there. Instead, we rented a car and drove the entire length of the island. First. We headed north, through the mountains, to the KariKari Peninsula; then we followed route #1 south, all the way to Wellington, stopping for a day in Rotorua, to learn about the Maori culture, and pausing in Taupo to enjoy the beautiful scenery around that big lake. The countryside looked like it had been given a close shave; we drove past endless rolling hills and vast plains, devoid of trees, carpeted with lush green grass mowed by millions of munching sheep.

After putting in a 281-mile [452-kilometer] day, it was nearly dusk by the time we got to Wellington; we were tired and hungry but wanted a cold beer more than anything. After checking into a hillside hotel, we drove downtown in search of said beer; but, there was nary a bar in sight; the only one open was crammed full of drunken college kids and young executives. It turned out that Wellington—like all of New Zealand—had a prudish temperament; Kiwis [New Zealanders] were ultra conservative, very principled; it felt like we had slipped through a time warp and were back in the 1950s.

We put up with the crowd and had some bar food—meat pies—with our brews. Later, despite being exhausted, we hardly got any sleep; high winds kept the shutters and shingles clattering all night, relentlessly. When I mentioned it to the hotel concierge the next morning, he told us that the winds rarely stop in Wellington.

Wellington sits on the southern tip of the North Island. Because of its land formation, the narrow channel that separates the North from the South Island acts like a wind tunnel. Otherwise gentle trade winds accelerate as they pass through the geographic funnel; the result is endless wind; perfect for sailors and hang gliders. Sure enough, the wind never let up during the entire time we spent in Wellington.

[We didn't include the South Island in our itinerary; that was a big mistake. Possibly Hita didn't have enough time, due to the obligations and scheduling demands of running her business, Law Seminars International.]

1995 – Café Berlin – 🍷* Fork Inn the Road

After the MAS photo library was completed, Saadah Shaik Mahmood and I made plans for a new AV show and a picture-gift promotion—the make use of all the new photography that I shot for the library projects. However, all those plans got cancelled when the Malaysian economy crashed during the famous Asian Contagion currency crisis. With the Malaysian ringgit devalued, I was too expensive; and that, as they say, was that—there were no more phone calls or faxes from Kuala Lumpur.

Although the wheels fell off the Malaysian gravy train, my coffers were replenished sufficiently to afford me the confidence to re-focus on my restaurant dream.

Ever since arriving on Vashon Island, I had my eye on Café del Sol, a Mexican joint that sat at the foot of the ferry dock.

Café del Sol was a run-down place (especially the kitchen). The restaurant had been a hobby business for Michele, wife of Ron Altier, the wealthy owner of Jorgensen Forge Corp., a steel-foundry.

Ron likely funded the restaurant's shortfalls.



The restaurant building was connected to four rental apartments. The owners had run those into the ground; they qualified as ramshackle tenements. There was a little house on the property too, which was also generating rental income. The unique thing about the **place was that it was Vashon Island's only seaside commercial property, prominently** situated at the foot of the ferry dock, where thousands of people passed by, every day.

The serendipity of Café del Sol was that my partner, Hita von Mende's, **twin brother, Ake,** had operated the restaurant two decades earlier, as a fish & chips joint.



More recently, Ake had opened Café Berlin, a German-style restaurant in Denver, Colorado. With my intense interest in the food business, I flew to Denver in 1994 and spent a month helping Ake build the place, go through the permitting, and get it opened.

Helping Ake whet my appetite to be a restaurateur and served as a dress rehearsal for converting Café del Sol into the Fork Inn the Road restaurant. Over the course of eight weeks, Ake and I fashioned a broken down, old restaurant into a Berlin café, complete with walnut-stained Wainscoting and art-deco murals painted **by Ake's sister, Hita.**



Hita made time in her busy schedule, running Law Seminars International, to fly out to **Denver and help on her brother's restaurant project; but she only had three days.** Her four murals were *one-day wonders* done with house paints purchased at the local hardware store.

For two months, Ake and I lived and breathed Café Berlin. Ake was a fellow Aquarian, I **understood him, he was like a brother, a colleague in arms. I sensed that Ake didn't pay** enough attention to his family.

Opening night at Café Berlin was a gala affair; Ake invited all his friends. I invited **Incredible's former Western States sales rep, Joey Porcelli** and her new beau, Randy Pharo, a corporate lawyer with well-endowed oil-industry clients. The best part was watching Ake in his element—the kitchen.

When I got back to Vashon, after the Café Berlin project, I was really fired up about the restaurant business; I decided to take the initiative by making an offer to the owners of Café del Sol (Ron Altier and George Durler). They took some convincing, but we came to an agreement, with owner financing for a 15-year balloon mortgage; that arrangement left me with enough money to remodel the place into a European style café, a tall order considering what was there when we started.

The dining room at Café del Sol had built-in booths and the place was so dimly lit you got a closed in feeling. Only a few booths could enjoy the spectacular, vista view of Puget Sound that was the biggest feature of the location. Thus, all the booths had to go.

I put the old restaurant booths out on the curbside hoping people would grab them. Some **of them were taken by Bishop's Pub**, one of the two sleazy bars uptown in Vashon town. The others were hauled to the Vashon dump.

The kitchen was a disaster zone, full of old gear that hadn't been well cleaned or maintained. As well, the kitchen layout **was odd, done by someone who didn't understand** much about cooking. For example, instead of being in the back, out of sight, the dish washer was up front, for all to see.

Café del Sol had been a Mexican place. That kind of food is all about assembling pre-cooked ingredients, not about cooking fresh ingredients to order. However, my restaurant would only serve fresh-cooked meals; so, the entire kitchen got torn out, save the stove and hood assembly (messing with them would have required a new permit--no thank you).

Getting rid of the old equipment was nearly impossible on Vashon Island. The only guy who would take the industrial-sized crap ran the dubiously-legal Vashon Junk Yard—a small-scale toxic waste site. There were hundreds of old fridges and freezers lying about in the junk-**yard's two-acre** field, rusting away.

The stuff I added to the junk-**yard's heaps was certainly toxic enough.** The fryer base and the floor under it were covered in 6-inches of accumulated fry-oil in various states of solidification. How those fryers looked inside, I will leave it to your imagination. Oh, and we found several dead rats behind the walls. Yuk!



Renovating Café del Sol was an expensive job. The kitchen was gutted and completely re-organized for the new work-flow requirements. The dining room was stripped bare and a tile-red floor installed, together with new baseboard heaters along the floor-to-ceiling windows, to keep them from fogging. Tables and chairs replaced the tattered booths, they gave the place an open feel.



The dining room was painted in saturated colors (golden yellow, orange, red and fuchsia) **that contrasted the red floor tiles; I jokingly called the color scheme “Tahitian Whorehouse.”** As a finishing touch, Hita painted marvelous murals of tropical scenes; they made the new place look like a million dollars.

Nestor Construction did the renovations; I trusted Dave Nestor and his crew; they built the additions to my house on time and on budget (unheard of on Vashon).

While Dave’s crew did the construction work I shopped the used restaurant equipment markets, looking for the tables and chairs; Little ol’ Seattle had five used restaurant gear outfits; each had a big warehouse full of used equipment and furnishings—a testament to how many restaurants fail. Most of Fork Inn the Road’s gear came from Dick’s Restaurant Supply [2963 First Avenue South] in the Sodo section of Seattle. I was such a good customer that I was on a first-name basis with the owners, Ed and Linda Johnstun.

[Spoiler Alert: Ed and Linda Johnstun helped me out when Fork Inn the Road closed. They bought the giant fork and hung it on the front wall of their First Avenue store. (They should have stuck it in the sidewalk, or in the roof, IMHO.)]

If you’ve read this far, you know I was all about marketing—the “right” kind of show, the “right” kind of image. For my restaurant, I came up with an identify package that reinforced the restaurant name: Fork Inn the Road.



The centerpiece of the restaurant’s identify was a kind of landmark—a 14-foot high model of the restaurant logo built to my design specs by Vashon metal artist Mark Bennion at his Coho Studio. The giant sculpture was stuck in the ground by the restaurant entrance, as if it fell out of the sky, e.g. a fork in the road.

At first, King County building inspectors objected to the big fork, claiming it violated a statue that prohibited large signage. However, pointing to a plaque on one of the tines, engraved **with the artist’s signature, I successfully argued that it wasn’t a sign at all, it was a signed work of art.** In the end, the fork stayed and became the subject of hundreds (thousands?) of pictures taken by visitors and Islanders alike; everyone wanted to have their picture taken with the fork.



Then, in what might have been a vendetta, King County, having conceded in the case of the big fork, came after me about the restaurant logo. True, it was designed to look like a road-warning sign, the kind they use to warn of pedestrians or animals, a yellow diamond with a big black fork (instead of the usual symbols, e.g., pedestrians, deer or horses).

After installing a few of the signs along the roads approaching the restaurant, a very angry Transportation Department official threatened us with an enormous fine for violating a statute prohibiting counterfeit road signs. We took them down of course; but I managed to get that story on the front page of the local papers, with a picture of our offending logo signs; an advertising failure turned into a PR plus.

Another funny episode involves a rumor that got started when a ~~busybody~~ nice lady that lived across the street asked what we were building. I was trying to keep the restaurant a secret, to build up curiosity and interest in the community, so I gave her a yarn—she gasped when I told her it was going to be a Burger King restaurant; soon after, I got a call from the editor of our local paper, the Vashon Island Beachcomber, asking if it were true. Ha!

(I had yet to learn how conservative most Vashonites are; by and large they oppose change in favor of keeping Vashon as it is, in a time warp; there is a bumper sticker on my car that reads, *Keep Vashon Weird*. When out-of-towners visited, I recommended that, while they were on the Island, they set their clocks back five or ten minutes.)

The restaurant opened on **Mexico's** Independence Day, May 5th; it was still dark outside when my partner, Hita von Mende, pulled the string to turn on the neon Open sign (left). Every customer of legal age was offered a free tequila or cerveza to celebrate the liberation of the (Mexican) Café Del Sol.

The lines were long on opening day; it was impossible to keep up with the demand. There was chaos in the kitchen; it was a far cry from what I anticipated, i.e., relaxed chefs finessing fine food.





Although the reviews were good and the business seemingly successful, the relentless pressures running the restaurant scared the hell out of me.

I couldn't imagine myself remaining in that situation. In the AV business, no matter how hard a job was, you knew that it had an end, that you'd get a break. The only breaks you get in the restaurant business are equipment breakdowns, supply failures, employee absenteeism/theft, and/or dishonest customers who pretend to find nails or other crap in their food, scamming you for free meals—the problems never stopped.

Restauranteering looks glamorous on TV, but it's the hardest business imaginable. If I wrote a book about Fork Inn the Road, I would call it the *Top Ten List of Restaurant Mistakes*; I made every one of them, and then some—all the result of my out-of-control ego. The take-away for me was learning that there is a reason why things are the way they are; going against the natural order can be costly.



My biggest mistake was the menu; I offered too many different choices; my idea was to have something for everyone—steaks, seafood, Italian, Chinese, Thai, Malaysian, and German. (!) If you think about how much all those different ingredients cost, you can understand why Fork Inn the Road never turned a profit. Offsetting restaurant losses was income from *Tern Inn B&B*.²⁰ I kept trying new things—a take-out window, a soft ice cream machine (I gained a few pounds running that one) and a well-stocked bar with a large selection of expensive liquors and wines—each improvement added more costs.

First customers at Fork Inn the Road's new take-away.

²⁰ The property that I bought for the restaurant included four studio apartments and a cute little house; the rental income from those five units was what made Fork Inn the Road possible; however, my plan was to convert them to a bed and breakfast business called "Tern Inn." [Terns are sea birds.]

I reckoned that folks on the ferry line would yearn for my goodies; I didn't realize that it would take a lot more than foodies to get those folks to leave their cars.

My other big mistake was not verifying the background of my employees. Many of them turned out to have light fingers; Halley Aldrich [daughter of the owners of Vashon's art supply store, Aldrich Art] ended up in cahoots with the larcenous chef I hired, let's call him Charles. I discovered too late that they were ordering cases of expensive champagne and liquors that they spirited away in the dark of night, along with racks of lamb, roasts of beef, and God knows what all else. By the time I discovered their transgressions, we owed FSA [Food Services of America] and the Washington State Liquor Board a small fortune.

Before that, Charles persuaded me to hire his buddy to be our maître d'. That scoundrel ended up fleeing the island after absconding with funds donated to a local charity.

Hiring a chef was probably my biggest mistake; I should have been the cook; the menu featured my recipes, after all. However, I felt my role was above that, that I should be running the business and be its creative director. I was convinced that—with all my years in the promotion business—I knew how to appeal to people. As I saw it, running a restaurant could be done with hired help. I still think that, today. My mistake was hiring a prima donna chef; he wanted to have a finger in the pie, so to speak; he wanted to make his own menu; he didn't want to be a sous chef.

Chef Charles (right) migrated to Vashon Island from Leavenworth, Washington—a Germanic tourist town in the middle of nowhere near the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, about two hours northeast of Seattle, by car (with no traffic).

He answered an ad I placed in the Seattle Times and made the trip down to Vashon Island with his wife for an interview.

Ake von Mende (left) and chef Charles.



He told me that he was moving to Vashon with or without a job at Fork Inn the Road; that impressed me. He said he wanted to be involved in a small restaurant where he was needed. He seemed to have good credentials, having worked at a half dozen going concerns in Leavenworth; so I hired him—without ever verifying his references.

Charles and his wife moved down to Vashon about a week before Fork Inn the Road opened. They rented a sprawling, ranch-style house on Judd Creek; that was a major financial commitment; but then, I was paying Charles good money.

He was supposed to be my alter ego at the restaurant; but he soon turned into an adversary—a psychodrama that took only two months to play out.

It started off well enough: Charles arrival overlapped Ake von Mende's **departure. Ake (Hita's fraternal twin brother) came to help me get the restaurant going; he was returning** my favor, when I helped him get Café Berlin going. Ake and Charles hit it off immediately. After Ake left, Charles took to learning the recipes on the menu; he had opinions that were contrarian and we had a few confrontations before I convinced him to go with the menu as printed—I told him it would cost too much to make new menus (that was an exaggeration; I printed the menus in my studio).

It was hard getting good help; when it came to Emily Post, Vashonites were clueless; Halley Aldrich had waited tables and knew the routine. I put her in charge of training our crew of two dozen local teens, many of whom she recruited. By opening day, we had a **functioning team that performed well (in Halley's classes) and looked good, wearing** custom-printed Fork Inn the Road shirts; however, it took them a week to get into the **swing of things, after the restaurant opened and some of them didn't make final cut.**

We opened May 5th and by June I knew I had problems; the beginnings of an internal, restaurant Politik had evolved. Halley had most of the crew under her thumb and Charles had the kitchen crew under his. It seemed like Halley and Charles had become union bosses; they wielded that kind of control; they had me under their thumbs, too.

Of the thirty-eight on our staff (their overhead was killing us; Hita says we were paying chef Charles \$60,000). The only loyal and honest worker was a Mexican lad in his early 20s, called Cirilo; we inherited him from Costa del Sol, where he had been trained to run the restaurant more or less single-handedly. Michelle and Ron Altier recommended Cirilo highly. He knew his way around the kitchen; he also knew the building inside and out, making him an invaluable asset—and best of all, he was hard worker.

Cirilo wasn't afraid of work; he jumped right in, helping with even the scuzziest tasks, one of which was emptying the grease trap, under the building. Restaurant grease traps were required by law to capture oil and grease from wastewater, preventing it from clogging pipes in the sewer or septic system. Ours was a large grease trap, it could trap 20 gallons worth of grease crap. That was good. However, it was located under the building. That was not good.

To empty the grease trap, we had to draw off the (disgusting, foul-smelling) fat in 2-gallon [~8-liter] buckets and haul it out from under the building to 55-gallon [208 liter] steel drums near the dumpsters. The filled drums were hauled away for recycling once a month. Working under the building was no fun; the crawl space was too low to stand up; we worked hunched over, wearing rubber gloves and protective clothing. It was back-breaking, disgusting work; but Cirilo—who later changed his name to Paco—never complained.

During the evolution of Fork Inn the Road and Tern Inn B&B, Hita and I got closer and closer. Even before I went to Denver, to help Ake with Café Berlin, we were living our lives as if we were married. I commuted back and forth between my house and hers.

I spent the days at my studio or the restaurant, and most evenings and nights at Hita's place. Before you knew it, I was a member of the Johnson family; the surrogate father, Mom's boyfriend.

I started intertwining my life with theirs, getting interested in what they liked to do—most of which were things I was never interested in. I started going to the track [Emerald Downs Race Track] with Hita and her sister, Elfie Rice. The three of us also made an excursion trip to the Skagitt Casino Resort, just north of Bellingham [Washington]. It was just a day trip; but I could tell they enjoyed gambling. (I didn't enjoy gambling, ever since I lost all my wife Leslie's winnings, at a jai alai game in Florida, back in 1967. I worked hard for my money and couldn't justify losing it.) Anyway....

I had a new family—the Johnson clan—and I liked that, very much; being part of a cohesive group; I never had—or even felt—that before. She had three bright kids who adopted me right away.

Jesse Johnson, who shared my birthday (January 28) was thirteen. He was addicted to video games, which made Hita crazy. Jesse was introverted and didn't like complicated salads. I'm not sure what he thought of me and I didn't push it.

Fifteen-year-old daughter, Sarah, legally changed her family name to George; that was possibly in honor of her godmother, artist George Wright; however my guess was that she didn't like her dad, Larry Johnson.

Sarah was a dedicated equestrian, like her mother and aunt, Elfi Rice. They enjoyed going to the races at Emerald Downs and kept horses out in Ellensburg, near the track stables. Sarah's horse, *Cassiopeia*,²¹ lived on Vashon and spent one summer grazing the grass on my hillside. Sarah supplied the materials for a 1000-foot [304.8-meter] electric fence, which I installed, to corral the horse on the slope. In exchange for the boarding, Sarah was to give me horseback-riding lessons.

I hadn't ridden a horse since I was twelve years old and found myself on a horse while visiting our Canadian cousins, the Bonners, in Toronto. That time, all went well until we came to a wide-open field; my cousin took off on her horse, but mine was only interested in walking. Cousin Bonnie told me to give the horse a kick with the heel of my shoe; I did; the horse took off like a rocket and headed straight back to the barn. I'd have lost my head, literally, if I hadn't ducked in the nick of time, beneath low-hanging tree limbs. Thus, I went into Sarah Johnson's lessons with a fair share of trepidation and never really got the hang of it.

Meanwhile, the accumulating piles of horseshit on the slope attracted the biggest and most vicious horse flies I have ever encountered. By July, the bug zapper in my kitchen was incinerating up to 100 per day. It was disgusting, listening to them frying while trying to cook or enjoy a meal. Worse, I was into nude living sunbathing in those days; the flies had a field day with me.

²¹ Wikipedia: *Cassiopeia* is a constellation in the northern sky, named after the vain queen Cassiopeia in Greek mythology, who boasted about her unrivalled beauty.

I was at wits end, but the problem went away when Sarah went away, to college, at Western Washington University, in Bellingham, and took the horse with her.

Hita's eldest daughter, Hilary Nye (her married name), was just entering Willamette College School of Law in Salem, Oregon. Hilary distrusted me; either that or she was just a cold fish by nature. Whatever

With Hilary and Sarah away at school most of the time, it was usually just Hita and Jesse and I around the dinner table.

The compounding stresses of the restaurant were exacerbating my drinking; that displeased my partner Hita. Though no teetotaler herself, she had been married to a **heavy drinker and became "allergic"** to anything more than a beer or two (maybe three). Although she came down on me for boozing, Hita could do serious damage to a six-pack and not infrequently; **so, I didn't pay serious attention to her protestations.**

However, after endless admonishment to quit drinking, I gave it a try—but it didn't stick. **That was partly because one day, after I'd been dry for a couple of weeks, Hita said she** smelled booze on my breath. Nonsense, said I, and rightfully so; she must have smelled my Läkerols [Swedish herbal breath mints]. However, she balked when I suggested she smelled my breath mints; and when similar suspicions kept popping up, I figured I was **damned if I did or didn't drink.**

Eventually, I sat Hita down and explained to her that we were done and I was "going home" (I had been sleeping at her house), back to solitary living (and drinking). Although neither of us realized it yet, that also marked the beginning of the end for our business partnership, MvM Holdings LLC.

We went our separate ways. I slogged along, running the restaurant and apartments; she went back to her law-seminars business (she never left it, actually). The restaurant business did not improve; I kept on hemorrhaging money.

Hita and I had different ideas about what to do with Fork Inn the Road; I wanted to board it up and sell it; but, Hita insisted on keeping it open, even at a loss; she admonished me to, **"Just give it time...."**

1995 – *Natural Selection* – Less Is More

Success at the Fork was fleeting. At the end of summer, when the tourists left the Island, my bottom line went with them. **The sales graph, prominently posted in the restaurant's** office, said it all (left). By the end of September, I was broke; no bank would loan me any operating capital and the mortgage on my house was overdue.

Countrywide (one of the mortgage lenders involved in the 2007-2008 Subprime Crisis) wanted to foreclose on my house, after less than a month overdue. Yikes!

The C-Suite at Fork Inn the Road. I should have spent more time there.



As luck would have it, my Swedish colleague, Filip Järnehag, called with a job offer; suddenly, I was back in Stockholm, working for my former assistant, earning money to pay the restaurant's debts.

As far as I was concerned, I'd about had it with Fork Inn the Road. My restaurant illusions were shattered; I wanted out. I announced to Hita and others close to the situation that I wanted to close the restaurant and sell the property. After putting out the word, to Vashon realtors, that I would consider selling, one of Seattle's top restaurant agents—Tony Wong—called to express interest. He made the trip out to Vashon from his office in Chinatown and got turned off by the ferry ride, which he thought was a waste of time. John Ratzenberger, famous for his acting role at the Postman on the hit TV show *Cheers*, came to see the place; we went back and forth on the price; he never made an offer.

I was not dissuaded by the negative early returns. The US economy was booming. It was only a matter of time before someone bit the hook. However, I had very little time, financially speaking.

Hita persuaded me not to shut the restaurant; she offered to run the place during the month I was in Sweden and I accepted her offer. In short order she fired crooked chef Charles and hired Randy Turner to be the cook and day-to-day manager.

Randy was uncomfortable making the dishes on the menu. While I was away, he came up with his own selections—simple comfort foods, like meatloaf and mac & cheese.

[Spoiler Alert: Changing the menu was the kiss of death for Fork Inn the Road. Steady customers return to restaurants because there is something on the menu that tickles their fancy; when menus change, steady customers have no reason to return, especially when **substitute selections aren't as good.**]

I was relieved when Hita took over, even though I realized that I was kicking a larger can down the road. I looked forwards to returning to a profession I loved and that was good at. I also wanted to see my old friends.

I didn't have many friends on Vashon Island after I announced that I was going back to Sweden. Hita's entourage—who accounted for most of the Islanders I knew—**didn't like** me anymore after that. They thought I was somehow cheating her; leaving her holding the bag, so to speak. In their eyes I was a quitter, a failure. I left for Sweden with my tail between my legs.



Filip Järnehag (right) and I produced a three-projector think piece, **called "Natural Selection,"** for Wärtsillä, a Finnish manufacturer of *gen sets* (for generating electricity), particularly gas turbines.

If felt good to be in familiar territory, making a slide show, working with a good friend and former colleague.

The show was a challenging project, working with only four projectors, instead of forty; the result was a more thought-provoking show, rather than my usual "flash and **trash.**" Less was more.

At first, I struggled with the core creative, coming up with a viable concept, the right show. Wärtsillä was on an ~~ego~~ eco trip; they were on the *green bandwagon*.

Wärtsillä's gas-turbine, co-generation power-plant modules produced more energy with less pollution [gas is the cleanest-burning fuel]. The company wanted a show they could use at a variety of meetings and events.

As our talks with the client began, everyone was thinking in terms of a general-purpose documentary and I tended to agree with them. Importantly, a straight-forward doco could be produced at Slidecom, i.e. limited means of production were an important consideration.

As was my wont, I began the creative process by listening to music, searching for a theme **song with a strong foundation upon which to build a script. As I've mentioned, good** screen choreography depends on a close interaction between the music and the words; everything must be in synch; the pictures must hit the beat, and so must the words.

In the old days, I had a substantial music library composed of several libraries and a collection of more than 600 LP albums. With thousands of songs to choose from, I never missed. However, Filip's music resource was more limited.

I insisted we use licensed music and none of the cuts in his library had the essential ingredient of Funk. **Track after track didn't make the cut (hahaha). Having Filip around didn't help; he didn't understand Funk, like Walt Wagner, who couldn't get into Bhangra; like Spike Lee once said: "White men can't jump," as I pointed out before.**

By the end of the day, Filip was getting impatient and I was getting desperate. I sent him away and kept listening; the strong Swedish coffee had me energized. Eventually, I reached the last selection; by then, I had few finger nails left. That last track was unlike anything I thought I wanted—I usually went for a strong beat; a pulsing rhythm; a throbbing quality; very visceral. But that track was a tear jerker, a poignant piece that plays your heart strings. Suddenly it clicked; as the music played, images came into my mind, then words. **Instead of being documentary, they were more "poetic."**

NATURAL SELECTION

An Audiovisual "Kick Off"

Written by Douglas Mesney | © Slidecom AB 1995

Status: Final Draft, 1995.09.06

ANNOUNCER

Our home,
a fragile orb in the cosmos,
unique in the universe.
Our marvelous planet is
a fantasia of physical phenomena.

ANNOUNCER (Continued)

And amidst .it all, life everywhere!
In the seas ... in the skies ... on land.
Wherever you can see,
and even where you can't,
Life persists.

Yet, although life is tenacious, survival isn't easy;
it requires successful adaptation
to endlessly changing conditions,
all part of an evolutionary process,
called Natural Selection.

No species has more successfully adapted
to life on Earth than Man.
No matter the climate, we have found a way
to survive and prosper...
but not without cost.

Our technological revolution
has altered Natural evolution.
We must find new solutions
to the challenges of life on Earth
that we have created for ourselves.

We must learn to adapt successfully
to new conditions and recreate ourselves
in response to the changing needs
of the world we live in.

We are continually developing new technologies
and state-of-the-art products to meet the needs
of tomorrow's world.
But that's only part of the story;
the rest must be written by you.

By Identifying new customers,
understanding their needs,
and providing total solutions,
we'll successfully adapt
to the new, evolving market
and make ourselves a "Natural Selection."

End

The script practically wrote itself [with the help of some Angostura Snaps]; **that's how I knew I was onto something.** Whenever I struggle with words, I know the reader will, too. **I was chuffed with my night's work, but Filip was nervous about diverting so far off the beaten track of corporate communications.** I said, "Trust me;" and he did.

The next step was convincing Christine Carlsson [now Ströman]; Wärtsillä was her client. Carlsson was a former **colleague at AVC; that's how we all met.** Since then, she started her own business as a consultant; Filip and I were subbing [subcontracting] to her company.

Christine turned out to be the daring **gal I hoped she'd be.** She loved the whole idea and went on to sell it through in **Wärtsillä's C-Suite.** Then we had to produce the show. That was another story.



As simple as it seems, making the soundtrack work turned out to be the hardest part of the job. My script called for a throaty narrator, like James Earl Jones ("**This is CNN**") or Sam Elliott ("**Guts...Glory...RAM**"); **but there were no such voices in Sweden and we couldn't afford London rates; so we ended up with Stockholm's ol' reliable English** announcer, Tim Earl, who did a fine job after a fair amount of coaching.

Reading poetry is fundamentally different than commercial writing, especially promotional copy, where excitement rules. It took a while to calm Tim down; fortunately, Roger Brett, our audio producer at Music City Media, was a patient man; he knew I was a perfectionist, after having produced, among other shows, Kodak's **mini epic, Got to Be, S-AV!**

The next challenge was illustrating the show; that was fairly straight forward. We didn't need a bazillion pictures or effects; just a few good theme pictures. Fortunately, there were a few good stock-picture agencies in Stockholm; Tio Foto was our primary supplier, **aside from Filip's archive.**

I couldn't help thinking that I was taking a page out of Watts-Silverstein's book; they were so well known for making meaningful, minimalistic shows using only two or three projectors; and here we were, using just four.

[Watch a video of *Natural Selection* at <https://vimeo.com/232929982>]

During the production of *Natural Selection*, I stayed at the Aston Hotel, in Södermalm, at **my request. The Aston was across the other side of the city from McLain's studio; but I** enjoyed my old neighborhood. I was in high spirits on that trip, in a celebratory mood.

On the weekend, I visited so many old haunts that by the time I got back to the hotel, I was so inebriated **that I couldn't get my electronic door key** to open [electronic keys were new then; I hadn't encountered them]. The night clerk at the front desk stepped back **when he got a whiff of my breath; but he gave me a replacement "key" and personally escorted me to my room, to make sure it worked.**

It was still early evening; I freshened up in my room; changed my clothes, enjoyed a couple of drinks from the mini bar, and headed out for a nightcap at a popular pub a few blocks away, called Tre Tunnor [Three Barrels].

Tre Tunnor had been my favorite bar when I lived in Stockholm. The vibe was clear; people went there to hook up. The candle-lit cellar bar was always crowded; patrons were packed together like sardines—talk about *pressing the flesh*! **You couldn't move in that place; I had to squeeze my way through the crowds—"Scuse me... 'scuse me." I spoke in English, to get attention. I was hoping to get lucky; I had, once before, at the Aston Hotel nightclub bar; but I drank too much, became incoherent and the bouncer asked me to leave.**

I took a taxi back to the hotel (the Aston was only a few blocks away, but I could hardly stand up, let alone walk). The front desk clerk eye-balled me as I staggered past. **All I wanted to do at that point was go to sleep. But, wouldn't you know: the electronic key didn't work. Yikes!**

I'd never been that drunk before. Given my intoxicated state of mind, my twisted logic reckoned that I couldn't ask the night clerk for another key, or help—nor would I have been able to. Instead, I pulled the fire alarm, figuring that would get them to open the door without my having to make an appearance (which was physically not possible—I couldn't even walk).

The Fire Department responded almost immediately and the hotel was evacuated. When they found me in the hallway, I told them that when I stepped out to see what the alarm was all about, I inadvertently locked myself out of my room. They bought my excuse and I joined the others outside.

A few minutes later, the firemen reported that the alarm system must be faulty because **there was no fire. After letting all the guests back into the building, the night clerk didn't say a word as he opened my door. Ha!**

While working with Filip, I visited my old client Max Bjurhem, at Scania Bussar AB. It turned out that Max was preparing for the 1996 launch of a new range of Scania busses—*Omni City*—designed for urban traffic; the new models were low-floor, aluminum buses that could *kneel*, for wheelchair access.

The new *Omni City* buses were sold road-ready; that was a radical departure for Scania. Formerly they only built bus chassis, on which other companies would build the bodywork, the carriage.

***Omni City* was to be the most important launch in Max Bjurhem's long career as advertising manager of Scania's bus division. I was therefore flattered when he asked me if I would be available. However, Max made no promises; the launch show was still almost a year away.**

1995 – Chance Encounter – Intriguing Invitation

After the *Natural Selection* show was in the can, I made a side trip to Gdansk, Poland, to find the town where Hita von Mende (aka Hita Johnson) was born. During the Second World War, her German parents migrated through Poland on their way to the USA.

I travelled to Gdansk **by Polferries' Rogalin**, departing from Nynäshamn, a port town 40 miles [60 km] south of Stockholm. Boarding the ship, I made eye contact with an attractive girl; she was reclined on a window ledge watching the goings on in the **reception area. I was dressed in photographer's attire, which is probably why she noticed me.** I played dumb and did the obvious thing, asking her for advice about Gdansk.

To my surprise, Anna Raus spoke near-perfect English—language was her major in college. Anna obliged me with a lot of tips and we exchanged contact information; but **we didn't see each other again during the voyage.** I searched the ship for her, spent a small fortune at **the ferry's nightclub, hoping she'd show up; but** to no avail.



Anna and I recreated our meeting aboard Polferries' Rogalin for this photo, during a 1998 Christmas trip to visit her family in Rawicz, Poland.

The next Christmas, back on Vashon Island, a package arrived from Anna with a greeting card. It was a picture book about her home town, Rawicz, and an intriguing invitation to come and visit her.

1995 – Wall of Worry – Cutting Losses

When I got back to Vashon, I discovered that despite the best efforts put forth by Hita and Randy, Fork Inn the Road was failing; **it wasn't hard to figure out why; the Fork's food—the total experience—had deteriorated.** The new menu was stripped down and basic.

Hita—who didn't have the time to properly manage the restaurant, due to the demands of her law-seminars business—was convinced that folks wanted comfort food; menu items now included pot roast, macaroni and cheese, meat loaf and other diner-style delights.

The atmosphere changed, too. Tito Puente's lively jazz selections had been replaced by elevator music; . **The place lacked soul; that's why there were no customers. Why would anyone drive all the way back to the north end of the island for a mundane meal? Short answer, they didn't.**

With the business failing, Randy capitulated; he upped and quit. Hita brought in a new chef who told her he could cook and serve 100 tops [restaurant slang for customers] by himself; that cut the burden of staff overhead from a high of thirty-eight employees (according to Hita) to just one.



Yours Truly on the ferry dock with Fork Inn the Road in the background.

For two months, I took over the reins of management, so the new chef could concentrate on cooking. During the time I managed, mid-October to just after Thanksgiving, you could have gone bowling in the place. The restaurant was empty save for the one or two locals who were regulars. We had a couple that worked at Microsoft who ate at Fork Inn the Road nearly every night—even they eventually abandoned us.

Location was another problem—it was a haul to get to Fork Inn the Road, because of its location on the northern tip of the Island; and when you got there, you might not find nearby parking—we only had space for 10 cars and the municipal lot was 100 yards away [91 meters] up a steep hill.

Whatever the reasons, the enterprise was a failure. I reckoned that it would be impossible to prod life back into the zombie called Fork Inn the Road.

Making matters existentially worse, King County was finalizing plans to put in a sewer system. My property was going to be assessed for 10 toilets—four for the restaurant, five for our rental apartments [Tern Inn B&B] and two for the adjoining house], at \$35,000 each.

And speaking of Tern Inn, between October and November we lost two tenants, only one remained, a pretty gal, called Jennifer, who worked at K-2 [ski company]. Jennifer raised tropical fish; we got along well. I invited her over to the house for dinner a couple of times, and took pictures of her [heh heh].

However, Jennifer was making noises about leaving because the bus service between the apartments and town was infrequent and erratic. She felt isolated, especially in the dead of night, after the ferry stopped running, being in an otherwise empty building.

It was then that Max Bjurhem faxed from Katrineholm to green light the Omni City launch show, scheduled for the following summer.

With my businesses on Vashon Island failing, I was climbing a wall of worry; bills were piling up faster than I could pay them; I had to stop hemorrhaging money. Those challenges and the opportunities offered by the big Scania job stimulated me to extricate myself from the shackles of Fork Inn the Road.

I surrendered all interests in MvM Holdings to my partner Hita von Mende, in exchange for one dollar. In return, she indemnified me for any and all liabilities resulting from my (former) participation in MvM Holdings LLC and Fork Inn the Road.

Free at last, I prepared to return to Sweden the next spring, to produce the Scania *Omni City* launch show with Filip.

1996 – Scania – *Jubelium*

"Where there's money, there's politics."

Yours Truly

Scania's Omni City busses were introduced at a grand Jubileum held to celebrate the company's centennial anniversary.



Dealers and sales agents from around Europe and Scandinavia were to be flown in at the **company's expense and treated to a week at the company headquarters**, in Södertälje , about 20 miles [30 km] south of Stockholm.

The Scania Wallenberg Museum²² was converted into a large theater with an adjoining banquet hall. Because most of the museum building was of glass-curtain-wall construction, it was enshrouded with black polyethylene to darken the interior sufficiently for theatrical lighting and projections. (See right picture in photo cluster, above.)

Inside, there were two theaters.



Our performance space (seen at right, during a rehearsal) was built in the emptied museum. Instead of a customary seating arrangement, the theater was a cabaret.



The museum's existing auditorium was used for a monster multi-media slide show about Scania trucks produced by Producenterna (more about that, below).



Arrow points to stage-right stack of projection cubes.

Special U-shaped, counter-height tables were built of birchwood and arranged in a semi-circle around the "stage."

Guests enjoyed cocktails and snacks as they watched the half-hour-long performance.

Every performance of the launch show—there were 30 performances over 4 weeks—was followed by lunch or dinner.

My job was to produce background visuals for a "dancing" Omni City bus and a troupe of 22 singer-dancers (organized by Filip's colleague Marie Söderman), who performed a medley of song and dance routines themed on the 26 countries represented at the Jubileum.

Unseen by the audience, stagehands manipulated an Omni City bus around the stage. A diagonal row of four slide cubes can be seen at left. The audience (not shown) was seated right of bus.



²² Scania ran into financial difficulties in 1921 and was rescued by Stockholms Enskilda Bank, owned by the Wallenberg family; the museum was built in their honor.

The museum's railroad wing was **the performers'** dressing room; windows were covered with translucent plastic, to obscure vision for privacy.



The dancing bus floated over the stage with the assistance of compressed-air skids. The skids worked by using compressed air to glide industrial equipment over a cushion of air, like a hovercraft. The air cushions made the Omni City behemoth easy to move about the stage. The floating effect was enhanced with low lighting and a thick layer of ground fog across the stage. [See pictures, below.]



I agreed to do the Omni City job and made a deal with Filip Järnehag to produce the slides at his Stockholm studio, Slidecom AB. Our design for the slide portion of the show was dictated by staging and political circumstances.

There was going to be so much on the stage that there would be no room for a projection grid or a traditional screen. Moreover, the floating bus was so big that it would make even a large-sized screen look small, by comparison. Instead, we decided to use picture cubes (rear-screen boxes—see pictures on the previous page)²³ and arrange them loosely upstage, behind the performers.

The cubes were one-meter on all sides [~40 inches]; each had a single projector inside and one side was a rear-projection screen. They were built and staged by Lars Billingskog and Thomas Ramn of AV Support (formerly with AV-Huset).

From a production standpoint, the picture-cube design was doable given the limited production capabilities **at Slidecom. Filip's studio wasn't set-**up to do big shows; he specialized in productions up to a dozen or so projectors. The design for the Omni City show was going to involve 30 cubes (that was the maximum number of projectors that could be controlled by one AVL Eagle programming computer). The number of slides got capped by the 80-slide capacity of each slide tray.



²³ With "rear projection" the projector is behind the screen—hence, "rear-screen;" the projector's light passes through semi-transparent screen material instead of reflecting off an opaque white surface, as with "front projection."

Filip did the rostrum-camera work **on his Forox (once Luminous Productions' camera**, that he purchased from Jim Casey). He and I shared the drudgery of mounting, cleaning and tray assembly. For pictures, we relied heavily on the Scania library for international pictures, representing the 20 countries in the show.

In addition to those archive images, Max gave us an Omni City bus for almost a week to photograph in the Scania Bussar assembly plant, and around the town of Katrineholm and surrounding countryside. Filip also made simple graphics of the 20 national flags; those were used for filler material and for stings.

We ended up making four backgrounds for each of the 20 song and dance routines in the medley. Programming was very straightforward as there was not much I could do with one projector per box other than make patterns with the pictures and flash them to highlight stings in the soundtrack.

Simple as that sounds, there was a lot to do; producing 2,400 slides and dropping them into 30 slide trays was a daunting task for two people.



Scenes from Omni City show dress rehearsal. Lower: one of twenty dance routines—one for each EU member state plus Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. A checkerboard pattern of slide-cube images can be seen left and right of bus and ballet dancers. Center: Bus arrived on stage floating on a thick layer of ground fog; singer-dancers were hiding inside; they emerged country-by-country during the half-hour show. A slide-cube stack can be seen behind the back-door windows. Upper: Cast of twenty-**two waves good bye before boarding bus and "driving" away.**

As impressive as it was, our Omni City show paled in comparison to what was spent by **the truck division for their extravaganza. Scania's Lastbilar** (trucks) division was ten times larger than its Bussar (busses) business.

Having said all the above, I'd add that the design and production of the Scania Omni City show was heavily influenced the political circus surrounding the Jubileum. It was the company's biggest-ever production. Tons of money was sloshing around; everyone wanted a piece of the action, the glory. Where there's money, there's politics and Scania were no exception.

However, there was a gravitas about the circumstances motivating Scania to spend so lavishly. The company was being pursued by Volkswagen, **Scania's top competitor.** [Spoiler Alert: VW purchased an 18% interest in 2000 and took full control in 2014.]

To fend-off VW, Scania had to strengthen itself internally (bean counting and employee motivation) and externally (image-wise). There was a new regime at Scania Bussar (and presumably at the truck division).

Rolf Teljeby (left) was installed to supervise the operations of the bus division.

Teljeby reported directly to **Scania's head office in Södertälje .**

Max (right) no longer enjoyed the free hand he once had, managing the bus divisions advertising and promotion department.

For the company, that was probably a good thing; but, for **poor ol' Max, not so much.**



I wasn't surprised to learn of Teljeby; Max's reputation was a bit tattered after the company's Midsommer party at which he had a bit too much to drink and made an ass of himself in the Scania Olympics Games.

One of the games was to find a croquet peg 100 feet [~30 meters] away while wearing a **big cone (about the size you see on the highway) over one's face; that limited one's vision** to a (very) small spot. The winner took the least time to navigate across the field without hitting any twelve inflated beach balls placed as guides.

Although nobody got to the goal without any errors, Max was so out of it that he went **'round and 'round in circles while the crowd roared with laughter.**

Having been exposed as the drinker that he was (like me), Max lost the confidence of his superiors in the C-Suite. Plus, Bjurhem was just three years away from retirement. So, he was kind of put out to pasture for those last 36 months.

For me, Max became, functionally, a kind of zombie boss; that was too bad. In the old days, I could usually get decent budgets from Max. He was never interested in any cost breakdowns; **he just wanted "the number."** I never got any sense of how much was too much; so, I always aimed high and was prepared for the little charade Max played whenever we talked about money. Whatever I initially quoted was too much. If I asked **about limitations, Max would reply, "Let's just say, I have an amount in mind."** It was **anyone's guess what that was.** What I eventually sussed was that if he liked my idea, he found the money.

Not so with Rolf Teljeby. Under his regime, vendors were to submit detailed budget breakdowns, including actual costs, mark-ups and contingencies; it was nearly impossible to hide any slush. Fortunately, I avoided a later Teljeby dictum that required all jobs to have at least three different bids; that was directed against Max, who was loyal to his **hand-picked suppliers.** **In Max's time, I was kind of grandfathered-in as the bus division's slide-show supplier.**

For the Omni City show, Max (and, by extension, I) was challenged by Per Fagerholm and Mark Haezenberghe, at the Södertälje headquarters. Fagerholm ran the marketing department and Haezenberghe was his in-house AV producer. They wanted to take control of the Omni City show by folding it in with the rest of the Jubileum presentations, which were formidable. Working with Producenterna—**Stockholm's biggest AV producer**—and Hennix Expo—**the country's** foremost builder of exhibitions, Haezenberghe produced an elaborate multi-media show about the century-long history of Scania, followed by a **presentation about Scania's new trucks. (See earlier picture.)** That was a 60-projector extravaganza involving a dozen screens, of all shapes and sizes, collaged together on a stage set with novel scenery flats **symbolically depicting a century's worth of Scania** vehicles. To say that it was an impressive set would be an understatement. By **comparison, I'd guesstimate that the amount I was given for the Omni City show was a mere pittance, compared to the Haezenberghe's; a drop in the proverbial bucket.** Nonetheless, I had to fight for every Swedish Krona.



In addition to Teljeby, the cast of Scania characters in my life expanded to include not only Haezenberghe and Fagerholm, but also Lars Andersson (seen at left in an earlier picture, on page 713) and Claes Nyborg (right), who took over the **day-to-day operations of Max's** department.

(I'll speculate that Max's drinking had started interfering with his management abilities; at least in the eyes of straight-laced Teljeby.)

I also had to interface with Lars Linden and Lars Tengelin, **from Scania's Södertälje CAD/CAM department** (see picture at bottom of next page); as well as Gunnar Bowman and Mats Jonsson, from the Lastbilar (truck) advertising department.

Having a foot in the door at Scania's Södertälje HQ presented new opportunities; I tried not to step on Haezenberghe's toes, but wanted the "powers that be" to know that I was interested in anything the truck division had to offer. I hoped to be supported in that effort by Peter Winbo. He was a central figure in the advertising department and the husband of Lena Thorén (ad manager at Saab Automobile); however, Peter—a timid, team player—remained steadfastly neutral; he never put in a word for me, as far as a know (and Lena would never say, either).

Being part of the Scania Centennial Jubileum also connected me with Mats Schylström (left) and Magda Sunbrandt of Graffiti Reklambyrå—the bus division's new advertising and promotion agency.

Somehow, they got their foot in the door and grabbed Rolf Telejeby's attention. They were new on the scene, so I didn't get any interference in terms of what Filip and I were doing. I used coordination as an excuse to visit Graffiti's offices and make a capabilities pitch. However, they had other ideas that did not involve slides. In my opinion, Schylström saw me as a competitor instead of a potential supplier or collaborator. In a sense that was true; every kronor I earned from Scania Bussar was one less for Graffiti.



Ibid Svensk Idé & Expo, another Scania Lastbilar exhibition builder whom I pitched, in hopes of partnering with them. With Hennix, I struck up a friendship with Jean-Pierre Mercanton; he was Hennix's account executive for their Saab Automobile business. "JP" lived in Stockholm. All to no avail, in terms of new business.

The only lasting comradery was with Lars Tengelin. He and Lars Linden worked in the CAD-CAM section of Scania. They assisted me with animated screen displays of their computer-aided components designs, which became scenes in several Saab and Scania shows.

Shortly after the Jubileum show, Tengelin got transferred to Scania's Brazilian headquarters in Sao Paulo, Brazil. We kept in touch by email for a few more years. I was hoping he might sponsor me for a project or two in South America.

Lars Linden (left), Vesna MilijkoVIC and Lars Tengelin at the Stads Hotel.



The Scania Jubelium job was nearly three months in the making. During production, Filip put me up in a posh condo on Valhallavägen, in Villastaden, near Stockholm's Olympic Stadium—possibly the nicest part of the city. The apartment belonged to a friend of Filip's on an extended overseas holiday. It was a huge, five-room flat, nicely appointed (TV, audio and Internet), with a full kitchen and a king-sized bed that got put to good use when Anna Raus arrived.

Anna had previously arranged to return to Stockholm, to continue Swedish-language lessons. She stayed with friends of her parents who lived in Nacka, a working-class community on an island east of Södermalm (South Island, Stockholm), and attended classes at a school right around the corner from my flat. The serendipity of it all was sublime—that she and I would be in Stockholm at the same time.

I found out about Anna's plans in a letter she sent in reply to my news about the Scania Omni City job and my forthcoming three-month sojourn in Sweden. At that point, I decided to go after Anna, big time. I established email contact with her as a first step. That was quite a feat; nobody had internet in the village of Rawicz, Poland—most never even heard of it. However, Anna discovered that the *Poczka* [Post Office] was beginning to offer e-post services. We used those for day-to-day communiques and the regular Post for pictures and printed stuff.

Anna sent me the personal details I requested, about her sizes. I had an Incredible jacket made for her, that matched mine—light-blue denim with the Incredible film-chip patch stitched to the back—together with a set of Incredible T- and sweat shirts. She was blown away by the array of gifts I brought her—a step along the path to seduction, in my mind.

I needn't have gone to such great lengths to get laid. Anna was also hot to trot. The night we finally met, about two weeks after I arrived in Stockholm, she came over to my pad, for dinner. When I answered the door, a vision appeared before my eyes—Anna wearing nothing but fancy black lingerie under a knee-length summer jacket. What derring-do! To travel the tubes from Nacka to Östermalm in such garb!

After a ferocious hug and kiss at the doorway, Anna said, I need a drink. I made her a Slimy Limey and turned off the stove. Half an hour later, we were in the sack; that was the start of a four-year-long sexual escapade; the kind you dream about.



With the morning sunshine and sobriety came a discussion of, what next?

I invited Anna to stay with me and she agreed.

God knows how that went down in **Rawicz when Anna's parents heard the news from their Nacka friends; or what Anna's story was, for that matter.** Did I care?

Anna Raus making dinner in Valhallavägen condo.

Of course, I clued Filip into what was happening straight away. As expected, he was totally accommodating; I think he got a chuckle out of watching the relationship between Anna and I unfold, given the thirty-year difference between us. His assessment was colored by cultural discrimination; you know, like Polish jokes.

As it turned out, Anna left Sweden before I did, before the big show. With plenty of time on my hands after she left, I contacted my old mentor, Lars Einar. He invited me down for a weekend.

His wife, Maud, was away; so, I had him to myself. For once in my life I did not drink too much. We shared a couple beers while **he BBQ'd some chops and potatoes.**

It was encouraging to be with my mentor again; he still exuded wisdom; I tried to absorb as much as I could.

He understood my desire to live in the country, in a place not unlike Öxelosund, where he lived.



I also re-connected with Kurt Hjelte. **He invited me to a family dinner. That's where I met** the grown-up version of his son, Jörgen Hjelte, who appeared to have inherited the Hjelte gene (aka ADD).

1996 – PIR Photo Library – Alarming Inebriation

They say, "Time heals all wounds." I would correct that to say "most."

After a tumultuous split-up with Elisabeth Ivarsson, when I moved to Belgium in 1989, I thought she would never speak with me again. Thus, I was totally surprised when she called me on Vashon Island (overseas calls cost a bundle back then).

It turned out that Arne, her hairdresser partner, summarily dumped Elisabeth and took up with another woman. Ha!

Talk about karma, that was the exact reverse of how she had left me. Arne's departure humbled Elisabeth. She explained to me that she was starting over and had a job as a production manager at an educational media production company called PIR.

PIR was the brainchild of Helena Högvist-Wallenberg, of the famous (in Sweden) Wallenburg family.²⁴ Helena had a substantial inheritance at her disposal; perhaps with a sense of *noblesse oblige*, Helena used part of her inheritance to fund a start-up called PIR New World Media.

The idea behind PIR was to create and publish digital educational media. It was the mid-'90s, new software like Microsoft PowerPoint and Aldus PageMaker were revolutionizing how media were made and used.

Elisabeth was a producer at PIR, part of a team of two dozen artists and writers creating *New Media* (digital) for children of all ages. They hired me to illustrate an e-book of sorts, put together with a revolutionary animation software called Macromedia. Instead of single pictures, sequences were used; the result was virtually the same as an animated slide show, albeit in digital format. To make the illustrations, the photos I made were digitized (scanned), pre-pressed in Photoshop, then imported into Macromedia.



I was awarded the PIR job for my expertise shooting step-animations; in this case, the animations involved actors shot in limbo [against a solid background color].

I hired Michael McLain's well-equipped Stockholm studio and, on Filip Järnehag's recommendation, engaged Marie Söderman to hire and manage six models, a make-up artist and two costumers.

Dani Duroj (right) and Marie Södermalm were the stars; they worked with four background performers. The shoot lasted one week and I stayed another to edit the 300 rolls of film that had been shot (10,800 frames) so that I could get an approval sign-off before I left.



Anna Raus came to stay with me during my two-week sojourn in Stockholm. I passed her off as my assistant; but it must have been obvious to Elisabeth and McLain what was really going on.

The two of us had become quite attached during our summer romance. Before the PIR gig, I met Anna in Gdansk for a weekend sexual escapade. We had been faxing back and forth, teasing and tantalizing each other. I told her I was bringing handcuffs and instructed her to bring some rope, to tie her to the bed.

We hoped that the ladies at the Rawicz Post Office weren't reading the faxes. Anna said they always giggled when they handed her my communiques.

Danny Duroj (above) and Anna Raus on the PIR "blue screen" set as Michael McLain checks the exposure.

²⁴ The Wallenberg family includes powerful industrialists, politicians, [bureaucrats](#), and diplomats; the family's great progenitor, Marcus Wallenberg, made his fortune as a banker (Stockholms Enskilda Bank, the predecessor of today's Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken).

1996 – Beating Odds – Losing Hand

"A camel is a horse designed by a committee."

Sir Alec Issigonis²⁵

The next thing I knew, John Whitcomb put me on the RFP [Request for Proposal] list for a huge AT&T project.

Whitcomb was formerly with Pran AV in New Braunfels, Texas. I met him two decades earlier, working on shows for the Canadian real-estate developer, Cadillac Fairview.

John was currently working for an architectural consultancy that specialized in audiovisual and acoustics technology, Paoletti Associates, in San Francisco. They were sub-contracted by major architectural firms and structural engineers to design multi-media conference rooms, auditoriums and TV studios.

Paoletti landed the design contract for a Visitors Center **at AT&T's new NOCC (Network Operations Control Center), being built at the company's headquarters in Piscataway**, New Jersey. They were soliciting ideas and bids for the media content to be presented at the Visitors Center. I am now convinced that, behind the scenes, Whitcomb was my ambassador, during the negotiations with AT&T about who would get the job.

I was flown to an RFP briefing held for the prospective producers by AT&T on site at their New Jersey HQ; there I found myself in the company of account executives representing the three biggest AV producers in the country—Caribiner, Jack Morton and Maritz—and a half-dozen other production companies. The big boys brought entourages of associates to the meeting; more than one hundred people attended. I took a seat in the last row, **convinced that there wasn't a chance in the world that little 'ol Mesney from Vashon Island could ever get the job.**

Back on Vashon Island, feeling cavalier, I wrote plans for an outrageously large **"experience" show**; My outlandish plans topped even those of Rusty Russell [producer of such notable shows as *The New York Experience* and *Where's Boston?*]. I figured, what have I got to lose?

My idea was to build a domed theater—a planetarium of sorts—atop a four-level pavilion. Beneath the dome there was to be a terrace restaurant and VIP lounge area. Beneath the planetarium, a circular multi-media theater was planned, playing a 360-degree multi-media extravaganza. The three floors beneath the theater would have housed the (proposed) AT&T Museum of Communications, a banqueting hall and a business center.

The proposal I sent in was 55 pages. The submission also included such self-promotion materials as a full list of my 150+ international awards, client testimonials, magazine articles about me, the lot—anything to get their attention. I knew that the big New York

²⁵ IT WAS Sir Alec Issigonis, the designer of the Mini car. According to a BBC television news report following his death last year, he coined the phrase to illustrate his dislike of working in teams. Martin McDonald, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.
[<https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-1459,00.html>]

producers would be wining and dining their prospective new client. However, being on the other side of the continent, I had no such opportunity for soft selling.. The proposal was my one and only chance to sink the hook—which it did.

Maybe it was the huge scope of the idea or maybe it was the \$25,000,000 price tag—that **doesn't matter**—they took the bait and I was invited back to New Jersey for an RFP review meeting.

At the RFP review I was informed that seven contenders had been whittled down to three and that, while they liked my idea, it was unaffordable. They asked me to trim my plan, staying in the range of \$5,000,000, and we agreed a date for the next meeting—my third cross country trip. The airfares were adding up, but they paid off. After enough trimming, my plan won the day.

1996 – White Christmas – Island Blackout

Anna visited Vashon at Christmas, during her two-week school holiday (she was attending a business college in Poznan, Poland).

I picked her up at SeaTac Airport and we got back to the Island just before a huge winter storm set in.

On the way home, we stopped at Thriftway to get some last-minute supplies; it was packed with people stocking up before the storm. Anna was blown away by the varieties and amounts of food at the market.

Her jaw dropped when we got to the ice cream section—an entire aisle, with a dozen freezers offering every type and flavor imaginable. She was absolutely incredulous and explained that, in Poland, even the biggest food stores had one ice-cream freezer, two at most, with only a half-dozen flavors.

The house was decorated to the hilt with my collection of Swedish Christmas ornaments—candelabras, *angelabras*, figurines of *Tomtar* (Christmas gnomes), advent stars, straw angels and goats. The halls were decked with boughs of cedar, from the trees in my forest. White fairy lights outlined all the doorways and windows and the mirror-ball spotlights were gelled red and green.

Fortunately, when we got home there were enough live embers in the woodstoves to get the fires restarted and in no time at all we were as snug as two bugs in a rug, sitting by the hearth, sipping Swedish *glögg* (mulled wine or vodka) and sampling fresh-baked *saffron bullar* (saffron buns). [See: *Recipes* in Appendix]

Over dinner—BBQ'd wild salmon grilled with "Cajun" spice mix (See: *Recipes*)—my first toast was to Anna, of course: "Welcome to America!" My second toast was to the weather gods: "Here's to a white Christmas!"



We woke up in a dark and silent house. The gods must have been listening because it snowed throughout the night and by morning the snow was a foot and a half deep [~46 cm]. The world through our windows looked like a winter wonderland, however the power was off; that meant no water. Pretending to pout, Anna quipped: **"Welcome to America? In Poland we have running water, flushing toilets and electricity."** Ha!

The power **wasn't** restored for another two days.

We lived by candlelight; it was very romantic.

The kitchen stove used propane and we also cooked on the woodstove.



1996 – Bait and Switch – Corporate Conundrums

Needing help to produce and deliver what I had proposed, I partnered with Watts-Silverstein **to produce the show. I didn't have any other choice in Seattle; Bob Peterson** and Doug Ethridge were out of the slide-show business; their shops would have been too small, anyway.

A lot had changed at Watts-Silverstein since 1981, when I worked with them to produce a Microsoft show. During the ensuing fourteen years later, they had grown into a big business. Their staff had grown from 3 to 30 and they produced both traditional multi-image shows as well as digital multi-media. Fully half the staff at Watts-Silverstein was dedicated to producing CD-Rom and interactive kiosk shows using a new software applications—MacroMedia Director and Softimage—forerunners to Microsoft PowerPoint.

Although a powerhouse production company, Watts-Silverstein was top-heavy with middle-management. They had a New Media production department, specializing in MacroMedia work, staffed by Ted Evans and Greg Hendrickson assisted by Pete Bjordahl; but, most the work was done by free-lancers or outsourced to other production houses whose invoices the company marked up (as ad agencies do), making them scads of money supervising the efforts of others.



While I was there, Watts-Silverstein was totally profit driven because there was a deal in the work—Bruce (left, seated) and Charlie wanted to extract cash from Watts-Silverstein while the going was good. They agreed to sell Watts-Silverstein to Caribiner, Inc., a New York multi-media conglomerate that was expanding rapidly into a world-wide communications conglomerate through an aggressive program of mergers and acquisitions. [See: *Caribiner* in the Appendix.] Unfortunately for their clients, Watts-Silverstein's profit squeeze meant that they were paying for watered-down drinks.

Shortly after landing the AT&T job, Bruce took me off the project and set up a production team headed by his own loyal serfs. Cindy Krueger was the supervisor. She did her job well, having got her start in the presentation business at DD&B studios (Deaf, Dumb & Blind—Richard Shipp's well-known slide-show shop in Detroit). Ted Iserman was assigned the role of creative director, that outraged me. I had worked with Ted at Image Stream in California twelve years earlier and, although an impressive talent, Iserman was a lightweight, compared to me.



The job of project coordinator was given to Abby Katzman (left). I have never met a more anally retentive person than Katzman. However, Silverstein loved her because she spent so much time on details. As a result, her billable hours—most spent on irrelevancies without production values—reached astronomical levels. In fact, Abby Katzman *impeded* excellence; she blew the budget, while Bruce and Charlie laughed their way to the bank.



Bruce Silverstein



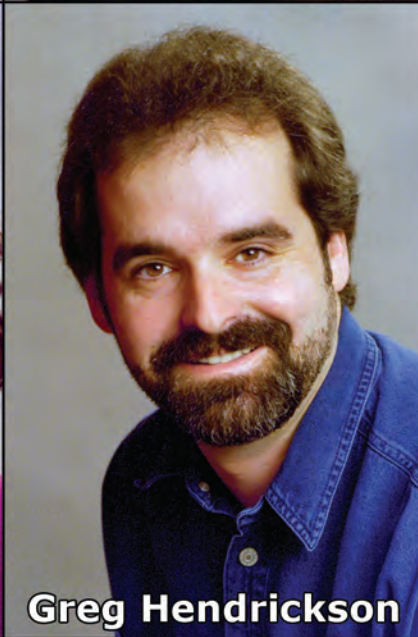
Charlie Watts



Cindy Krueger



Gail Rice



Greg Hendrickson



Kendra Howe



Peter Howland



Lynn DeNesti



Justin Liebow



Anonymous 1



Anonymous 2



Shelley Treacy



Ann van Leyensel



Tim Shields



Beth Karnes



Peter Joers



Jannika Petersen



Lee Costic

I felt betrayed by Silverstein when he replaced me with Iserman on the AT&T show production team. But I should have known what was coming. Bruce had already proven himself to be a snake in the grass—devious, self-serving and untrustworthy.

To digress for a moment, for a Watts-Silverstein history lesson: When I worked with Watts-Silverstein on the Microsoft show, in 1982, it was a young company going through growing pains. They were light on gear, so I voluntarily brought in my own 24-projector kit to beef-up their meagrely endowed studio. We were getting along famously back then and it seemed like the right thing to do. Silverstein eagerly accepted my equipment donation; we seemed to be on some sort of a path toward a more defined professional association. On a personal level, too, they seemed to be taking me into their family.

Bruce and Robin, his wife and business partner (Robin was also a practicing nurse), were very engaging; they had Sandra and I over to their home for dinner on several occasions,²⁶ together with Charlie Watts and his wife, who lived in the house next door.

Watts and Silverstein both lived near Lake Washington on spacious lots in a well-established neighborhood close to the University of Washington, where Bruce taught gastroenterology. (Bruce was a fully trained proctologist; the staff at Watts-Silverstein nick-named him *Brown Finger*.)

Watts-Silverstein was in the process of shifting from slide shows to digital content, for the Internet—the so-called Information Superhighway—which was a new “phenomenon” back then. Thanks to Silverstein, his company was way ahead of the game in digital technology. Communications firms skilled in digital media were hard to come by in those days. Silverstein’s digital acumen gave him access to the C-Suites at tech giants.

Silverstein loved playing in the big boys’ sandbox (albeit surreptitiously). He pandered to the likes of Andy Grove [CEO, Intel], Howard Shultz [CEO Starbucks] and Jeff Bezos [CEO Amazon]. Bruce thought of himself as playing in their league. (Imagine the chutzpah that required.)

Watts-Silverstein was probably one of the most technologically advanced media production houses in the country, if not the world; their technical prowess was why Caribiner was interested in buying the company. Once acquired, that digital advantage became Caribiner’s.

Bruce and Charlie stood to make themselves a bundle in the Caribiner deal. For their part, Caribiner were only interested in making money; they were a publicly-held company owned by British venture capitalists; quarterly yield was all that mattered to them.

Caribiner’s interest in Watts-Silverstein was unbeknownst to me when I brought the AT&T job to Silverstein. In retrospect, it is easy to understand a.) why he so enthusiastically welcomed me into the fold and b.) why he pushed me aside once the job was secured, to claim the prize as his own.

²⁶ Bruce was profoundly interested in the Japanese way of life; he travelled to Japan as frequently as possible, spent as much time there as he could. His house was filled with pricey, imported Japanese furnishings and artwork. Twelve years later, when I was invited to dinner at his new, even larger home, it was like stepping into a Tokyo museum. God only knows how much was invested in all those Japanese artworks and furnishings.

Certainly, that \$5,000,000 feather in his cap sweetened the deal for Caribiner shareholders.

Charlie Watts remained compliant and starry eyed throughout.²⁷ Watts openly admitted that he wanted no part in the business dealings of his company (!) although he was certainly enjoying the rich rewards his partnership with Silverstein garnered. His job was 100% creative. In Charlie's ideal world, he came up with the ideas and his serfs produced them.

Cindy Krueger was the missing link between Bruce and Charlie, liaising between corporate and creative interests. Functionally speaking, Krueger was like a Boy Scout den mother. At the time, Silverstein put the heavy lean on Krueger to maximize the staff's billable time and drive up Watts-Silverstein's P/E ratio. She exercised her control through a network of associate producer—Gail Rice, Patty Kapler, Kendra Howe, Abby Katzman, et al—whose main job was to police budgets and maximize profitability.

What got me was how their clients' interests were pushed aside. IMHO, they were screwing their clients, in terms of production value. Production budgets were depleted by meetings involving more people than necessary (middle management) for the purpose of maximizing billable hours.

When the time came to actually produce tangible results, there was little money left to do anything with real value. Add to that the fact that a good portion of every production was usually out-sourced (with supplier invoice mark-ups generating even more profit), and it is easy to see ~~how the client was getting shafted~~ why quality suffered.

Having been stricken from the AT&T job, I had little to do at Watts-Silverstein; I was like out in the pasture instead of in the weeds. Cindy did her best to work me into other **people's projects with varying degrees of appreciation and success. There weren't too** many who wanted to share the glory. Plus, my colleagues had no idea of who I was or what I could do; I had to prove myself. The question was: what did I want to do? Who did I want to be?

Watts-Silverstein was billing me as a creative director; as such, my job was to come up with so-called core creative; **you know, the ol' Big Idea. However, the way ideas were generated at Watts-Silverstein was by committee. I kid you not. They'd fill-up the** conference room with a dozen or more people—everyone involved with a project plus a few other ad hoc creatives—and kick around ideas. As people dreamed up ideas, the **meeting coordinator would write them all down on a big white board. Finally, they'd take a** vote on each idea and go with the winner. Sounds good, eh?

Well, as the saying goes, "A camel is a horse made by a committee."

²⁷ Charlie Watts was the Yin to Bruce's Yang; a nicer guy you won't easily find. I don't think I ever saw Charlie angry; he was so charming, so beguiling; maybe he kept his anger bottled-up inside (that would account for his high-blood pressure condition). Unlike Bruce, Charlie's lifestyle was considerably more modest, although he must have earned Bruce's equivalent (i.e. a lot); other than his up-market downtown condo, he had no expensive habits, he drove a normal car; maybe his wife spent all the money? Charlie was a dreamer by Nature; I had a hard time taking him seriously; I took everything he said "on good faith" and with a grain of salt. Charlie shot from the hip; like George W. Bush and Donald Trump, his "gut" directed his decisions. Watts had a habit of coming up with instant ideas and becoming fixated on them, dismissing any other ideas or suggestions, better or worse. Charlie and I smiled at each other from arm's length.

One of the creative bull sessions I attended was to generate ideas for Washington Mutual [WaMu]²⁸ **bank's new cable-TV channel: WMTV**, which played on an infotainment system at each of their new, automated, DIY-banking centers. The idea was that each center **would have several screens playing WMTV, to "warm-up" the environment**—you know, like ESPN at sports bars.²⁹ The main content for WMTV was to be Northwest News, a CNN copycat presenting regional and local news.

WaMu was looking for ways to build-up the brand identity of WMTV. I proposed a series of visuals—I called them **"factoids"**—that were iconic scenes of Seattle with the Washington Mutual TV call letters worked in; and that idea won the competition that day. The factoid series gave me the opportunity to demonstrate my abilities as a one-man band who could do everything himself as well as a competent photo illustrator. Some became jealous.

Hammering Man at the Seattle Art Museum. Washington Mutual's building rises on the right.



For the WaMu factoids, I got teamed up with a brilliant young art director named Justin who within a year moved on to bigger, greener pastures in Los Angeles. The guy was about half my age; I was only fifty-one but felt like his grandfather. Fortunately, Justin recognized the reality of the situation and let me do my thing.

I got a kick out of surprising him, with creative photos using exotic lenses, like the Nikkor 13mm flat-field fisheye. (lower right).

Justin was redundant, in my mind; this was another case of padding the billable hours.

The combined costs of his time, mine, and our **producer's, made each factoid remarkably expensive**. In the end, instead of a subscription only five were produced.



²⁸ WaMu was one of the TBTF banks caught-up in the 2008 mortgage-based-securities scandal and subsequently absorbed into Bank of America.

²⁹ ESPN is a US-based global cable and satellite sports television channel owned by ESPN Inc., a joint venture owned by The Walt Disney Company and Hearst Communications.

After the WaMu campaign wound down I came up with a bunch of make-work projects, like photographing everyone at Watts-Silverstein and beginning to organize a company photo archive. Even so, I still had plenty of time on my hands. I spent the time educating myself in digital technology; Watts-Silverstein was certainly the place for that; Bruce had seen the future; he totally embraced digital technology. I treated myself to a Toshiba laptop and loaded it up with all kinds of applications, especially graphic-design and photographic programs, including Adobe Photoshop (Version 3) and Aldus PageMaker; they really captured my attention. Nobody had time to teach me much, per se, but I managed hack my way through. When I bumped into a major problem, there was always someone who could give me a tip. Had I had stayed with the company longer; I would have tried a hand at MacroMedia Director and Softimage. Ted Evans and Greg Hendrickson were masters at it, but they played their cards close to their chests.



Pete Bjordahl was more forthcoming with help, possibly because we shared a serendipitous kinship of sorts: **Pete's aunt was Joey Porcelli, Incredible Slidemakers' western representative. Joey's sister Penny Porcelli married an artist (Bjordahl) and went to live in Hawaii, where Pete grew up.** Since I had lived in Hawaii, Pete and I also had that in common; despite the generation gap, we hit it off; after leaving Watts-Silverstein/Caribiner, we worked together.

Pete and I in 2017. Photo by Pam Swanson.



When I started working with Watts-Silverstein, ostensibly on the AT&T show, neither Pete nor I were aware of our connection through his aunt, Joey Porcelli (Mrs. Randy Pharo). We had actually met before, in 1982, at the Hyatt Regency Maui, where Joey and I were staging the Great West Life show and where I photographed the two of them underwater, in the pool (Pete is on the left).

Although he knew nothing about slide shows, Pete was put in charge of the old slide projection system at Watt-Silverstein. It was a job nobody else wanted to do anymore—because slides were dead. The day we met, Pete was getting ready to test an audiotape that Silverstein had sent away to be *baked*, to restore the integrity of its magnetic data.³⁰ When Pete expressed his doubts about the physical integrity of the baked tape, Silverstein, who wanted nothing to do with slides anymore, suggested he ask my opinion of the situation. I agreed with Bjordahl, that the tape looked like it had been baked too hot and too long.

³⁰ The purpose of "baking", is to drive out all the moisture that the tape binder has accumulated, which is what caused it to go sticky in the first place. This will give a few weeks to a few months of "normal" tape functioning... enough time to transfer the affected recordings to a stable medium before the problem reappears when more moisture is absorbed. [<https://audio-restoration.com/baking.php>]

Poor Pete, his introduction to multi-image was the task of recuing an old 18-projector mega-show from the ravages of time. It was Watts-Silverstein's **biggest and best** production, *The Great Storm*, about the 1900 hurricane disaster in Galveston Texas, co-designed by Charlie Watts and Gar Benedict;³¹ a 45-minute long epic production; a well put together documentary in a style that emulated a Ken Burns PBS documentary, e.g., **Burns' *Baseball* and *Civil War* series.**³²

[Spoiler Alert: Once having brought me into the picture, John Whitcomb let me fend for myself. When Silverstein kicked me off the AT&T team, Whitcomb did nothing to protect me. We had no further direct contact for years. The next time I heard from John was after I returned from Europe; in the early 2000s. Whitcomb launched several companies for which I designed logos. One was *Aon*, his plan for totally secure sites for IT companies, called *Super Site* (2000), renamed Endur in 2001; another company, called Enterprise Meeting Solutions, set up in 2006, worked on applications to facilitate corporate communications; that company was renamed Meeting Sciences in 2009.]

1996 – Prospect Generator – *Positively Poland*

The finder's fees I earned for delivering the AT&T job to Watts-Silverstein whet my appetite for more sales commissions. With little persuasion, Bruce Silverstein green-lighted my aspirations to generate more commissionable sales. He agreed that going after some of my former overseas clients was a worthwhile investment of my time and his resources.

Coincidentally, **Anna Raus'** invitation—to visit her in Poland—stimulated me to come up with a new-business prospect for Watts-Silverstein. I parlayed the opportunities I had, as a new-business *prospect generator*, to write myself a ticket to Poland. **Well, it wasn't quite that easy**—I had to come up with a complete plan to justify such an expensive foray into a market half a world away. Thus, I wrote-up a 50-page plan for a business-to-business communications program called *Positively Poland*.



³¹ Gar was like a clone of me; not in all ways, but certainly in terms of design and production; we shared similar visual styles and both of us programmed with the same "logic." Gar was living in Seattle when I first arrived; he transplanted himself from California to work with Bruce and Charlie. Gar and I never worked at Watts-Silverstein simultaneously; I made a stab at striking up a friendship with Gar and his girlfriend, but it never worked out, probably because of professional jealousies; we were essentially competitors, vying for Bruce's and Charlie's jobs. A decade later Gar and I did work "side by side" at Sound Images, under the direction of Dave Frey, producing content for Nike sales meetings.

³² Watts-Silverstein had a reputation for making stellar shows with just a few projectors; their work was testament to the maxim: "Less Is More." What kept your rapt attention during their (typically slow-tempo) shows were the soundtracks. Charlie Watts had a talent for producing audio; he was a storyteller who excelled at producing programs that were like radio dramas. **Charlie's story-telling skills were matched by Gar Benedict's skillful screen design.**

Briefly, the idea was to produce a documentary presenting Poland's many advantages for businessmen and financiers. The proposed program involved a trade fair exhibition that toured the world, sponsored by the Polish Government Chamber of Commerce. The job never materialized, but it accomplished job #1 — getting me to Poland, to visit Anna.



Anna Raus with her maternal grandmother (left), Bozena and Zbigniew, center, and Bozena, right.

I planned the trip to have a week off. During that time, I travelled to Rawicz, from Warsaw, and stayed with Anna and her family. They were doing quite well by current Polish standards (people in Rawicz were living amidst the remnants of a communist life style). The Raus family lived in a spacious apartment.

Anna's father, Zbigniew Raus, was a successful doctor who managed the local hospital and had a private practice as a specialist allergist. Her mother, Bozena, was the head curator for the Rawitz Museum—a prestigious and enviable position. Her brother, Kris Raus, was still so young that he shared a bedroom with his sister—until my visit. Anna was the only one in the family who spoke English.

Anna's parents didn't know what to make of things; I was so much older than their daughter; she was a mere twenty-one then. Anna took me all over town and introduced me to her friends; they were impressed that Anna had snagged an American.

Ever the optimist, I invited Anna to spend the summer with me. We went to a local branch of Bank Polski and opened a joint dollar account into which I deposited \$500; that was travel money, I explained to the suspicious teller.

1996 – New Business – Client of the Year

After the Polish new-business excursion, I took out my little black book and targeted some of my best old clients in Sweden. Subsequently, I made a new-business swing through Sweden, to pitch them on the digital-media capabilities of Watts-Silverstein.

For the Swedish foray, Bruce cuffed me with a baby-sitter—Kendra Howe. Kendra and Gale Rice **were the "women behind the man;" the two underpinned Bruce Silverstein's** success; he totally relied on their advice and consent. In their turn, they were totally dedicated to him. The two power ladies considered Bruce some sort of latter-day saint, proving that some people admire connivance.

Snarkyness aside, Bruce did hang with some heavies; he hob-knobbed with the likes of Bill Gates, Andy Grove, Jeff Bezos and Howard Shultz. Bruce saw himself as one of their equals and made you know it.

Kendra and I pitched Lena Thorèn, at Saab Automobile, Max Bjurhem, at Scania Bus, Sergio Bortolucci, at SKF (the ball-bearings people), and Karl-Erik Kloo, at Wärtsillä (a leader in gas-powered co-generation of electricity).

As mentioned earlier, I really wanted to work with Sergio, on any project. He was a brilliant creative director and a superb art director who combined the best of Italian and Swedish sensitivities—his wild ideas were tempered by the Scandinavian principles that form follows function and that enough is enough (*lagom*).

Kendra and I were politely received by everyone, but there were no results. That was not necessarily because we failed to impress our prospects. Back at Watts-Silverstein, **everyone's circumstances were morphing into the amorphous as the company was** absorbed by Caribiner. Priorities were changing.

[Spoiler Alert: Nobody ever followed up with the folks we pitched and if they called Watts-Silverstein, well, that company no longer existed.]

After the Swedish trip, I was grounded. I continued teaching myself (Photoshop, Pagemaker and PowerPoint) and amused myself photographing office people for other Watts-Silverstein self-promotion projects. I was feeling useless at Watts-Silverstein and questioned myself about what I was doing there, besides collecting a (not insignificant) salary.

Commuting from Vashon Island lost its luster. At first, commuting by boat was fun and kind of special; one moment I was in the big city and, the next, back in Nature. I was living the best of two worlds, just like I had pictured it, in Sweden, when I worked with filmmaker Gerd Rein. However, the reality of living on an island also meant getting up at 5:30 am for a 9:00 am meeting, because I never knew how bad the ferry delays would be.

As the reality of my situation at Watts-Silverstein sank in, i.e., chained to my desk, a new opportunity arose: Alan Hilburg somehow located me in Seattle and offered a two-million-dollar project for Swedish Match, a large but generally unknown company whose holdings included companies making matches, lighters, cigarettes and cigars.

Back in the day, Allan parlayed a ton of work to Incredible Slidemakers; he won our 1980 Client of the Year award.
Hilburg's expertise was convincing big clients that they had a problem... one that he knew how to fix.

Hilburg, whose clients included the World Wrestling Foundation, was an expert in crisis management. He was trained by Geoff Nightingale at Burson-Marsteller, which is where we first met.

He convinced Swedish Match that they needed protection from employee demands for better pay and benefits.



Swedish Match had reasons to take Hilburg seriously. They were a huge, multi-national corporation. Most of their factories were in remote corners of third-world countries (now called *emerging markets*), where labor was cheap and labor relations tenuous.

Hilburg had sold Swedish Match a gargantuan employee-morale program. I think the whole thing was a ruse to justify top-**management's junket trips around the world; but** that was another story. Meanwhile, Hilburg was offering me a two-million-dollar job. (!)

When I explained to Allan that I was working for Watts-Silverstein, he was initially put off. However, when he flew out to Seattle, Bruce and Charlie seduced him.

Allan left the pitch believing that I would be the creative director of his show. He liked my creative solutions and had total faith in me—which was why he called in the first place. That made it even more tragic when I quit Caribiner in the middle of the Swedish Match job; in his eyes, I betrayed him. But I am getting ahead of myself.

1996 – Swedish Match – Political Burnout

The heaven-sent project Allan Hilburg delivered turned into the job from hell for anyone who actually had to do something, other than attend meetings and discuss hypotheticals.

It was an unusual situation right from the start. Alan Hilburg was a free-lance consultant reporting directly to Bill McClure, a division president of Swedish Match. Watts-Silverstein therefore reported to two masters, actually three: Alan Hilburg, Swedish Match and Lexivision AB, the agency of record for Swedish Match.

Lexivision handled all aspects of PR, promotion and advertising for its conglomerate client. Part of their responsibilities was overseeing and coordinating any work done by ancillary agencies in the various countries where Swedish Match did business. Swedish Match was a dream client for the gang at Lexivision; **they got to travel around the world “babysitting”** otherwise competent professionals.



Lexivision sent a team of six to interface with the dozen or so people at Watts-Silverstein assigned to the job.

The team leaders were Ulla Ericsson (lower left) and Rolf Kroon (lower right).

They reported directly to Swedish Match, as did Alan Hilburg (upper right). Freelance writer Mark Ann Makin (upper left) held considerable sway over Hilburg.

Although I was billed as creative director—usually a powerful position—in this case, I was just another cog on the wheel. In fact, it seemed like everyone was a creative director. Cynicism aside, the job needed a big crew; the project had a lot of moving parts.

The inspiration for Hilburg's idea was Swedish Match's sponsorship of a boat—*Swedish Match*, skippered by Gunnar Krantz—in the **Whitbread 'Round the World Race**. Why? Think, Nike; they sponsor big athletes who become *brand ambassadors*; heroic **advertising icons**. The exposure keeps the sponsor's name (called *brand* these days) in the public's eyes.

However, unlike mainstream sports, yacht racing is a gentleman's game, a sport for *élites*. There aren't many beer-drinking worker bees in this world that follow world yachting. Even tennis and golf events have a hard time getting audiences of any real size compared to "gladiator" sports like wrestling, boxing, football (soccer, rugby) and ice hockey.

One had to ask oneself, why was a yachting event chosen by Swedish Match to symbolize achievement **and "excellence"** and teamwork for an employee-communications program whose stated goal was to lift the spirits of line workers and solve (imaginary) morale problems?

Before answering that, let me say: Most of the workers I photographed for the show lived in shacks. They might be lucky enough to get the local ball game on TV; but the chances of them relating to yachting **would be zilch**. And as for motivation, that's an oxymoron in Third World countries. Generations of serfdom have bred ambition out of the laboring classes.

A friend of mine, Martin Mohr, describes Asian laborers as living in the Stone Age. He should know, working in Indonesia as a construction-**project supervisor for the world's** biggest pulp and paper factory.

Martin told me, nobody cares whether things are done right or wrong. Maintaining standards, even basic sanitation, is essentially impossible given the low wages and live/work arrangements that workers endure.

The labyrinth of larceny woven into the fabric of society is another impediment unlikely to change, because our credit-driven economy indentures workers to debt slavery, a kind of serfdom. Such peons and pawns were unlikely to relate to marine-racing memes.

More likely, the upper management of Swedish Match wanted to enjoy themselves hanging at yacht clubs **'round the world, scuttlebutting with fellow élites**. Hilburg's scheme gave them an opportunity to justify the huge amounts of money spent on C-Suite frivolities instead of wages.

On the other hand, and in fairness, the basic concept—coalescing a corporate family comprised of disparate operations scattered in the far corners of the world—was a good one. Likewise, the catchy name for the program— *Swedish Match Global Team*— was also good; the name embodied what they hoped would be perceived as a new corporate Zeitgeist.

The grand theme smacked of entitlement and privilege; in management's eyes, everyone in the company became part of the Swedish Match Global Team, a clan in quest of glory, flying the Swedish Match flag.

I wore my satin Incredible Imagers jacket to a meeting with Hilburg; I didn't need to say a word—he got it and had baseball jackets made for the Seattle team, including our Lexivision babysitters; but they were cheap ones made of imitation satin (a stiff, noisy polyester blend) instead of the real thing. “*Swedish Match Global Team*” was emblazoned across the back, paired with a garden-variety globe graphic, both embroidered in gold, silver and white. The jackets were nonetheless spiffy and did build a sense of comradery and common purpose among those of us who wore them (which was kind of obligatory). What that purpose actually entailed was another matter.

Early on, I gave up fighting for any of my ideas; they were just fodder for discussion, concepts for the others to tear apart. Mary Ann Makin, a freelance writer, was brought in to put together a script. It was easy to tell that she never wrote for an AV show before.



Makin was flirty with Alan; they got on well, maybe too well; he kind of fell for her, I think.

Thus, she had influence, up to a point. However, everyone had a say in things.

All ideas were posted on big boards and what ensued was a pissing contest that had less to do with Swedish Match than with the postures of the participants.

Somewhere in Stockholm: Mary Ann Makin and Alan Hilburg shared confidences with Yours Truly.

Project overlord Cindy Krueger assigned the production manager position to her chief vassal, Ted Iserman (a master of meetings); he was the one who subbed the script to Mary Ann Mackin.

With so many chefs the result was, to be vulgar, *shit perfectly cooked*. **OK, it wasn't shit; let's call it vanilla.** The project hinged on a documentary-style promotion program [so-called *infotainment* or *edutainment*] composed of three elements:

First, there was the Whitbread race itself, the *cause célèbre* for the Swedish Match Global Team program. Watts-Silverstein minimally interfaced with Lexivision's efforts to get Swedish Match lineage in press coverage of the events.

Alan had a separate crew covering the race; or rather, he had access to stuff produced by the Swedish Match Racing Team [they sold their exclusive pictures and footage to news agencies].

Watts-Silverstein were responsible for the creation of a documentary about Swedish Match. The purpose of the documentary was two-fold: **a.) strengthen the company's** profile in the financial press (to drive up the share price of Swedish Match stock), and **b.)** explain the company to employees and build team spirit.

Once again, I was shoved aside by Silverstein. As was the case with the AT&T job, though it was I who brought in the client, I was given a figurehead position without any real authority.

Bruce and his cabal did their best to embed themselves in the client's business, to wrest the account from me (thus saving the expense of my finder's fees). I realized what was going on; but this time tried going with the flow. Having been self-propelled for so many years, working in a group was a new experience. I had to learn how a committee works, about politics and pecking orders.

Asserting myself as creative director, I flexed my mini-muscles and assigned myself the **role of team leader for the film and video crew sent out to document Swedish Match's operations. Silverstein's cabal didn't want to let me do it; they wanted me to stay in my office and fly a desk. No way.**

Working in the office was weird; folks at Watts-Silverstein **weren't allowed to talk with one another.** Even if I just wanted to say howdy to a colleague in an adjacent office, I had to do it by email; I was not supposed to just step across the aisle and say hi.

That policy didn't make sense to me; the whole idea of having an office is to provide a central place where people can engage in face-to-face discourses, to share ideas. If business is conducted by email, why bother coming to the office?³³

Silverstein justified his policy by saying that electronic communications allowed people to work in an environment that was free of distractions and interruptions. Sure enough, the office was as quiet as a library (or a morgue).

I hired Doug Ethridge **to cover stills photography at Swedish Match's US operations** (making snuff and chewing tobacco) and European operations in Belgium and The Netherlands (making lighters).

Ethridge **and I hadn't seen each other since the days producing content for Malaysia Airlines** a few years earlier; that episode ended oddly, as I mentioned earlier.³⁴ He protested that he was more interested in producing video, that he had left stills photography behind; however, the smell of good money lured him and in the end he took the job.

³³ The concept of working from home was not lost on Silverstein. Aside from supervisors, most folks only spent about 60% of their time in the office.

³⁴ Ethridge was pissed off that he never got to go to Malaysia.

Then, as luck would have it, he was desperately ill the week of his assignment. He told me later that he would have been a dead duck without auto-focus and auto-exposure. His confession made it easier to understand why his shoot was not up to snuff (which was embarrassing, particularly as I had recommended him so highly to everyone on the Swedish Match Team).

With the US and Europe covered by Ethridge, I turned my attention to assembling my own team for the global shoot. Our shoot list included:

- Brazil: production of matches and lighters in Recife, Curitiba, Manaus, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo
- Indonesia: cigar production in Java
- The Philippines: manufacturing of lighters, in Manila
- China: machinery and parts making in Shanghai
- Sweden: matches in Jönköping and Tidaholm; *snus* [snuff] in Göteborg [Gothenburg] as well as the main corporate offices, in Stockholm



Libby Fernau holds a map showing the routes of our global pictorial odyssey. Libby went on to bigger things after the Swedish Match adventure, landing a network TV gig on the show *Cops*).



The Watts-Silverstein Swedish Match team included me (below, right), shooting stills and directing video content shot by CNN news stringer Dave Oglevie (left), assisted by his hard-working young sound gal Libby Fernau (center left). Steve Michichi (center right) was our grip; he, not Ronald, was the clown.

Abby Katzman fumed at my choosing the crew. Reasserting herself as the alpha bitch, she tried to put the kibosh on Oglevie and snag the work for her videographer husband, Ray; but that smacked of nepotism, so her arguments fell on deaf ears.

Dave Oglevie was recommended by Doug Ethridge; I knew that the two of them worked together a lot. Doug, being a stills photographer, understood the hassles of working with a video or film-**camera crew on the same job; it was hard to avoid stepping on each others' toes.**

Oglevie was like a porcupine; when anything went awry, he got prickly; that more or less **assured he'd get his way. Ethridge explained that the best way to work with Dave was to let him shoot first.**

Despite his taciturn reticence, Dave turned out to be the perfect talent for the Swedish Match assignment. He knew how to handle himself. He knew the ropes of international travel—which can be challenging for a film crew schlepping a dozen or more crates of gear. And he knew his equipment inside and out.

When we arrived in Shanghai, for example, Dave discovered that his camera was on the fritz, but he had it fixed by the end of the day, after spending hours on the phone with technicians at Sony—**I can't imagine how much that phone call cost.**

Being tough was a trait Oglevie picked up fighting other lensmen for the best shots at photo ops. Importantly, Dave knew how to direct people while still retaining the authentic **look of documentary news photography**. **News people are supposed to report what's there, without being involved; when you start directing events and staging things, that's** when documentary morphs into editorialized reportage (aka propaganda).

However, life doesn't always present us with well-composed scenes or well-behaved subjects. Quite often the scenery needs adjustment and the people some direction, in order to obtain a *picture-perfect* result. When you point a camera at them, most people freeze, like a deer caught in headlights. Simply explaining to them what they should do nearly always solves the problems.

It is the same as working out the scenes of any movie. The scenes must work alone and together. There must be continuity in the storyline as well as in the screen direction. Dave knew all that and more. He kept to himself too; a quiet, introverted person. That was fine with me. There is nothing worse than a chatterbox on or off the set—although it was always fun to have a comedian, to provide a little *light relief*. **Alan's nephew Steve** Michichi filled that role for us. Hilburg ~~insisted~~ asked that we hire Michichi to assist me. There was really no way I could say no despite Bruce and Charlie's **mutterings and the** protestations of Kendra and Abby.

Michichi turned out to have a buoyant personality and a get 'er done attitude; he was a real plus on our team. The four of us traveled around the world; we shot on four continents. Everything went like clockwork and we all got along. Steve provided endless entertainment and took advantage of the trip to put some notches in his gun. After scoring at a disco in Padaan, Indonesia [where we photographed a tobacco plantation and cigar factory] he landed a girlfriend in Shanghai; her name was Bing Bing, seriously.



Photo by Libby Fernau

Bing Bing (left, center) worked for the Chinese Swedish Match subsidiary; she was secretary to the president. She spoke perfect English and made things easy for us wherever we went. Bing Bing fell in love with Steve and worked hard to get him to sponsor a trip to America for her. The two of them were like a reality show. One night, Bing Bing took us to her favorite restaurant; after a fabulous meal, the waiters served a very special Chinese liquor. The way they served it, in little porcelain cups, seemed ceremonial. I expected some essence of the Gods; but the stuff tasted like a mixture of kerosene, mineral oil and sugar. It was so bad that I insisted on bringing a bottle of it home to Vashon, to serve to special guests. Ha!

The Swedish Match shoot was intense; it was a program that I could really sink my teeth into. I had to think on my feet. I call it *guerilla* photography, or *run & gun* shooting.

The frantic, relentless schedule reminded me of my former days in New York running **Mesney's Mad Medicine Show**. That was when I cut my teeth shooting industrial *process* photography.

Those years spent learning the ropes of factory photography served me well on the Swedish Match assignment; particularly how to handle people, how to direct them. Good industrial photography could be just as iconic as an Edward Steichen nature shot, a portrait by Josef Karsh, or a surrealistic photo illustration by Ryszard Horowitz (a true genius).

Good anything doesn't just happen; it is put together. To put together good factory pictures, you must establish a fair degree of control over the situation, at least of things that can be controlled (some things can't). Gaining command and control of situations, is what experience brings. Creativity expands with control.

For example, we photographed the Swedish Match equipment manufacturing plant in Shanghai.

It was a vintage WWII industrial plant the size of a jumbo-jet aircraft hangar, filled with equally jumbo capital equipment that made men appear as small as Lilliputian miniatures.



The comrades who worked there all wore identical same light blue worker outfits complete with caps. I got the impression that they hadn't donned those uniforms for my benefit, they wore them every day. That was a stark visual reminder that these very men (most of whom were well on in years) had lived through the latter days of Mao Tse Tung's tough regime.

Although the place had the look and feel of the 40s, my job was to make the machine shop look like a modern, efficient operation—the kind of place that would make Swedish Match shareholders glad they owned equity in the firm. That was done by working close.

Fortunately, the shop was so big that I could lay back and use long lenses. For the most part, I used the Nikkor 200-400 f4 zoom telephoto, rigged with an 81D warming filter; **that intensified the workers' blue outfits and gave their yellow-white skin a more ruddy, tanned look.**

The key to success was directing; that was also the challenge. The plant manager was totally unprepared for what happened that day. As Bing Bing explained our plans, his eyes rolled in his head. I took his picture first and made sure to pose him in several backgrounds, so he got the idea that I had to move things around, to make them look better. He not only got the idea, he accompanied us all around the shop and worked with Michichi and Bing Bing to arrange people and props.



Wherever we filmed, the workers were among the most gung-ho models **I've ever** shot; they were ready, willing and able to help in every way.

They didn't just smile for the pictures; they were already smiling before we arrived and kept right on smiling after we left (presumably).

Although they spoke no English and I spoke no Chinese, they caught on fast to my hand signals; the result was portfolio-quality work.³⁵

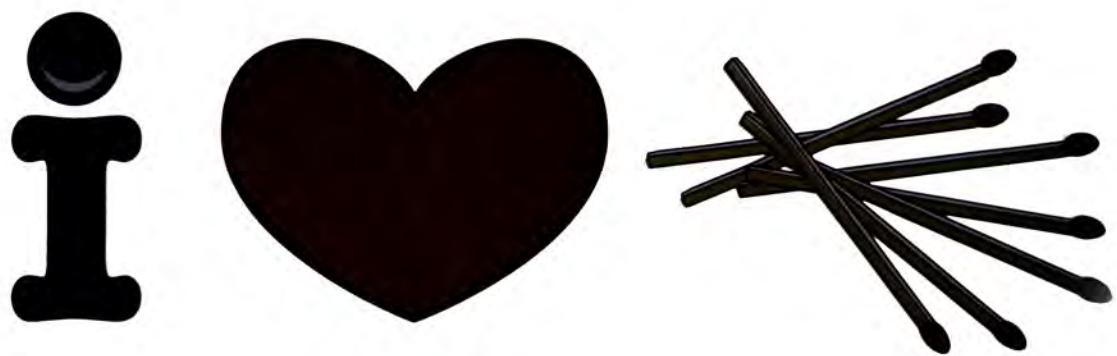
Embarking from Shanghai: Fernau, Michicci and Yours Truly.
Photo: Dave Oglevie.

Unfortunately, we got to Brazil in the middle of their winter, so the Copa Cabana **wasn't quite like the way I might have hoped for; but our job wasn't anywhere near that famous beach.**

Our work took us through a few of Brazil's biggest cities and out into the jungles, where Swedish Match harvested and converted resources into useful things like matches. One of the most interesting shoots of the trip was recording the process by which Amazon rain forest trees are cut down and processed into wood-stick matches that are used around the world.

1996 | Portfolio | Swedish Match | Plates N^{os} 1-50

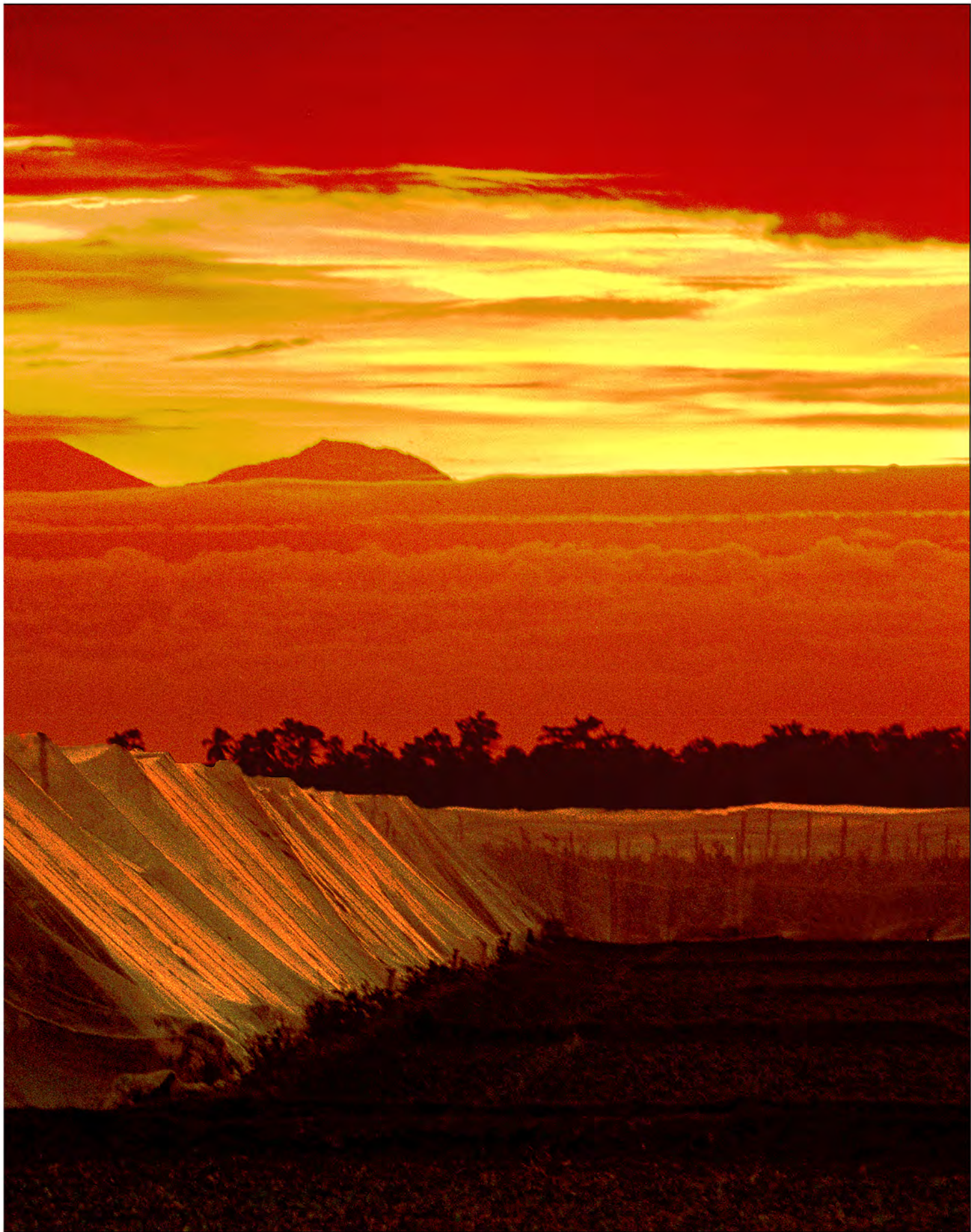
³⁵ I had a similar experience in Romania, when shooting for Scania Bus, in 1999; the workers in that dictatorial regime were also terrific models; I don't know if their smiles were put on or real; that didn't matter; the pictures looked genuine.





1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 2

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 3

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 4

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 5

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 6
Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 7

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 8

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 9

Tobacco plantation | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 10
Tobacco production | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 11

Tobacco production | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 12

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 13

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 14

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 15

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia



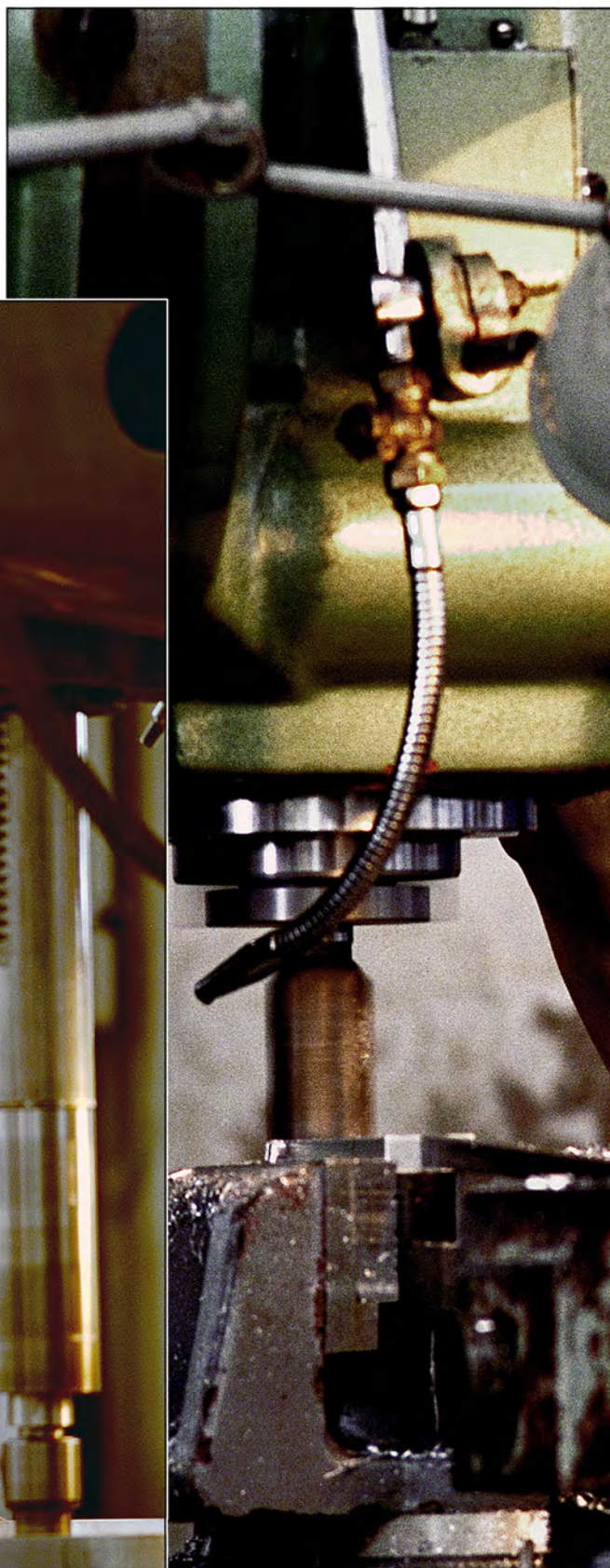
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 16

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia

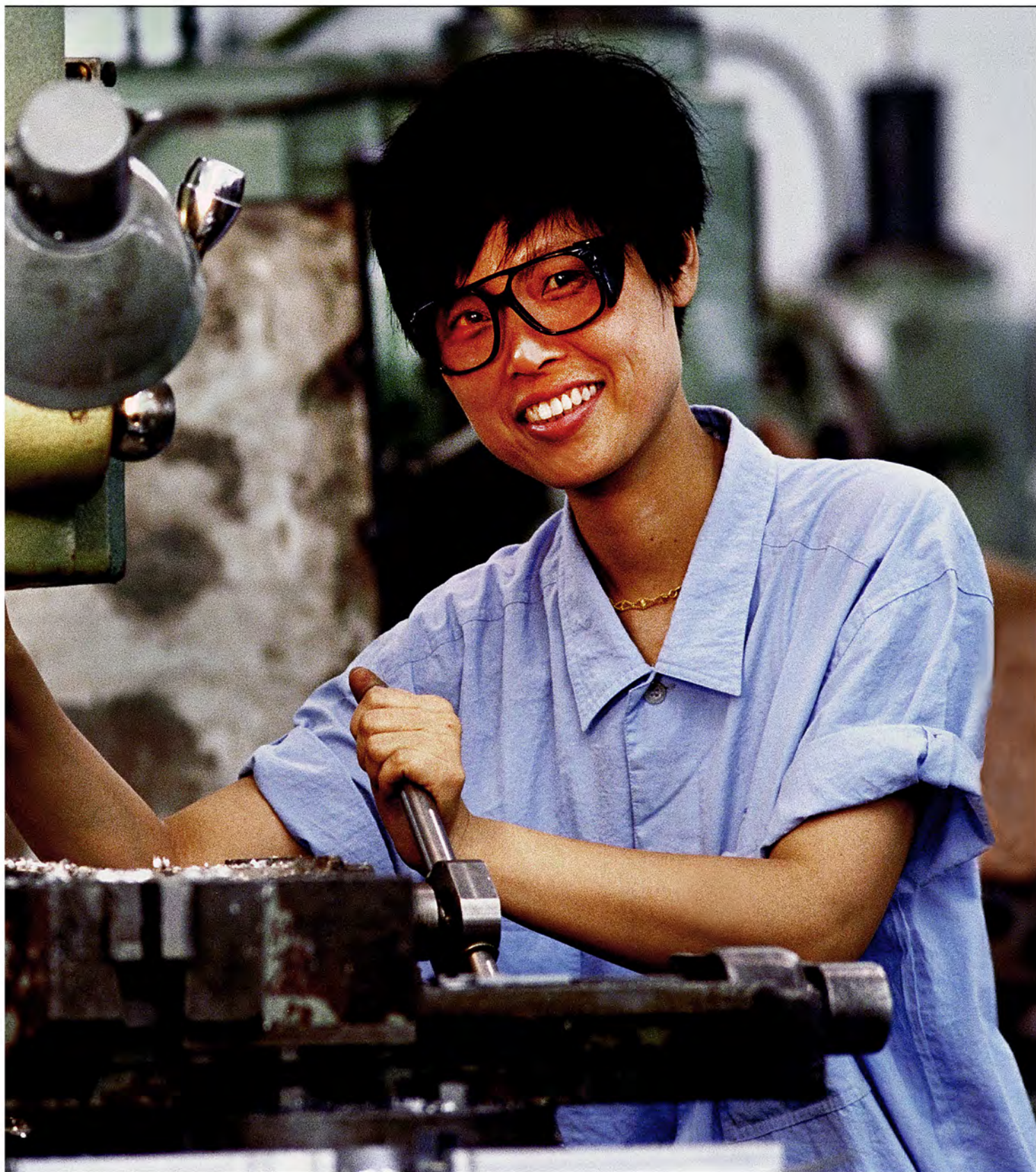


1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 17

Cigar production | Java, Indonesia



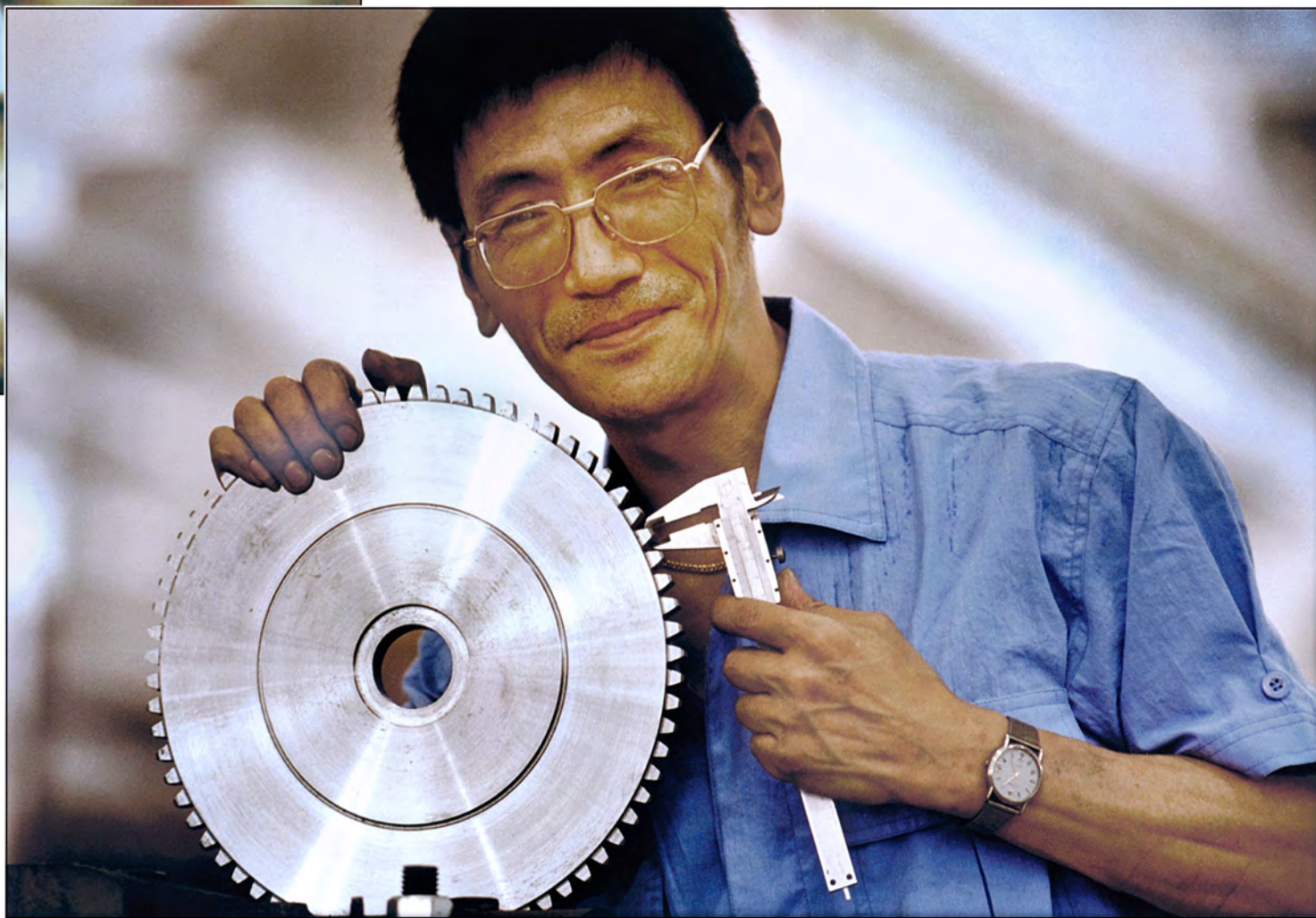
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 18
Machinery production | Shanghai, China



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 19
Machinery production | Shanghai, China



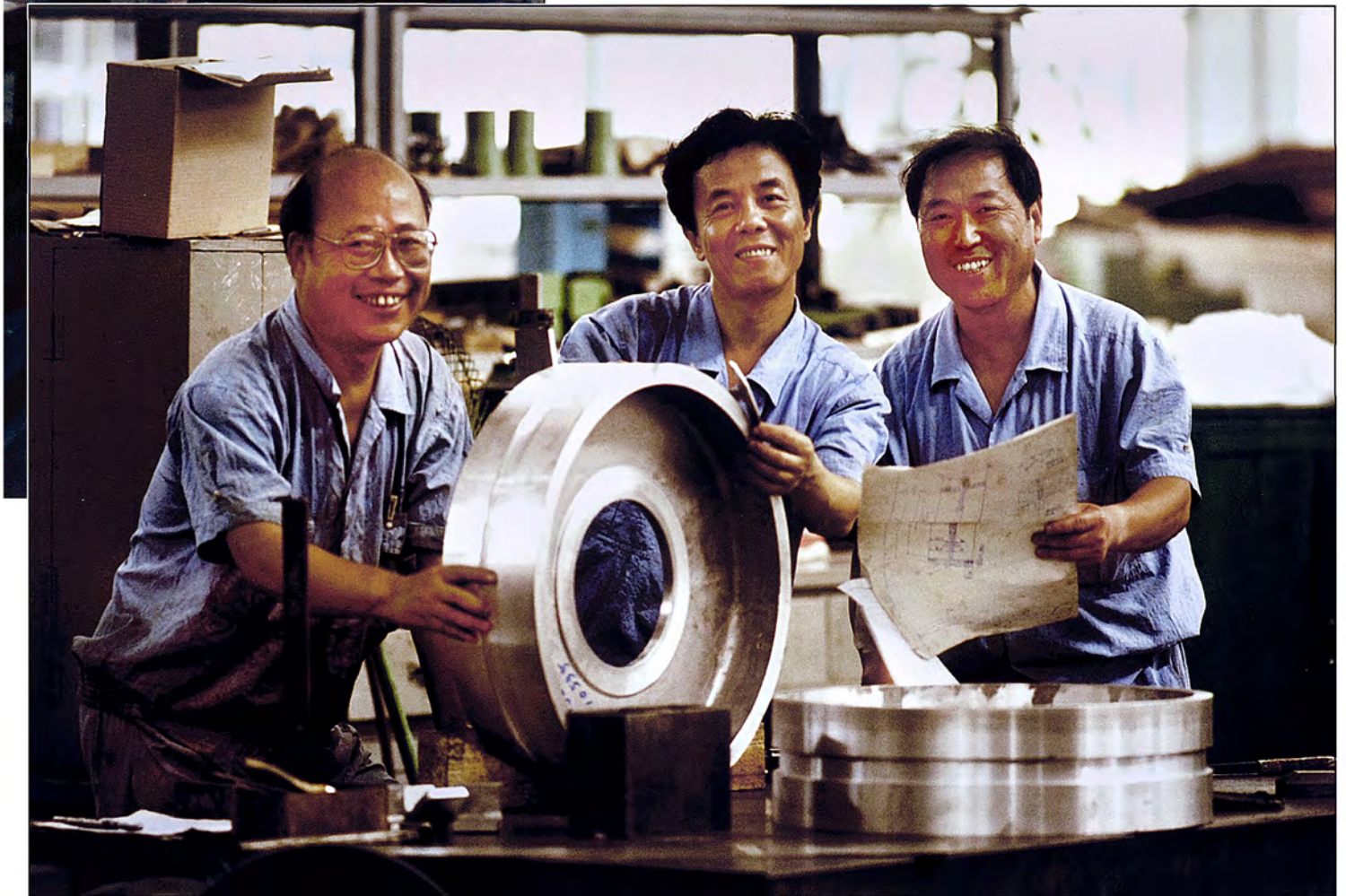
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 20
Machinery production | Shanghai, China



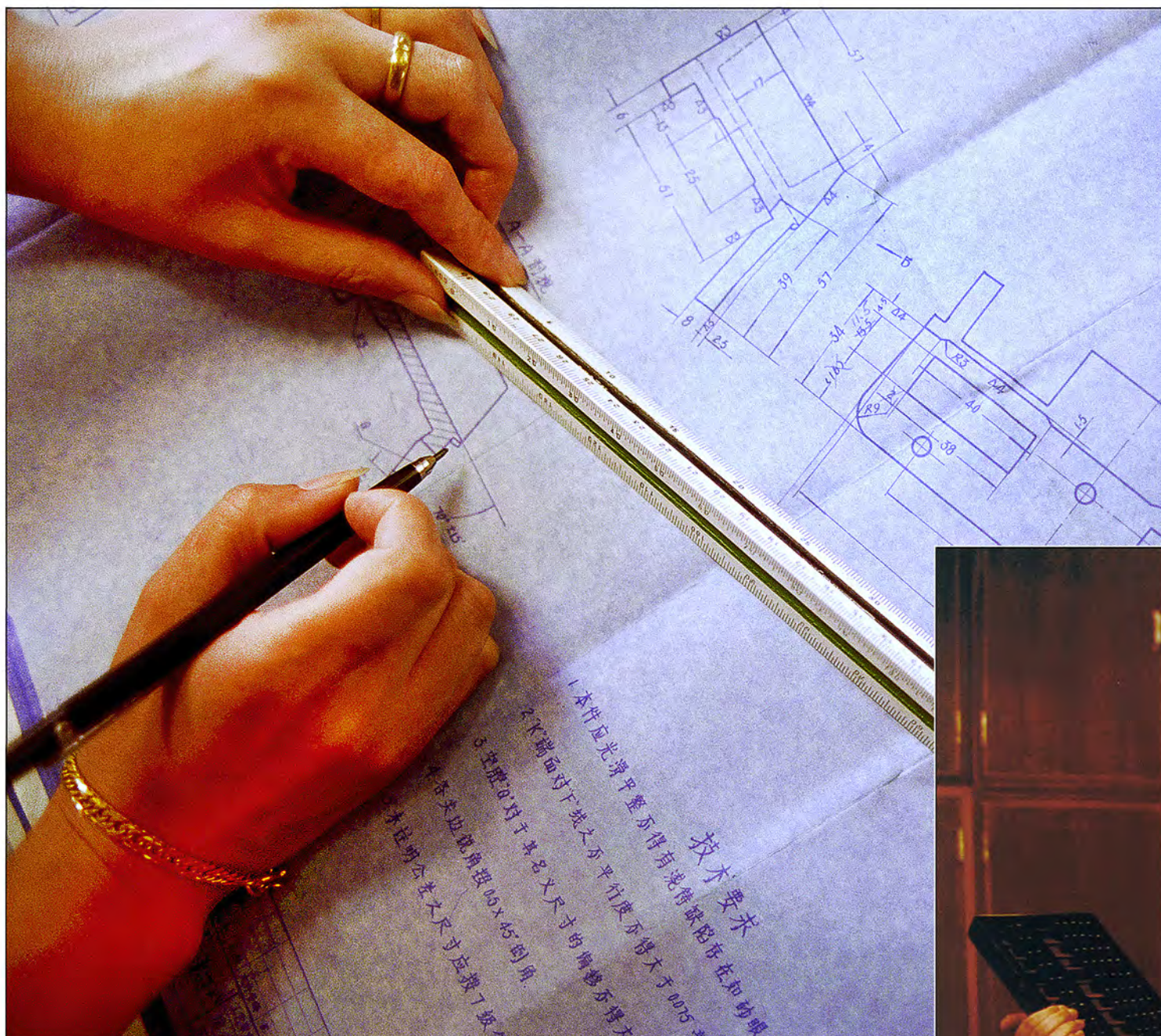
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 21
Machinery production | Shanghai, China

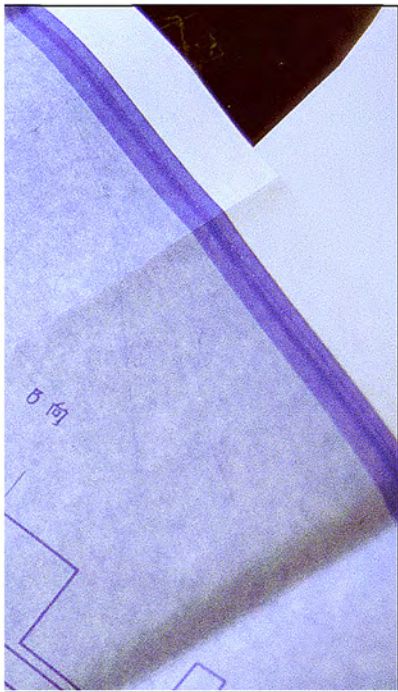


1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 22
Machinery production | Shanghai, China



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 23
Machinery production | Shanghai, China





1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 25

Accounting department | Shanghai, China



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 26

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 27

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 28

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 29

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 30
Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 31
Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 32

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 33

Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 34
Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE Nº 35

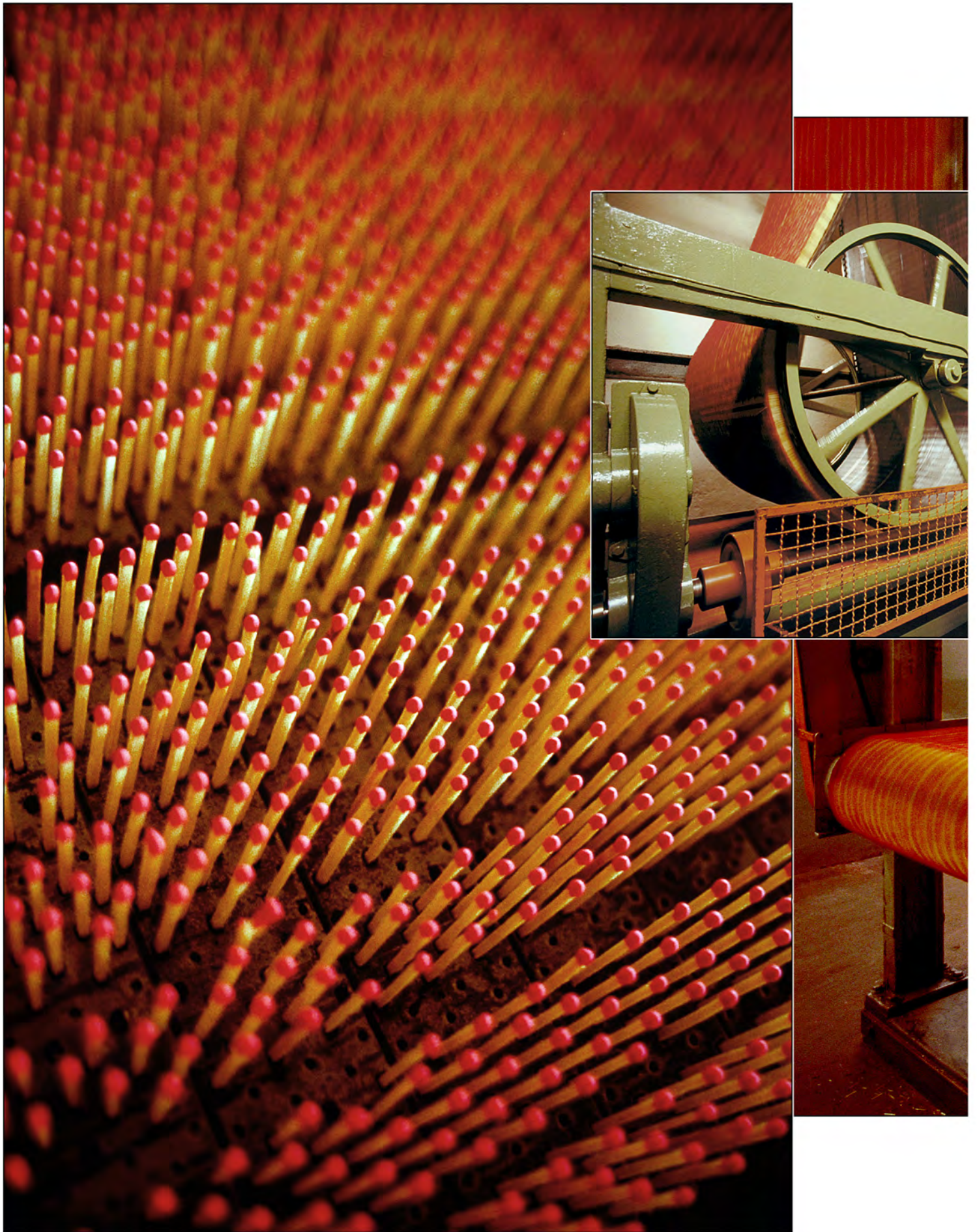
Matchstick production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 36
Match-head ignition-material production | Curitiba, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 37
Match QC Lab | São Paulo, Brazil



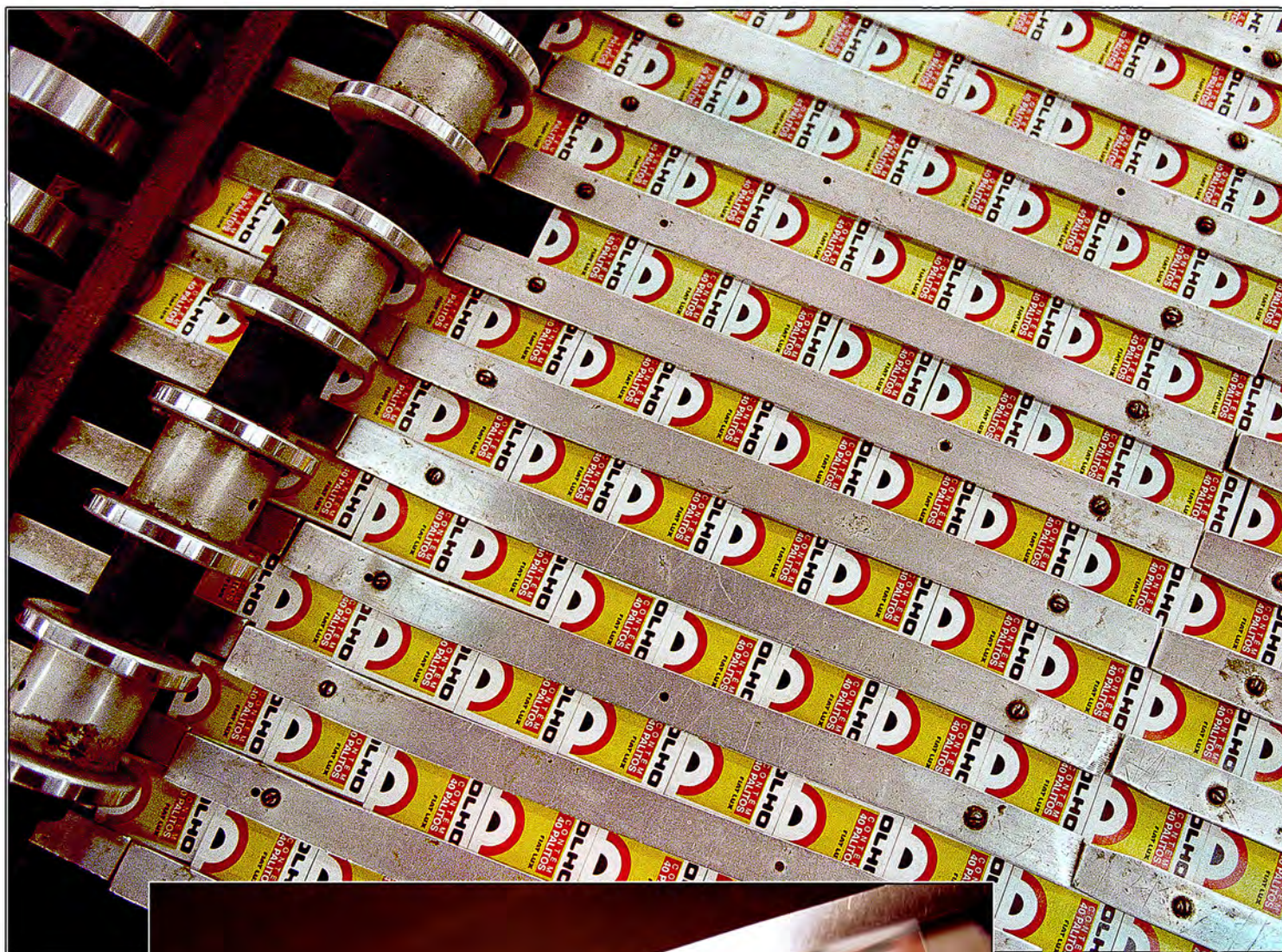
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 38

Match production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 39

Match production | São Paulo, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 40
Match-box production | Belo Horizonte, Brazil



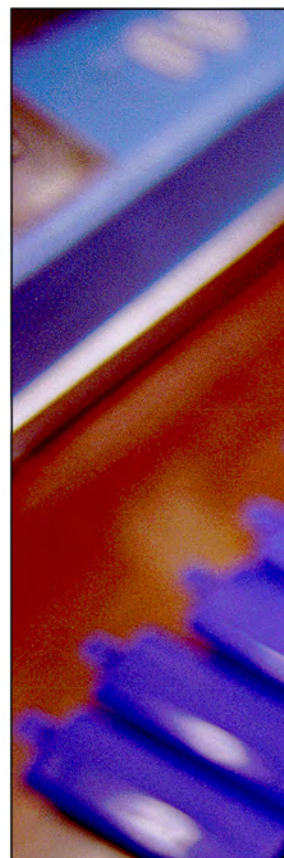
1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 41
Match-box production | Belo Horizonte, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 42

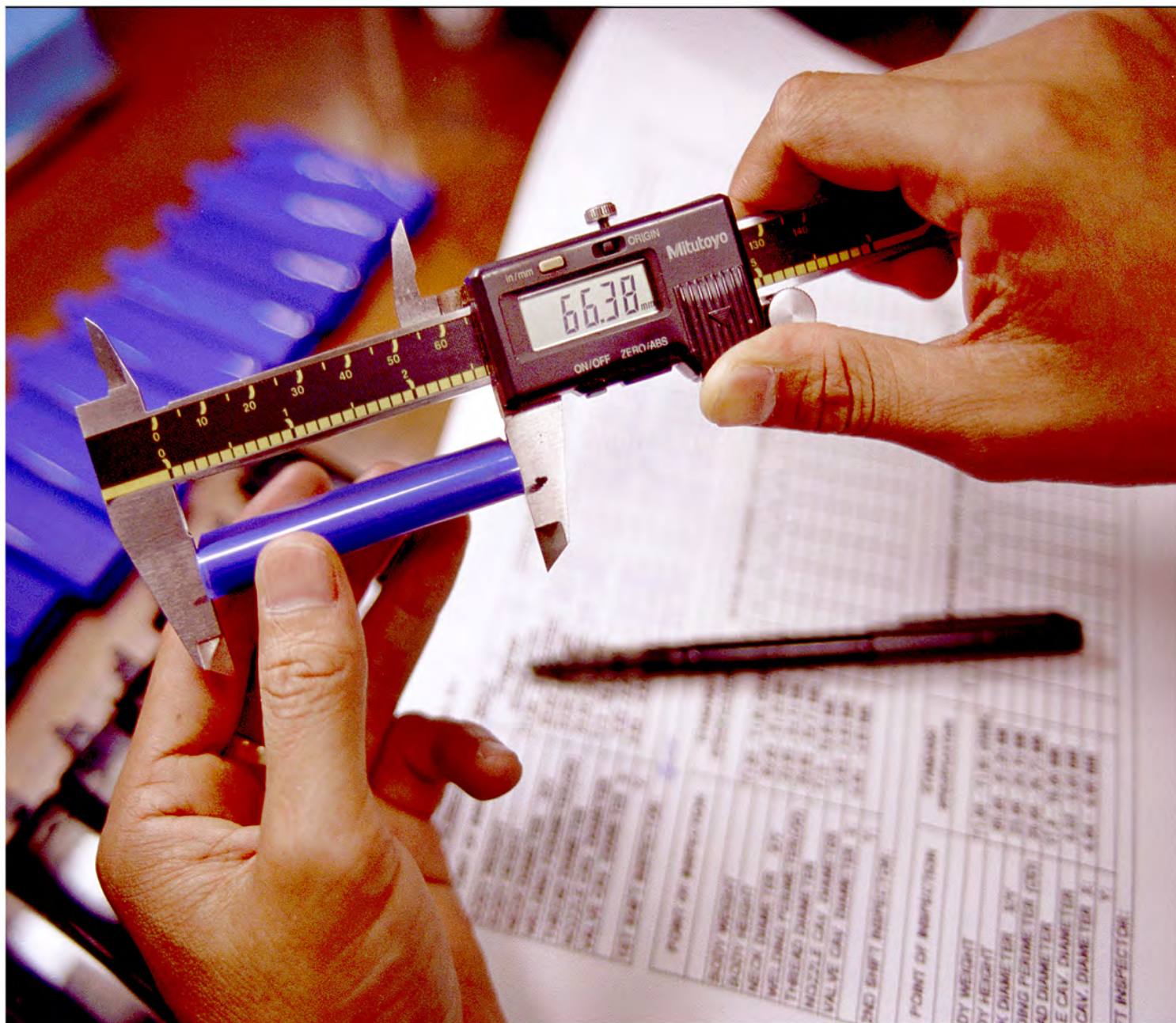
Match production | São Paulo, Brazil





1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 44

Cricket lighters production | Curitiba, Brazil



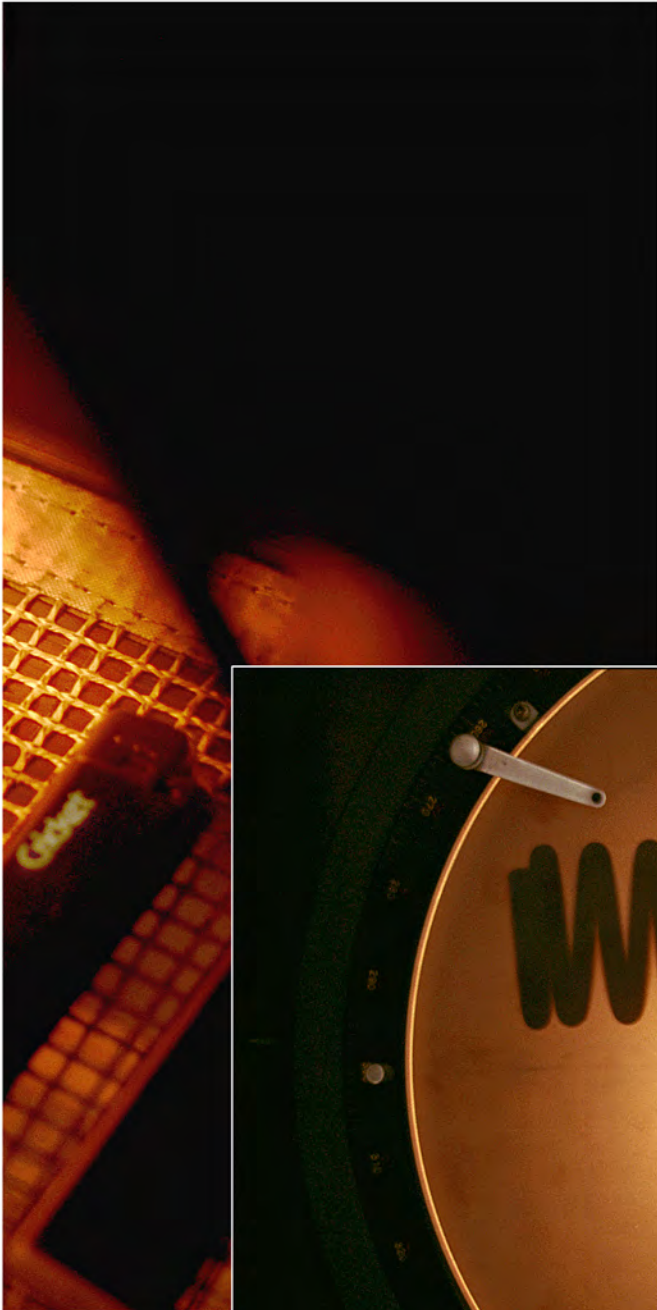




1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 47
Cricket lighters production | Curitiba, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 48
Cricket lighters production | Curitiba, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 49
Cricket lighters production | Curitiba, Brazil



1996 | PORTFOLIO | SWEDISH MATCH | PLATE N° 50
Your's Truly at Restaurant Garote de Ipanema | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



I've always loved illustrating how things are made; production processes fascinate me. It doesn't matter if it's complex or primitive; they are all interesting. Photographing the metamorphosis of a tree into a box of matches **made by "natives" working in with 19th century machines in rusty-tin sheds**—that was like an experience straight out of the pages of National Geographic.

Dave and I worked out a pattern that would keep us apart during the shoot (stills pictures and video do not mix well on the same set or location). He filmed the production process working forward, and I shot it in reverse (From finished goods back to raw ingredients). We never arrived at the same place at the same time.



In Java, Indonesia, we photographed tobacco plantation and cigar-rolling factory. The gals that worked there went gaga for Michicci, who scored big time at the disco.



Those are just a few of many episodes. We shot a city a day. Every evening we'd jet away to another; it was existential.

I arrived back in Seattle with hundreds of rolls of film.³⁶ Similarly, Dave had shot several hundred hours of video. The job(s) of sorting, labelling, cataloguing and binning all that material was monumental and chewed up about three weeks. That left us less than a month to make something out of the mountain of material.

Sometimes you can have too much of a good thing, and this was one of those cases.

Sorting my own work was the easy part; I had a lot experience with copious quantities of slides, or in this case negatives.

To digress for a moment, about types of film:

When we made slide shows, the best film to use for shooting originals was Kodachrome, while it was still available; the next best was Fuji's *Velvia*; those two emulsions produced the most saturated colors and the best D-max.³⁷

Put more simply, the pictures looked better—so much better that Paul Simon even wrote a song about Kodachrome.

However, transparency films like Kodachrome and Velvia were inherently inferior to color negative films. When slide shows faded from favor there was no longer a need to use so-called transparency film. It was now possible and preferable to me to use negative film.



Manufacturing match-head ignition material in Curitiba, Brazil. Left: Transparency films produce positive pictures that look real, like slides do. Right: Negative films show complementary (opposite) colors—yellow becomes blue, green becomes magenta, red turns cyan—and that is too confusing for most folks, which is why positive films were developed in the first place.

³⁶ Fully-digital photography was still a few years away; back then I shot film and then scanned the slides or negatives to make digital versions.

³⁷ Wikipedia: D-max = $-\log_{10}(\text{minimum print reflectivity})$ is a measure of the deepest black tone a display or printer/ink/paper combination can reproduce. It is an extremely important quality factor. Images with poor DMax look pale and weak.

Positive films came with problems. Even the best of them (Kodachrome) had narrow exposure tolerances and were contrasty. Their inherently high contrast was amplified each time the picture was duped (duplicated).

Contrast build-up was a natural part of the photo-chemical processes governing film photography. Photographers went to great lengths to reduce contrast so that their work would print well in magazines and newspapers.

Negative emulsions had wider gamuts and contrast ranges; but, negatives were difficult to work with, difficult to read; they needed to be printed to see what you had. Film prints made from negs lacked enough D-max for projection—pictures on the screen looked washed out, lousy.

Negatives were meant to be printed. It was during the printing process that the contrast (and color) could be adjusted. It was easier to add contrast than reduce it

I ran a test series using all the positive and negative film stocks available in the early '90s; Kodak, Fuji, Agfa *et al*; about a dozen and a half emulsion types in total.

The winner was Fuji because their negative film was best at differentiating shades of red (a difficult color for all media types, traditional and digital) and being able to see into the shadows on a bright sunny day. So, I decided to use that stock for the Swedish Match job.

It turned out to be a wise decision for more reasons than one—nobody else wanted the job of going through the negatives in search of the best frames; they were used to slides and couldn't deal with negs. That was terrific for me; I like to edit my own work.

I had a set of color contact sheets made; the stack of them weighed in at thirty pounds [~14 kilos]. The selected frames were marked with grease pencil and those were sent to Kodak for digitizing. Kodak offered a terrific service then, called Photo Disc; negs or slides were scanned in three sizes and stored on CDs for just a couple of bucks each.

The beauty of Photo Discs was the quality of the scans. There were any number of scanning methods and machines on the market, ranging from laser drum scans on the high end (costing between \$50 and \$100) all the way down to DIY prosumer flat-bed and slide scanners made by Nikon and Epson among others (those scans were unacceptable by most stock-picture-agency standards). Kodak's had the quality of drum scans, at the price of flat-bed conversions.

Another Photo Disc benefit was that once the six sets of discs were distributed—to the client and all their agencies—I was out of the loop.

With the still-photo situation under control, I was assigned the task of "supervising" the video production editor—Doug Loviska, at Flying Spot. Of course, that was just another ploy to beef-up billable hours.

I was totally redundant; Loviska was totally capable of sorting and binning the shoot by himself; all I did was watch him go through the footage, all 100+ hours of it.

That was not easy for me; I have always been a hands-on guy; I try to do everything **myself; it was not easy to sit by and watch somebody else. It wasn't so bad on the first go** through; there was a lot of busy work, sorting and labeling. However, the actual editing and assembly process was excruciating. The machines were slow to work with. The problem again was having too much material. Winding back and forth through miles of videotape to locate and accessing scenes took a long time—*forever* compared to slide editing.

As an editor, Loviska was brilliant; he needed me around like a hole in the head. I was clearly a bump on the log. I sat for hours keeping one eye on Doug and the other out the panoramic picture windows that afforded a million-dollar view of Elliott Bay. I watched tourists parasailing and jet-boating in the warm summer sunshine while I shivered in the air-conditioned video-editing suite.

Making things worse, on most days one of the Lexivision baby-sitters would hang with us; that meant chit-chat and hand-holding—not my favorite way to pass the time. That said, some memorable meals were put on the company card in the name of client entertainment.

Between the sedentary lifestyle and more meals per mile I would have gained half a stone **if weren't for jogging. People don't call it jogging anymore; now they run; but it is roughly** the same thing, the difference being that joggers lope along while many runners are quite fast and furious. My routine fell somewhere in the middle; unless it was pouring rain, I did three miles in a half hour almost every day.

To digress again, this time about my obsession for running: I ran to eat (and drink). Being a reformed bulimic running became an obsession. For me, it was straight calorie counting; the more I ran the more I could drink. Bill Clinton once attributed his jogging to the same reason.

I ran a minimum of five days a week and pushed for six. My favorite run was on Vashon but in the shorter days of autumn it got dark before I got home, so I ran in the city during my lunch break. It was embarrassing at first, changing into running gear and charging out into the often-rainy streets. Nobody else at the office jogged or did anything active at lunchtime. The lunchtime run routine also helped me keep my cool; I didn't like the creative restrictions put on me and I think it showed sometimes.



Anna Raus in the office at the Vashon studio.

When Anna arrived, in July, I chilled considerably. Work became tolerable because I had another life awaiting me on Vashon Island.

In preparation for her visit, I built a 600-square-foot [66 square meter] deck on the south end of the house. Working with my hands took my mind off the charged politics of daily life at Watts-Silverstein, where I continued to feel like the odd man out.

While I was babysitting Loviska, the rest of the Swedish Match team ploughed ahead with more meaningful work. Whenever I tried to get involved, nobody paid much attention.

That got even worse after the staff met Anna Raus for the first time. She was another **reason people didn't take me seriously. She was thirty years my junior, had a Polish accent and weighed a mere 90 pounds.**³⁸ For most we were an odd couple; **frequently I'd be mistaken for her father; fair enough, I was old enough to be.**

Perhaps not surprisingly, the visiting Swedes totally accepted Anna; they didn't ignore her like many of the Americans did. It was sad, Anna wanted so much to be friends with almost everyone but few responded. Ted Iserman was one of the rare exceptions; he and his wife Cindy took a liking to Anna; I think they felt sorry for her, me being an alcoholic in their eyes.

[Spoiler Alert: The last time I saw Ted socially was when Anna and I joined he and Cindy for dinner at a trendy Seattle restaurant—**Chloe's**, on Second Avenue, in Belltown—at which I drank a bit too much. Things were never the same after that; in fact, when Anna and I divorced Ted and Cindy witnessed for Anna, verifying aspects of her amplified accusations; that flummoxed me; Ted and I went back a decade, from our days at Image Stream. Was that a politically motivated vendetta?]

To score some bonus points with the Seattle crew I invited everyone out to the Vashon studio for an afternoon of BBQ and a badminton game—Sweden vs Seattle. Anna and I went to great lengths to put out a good spread and the bar was fully stocked with a variety rivalling a New York café.³⁹

My kitchen was at peak performance then, so I prepared a variety of Indian and Chinese side dishes while Anna made a batch of Polish appetizers and confections. The main course was to be prepared out on the deck. Using my authentic Malaysian-street-hawker wok—which I thought was pretty cool—I made a Malay mixed grill featuring chicken satay and veggies.

You can imagine my disappointment when a fellow nick-named Jeppe (JP Morgan Friberg), the self-appointed group leader and blustery bull of the Lexivision bunch, stole the show. He brought a case of champagne and all the ingredients for an up-market lobster dish that was to die for. I remember being fiendishly jealous of Jeppe for upstaging me at my own party. But that was just him; a Swede with Viking heritage; too smart for his own good. With Friberg, I met my match.

There were many who didn't show up for the party that weekend; they all had their reasons but it added up to (unsurprisingly) a boycott. The snub did not go unnoticed.

³⁸ Anna was a genuine anorexic when we met; we understood each other on a profound level because of that; all anorexics are brothers and sisters. But by then I was a reformed anorexic; I was beyond bulimia; in fact, I had become a health food and exercise fanatic. When I told Anna about how I run to eat, she got it; from that moment on she was as obsessed as I with running. We seldom ran together; she was too light and fast for me; I am a plodder, like a robot; she was an airy sprite.

³⁹ I smuggled my liquor collection from Stockholm to Vashon; more than four dozen bottles of specialty drinks from across Europe, especially snaps; I had snaps from Austria, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland; for making home-made snaps from Vodka I brought a collection of four dozen flavorings; my favorite was "Angostura."

I was rapidly running out of patience for the abuses of power and reason perpetrated by **Bruce Silverstein's politically**-oriented acolytes. Here is an example:

The master script for the Swedish Match doco had been written and approved in English. It needed to be translated into other languages, all the usual ones plus some off-beat Indonesian and Brazilian-Portuguese dialects. When I heard that Abby was about to hire a local Seattle company to have the scripts read by American-immigrant talents I just about crapped. Years of producing shows for Saab and a host of other international clients had taught me that no immigrant could speak with an authentic accent.

Not only that, there was the regional dialect factor. If I tell a European that I want something read in English that could mean any of many dialects: British, American, Canadian and more. Plus, within individual countries, accents can vary radically. A Canadian from Newfoundland would have a hard time understanding a US Southern drawl, and vice versa. Or this: have you ever tried (really tried) to understand ghetto rap?

Choosing the right voice(s) for a job was trickier than it seemed; but what did Abby know? She never lived outside of the States—but she did know how to access Bruce and Charlie. For all my Saab and Scania work the *right* English voice had a flat (neutral) accent called *North Atlantic English*.

Although I had authentic international voice-talent resources to recommend—professionals around the world that I had worked with—**my recommendations weren't** even considered—translation work was not part of my job. That episode shook my **confidence deeply; I realized that the client's interests ranked second** at Watts-Silverstein. That was a credo I could not live by.

Then, a few weeks later, I almost lost it in another confrontation with Katzman. This time **it was about the Swedish Match video's graphics**—the titles, charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, all that sort of stuff.

Graphics are a bigger part of shows than most people realize. Movie makers spend a fortune to capture your attention. Titles sometimes become a recognizable part of a brand—I am thinking of the opening titles of the James Bond films produced by Albert Broccoli and designed by Maurice Binder.

From my past work making award-winning slide shows I knew a thing or two about graphic design—what was possible, how it was done, what it cost, and how important graphics were, in relative terms, to an overall production, for impact as well as in subliminal ways (brand image).

I came up with a design concept for the Swedish Match video and ran it through the approval cycle. It was immediately rejected by Abby Katzman. I was told that there was no budget for my designs. That was ironic because my designs were made to save money while still having enough impact. (Lars Einar showed me how to balance cost and impact; he taught me to think smart.)

You might ask, how much impact is enough? Part of the answer depends on the budget, the wherewithal to produce. When you see a *Star Wars* movie you expect exciting **graphics; without those graphics, it wouldn't be the same movie that you know; you wouldn't be as impressed and might even feel disappointed.**

In this case, their video was costing Swedish Match nearly two million 1995 dollars—**that's** about \$4 million in today's money (2018). Yesterday or today, that was a lot of money.

I knew that the client expected to see on the screen something that equaled the impressive size of their investment. But I was told by Katzman that there was only \$10,000 left in the budget for graphics and effects—a piddling 0.55% of budget—less than 1%. That popped my cork.

By this time, I hope you can understand why I **didn't last long** at Watts-Silverstein.

I detested **Silverstein's Japanese**-style, layered corporate structure. I was basically not a team player and **didn't do well on committees**. I knew when I *knew* a better way. So, I walked away and left my chips on the table. I just wanted out of what I considered a scam, to plunder Swedish Match and drive up Watts-**Silverstein's P/E ratio, sweetening** the deal for Caribiner, Watts and Silverstein.

Cindy Krueger heard my verdict first, over coffee in her office. I felt meek as I explained my decision to quit; my reasons were a powerful condemnation of her boss and his regime, of which she was a key player. She made no attempt to change my decision. That said it all, as far as I was concerned; it confirmed that I made the right move.

The only thing I still regret was disappointing Alan Hilburg, letting him down; but there was nothing I could do; I had no control at Watts-Silverstein and could no longer serve as his ombudsman.

I explained my decision and the reasons for it during a cab ride from LAX to the recording studio, where I was going to direct Brad Crandall narrating the English voice track for the Swedish Match documentary. Hilburg did not take my decision to quit well. He did his best to persuade me to stay. I tried to make him aware of the situation he faced at Watts-Silverstein—that he was getting ten cents on his dollar in terms of production value and **there was nothing I could do about it. But he didn't buy it. He called me a quitter** and I never heard from him again.

Freedom costs.

1996 – Life in Flux – Reality vs Fantasy

Working at Watts-Silverstein afforded me personal time that I didn't have when I worked for myself.

Self-employed people rarely have a life of their own; their life is their work; their business is everything. Although I gave Bruce and Charlie their due, when the clock struck 6:00 pm [18:00] I was out of there, aiming for the 6:30 pm [18:30] ferry or the one at 7:00 [19:00] if the traffic was heavy. That got me home to Vashon around 8:00 pm [20:00].

Commuting by ferry boat began and ended each day with a mini adventure—way more fun than sitting in a *stau* (traffic jam) on the highway. However, soon enough, the ferry commute got old; eventually I learned to hate the boat.

It seemed like every other day there were hours-long delays caused by one problem or another, be it the weather, a medical emergency, a mechanical failure, or crew issue.

In the beginning, I tried to salve the issue by catching up with work while waiting on the ferry line, using a laptop in my car. But there were too many interruptions to do any meaningful work. Every few minutes I had to restart the car as the line crept forward to the ticket booths.

Bike riders went to the head of the ferry line; but I never used mine to commute on a **regular basis. The climate probably had a lot to do with it; I didn't like riding in the rain.** For whatever reason, my Yamaha 750 motorcycle languished in a corner of the carport for nearly another ten years before I sold it to my assistant, Ryan Grenville, for one dollar.

When I first brought it back from California, I spent a small fortune to restore the bike's road-worthiness, from new tires to a new seat and everything in between. Hita enjoyed riding on the bike; we blasted around Vashon Island during the summers of '93 & '94. But after the restaurant failed and I started working overseas again, the bike's condition deteriorated and I was never motivated to fix it up because there are so few good bike riding days in the rainy Pacific Northwest.

I bought a '70s Ford Van for a song from Mac McKenzie, a nature photographer and machinist who worked at Boeing for many years. Mac built some custom camera gear for me—special camera-tripod mounts for using extremely long telephoto lenses when photographing fast moving subjects, like bounding elk or speeding cars.

With photography as a common interest, Mac and I got to be good friends. Mac was also an avid wildlife photographer, an Art Wolfe wannabe who went anywhere and everywhere to photograph animals and birds. During the year I knew him, he travelled to Churchill, Manitoba, in northern Canada, to shoot polar bears.

McKenzie's work went beyond Wolfe's. Art was still a purist who frowned on digital photography (five years later he changed his tune); whereas Mac used Photoshop to enhance his pictures, to stylize them. He produced beautiful framed prints that were popular enough to sell via his (self-made) website. To say that Mac was digitally capable **was an understatement. To me, Mac's web-marketing prowess was a big deal; it was exactly what I wanted to do.** Thus, McKenzie became a mentor.

Mac was a dyed-in-the-wool neocon (neo-conservative), a libertarian with a penchant for **shooting with cameras and guns. Mac's hobby was long-distance target shooting; he built his own guns and competed in sport-shooting matches; Mac also packed a pistol wherever he went; he encouraged me to own a gun and tutored me when, after being convinced that it was a good idea, I bought a 9 mm Beretta revolver.**⁴⁰

When his father died, Mac went out to Denver to deal with the estate; he returned with his **Dad's camper van. It was a pimped-out, long-wheel-base Ford model.**

⁴⁰ Living alone in the woods on an Island was probably reason enough to own a gun. However, I got mine primarily so that I would have a way to off myself, if the need ever came to be.

At the touch of a button, the van became a boudoir —the back seat folded out into a reasonably comfortable, velveteen-upholstered, double bed, with mood lighting, a little TV **and a terrific sound system. Forward of the bed, there were four captain's chairs and a** little dining table with cup holders. I called it the *Luxury Liner*.

Anna and I used it for a couple of camping trips; but she hated it; so, except for a few trips down to Portland, the *Luxury Liner* sat in the carport until I moved to Vancouver, in 2003.⁴¹

My friendship with Mac wore out well before that; he and his wife shared a vicious kind of co-dependent relationship that upset me. Whatever she said or did, he put down. Maybe he thought it made him bigger, but it belittled him in my eyes, to the point where I just stopped seeing them.

Anyway, given the distances and ferries involved between Vashon and North Seattle, where the McKenzies lived, visiting them was a chore.

Before we parted company, Mac turned me on to Peter Hanson at Up Time Technology, a start-up IT firm that Mac used to build his computers and host the impressive website he built to showcase and sell his wild-life pictures.

Emulating Mac, I established an internet account at Up-Time and had them build me a *tower of power* computer, for processing high-resolution pictures in Photoshop. The tower was the first of many custom-made Up Time computers **they built for me during the '90s,** before I switched to Apple computers in 2000, then Dell computers, in 2002.

Living on an island enhanced the duality of my life. Vashon is a rural community of do-it-yourselfers, many of them small-scale farmers and ranchers.

I had a fair sized 3.5-acre lot [1.4 hectares]; it gave me a lot to do, from mowing the field to felling trees and chopping fire wood, to the usual household maintenance chores in a 3,200 square-foot home [297 square meters]. **It wasn't hard because it was all new; well,** most of it. I felt like I was living in some kind of latter-day *Little House on the Prairie*.

I re-dedicated myself to finding a way to make it on the Island. Having a well-equipped photo studio, I started a new business making super-wide panoramic pictures of Vashon **scenes and selling them at the Heron's Nest,** a popular local gallery.

Anna **was still there in the beginning of that transition; she didn't return to Poland until** November. We took the opportunity to travel about and camp together; they were photo camping trips (I was still selling stock photos through the Stock Market picture agency).

⁴¹ When I moved to Vancouver, the *Luxury Liner's* enormous capacity came in handy as a moving van; after that it went to Burning Man in 2005 and finally got sold to a neighbor's kid on Vashon who used it as a band bus for a few hundred thousand miles before it wore out, together with the band.

During our first hike, into the Olympic Mountains, we overpacked and it exhausted us; Anna said she never wanted to hike again after that. However, we also made a beach hike—an easy one—on the Washington coast, to Rialto Beach.



We camped on the north end Rialto beach and produced some of the most creative nudes that I have ever photographed; I called the series *Bare Bones*. **Anna's poses** mimicked the bleached-driftwood skeletal remains or countless trees, washed up along the shore—a spectacularly dramatic background, for its starkness.

Both of us thought that wearing sunglasses would improve the pictures, make them more modern. **Now, I don't know what I think; but they** spare me having to put a black bar over her eyes in the pictures, to hide her identity.⁴² Ha!



We also made an adventurous sight-seeing trip down through Idaho to Las Vegas, across to LA and then up the California and Oregon coasts. We did that trip in the Isuzu Rodeo; for me, it was like re-living the cross-country Isuzu photo assignment, for which the rig became part of my payment. Anna and I had our first fight on that trip; she wanted to stay in San Francisco and was disappointed that I chose to drive on, avoiding the high costs of that famous city by the bay.

Looking back, I question why I was so adamant about not staying in the city, why it was **so important to save a few bucks at the expense of Anna's happiness?** [Spoiler Alert: Now, Anna lives in San Francisco—**how's that for irony.**]

While we were away, a storm washed out my already deteriorating driveway. It was a 500-foot [152-meter] dirt road on a steep slope that reached incline grades of 22%. Many cars had extreme difficulty making up the hill, especially in the rainy season; and only my four-wheel-drive Rodeo could make it all the way up in snow. Having a road like that led **me to discover how many people don't know how to drive (hint: a lot). Spinning wheels** dug ruts that eroded in the rain, transforming the driveway into a miniature of the Grand Canyon. Anna pitched in to help with the driveway repairs. We dug a series of seven drainage channels across the road. There was one every 50 feet, each installed on a 15-degree downslope angle so that gravity would channel the rain water into a roadside ditch. Each channel was lined with a 14-foot-long [4.25 meters], 4-inch [10 cm] wide steel "U" channels; they weighed a ton and cost as much.

⁴² Unfortunately, those pictures are never supposed to be seen, as decreed in our divorce.

I am taking my chances; but, I don't think Anna would object now, going on two decades later. I hope she understands, they are art pictures, not smut.

I bought the steel channels from a metal wholesaler in South Seattle and nearly got killed schlepping them back to Vashon. They were way too long for my 10-foot (3.05-meter) trailer. The steel channels overhung the back of the trailer by about five feet (1.52 meters); **they also challenged (might have exceeded) the trailer's weight limits. But, that wasn't the worst of it.**

When the Rodeo got up to speed on the West Seattle Freeway, I had the opportunity to learn about fish-tailing. The trailer started swerving back and forth violently; the channels broke loose and slid back and forth, magnifying the oscillation; they were in danger of **being flung off the trailer... at 60 miles per hour [90 km/h]. Yikes!**

Visions of the channels tumbling across the highway, taking out cars, flashed through my **head. I couldn't hit the brakes too hard, for fear of jackknifing the trailer.** Somehow, I managed to coax the car slower and get off the highway. It was real white-knuckle stuff.

Back on the Island, Anna and I must have made quite a sight, swinging pick axes and mattocks, hefting those heavy steel channels into position. Anna and I had quite a tan that summer. Whenever the weather was good, we worked in the nude.

When the weather prevented work on the road, our attention turned to reconfiguring the house to handle my new situation.

When I first came to Vashon, I set-up the house as a kind of personal restaurant and lounge. In the front (west-facing) half of the new, 1,000-square-foot [111-square-meter] addition was made into a parlor, for dining and lounging. In the back half, I set up the famous pool table upon which the King of Sweden had played. The pool room was decorated, wall-to-wall, with dozens of the many awards I had received for slide-shows and photography.

At that time, I was going to be a chef; the house was my catering facility and test kitchen. My photo and AV gear was put in the storage room and stayed there for six years while I went through my Fork Inn the Road phase, as described earlier.

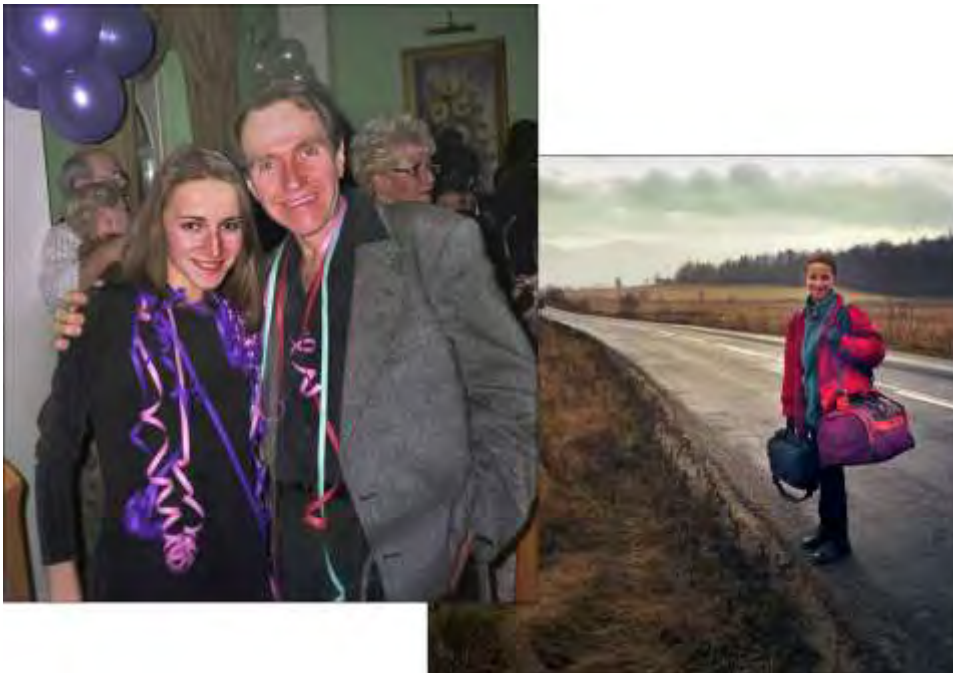
Now, the pool table was moved into the (former) parlor. The awards were packed up and taken to the storage room, where they replaced the all photo and AV gear being moved into the (former) pool room, which became photo studio.

When her six-month visa expired, Anna returned to Poland where she attended a prominent business school **in Poznan, Poland's business city. It was tough living on Vashon without Anna; so, I decided to visit her.**

I made the first visit at Christmastime; the two of us took the train together, from Poznan down to Rawicz, **and stayed with her family. By then, after Anna's half year in Vashon, they totally accepted me. In fact, Anna's father, Zbigniew, sub-divided the Raus' apartment to create a private room for the two of us.** I thought that was an exceptional gesture, especially considering that I was his senior by a couple of years.



"Z'Big" and Bozena, pulled out all the stops and put on quite a spread during Christmas week: I must have gained a stone. I met Anna's brother, Chris (in green) and her paternal grandmother (right), who would soon move into Anna & Chris' room, due to poor health.



For the New Year, Anna and I took a train to the Carpathian Mountains southern Poland and spent a week at a ski lodge in Szczyrk (pronounced "schturk").

The bus from the train was on holiday schedule—once a day—and we missed it and hiked 2 miles [3 km].

In Europe, New Year's Eve is a stylish celebration called *Sylvester*. People get dressed to the nines and attend elaborate parties that start with a lobster dinner, continue with cocktails and dancing, climax with fireworks and champagne at midnight, then carry on into the wee hours of the morning.

During that trip, Anna and I made plans to live together in Poznan. I went back to Vashon, closed the house and returned to Poznan a month later. While Anna attended school, I began work on a project that I concocted to justify (as in write-off the costs of) being in Poland—a **Chef's Lexicon** of international culinary words and terms.

I went around interviewing chefs, sommeliers and hoteliers to learn the Polish names of everything from apples to zucchinis. I built the book as a giant-sized Excel spreadsheet; as it got bigger it really stressed the limits of my little laptop.

My grand scheme for the Chef's Lexicon was for Anna and I to travel around Europe and Scandinavia together, researching for the Lexicon, then make a million dollars selling them. Ha!



Anna lived in a three-bedroom, State-run apartment with two other schoolgirls. It was a tight fit, but we managed to make things work for the two of us in her bedroom, while sharing a bare-bones kitchen and bathroom with her roommates.

I soon became the cook. I shopped at the expensive food stores (by Polish standards, I was rich). The girls never ate better or drank as much. I ended up staying for three months, through the late winter and early spring. Living amongst the bourgeoisie in Poland was an education. I learned a lot about the nature of man, about how decadent and amoral America had become.

I also learned that investing in Poland could be a smart move. The country was pulling itself up by the bootstraps after years of communist suppression. There were opportunities everywhere. People needed everything. And the US dollar went a long way.

To that end, I began looking for an apartment to buy—as an investment and a place for Anna and I to live during her three-year business school program. We found a place and made an offer, then discovered that only Polish citizens could own real property. That put the kibosh on those plans. As much as I loved Anna, I wanted my name on any deeds.

Instead, we went the other way and began planning Anna's next Vashon visit. Having been away three months, I felt the need to return to Vashon; I didn't want to leave the house dormant much longer, even though the Lorentzens were looking after it.

On my last night in Poznan we went to see the box-office smash, *Titanic*. It was strange to watch that epic film in Polish, especially as I was going to be leaving soon... by boat (Polferries from Gdansk to Nynäshamn, Sweden).

1997 – Nike Anaheim – Third Dimension

With Avcon Media Solutions closed and my bridges burned at Watts-Silverstein, I needed to find new clients.

I couldn't go after any end-user clients, e.g., Boeing, Amazon, Starbucks et al, because I advertised myself as *The Incredible Freelancer*, a producers' producer. Who would hire a guy who might go after their clients, eh?

Anyway, I didn't want to work for the corporate crowd anymore. I just wanted to do my thing—play with slides. With virtually no prospects in Seattle, I expanded the circumference of my target market to include Portland, Oregon, three hours south of Seattle.

I contacted Sound Images and made an appointment with their owner, Dave Frey, to present my portfolio and make a capabilities pitch. It was a five-hour trip, driving to Portland from Vashon; I used the time to rehearse my pitch, over and over.

Walking in the front door of Sound Images, I instantly knew that I was in the right place.

Wrapped around two walls in a reception area painted semi-gloss black, was a 20-foot-wide [6.1-meter-wide] mural of runners, composed of sixty 8 X 10-inch [20.3 X 25.4 cm] color prints arranged in a matrix with 2-inch [10 cm] mullions. The 60 prints stood out from the black walls by a half inch [1.25 cm], appearing to float in space. It was a very **effective display; so symbolic of Frey's business—multi-screen shows.**

Against that background, a well-tanned, athletically handsome, silver-haired Dave Frey strode up to me and proudly said hello. I had a bunch of stuff to show him so we moved to his office; along the way he gave me a tour of the place.

There was nobody else there but the two of us; everyone was taking time off after a Nike sales meeting job, Dave explained. (When it came to rewarding his staff for the long hours they put in on his shows, Frey was stingy with money but generous with time off.)

I was overwhelmed by what Dave showed me. I was expecting to meet a "little ol'" Portland producer. Instead I met an AV titan running a giant studio.

Until then, the biggest show-assembly room I had worked in was Image Stream's; their programming suite was maybe 20 X 40; big enough to line-up a 45-projector panoramic show.

Programming and pre-assembly using "write-on" slides; Steve Farris in the BG, for scale.



Dave's assembly and staging studio was big enough to contain six of Image Stream's size. It had formerly been a video studio that featured a 100 X 30-foot [~30 X 10-meter] cyc (cyclorama)⁴³ big enough to shoot 40-foot [12.2 meters] tractor trailers for Freightliner, a local Oregonian truck-building behemoth.

There was an adjoining suite of 10 offices and a conference room that provided ample space for slide editing (instead of a light table they had a light box room where you could layout at least 1000 slides), art production (including darkroom), rostrum photography (they ran a computer-assisted Marron-Carrel MC-1600, like the one Emms ran at Incredible in Sweden, but not as pimped), slide mounting, tray assembly, and the usual back-office functions of any company.

Sound Images was the best multi-image production facility I had ever seen, bar none. As you can imagine, my tongue was hanging out by the end of the tour; I really wanted to work there and had a hard time containing my enthusiasm lest it appear to be desperation (which it was).

Dave explained that he already knew me by reputation. He said my show reel was incredible; then doused my dreams when he said that he rarely used freelancers. He thanked me for coming down to see him and said he would get back to me if something came up. Hmm.

My drive back to Vashon was not a happy one. Was Dave just playing hard to get? He told me that Gar Benedict **had him covered but said he'd keep me in mind. I knew that Gar** was a formidable talent; I met my match with him; we were equally good but stylistically **quite different. Gar's sense of screen design was instinctually corporate**; he and Dave shared the same designer DNA. **My style was way different than theirs; mine didn't fit Sound Images' house style.** Worse, my temperament **didn't fit the Sound Images culture**; I am a loner, but Dave emulated his client Nike and ran his business as if it were a sports team and he was the coach.

Dave spent most of his time out at Nike hanging with top management, from Phil Knight on down. **He operated on the inside, as part of the Nike's marketing team.** Big shows were **part of Nike's corporate communications**, internally and externally; they were extravaganza shows, like mini versions of Super Bowl half-time shows.

⁴³ Cyclorama—curved walls without corners that provide a "seamless" background; aka "Cove."

Sound Images functioned as if it were a department of Nike, although Dave was allowed to run it as his own cash cow. He had a direct line to the Nike C-Suite through Mike Dougherty, Creative Director of Global Brands Presentations. Mike reported directly to CEO Phil Knight who took a personal interest in the presentations because he considered **them the reason for Nike's success**—they were.

Meetings and events were part of Nike's DNA; the company used them to boost team spirit; to rally the troops. Big regional sales events were held several times per year, at luxury resorts in places like Hawaii, **for audiences ranging from 600 to 1200 of Nike's top sales people**. The meetings were motivational and educational. The sales force learned not only about new Nike footwear, fashions and sporting goods, but also about how to sell and how to improve as a person.

If I had to use one word to describe Nike meetings and events that word would be inspiring. Dave and Mike conjured audiovisual spectacles that frequently involved 50 or 100 projectors. One of the biggest they did, nicknamed *Thunder Dome*, was a 120-projector show presented in a custom-built, 360-degree (circular) theater seating 800 people. Dave brought in Gar Benedict to co-produce that particular show. Dave ran a tight ship; giant shows were produced by surprisingly small crews.

Sound Images **turned out to be one of the world's best AV secrets**. They produced some of the biggest slide-show extravaganzas of all time; shows involving hundreds of projectors and elaborate assemblies of multiple screens; the kind of things you see at big rock concerts these days.

However, very few people in the AV world ever heard about Sound Images because Dave Frey was a modest man (and a cunning businessman). I once asked him why he had never attended any of the AMI festivals or entered his shows into competitions; his reply **was that he didn't feel the need to prove anything to anyone; that he didn't need awards to know the work was good; and that he didn't want to advertise to other producers that his #1 client (Nike) was a big user of multi-media shows**, that would only invite competition. No, Dave was a very private man who liked to operate under the radar, behind the curtain; I believe that he may have had strong religious roots.



There were three **on Dave's** permanent staff: Steve Farris (right) wore three hats; he managed the business affairs, doubled as a programmer and stage- managed the road shows. Derek Jackman (center) ran the staging department and managed gear (a warehouse full). Dan Root (left) **was Dave's** photographer, nicknamed "**Rooter the Shooter**".

Rooter also assisted Steve and Dave also did photography, but only occasionally.

That small team was fleshed-out with a few freelancers: creative regulars included sound designer Bill Scream and screen designer Gar Benedict. For staging it was Rick Botz.

On the production end, favorite freelancers included rostrum cameramen Chris Fowler (right) and Philip Augustin, (left) who was chief slide mounter and production coordinator.



Those nine (ten including Dave) were one tight team of AV guerillas—the kind I liked.

Winning work from Dave Frey wasn't easy. He was happy with his current designer, Gar Benedict. Gar was Dave's first choice for designer-programmers, for good reason:

Benedict was a top talent who free-lanced at some of the best multi-image shops. Being a jack of all trades—graphic designer, photographer and programmer—Gar was a lot like me; we both thought alike in many respects.

For example, while I was in Australia developing Master Masks, Gar was simultaneously working on his own masking system; neither of us was more than superficially aware of each other then. Gar had some success with his mask products; he arranged with Marilyn Kulp, AMI's managing director, to brand his masks as an AMI product and collect a royalty stream from their sales. That was clever, eh?

One difference between us was that Gar knew his own limitations whereas I would never admit to mine. I always tried to do everything myself. Benedict was more of a team player.

He and I got to know each other at AMI festivals. We both sat on show-judging committees **and got involved in other aspects of the organization. But we didn't get to** know each other well as colleagues until I arrived in Seattle and started working at Watts-Silverstein.

At that time, Gar was living in Seattle and free-lancing for Watts-Silverstein, programming such shows as *The Great Storm* and *Texas Forever*.

I would have liked to be better friends with Gar. We talked and talked about getting together. I invited Gar and his awesome gal, Karen Lamport, out to the house several **times, but nothing clicked. Then the Benedict's moved back to California; I didn't see or** hear from Gar again until we met again at Sound Images.



To my utter surprise, Frey (left) got back to me in fairly short order.

My lucky break came when company photographer Dan Root was too busy to shoot for a new Nike show.

With his entire production staff already operating at full capacity, when Nike requested another show module for the meeting, Dave decided to call me. He knew that in addition to being a multi-image designer-producer, I was also a photographer; that was the combo he needed for the new Nike project.

Dave had come-up with a brilliant solution, one that didn't involve his already stressed production crew: make a stereoscopic slide show. 3D shows **didn't require many slides (or projectors)**. The magic 3D effect had enough impact to carry the show; plus, making a 3D show was so easy that I could do it by myself—the rest of the staff could devote their time to their prior commitments.

For example, the 3D show module that I shot and produced for Dave had only 60 slides (2 sets of 30—left and right); I was able to shoot, assemble and program the 3D module all by myself. By comparison, a typical Nike-meeting module might use 30 projectors and a few hundred slides, requiring many people to produce.

Dave whittled me down on the price saying that he had intended to shoot it himself—he could have; in fact, I used his 3D rail to do the photography.⁴⁴

Between the lines, Dave was suggesting that he still might do the work himself if my rate was too expensive; so, I gave him a deal. (I would have given him a deal under any **circumstances, to get my foot in the door; but, don't tell him that.**)

Once they opened for me, I passed through the doors at Sound Images on so many occasions that Dave gave me a key to the place. I became part of the Sound Images family eventually worked on at least a dozen major projects, some of them alongside Gar Benedict (he got the important modules; I produced support shows).

⁴⁴ 3D photography requires two side-by-side cameras (left and right) aligned on a calibrated rail. Alternatively, a single camera slides along the rail and pictures are taken at two positions.

The Anaheim show was a BFD. Frankly speaking, I **was kind'a** blown away by the size and scope.



My little 3D show didn't even play in the big auditorium; it was used at break-out sessions in a much smaller room (which was better suited to 3D because the viewing angles could be controlled). During the plenary sessions in the big theater, I assisted Steve Farris (lower picture).

I didn't mind being on the B team because Dave left me alone, to do my own thing, whereas Gar had to deal with Dave looking over his shoulder, helping. Much later Dave confided that although he thought many of my ideas were zany, that he appreciated the **fact that I could make a silk purse from a sow's ear**. By that, he meant that I could take whatever was thrown at me and make into something palpably cogent. That was a skill I learned in the kitchen (I have always been a foodie), making meals out of whatever I could find in the fridge and closets; they could be wild concoctions, but they tasted good most of the time.

[Spoiler Alert: Doing the 3D show for Nike sparked my interest in stereoscopic photography and presentation. I read a few books on the subject, then bought a set of standard 3D rails and had some custom ones built; I also invested in a three special tripod heads and a slider mechanism that facilitated shooting stereoscopic images with only one camera, by sliding it from the left position to the right, or vice versa. (The sliding-camera **technique only worked on subjects that didn't move.**). **For the next ten years, I tried to** interest other prospective clients in 3D projection; but without success.]

Working with Sound Images revitalized my interest in producing slide shows. Thus, when Dan Davenport **called and offered to sell me Minolta's Marron-Carrel MC-1600 camera for one dollar (plus shipping), I couldn't resist. I thought it would be a good backstop, in case the trend to digital imaging faltered or failed. And, what did I have to lose... a buck?** (No, \$300—the cost of shipping the white elephant from Ramsey, New Jersey to Vashon Island. As mentioned earlier, it was a stupid move; there was nowhere to set-up the huge camera in my Vashon studio; so, it sat in the storage room, occupying the lions share of space, for years, before I paid some Mexicans to cut it up and haul it to the dump.

Davenport had always been a fan of mine; he was an enthusiastic multi-image producer who built shows for Minolta—**Minolta's link to multi-image** photographers—and attended AMI and other slide show competitions and festivals.



Dan arranged for Cokin to give me a complete set of their filters in exchange for my name—for being a brand ambassador. He got tight with Pat Billings when she left Incredible Slidemakers, **to work with Don O’Neill’s cabal. I hadn’t heard from Dan for** years; he told me he was still with Minolta, but their slide set-up was being disposed of—they were going digital. Hmm.

1997 – Swedish Redux – Surprise Marriage

When I quit Watts-Silverstein, in July, it made a lot of waves. Internally and externally, my departure was a BFD (**Big F’ing Deal**). **Leaving Watts-Silverstein** was an audacious move, and an awkward one.

I initially informed account supervisor Cindy Krueger, a sharp cookie who knew which side of her bread was buttered.⁴⁵ The Swedish Match project was at a critical stage of production with a tight deadline looming when I told Krueger that I was leaving. Krueger was flummoxed and not without reason; my resignation came out of the blue.

I explained my opinion—that **the client’s money was being wasted on middle-management** and meetings that were largely unnecessary; and that those costs seriously undercut the **job’s production value. Caught off guard, Cindy recovered quickly, saying that she** understood and accepted my resignation. God knows what she really thought of me; but, if the way most of my other colleagues at Watts-Silverstein thought was an indication, **that wasn’t good. Most thought I was some kind of rat, jumping ship; a traitor.** I would have thought they would be glad, to have a scapegoat. Ha! We skipped the formalities of a notice period and I skipped out the door immediately. That was easy to do because **there wasn’t much of anything in my little office. In retrospect, it may not have been the best decision of my life; certainly, life’s path would have wound in other ways had I** stayed and seen the job through.



While all the above was unfolding, the powers-that-be at Lexivision, in Sweden, took note of my departure from Watts-Silverstein. They offered me a job as one of their stable of creative directors. That was a chance to live in Sweden, just a ferry ride from Poland. You can bet your sweet bippy, I wanted that job. To make myself a unique talent in the eyes of immigration authorities, I described myself as a producer of “megamedia”; **it was a 99.99% certainty that no** Swedes were qualified for that. (Ha!)

⁴⁵ Cindy started her career working with the renowned Richard Shipps at DD&B (Deaf Dumb & Blind) Studios in Detroit; she knew—from the days when Incredible and DD&B played pranks on each other at AMI conventions—that I was a one-man band who knew how to get things done.

Lexivision paid my way to Sweden for a job interview. I used their return ticket (Business Class on SAS) as the basis for a side trip to visit Anna. The morning after my interview, I hopped a bus to Nynäshamn and caught the ferry to Gdansk.

I loved that Polferries ride—sunset drinks on the back deck, a fantastic smorgasbord dinner and nightcaps at the nightclub, where a B-grade duo or trio played contemporary **hits on an accordion and electronic keyboard sync'd to a rhythms-and-drums machine.**

The nightclub wasn't popular; besides myself, there were only a dozen other people, mostly Polish and Finnish truck drivers. But the music was decent and the drinks were cheap; so, I soused myself to slumber.

The next day, a pick-pocket gang tried to rip me off as I boarded the train to Rawicz. However, I was prepared for them, having been hit on before, more than once. Those thieves **didn't get anything**—everything of value was not only in a zipped pocket, but also tied to my body by a string. Extremely valuable stuff (wallet, passport, etcetera) was zipped up twice (that really fools them).

After that rude boarding, the ride was pleasant and a happy Raus contingency met me at the station when I arrived in Rawicz. **Although they were all smiles, I sensed her parent's concern; after all, I was older than Anna's father.**

Back at the Raus apartment, over dinner, I explained my new situation to Bozena and Zbigniew. My plan was that Anna would join me in Stockholm—which would mean her leaving business school, in Poznan.



Positioning it as a unique opportunity—one that I hoped to share with Anna—her parents bought my plan; they really had no choice; they could see that Anna was psyched.

Fast forward a few days and I found myself sitting next to Anna on a flight to Seattle. Our plan was to pack up the Vashon house and rent it for the year or two that I would ostensibly be working at Lexivision; that way, the house would be generating income to offset its operating expenses and taxes.

US Customs singled us out when we passed through immigration at LAX [Los Angeles], where we transferred to another flight to SEA [Seattle]. They said we were randomly selected, but I wonder about that.

My hunch was confirmed when they interviewed us separately and they explained that we were pulled out of line because **Anna's bag contained some of my business papers.** They wanted to know, what was up with that?

After a half-hour of cross examination, we were informed that Anna was accused of violating a statute relating to betrothal [engagement]—it was the same problem I encountered a decade earlier, when I had to marry Sandra Sande—Anna was deemed to be engaged to me; she was warned that one more violation would result in her being barred from entering the USA. Yikes!

As happened before, with Sandra, there was only one thing to do—marry the girl.

Anna and I hurriedly planned our wedding while boxing up everything in the house and **storing it in the north wing (my former office & programming studio)**. We didn't have a lot of time; Lexivision wanted me back before the end of the year.



The Lorentzen's agreed to be our witnesses. Tom was my Best Man and Bea was Anna's Bride's Maid.

We were married at sunset on the beach in front of **"Gig-Eye" Kirshner's house**; the Reverend Tom Martin of the Vashon Methodist Church presided.

Anna wore a wedding dress made (at considerable cost) by a Rawicz dress-maker, sent to us by FedEx. I wore my favorite tuxedo outfit, sporting a butterfly bow tie.

On the afternoon of the wedding, just before leaving for the ceremony on the beach, I shot Anna in her wedding dress, with a Nikkor 600 mm f4 telephoto lens.

I was up by the house and she was at the bottom of the west slope.

I set up huge reflector boards to provide enough fill-light from 180 feet [~54 meters] away; we communicated with walkie-talkies.



Before that, I convinced Anna that a pre-nuptial agreement [aka Pre-Nup] was the standard way things were done in the USA.

We signed ours at a local bank, where a notary witnessed us. The pre-nup said that if the marriage fails, we each leave with what we came with. However, as Washington is an equal partnership state, that **document's efficacy was** questionable.



[Spoiler Alert: The pre-nup, prepared by Vashon attorney John Knudsen, **didn't hold up in Court**. I later sued Knudsen. Although I won the case, there was no monetary reward. WTF?]

With the house packed-up, I put a rental ad in Vashon's local newspaper, the Beachcomber. The first family to come see the house turned out to be a local couple, both **realtors, with four kids and two big dogs. They said they'd take it, but I was loath to rent it to them—I feared that they would trash the place.** However, the rub was that Washington State law prohibited me from discriminating against them; as long as they **wanted it, I couldn't rent the house to anyone else. The only alternative was not rent the house,** which was what happened.

We left for Scandinavia with our furnishings and stuff packed up and stored in the north wing; the rest of the house was empty. The Lorentzens, offered to look after the place **and collect our mail while we were gone. That wasn't as easy as it sounds; if the weather got too cold, Tom needed to fire-up the two wood stoves and heat the place sufficiently to prevent the pipes from bursting. He didn't mind that chore, he told me later, because it gave him an opportunity to sample the various types of Scandinavian schnapps I had stocked in the bar.**

Suddenly, there I was, back in Sweden again. It was a good feeling; I like Sweden; I had a lot of friends there and appreciated the Swedish work ethic. The Scandinavian economy is geared to work for the benefit of the majority—the bottom 99% instead of the top 1%—and things work there. Swedish society ran as smoothly as a fine Swiss watch; the roads were paved and trains ran on time.

Lexivision put us up in a huge sublet apartment in the upper-crust Östermalm neighborhood, near their offices. Unless they were newly built, most Swedish apartments were large sprawling affairs with a half-dozen rooms usually totalling a thousand or more square feet [300+ square meters]. This one was fully furnished with antiques and expensive ornaments; and it had a terrific kitchen.

Anna and I settled in and began our new life. It was easier for me than for her. I had a **job; but she had nothing to do and, being an ambitious gal, got bored... but, not for long.** Lexivision went broke just half-a-year after I got there, victims of their own success.

Like AVC before them, Lexivision had been on a tear, expanding along with the whole world's economy in general and Sweden's in particular. But, as the so-called Asian Contagion spread, said economy went south. Lexivision were too top heavy to survive a cyclical business turndown.⁴⁶ The history of the slide-show business—or any business sector for that matter—is filled with stories like Lexivision's. Like the top-heavy Swedish battleship *Wasa*, they were blown over when the winds got too strong.

Lexivision was a tech-oriented agency; they were a lot like Watts-Silverstein in that regard, which is why the two companies found affinity for each other during the Swedish Match show. But, Lexivision was thrice the size of Bruce and Charlie's shop and working there was an entirely different story—I was truly a cog on a wheel of this giant company.

Lexivision was so structured, I had to enter a user code and project number for every Xerox copy I made. Rule compliance was strict for the color printer; they had a good one and it was popular. I used it a lot while teaching myself Photoshop and PowerPoint, using semi-fraudulent job numbers (for projects I invented and self-actuated). I'm pretty sure they must have been on to me; but they didn't make a fuss.

I think they were embarrassed that there was no work for me to do. I knew the company was in trouble; I could only wait and hope that they would get enough new business to keep their ship afloat. In the end, that didn't happen, the ship went down; fortunately, Anna and I had a lifeboat—plan B.



When I went to work at Lexivision, I learned a lot more about Photoshop and PowerPoint thanks to their brilliant digital artists, Joachim "Joki" Haag and Åsa Edwall. They took an interest in me while I was working on my first digital photo-illustration, an assembly of 53 pictures of Las Vegas called *Neon Jungle* (left).

Åsa taught me sophisticated PowerPoint tricks; she helped me make a slick portfolio with the digital archive of my photos I brought with me from Vashon. Joki taught me the secrets of making invisible cut-outs in Photoshop; those were lessons I soon put to good use illustrating Scania buses—separating pictures into their component parts so that each part could be individually adjusted.

⁴⁶ As 1998 drew to a close, the world was caught in the grips of the most serious financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Starting in Thailand in July 1997, the crisis spread spasmodically to much of the rest of Asia, parts of Latin America, and Russia over the next 18 months. By the end of the year, it posed a direct threat to the US economy, which was in the midst of the eighth year of an expansion that had sent the stock market to record levels. Somewhat less menaced was Europe, which was on the verge of adopting a single currency (the euro) in 1999 for 11 countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Luxembourg). [More at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/troubled-world-economy-178406>]

This is the Powerpoint show that Joachim "Joki" Haag and Åsa Edwall helped me put together at Lexivision. Their tutelage was like a post-graduate education in digital media. The two were forthcoming and their respective mastery of Photoshop and Powerpoint exceeded the skills of anyone I previously learned from, except Monte Cline; at Watts-Silverstein, most held their cards close to their chest, everyone was protecting their turf.

At the time, digital media was beginning to disrupt business communications big time; people spoke of the paperless office; video-conferencing was making business travel unnecessary; email was replacing faxes and even voice communications. Thus, I was eager to create a digital portfolio, instead of presenting tear-sheets and prints. How cool it would be to send clients and prospects a CD of my work!

*Watts-Silverstein was a hotbed of innovation in all things digital. Bruce Silverstein was on top of that game; so I was in the right place at the right time to see what was possible and learn the basics. I often wonder what would have happened had I not quit and gone **back out, on my own. Likely, I wouldn't be writing this.***

I prepared for the production of a digital portfolio before leaving for Sweden. Monte Cline taught me how to use the Nikon 2000 scanner to convert slides into digital files and to use Photoshop to stitch-together panoramas and do rudimentary photo retouching. I brought about a thousand images with me to Lexivision. I was going to work on the portfolio show after hours; but they had no work for me, so I spent the days teaching myself Powerpoint and prepping pictures and graphics for the presentation.

*From the sheer size of the Portfolio Show, it is clear that I had yet to learn that, when it comes to portfolios, less is more. There are 190 Powerpoint pages and many have two or more pictures. I threw in everything but the kitchen sink; the show included images from **every stage in my photographic career; bits and pieces of all prior portfolios. If you've perused the earlier parts of this tome, you'll likely recognize some familiar photos—the ones I've come to call,** pinnacle pictures. I reckoned a prospect could look at as many as they wanted to. But I was also out to make a killer Powerpoint show, which it was; even Eva complimented me. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall when the folks at Watts-Silverstein saw it. Ha!*

***Unless there's something worth saying, I'm not going to comment on every Plate; the** basic info is presented in the Powerpoint slides (albeit small and hard to read) and the stories behind at least half of them are covered in the text and or previous captions.*

That said, I combined pictures from different shoots, based on the portfolio category. And, when one of my photos sold via The Stock Market, I thenceforth attributed that picture to that buyer, as if they were my client.

I apologize for the florid colors and banding; returning the slides to jpg format from Powerpoint was a bit of a chore. Back in the day, the world of color reproduction was not nearly as standardized as is the case now. I was unaware of the differences between various color modes, e.g. sRGB, Adobe 1998, CMYK, etcetera. Until 1999 all the work I did was sRGB, a very limited gamut designed for the electron-gun color monitors of yore.

Nor did I know anything about monitor calibration; the body of slides needed substantial brightening (which revealed color banding), levels adjustment and desaturation.

Plate N^o1: Åsa Edwall's contribution was teaching me sophisticated Powerpoint programming, exemplified by the Menu Page. Twelve categories of pictures could be independently accessed from the pictorial menu-grid:

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Beauty</i>	<i>Nature</i>
<i>Architecture</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Technology</i>
<i>Automotive</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<i>Aviation</i>	<i>Lifestyle</i>	<i>Travel</i>

Those twelve, plus a thirteenth category—Personal—could also be accessed from any page, by virtue of navigation bars left and right of the picture window. Of necessity, the pictures are presented in linear fashion, by category; navigation was done by page flipping.

Client attribution for many pictures is indicated as The Stock Market. While that is true—virtually all my work was submitted to the agency—many of those pictures were originally made for other clients.

Plates N^{os}11(B)-13: These pictures, of wheat harvesting in eastern Washington State, were taken during a western-states tour with Anna Raus, in 1996. I brought a full kit of gear with me on that trip, to shoot stock photos for my picture agency, The Stock Market. The wheat harvest was shot on Kodachrome with my long Nikkors, the 200-400 and 600 mm lenses, as well as the super-short 16 mm.

*Plate N^o 26T: The top picture was made for an EJA annual report [See, 1970s | Portfolio | Executive Jet Aviation | Plates N^{os}26-27 and 37.]. However, when the artwork and mechanicals were presented to Bruce Sundlun for approval [I insisted that clients initial every board, illustration and photo] he almost jumped out of his chair when he saw this one, exclaiming: **"If any of my pilots pulled a stunt like that, they'd be fired."** Fortunately, the aircraft cut-outs were mounted on a clear-acetate sheet overlaid on the BG sky picture; a little dab of runner-cement thinner was all it took to peel-off the Lear on the left **and get Sundlun's OK.***

Plate N^o 26B: The bottom picture was my first major Photoshop undertaking. Bits and pieces of about fifty different pictures were assembled into a collage called Neon Jungle. All the source material (except the moon and aircraft) were photographed during the Western States tour in 1996, with Anna Raus.

*Joki Haag taught me how to cut and paste pieces of pictures, by using the pen tool to **create paths, converting them to selections and feathering the edges.** But he couldn't help me when I got in trouble by making a Photoshop file that was too big to save. (Who knew there were limits?) Paring down the number of layers by merging groups of them solved that problem. The illustration took me the better part of a week to put together; gees, was I proud of it.*

Plates N^{os} 27B-28T: *I certainly did not hire a helicopter to shoot stock pictures on speculation; Don O'Neill's client, Arlen Realty, paid for it, to shoot their new Olympic Tower building, at Rockefeller Center. I hung a motorized Nikon out of the helicopter using a home-made rig [a self-leveling ball head connected to a Slik dual-camera bar suspended with clothes line and a 25-foot [~8-meter] shutter-release cable made of zip-cord and a cheap push-button doorbell. It was such a rare opportunity, to shoot NYC from a helicopter at low altitude [O'Neill used his EJA and Piper creds to get permission from the FAA at LaGuardia Airport]; I took advantage of it, shooting with a variety of lenses, from a variety of locations, at a variety of altitudes. The chopper cost a fortune, but the results kept O'Neill's wrath at bay.*

Plate N^o 31: *These pictures, of Arches State Park, in Utah, were taken during a western states tour with Anna Raus, in 1996.*

Plates N^{os} 32-35: *Living in Stockholm again, while working [sic] at Lexivision, I had opportunity to shoot some killer images for The Stock Market, and my portfolio. As it turned out, they objected to my addition of moons and other photo enhancements and after that all my work became suspect of digital manipulation. There were still a lot of photo purists in powerful positions; tech had yet to overwhelm the puritanical old curmudgeons.*

Plates N^{os} 45-47: *When I returned to the States in 1992, Jon Bromberg hired me to shoot pictures of the NOC for Microsoft's MSN network.*

Plates N^{os} 61-62: *The nature shots were made at the Vashon studio; the raspberry at my neighbor, Tom Lorentzen's garden.*

Plate N^o 64: *Shot on hiking trips with Anna Raus. Top, Rialto Beach. Bottom, Ho River Trail, Olympic Mountains.*

Plate N^{os} 66: *I resurrected Pixies with Christmas mailings of these two black-and-white photo-illustrations, made at the Vashon studio. In an age of digitization, I reckoned that an old-fashioned exhibition-print-miniature would capture attention. It did; but the plan backfired; I was considered Old Fashioned.*

Plates N^o 70-71: *These pictures were shot during the 1970s. In those days, effects were done with lens attachments. I invested heavily in every kind of color and special-effects filters. These pictures were made with so-called multi-image-prism filters. I loved them; they added an extra dimension to my slide shows. By rotating the prism on successive shots, and animating those slides, I added life to my shows.*

Plate N^o 86T: *I lost a fortune on that shot. I reckoned it was simple: attach a motorized camera onto a surfboard and use a radio-remote to trigger it. OK, got the shot; next frame was a blur and after that, nothing—the camera housing (a plastic bag) failed when the wave wiped out the surfer. The insurance company wouldn't pay.*

Plate N^o 89: *At the Vashon studio, I spent my days creating new images for The Stock Market, using simple props in a table-top studio. [The Vashon studio wasn't big enough*

for anything bigger than a large desk.] I struggled to come up with ideas for theme pictures that were relevant to the times we were living in. I was never good at that.

Plates N^o92-93: Exploring Photoshop, I discovered myriad filters and effects and had tons of fun playing with them. So did just about every other photographer in the known universe. The Stock Market took a dim view of the SFX. Only Chemical Man ever made any money for me; the gas mask made a model release unnecessary.

Plate N^o 94: The Stock Market used to send their photographers lists of subjects they were seeking; character shots were always near the top. These two were old shots dating back to Incredible Slidemakers days, on 73rd Street. They may have been shot by Pat Billings, while she was in my employ, for one of the shows she was producing. The attribution of the Lido shot to Burson-Marsteller is just a guess.

Plate N^o 95T: This was one of a (long) series of character shots made for PIR, in Sweden (as was the one of Danny Durois on Plate N^o93B). The models posed against a limbo background, so they could be easily isolated and dropped into other scenes. For example, I added the TV; it was one of the first Photoshop exercises done at Lexivision.

Plate N^o 95B: Flying Carpet was made on a whim, as a birthday present for Hita Von Mende's sister, **Elfie Rice, who was a professional Rottweiler**⁴⁷ breeder with a bevy of blue ribbons to show for her dogs. I volunteered to photograph her champion dog: Ty. The dog had sired dozens of pups, but was in his golden years; Elfie wanted a portrait to **remember him by. We shot the dog in the Vashon studio; it wasn't an easy shoot; the strobes agitated Ty; Elfie had a tough time getting him to relax (he never did); he kept messing-up the little Persian rug he was standing on.**

Elfie chose a close-up portrait. Later, it occurred to me that the messed-up carpet could be transformed into a flying carpet. I used a 16 X 20-inch [~41 X 51 cm] print of the BG sky left over from an EJA annual report and superimposed a cut-out of the dog printed on single weight Kodabromide F2 paper; that master artwork was photo-copied with a 4 X 5 camera at the Ivey Seeright lab in Seattle, and prints made from that negative.

Plate N^o 96B: The shot of Yours Truly in front of the Taj Mahal was originally used as a port-card promotion. For several years, it was my practice to take selfies in exotic locations during my travels, have them printed as picture post cards, and mail them to clients and prospects with greetings and salutations. In retrospect, I reckon that such self promotion backfired; I was seen by many as an arrogant egomaniac, I fear, because I never once got a call as a result of those mailings.

⁴⁷ Wikipedia: The Rottweiler is a breed of domestic dog, regarded as medium-to-large or large. The dogs were known in German as Rottweiler Metzgerhund meaning Rottweil butchers' dogs, because their main use was to herd livestock and pull carts laden with butchered meat to market

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Douglas Mesney



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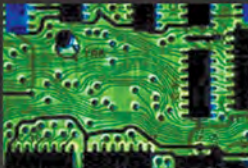
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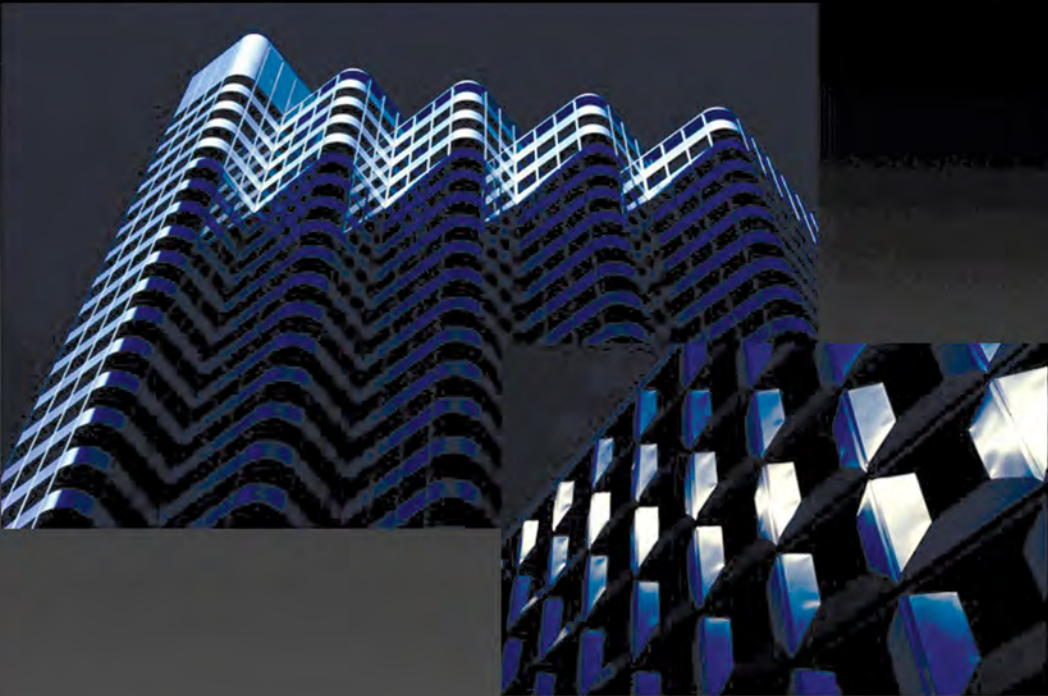
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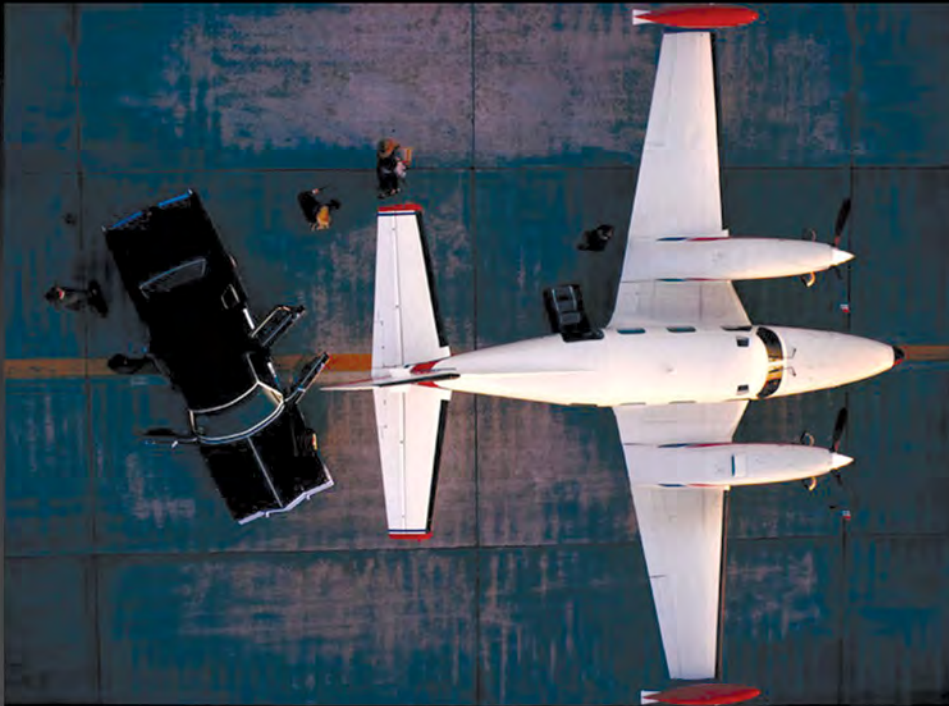
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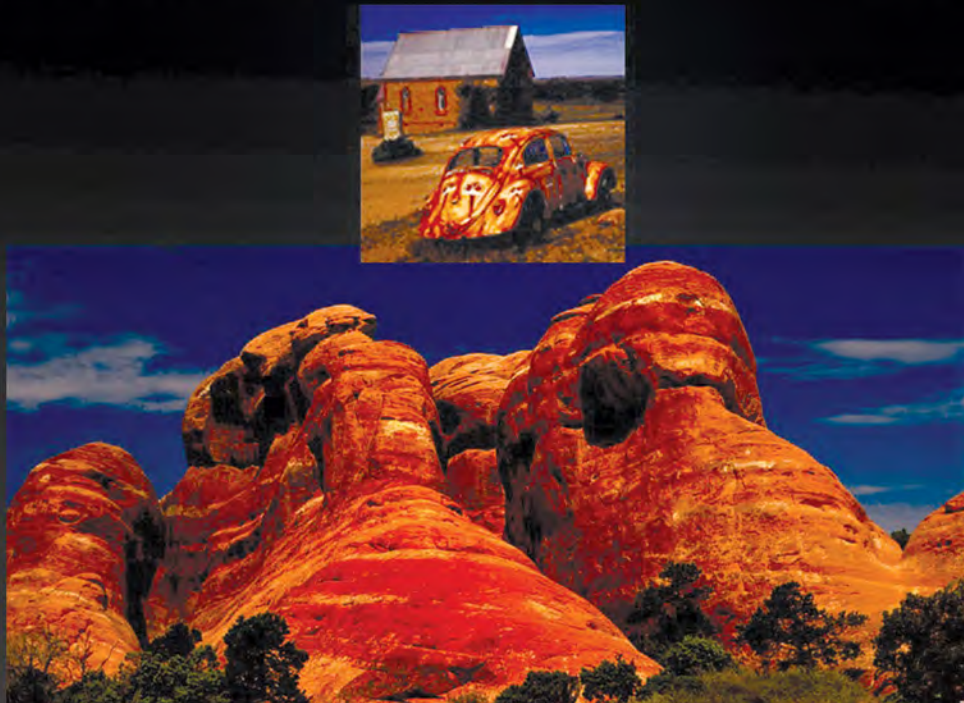
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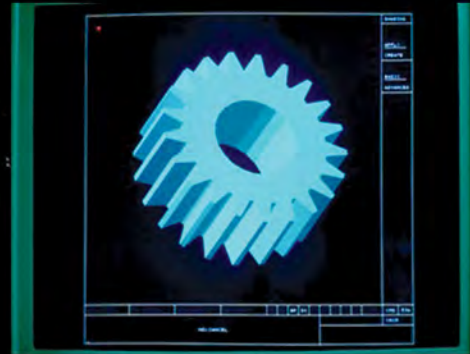
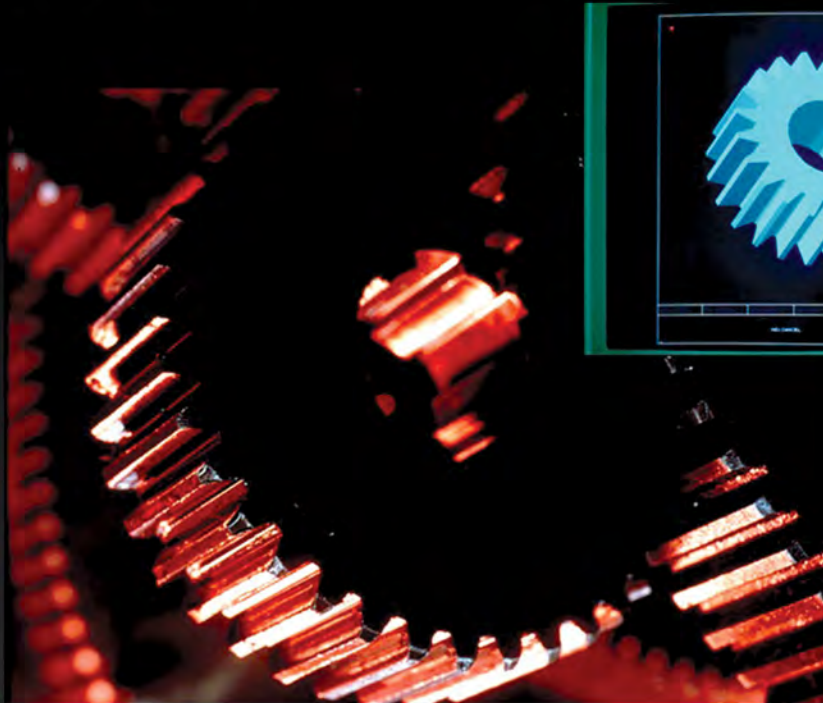
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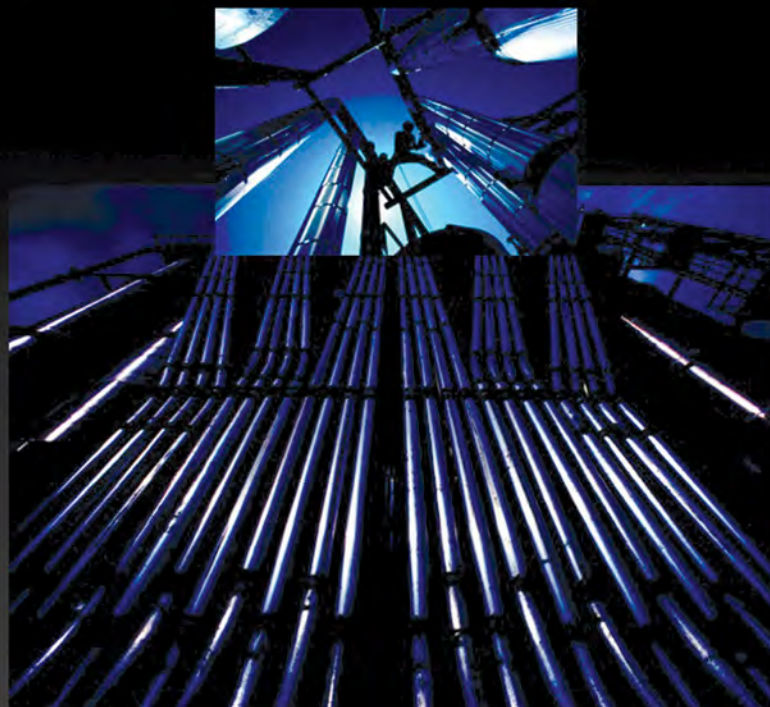
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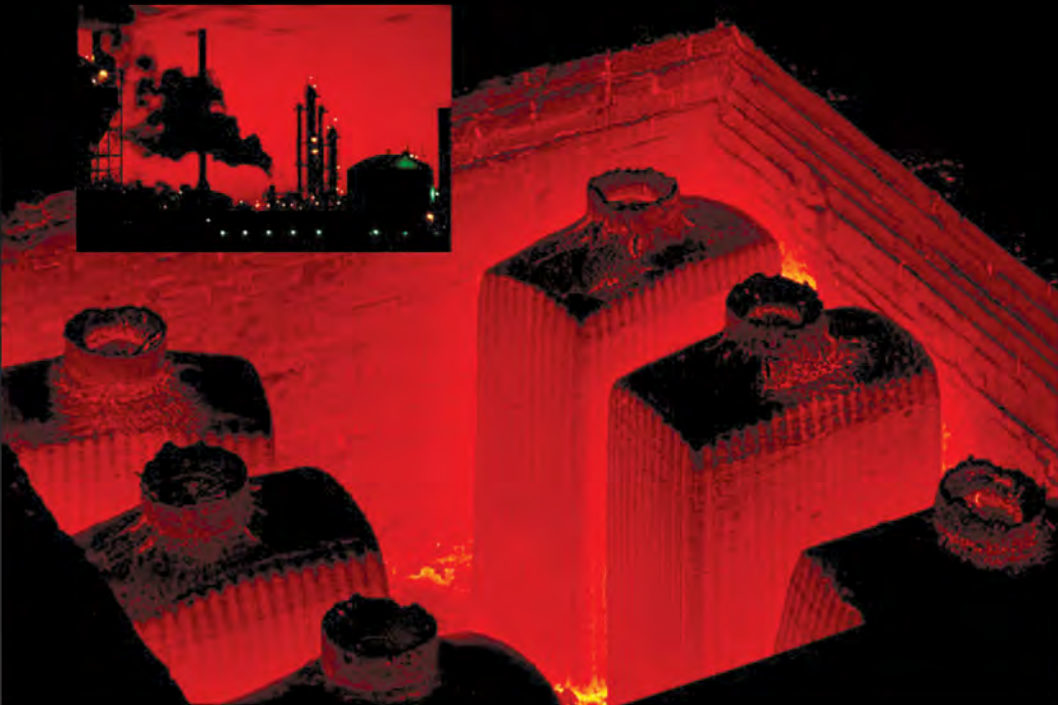
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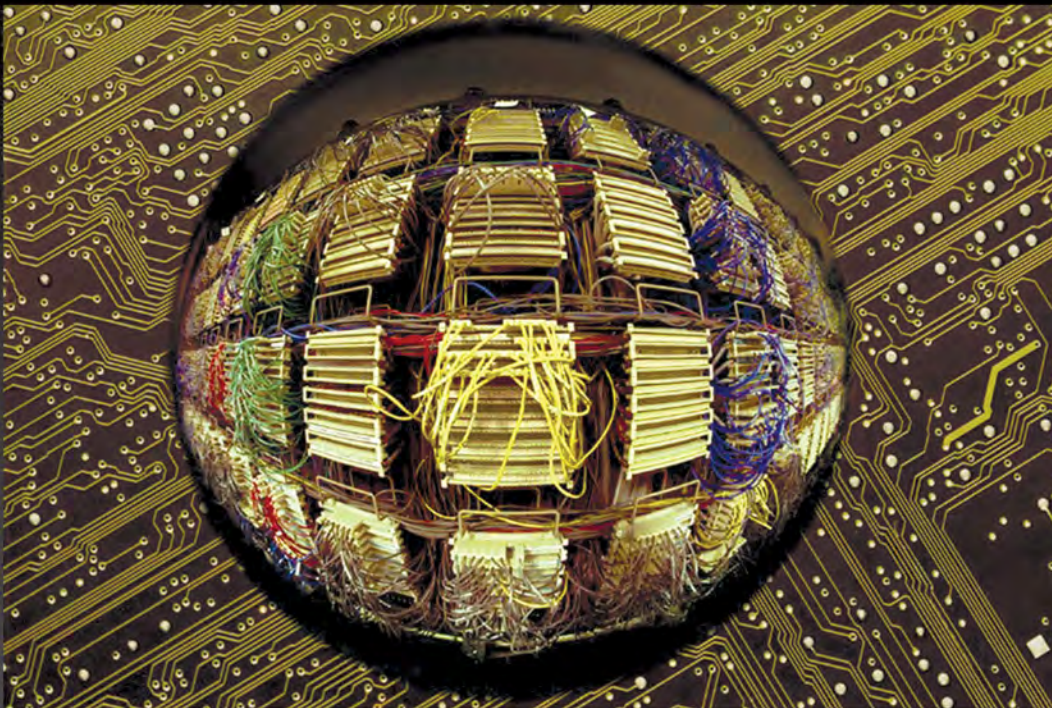
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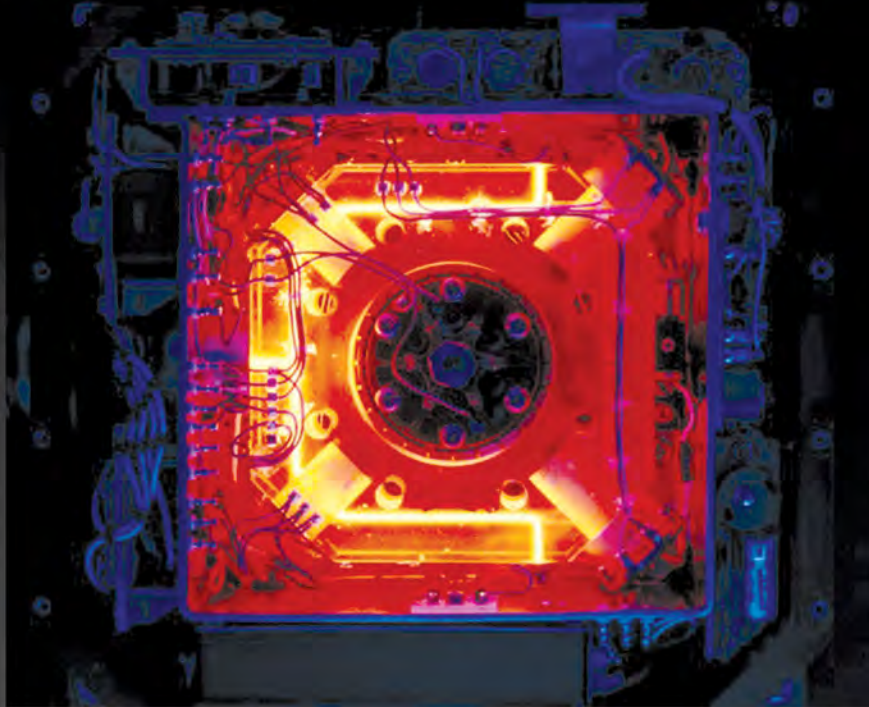
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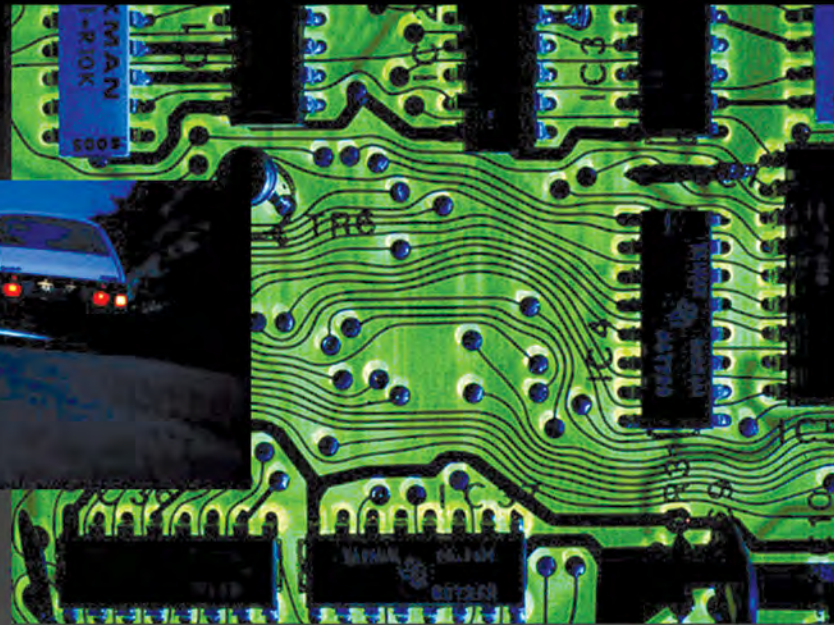
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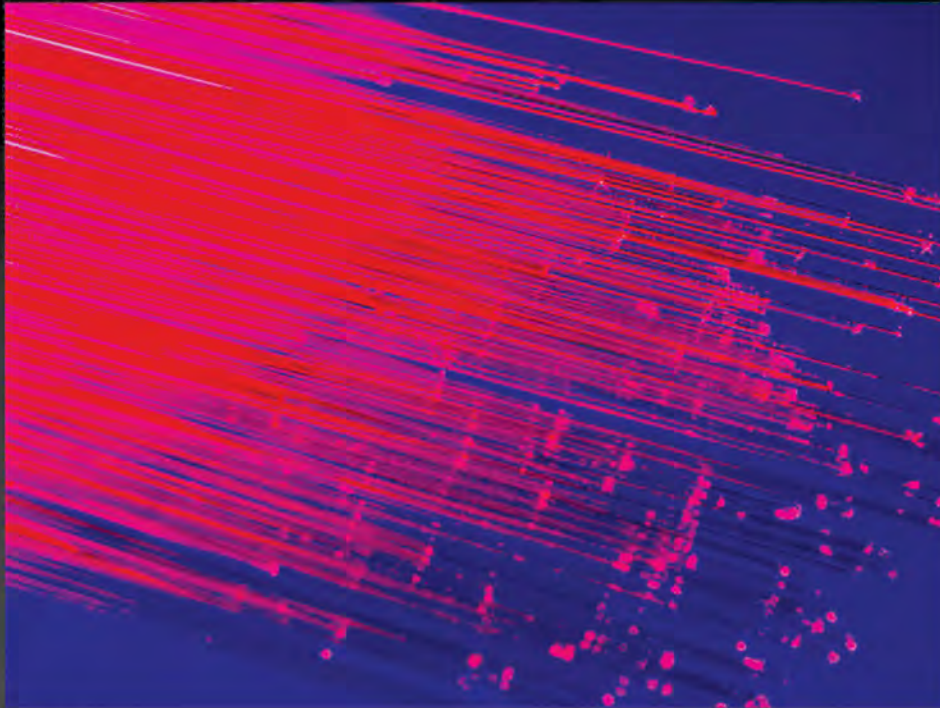
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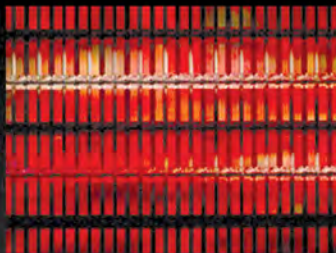
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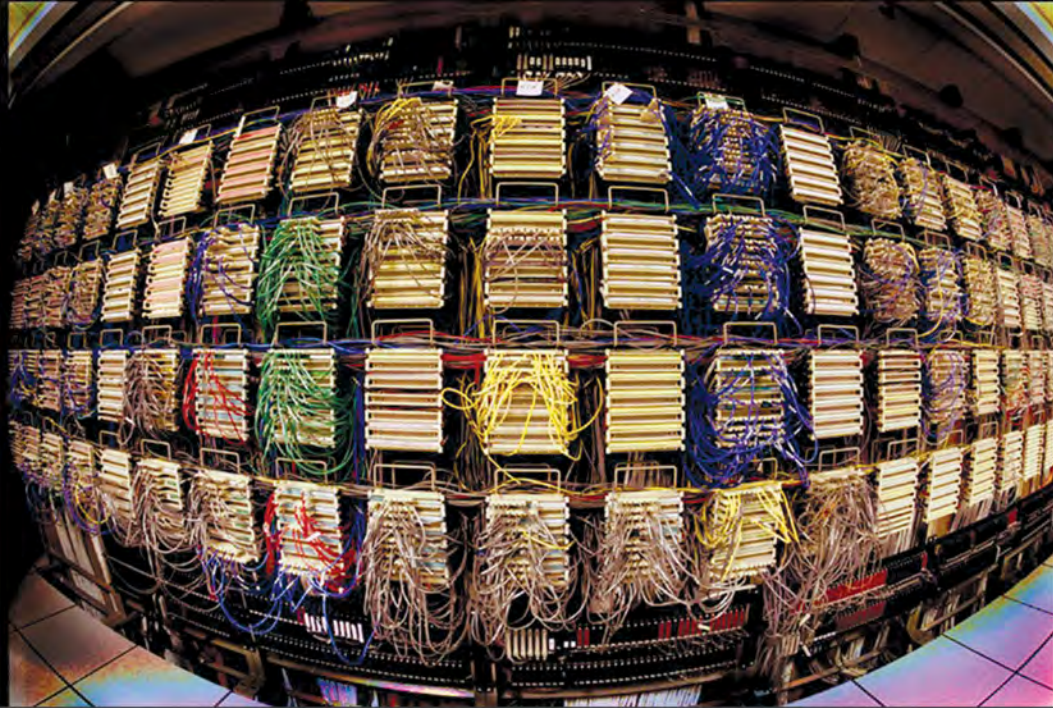
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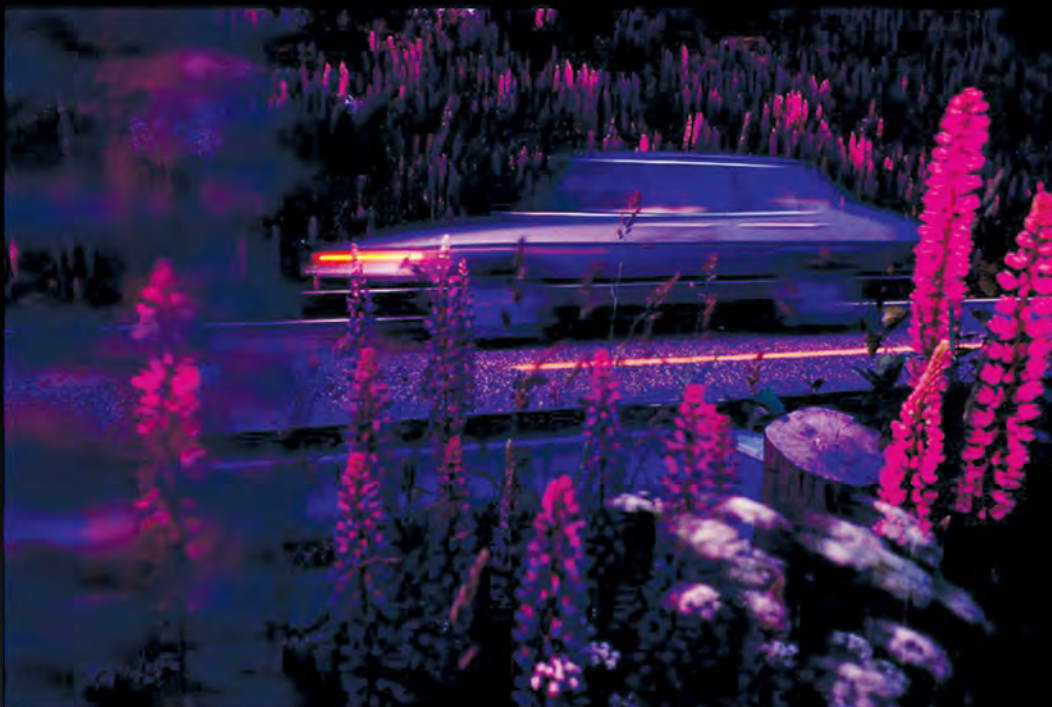
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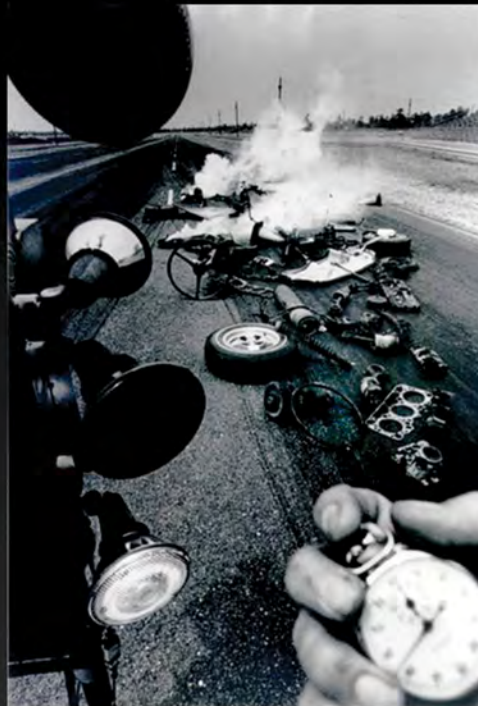
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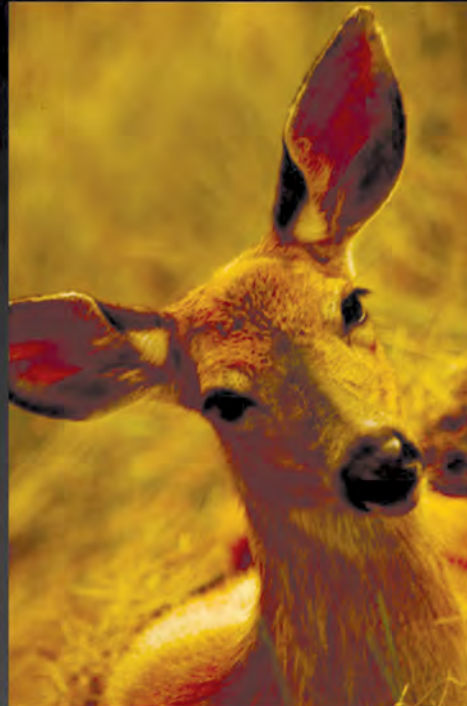
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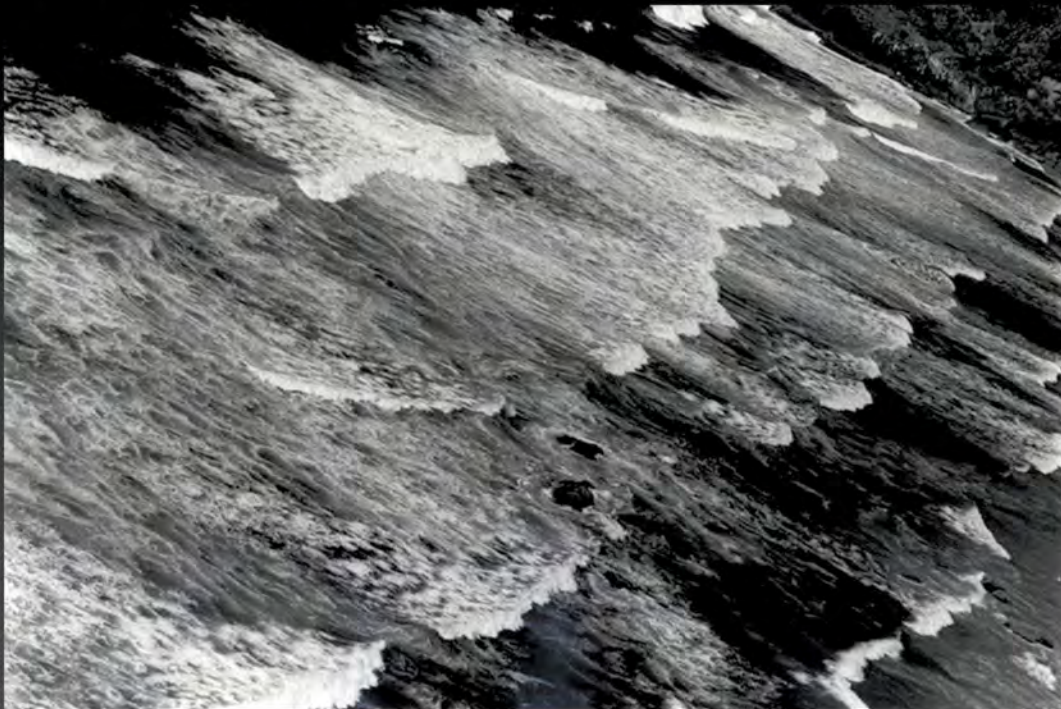
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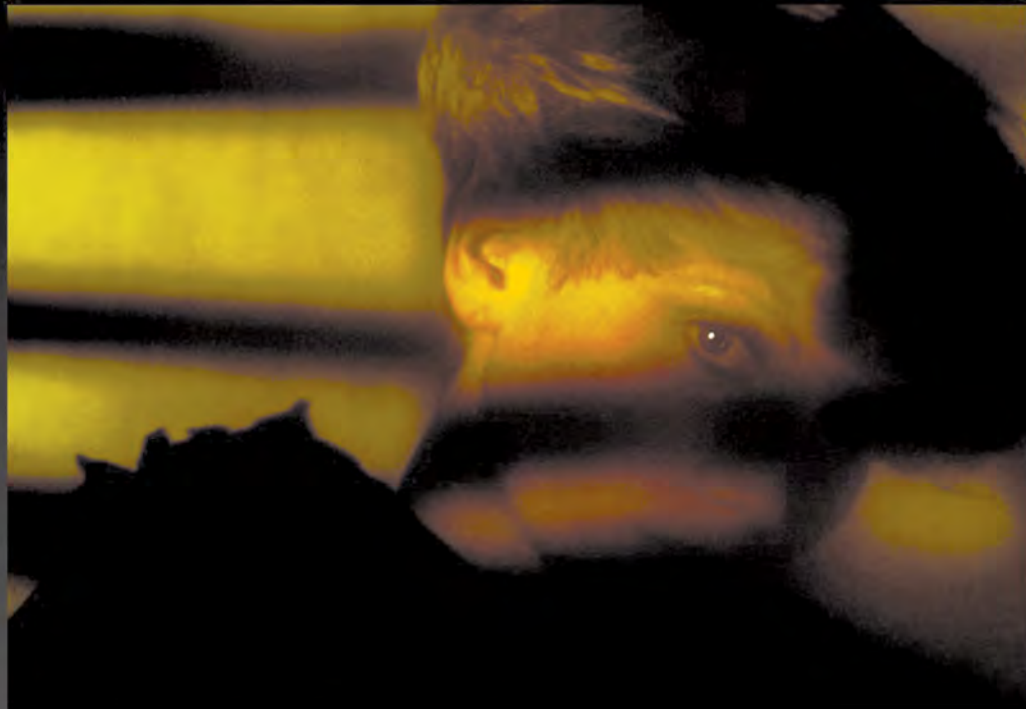
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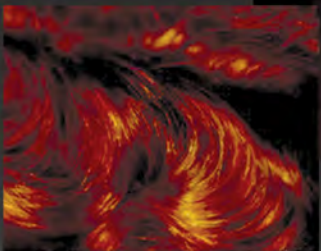
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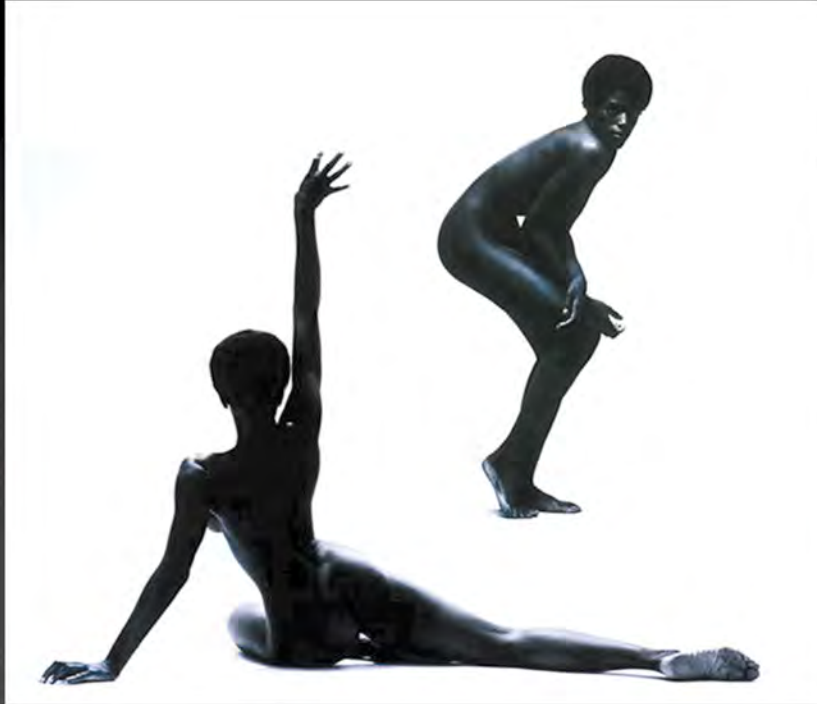
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AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



Photographs © Douglas Mesney (mesney@aol.com)

GQ

EDITORIAL FEATURE

New Jersey, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Yamaha

SALES PROMOTION

Los Angeles, California, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Santa Monica, California, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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NAEBM

SALES PROMOTION

Florida, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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SALES PROMOTION

Florida, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Nikon World

EDITORIAL FEATURE

Block Island, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Union Carbide

SALES PROMOTION

Connecticut, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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EDITORIAL FEATURE

Florida, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Motorboating & Sailing

EDITORIAL FEATURE

Massachusetts, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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ANNUAL REPORT

Block Island, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Motorboating & Sailing

EDITORIAL FEATURE

Long Island, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Yachting

EDITORIAL FEATURE

Block Island, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Owens Corning Fiberglas

SALES PROMOTION

Hawaii, USA

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Oregon, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Hanes

SALES PROMOTION

New York, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Personal Work

SELF PROMOTION

New York, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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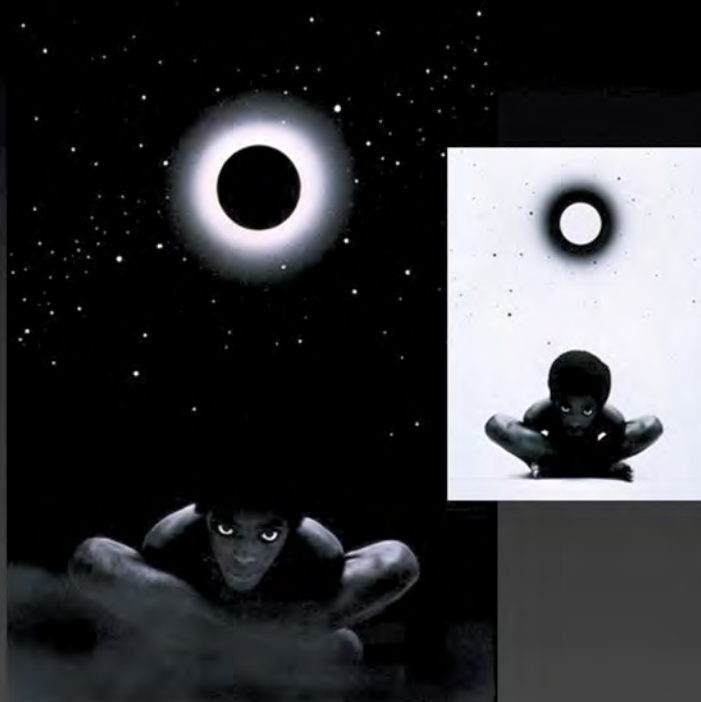
Personal Work

SELF PROMOTION

New York, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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New York, USA

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New York, USA

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Las Vegas, USA

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New York, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



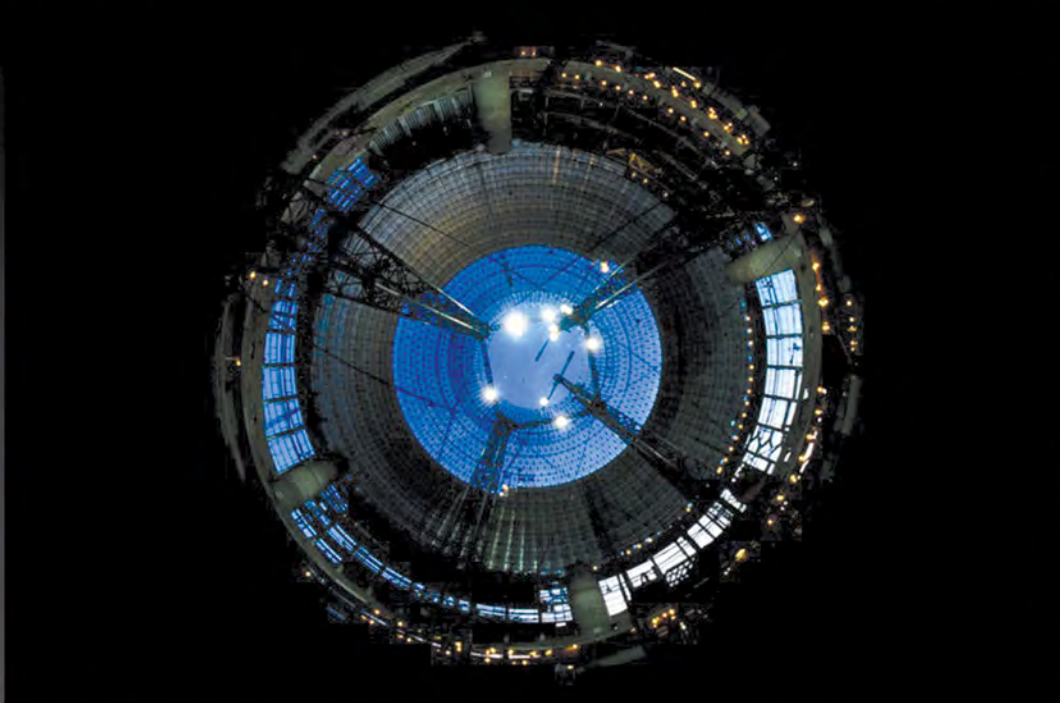
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ABV

SALES PROMOTION

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AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



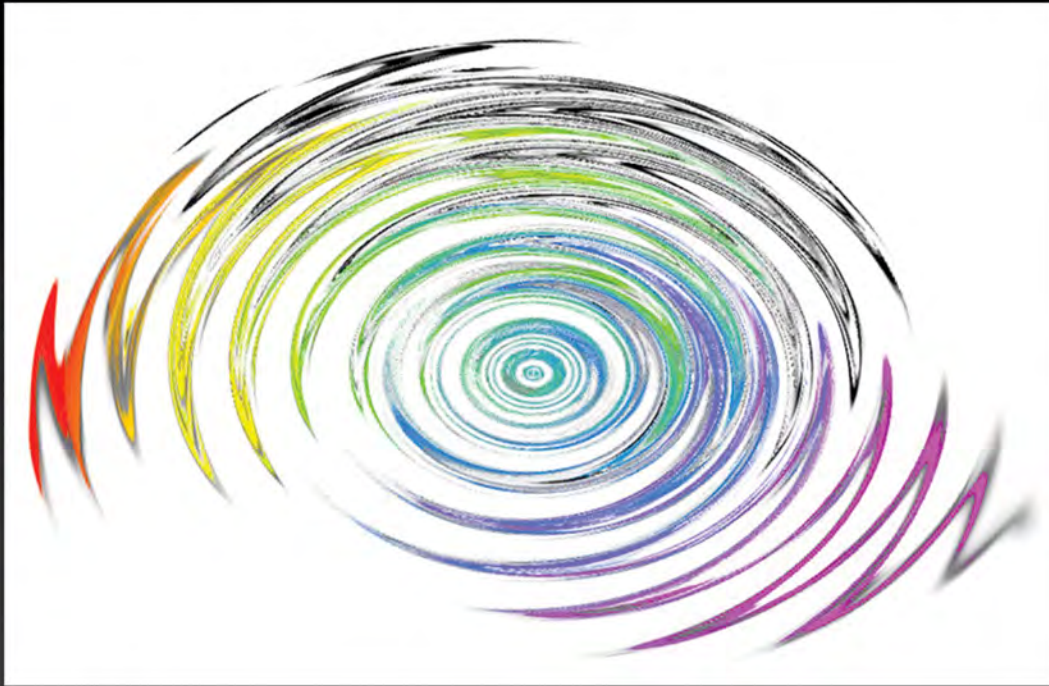
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INTERNATIONAL STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY SALES

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AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Surabaya, Indonesia

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Burson-Marsteller

NEW BUSINESS PRESENTATION

New York, USA

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The Stock Market

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New York, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS



INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Personal Work

SELF PROMOTION

Washington, USA

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INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



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Piper Aircraft

SALES PROMOTION

New York, USA

AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE AUTOMOTIVE AVIATION BEAUTY BUSINESS

INDUSTRY LIFESTYLE NATURE PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY THEMES TRAVEL



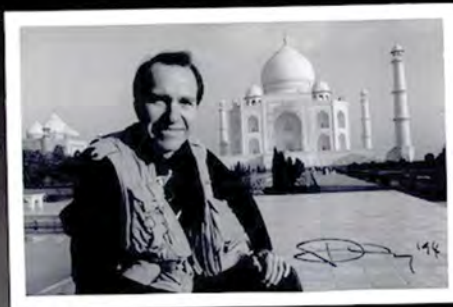
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THREE REASONS: EXPERIENCE... EXPERIENCE... EXPERIENCE

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1997 – Jump Ship – Patience Is A Virtue

Thanks to Joki and Åsa, I got more control of digital imaging. The quality of my pictures improved dynamically; it was the beginning of my transformation back into illustrative—as opposed to reportage—photography. By cutting apart pictures, I could create entirely new ones from the pieces; *making* pictures instead of *taking* them.

While at Lexivision, I renewed friendship with a very loyal former client, Scania Bussar.

As it turned out, Max Bjurhem, their advertising manager, had finally come to agree with an idea proposed years earlier, to create the Scania International Photo Library with up-to-date pictures of Scania facilities, products, and customers around the world; to be a standardized pictorial resource for use by Scania offices and their global network of agencies and affiliates.

Getting big corporate money takes time; companies plan their budgets at least a year in advance; government budgets can stretch into the decades, as can large projects like mines. So, it should have been no surprise when Max called me about the international photo library four years after I proposed the idea for it.



Yours Truly and Max Bjurhem at Scania Jubileum in 1997. Filip Järnehag photo.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect—I had been wondering what I would do if Lexivision sank (or got scuttled). Thus, **it was in everyone's best interest when I jumped ship** and resigned from Lexivision (before the embarrassment of being let go) and went to work for Scania.

Anna and I packed out of the luxurious Stockholm apartment that had been rented for us by Lexivision; they had paid two months advance rent which gave us a month to move from there to Katrineholm, **where Scania Bussar's headquarters were located. Scania** provided us with a modest but comfortable 3rd floor flat in an apartment complex near the heart of the town. They also leased us a Volkswagen Passat estate wagon.



Spider Web; stock photo shot for Corbis, 1994

"Good Things Come to He Who Waits"

Grandma's Advice

Mom and Grandma tried to temper my impatience and impetuosity by drilling into my head that proverb, "*Patience Is a Virtue.*" Yikes! How many times did I hear that? Annoying though it was, their nagging got the intended results; I could pass the Marshmallow Test with ease, anytime.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Wikipedia: The **Stanford marshmallow experiment** was a study on delayed gratification in 1972 led by psychologist Walter Mischel, then a professor at Stanford University.^[1] In this study, a child was offered a choice between one small reward provided immediately or two small rewards if they waited for a short period, approximately 15 minutes, during which the tester left the room and then returned. The reward was either a marshmallow or pretzel stick, depending on the child's preference. In follow-up studies, the researchers found that children who were able to wait longer for the preferred rewards tended to have better life outcomes, as measured by SAT scores,^[2] educational attainment,^[3] body mass index (BMI),^[4] and other life measures.^[5]

However, they could not extinguish my feeling of urgency, of needing things to be done *now*, before it is too late; things can, and do, go wrong. That angst began in my early teens when Grandma Taylor died; they had an open casket and the sight of her body there, all made-up, inspired an epiphany.

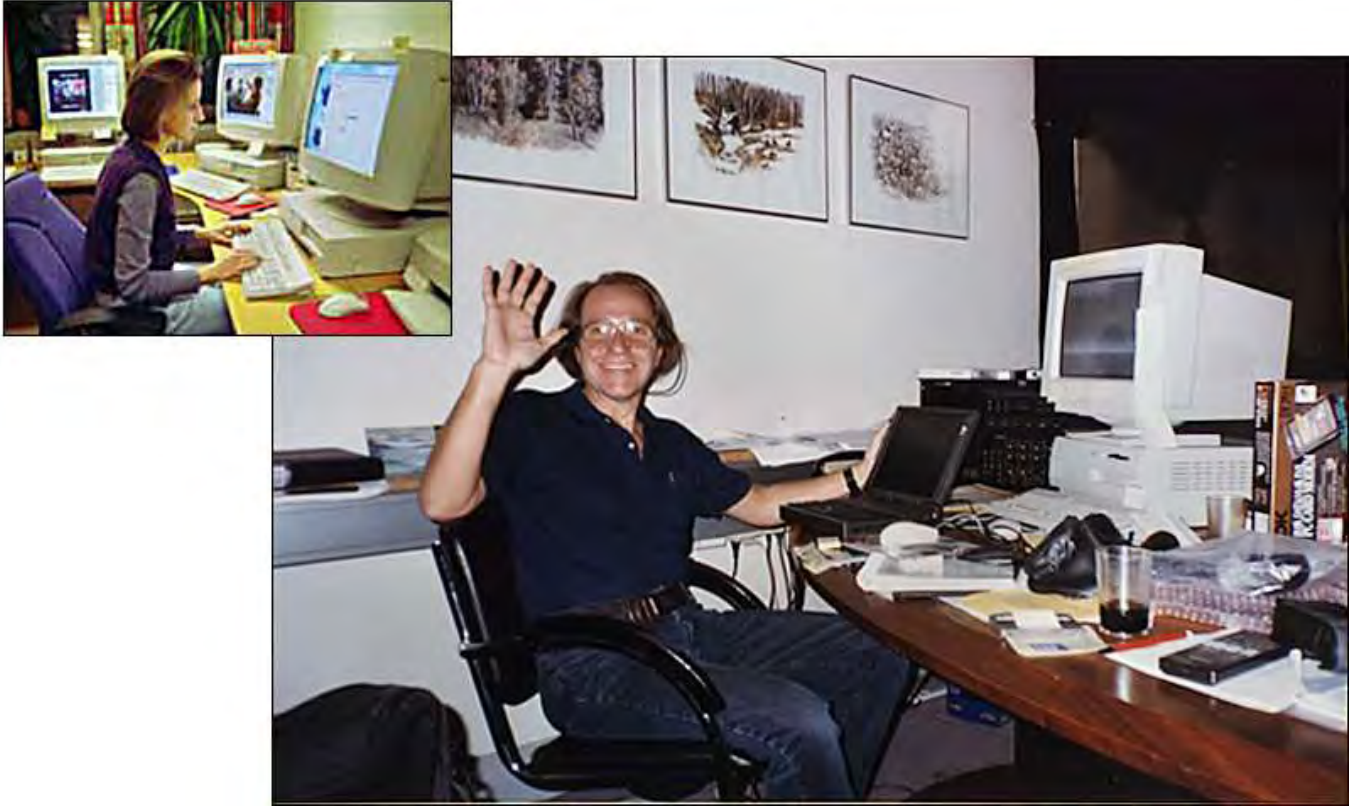
It was first time I confronted death and seriously considered the mysteries of the Universe, of Life itself, and my own insignificance—here today gone tomorrow, **existentially speaking. You really don't know how much time you've got; so, if you want to get something done, better do it now. "There is no time like the present,"** Granny advised. Ha! As a result of those proverbs and many more, whenever I got into something (or someone) I became consumed—a **man on a mission. There weren't too many people who** could keep up with me when I got on a tear; I could be quite an ogre when I needed to be. **"Don't take no for an answer!" Mom** said, trying to build my character.

I ran my studio the way Jeff Bezos runs Amazon; they never make a profit; instead, they plow earnings back into the business, to grow it; that is what I aspired to do. My twin failures were over-optimism and over-exuberance. Over and over I failed to see that **things could go wrong, even though I realized that "What goes up must come down," (and vice versa). I was so preoccupied with my own business that I didn't see (or understand)** the larger economy I was operating in. That is another way to say, I was never a good businessman. It is only now, retired and with plenty of time on my hands, that I follow the markets (as a pass time). Having spent a few years doing that, I have come to have an **understanding of the "seasons" of business and money.** Those cyclical forces have battered me about for 70 years; only during the last five have I come to understand them in basic, albeit amateurish ways.

Truth be told, I always wanted to be rich; I love the trappings of the good life and always assumed that one day I would. Hell, one time my horoscope even predicted that one day I would be very wealthy. However, the world constantly evolves, so slowly that you can **hardly notice the pace of change until, looking back, you say "wow."**

Now, once again, the winds of change are in our face instead of at our backs. How many times has that stormy wind blown in my face? Will there be another decade of decay and decline? My sands of time are running out. If good things come to those who wait, like **Mom said, my question is "How much longer?"**

1998 – Scania Bus – Life Gets a Lift



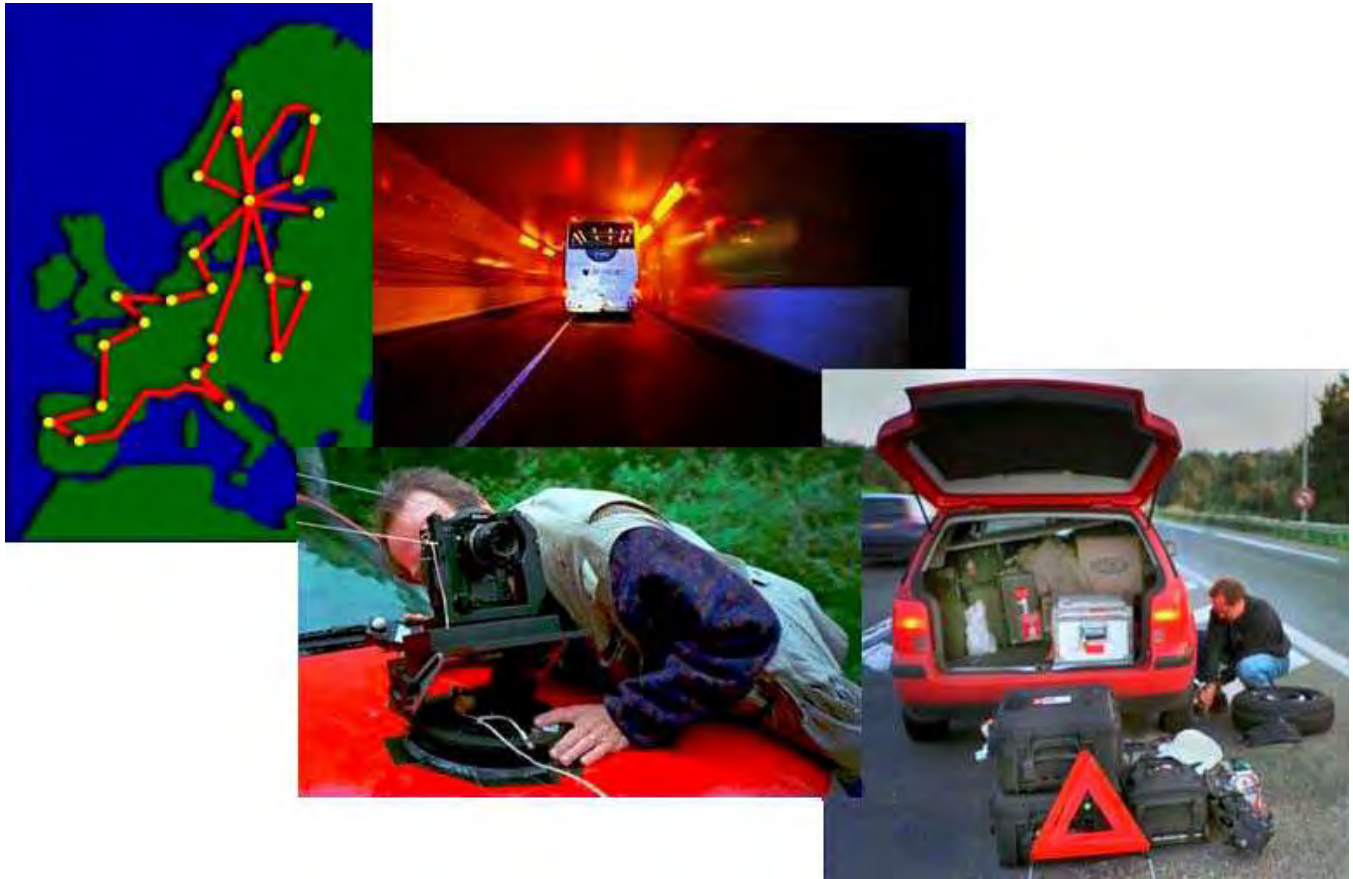
Scania's project was a daunting opportunity. I had to rely on the digital skills I acquired by osmosis watching others. There would be no assistance, no colleagues to ask for advice if I ran into a jam.

Max provided us with a decent-sized work space—his former conference room—for our office and production facility. It was quickly filled up with slide-scanning gear, a pair of Epson 2200 giclée printers, CD burners and a mini computer network.

After shaking down our gear, I set to work re-testing color film stocks—there was the off chance that European film stocks were somehow different than those made in North **America. The test was designed to reveal each film's gamut**—the total number of number of colors it could reproduce when scanned. The new tests concurred with the original test results. The winner once again was Fujicolor.

Concurrent with the film tests was the massive job of organizing the shoot.; **Max's** secretary, Kerstin Lindström, sent word through the Scania network that each country manager was assigned the task of organizing the shoot(s) in his territory; ⁴⁹ including buses/coaches, models, mechanics, etcetera, as well as arrangements for our accommodation.

⁴⁹ Curiously, even in the 1990s, there were few women in the bus/coach division of Scania, other than Kerstin and **Margareta Tjell, the sexy boss of Scania's operations in Denmark.**



I mapped out the route we would take and gave Kerstin our arrival, departure and shooting dates in the 22 countries we were going to cover. It was a three-month-long circular route that began in Denmark, then circled, counter clockwise, through Europe (including Eastern Europe, Estonia and Finland), back to Sweden.

[Countries are listed in order they were visited.]

Denmark	Spain	Hungary
Germany	Canary Islands	Poland
France	Italy	Estonia
England	San Marino	Finland
Belgium	Slovenia	Sweden
Luxembourg	Romania	Norway
Netherlands	Austria	
Portugal	Switzerland	

The trip started during the last week of April (the 28th, to be precise.); it was timed to catch the full blush of spring in Denmark and northern Europe. We needed colorful **backgrounds for the busses and coaches; the pall of winter wouldn't do. I reckoned that** by the end of April there should be some foliage on the trees, green grass, and colorful flowers. As it turned out, we could have waited an extra week before starting—spring was late that year.



Max (left) met us at the Scania factory in Silkeborg. Was he that interested in watching me shoot? Likely, he was more interested in Margerite Tjell, his counterpart (marketing manager) at Scania Denmark.

Tjell was generous with her time; she entertained us to the hilt; included a day off for sightseeing in nearby Aarhus, known for its jazz festival. Remarkably, Margerite drank Max and I under the table. Shortly after this picture was taken, she **emigrated to new position at Scania's** Australian HQ near Melbourne.



Collage of three News & Views photo-illustrations.

To digress for a moment, about the hammer I am holding. At the time, I was writing an op-ed piece for Dataton's periodic house organ *News & Views*. As I recall, it was a rant about digital media and the lead illustration was a picture of Yours Truly smashing his laptop with the big, rubber mallet.

The trip was the best part of the job: we survived it. (!) People say that extended road trips kill marriages. The Scania epic had the opposite effect on Anna and I. We were tighter than ever after the trip. Part of that had to do with staying in top-drawer hotels; she had never stayed in four or five-star hotels—or any hotels, really, other than youth hostels.

Nor had Anna eaten in the high-class restaurants we were treated to by the various country managers who hosted us. Some of them went way beyond what was necessary or expected.

For example, in Bilbao, Spain, we were bivouacked in a presidential suite at the five-star Gran Hotel Domine Bilbao; our room was colossal, maybe 1,000 square feet [93 square meters]; the art was worth more than my camera gear.

There was an amusing episode when we arrived; the doorman thought we were laborers **arriving to do a job. He kept trying to send us around back, to the workers' entrance.**

Geez was he surprised to learn we were staying in the penthouse suite; and even more surprised by a special permit allowing us to park our VW Passat (loaded with expensive gear) with the Lamborghinis and Ferraris by the front entrance.

I hope I can find my picture of that comical juxtaposition; maybe it'll be in the second edition of this book. Ha!

We spent the night before in Toulouse, France, where another funny episode occurred. It was late when we rolled into town. The only place open was a three-star restaurant trying to close., My American accent persuaded them to stay open.

They graciously seated us in an elegantly appointed dining room; before each of us, perfectly positioned on a lace tablecloth, were the necessary silverware and crystal glasses to properly eat a ten-course meal.

To say the menu was extravagant would be an understatement.

The waiter explained to us that many items would not be available due to the late hour. I explained to the waiter that Anna and I were both trying to eat and live healthy, and could the chef please prepare a simple vegetarian dish for us—perhaps a simple salad?

The waiter smiled in the affirmative, disappeared and left us with our cocktails, only to return 10 minutes later, with three other white-vested waiters, carrying a dozen silver serving dishes covered with polished domes.

I couldn't imagine what the chef had dreamed up until the waiters, with a well choreographed flourish, pulled off the plate covers, revealing raw veggies; one dish had radishes, another broccoli, there was a special, long silver plate (a fish plate) with two carrots—you get the idea. What a rip. \$15 of raw veggies ran me north of \$150.

Anna took to her central role in the Scania shoot; she became an instant pro, playing in the big leagues. Anna organized model releases while we were on the road, and organized images during post production.

Living and working with me was a world apart from her former village life in Poland. We were treated like rock stars wherever we went. The levels of cooperation and hospitality extended to us impressed even yours truly.

After spending 3 months travelling to 22 countries across Eastern and Western Europe photographing Scania buses, dealerships and customers, Anna and I then edited 33,000 pictures down to 3,000.



Since I was shooting negative film stock (Fujicolor), post-card-sized prints were made from the negatives processed at Diabolaget, in Stockholm.⁵⁰

Culled prints were organized into binders (upper picture); they served as the master storyboard for the Library and were useful—vital—for presenting the work and obtaining approvals, before committing to digitization and archiving. The negatives were sleeved in Vis-Sheets and organized binders.

After the cull was approved, original negatives of selected frames were scanned using a Nikon LS-2000 and processed in Photoshop before being burned to >100 CDs and filed in the digital-image archive that was called the *Scania International Photo Library*.

I handled the image creation while Anna dealt with the archiving—numbering, captioning, filing and indexing. The work flow was efficient and, for me, the sheer repetition of scanning and optimizing pictures all day every day for three months was like a post-graduate education in Photoshop.

I emerged from that job a Photoshop expert; **I was done with those 10,000 “bad ones”** that Oriental philosophers say we must get through, to get good at something.

⁵⁰ At the end of each shoot, the film was FedEx'd to the Diabolaget film lab in Sweden; there, partners Christer Hammarborg (in charge of the film lab) and Mats Ekman (the financial officer) processed and printed each take, giving every negative/print a sequential number; they did a terrific job; but, we came to blows when I discovered that dozens of rolls were processed with dirty rinse water; it took me hours to remove the grit—groznies, as they called such crap at Sound Images—from the negatives we scanned.

1999 – Scania – Millennium Calendar

With completion of the Scania International Photo Library, Max Bjurhem asked me to stay and design the Scania Bus Millennium Calendar.

That was quite an honor and I accepted the job; it kept us in Sweden until November, when it went to press.



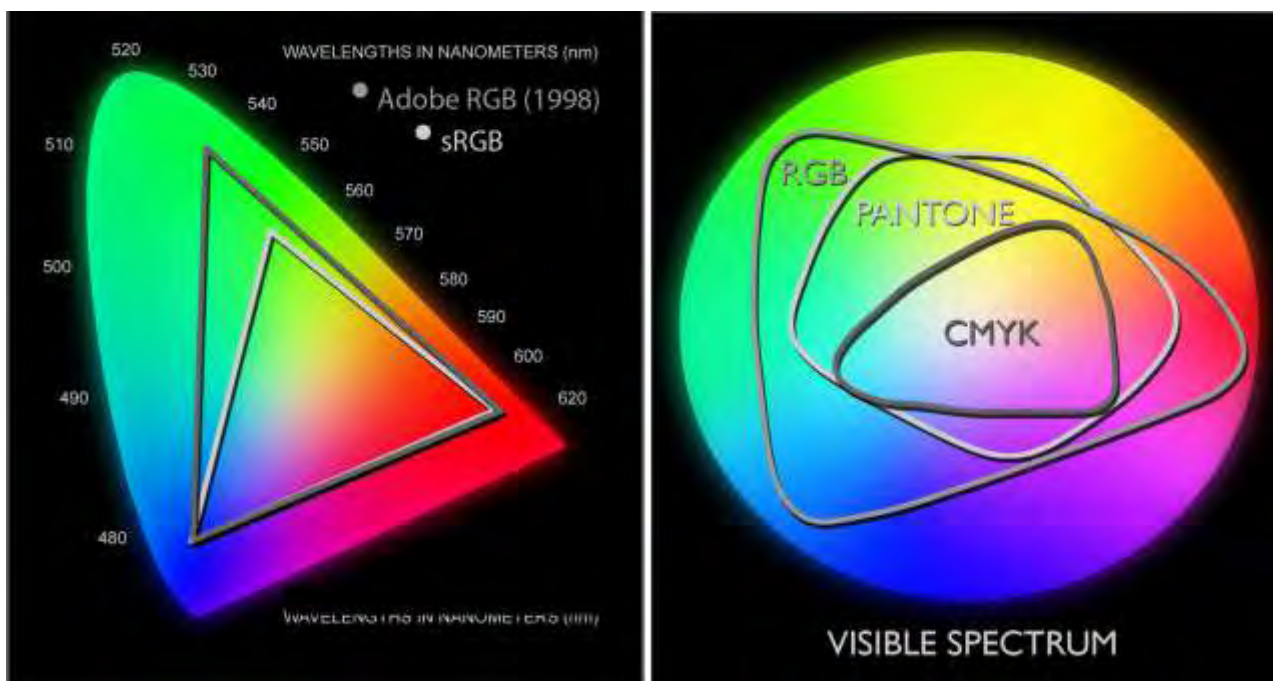
The Scania calendar was part of a double-barreled promotion; it featured pictures from the new Scania International Photo Library which was simultaneously released to celebrate the 21st century.

I felt honored to illustrate Scania's year-2000 calendar and put my all into getting it right, technically. I spent extra hours making sure that all the pictures in a grouping had the same gamma and saturation range. While I was making them, the calendar pages looked great on my monitor.

But when the proofs came back from the printer—Trosa Tryckeri—they looked terrible. The situation was nearly a disaster. Steffan Leindahl and Tommy Lundqvist, the print **shop's owners, explained to me that the problem was with the color "profiles" that I used** to create the picture files. Color what?

Color profiles **were new to me; I didn't fully understand the difference between RGB and CMYK color spaces.** Unwittingly, I made the calendar artwork using RGB [red green and blue] colors, but the printers used a completely different color scale with complimentary primary colors—cyan, magenta, yellow and black].

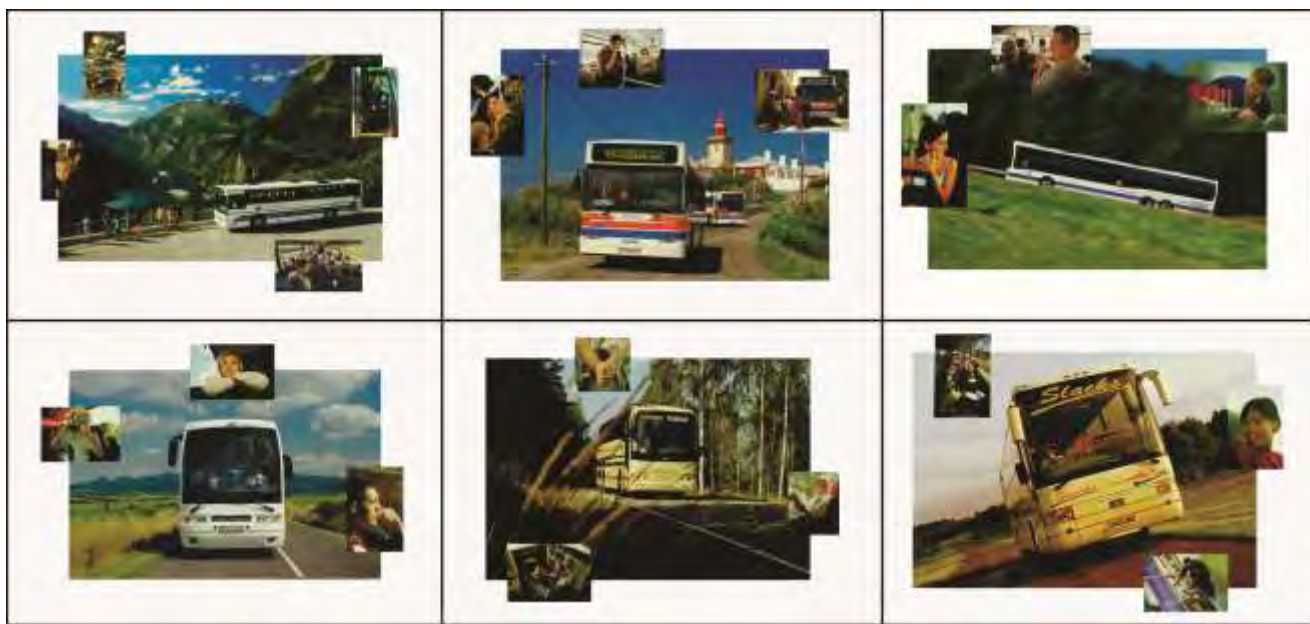
It turned out that my RGB files—meant to be seen on back-lit screens, like computer monitors—**were oversaturated and didn't translate well into CMYK. When the first set of printer's proofs** came off the press the pictures looked like ghosts of their former selves—the colors were flat and, in some cases, different. Different?

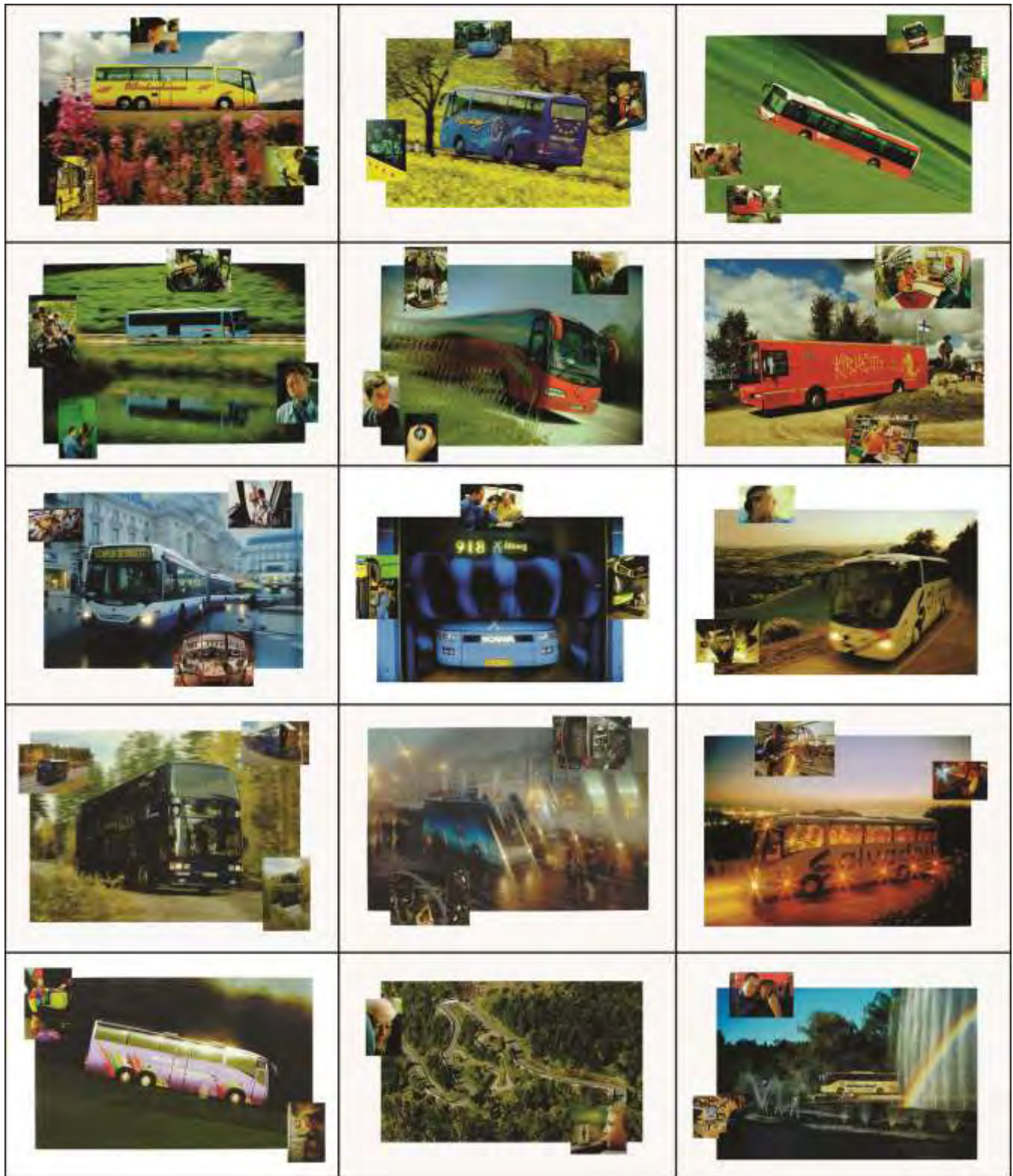


The printer explained that the CMYK gamut (palette) didn't have nearly as many colors as the RGB gamut. When the CMYK printing algorithms encounters RGB colors that are not in its gamut, the *nearest neighbor* color is chosen to replace it. Green and blue colors were the chief offenders.

Thus, began my education about color profiles.

To digress for a moment, about color reproduction: All image devices are biased; they each “see” and reproduce colors differently. The blue I see on my monitor is (almost certainly) not the same blue you see on yours. That extends to what you see in magazines, on TV, etcetera.





Above and adjacent: twenty-one of the candidate layouts made for the Scania Millennium Calendar & Collection.

To reproduce colors as closely as possible to their original shades, there is a standard scale, called a Look-Up Table, or LUT. Every shade of every hue has a color number—there are millions of them—those numbers are how all devices know what a color is supposed to look like.

To fix the colors in the Scania calendar, all my files had to be converted to CMYK format—so that I was working with the same gamuts as the printing company—then, all the colors, in every picture, had to be adjusted to look good in the more limited CMYK gamut. My color blindness to certain greens complicated things.

There was also the problem of computer-monitor profiles. For example, if my monitor had a blue tint, I would likely overcompensate and use too much yellow. Likewise, if the **printer's monitor was too rose colored (compared to mine), he'd interpret my colors** incorrectly and fix the color by adding cyan.

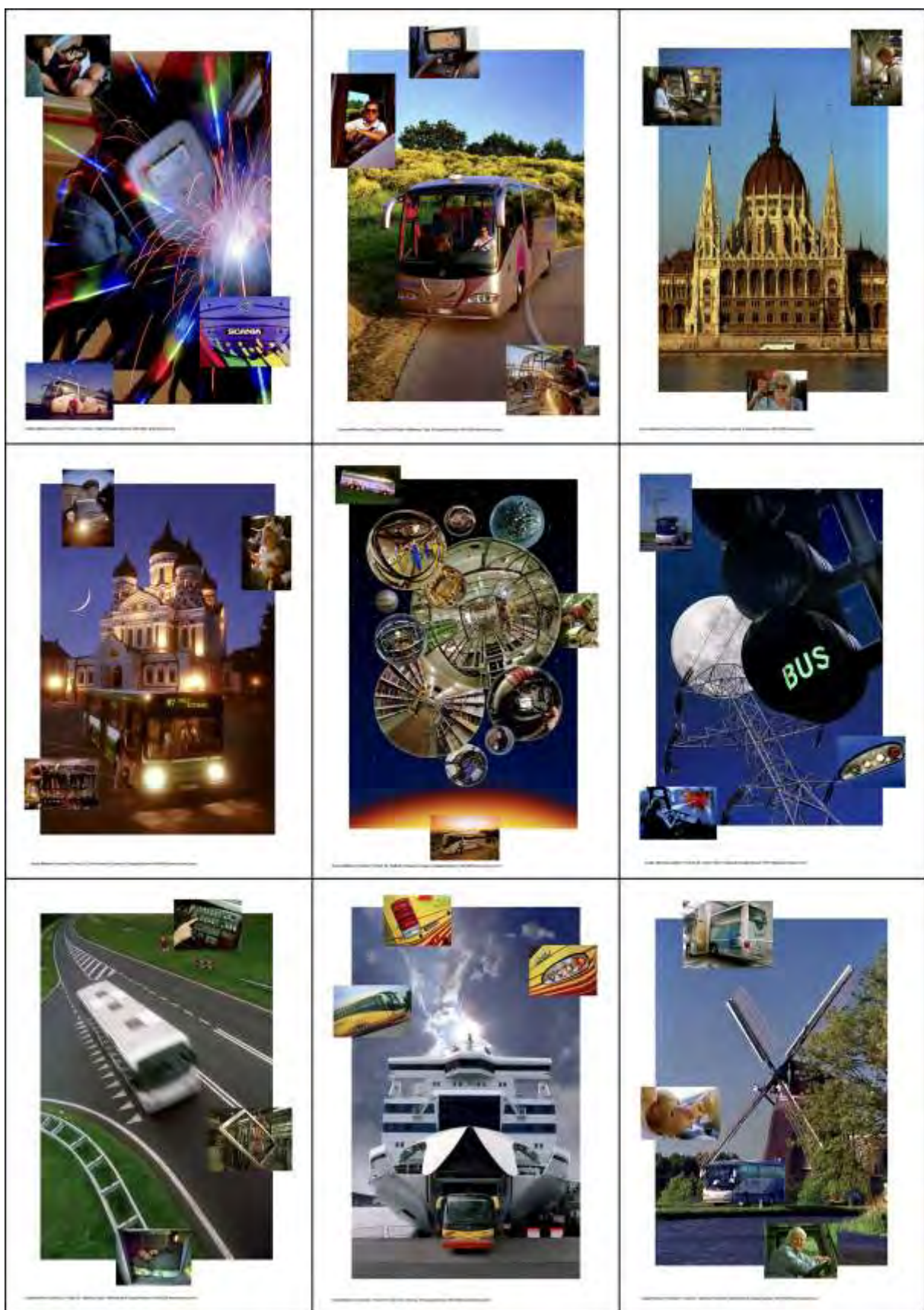
Although I was able to profile my monitors and files, the printer's gear was not profiled—Trosa were using an older *Iris* color system. **Our machines couldn't "speak" to each other,** so color tweaking ended up hit or miss. Corrections were made the old-fashioned way—adjusting exposures while making the printing plates and adjusting ink-flow taps on the press while it was running.

We went through several sets of proofs (at great cost) before a good combination was **finally achieved. I'm sure they were glad to see the last of me, but they were chuffed that** I had an extra press run made with my own text and without the calendar, to use as a portfolio piece.

The kerfuffle over the Scania Millennium Calendar was eclipsed by the damnation of my picture files by the digital-imaging manager at the Scania picture archive. When he received a set of the International Photo Library CDs, he condemned the scans made on the Nikon 2000 scanner as inferior. He claimed that they were unusable.

Max was not pleased with that news and it was difficult to explain why he had no reason to doubt the voracity and viability of the Library images.





Above and adjacent: twelve candidate layouts for proposed Scania Millennium Posters promotion.



*Scania, one of Europe's leading bus and truck manufacturers,
commissioned a pan-European collection of pictures
to present their corporate portrait at the turn of the century.*

33,000 images were captured in 22 countries.

The top 3,000 pictures became the Scania International Picture Library.

The top 300 became the Scania Millenium Collection.

*The 37 collages that follow were used for Scania's year-2000 calendar and
posters promoting the Millenium Collection & picture library.*





1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 3
"Lighthouse Road" | *Portugal*



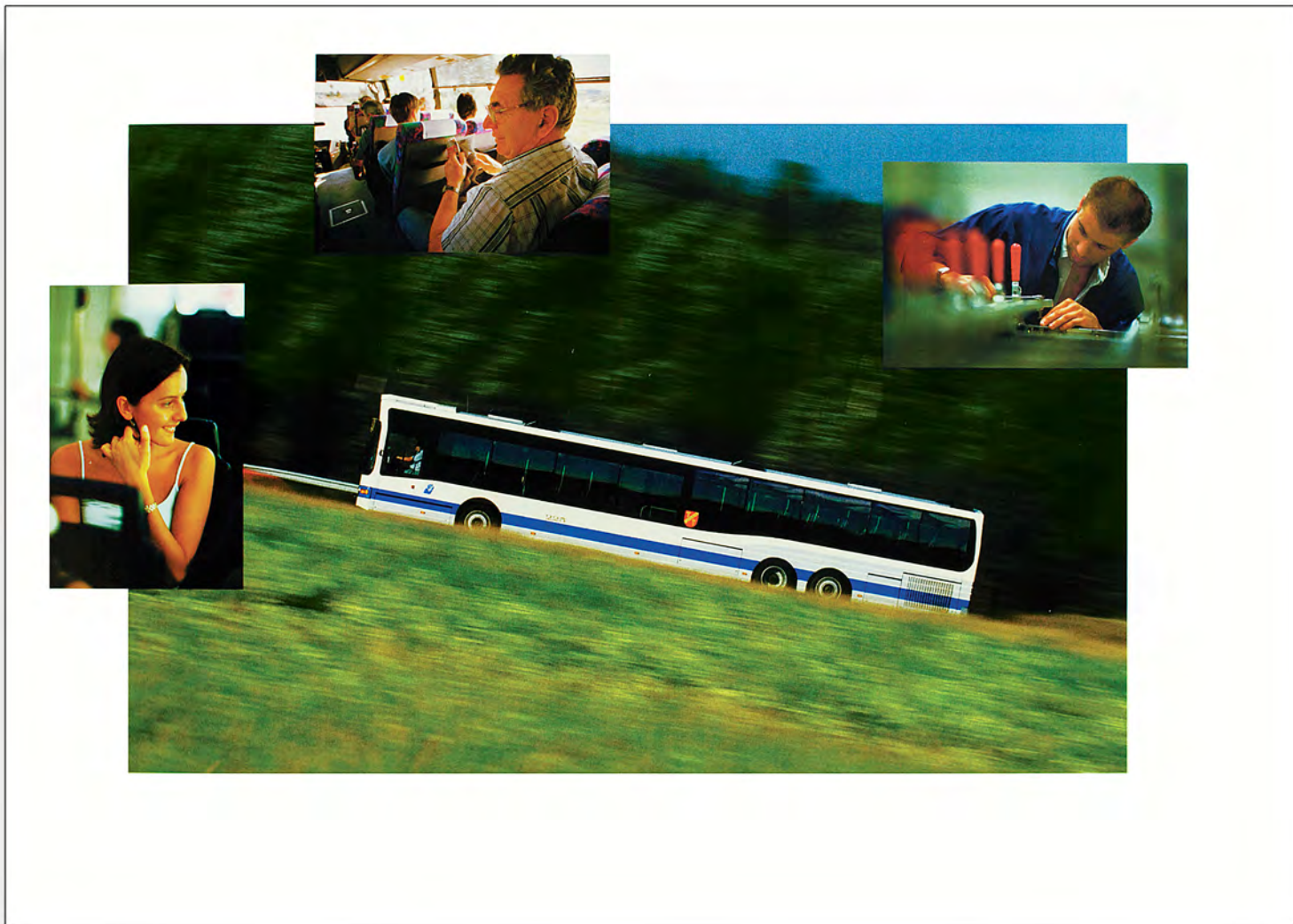
1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 4
“Dusk Drive” | *England*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENNIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 5
“Tilausja Forest” | *Finland*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 6
"Field Trip" | *Hungary*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 7
“Making Time” | *Romania*





1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 9
“Fjord Vista” | *Norway*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 10
“Serpentine Road” | *Norway*







1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 13
“Fountain Rainbow” | *Finland*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 14

“Krakow Café” | *Finland*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 15
"Rimini Sunset" | *Italy*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 16
“Umeå Express” | Sweden



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 17
“San Remo Dusk” | *San Remo*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 18
“Washing Machine” | *Sweden*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 19
“Angers Omni City” | *France*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 20
“Warp Speed” | *Germany*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 21
"Kirjasto" | *Finland*

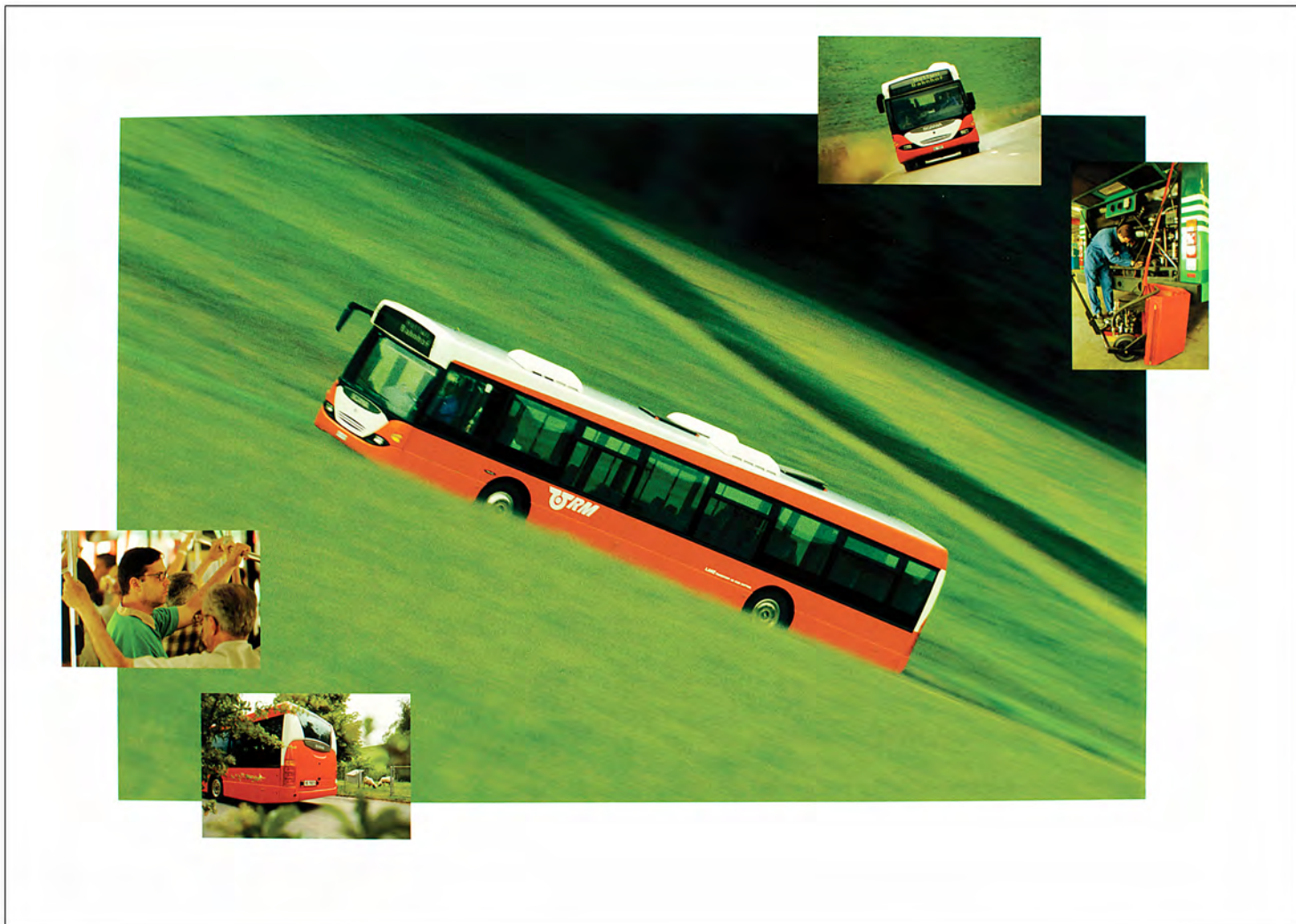


1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 22

“Autobahn Cruiser” | *Germany*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 23
 “Spring Fling” | Germany



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 24
"Hill Climber" | *Switzerland*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 25
“Heads and Tails” | *Norway*





1999 | SCANIA MILLENNIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 27

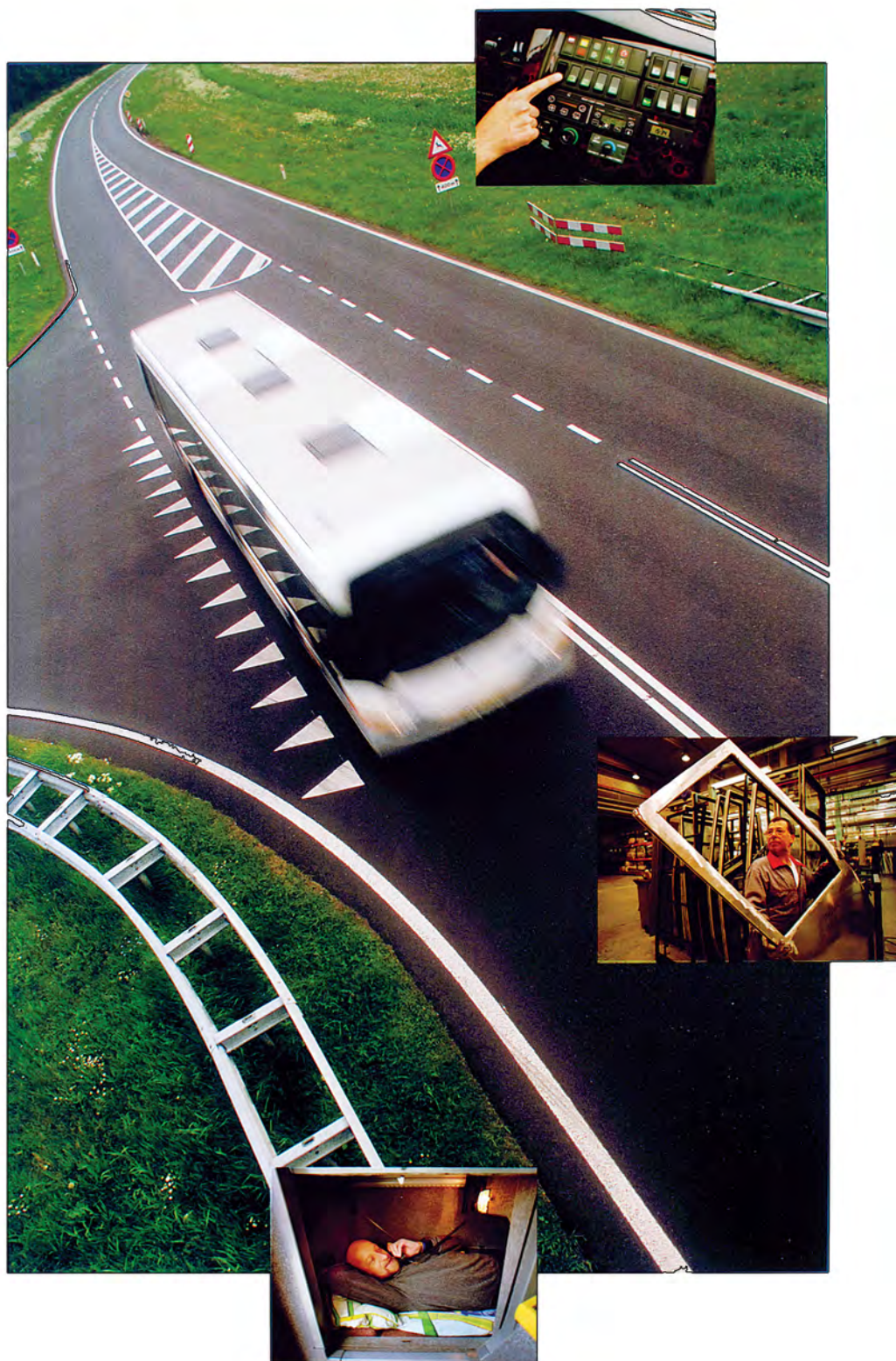
“Power Tower” | *Netherlands*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 28
“Bridge Traffic” | *Netherlands*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 29
"Krakow Square" | *Poland*



1999 | SCANIA MILLENNIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 30
"Highway Hustle" | *Belgium*

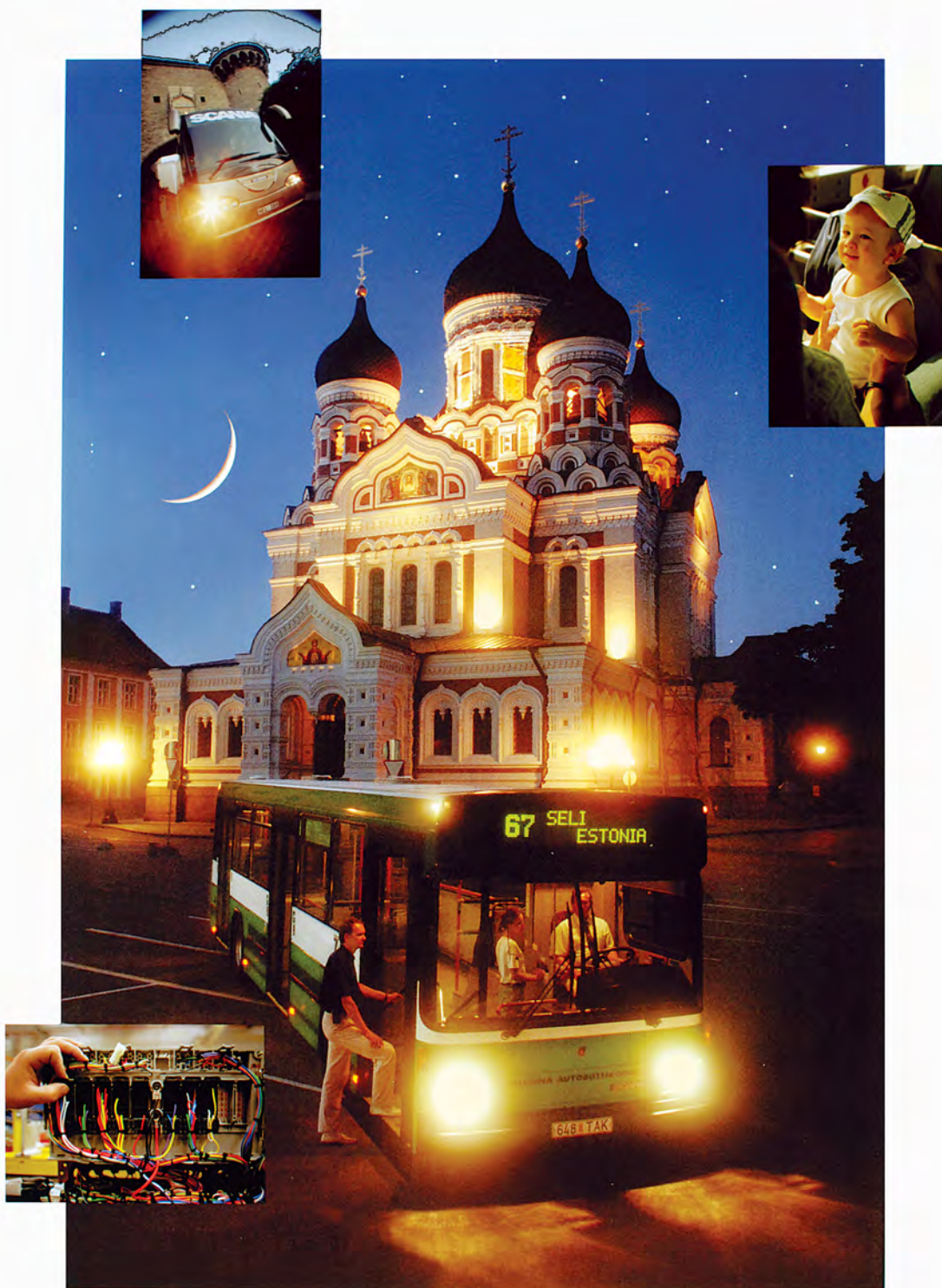


1999 | SCANIA MILLENNIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 31
"Oslo Ferry" | Norway



1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 32
 “Traffic Circle” | *Estonia*





1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 34
"Tallin Moonrise" | *Estonia*

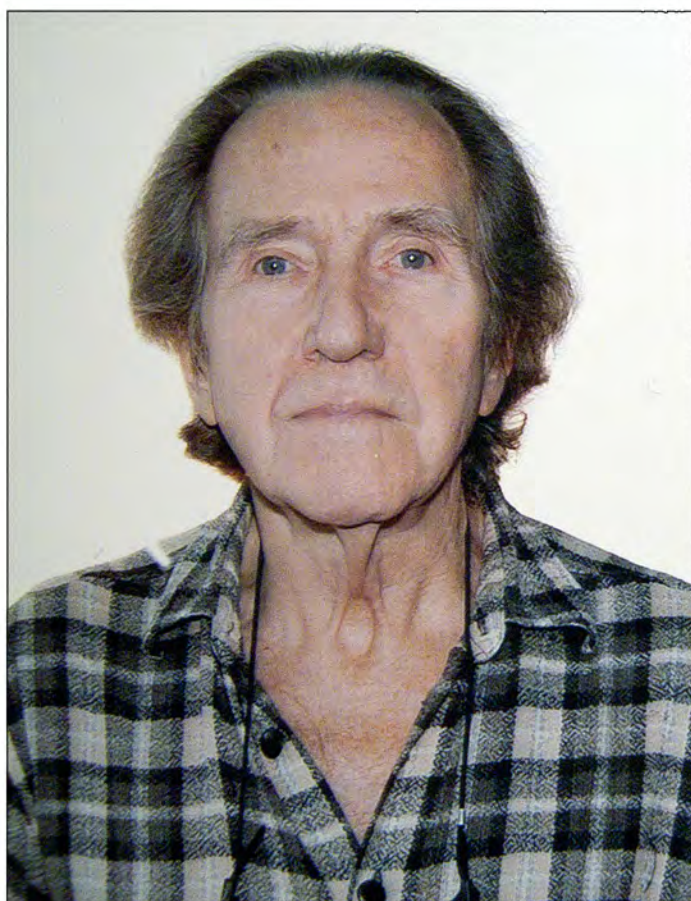






1999 | SCANIA MILLENNIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 37
“Wildflowers” | *Spain*





1999 | SCANIA MILLENIUM COLLECTION | PLATE N° 39

One of many visa and passport pictures made for the pan-European Scania shoot.

Technically speaking, compared to the super-high-resolution scans his department was producing on a \$90,000 drum scanner, my results using the \$3,000 prosumer Nikon scanner were indeed inferior. But they were hardly unusable. The beautiful Millennium Calendar and the posters printed from those files proved him wrong.

Even though Max Bjurhem and his entire staff—Kerstin Lindström, Lars Larsson, Claes Nyberg and Gunnar Bowman—went to bat for me, the archivers had more political clout with Rolf Teljeby, **Max's boss**.

My reputation at Scania was tarnished, making future work improbable. Thus, Anna and **I returned to Vashon in November. I'm sure our departure thrilled Marc Haezenbrege**. He was super jealous when Max hired me for the huge photo shoot across Europe. Haezenberge sided with the archivists, to expedite my demise.

[Spoiler Alert: When I got to Vashon, I mailed those big beautiful Scania portfolios to every bus and truck company in North America and Canada resulting in nary a query. **Those were recessionary times; my slick mailer probably made me look "expensive."**]

1999 – Dataton – Watchout Keynote

Just after returning to the States, Mike Fahl called from Dataton in Sweden; he asked me **to make the keynote address at the launch of Dataton's new product: Watchout**—a computer application facilitating digital multi-image presentations.⁵¹



Mike told me that it was the *Slides Are Dead* ad I made for Dataton back in 1989 that inspired him to develop digital slide show technology.

At the time, though, my comment was aimed at the business of slide shows, not the technology.

Photo of Yours Truly taken at the Hornsgatan studio in Stockholm, by Dataton's photographer.

⁵¹ Watchout software made it "easy" to visually choreograph a show, any show, no matter the complexity; it was like Adobe After Effects for presentations and shows, with real-time rendering.

I was saying that slides were dead because they were too successful, too popular; that the world was living in a multi-image bubble; that shows had gotten too big, too complicated and too expensive. I knew the multi-image market would implode and when Microsoft launched PowerPoint it did.

Mike had interpreted my comment from his tech perspective. (To a hammer, everything looks like a nail, eh?) Mike thought I meant that slide projectors were dinosaurs; well, that was also true, come to think of it.

I relished the chance to do the Dataton keynote. It was an important launch; with Watchout, Mike Fahl and Dataton would forever change the world of corporate media. I would have the opportunity to see many old colleagues. I wanted to tell them, to tell the world, that I was still alive.

Nobody in the AV world had heard or read anything by or about me for a few years; and **the last things they heard weren't good. As Incredible Imagers crumbled at the outbreak** of the first Gulf War, I still had speaking engagements at industry events; unfortunately, I used those events to vent and rant; I made a series of Mea Culpa speeches; I must have been a pitiful sight; those who knew me well realized that I was drinking way too much for my own good.

For the keynote, I chose to do what I do best: entertain. I made a one-projector show, a mock history of slides and slide shows. It was easy to illustrate because back in the late '70s, **when Incredible Slidemakers** produced *Bumbles*, that show began with a parody of multi-image errors. There were also a bunch of slide-show send-up scenes from the parodies presented at the 1980 AML *Method In The Madness* conference; so, I had a library of existing slides for the Dataton keynote. [See: Addendum II – *Keynote address for Dataton Watchout launch shows.*]

As a bonus, Dataton decided to do a second launch in London about two months later. (I **guess that a lot of folks didn't want to fly to Stockholm in the dead of winter.**) The launch redux was held at Pinewood Studios, where James Bond films were made; it felt good to absorb those vibes while we were working there.

I discovered another Mesney on that trip, distant-cousin James Mesney. He picked me up at Heathrow Airport and took me home with him to Devon, where my Grandfather had lived. James and I had dinner together and I overnighted at his house and he drove me to Pinewood the next day. Cousin James was unmistakably Mesney; he looked almost exactly like my father as a young man. There are so few Mesneys; it was a very special occasion, meeting him. I stayed in touch with James for a while; but I was old enough to **be James's father and, other than lineage, we didn't have enough in common to maintain** a conduit of communication.

Doing the keynote for Dataton put me in the enviable position of being on the inside of an important event. I got the scoop about Watchout before anyone else—from the guy who wrote the code. I told Mike to sign me up for Watchout. That was an expensive decision; but it gave me another branch to swing to, on the Tree of Life. Dataton followed up my performances with another great honor: to write an introduction to their new, online *Watchout Forum*.



This illustration for the first version of **Dataton's Watchout Forum** wasn't used because they changed the dongle style, and some felt it might offend women. Say what?

The final illustration for Dataton's Watchout Forum was totally a-sexual (unless you're an ostrich, maybe). In the end, I came to like this piece better than being a parrot in the picture of Monique Kaeo.



2000 – Back to Vashon – New Lease on Life

Life was good at the turn of the century. After unpacking our furnishings and putting the house (and my bank account) back together, Anna and I got back in the swing of life on Vashon Island.

Recall that, we had packed-up and put everything into storage before leaving for Sweden. It took the better part of a fortnight to get out of boxes again. The exercise allowed us to reassemble everything in terms of current needs. The former north-wing office was converted into a Watchout studio **and the guest bedroom became Anna's studio; she had gotten into beads in a big way.**

By New Year's Eve we were all done and had cozy fires going in the salon and studio. I started celebrating with a toast to the old century's last sunset—at 4:28 pm [16:28]—and passed out drunk well before the New Year rang in. I remember waking up about 2:00 am and realizing we blew it; my first word in the new century was, "Shit!"

Anna and I hosted a gala dinner party on New Year's Day. The guests included: my sister Kathy and her husband; a bunch of their friends and relatives; and my younger sister, Barbara. Before the fête, I shot Millennium portraits of my immediate family.

The turn of the Century kindled significant family events and reunions; possibly because that turning of the clock reminded folks about our temporality and origins.

Plate N^o 1: Top: Proving again its miraculous nature, the Internet provided pathways for me to discover Mesneys in Malaysia. I forget whether it was Lycos, Netscape or AOL, but I found Tim and Sue Mesney in Borneo, and they sent me these two photos of their family. We lost touch after that; I am trying to find them again, now. Bottom: The James Mesney clan. James is seen sandwiched between his brothers (above) and (below) his father and his latest offspring. Trying to find them, too.

Plate N^{os} 2-6: Anna and I threw a big party on New Year's Day for family and friends. It was an annual event that in years past had been hosted by Kathy, for her husband Lou's side of the family. His sister, Esther, and her husband, Marvin Wolf, lived on Mercer Island, the rich folk's version of Vashon, just east of metro Seattle. Bonnie Cohen, and husband, Mel Baer, were there with their daughter, Simone, together with David Wollock, Esther's son by a first marriage; the kids were in school in California and New York, but came home to Seattle for Hanukkah. Kathy's closest Vashon friends, Michael & Elizabeth Golen-Johnson were also invited.

I went all-out on the decorations, converting the photo-studio into a dining room with a long table for fourteen guests. By then, I had opened the wall separating the two main parts of the south wing. Parker Taylor, Tom Lorentzen's son-in-law did the work; Tom was the brains, Parker was the brawn. The open space, 50-feet long [~16 meters], end to end, was impressive; I couldn't reckon why I originally separated the space.

I was long past wanting to be a restaurateur, but still loved entertaining; and I had all the gear to do that; I still had my restaurant kitchen, fully equipped to make... anything.

For that Christmas party, I made an Sino-Indian meal. There were eight entrees to choose from, served buffet style along the island counter in the kitchen—I would have made more, but the counter was only 16-feet wide [~5.3 meters].

Guests were always blown away by the scope of the meals I prepared for dinner parties. The complexity of the menus was likely promulgated by my need to prove my worth, coupled with an inferiority complex which left me ill-at-ease in most social situations.

You see, I didn't relate to anyone. I was so into my own world that I couldn't carry on conversations about current events or what was on TV. But I had tons of stories, about this and that, that kept me afloat, conversationally. Although I didn't think so at the time, I'm pretty sure than my dinner guests realized that I was drunk, when I finally sat down at the table.

As the guests arrived, they'd find me working behind the island counter, in the galley, prepping and cooking the meal. Anna would cover for me during cocktails (I kept my own glass full, backstage).

Only when dinner was served did I relax and join the party... and switch from snaps to wine. By then, I was more stoned than any of my guests... which is what eventually turned Anna off to me. But I was in denial; I was living the good life.

*Plate N^{os}2-3: **The Vashon studio was decked out in a full regalia of Swedish "Jul décor,"** (Christmas decorations) that I brought with me, from Stockholm. My sister, Kathy, is sitting on the one of the three couches in the lounge. A sampling of those decorations adorns my flat in Vancouver, now. The central star hangs in my kitchen window year round but only gets lit for the Yule season, which for me is from Lucia Day, December 13th, to 12th Night, January 5th.*

Plate N^{os}4-5: Sister Kathy provided this photo-ID guide:

Starting at lower left and going clockwise:

Esther (Wollock) Wolf

*David Wollock **[Esther's son]***

*Simone Baer **[Esther's daughter]***

Mel Baer

? (maybe your friends?)

? (maybe your friends?)

Me [Kathryn Mesney aka Patti Pimento]

Barbara

Michael Golen-Johnson

Elizabeth Golen-Johnson

Marvin Wolf (Esther's husband)

Bonnie Cohen (Mel Baer's wife)

Lou Hetler

Anna Raus

At that stage in the game, Anna and I were like two peas in a pod, as evidenced by our twin stepping machines, seen upper right. The studio also housed parts of my photo archive (left wall) and photo gear. A TEAC 3340 tape deck is seen rear right.

The photo, and others in this group, was made with a Nikon F3 at ISO 3200—which is why there is so much graininess—called noise. I used a 20 mm Nikkor with High Speed Ektachrome film set for ASA 320 and an 80B (blue) filter to compensate for the Kelvin 3200 tungsten lighting. The actual light color was closer to Kelvin 2200, because the house lights were on dimmers. In the dining room (photo studio) the primary lighting was pencil-beam spots gelled green and red. White Christmas-tree lights provided ambient light.

*Plate N^o 6: The POV is reversed in this picture, taken from the east end of the room, looking into the salon, beyond. The camera is focused on Marvin Wolf, in an animated conversation with Mel Baird. The 20 mm POV, shot with a Nikon F3 on High Speed **Ektachrome, is from sister Kathy's place at the end of the table, behind sister Barbara** (left) and a mystery couple (right). **Elizabeth Golan-Johnson is to Marvin's right; she was one of sister Kathy's Reiki clients.***

2000 | Millennium Portraits | Plates N^{os} 1-12

Plates N^{os}1-12: Shot with a Hasselblad and 150 mm Zeiss lens, on Plus-X Pan film.



2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE | PLATE N° 1
Malaysian and British Mesney clans.



2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE| PLATE N° 2
Christmas party at Vashon studio.



2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE | PLATE N° 3
Christmas party at Vashon studio.



2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE| PLATE N° 4
Christmas party at Vashon studio.



2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE | PLATE N° 5
Christmas party at Vashon studio.

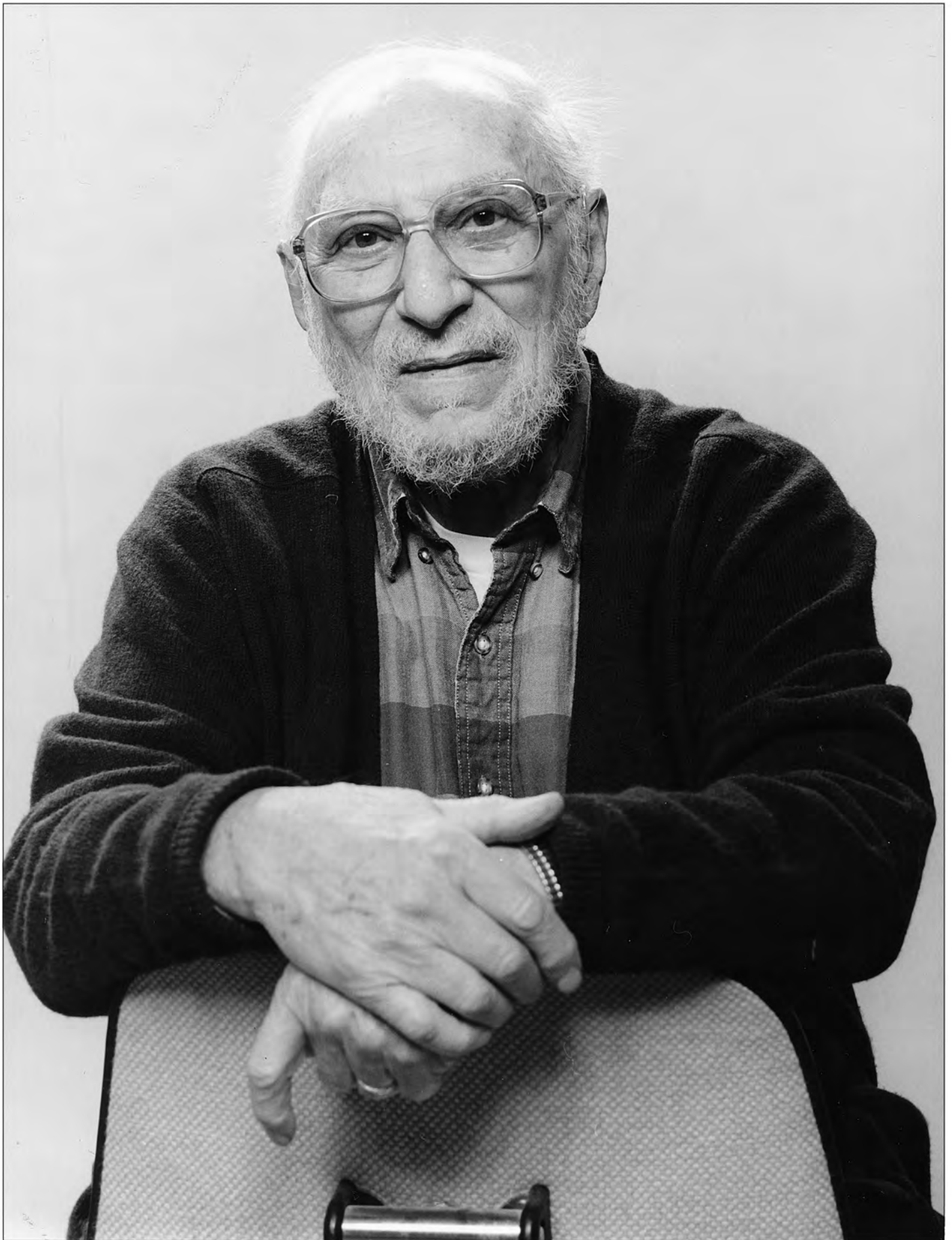


2000 | MILLENIUM FAMILY COLLAGE | PLATE N° 6
Christmas party at Vashon studio.



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 1

Kathryn Mesney-Hetler & Lou Hetler



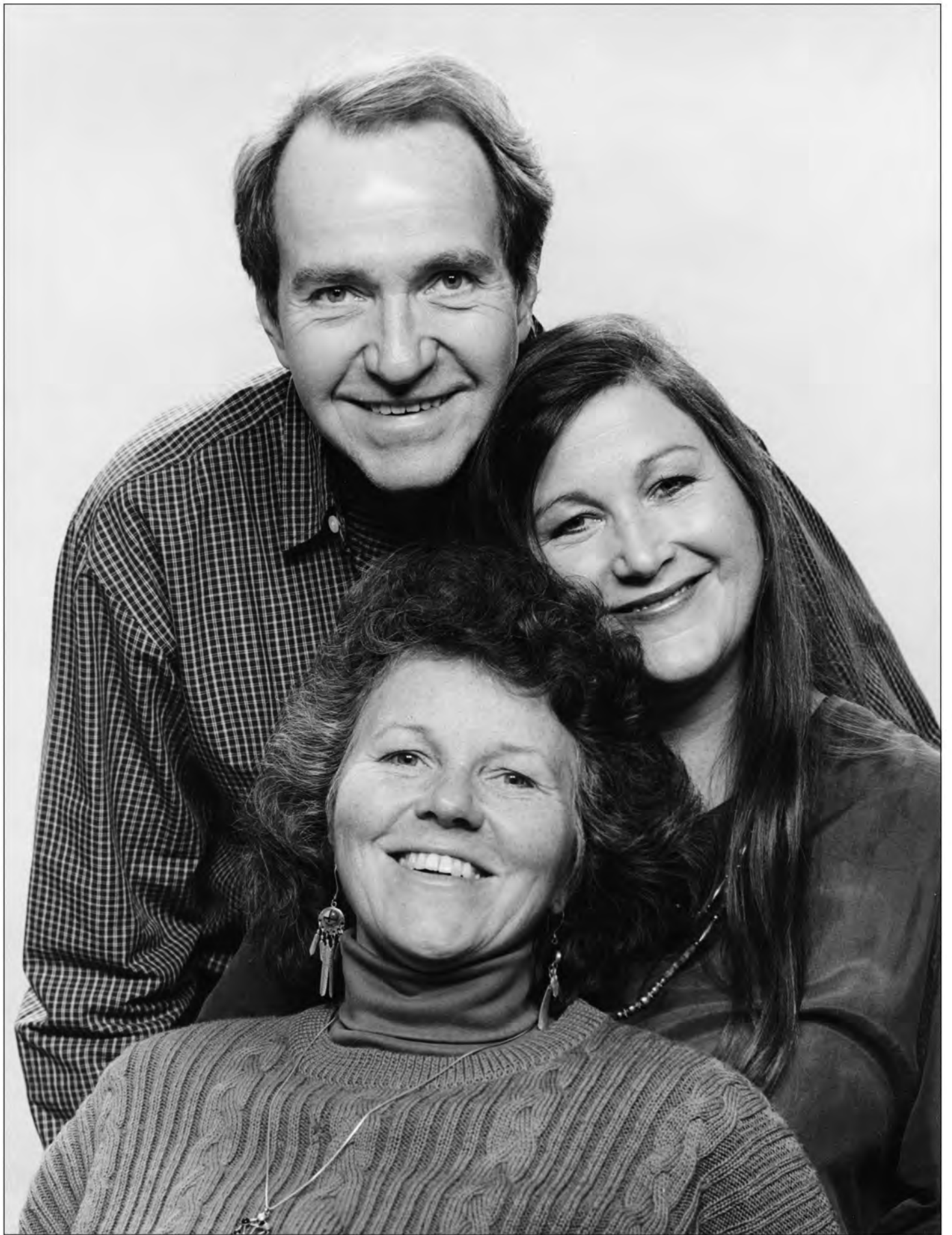
2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 2

Lou Hetler



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 3

Kathryn Mesney-Hetler



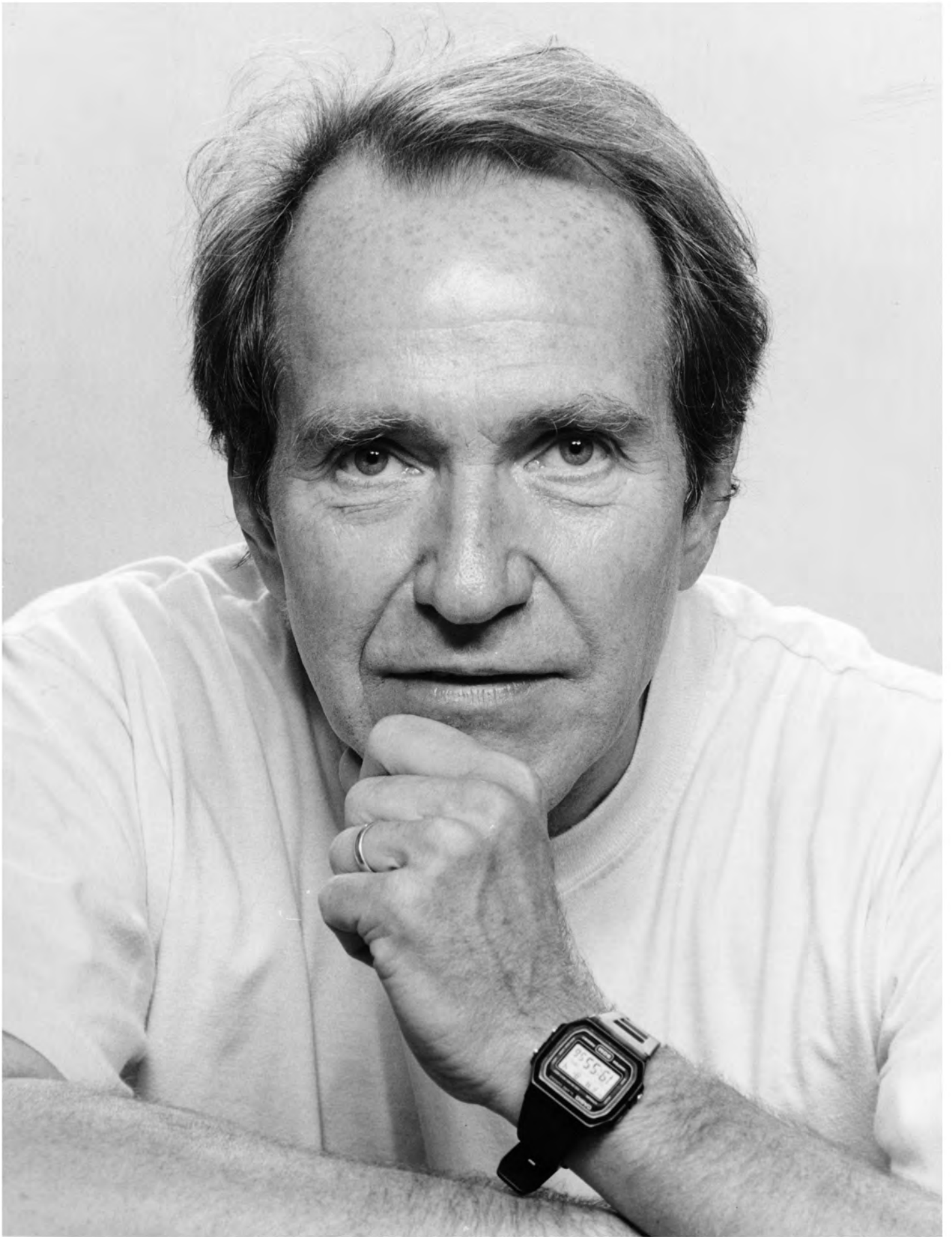
2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 4

Douglas, Barbara & Kathryn Mesney



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 5

Barbara Mesney



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 6

Douglas Mesney



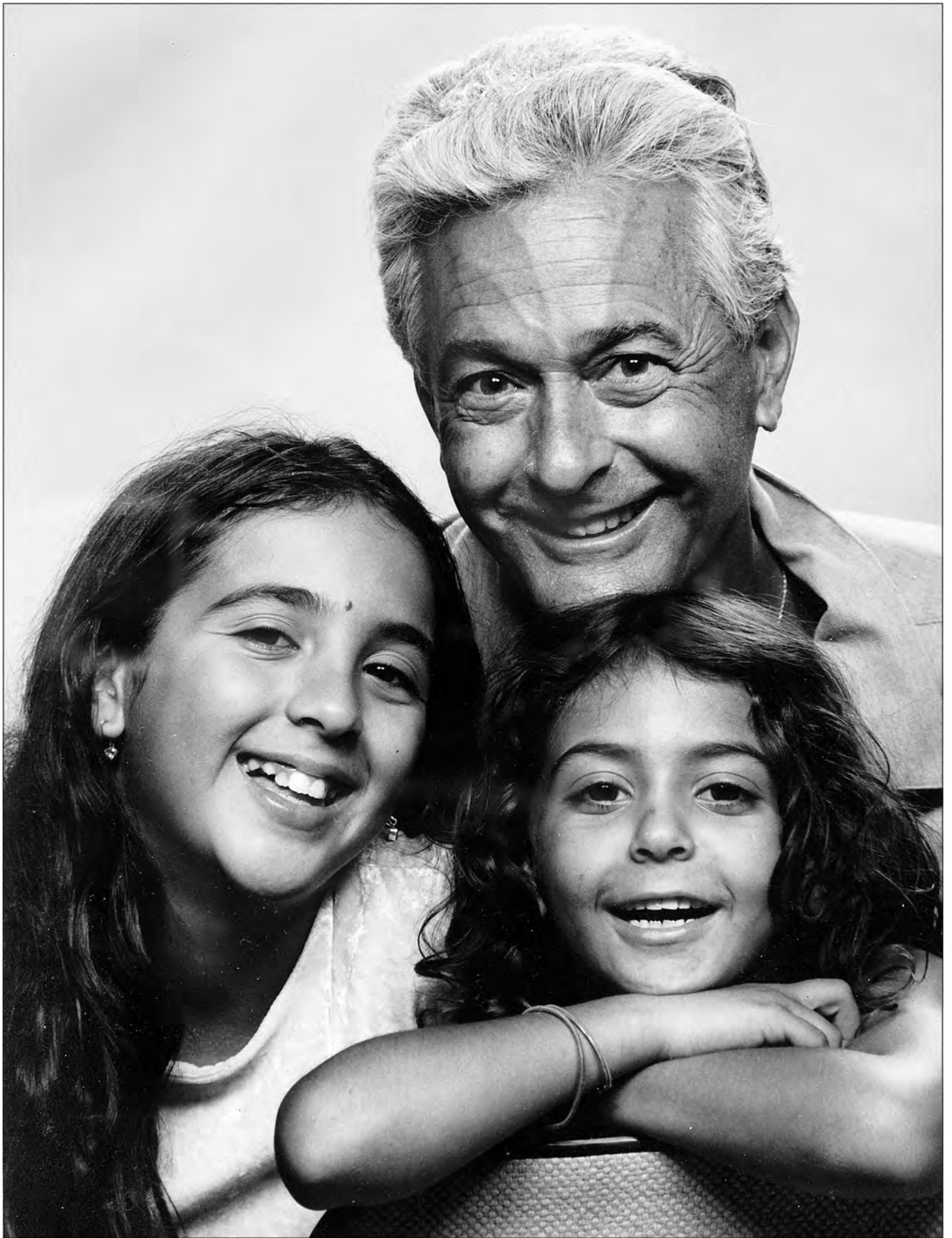
2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 7

Anna Raus



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 8

Allan Seiden



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 9

Martine, Sonja & Allan Seiden



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 10

Martine & Sonja Seiden



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 11

Martine Seiden



2000 | MILLENIUM PORTRAITS | PLATE N° 12

Sonja Seiden

I pondered what I was going to do to make a living. My audiovisual career languished after video and PowerPoint usurped multi-image during the '90s. Slide shows had died and it seemed that conventional photography had met its demise, too. Digital-imaging technology was disrupting the photography market. My picture agency, The Stock Market, was going digital—they returned my transparencies, requesting digitally-scanned replacements of them.

Professional image makers like me were caught in a conundrum—silver-based photography was on the way out, but digital imaging **hadn't come of age; there were no standards**; the technology was changing too fast. When I got back from Sweden, I thought I was well-ahead of the game; after all, I had just made a digital picture archive. I thought I knew a thing or two about scanning and Photoshop and I did, but what I was doing—the gear I was using as well as my methodology and work flow—**wasn't good enough**. Or so they said.

To digress for a moment, about that silver vs digital conundrum: In the mid-'90s, digital imaging was making serious inroads into professional photography; scanners and digital darkrooms were catching on, but the quality wasn't there yet.

Those were the days before digital cameras, when the work flow was to shoot film originals and then scan them to obtain digital versions. However, unless you owned a \$100,000 laser drum scanner, or were prepared to spend \$50 per picture to get scans made on one, digital images made from film scans did not look as good as pictures made from film.

“Prosumer” [**professional-consumer**] scanners, e.g. the Nikon LS-2000, digitized pictures of inferior quality. The main problems had to do with *granularity*, (i.e., pixel resolution), color and contrast. Inconsistency was another problem; different brands of scanners produced different results. Some way better than others. That was especially true in the case of color printers.

Only Epson came close to photo quality—close, but no cigar. Pictures printed directly from transparencies or negatives onto photo paper still looked way better than digital prints. Digital's dual nemeses were—and still are—pixel density and gamut, a funny word that means palette, as in number of colors, e.g. millions vs billions.

And to digress another moment, about image quality: The gamut [number of colors] produced by any digital device is limited by its pixel sensors (in the case of a camera), or its light-emitting-diode pixels (in displays like computer monitors and projectors).

Whether in a camera or a display, every pixel has three sensors that record or display the three primary colors of light—red, green and blue. Cheaply-made pixels have a smaller gamut than expensive ones; they don't see or display as many colors.

If you have ever tried drawing with a beginner's set of, maybe 10 colors, you know how hard it can be to make a realistic-looking picture. The human eye can see millions (billions?) of colors. However even the best digital media produce far fewer than that, albeit millions. Today's digital devices produce significantly wider color gamuts than the ones we worked with in the '90s and early 2000s. Back then, even the best color printers turned out pictures that looked over saturated and contrasty. When it comes to clarity, film and digital images are difficult to compare. Film images are captured by molecules of silver chloride, called *grains*. Like sand on a beach, film-emulsion grains were randomly distributed and varied in size. On the other hand, digital images are captured by an array of sensors arranged on a grid, called pixels. Until recently, pixels were bigger than film grains. Whereas the finest chip of 35 mm film had a pixel equivalency of about 4,000 per inch (as of 2020), a digital scan of that chip, made with a prosumer scanner, delivered about half that number. With only half the pixel density of film, those scans could not be enlarged much beyond the size of a magazine page without looking jagged. The same resolution problems confronted the makers of digital audiovisual gear, especially projectors.

Thanks to Mike Fahl and Bjorn Sandlund, at Dataton, slide shows were back in vogue. Old slide-show producers like me were given a new lease on life.



Front-back views of the ten-screen Watchout programming suite built in the north wing of the Vashon studio.

My career as a multi-image producer was restored as soon as I started using Watchout. **That didn't happen all at once; it evolved during the year.** Before investing in Watchout, I needed to upgrade to digital Nikons and stop using film. Scanning film images took too long, averaging 15-20 minutes per scan by the time you got it right. Thus, I upgraded my photo kit with a Nikon D1X, a D1H (**higher speed, fewer pixels, a "sports" camera**) and a compliment of four auto-focus Nikkor lenses extending from 10 to 210 mm (420 mm with a doubler).

There was more to digital shooting than I imagined. Getting the right exposure was much more important. The digital Nikons had far less exposure latitude than film; they were less forgiving. With an underexposed film picture, there was usually enough image to work with, albeit faint, that by using specially-graded photo paper and *dodging* those dark parts (giving them less exposure) they could be lightened. However, beyond a certain point of underexposure, digital pictures left nothing to salvage. Highlights were even worse. With film, I could save most over-exposed parts of pictures by exposing them longer when printing the negative—a technique called burning.⁵²

⁵² Photo paper came in five contrast grades ranging from low contrast (1) to high contrast (5). Normal negatives were printed on grade 2 or 3; over-exposed "thick" negs were printed on grade 1, and underexposed "thin" negs on grade 5.

Learning to deal with those kinds of photo vagaries chewed up most of the summer and autumn, as did work that came in producing slide shows for Dave Frey at Sound Images.

2000 – Sound Images – Nike Shox

If memory serves me right, the last slide shows made at Sound Images were produced for Nike's **spring sales meeting**. The venue for the meeting was the Phoenix [Arizona] Symphony Hall, which comfortably seated Nike's audience of 800. The configuration of the theater presented challenges. The proscenium arch⁵³ was enormous. It dwarfed even the **biggest of Dave's screens**. The solution was to use the house screen, built to fit the space. The screen had impressive dimensions, measuring 60 X 30 feet [18.28 X 9.14 meters]; that was masked with a black frame to create a 50 X 20-foot image area [15.24 X 6.09 meters]. A second, smaller screen was hung in front of the big house screen. It was about 1/3 of the size of the main image, and more rectangular (4:3 ratio—for video). That screen was suspended stage left, about 20-feet downstage (toward the audience) from the main, screen. The presenters were positioned mid-way between those two screens.



Presenter

A pair of video projectors were aimed at the smaller, front screen, from the balcony, next to our work stations. Those were powerful, xenon-lamped projectors, doubled-up both for safety (redundancy) and to improve the brightness of the video images. Six plasma screens also hung in front of the main screen; they flew in and out, separately and together, on various cues. A grid of ninety projectors was erected on a massive, multi-level scaffold positioned roughly 10 feet [3.04 meters] behind the screen. Each projector was lensed to shoot a 10 X 6-foot image [3.04 X 2.13 meters]. A matrix of forty-five overlapping images was needed to present a full-sized picture on the screen. An additional set of forty-five projectors allowed images to dissolve into each other as they transitioned, one to the next (like a two-projector show).

⁵³ Wordnic: The area of a modern theater that is located between the curtain and the orchestra.

I wrote to Steve Farris, at Sound Images, to fact check this case history; here's what he had to say: "I think it was even more involved than you describe."



“The image was a 3X5 butt image with overlaps both vertical and horizontal and 2 projectors per projection zone. That required two soft-edge masks in each slide mount! [See soft-edge-mask illustrations in, *1976 – Hard Drinkers – Soft Fuzzies*]

“But there was also a video component on the Plasma screens that lowered in as the story unfolded, and a large front projection video screen. We used a Dataton Trax control system to drive 14 DVD players, a Betacam player, and a 16X16 matrix router. The entire system was driven by time code from an Alesis ADAT audio deck. For manual cues, the Trax system sent a relay closure to the AVL system to sync all the computers.

[Steve has more to say about the set-up; see the Appendix – *From Steve Farris.*]

It goes without saying that trying to project a single image from forty-five slides was no **simple matter. Alignment was the chief nemesis. If the pieces of the matrix didn't fit** together perfectly, the result on the screen looked horrible.

To achieve perfect image alignment, the projectors had to be equipped with matched lenses that all produced the same size image, with straight lines and right-angled corners.

The projectors had brand-new lamps installed, so that each would be equally bright. However, that involved another risk—if a lamp were to blow, it was likely to fail during the **first hour of use; thus, old lamps were swapped for new ones during each performance's** final run through; that gave all lamps a two-hour burn, enough to cull any rejects.

Behind the scenes, the complexities of the projection rig were matched by an equal degree of precision required of the slide production department. Each full-screen picture had to be shot in forty-five sections. That was done with a computer assisted Marron Carell MC-1600 rostrum camera, capable of shooting within a millimeter of accuracy.

Artwork production for the Shox show was "revolutionary"—that is, the process went full circle: from film to digital and back to film.

At the turn of the century, the technology of, slide making straddled two worlds—a mix of analogue and digital techniques. Digital cameras were still a way off. Digital images were made by scanning analogue ones and working with them in Adobe Photoshop.

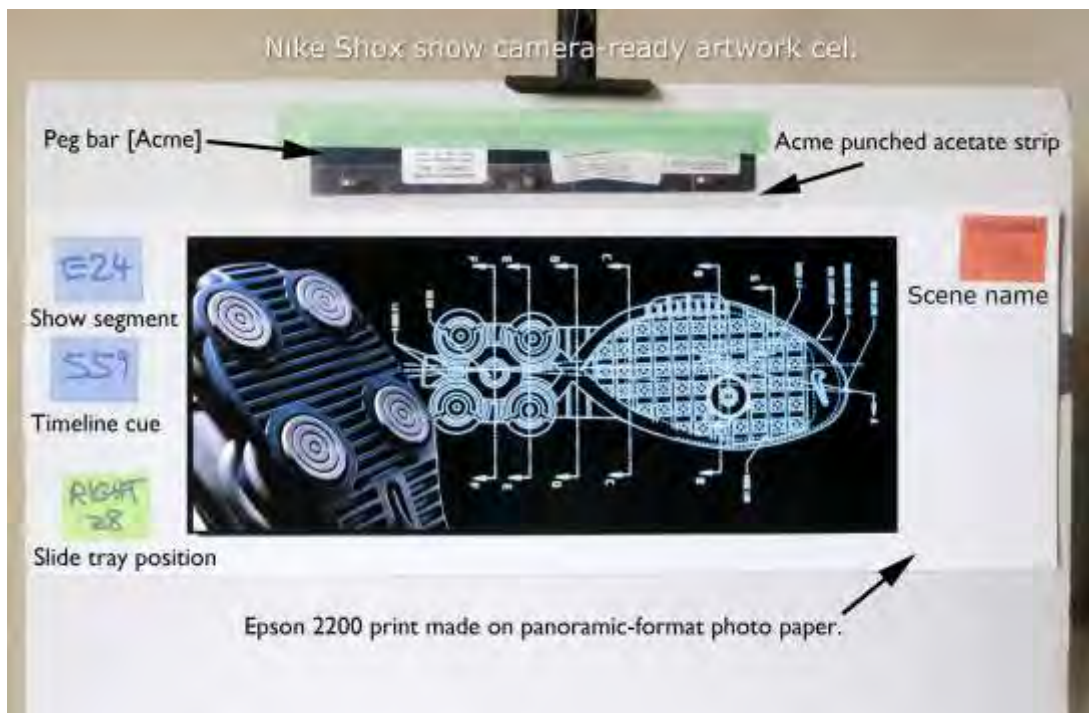
For the Shox show, Photoshop'd digital images were printed, then shot back into slides. The complete cycle was film to digital to film. Later in the year, Dave invested in a Watchout rig, and that last step—digital back to film—was eliminated.

The Epson 2200 printer was the behind-the-scenes star of the show was. The 2200 produced photo-quality images. **The photo quality was made possible by Epson's *giclée*—ink jet—technology.**⁵⁴ Ink jets spray pigments in a matrix pattern. Giclée printers spray little droplets randomly, closely approximating the look of film grain (emulsion granularity).

After creating scenes in Photoshop, they were output onto Epson's panoramic-format photo paper (which measured 23.4 X 8.3 inches [59.4 X 21 centimeters]). Each scene was surrounded by a 3/8-inch black border [about 10 millimeters] to ensure clean edges and assist in aligning the cels.

Using a light box for rear-illumination, each panoramic print—**called a camera "cel"**—was aligned to a master position guide and then *pegged* (taped to a strip of clear acetate punched to fit an Acme peg bar on the camera stage) to accurately position all cels.

⁵⁴ Inkjet printers were really an evolution of dot-matrix printers. Instead of metal needles, they use hundreds of tiny guns to fire dots of ink at the paper instead. The characters they print are still made up of dots, just like in a dot-matrix printer, but the dots are so very tiny that you cannot see them. Different types of inkjet printer fire the ink in various ways. In Canon printers, the ink is fired by heating it so it explodes toward the paper in bubbles. This is why Canon sells its printers under the brand name "Bubble Jet." Epson printers work a slightly different way. They use an effect called piezoelectricity. Tiny electric currents controlled by electronic circuits inside the printer make miniature crystals jiggle back and forth, firing ink in jets as they do so. You can think of inkjet printers very simply as a firing squad of nozzles rattling off millions of dots of ink at the paper every single second! <https://www.explainthatstuff.com/inkjetprinters.html>



Artwork was sized at 15.5 X 6.5 inches [39.37 X 16.51 centimeters]; that large size helped insure accurate positioning by the camera's computer-controlled stage. Each individual shot covered an artwork-area of 1.7 X 1.3 inches [4.25 X 3.25 cm], which translated into a projected size of 10 X 7 feet [3.04 X 2.13 meters].

Instructions for the cameraman and slide assembly staff—called “slates”—were written on little Post-it notes stuck on cel borders. For the cel pictured, the Post-it instructions are:

- E24—Meeting segment E,
- Scene— Extravaganza 14B
- 559—Position on the Watchout timeline
- Right 28—Slot 28 in each slide tray

The cameramen, in this case Dan Quigley and Chris Fowler, shot the slates at the head of the scenes—that is, before each 45-slide segmentation. In that way, as the processed roll of film was unwound, the slide assembler, Phillip Augustin could identify each sequence, and its slide-tray position. If Phillip had questions, he'd refer to a scene by its name. When done, the production assistant would cross-off each completed scene, by its show segment number. That system worked well; everyone got the information they needed. It **was invaluable in terms of getting the big show produced in less than a month's time.** Think about it: there were close to 7,200 slides, most of them composed of three chips of film (the image and two soft-edged masks, for horizontal as well as vertical blending)—all produced by four guys: me, Dan, Chris and Phillip.

I had no qualms about taking on the assignment, having made a similarly large extravaganza for Saab, to launch the 9000 CD model, in 1987. That show had 6,400 slides, all made by me, John Emms and Dean Dedmon. Shox was the first show that I produced for Sound Images after returning from two years in Sweden, producing the Scania Bus International Photo Library and millennium calendar. In terms of Photoshop skills, I was way ahead of the pack at Sound Images, especially in special effects. My advanced Photoshop skill set put me in the catbird seat for a while. My chief competitor, Gar Benedict, was behind the curve on that count.

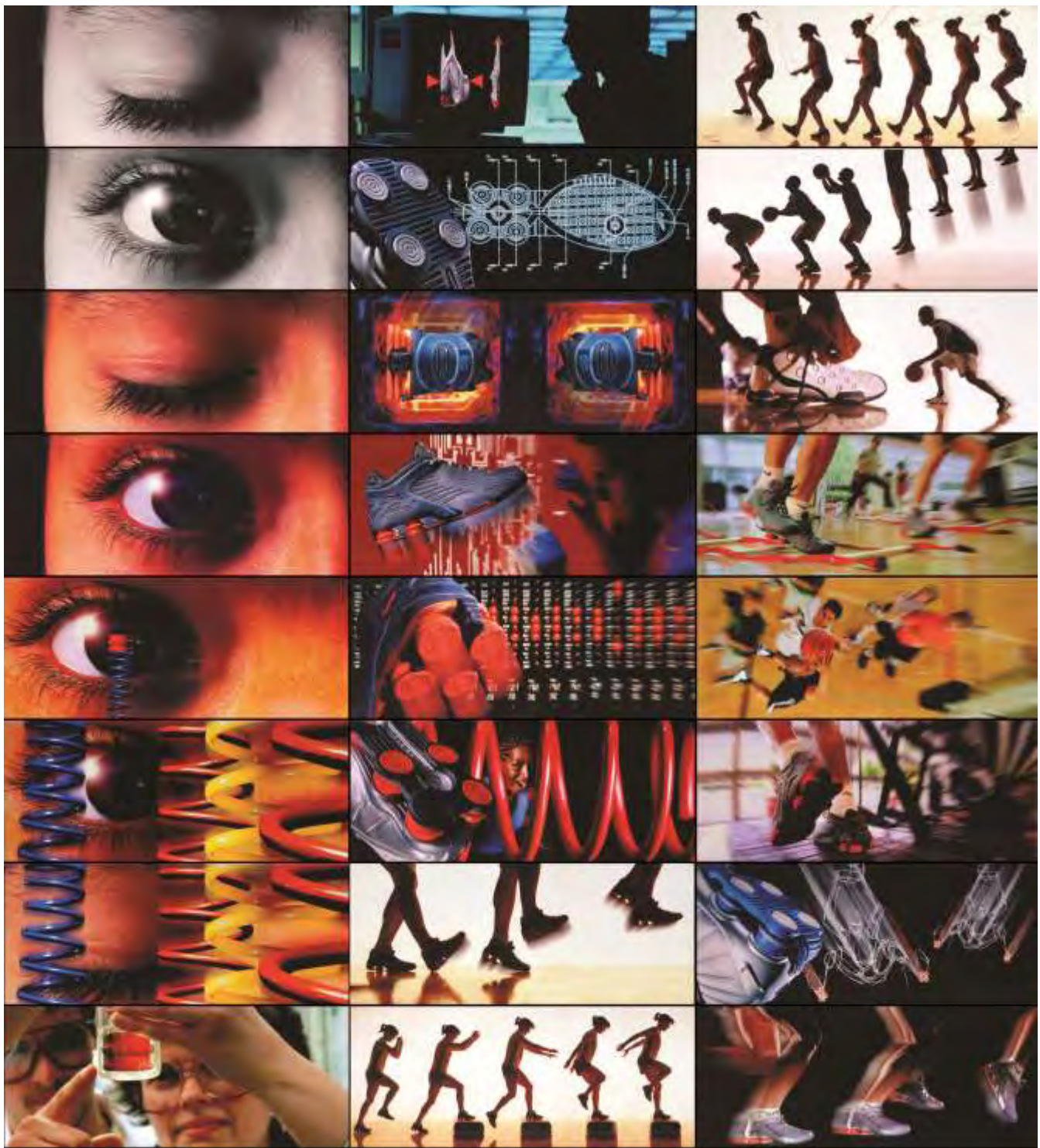
Dave had to hire free-lance graphic designers to produce artwork for Gar's shows, whereas I was a one-man band. That—saving him money—put me in good stead with Dave Frey; comparing my costs to Gar's, I was a bargain.



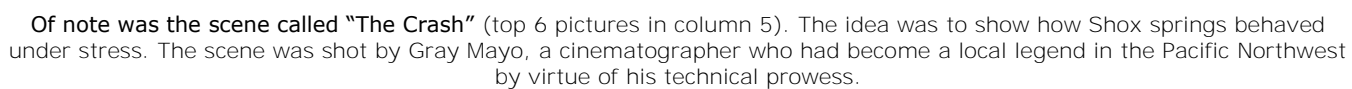
45-slide split of artwork for scene 14B, shown above. Special "Vis Sheets" were made to accommodate 45-slide layouts

Nike used the metaphor of springs to market Shox; the odd-looking sneakers had four springs under the heels of the shoes; the springs gave more bounce—called "**Boing**"—to **one's stride**; it was a simple concept that succeeded with a certain segment (although Shox was never a mega-brand, like Air Jordan). I latched onto the springs concept and took it to extremes. Dave came up with the concept of opening the show with a girl's eye: she opens her eyes and Shox "springs" into view. I'm not sure which came first, the idea for the opening, or the picture of the girl's eye, which turned out to be Dave's daughter, photographed with a super-close-up lens. Dave started his career as a photographer, like me; that's one reason we got on so well together. In my early days at Sound Images (the late '90s) Dave used to do a lot of shooting for his shows; but, when the size and complexity of the productions got to a certain point, he delegated most of the work to Dan Root ("**Rooter the Shooter**") or farmed it out to freelancers.

I was a godsend to Dave because I could shoot my own stuff. However, Rooter continued to do most of the photography. Nike shows didn't need my kind of stuff (extreme, overly creative); they needed good sports reportage, the kind you'd see in magazines like Sports Illustrated. Rooter was good at that kind of shooting, what I call "run and gun" photography. I was more technically oriented. Nike also had an in-house studio manned by top professionals and equipped to do virtually any kind of photos, films and videos. Nike preferred it when Dave used the stuff produced by their studio. For example, many of the pictures in the Shox show came from Nike; I combined those with pictures from my own image library and added effects.



Above and adjacent is a sampling of 48 scenes from the Shox show presented in vertical columns, top down, left to right. In the actual performance there were many more. I've only included 10 speaker support scenes (bottom of column 5 and all column 6), the ones that illustrated the presentation made by Steve Wilke, from Nike's ad agency, Weiden & Kennedy [Portland, Oregon]; his aptly-titled segment was called "Boing Explained."



Mayo brought his slow-motion cine rig to Nike's headquarters in Beaverton [Oregon] and set it up in their grand film studio.⁵⁵ When I first saw the set, I wondered how anything impressive could be shot on it—there was simply a large black canvas lying on the ground, with a row of orange lights in the background. Little did I know how well that would look when shot through an extreme macro-telephoto (a long lens able to focus close).



What seemed like an easy shot—a runner strides by—turned into an expensive mini-nightmare that took the better part of eight hours.

The slow-motion camera—about the size of a banana box—was bolted down, to minimize vibrations. The lens was focused on a narrow field 18 inches wide [45 centimeters]; the depth of field zone was only five inches [10 cm] deep—the width of a running shoe.

To be in focus and correctly positioned in the frame, the runner had to hit a mark on the floor with absolute precision. That had to be done while running at full speed, to get the Shox springs to do their boing thing.

Imagine running at full speed and hitting a spot about the size of a quarter with your right heel?

Four of four hundred high-speed film frames, cherry-picked for the slide show and processed in Photoshop to add motion blur.

About two dozen takes were filmed. Ordinarily, that wouldn't be too bad, for a technical shot like that one. However, the camera shot 250 frames per second, which, at 16 frames per foot, ate up 15 feet of film per second. A given take ended up more than 200 feet long because the camera took a few seconds to get up to speed, and a few more to come to a stop.

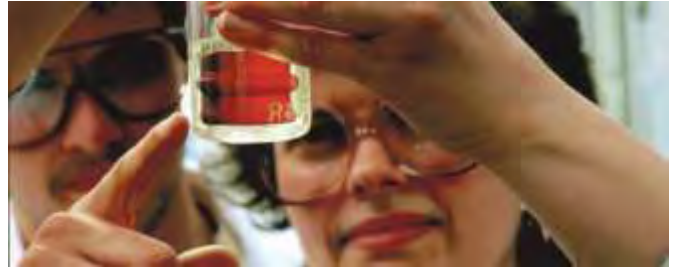
That meant that the camera had to be reloaded after each take—a laborious process involving a shutter check (to make sure it was clean, that no bits of film have gotten caught in it) as well as refocusing and realignment.

As an observer, I was dying of boredom; I was supposed to be getting shots for the slide show; but Mayo wouldn't let me anywhere near the live action, and I could understand why; he was under intense pressure. In the end, I was given duplicate footage to work with; the key frames needed were scanned and Photoshopped with mezzo-zoom motion blur effects.

⁵⁵ The Nike studio was more than 100-feet long, to permit athletes, particularly runners, enough room to get up to speed—to get realistic pictures, instead of ones that looked staged.

Making the artwork for the Shox show was a major exercise in Photoshop. With only **Nike's studio shots of Shox shoes to work with, I had to pull a rabbit out of a hat to illustrate Bill Scream's screamin' sound track. The solution was combining Nike's product shots with stock pictures from my image archive to invent scenes parodying high tech.**

To create the chemists' scene, I superimposed a little Shox spring into a scene shot in 1974, for the USI "Little Chemical Giant" show. The images favored the left side of the screen, to minimize competition with the big video screen hanging in front of it.



The inferno effect was made by superimposing a pair of Nike Shox shoes into background scenes of a glowing Saab turbo rotor assembly shot for the Saab 9000 launch show.



The mezzotint-zoom effect was made by combining four images. The original treadmill image, shot by Rooter the Shooter, was made into a mezzotint; then, both the original and mezzotint were zoomed towards **the heels of the runner's Shox shoes—to lead the viewer's attention to the Shox springs** (a double zoom—one for each of the two heels). Finally, the zoomed images were blended together, using varying degrees of opacity. The first time I used the mezzo-zoom effect was in the *Enginuity* show, made for Saab in 1987. The purpose of the mezzotint is to provide more visible streaks; the granularity of a mezzo produces distinct lines, when panned, streaked or zoomed.

Dave was focused on the complexities of staging; he pretty much left me to my own devices. As the show came together, he began to get antsy about the liberties I was taking to illustrate the show and all the "whacko effects." Visually, the show I designed was a conceit, a parody of **Nike's high-tech running lab.**

Sound Images shows were usually conservative and understated, yet bold; like Dave Frey, himself. For example, the speaker-support scenes that followed the Shox module were simple designs with plain-white backgrounds (designed by Dan Root). Those scenes were much more conservative. However, the soundtrack that Bill Scream put together was pretty nutty and my so-called whacko pictures worked well with it.

Programming the show was a challenge. Bill Scream's tracks were true to his name—high energy soundscapes. I enjoyed choreographing slides to his tracks because he gave me so many *handles* in the form of sound effects and musical stings. The Nike Shox show was no exception. My challenge was that the Shox module was basically a two-projector show, albeit a large-sized one; that is, there were only two projectors for each screen area. The only way to create any visual excitement was to come-up with reveals that involved patterns—like spiraling in or out from the center, or snaking up and down and/or back and forth.

Although I had practice in this kind of programming for the Image Wall used for the Saab 9000 CD launch show, in 1988, that show used a grid of rear-projection boxes. There were hard edges around each image and a grid of lines—called *mullions*—between them. But **Dave didn't want to go that route; he hated mullions, called them old fashioned.**

Frey preferred the seamless look. So, instead of having rectangular pictures with which to program patterns, individual slides (soft-edged for seamless blending) looked like little **"pillows of light"**, ovals with indistinct fuzzy edges. To be sure, the final look was certainly original—pictures oozed into one another. However, the amorphous look made it hard to punctuate **Scream's soundtrack.**



The Shox module got a nod of approval in the C-Suite (although Phil Knight probably thought Dave had dropped acid). In fact, Nike used this scene—called Hoops 03—to make a giant, fold-out promotional poster. I was a little miffed that Dave just gave them the picture; I reckoned that I should have gotten a bonus, for extended-use rights. I guess my bonus was getting to work with Sound Images on another show. Ha!

2001 – Greece & Turkey – Calm Before the Storm

To celebrate our birthdays (her 25th and my 56th) Anna and I took a two-week winter holiday trip to Greece and Turkey.

The Mediterranean trip was the apex of our relationship. After that excursion, everything started to melt away, every so slowly at first. But that was later; we had many more laughs before the tears began.

I would have liked to have stayed on holiday longer; but Anna was new at her job and **wasn't yet entitled to any holiday (she worked as a clerk in the media department of Sedgwick Road, a consumer-advertising agency that has since gone out of business)**. Her boss did her a favor and advanced her vacation time, as a friendly gesture.

We took a triangular route—Seattle to Athens to Istanbul to Seattle—and flew the long-haul on United Airlines, burning-off air miles. (Thanks to the Swedish Match job, my supply was replenished.)

Anna had been to Athens before. When she was a pre-teen her family spent a summer holiday there, driving 1,404 miles [2,261] km each way from Rawicz, Poland in the family Lada **[a Russian car]. They spent their time at the beach then. Anna didn't have any** recall of the city; everything was new and exciting for her. I was a bit more jaundiced having been to so many other cities.

We stayed in the heart of Athens, at a hotel just a few blocks from the Old Royal Palace [Greek Parliament Building]. In a compressed two days, we took in the Acropolis, an enormous indoor market and a few museums before taking a ferry to Santorini.

The Acropolis was at the top of my list of must-shoot scenes. We got there very early to be able to get shots before the place filled up with tourists. The restaurant at our hotel brought us room service at 5 am; we were out the door by 5:30 and ascending the long stairway up to the Acropolis shortly after dawn. The weather cooperated fully. It was the perfect time of the perfect day and I was inspired, ready for a great photo session. Can you imagine how horrified I was to discover that the whole monument was surrounded by renovation scaffolding?

Undaunted, I shot the monument as if the scaffolding wasn't there and later retouched all the scaffolding away in Photoshop—a major retouching exercise that took several days. Discovering how—creating new columns using bits and pieces of the unobscured ones—taught me invaluable lessons about how Photoshop tools functioned.

Parthenon Moonrise is my favorite of the illustrations made from elements shot in Athens, Greece.



Santorini **turned out to be a photographer's paradise, just like I was hoping it would be. The only bummer was that it was winter; there weren't any bikini-clad "bums" on the beaches.** The snappy temperatures took Anna and I by surprise; neither of us realized that it can snow in Greece.

Needing to buy some sweaters, we went on a shopping spree and passed by a café playing very appealing music. Most restaurants and bars in Greece play stereotypical music, like *Zorba the Greek*; I got tired of the stuff after a while. The toons playing in the café were so tempting that we went in for a drink and stayed for two more, just to hear the music.

Our waiter explained that they were playing *Buddha Bar* and that we could get CDs from his friend, who ran a music shop that sold *chill* music. I bought my first three Buddha Bar compendiums there; they cost a small fortune, but I had to have those CDs. So-called club music (aka lounge music) **hadn't hit America yet although it soon would, big time.**

[Spoiler Alert: When the Buddha Bar CD sets hit \$50 I stopped collecting Claude Challe's music. Challe compiled the Buddha Bar series and a host of other collections, most of which I also picked up along the way. I would have loved to have visited his famous Paris club.]

When Anna and I got back from the trip we held a few parties to entertain her new agency associates. The guests were as intrigued by our new music as we were when we first heard it.

I fell in love, e.g. Electronica, Chill, and House music. During the next few years, I went on a music buying binge and enlarged my already substantial music collection (nearly 900 albums) with another 300 CDs, all of it lounge music in various international incarnations.

After Santorini, we ferried over to Rhodes, rented a car and drove all over the island. Rhodes was much bigger than Santorini; you really needed a car if you wanted to see anything. I had rented a car on Santorini but it was a waste of money; there was no place to go save one remote beach at the end of the road. Unlike most tourists, we were looking for excitement and photo ops, not romantic beaches.

What caught my attention on Rhodes were the massive stone forts built by the Crusaders, there were several of them. I had a sense of déjà vu in the old forts. Where that came from, I will never know; but I got a shiver thinking of the times and circumstances when those forts were built and the gangs of people involved.

After overnighing back in Athens, we flew on to Istanbul—a place I hope to return to before I die. We took the evening flight, trying not to waste valuable daylight hours on transport.

Being in Istanbul was like stepping back in time by a few centuries. There were few vestiges of Western civilization, not even the ubiquitous golden arches (McDonalds). **Beyond the confines of the airport and our hotel, we didn't see many other Westerners.**



We made an odd couple and attracted a lot of attention from street vendors of all types. Most mistook us to be a father and daughter duo (or maybe a sugar daddy out with his concubine, heh heh).

After a while we just winked at each other and played those parts, it was so much easier than explaining over and over that we were married.

(When I was 18 people mistook me for Albert Finney, who played Tom Jones in the popular movie by the same name. Folks would discreetly approach and ask for my autograph. After a while, I just signed with a smile and moved on. Denials took longer and left people feeling embarrassed. Better to leave them feeling happy; little would they ever know I was just a look-alike.)

We stayed at the Ambassador Hotel in the historical center of Istanbul. As hotels go, it was just the kind I like: small, traditional, and well run. Our room was a fair size and comfortably appointed, featuring a hand-painted wall mural of the Bosphorus at sunset.

If we got to the rooftop restaurant early enough, we could get a window view of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque (aka Blue Mosque). Morning prayers waivered in the distance, **blending with the restaurant's intriguing mixes of modern Turkish music. I commented on** how well I liked Turkish toons being played; the next day, the head waiter gave me an audio cassette tape of the house selections.

After breakfast, we would head out on the day's photo mission. Anna put up with my penchant for pictures. Having spent a half year together on the Scania photo mission, she knew the drill; as before, she dealt with the model releases.

Istanbul was a glorious place, a picture paradise. The city was clean, well-kept and full of **life. It felt like a new world. I hadn't spent any time living or working in the Near East;** I had nothing with which to compare Istanbul.

Most of what I knew about Istanbul were clichés from the 1964 movie *Topkapi*, about the theft of an emerald-encrusted dagger from Topkapi Palace. Suddenly there I was, in that famous palace (now a museum). There was no gem-studded dagger, just a lot of sacred relics for the religiously inclined.

I was more interested in photographing the palace grounds and its Moorish architectural features, intrigued by Ottoman art. It was challenging to get scenes uncluttered by roaming tourists; the place was packed with busloads of them that day.

Of course, the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia had to be shot, inside and out. I devoted a half day to each. Both were enormous, cavernous structures. One marvels at how they have survived centuries of earthquakes and wars.

Photographing well-known monuments was a challenge; so many others preceded me. To get shots that stood out in an ocean of others required more than just technical **perfection. Originality was the key ingredient. When I arrived at such places, I'd typically** understand rather quickly why most of the pictures I had seen all look the same—there were only so many good angles and ideal times of day—and nearly every photographer aims for those.

Another challenge was not being able to bring in big lenses or a tripod without obtaining the special permits required of professional photographers. Those would have taken too much time to obtain, so I confined my kit to a small belt pack. Still, it was difficult to disguise the fact that I was a professional photographer. The photo vest I was wearing was a dead give-away. At the big mosques, my vest was frowned upon as being **disrespectful. But, holy smoke, I wasn't going to leave that outside in the cubbyholes** provided for shoes—not if I hoped to wear it again!

I had two cameras (Nikon D1X and D1H) and three zoom lenses (Nikkor 17-35 mm, 24-120 mm and 70-210 mm). Anna and I split them between us to get past the security guards; it was surprisingly easy back then, before the current Age of Terror. Inside the mosques, I was challenged again by scaffolding and renovation work. It was Acropolis déjà vu all over again. Those impediments limited the number of acceptable views.

The best unobstructed views were of the ceilings. To get good shots of those required looking straight up; that is something difficult for me, given my poor posture (the result of years spent schlepping heavy gear). For ceiling shots, I normally lay on the floor, but that **wasn't possible. Imagine the chaos it would cause, me lying flat on my back in the middle** of the Mosque. Ha! Just kneeling caused enough of a stir to make it clear that I was pushing the boundaries of propriety.



I managed to stand up straight enough to capture the source images for several illustrations, including *Blue Mosque Ceiling #1* (left) and *Blue Mosque Ceiling #2*.

The Basilica Cistern was an intriguing location—enormous, cavernous and dark. It was built in the middle ages, not to be visited or admired, but to provide a hidden store of **water, to keep the fortified city's occupants alive during a siege. No longer needed as a** reservoir, the celebrated cistern was made into a tourist destination—an art experience.

In near darkness, Cistern visitors crisscrossed walkways that wound around an array of large, rectangular pools of water, each measuring about 20 X 40 feet [~6.1 X 12.2 meters]. The surfaces of those pools were so still, and their waters so deep, that they appeared to be enormous mirrors.

Above the reflecting pools was an intricate vaulted ceiling held up by columns positioned to outline the grid of ponds. **Visitors were awed by the environment; there wasn't a sound, other than the soft shuffling of feet along the well-worn slate floor tiles.**

Huge glass art works were suspended by invisible wires over some of the reflecting pools, brilliantly lit by narrow shafts of pencil-beam spotlights. Photographing the lit-up artworks was easy; but it was nearly impossible to take pictures of the architecture and underground ambiance; the place was too dark to shoot without a tripod.

I pushed the ISO [sensor sensitivity] to 1600, one step below the max [ISO 3200] **knowing that I would have to deal with a lot of "noise."**⁵⁶ By bracing the camera against the stone columns, I was able to steady it enough for the long (2-4 second) exposures needed to record the mysterious-looking environment with only faint levels of existing light.



The combination of elements photographed at the Basilica Cistern—in particular, the crystalline figure of a veiled woman—were combined with a body-painted nude of Sol Diaz to make the illustration entitled *Cistern Dancers* (above).

⁵⁶ "Noise" is so named because its audio version sounds like the "hiss" you sometimes hear when a TV or radio station goes off the air. Visual noise is exhibited by random, colored, snow-like flecks that are actually pixels that have been nuked by a static electricity build-up on the camera's sensor chip during long exposures; increasing the sensor sensitivity also increases the static discharge.

The famed Grand Bazaar⁵⁷ was another source of photo fascination. The challenge there was the sheer size of the labyrinthian, 61-block, souk (shopping center); there were no windows; the only ways in or out were through one of its 21 hard-to-find “**gates.**” Under high arching ceilings were dozens of intersecting aisles, each with more than 4,000 merchants selling an endless selection of practical and luxury goods. It was hard to keep your bearings straight and not get lost. In the end, we did get lost and slipped out a side door when no one was looking.

Even though there were endless photo opportunities **at the Bazaar, most didn’t have the** polished, stylized look needed for stock photos that sell. For a shot to sell, everything must be perfect; and, significantly complicating my life, to earn big money, I had to get model releases. We were carrying the same abbreviated *pocket releases* we used on the Scania shoot. Anna was well practiced in approaching people, explaining the release and getting signatures. However, our pocket releases scared off most of the shop keepers; so, we offered token payments—that did the job!

When we couldn’t get cooperation, I shot from angles and positions that avoided showing anyone. Of course, those pictures were less interesting and less likely to ever earn a dime.



None of the shots taken at the Grand Bazaar ever made it into any of my illustrations save one, taken at a lamp shop right next to the side door we exited.

It was the last set of pictures I made at the Grand Bazaar. The lamp shop was in a big tent; the ceiling was densely packed with a hundred or so colorful lanterns, each unique. From pictures of those, I put together the illustration called *Eastern Lanterns* (left).

The lamps were affordable; but, too big to carry with us. But the shop keeper was happy to oblige me with a catalogue and assurances that he could arrange safe shipment to the States. I seriously considered investing the nearly \$1000 it would have cost to buy the lot and duplicate the entire display in my studio lounge on Vashon Island; but events soon put the kibosh on that kind of discretionary spending.

Back on Vashon the photos taken on the trip gave me grist for the image mill. Although I **wasn’t making full-**fledged illustrations yet, I was inching my way closer, gaining control **over color, contrast and pixel quality. That wasn’t just a matter of turning a few dials, like** on a TV; it required repeated trials and errors discovering how to preview pictures on a monitor and output consistent results with a printer and/or projector.

⁵⁷ Wikipedia: The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the world, with 61 covered streets and over 4,000 shops which attract between 250,000 and 400,000 visitors daily. In 2014, it was listed No.1 among world’s most-visited tourist attractions with 91,250,000 annual visitors. The Grand Bazar at Istanbul is often regarded as one of the first shopping malls of the world.

A small fortune's worth of paper and ink passed through my printer that spring. Anna happily hung my panoramic prints of Greece and Turkey on the walls of her office area; they were much admired by her colleagues at Sedgwick Road. I secretly hoped that her display of my work would stimulate a call from one of the agency's art directors, to see my portfolio. No such luck.

2001 – Sound Images – Working Out Bugs

Dave Frey called soon after we got back from Greece and Turkey, to sign me up for Nike's spring sales meeting.

Working for Dave was becoming a regular thing. Although Nike usually held their sales meetings in exotic locations like Hawaii, times were tough after the dot-com crash. This meeting was held at the Portland Convention Center, near Nike headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, and even closer to Sound Images' studio.



The proximity of the meeting to his studio gave Dave the opportunity to pull out all the stops, in terms of show size. Getting gear from the studio to the PCC was as easy as pie; so, he came up with a doozy—an arced array of 20 vertical screens flanking a centered stage with a panoramic screen.



More than 100 projectors were needed for the immense rig. (Recall that equipment rentals were how Dave made his money.)

The highlight of the show was a documentary about the world's most grueling endurance race, the fabled Marathon Des Sables [Marathon of The Sands] the world's toughest endurance race for runners—a six-day, 156-mile [251 km] ultramarathon across the Sahara Desert.

The star of the show was a disabled runner who trained himself to beat his disability. When he came to Portland, to work out his performance and speech for the sales meeting, we had the opportunity to interview and photograph him for the slide show module.

Working so closely with such an exceptional human being went so far beyond humbling that it became inspirational. I was a runner then; I related to him; he made a permanent impression on me—an in-the-flesh testament to the fact that one really can do anything, one can be whatever one wants.

To get what he wanted—run the Marathon des Sables—this guy put on a backpack with 25 pounds of sand in it and ran 50 miles a day, for an entire year, to overcome his disability and build his endurance.

Working on a Sound Images show meant living in Portland during the production cycle; Dave always put me up in good hotels and gave me enough money to enjoy the fabulous eateries within walking distance.

Sound Images studio was in the so-called Northeast Quarter of Portland that became trendy. (Dave probably made more money on the studio real estate than he ever did in show business or playing the Market.)



The hood was so nice that Anna was encouraged to visit; she came down a couple of times during my month-long sojourn in the Rose City.

On one of Anna's Portland trips we bought roller skates. I needed skates to save time while assembling the monster show I was making.

The 36-stacks of projectors stretched across 70 feet; loading one scene took 10 minutes, just getting from one end of the projection grid to the other. But with roller skates, I could zip back and forth in a fraction of the time.

Self-promotion picture by Anna Raus; used as a postcard mailing.



The day I started using skates in his studio, I thought Dave would die of laughter—until **he saw how fast I got things done. Dave’s studio was the idea place for Anna to learn** skating. It was like having our own private rink.

Anna thought it was super cool. That had less to do with actual skating and more to do with what her peers thought. Her life had reached a point where everything Anna did required the approval of her colleagues at Sedgewick Road. While she practiced skating at Sound Images, I am sure Anna saw herself skating along Alkai Point in West Seattle, a beach town that was trending with the so-called Generation X—her new friends and colleagues.

Dave and I bonded on the *Marathon des Sables* show. The last time I had worked for him was in 1997, doing a stereoscopic Nike show for their sales meeting in Anaheim, California.

During the production of that show, I bought Anna’s **diamond engagement ring**, at the Portland Costco store. Dave was the first person I showed it to. Now, I was back, with Anna in hand, and we were working together again; it felt very fraternal.

Dave was all ears when I told him about Dataton and their new Watchout application for making digital multi-image shows. I told him that I would match his set of gear with one of my own; that way, when working together, there would be a back-up system.⁵⁸

Dave and I had both spent small fortunes upgrading to digital-Nikon camera systems. Now it was time for each of us to pony up another \$60K for Apple computers and Sanyo video projectors, and yet another \$10K for enough Watchout licenses to project a panoramic, five-screen show—**Dave’s favorite format for Nike shows.**

Pivotal picture reveals the transition from analogue to digital at Sound Images.

Yours Truly is futzing with the new Dataton Watchout rig (check out all the **wires... Oy Vey!**)

In the background **there’s the five-level** rack of 100 projectors used to stage the Nike Shox show at the Phoenix Opera House.



⁵⁸ Big shows often ran two sets of gear simultaneously, so that if the primary set had a problem, the director could switch to the back-up set.

Between me and Dave, Dataton got a sizeable order, as did Apple Computer and Mike Boer, at Slide & Sound Corp., who sold us Sanyo 2,000-watt LCD projectors at \$5K apiece (today, equivalent projectors cost about a tenth of that). Frey used his gear exclusively for Nike work; I used mine for experimentation and to make a demo show promoting my Watchout proficiency.

Learning Watchout was no cakewalk. The software that Mike Fahl wrote was intuitive. **However, the first versions of Watchout ran on an intranet of Apple computers; that's** where the challenges lay for me. I was a Microsoft Windows user. Working with Apple also meant new versions of my software applications, e.g., Photoshop, MS Office, etcetera.

Dataton chose Apple for their graphics capabilities, **which exceeded Microsoft's by a** considerable margin. A year later, those tables turned; when gaming became popular, developers chose to work with Windows machines because Microsoft commanded 90% of the PC market. At that point, Mike Fahl re-wrote Watchout for Windows machines and dropped Apple altogether. That really pissed off a lot of producers who, like me, who ended up with a bunch of Apple boat anchors.

Worse, Watchout produced inconsistent results using Windows machines (called Watchout servers)—what played well on one set of servers might not perform so well on another. **That wasn't Dataton's fault; the inconsistencies in Watchout playback reflected the myriad** differences between PC computers.

Apple computers—and all their components—were made by one company; PCs were made by dozens of companies and their internal components by scores more. Using automobiles as a metaphor, each brand and every model has slightly different driving characteristics; some were built for comfort, others for speed, and so on and so forth. And, just as cars had performance limits, so did computers; one computer handled graphics faster and **better while another excelled in spreadsheets. (Sorry, I couldn't resist that one.)**

Watchout was far from bug free when Dataton released it. Development of the revolutionary software was likely rushed things to be able to launch Watchout before **New Year's Eve 2000, meeting a deadline Mike made for himself, prompted by a challenge I** put to him in 1989—to develop digital slide shows before the new century.

Either that or Mike Fahl went as far as he could in the lab and decided to let Watchout loose—making producers Beta testers—and see what happened in the real-world environment.

What happened were weird things. As those performance anomalies were reported to Mike, he was very good about fixing them, right away. For example, during a Nike show that Steve Farris was running, one of the five Watchout servers would, on its own, move ahead to the next cue. It was a random failure. Steve never knew when it would happen.

During the intermission, we swapped out the server; but that didn't fix the problem. Steve sent Dataton a copy of the program, but they were unable to duplicate the problem and never came up with fix. Nor did we ever have that problem again; so, who knows, maybe it was noise in the electrical circuits?

That fluke was representative of gremlins associated with nearly every Watchout performance using Watchout V1.x and 2.x during the first year and a half.

Then, in 2001, Dataton released Watchout V3.0, a total re-write, made specifically for Windows machines. V3 was more robust and stable; however, the challenge of inconsistent playback continued because, as explained above, different computers had different performance characteristics.

2001 – ISSI – Simple Solutions

"What can go wrong, will go wrong."

Murphy's Law

Despite its foibles, Watchout rekindled my career as a screen designer for industrial shows. I was a unique talent, an expert in digital imaging and Watchout; I enjoyed a steady stream of business as a result.

Scott Maslowski and Pete Bjordahl became close colleagues with whom I partnered to produce content. Maslowski was my video guy and Bjordahl did motion-graphics.

Most of my early Watchout work came from Dave Frey. One of the first shows I put together for him was a corporate portrait of Silicon Valley chipmaker ISSI—Integrated Silicon Solutions Incorporated. Sound Images was booked solid with Nike work. Dave knew that, as a one-man band, I could make an image piece about the chip factory all by myself.

Although my job was billed through Sound Images—with a hefty markup—Frey gave me carte blanche and put me in direct contact with Jim du Bord, **ISSI's CEO, to whom I** reported. Jim delegated supervision and coordination of production to his gal Friday, Vicki Bogar, and ad manager Don Trask.

Vicki had a favorite piece of Moby music she wanted to use for the sound track of the **show; it wasn't anything like what I would have chosen, or that Bill Scream** might have produced.

There were also copyright issues (the song was on the top of the charts at the time). But the client indemnified me for any use-**rights violations; so, Vicki's selection made the final** cut. It was a droning piece of music without drama. I suggested that we skip a narrated script and let pictures do the talking, using graphics and titles to convey important facts.

I flew down to San Jose and spent the better part of a week photographing everything and everybody at ISSI. Back on Vashon Island, armed with a few thousand disparate pictures, I put together a slow-motion mindblower that was a kluge loosely framed around a series of *factoids*.



The ISSI show was given a distinctive look by enhancing the photos with mezzo-zoom transition effects (described earlier; see *2000—Sound Images—Nike Shox*). Adding motion graphics sequences by Pete Bjordahl was like putting icing on a cake.

Years later, Dave admitted to me that the show was way better than he had hoped for, given the measly budget he imposed on me. But I took the job knowing I wanted a Watchout portfolio piece out of the deal, and got one.

The show was approved without changes and staged at the Hilton Waikoloa Resort on the windward, northwest coast of Hawaii's **Big Island**. Steve Farris was tied up with the Nike shows; so, Dave joined me there to help run the show (and hang on to his client).

It was an important meeting for ISSI; besides staff they had invited some VIPs and the Press. The performance opened with my documentary corporate portrait, which was well received. Then Jim du Bord got up to give a keynote; his presentation was richly illustrated with fancy speaker support visuals that I put together with outtakes from the corporate-portrait show. I also shot candids of the meeting and inserted them into a short closing mindblower that was made on site, at the last minute (audiences loved looking at pictures of themselves).

A few minutes into his address a terrific thunderstorm interrupted the power, triggering the alarm on one of the six UPS [Uninterruptible Power Supply] batteries that were powering the Watchout rig. When the electrical surge first occurred, all the batteries beeped; as the power stabilized, they all stopped—except one.

We knew, from rehearsing DuBord, that he would carry on for another 20 minutes; we also knew that the offending battery pack would only hold for fifteen.

It was white knuckle stuff made more excruciating by the incessant beeping. In the end, it turned out to be a faulty alarm; the battery held fine and made it through to the end.

[Watch a video of the ISSI show at <https://vimeo.com/233146805>]

Dave arranged for us to stay at the Waikoloa for two extra days, as a reward for our successful accomplishment. He hired a car and we drove all over the Big Island, taking pictures. He spent the rest of the time wind-surfing while I shot the magnificent grounds of the resort; those scenes eventually made it to the screen in a Watchout demo show for NEC that I subbed (sub-contracted) from Dave Branson.

The NEC demo also re-purposed a substantial amount of content from the ISSI show as well as sequences made for my own Watchout demo. An extended motion-graphics sequence by Pete Bjordahl features prominently. The kluge is a mindblower aptly called *Pot Pourri*.

[Watch a video of the NEC Watchout demo show at <https://vimeo.com/233251389>]

2001 – Avcon – Northland Services

In the late spring of 2001, Doug Ethridge [Avcon] called with a king-sized photo project: a 10-day assignment for Northland Services, a shipping company that serviced Alaska from a terminal on the Duamish River south of Seattle. Ethridge usually shot his own stuff; but he already had another, larger client in the Alaskan freight business—Linden Shipping. Not wanting to bite the hand that fed him, Ethridge hedged his bet and farmed out the production work done for Northland. He was also returning a favor—a few years earlier, I gave him a cushy job shooting for the Swedish Match job.

The team Ethridge assembled for the Northland reportage job included Scott Maslowski (left) as producer, David Fox for video and me for stills. It surprised me that Ethridge had switched videographers; Dave Oglevie **had been Doug's** steady go-to guy for video. But I soon understood why: Fox was a creative videographer; he was also considerably younger and had more vitality than Oglevie.



Back then, stamina was important—even the smallest professional Beta-Cam video cameras were colossal compared to what people shoot with today. Bulky cameras did not encourage one to look for unusual perspectives—to bend to the occasion, so to speak. As a rule, videographers generally parked their heavy cameras on their shoulders or on tripods and shot everything from eye-level. Dave Fox was an exception; he used lenses creatively and knew how to compose shots. He was a video clone of me; had I shot video, **I'd have probably shot like him; we both sought unusual angles and perspectives.** Fox was also a video editor. He was mindful of how to cut from one scene to the next, in terms of continuity and screen direction; he thoroughly covered every scene with long shots, medium shots and close-ups. Watching him shoot, I could see the wheels turning in his head, pre-editing his coverage, assembling the scenes he was shooting. Fox, like Oglevie, was a CNN stringer. He was married to another CNN shooter, Diana Wilmar; together, they ran a video production service appropriately called Fox-Wilmar. Pooling their resources, the couple invested in the latest Beta-Cam technology. **Dave's camera was an \$80,000 investment;** God knows what their editing suite set them back.

Fox liked to travel and shoot light, but I travelled heavy. I was into stylizing and enhancing reality; my slogan was *Reality at Its Best*. On the Alaska shoot I travelled with a dozen lenses (from 8 mm to 1200 mm), two Nikon F3 cameras, a basic lighting kit (two flood lamps with reflectors and flags), and several hundred color filters. Virtually every scene was enhanced with some sort of filtration. For example, cloudy weather was filtered with shades of blue while orange was added to boost the color saturation of sunsets.

I sought to show things in ways people don't normally see them, using unusual lenses in ways that often-required elaborate set-ups.



One of my favorite shots was made by hanging a fisheye lens off the Douglas Bridge in Juneau, to capture a Northland container barge passing under it, through the Gastineau Channel.

The weather was socked in that day, everything looked blah.

It was for times like that, that I carried all those lenses and filters—to be able to add color **and drama to scenes that didn't have enough** natural character or visual excitement. In Juneau, I underexposed slightly and used CC 40 cyan filtration, making Mother Nature appear colder and more threatening (and the Northland voyagers thusly more “heroic”).

To digress for a moment, about filters: Filters were normally used on the front of a lens; but, you can't front mount anything on a fisheye because of its spherical shape as well as its 180-degree field of view; because fisheyes see *everything*, any front-filter system would result in pictures that looked like the camera was shooting through a tube.

Nikon's fisheye lenses (and early models of extreme telephoto lenses) came with a basic set of four built-in filters; red, orange, yellow—colors meant to darken the sky in black-and-white photography—and a clear, 1A filter used to block UV light.

The Nikon 8mm fisheye lens I used was modified by Marty Forscher, at Professional Camera Service, in New York. He added a collar around the rear lens element to hold little half-inch [1.25 cm] disks of gelatin filters. Forscher also adapted my long lenses for rear-mounted gels. Front filters degraded the focus of extreme telephotos and, in large sizes, cost several hundred dollars each.

I travelled with three sets of filters, made in the diameters required for Forscher's adaptations. Gel sets had 50 colors including:

- “Decamired” values
- 81A-EF, 85A-D
- Six shades each of primary light colors (red, green and blue)
- Six shades each of secondary colors (magenta, cyan, and yellow)
- Five special colors for Infrared film (87, 47, 73, 64, 29).

I cut the 150 little disks from a larger set of 3 X 3-inch [7.5 X 7.5 cm] Kodak gelatin filters.

In addition to the gels, I had two sets of small-sized, rear-mount, glass filters. One was for selected long lenses and the other for the super-wides.

Some Nikon telephotos had a rear slot for using of 39 mm, screw-in, glass filters. For those telephoto lenses, I ordered custom-made 39 mm colored-glass filter disks from Tiffen Optical in New York.

Nikon's extremely wide lenses (8 mm, 13 mm, 15 mm and 16 mm) came with four small, rear filters with *bayonet* mounts (red, orange, yellow and 81A); for those lenses, I had Sevärt Optiks (an optician across the street from my Hornsgatan studio in Stockholm) make custom bayonet filters; they cut small disks from larger filters, then fit them into empty bayonet mounts (made by removing the glass elements from available bayonet filters).

All-in-all, the special filter sets I carried with me were worth more than the lenses themselves.

For shots of people I tried to keep the lens range as long as possible. Telephoto lenses are how Hollywood shoots dialogue scenes; long lenses throw the background out of focus (an effect called *bokeh*). That makes the subject stand out more clearly.

With telephoto lenses, the viewer is *pulled into the picture*; **there's a more intimate feel**. Short and medium range telephoto lenses (from 85 mm to ~350 mm) make people look best. Wide-angle lenses distort facial features in odd ways—noses look longer and eyes look more deeply set.

My favorite portraiture lens was the Nikkor 200-400 mm zoom. However, it was too heavy to hand-hold very long and needed to be steadied by a tripod, clamp, or other support. That meant more rigging, more time. Eventually, even the little bit of extra time it took to **mount lenses on tripods and fit them with filters got on everyone's nerves. That it put me** in direct conflict with David Fox; he was a run-and-gun shooter, not a set-up guy.

Poor Scott was caught in the middle. Fox was always finished first, panting to move on, putting the pressure on me to hurry-up. The whole affair became an ugly rivalry.

Ethridge never said much about my work on that job; I'm not sure why. Doug's shooting style was more like Oglevie's than mine or Fox's. They went for bullet-proof basics; they either didn't see or didn't want to futz around with any "creative" shooting.

Had Ethridge been on location with us in Alaska, he might have argued that coverage was more important than stylization. Today I would agree with him. Besides extra shooting time, my six cases of gear were causing other problems—it was hard to fit it all the gear into the small float-planes and helicopters that flew us to remote parts of Alaska.

The expedition took us to Ketchikan, Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, Tanana (at the north end of the Yukon River) and Unalaska (way out west, on the peninsula).

The shoot began at the Northland Services terminal in Seattle. The idea was that we would photograph the loading of shipping barges there, then follow them to their various destinations in Alaska.

The shoot got off to a wet start; the day scheduled for the Seattle terminal shoot was a soaker—cold and dreary with incessant hard rain that poured down on me from the time I started until I finally left, around midnight—a miserable experience.



I stayed well into the night because it was the best way to get dramatic pictures of otherwise dull subjects (cargo containers).

In rainy weather, wet things glisten, especially at night. Around the Northland terminal, the headlights of container-handling vehicles spot-lit the stacks of glistening containers, setting them off against the velvet-black sky.

I got lucky when the rain storm cleared for a half hour, revealing a full moon. No SFX necessary!

To heighten the rain effect, I used fog filters on the lenses. They diffused the light, made the storm appear more severe. They also created little halos around lights and highlights. I also dabbed Vaseline onto the fog filters, to simulate the look of big water droplets. **By using Vaseline, the drops wouldn't move, nor would they evaporate, allowing me time to compose the scenes more accurately.** The Vaseline water drops were **positioned in patterns that focused the viewers' attention on the subjects.**

The most difficult part of the assignment was making rudimentary things look impressive. Northland had no special gear; in fact, their operations were totally basic. They used a (very) basic crane and a few longshoremen to load as much cargo onto a barge as was humanly possible, and then some.

Watching their dock hands load for the Alaska voyage was like watching a jigsaw puzzle being put together. Modern containerized boats load in little time because everything is in standardized boxes that are easy to stack. But Northland carried every conceivable kind of cargo, including shipping containers, palletized goods, industrial machinery, even vehicles, like school buses and tractors.

How to get all those sundry goods lashed onto the deck of a barge was an art drawn from brawn. It was hard to capture the ingenuity and hard work of the crew in still pictures—especially because the finished stack looked like it had been put together by the Beverly Hillbillies; **you couldn't imagine that a lot of planning went into what looked like a disorganized hodgepodge.** However, at four stories high, it was nonetheless impressive, just for sheer size.

It took a very long time to load the barge that rainy night. The wet decks were slippery and dangerous. The slow process that gave the crew and I plenty of time to get to know each other. They were reticent to be photographed at first; but, as dusk became night, when they saw I was serious about documenting them, they actually started allowing me to pose them in dramatic ways. During our scuttlebutt, between shots, the dock hands **told me tales of loads that weren't packed right, that went down in storms, sometimes taking the tug along with it.**

David Fox and Scott left early that day; Fox wasn't prepared for the heavy rain. I had packed some waterproof scuba bags for my Nikons; it could rain as hard as it wanted to; in fact, the more rain, the better. That was the only day I got more points than Fox.

Our crew left for Alaska a week later. The trip was timed to coincide with the arrival of the first barges in Alaska.

I recall being impressed with the sheer size of Alaska. We flew nearly four hours from Seattle to Anchorage.

Along the way, we passed over precious little but forested mountains and tundra.

Anchorage was an outpost of civilization, a small city of ~250,000, surrounded by wilderness.

If you couldn't find what you wanted or needed in Anchorage, you were SOL (Shit Out of Luck).
Ha!



In Anchorage, we shot a fuel truck delivering oil to a family living in a suburban home. There was absolutely nothing special about it. Fox got his stuff done in less than an hour. I struggled to find a creative shot but gave up.

Northland put us up in the best hotel which was maybe three stars at best in terms of amenities. Everything was *basic in Alaska*. **I didn't want burgers for dinner and went out** in search of a real eatery. Eventually I found a fabulous place run by an energetic young **couple who served fusion cuisine as fine as you'd find in Seattle or Vancouver; and it was** the only place in town with a decent wine list.

After dinner, I went exploring, looking for some action; the best Anchorage had to offer was a pool hall with a country-western band; it was full of drunks; I left well before midnight.

The next morning, we made the hour-long hop flight from Anchorage to Fairbanks; the amount of snow there was more than I had ever seen; 10-foot-high [3-meter] berms lined every road and path. Those berms were bigger than the biggest ones I had seen in Montréal, when I took Marion Roach there, twenty years earlier, for a winter-weekend tryst.

Fairbanks depressed me. Indigent alcoholic First Nations people dominated large sections of the city; the rest was a white, middle-class enclave, like a mall-oriented Mid-West town. Set in the middle of that mundane mass was the University of Fairbanks, known internationally for its astrophysics department.⁵⁹

We called Fairbanks home for three days, during which time we photographed two outpost towns along the Tanana River, making day trips to them by float planes. The first was Tanana, one of the most remote outposts of civilization that I have ever been to—a small community, of log houses with rusty, corrugated-metal roofs, at the end of the line, literally.

Tanana was the last outpost at the confluence of the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, a small town with 341 people of mixed breed, a combination of First Nations and white explorer/trapper stock. In the old days, those people lived off the land; now, they lived off the dole of the Alaska state government.



We were flown to Tanana by float plane. (That was the time when all my gear really got in the way.)

⁵⁹ When Ethridge and I put together the Aurora Experience plan for Holland-America, our show was based on research done by the University of Fairbanks.

It was a long flight over seemly endless miles of wilderness— vast areas of life as it was before man. The flight reminded me of flying over the boreal rainforests of Borneo with Hita in 1993. The scenery uplifted my spirits.

When the float plane touched down in the tiny town of Tanana, it pulled up close to a river-**edge landing, where the barge would dock and offload a year's worth of supplies. (Imagine that, for an entire year you get to go shopping once... could you do that?)**

It goes without saying that the Northland-barge delivery took priority over everything else for the local population. I learned that they had run out of beer two months earlier (boo hoo!).

For the residents of Tanana, our reportage crew were like Moon Men. They never encountered anything like our team and were nervous, distrustful. **Dave and Scott didn't** know how to handle that, I had to show them.

Years earlier, I learned how to get photo subjects to do anything you want when I was shooting industrial reportage for Owens Corning Fiberglas. I knew that one had to grovel to gain respect; one had to be humble **and lower oneself beneath one's judges.**

So, it was I who first waded through the thick swamp grass at the edge of the river, to get a wide-angle perspective of the scene, framed with riverside foliage to emphasize the rural aspects of the locale. I got some great shots, but paid for the privilege.

There is a reason why the mosquito **is the popularly proclaimed State "bird" of Alaska.** The mosquitoes in Tanana were as bad as the black flies I encountered shooting Holden cars in Australia for Lindsay Rodda [Sonargraphics].

There were thousands of mosquitos—an overwhelming amount—they went straight for my face and the back of my neck. I remember using my left hand as a windshield wiper, to keep the buggers away, while trying to operate the camera single-handedly with my right. That mostly worked, but there were certain shots where I just had to let myself get munched on, until it got absolutely unbearable.

As if the mosquitos weren't enough, everyone in the town was wearing a baseball cap with a white rag clipped onto the visor with one of those old-fashioned wooded clothes pins. I thought it was a style thing at first; but, when I asked anyone to remove the rag for my pictures, they refused, each and every one.

Perplexed, I sought out our producer, Scott, for a tête-à-tête. He had established some **sway with the village chiefs. They informed Scott that they wouldn't remove the rags** because of the mosquitos. It turned out that the rags were actually sheets of Bounce, a laundry product with a strong and lasting odor that repels mosquitos. In the end, I was able to pay a couple of locals to work for me as models; \$20 each got me the directable talent I needed.

Our next shoot was at Nenana, a slightly bigger outpost town (population 394) about 200 miles upstream of Tanana, at the confluence of the Nenana and Tanana rivers.

Although less than an hour apart by float plane, the differences between the two baby burgs was notable. Tanana was a depressing place; the former trading post was populated mostly by down-on-their-luck Native Americans [79%]. The median income was about \$25,000. The people there gave the impression that they had largely given-up on life.

Contrasting Tanana, Nenana's population was 41% Native American and 50% white with a median income of \$40,000; the well-kept town was settled by railroad workers, men of some ambition. There was a sense of optimism and pride amongst its people, who benefitted from a lively, albeit small, economy based on government work and the Nenana Ice Classic.⁶⁰

The Nenana townspeople's civic pride (and no mosquitoes) made our job considerably easier. **By now, I largely gave up trying to be overly creative; it wasn't worth the hassle I** was getting from our crew. I left most of my gear at our hotel in Fairbanks and shot with a basic reportage kit—three zoom lenses and two camera bodies.

From Fairbanks, our next excursion was to Nome, 521 miles northwest, a town made famous by the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. In 1898, gold was discovered in Anvil Creek. **Nome's population swelled to nearly 10,000. Mining remained the town's sole industry,** but the population declined to 1,500 by 1950 before bouncing back to 3,497 before we visited.

Like all the other outposts we had been to, there was little to photograph besides **Northland's operations. We were supposed to be reporting on local color but there was** precious little of that; *au contraire*, the local white population dressed like bums, and the Native Americans were all destitute alcoholics.

The most difficult shoot was 1,529 miles from Fairbanks, out on the peninsula, in what seemed to be the end of the world— an outpost called Unalaska; that was yet another depressing experience. By then I realized that Northland was a critical link in the supply **chain for many communities, vital for their very survival. I hadn't realized there were so** many of those little outposts. I wondered, why would anyone want to live at the edge of civilization, in a frozen world that is dark half of the year? How did they get there in the **first place? Why didn't they pack up and move?**

Finishing up our assignment, we shot in Ketchikan on the way back to Seattle. The place reminded me of my days in Honolulu selling Hawaiian Panoramas to tourists. Life in Ketchikan revolved around tourist cycles, i.e., the arrival and departure of cruise ships.

After bivouacking at our hotel, we went you to shoot the town; but it was totally deserted. We had a hard time just finding a cup of coffee for ourselves; when we did, the proprietor told us to just hang on for a few hours until the cruise ship arrived. Geez, was he right.

⁶⁰ Wikipedia: The Nenana Ice Classic dates back to the spring of 1917, when railroad workers, bored from the long winter, set up a tripod in the middle of the frozen Tanana River. They took bets on when the tripod would fall through the melting ice. Eventually, the betting became a statewide event that now raises money for numerous organizations and local charities. ... The competition is run as follows: a large striped tripod is placed on the frozen Tanana River and connected to a clock. The winner is whoever comes closest to guessing the precise time when the ice beneath weakens to the point that the tripod moves and stops the clock. Interest in the pool has increased and attracts bettors statewide. This lottery has paid out nearly \$10 million in prize money, with the winning pool in recent years being near \$300,000. ... The Nenana Ice Classic administration provides employment for nearly 100 locals during the counting and tabulation of entries for the Tanana River ice breakup.

When the ship arrived, the townspeople and shop owners suddenly appeared and opened their shutters. The town came alive as the passengers left their luxury liners to explore (shop). A few hours later, when the passengers returned to the ship, the town closed up again. Ketchikan was in perfect synch with the cruisers; like a prayer plant, responding to the sun.

2001 – In-laws Visit – Fraternal Fishing

Anna's parents stayed with us for nearly two months the next summer.

I did my best to remain relatively sober but blew it on enough occasions that the gleam came off their image of me.

I had a lot of work to keep me occupied and Anna had her job at the Sedgwick Road advertising agency to deal with; so, we gave her parents keys to the house and luxury liner, **inviting them to explore Vashon's many tourist activities** on their own.

Zbigniew liked to fish; it was his passion; he got out there every day with tackle that he **borrowed from me, tackle that I hadn't used for thirty years. The fact that I had been a fisherman drew Z'Big closer to me.**

To digress for a moment, about fishing: When I was growing up, in Douglaston, I fished several times a week, trolling for striped bass with my neighbor and mentor, Bob Banning; those were some of the best days of my young life; he took me on trips all around Little Neck Bay, to the best fishing spots; my favorite of them was at the farthest point of land across the bay from Douglaston, a peninsula inhabited by the US Army, called Fort Totten. The shoreline around the peninsula was rocky; piles upon piles of huge rounded boulders protected the Fort and provided a marine habitat for migrating striped bass.

Later, Bob taught me the art of surf casting; I began casting for stripers along the shoreline of Douglaston, which, like Fort Totten, was similarly strewn with boulders. The idea was to cast your lure between the boulders avoiding getting your hook caught in the hairy seaweed that grew on them. Banning used lures that his father made by hand; he called them "Father's Feathers;" he and his dad had plans to sell them to tackle shops out on Long Island and in Sheepshead Bay [Brooklyn]; but, the old man passed away before that happened.

When Banning and I fished together, each of us used a different lure, to see what the fish were biting on; usually the Father's Feathers did the trick; but, occasionally, I connected with a Striper Swiper, a six-inch [15-cm] plug shaped like a white fish with a blue tail. That plug was my favorite for catching bluefish along the Jersey shore, near Atlantic Highlands.

Bryan King, AVL's sales manager, had a beach house there; he invited me out during the bluefish run in late August; that was one of my top 10 fishing experiences. The ocean had a 10-foot [~3-meter] surf that afternoon; the towering waves curled dramatically as they rolled toward the shore; the late-afternoon sun shown through them; they glowed from within, silhouetting any fish.

I could see the schools of bluefish racing back and forth in the waves, chasing small baitfish; I could see when one of them chased my shiny-silver lure (I was using a 10-ounce [~283-gram] diamond jig with a triple gang-hook; it flashed brightly in the sunlit surf). Many fish chased the lure, but most veered off and darted back to the school when the jig got too close to shore and the waves started to break. It was so exciting that I kept at it, casting all the way through sundown. I only landed three blue fish that afternoon, but they were fair-sized ones—about 6-pounds each [2.7 kg].

When I got back to his beach house, Bryan was already three sheets to the wind; after I cleaned the fish and put them on ice, we went down to the Quay for dinner; we met Chuck Kappenman there; Mike LaRue was tending bar; he made sure our glasses were never empty.

Later that summer was the AVL's annual fishing trip, for their favored reps and VIPs. On the first of those trips, in 1976, I managed to hook a seven-foot-long [210 cm] shark. I was the only one to catch a fish on that trip; how that was done qualifies as true fishing lore.

I drove down to Atlantic Highlands the day before the AVL event, at Bryan King's invitation. I spent the night at his crib, an upscale Jersey-shore beach house. I spent the afternoon casting for bluefish. We took one to the Quay—AVL's beach-bar watering hole—where they cooked it for our dinner. That was after a few cocktails.

I was still drinking Tanqueray Gin martinis in those days; Bryan matched me, drink-for-drink, with vodka martinis—doubles. We were half in the bag when we got back to his house. Nightcaps of brandy went on well past midnight. Seldom have I been as plastered as I was that night.

Bryan was in worse shape; his sonorous snoring kept me up most of the night. In the morning I felt like death warmed over; the tequila and beers served on the fishing trip didn't help.

AVL's chartered fishing boat cruised 50 miles out to sea, so far that the Jersey shore disappeared over the horizon. The ocean was unusually calm that summer afternoon. The sun beat down on the water producing a fierce glare and slowly-rolling 3-foot [~1 meter] waves rocked the boat gently but incessantly. I started to feel seasick; the recommended remedy was—more drinks. Ha!

We were “chum” fishing that afternoon, for sharks; that's done by chumming the water with bait fish mixed with a lot of fish blood and guts—a positively disgusting and foul-smelling mix. We lowered their lines into the chummed water to a depth of about 30 feet [~9 meters] using foot-long mackerel as bait, each rigged with a “gang” hook [an assemblage of three hooks]. However, for whatever reason, the sharks weren't taking the bait; copious amounts of more chum failed to attract them, either.

As the hours lapsed, so did the consciousness of me and most of the rest. The AVL boys were the hardest drinking bunch I've ever encountered; I did my best to keep up with them; but the rolling sea and the smell of the chum finally overcame me and from my perch on the bow I blew lunch into the sea. Yuk!

Geez was I embarrassed; but, a moment later a shark took my bait and I managed to hook it. The ensuing battle was hardly epic; sharks aren't "fighters;" they don't thrash about and break water, like the blue-water sport fish you see on TV. Instead, sharks lunge and reeling them in is like hauling-up a refrigerator.

When the shark
was finally—and
with some
difficulty—hailed
on board, the
captain set to killing
it with a club.

I protested, I
wanted to release it;
but the captain
explained that it
was too dangerous
to try to remove the
hooks from the
throat of the shark.



Photo by Jon Bromberg.

After dispatching the poor creature, they were going to toss it overboard, but I insisted that the shark instead be cleaned and dressed for eating. The others got a hearty laugh out of that; however, I took home about twenty-five pounds [~10 kilos] of shark filets and found them strong-flavored but edible when served-up Chinese style, with a ginger-soy sauce.

Aside from those AVL fishing trips, my fishing gear stayed in the closet from the time I was 17 until I got to Vashon, at 47.

When I moved to Vashon, the salmon run was in progress. From the ferry dock, I could see fishing skiffs trolling off the north end of Vashon; the site of the trolling skiffs whet my appetite to go fishing again.

My original Vashon plans included getting a little boat to fish offshore, around the Island; **I never got one and am unable to answer why, except to say that owning a boat isn't all fun and games.** Boat ownership comes with a lot of work—and costs.

Without a boat, I fished off the old ESSO pier at Tramp Harbor; there were always a few fishermen there, even in the dead of winter. I never caught anything. But it was fun trying.



In the summer, the waters around the Tramp Harbor pier would fill with phosphorescent plankton. Anna and I discovered that one night when we were driving home from a party on Maury Island. We saw bright lights at the end of the pier and went to investigate.

Photos: dock, Anne Gordon; fisherman, Tim Carney.

There were two families of Asian fishermen jigging for squid [calamari]; it was interesting watching them; but, the real fun was running along the Tramp Harbor pier, watching the plankton light-up, triggered by the vibrations of our footsteps.

If we, er, *tramped* our feet hard enough, it would trigger a circle of light twenty feet [6.2 meters] in diameter.

I tried fishing in a couple of other spots on Vashon, casting from the shore, but never got even a single hit; so, the fishing tackle went into the storage room again, until Zbigniew Raus arrived.

When he saw all my fishing gear, Z'big was in heaven. But he soon learned that fishing was lousy on Vashon Island unless you had a boat, or a friend with one; and, even that didn't always work. ⁶¹

Undaunted, Z'big switched to crabbing off the ESSO pier at Tramp Harbor; it was a great spot for Dungeness crabs. **Z'big ate crabs every day; he caught them in the morning and by lunchtime had them cooked up in a 10-gallon lobster pot.**

I think one of the reasons Z'Big liked to fish was to get away from his wife, Bozena.

She was a good woman and strong-willed; but she was afflicted by a severe case of Bi-Polar disorder.

Bozena was taking lithium to keep her from falling into a depression. The lithium kept her in bed most of the time and Bozena said that the stuff dulled her, making it hard to have fun; so, sometimes she skipped the lithium—**that's when things would get "interesting."**

Bozena's moods swung like a pendulum, three months down, then three months up. Sometimes, when she was on the up end of her mood arc, she would stop taking her meds.

At those times, Bozena was a bundle of energy and ambition; she became super-social and took every excuse to entertain, talking your ear off in the process. Bozena was **boggled by the party environment at my Vashon studio; I'm sure she tossed her pills down the toidey;** she was flying the entire time they spent with us.

[Spoiler Alert: Bozena Raus died in a house fire shortly after Anna and I divorced.]

⁶¹ Hita von Mende's nephew Chris Terp (her sister, Elfie von Mende's first marriage was to George Terp) took me out in the family skiff twice, trolling for salmon off Vashon's north end. We tried everything, but got skunked both times.

2001 – Mom Dies – Anna Recoils

An undercurrent for me was the deterioration of the relationship I had with my mother.

She and I had been on the outs since I was twelve and we had a showdown about going to church. That was the time we slugged each other.

I could not deal with Mom's narcissism. I watched the effect her dominance had on my father—all of us, actually.

Her self-centered manipulation of us and the events in surrounding **the family debilitated one's** ambition to participate.

Dad was like a beaten dog; he totally capitulated to her demands and commands. I just stayed as far away from her as possible. During the years I lived far away, Mom disappeared off my radar screen.

However, when I moved to Vashon she re-appeared, like a storm on the horizon.



Happier days: with Mom and Dad at the Novotel Hotel in New York city, 1987.

Mom was a financial train wreck happening in slow motion. Even when Dad was alive, her spending was out of control. Mom had no sense of reality; she lived on a hope and a prayer—her so-called faith in the Lord. Her vision of the world was like that of a submariner peering through a periscope; she saw only what she wanted; other realities—and their consequences—were denied.

When my father died, in 1989, she found herself unable to afford the family house in Douglaston and fell victim to a predatory loan made by Long Island City Savings and Loan Association.

That bank was tied in with the famous S&L [Savings and Loan] scandal that brought down **the American economy in 1987; but they kept up the predatory practice well into the '90s.** Thus, the Long Island City S&L gave Mom—who had no income other than Social Security—a third mortgage. It was a hopeless situation.

Mom eventually went bankrupt and got thrown out of her house.

To digress for a moment, so I can vent a rant about our corrupt, credit economy: There's magic at the heart of the banking business. The magic is making of money out of thin air.

Money comes into existence when the Fed writes a check to the US Treasury to buy bonds—US T Bills (Treasuries). Of note, the Fed's check is drawn on an account that has nothing in it. The Treasury then owes the Fed the amount that it borrowed [the principal of the loan, abbreviated *P*] plus interest [the Fed Rate, abbreviated *I*].

The Ponzi is built on a formula: $P < P + I$. Principal is less than principal plus interest.

The Fed (and most other Central Banks) create money whenever the government(s) need it, in whatever amounts are needed. The dollars created by the Fed have debt attached to them—the Fed's interest on their loan(s), ultimately payable to the stockholders of the Federal Reserve.

Of further note: Nobody knows who owns the Fed; that is a closely guarded secret; but the Fed is a private corporation that pays its stockholders an annual dividend of 6%.

When the Treasury spends the money, it borrowed from the Fed, those funds make their way to banks across the country. Those Banks make money in like manner—by issuing loans. For every dollar deposited, a bank can loan nine more (approximately); that's called *fractional-reserve banking*; it gives banks financial *leverage*.

For every dollar loaned, a dollar plus interest needs to be paid back. To simplify: Let's go back to the first dollar created by the Fed. The Treasury was on the hook to pay back that single dollar with interest. Where did that interest come from? More dollars had to be created (to pay the interest)—and those new dollars came with their own interest.

When one takes out a bank loan, that money comes into existence when you sign your name—the money you receive from the bank is conjured out of thin air. (The money isn't actually printed, it's just a balance-sheet entry.) Your signature on the mortgage makes you liable to the bank for the money you borrowed plus interest. If you don't pay, the bank takes your real estate and, *voilà*, gets *something* (your house) *for nothing* (“money” conjured from thin air).

As you can see, it is a perpetual-Ponzi—new money must be printed or the system collapses. And, all that (fiat) money is backed by nothing more than the ~~armed forces~~ “full faith” of the US government. In the old days, paper money was backed by *real money*—gold and silver—but not anymore.

[For a more detailed explanation of the Fed Ponzi, refer to the Hidden Secrets of Money diagram. See Appendix: *Money – The Fed | Ponzi Diagram*.]

In the lead-up to her traumatic eviction, my sisters and I offered to help Mom get a fresh start, if she would just come out to the West Coast where we lived. Kathy and I offered to help her find a place on Vashon Island and Barbara offered to contribute to that cause. The idea was that Mom could sell the house, pay off the three debts, and invest the remaining funds (not inconsiderable) to provide a nest egg that would suffice to keep her financially afloat, with a little help from us three kids.

However, Mom steadfastly refused to leave Douglaston. She started asking friends and relatives for loans; they, in turn, started making hate calls to my sisters and I, telling us how despicable they thought we were for not taking care of our mother. One guy even **threatened my life. (I keep the answering machine tape with that threat to this day... just in case.)**

After Mom got thrown out of the house, Sue Bottomly, a close family friend, helped get her settled in an apartment in Bayside, 10 miles [16 km] from Douglaston, where rents were way more affordable. Mom hated it; she turned to drink and got evicted after a fire in the apartment nearly killed her. Sue then placed her in a State-run nursing home for the indigent, in the Rockaway Beach section of Brooklyn; she holed-up there for five years before dying on September 4, 2001, just a week before the infamous 911 attack on New York's World Trade Center.

My sisters and I all made our separate ways to New York for Mom's funeral. **We stayed at two different motels in Bayside.**

Before the funeral, we had to deal with the stuff Mom left behind. There wasn't very much. When we got to the nursing home in Rockaway, Queens, two polite but contrite nurses handed us one of those black-plastic trash bags with what they claimed were **Mom's last possessions. We doubted the nurses' voracity; we knew that Mom had gone** into the nursing home with a TV, a sound system, a slide projector and a bunch of other stuff; the nurses likely took those things. That put my sisters off but I was relieved, after all, who would have wanted the stuff?

There was only a small contingent of family and friends at the church service; nothing like **the overflow crowd at my father's funeral twelve years earlier. Most of Mother's friends** and peers had perished or moved away; none of the few remaining relatives were close with her any longer.

I'm not sure Mom had many friends when she died. I can empathize with her situation now, being older, having few friends left of my own and all of them being far away. One can learn to do anything, including live alone.

My ~~sisters~~ mother wanted a traditional funeral. She was buried in a casket (closed, **fortunately**) **with some of her husband's ashes, reserved for the occasion by my** thoughtful sisters. Her funeral was held in Great Neck at All Saints Church.

During her internment, deep dark storm clouds gathered in a sky that hung low over the graveyard, adding considerable drama. As her casket was lowered into the ground, lightning **flashed with a thunderous roar; the skies poured rain upon us. There weren't** enough umbrellas; the weather had turned bad suddenly, surprising everyone; most got thoroughly drenched; many outfits were ruined, including my own.⁶²

⁶² I wore a suit made for me by the tailors at Old English, **a gentlemen's haberdashery in Brussels; I called it my death suit** and intended to be wearing it when I was cremated, and at every funeral I attended before that; it was a black worsted wool with a discreet, ultra-thin, dark-red pin stripe; the soaking shrank it just enough that it would never fit me again; when it was made, I was never thinner. Lesson: have your clothes made before you lose weight.

Just as quickly as it came, the storm went; the sun burst forth and everyone walked from the soggy cemetery under sunny skies. My sisters and I concluded that the storm was Mom, up in the heavens, shaking her fist at us. That was September 10th, one day before the infamous 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.

After the funeral, my sisters suggested having a commemorative dinner at **Louis's**, a favorite fish joint out in Port Washington, about 10 miles [16 km] east of Great Neck. I backed out; I needed to be at LaGuardia Airport, to catch an 8:00 am United Airlines flight the next morning, to Denver, where I was to make a connection to Seattle. However, they **went and subsequently sent me a Louis's tee shirt; I have yet to wear it and should** probably have it framed.

Had I gone to dinner with my sisters I would have likely have drank too much and might have missed or postponed my return flights. Had that happened, it would have altered things substantially. I might have ended up joining my sisters on a cross-country Odyssey, driving a rental-**van back to Kathy's house on Vashon Island, full of Mom's** stuff—boxes full of family pictures and other memorabilia that Sue Bottomly kept for Mom in a storage unit.

[**Spoiler Alert: I never got to see those pictures and don't think my sisters kept many of them. The pictures weren't captioned and my sisters couldn't figure out who was who or what part they played in the family's historical record.**]

Most of the family's archival pictures and home movies got tossed when Mom was thrown out of the house. There were several steamer trunks full of them; I never saw those either. However, the quantity of stuff my sisters managed to save was impressive.

Kathy started showing me some of the pictures at her place one evening after dinner. The occasion was some time after **Lou's death and Anna's departure. It was Christmastime;** sister Barbara was visiting from California; I believe her ex-beau, Wayne Olds, was there, too. We just scratched the surface of the pictures.

Pretty soon after that my sister Kathy morphed into a new person calling herself Patti Pimento. Without saying goodbye, Kathy moved away to Los Angeles, to live with sister Barbara. I never saw her again, to say nothing about those historical pictures.

Mom's death came as a shock to Anna. All she knew was that Mom was stuffed away in a poor house and that neither I nor my sisters seemed to care. Our seeming disregard for our mother must have disappointed and confused Anna. Her family took in their grandma when she got cancer and cared for her at home for nearly two years; she was there when I visited Anna in Rawicz. Surely, Anna saw me as the two-face I was. But it was the death **of Kathy's husband Lou that really shook Anna.**

Lou looked down on me; he saw me as a drinker fixated on younger women. Ha!

What do they say, "It takes one to know one?" Although Lou was a teetotaller, he married my sister, Kathy, who was 35 years younger than him. I think Lou felt sorry for Anna; he was exceptionally grandfatherly with her. Her feeling was mutual; Anna felt close to Lou.

Before Lou died (of prostate cancer complications) there were a series of ER episodes and an extended period of home care that turned my sister Kathy into a hospice nurse-maid. **Lou's extended decline really put a strain on Kathy. Anna took note of that.**

One day, on the ferry line for the Vashon crossing, Kathy and Lou ended up in the queue adjacent to Anna and I. We all decided to go up on deck and sit together for the crossing. **Lou just about collapsed and, as he did, a look of fear came across Anna's face and her gaze turned to me.** I knew then that my goose was cooked; there was a thirty-five-year age difference between Kathy and Lou, and thirty-years between Anna and I. I believe **that, seeing Lou collapse, Anna visualized herself in Kathy's shoes, nursing a dying** Douglas.

Things were never quite the same between Anna and me after that.

I started working harder to keep our boat afloat. We took a weekend trip up to Vancouver, Canada;⁶³ it was to be a kind of second honeymoon. Anna fell in love with the place, while I was reminded of my days living in North Vancouver with Sandra, in the '80s.

We stayed at the classic Sylvia Hotel on English Bay, **in the city's West End. Anna decided** she wanted to move to Vancouver; she asked me to seriously think about it. Between the **lines of Anna's suggestion was an admission that she didn't want to live on Vashon Island** any longer; working at Sedgwick Road had changed her into a city girl; **she wasn't the** country girl from Rawicz any longer.

2001 – 9/11 – Diversions

The day after Mom's funeral, it was a crisp, sunny September morning.

After dealing with heavy traffic on the Cross-Island Parkway and more delays returning my rental car I arrived to LaGuardia Airport late; but, I made my flight—there was no TSA to deal with then; I just grabbed my tickets and ran to the gate like a madman.

From my window seat, I watched the ground crew readying the plane for departure, paying attention to the baggage loading, to make sure mine made the flight. All appeared well; but we seemed to be lingering at the gate too long. I overheard some mutterings to the effect that a small plane had crashed into the World Trade Center; finally, the flight finally took off for Denver; the excessive delay was forgotten—until we arrived at Stapleton Airport.

In the terminal, I noticed that all flights had been cancelled; passengers were being told to leave the airport. Leave the airport? You can imagine the pandemonium. There was a mile-long line at every car rental desk; every bus to Denver was booked; many people **didn't know what to do, nor did the authorities have many suggestions; just "get out of the airport."**

⁶³ Vancouver B.C. is a uniquely situated city; beaches and mountains surround a cosmopolitan central core; it's frequently rated one of the top five "most livable" cities.

Fortunately, I had friends in Denver. First, I called Joey Porcelli, **but didn't connect**. Then I called John Whitcomb; he answered and confirmed what I heard about the attack in New York. Whitcomb came to pick me up at the airport and welcomed me into his home.

I ended up staying with he and his wife, Lana, for a week (all flights were grounded for about that long). We spent most of the time in their basement suite, stoned on dynamite Denver weed, watching the news unfold on television; in between, John extrapolated about his latest crazy ideas and Lana bitched at him for being a dreamer.

John and I had come a long way since 1982, when I visited him at Pran AV's offices in New Braunfels and played my 30-projector *Xanadu* show at a local-chapter event for the Association for Multi-Image.

During that week, the two of us connected much more than we ever had, personally and professionally. John built-up an audiovisual-consulting business that he called Evolutia; he consulted for Evans Consoles in Calgary, Alberta [Canada]; they were consolidating a NOC [Network Operations Center] for Canadian oil giant Encana.

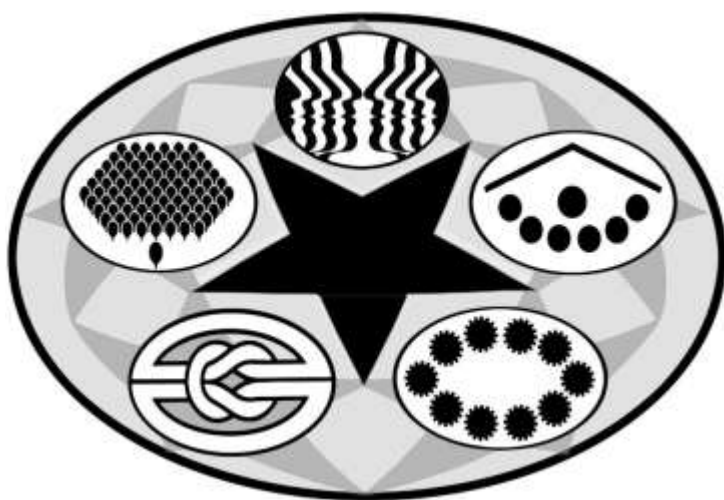


In 2000, Whitcomb sold Evolutia and formed a new company, Stellar Vision Holding Company, for which I designed a logo with the S is holding the V, seen at right.

Stellar Vision's mission was originally the development of John's concept for Super Site, a totally secure— *five nines* [99.999%]—technology park for IT companies.

His plans covered everything: back-up power; disaster preparedness, you name it. I was mightily impressed. The fact that we were coming out of the 911 terror attack **made John's idea even more relevant.**

Stellar Vision logo candidate, 2002



I put together a graphic depicting Super Site's **five components surrounding a central STAR**—System to Assess Risk:

- Design Assist
- Build Assist
- Meeting Assist
- SCORE – Strategic Critical Operations Reporting Exercise
- SCOPE – Strategic Communications Operations Performance Evaluation

Super Site combo-logo candidate, 2004.

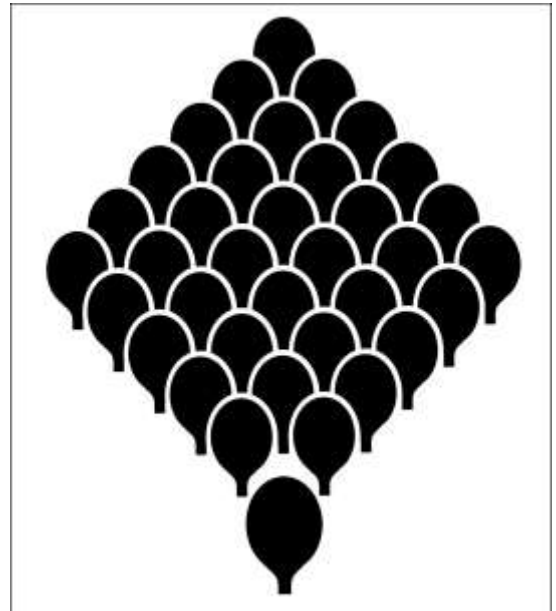
Stellar Vision morphed into a series of other ventures that led to Meeting Sciences, for whom I **designed another logo (right); it's my favorite of the three, for its simplicity.**

Doing the logos proved to me that I am no Herb Lubalin, nor Saul Bass; **symbolic graphics don't** come easily to me; probably because I think too literally, too, well, *pictorially*.

None of the logos was ever used; John's partners brought in other designers, who did quite ably by Meeting Sciences.

They never got traction; technology rendered their mission redundant. [I know all about that problem.]

Meeting Sciences logo candidate, 2006



Talk about the gift of gab: John could be very convincing. I reckon that for the better part of a decade, he lived off money generated by selling shares in his ventures, and paying for services with them. But that gravy train screeched to a halt when Meeting Assist failed to launch. Social media and smart phones made Meeting Sciences irrelevant. [2021 **Update: Now there's Zoom; it's everything John was trying to do, and more.**]

During my sojourn with the Whitcombs, my two sisters were driving cross country with a **van full of Mom's stuff. Getting out of New York was impossible for the first days; the bridges and tunnels were closed; the police were maintaining low-level Martial Law, even out in Bayside. Planes were grounded and it was hard to find any other transportation that wasn't fully booked; the news reported that it could take a week to get America's airline system up and running again.** My sisters decided not to wait around; who knew what would happen next; it seemed that anything was possible. Luckily, they found a van to **rent; I'm not sure if they told the rental agency that they would likely never see the van again, that it was going cross country.** They drove 600 miles a day, doing the trip from Long Island to Vashon Island in four days; their only side trip was to see Mount Rushmore National Monument in the Badlands of South Dakota. **When we finally reunited at Kathy's house, the events of the last week had almost completely erased the memories associated with Mom's funeral. 911 and its aftermath dominated the conversation. We knew the world had changed.**

Whitcomb kept me on his Stellar Vision team of consultants right through the first half of the decade. He was keen on conference calls between himself, Katarina Bergeron, Laurie Glover and me. Those three did most of the talking, especially John and Laurie. Katarina and I chimed in once in a while. John was always coming up with wild ideas and huge concepts. He used us as sounding boards. He could go on and on, in great detail, for hours on end.

L to R: Katarina, me and Laurie at a 2004 Stellar Vision conference.



Bjorn Sandlund had his henchman, Fredrik Svahnberg, sack Jim Kellner and hire David Branson to represent Dataton in America.

Sandlund's move was clever. Branson was a technical wizard whose AV career thrived making launch spectaculars for the Detroit auto giants. However, for Kellner, it was a betrayal.

A decade earlier I had persuaded Jim to leave his sales manager job at AVL and become a Dataton importer. My idea was that Jim would work with Ed McTighe, Chuck Kappenman's original partner, in AVL.

McTighe went back to tending bar at the Quay when he and Chuck split up; however, he wanted to get back into AV.

Meanwhile, in Sweden, **Bjorn Sandlund had plans to launch Dataton's slide-control gear** in the States. He was looking for someone to rep the company and its products.

Bjorn made me his *confidante*; I gave him advice about the AV market in the US, its movers and shakers. Playing matchmaker, I tried to arrange a deal whereby Ed and Jim would import and sell Dataton gear in America. Bjorn was keen on the plan and Eddie flew over to Sweden on his own nickel for a meeting with him.

As for myself, I reckoned there was money to be made and wanted to be in on what I knew would be a tidal wave of digital transformation in the AV world. After watching AVL sales reps get (really) rich, I wanted to be a sales rep, too, and thought I might be able to get a Dataton franchise in the Western states.

Ed declined the opportunity because he didn't like Bjorn's terms; Bjorn wanted to own the US company and have Ed working for Dataton; but Ed wanted control of the company, to work as an importer and manufacturer's rep. When Ed backed away, Jim Kellner accepted the job and became Dataton's man in America.

I petitioned Jim for a piece of the action. He set up a meeting with Fredrik Svahnberg, at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, during the Infocom trade show. I explained my desire to be a sales rep for Dataton; I requested the Western states, explaining that Jim could work the Eastern half of the country.

However, Svahnberg nixed my request, in no uncertain terms; he dismissed my ideas, even scoffed at them. Instead, he went back to Sweden, fired Kellner, then brought in Branson and gave him the whole shebang.

That dashed my dream and got Svahnberg a permanent place on my shit list; I never liked the arrogant, conniving, self-serving Swede to begin with, and even less so after that episode.

Fortunately for Kellner, Branson was a decent chap; Dave hired Jim to work for his company, Show Sage. As for me, Dataton knew I was disappointed. To make up for their insult (and possibly, because they ~~didn't want me bad-mouthing them~~ realized that I could still be a good brand ambassador), Branson and Kellner gave me dealer pricing, enabling me to load up on Watchout licenses (I ended up with 23 of them).⁶⁴

Watchout didn't catch on right away. For a while, I was doing more advanced work than most other Watchout producers. For one, I had a lot of Watchout dongles, a big rig; then too, I had the advantage of being fluent in Photoshop.

Many producers bought Watchout thinking it functioned like PowerPoint, which is used for both creating visuals and choreographing them. Those producers soon learned that Watchout was only made for image choreography—the images themselves had to be made in another application, e.g., Photoshop or After Effects; that left many producers at a loss; but not me.

While other producers were using Watchout to make traditional slide shows, I went for graphics and effects. Having once created special-effects slides, I understood how to re-create those looks using Photoshop. Right out the gate, my Watchout work raced to the **head of the pack. The "incredible" difference was that I could produce, by myself, what** used to require a staff of a dozen or more specialist artists and technicians.

The master of flash and trash was back on the block. Branson asked me to produce a demo show, co-sponsored by Dataton and NEC [a major Japanese maker of digital displays, monitors, and projectors], for use at major industry events and trade shows. **NEC was Dave Branson's client and ordinarily he would have done the show himself; but,** he was working on a show about a new Digital Projections machine and wanted to avoid conflict of interest. [DP and NEC were competitors]; so, he outsourced the NEC demo show to me.

I was flattered to be chosen by Branson; his credentials exceeded mine in so many ways. **Branson was a tech wizard; I felt like the sorcerer's apprentice. I told Dave that I wasn't** interested in money for the NEC show; I wanted to barter it for Watchout keys and Show Sage servers (computers); I got more value for money bartering. Those savings were considerable—a single set-up (Watchout license and Show Sage server) cost well north of **\$3,000; to project a "simple" 2+1 panorama** required \$12,000 worth of gack [gear]—not including monitors and projectors.

As explained earlier, Watchout playback quality depended on the kind of computers being used as Watchout servers. More specifically, Watchout performance depended on the server-**computers' graphics cards** and image-processing capabilities.

Branson's genius was realizing that the market longed for a return to the old days, when there were machines dedicated to specific jobs. Producers and programmers weren't interested in the complexities of adapting generic computers, not if they could buy machines built specifically to play Watchout.

⁶⁴ Licensing was how Dataton made money with Watchout; the software itself was free, anyone could download Watchout and play with it; but, if you wanted to show anything, each server needed a "key" in the form of a USB dongle; those started off retailing for about \$1,200; that price escalated to nearly \$2,400 in short order, as soon as they had a significant user base.

Thus, based on producer demand, Branson started producing Show Sage server computers. As soon as they came on the market, Dave Frey and I shelved the Dell tower computers **we had been using as Watchout servers; we switched to Branson's machines;** by comparison, they behaved like a Ferraris, compared to a Ford. There were a lot of horror stories about Watchout shows going down. I built-up my Watchout license inventory buying used keys from producers and staging companies that ditched Watchout, cursing it as too temperamental. To them, the fact that the fault was the computers they **used as servers, didn't matter. Staging companies liked the technologies they employed** to be bullet proof; after all, *the show must go on. Watchout's early versions were too* unstable; the surest way to lose a client was to blow a show, for whatever the reason. Performances were expected to be glitch free. AVHQ (Audio Visual Headquarters) was the first major staging company to dump their Watchout gear; I got four keys from them, at 1/3 the price of new ones. Before long I held 23 keys and started making money renting them. Watchout keys were relatively rare and because they were pricey (about \$1200 at **the start and eventually double that**) many producers couldn't afford to buy them, especially for a one-off show. With that many keys, I had enough for a six-projector Watchout production studio, installed at the Vashon studio, a duplicate set (used for backup during performances), with ten more generating rental income.

[Watch a video of the NEC-Dataton *Pot-Pour-Eye* demo show at <https://vimeo.com/233251389>]

2001 – Evolution – Devolution

Anna was in the midst of a grand transformation, from Polish village girl to Ally McBeal wannabe. Without wanting to sound deceitful or angry, what became of Anna and I over the course of the next two years was probably predictable.



While her world was expanding, mine was contracting. I spent more and more time alone, working in my new digital studio, exploring Watchout and Photoshop. The capabilities of my Watchout programming studio were expanded to eighteen servers; I eventually accumulated twenty-three Watchout keys.

In the foreground are seven of twenty-one rolling file carts containing the image archive; **Anna's desk** can be seen in the background on the right.

I dove deeper into the bottle as it became apparent that Anna was slipping away. By the time she got home from work (at Sedgewick Road), I was already two sheets to the wind; cocktail hour began at 7:00 pm [19:00].

Anna started seeing a therapist, about my drinking. The therapist wanted me to attend the sessions with Anna; however, I declined the invitation; I was in denial; said Anna was over-reacting; that she didn't understand the American way of life. To a certain extend I am right about that; nonetheless, she was reacting.

Anna also didn't like the fact that I was growing some damn fine weed. In general, she was against my pot smoking; that was likely because she never got high; she never inhaled. But I was high as a kite 99% of my waking hours, as mentioned earlier. What **Anna really didn't like was the me she met every night**—totally blitzed by alcohol and pot. If I stuck with just one, I was tolerable; but, high on both, I became another person.

To digress for a moment, about marijuana and me: I took my chances back then. The Feds could take your house if they caught you growing bud; undaunted (and ever so careful) I had an ever-expanding horticultural adventure.

Each year, I got bolder and grew more. During Anna's tenure, until 2008, I grew about a dozen plants a year in a long-skinny "greenhouse" enclosure that hugged the house on the south deck. They were OK but the enclosure cut the sunlight by at least half. So, in 2007 I started growing the plants in the open.



Covering the plants with big bright yellow, orange and pink flowers made the greenhouses look densely polka dotted from a distance, camouflaging the herb gardens from prying eyes. My last crop was more than one hundred prime specimens, grown in two well-disguised greenhouses.

Pam used to bring me artificial flowers from Vancouver. I fastened them to the plants, to make them look like giant flower bushes.

I was convinced that the police were doing helicopter fly-bys and satellite surveillance.



Photo by Pam Swanson.

Having grown cannabis on Vashon Island for twenty years, the strains I had were well-adapted to the native climate and conditions. I bought how-to-grow books at Marc Emory's Cannabis Culture in Vancouver. I taught myself everything I could about the botany of cannabis. (Its closest genetic relatives are strawberries... isn't that sweet?)

My plants were big and happy; when they hit the ceilings, I had to trim them back. I also dedicated two dozen plants to a miniaturization experiment. Which would yield more bud, a tall slender plant with just a few big colas, or a short bushy plant with many more, smaller colas? [Spoiler Alert: both yields were the same, on average.] The trick was feeding them liquified chicken manure—called *chicken-shit tea*—made by steeping a 10-pound sack of chicken shit in half a wine-barrel full of water. After few weeks drinking tea, the plants were ready for a role in *Jack and The Beanstalk*. The colas of the tall plants averaged a foot long [30 centimeters] and those buds were as fine as anything you’d find in BC or California.

I never sold or bartered any of the grass I grew; I gave away what I didn’t use myself, which was a lot. I made salads out of it; infused cooking oils and butter; baked breads, cakes and cookies. Being high became my new normal. That made Anna **crazy; she didn’t** like the stuff; but it was my drinking that really destroyed us.

For the better part of my life, I maintained essentially the same drinking pattern, the one taught to me by Bob and Anne Banning, when I was in my teens: cocktails for them **began at when Bob got home from work, around 6:00 pm [18:00]; he’d fix a big pitcher** full of manhattans (rye whiskey and sweet vermouth... yum). **By the time dinner was ready, they were sloshed. Like the Banning’s, my daily routine included a three-hour** window between 7:00 and 10:00 pm (19:00 to 22:00) that I called it my creative time. I drank quickly for the first hour and once I peaked, tried to plateau; but that never **worked. I still have that pattern; but it doesn’t take much to get me high, these days.**

Back in those days with Anna, I was in a state of denial. The truth was that I had crossed the line, from heavy drinker to lightweight alcoholic. Anna started seeing a therapist to **deal with my issues, as mentioned. I refused to go, insisting I didn’t have a problem.** As I devolved, Anna got embarrassed to take me anywhere, and for good reason—her colleagues at work disapproved of me. They were a bunch of young, ad-agency hotties emulating the lifestyles they saw on TV in shows like *Sex & the City* and *Ali McBeal*. Anna started feeling isolated and deprived. Living on Vashon made it difficult for Anna to party with her slick city colleagues; there was the long commute from Sedwick Road back to Vashon; the ferries crossed infrequently after rush hour. I bought her a cute little red Honda Civic hatchback and gave her as much rope as I dared; but she still felt harnessed. As her life bifurcated, Anna found herself living two lives, one at work and the other at Vashon. Eventually city life won over country life.



Exacerbating Anna’s **metamorphosis** were a couple of episodes that alienated me from her. One of them happened the summer that her brother, Kris Raus, came to visit us. I considered him a good-for-nothing sloth. He never did anything to help with the chores; he stayed out all night at drugged-up parties in Seattle; and he slept away half the day.

Yours truly with Anna & Kris Raus, by Rocky Graziano

One night, while blitzed, I blew-up at Anna and demanded that her brother leave. I **couldn't take it anymore; I hate sloths**. Maybe my aversion to lazy people is because I know how hard I had to work to have what I had. When I was Kris' age, I was working full time to pay my way while going to night school. Since then, I've disliked those who coast through life never having put in a good day's work. I like people who do things, who get things done; it doesn't matter that much what they do (within reason), as long as they just do *something*. Life involves a lot of stuff you don't necessarily want to do but nonetheless need to do. I hope that whoever wrote Nike's *Just Do It* slogan is driving a Cadillac. That slogan is my credo, it keeps me going, whatever I am doing (currently, the four-month task of indexing this book).

Rocky Graziano and his wife, Kathy, also visited that summer. They provided some needed levity to my domestic situation. Plus, Rocky was a perfect example of people who do things, who get things done, who I hoped would make an impression on Kris despite my in-law's indifference and apathy.



Photo snapped by Kris Raus, Anna's brother.

2002 – Skechers – Covering for Dave

Dave Frey called from Sound Images with a new offer, this one an unusual proposition: to produce a show for Skechers, the shoe people. This deal was different than any that preceded it—**Dave didn't want me to work at Sound Images making the show; he wanted me to produce it in my own studio, under my own banner as a sub-contractor and bill Sound Images; then Dave would mark it up my bill and sell the show to Skechers.** It was a way for Dave to run the job through his books and collect a generous finders fee, without ruffling feathers at Nike, **the client who were, quite literally, Sound Image's *raison d'être*.** Nike considered Skechers an anathema. Skechers made money copying Nike and other big-brand shoes and selling them on the cheap. If they caught Dave producing for Skechers it would be the end of Sound Images; so, Dave turned over the client to me. The only caveat was that Bill Scream was to make the soundtrack for the show. That was **no problem for me. Scream did all of Dave's soundtracks. I was sold on his brilliant work** from the moment I saw my first Sound Images show. By agreement, there was to be no script for the Skechers show; it was to be a Bill-Scream-music mindblower, actually ***soundscape* is a better word than "musical."** The soundscape Scream made for the Skechers show was a masterpiece, though I wondered if Scream was on peyote when he **assembled the hundreds of sounds and effects. Scream's bizarre, ultra-modern soundtrack** was perfectly suited for Skechers. The Manhattan Beach, California, shoe company considered themselves the hippest of the hip, the super-élite of fashion, setters of trends.



This “trick” photo is a 280° perspective—the cameramen were behind me. It was shot using a “VR” [Virtual Reality] tripod head with the camera mounted vertically. The scene is composed of 18 overlapping vertical slices, facilitated by the precision tripod head, “stitched” together in Photoshop. The stitching technique made it “easy” to shoot 360° panoramas; my expensive Roundshot and Cyclopan cameras were thenceforth redundant.

The purpose of the Skechers mindblower was to kick-off a sales meeting at the very posh Wiltshire Hotel just off Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, California. It was part of a much larger content package for a theater-in-the-round presentation that involved 14 screens (two sets of seven).

I had never heard of Skechers; all I knew about the shoe company was that they were on a roll. Skechers was built by the Greenburg family from the carcass of the L.A. Gear company, which Greenburg gutted to fund Skechers (or so the story went). Dave told me **that, in the shoe business, Skechers was on everyone’s radar; they were the shoe dogs’ darlings.**

As an upstart disrupter, Skechers lacked the experience or resources to do the kind of sophisticated, theatrical, launch shows that Nike routinely produced. There was no archive, no body of existing material for us to work with, other than a very complete clip-book collection.⁶⁵

With only clip books to work with, Dave decided to base the show on them; he reckoned that, if presented in the right order, the headlines, story-snippets and published pictures would weave a tale about the history and success of Skechers. The clip books were, in **fact, the best I’d ever seen; the most complete and best organized, chronologically.** That made my job much easier, narratively speaking.

Skechers were reluctant to send their priceless clip books to a guy on some island **somewhere (I can’t say that I blame them); so, I was sent to LA to create the facsimiles needed for the show. I brought along Sound Image’s Epson scanner, a laptop to capture the scans, and a CD burner, to archive them.**

However, when I got to Skechers I discovered there were a dozen large, fat albums containing about 3,000 clips. That was too much to scan in the five days I was allocated for location work at Skechers. (Allowing 2 minutes per scan—an optimistic allocation—it would have taken 100 hours—two fifty-hour weeks—to digitize the contents of all twelve clip books.

⁶⁵ Clip books were archives of stories clipped from newspapers and magazines.

So, I decided to just take pictures of them, using a Nikon D2X with a Micro-Nikkor 55mm lens. What seemed like it was going to be scanning nightmare—think of it, 3000 scans—turned into a super-simple assignment done in two days, with time to spare (ogling the gorgeous gals of Manhattan Beach—I nicknamed the place *Babe Land*).

Instead of spending a week or more bent over a copier in a fluorescent -lit, air-con'd office, I found a quiet corner in the courtyard, where the sun shone all day, and soaked up said sunshine while photographing the clippings “clickety split.”

A couple of days later, back on Vashon, Dave called. He was concerned that it hadn't taken me long enough. When I described how I did it, he was flummoxed; eventually he **got around to congratulating me for finding a good solution. But that wasn't all. The main** purpose of his call was to send me back to Babe Land, to a photograph a case history for the Skechers show.

As mentioned above, the Skechers show involved a lot more than kick-off clip-book mindblower. After that there were two days of intensive meetings, training, and new product intros—fashion shows—for the four-hundred-plus Skechers sales reps in attendance. Those were break-out sessions for smaller, regional groups of about fifty people, held in other meeting rooms equipped with basic AV support, i.e., video and PowerPoint. The Sound Images team was kept busy creating content for a dozen or so such sessions.

One of the breakout sessions presented a case history about one of Skechers' top sales people—Eleanor Hughes. That was what Dave was calling about.

I flew back to Babe Land and spent three days with Eleanor Hughes shooting scenes for a Day-In-The-Life show about her. That module followed the presentation of Skechers sales-person of the year award.

Hughes was well prepped for the gig—and for life in general; working with her was a dream. I faxed her a list of the situations I wanted to cover; she had them organized and even managed to talk Costco into letting us shoot in-store scenes. [See collage, next page.]



Pete Bjordahl made all the motion graphics for the Skechers show. I was happy to be working with him; he was at the top of his class working with Softimage. Besides that, my graphic style—the look of the '60s and '70s—was too old-school for Skechers. Pete's designs contributed the hip, modern look needed for a Skechers show. In fact, the **Greenburgs liked one of Pete's blueprint logo** renditions so much that they inquired about licensing it for print purposes.

Pete and I made a good team; I thought in stills and Pete thought in motion. I wish there had been enough business to keep us working together; but Life soon put up a detour.



[Watch a video of the Skechers show on Vimeo at: <https://www.vimeo.com/233403349>]

2002 – Fred Brink – *Kentucky Show*

Just after the Skechers show, Fred Brink contacted me, wanting to have his *Kentucky Show* converted to digital format. **Brink's was the first slide show that I converted** to Watchout; several others would follow in later years.

Fred's Kentucky Show played several times daily in a Louisville [Kentucky] theater. It was a business that supported him and the theater owners. However, the slides in the show were fading fast from such frequent projection; they could no longer be used to make new duplicates. Fred wanted the pictures digitally restored and re-mastered using Photoshop, and the slide show recreated in Watchout.

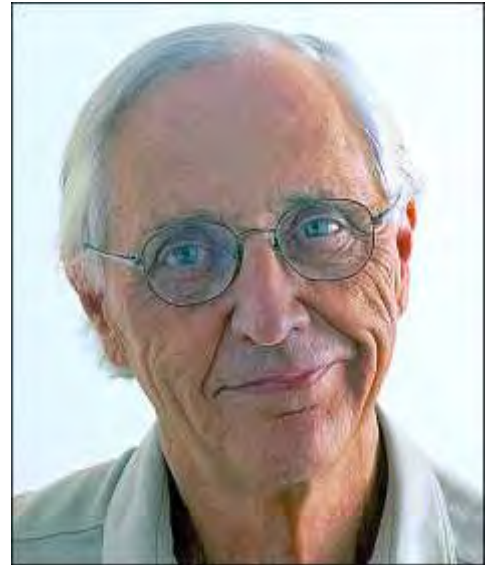


Photo of himself courtesy of Fred.

Fred travelled down from Boston and stayed on Vashon Island for the better part of a week, during which we scanned the slides from the show and made a digital Watchout version that ended up quite different than the original *Kentucky Show*. When Fred arrived, Spring had sprung; the property looked lush and the enormous cherry tree in front of the house was in full bloom.⁶⁶ **The studio's Watchout production suite** had a west-facing window wall through which the blossoming cherry tree framed a panoramic view of the Olympic Mountains. Although the sunset views were a gorgeous sight to behold, the brilliant afternoon sun made working in the studio almost impossible—despite sunscreen shades, **we couldn't see the pictures on the computer-monitor screens.**

Brink was the one of the most tortured producers I ever worked with; his discontent stemmed from his inability to make decisions. **Fred couldn't decide which pictures were** best or what order they should be in; he had no sense of screen design; he edited pictures based solely on content and aimed to be as literal as possible when illustrating the script. The goal of being literal was not in itself a bad thing; but it put artistry, creativity and interpretation at risk. Worse, Fred had to see things to be able to decide. **As a result, I might spend an hour working out at sequence only to have Fred say, "That's nice, now let's try it with these other pictures...." It was unbearably frustrating.**

In the beginning, I was totally obliging. Eventually his indecisiveness reduced his esteem to a veneer. Making matters worse, Fred had taken most of the pictures himself; they were competent, but barely a step beyond semi-pro. I found it difficult to design with them, yet more difficult to fault them. By the third day, we were seriously behind schedule despite putting in 10- and 12-hour days. Fred was a voracious worker; I had to throw him out every evening, after dinner (cooked by yours truly).

⁶⁶ My sister Kathy planted the tree when she and Lou bought the house for me in 1990; the sapling had since become a giant—much bigger than normal ornamental cherry trees. Later I discovered why: its roots had worked their way into the septic tank. Ha!

Fortunately, Fred was not beyond having a couple of stiff ones to wind down before dinner. He brought a liter of fine Kentucky bourbon, as a gift; but we finished most of it before he left.

In the end, Fred was sufficiently satisfied with his re-incarnated slide show that he hired me again in 2006, to program an even bigger show—*Blessing of Liberty*.

2002 – Watts Media – Samsung

Charlie Watts hired me to co-produce an important show for Samsung.

The Korean electronics giant was just at the beginning of its incredible ascent to the top of the heap. To build-up their image, Samsung did a press tour, making presentations from Wall Street to Washington DC.

The first performance was at the huge Consumer Electronics Show [CES] show in Las Vegas.⁶⁷ The Samsung show was presented in the Showroom of the Hilton International Hotel—a massive theater seating more than a thousand.

Samsung hired The Production Network [TPN]—in Seattle to produce the press-tour show. TPN subcontracted the core-creative to Charlie Watts. Charlie was operating on his own those days; after the demise of Watts-Silverstein-Caribiner, he started a new company with his son—**Watts Media**. In turn, Charlie sub'd the Watchout production to yours truly; he was returning a favor.

To digress for a moment: A year earlier, electronic art was trending in Seattle and Charlie got himself involved with ~~the gal running~~ a little gallery next to the Moore Theater. The gallery owner was an avant-garde beauty who liked art of all kinds, the more eclectic the better.

Charlie came up with the idea of featuring Watchout at the gallery; he invited me to put on a demo there; he promised it would be a big event, with a gala opening for the press and VIPs. (Maybe he knew I was a sucker for publicity?)

Besides being a flop, the demo was a huge pain in the ass to set-up. I was cramped in a tiny, rear balcony space. The throw distance was so short that, even using wide-angle lenses, only small images could be projected. The show was totally underwhelming and almost nobody showed up to see it, save a few of our friends. There was no Press, no VIPs, just a few passers-by and a bum looking for a toilet.

At the time, the disappointing demo didn't matter. I wanted business from Charlie Watts; I had delivered on my end; he owed me. And Samsung was the payback.

⁶⁷ Wikipedia: CES (CES was formerly an acronym for Consumer Electronics Show but is now the official name) is an annual trade show organized by the Consumer Technology Association (CTA). Held in January at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, the event typically hosts presentations of new products and technologies in the consumer electronics industry.

Between them, Watts and TPN design-built an elaborate stage set for a show involving well-known TV actor Richard Karn [Tim Allen's co-star in the television a series *Home Improvement*]. In the Samsung show, Karn played his TV role, but with a new family. They performed live skits about Samsung concepts for home and lifestyle improvement.



Top left: Dr. Daeje Chin reveal, under screen. Top center: mid-show; note I-Mag video insert on left of screen. Top right: finale. Bottom: Opening module, "Everyone Is Welcome;" note that stages are hidden behind oval-shaped sliding panels.

TPN came up with a cleverly-designed, three-section, rotating stage and an equally clever way to reveal it (sliding oval panels). Just the three stages would have made a great show; but Charlie Watts sold TPN and Samsung on the idea of using Watchout with a giant screen. Samsung they liked that the show would use a new, digital-presentation technology.

Thus, a 45 X 10-foot [$\sim 13.7 \times 3.1$ -meter] rear-projection screen was hung above the stage and became part of the scenery when not presenting modules, I-Mag⁶⁸ and or pre-recorded interstitials. Screen content was projected using a 4-server Watchout system with 1024X768-resolution projectors. The projectors were overlapped 10% (for soft-edge blending) giving the screen's a pixel dimension of 3484 X 768.

⁶⁸ I-Mag means Image Magnification. An example would be projecting video of a presenter onto a large screen, for the benefit of people in the back rows.

As always, Charlie produced the script and soundtrack; that was his specialty and he was good at it. I had my hands full producing the visual content. I brought Pete Bjordahl in on the deal again, to handle the motion content. The stills pictures, which dominated the show, were a combination of stock photography and studio work, of people and products, done in the Vashon studio.

During the production of the Samsung show, I realized that my big plan—to have a production-studio business on Vashon Island—would never work. Vashon was too inconvenient. For Seattle based clients, working on the Island took more time and incurred extra costs; some of those costs were psychological—by the time visitors found their way from the mainland to Vashon, they were drained emotionally; for them, Vashon was another reality zone.

Aside from the hassles trying to shoot decently lit studio pictures in my small studio space, producing the Samsung show was a hugely educational project. It was my first big solo project since the Scania millennium calendar. The work involved the super-imposition of my studio work with stock photography and/or graphics, for Watchout.

By the time the Samsung show was in the can, I was well ahead of my peers, in terms of having a marketable Watchout-Photoshop skill set.

[Watch a video of the Samsung show on Vimeo at: <https://www.vimeo.com/233242191>]



Projection grid at Incredible Slidemakers' 73rd Street studio, 1975.

"It's showtime!"

Roy Scheider | *All That Jazz*

The actor Roy Scheider lived up the block from me on 73rd Street; at the time, he starred in a film, called *All That Jazz*, about the life of choreographer/director Bob Fosse. The title scene is when the Fosse character, feeling lousy, finishes his stage make-up, picks himself up, takes a final look at himself in the mirror, and says with determination: **"It's showtime!"** That became my motto; it summarizes how I felt about life; I was ruled by production deadlines and the need to deliver ever-increasing amounts. *Showtime* superseded everything; *showtime* was the moment of do or die; every time, every show. **No matter how bad I felt, all I needed to do was say to myself "It's showtime;"** that was my call to arms.

How does that Ethel Merman **show song go...?** ***"There's no business, like show business."*** Irving Berlin, the song's writer, knew that show business is a tough business. Success is imperative for survival. You are only as good as your last show. Show business is the very essence of the *entrepreneurial spirit*, to climb every mountain, cross every sea. Show business is how I came to lose all my friends, and lovers; obsessed by fear of failure, shows took over my life; each was too big to fail; everything I had was leveraged on success; failure was never an option.

Existentially speaking, shows really are TBTF [Too Big to Fail]. Toward the apex of the multi-image business, in the mid-to-late '80s, **it was a buyer's market. Just after the Savings & Loan fiasco in 1987, when the economy suffered a severe jolt, expensive media shows were politically incorrect, deemed ostentatious displays of corporate wealth. The result was that a dozen shops were all pitching for every decent-sized piece of business. Within just a few years the industry imploded; by the early '90s, only the strong survived.** The industry was migrating into new technologies like video and digital imaging. With less food for all the sharks, every show was *do or die*.

There are consequences when ~~success~~ work becomes your life. Family and friends **eventually get left behind. It's hard to win them back, after you abandoned them. They don't trust you after that; why would they? With time, everyone's changes, they morph** and move on; so, do you; so, you have less and less in common with them, or anyone. All you have left, then, is people who want your money, in one form or another. I was at that point when I crashed in 2003; then I woke up and realized the truth in the axiom that **"*Money can't buy you love.*"** (Yeah, but love don't pay the bills.)

Jim Kellner was in no small way responsible for the meteoric rise of my career as a producer of Watchout shows. He became the US representative for Dataton and later worked in cahoots with David Branson at Show Sage. Kellner operated out of his home, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dataton gave him a lot of free reins and a modest budget with which he **travelled about supporting Dataton's sales of Watchout licenses** at trade shows and events as well as by match-making. Cleverly, Jim made sales by arranging marriages between clients and producers—an old AVL sales ploy. The only way a producer could buy Watchout keys was by contacting Dataton. Jim got sales-inquiry calls from both producers and end users; he passed on those sales leads to his favored producers; I was lucky enough to be one of them, but Barry Fluster was his favorite. **Fluster's advantage was the size, scope and location of his business; he ran a staging company in Las Vegas, the show capital of the world.** Barry was able to sell more keys and shows than I could; but he lacked my level of creativity and image-making skills. As a result, Jim sent me the shows **that needed an artistic touch.** IBM's *Power to Win* global sales meetings was one such job. Kellner was contacted by Steven Grey at Creative Technology in San Francisco [CTSF], **possibly the world's foremost audiovisual staging company** at that time, at least in terms of know-how, if not sheer size. Grey was the brains behind CTSF's brawn.⁶⁹

CT's client, IBM, had voiced interest in using Watchout; but Grey had no experience with the new technology. He contacted Dataton; they referred him to Kellner and he, in turn, recommended me for the assignment. Jim knew that I had the creative skills and, importantly, a kit of gear big enough to handle the assignment. However, I bit off more than I could chew. It was a huge job, actually a bit over my head. I had to gear up, substantially, doubling the size of my gear kit from 10 to 20 Watchout servers. From an equipment standpoint, it was the biggest investment that I had ever made. After that expansion, there were few producers or staging companies with a Watchout inventory to match mine. I was still using Dell *Dimension* 8000 and 8200 computers for Watchout servers; twenty of them engulfed my studio, exhausting so much heat that I had to install ventilation fans to keep the temperature under 100 F [37.77 C], in summertime.



Technical rehearsal of Orlando performances.

⁶⁹ Later, I learned that it was a real privilege to have worked for CT, because they preferred to keep everything in house and rarely hired outside talent.

IBM's *Power to Win* show involved five projectors overlapped to create an extremely wide panoramic image (a format called 3+2, or 3-over-2). For insurance, there were always two sets of gear running the show concurrently; if the A set failed, the B set could be quickly engaged. Thus, the IBM show required twelve Watchout keys, for ten servers and two control computers (Dell Inspiron 8200 laptops).



Back stage at the Orlando show. Laptop (right) controlled Watchout image serves (center). "Video Village" is seen at left.

Complicating things, the gear for the Shanghai [China] show had to be sent a month in advance, by ship, in a 40-foot container, along with all the rest of CT's stuff—lighting gear, video projectors and monster-sized audio rig. (The dozen huge audio speakers scared the hell out of me. Audio loudspeakers have magnets and those can destroy digital data. However, Steve Grey knew how to pack the container; he built a wall of fabrics to separate the speakers from all the electronic gear.) The time needed to assemble a duplicate set of Watchout servers, test them, pack them in Benson Boxes⁷⁰ and prepare Chinese shipping documents took a considerable chunk out of the 6-week production schedule.

I divvied up the production work as best I could. Pete Bjordahl helped with motion graphics, Bill Scream did the soundtrack, and I hired a local young geek, Ryan Grenville, to help me with Photoshop work and image processing. Ryan was fresh out of high school and didn't want to go to college; he was the most digitally qualified of the bunch that answered my help wanted ad in Vashon's hometown newspaper, the Beachcomber.

⁷⁰ Foam-lined Coroplast® road cases, my favorite, light weight and virtually indestructible.

Ryan liked nothing better than smoking my weed, donning his headphones, listening to Eminem's *8 Mile Road* soundtrack, and play with pictures in Photoshop. Except for his taste in music, he was just like me. IBM had a clear idea of what they wanted, that added **to the challenge. There was an IBM "culture" that I was unaware of; the company's** audiovisual team were trained by none other than Leslie Buckland. For years, Caribiner **was the sole supplier of meeting content for the tech giant. Being Caribiner's biggest** client, IBM became accustomed to the Caribiner style [sic]. At first, I was clueless about all that and by the time I learned it was too late. With time running out; the client (who caused innumerable small delays) **signed off on *Scream's* radical soundtrack without really listening to it; as a result, they weren't totally satisfied with what I produced. (I thought it** was pretty cool; certainly, it was the most complicated Watchout piece I had done—maybe too complicated.) My show was so complex that it was difficult to make the changes requested by the client. That was a problem. I should have remembered that the client will always make changes. My error was failing to allow time for those inevitable changes.

IBM was the kind of company that ran on consensus. Everything was decided by committee. It was crazy toward the end, getting approvals. With CT in San Francisco, me on an island near Seattle, and the client in Armonk, New York, there was no easy way for the IBM committee to see the show. CT appeased them by having me bring the whole kit **and caboodle to IBM's headquarters** in Armonk. That stole another 4 days from my production schedule. With half the gear on its way to China, I had to dismantle and ship **the programming studio's gear to Armonk; then reassemble the grid back on Vashon, to** make the changes they requested—before breaking down the equipment grid yet again, and shipping it all to Barcelona, where the first of three IBM meetings was staged. (The show was, in fact, not finished when the time ran out and everything got airfreighted to Spain.)

IBM shows have big audiences. The performance in Barcelona was held in a sports stadium. It was winter; the entire week was spent setting up in freezing conditions. Although it was an enclosed space, the area we were working in was unheated. My back-stage Watchout control desk was located right by the doors to the freight entrance; they were kept open most of the time as gear was moved in, empty shipping cases back out. The whistling winter wind was tortuous. On the second day, I started coming down with the flu. Everyone was in full rehearsal mode at that point; but, I still needed to make the changes requested at the approval sessions in Armonk, as well as the new requests for changes and updates that were coming in hot and heavy, as more and more executives saw their presentations for the first time, during rehearsals. I was working late into the night while the rest of the crew went out for dinner and got some sleep. Besides the 20-hour days, I was jet-lagged and having a hard time seeing straight. I tried to nap under my desk amidst all the commotion; but it was nigh on impossible; so, I got sicker and **sicker. During rehearsals, when I wasn't involved, I tried to sleep under my desk, on the** cold, concrete stadium floor; it was excruciating.

Until Barcelona, I hadn't actually worked with Steven Grey, except for the trip to IBM in Armonk, to screen the show for approval at IBM's headquarters. That was a relatively easy set-up, in a fully-equipped conference room. Grey handled that well enough; but, his formidable talents were revealed during the Barcelona set-up.

Things were not going smoothly; our North American gear ran on 110 volts; however, in Spain the current was 220 volts. Although the stadium had agreed to provide 110-volt **power, the current was not clean enough to run our sensitive AV gear. After everyone's** equipment was in place, each department, e.g., audio, video and lighting, was instructed to turn on their rigs. One by one, the systems failed; brought down by electrical gremlins. It was the weekend, the stadium engineers were not working; so, Grey and his crew **dismantled the stadium's main power box. Holy cow!**

The dismantled power box was laid out on the floor. There was much discussion about which wire was which. They were dealing with high voltages and amperes; a mistake could be expensive at best and fatal at worst. Finally, amidst contentious disagreement, Grey prevailed and the system was rewired his way. Everyone stood well back when the switch was thrown; but all was well and after a brief round of applause to the chief, on we went, as if nothing had ever happened.

During the flight from Barcelona to Orlando [Florida] the flu pushed deeper into my already-stressed body. I had a desperate time setting up and running the show at Disney World. I was faced with one of the most difficult professional situations of my career; not only was I sick, I was also the MVP (most valuable player) on the show team; I was the only person who could run the Watchout rig, upon which everything was hinged. Stephen Grey must have made a mental note, about the vulnerability of having only one Watchout operator (and a freelance one to boot). Shortly after the IBM show tour, CTSF invested in their own Watchout gear and assigned two of their own salaried people to run it. I never heard from them again.

There was a two-week interval between the Orlando and Shanghai shows. I was fully recovered from the flu and back in action. I had never been to China and was excited about going there, although I was also apprehensive that my gear survived the sea voyage across the Pacific Ocean. It did, and, not only that, the Chinese crews assigned to help us turned out to be exceptionally talented and motivated; I was genuinely impressed with their work ethic—it rivalled that of Scandinavia and Germany. Most corporate shows were one-offs, it was do or die with no second chances. Being a tour, a suite of performances, the IBM show was different. Having performed it twice already, we had the show down cold.

We were in Shanghai for a week doing the show. I extended the trip for another week, to enjoy some Chinese R&R [Rest and Relaxation]. I was still sending pictures to the Corbis agency and I brought a full kit of digital Nikon gear with me to Shanghai, figuring that I could get some good new stock photos (I did).

While the crew spent their off hours at the bar, I went out shooting pictures of the city. That had negative consequences; the crew thought I was unsociable. However, as I was being disparaged for my penchant for pictures, I ended up a hero when I made a dramatic panorama of Shanghai for the show, on the spot, when the client requested one. At that point, Steven loosened up and let me keep my camera backstage. In earlier shows he **wouldn't allow me to have my camera; he wanted me to concentrate on my Watchout work. Now, he didn't seem to mind my taking some beauty shots of the stage set and crew at work.**

The Shanghai performances of the IBM *Power To Win* show (shown in the picture) were held at the luxurious Shanghai International Conference Center, right on the river, with a spectacular view of the Bund District on the other side. The show was in the same building; so, the commute was easy.



I love Chinese food and was so looking forwards to eating the real thing. On the very first night I decided to blow a small fortune and eat at the Conference Center's Chinese restaurant; the Center was so spectacular, I expected the food would be, too, but couldn't have been more wrong; I ordered three items and each was worse than the others. Wherever we went, the Chinese food, in China, wasn't as good as what we get back home, in North America. Go figure.

After consuming what seemed like a gallon of oil eating restaurant food, I was ready for something fresh and ventured into a downtown Shanghai supermarket in search of ingredients for a hotel-room meal. It was an entertaining and educational experience, making me appreciate Western standards and bounty. At one point a pallet of apples (from Yakima, Washington!) was brought into the store; it was a huge box containing maybe 500 pounds of apples [227 kg]. The arrival of the produce produced pandemonium; the crowd around the pallet was five-deep; people were desperately grabbing; it was a free-for-all, kind of frightening.

After the show, I moved to the well-appointed but more affordable Jing Jiang Hotel and spent a week traveling in and around Shanghai in search of stock photos. Overall, people were responsive and kind to me wherever I went. Sometimes it seemed that people were programmed to treat tourists well; that what I saw and experienced was just an act.

[Watch a video of *The Power to Win* on Vimeo at: <https://www.vimeo.com/233416499>]

2002 – JD Edwards – Shit Perfectly Cooked

Later that Spring, Jim Kellner sent me another big show. Jim was contacted by Jack **Morton's Dallas office**; they had a master contract from JD Edwards, the computer software giant, for their entire corporate communications program, including meetings and events.

The whole thing was masterminded by Morton's executive creative director and the general manager of their Dallas office, Bill Callejas.

I was flown down to Dallas for the brief; I hadn't been there since 1982, twenty years earlier, when I did the Cadillac Fairview job, in association with Pran Audiovisual. Dallas had changed a lot; I hardly recognized the place.

When I worked there in '82, I was totally impressed with Texas; I left thinking the place should be its own country—it is that different from the rest of the States. Texans had their own thing going; they identified as Texans first, Americans second, or so it seemed. Texans had tremendous civic pride. I remember being impressed by the fact that the city of Houston actually designs its skyline—if a building didn't add to the skyline the design was not approved.

Arriving at the offices of Jack Morton, I was impressed to see that the interiors were designed with the stylized high-tech, industrial look that originated with the Pompidou Center **in Paris in the '70s. Instead of being hidden, the exoskeleton and building systems** (plumbing, electrical conduits and HVAC ducting) were made part of the interior design.

High-tech interior design was trending; if I am not mistaken, the look got started in San Francisco. The first time I encountered an industrial-motif interior was at the agency Anna worked for, Sedgwick Road.

The interiors of the Jack Morton space were stripped down to bare essentials, reminiscent of modern Swedish design. The high-tech look was accomplished by painting the **building's mechanics and utilities with bright colors, making them stand out.**⁷¹

Morton's designer offices smacked of money. I could tell this was going to be another Big-League show, like the IBM production. Those people were not afraid to spend money; they did business the American way—**there wasn't any bargaining over the price, with** mandatory concessions, as one experienced doing business in Asia. In this situation, none of that mattered anyway. Watchout was so new nobody had any idea what the costs *should* be. Besides, I was a unique talent—a one-man band with few competitors.

Although I didn't have much to worry about when it came to price, producing the show was another matter. Bill Callejas sent his top producer/designer, Katherine McHaney Coker, to babysit me. I did not appreciate that because I hate people looking over my shoulder. Although I preferred to work alone, I came to appreciate Katherine and, in the end, she became more of a mentor than a client.

I'm not sure what Coker thought when she arrived; Vashon Island was the boonies compared to what she was used to—the uber-corporate Texan world. I did my best to sell her on Vashon Island, reminding her that rock bands, writers and painters often go off to remote places to produce their work; the Beatles went to India, after all. Katherine bought my argument; she liked the idea of being isolated, being able to concentrate on the job at hand.

I soon understood why she cottoned-on to working in my studio so readily; her office in Dallas tried to contact her on a continuous basis; however, the tenuous dial-up internet connections on Vashon Island made that difficult at best. After a while, Dallas gave up and **left her alone; that's when she and I got into the swing of designing the show together.**

⁷¹ Read more and see pictures of the Jack Morton Dallas offices at architect Caco's website: www.cacoarchitecture.com/#!_jack-morton-worldwide.

The JD Edwards show was to be Katherine Coker's swan song. She was married and had a bun in the oven. After the JD Edwards show, she was going to take a two-year sabbatical to have her child and raise it herself during its critical first years.

As they used to say, "You're as good as your last show." Katherine wanted her last show to be her best; she was a work-a-holic; she had no problem hanging in until 10:00 pm [22:00] and didn't need attention after hours; she was a salad eater and made her own meals; she stayed at a cabin I rented for her—a local B&B just a few miles north of my studio. I would pick her up at 8:00 and we would carry on until 9:00 or 10:00 pm. To my chagrin, Katherine didn't drink; my normal 7:00 pm [19:00] cocktail hour had to be curtailed; but, I did manage to discreetly smoke and eat enough weed to keep an even keel.

Katherine was better at Photoshop than I was. I wasn't used to that; usually I was the top dog. One morning she asked (that was nice) if I'd mind if she worked on one of the scenes I just finished (and was quite chuffed with). It was a difficult sunset scene; I had spent a long time combining clouds from several skies. Well, in less than 15 minutes, her version was way better than mine; she managed to combine the same pieces in a better way using Photoshop *blending modes* that I didn't even know existed. From that point on, I realized that I could learn a lot from Katherine.

Although I've been referring to the JD Edwards show (shown below), it wasn't really a show at all; it was speaker support on steroids. 90% of the content was text slides, charts and graphs. Katherine worked on those, assisted by Ryan Grenville. I devoted my time to a series of quasi-animated interstitials that were used to open and close meeting segments. The client was fixated on a map effect from a TV show in which lines of longitude and latitude crisscrossed to pinpoint map locations. It was impossible to duplicate the TV effect in Watchout, so my work disappointed the client.

In fact, the whole production was a hodgepodge. So much time was spent (over-) designing the elements, that it qualified for the description: shit perfectly cooked.



I hired Pete Bjordahl to do the motion graphics work and to help me stage the show at the Denver Convention Center. It was during the performance of that show that I became **aware of Pete's formidable talents making motion graphics.**

On one occasion, when the client complained about the jerkiness of a sunrise sequence assembled from slides, Pete managed to make a realistic looking movie out of the slides, using a (then) new animation software called Quicktime; it knocked my socks off—the **clients' too.**

Pete was a loner; after long days at the Convention Center, rehearsing the show and dealing with changes, he just wanted to have some time to himself; so, I drank alone on that trip.

One evening, I walked down to a bar at the edge of town. Smoke from distant forest fires **hung in the air. There weren't a lot of people, only three of us at the bar and a few others** at tables. The two guys at the bar were together, a fact made obvious by their tattoos—both were covered all over with them.

The two weren't put off by my inquisitive questions; they invited me to sit with them, whereupon they explained that individual tattoos were parts of an elaborate total-body design. For them, tattoos were *religious*; not so much the symbology of the art as for the pain endured while being tattooed.

Some parts of the body are excruciatingly painful to paint; those tattoos are worn as badges of courage, of extreme self-control. That was years ago, before tattoos became **trendy. If I were younger, I might be tempted; but I recall Hita's sage observation, that** as old skin sags, tattoos wilt; not a pretty picture.

2002 – Pride & Prejudice – Black & White Choices

Between shows, I had a small local business selling pictures at the Heron's Nest gallery in downtown Vashon.

I wanted to build enough Island business to support me full time. I liked living on the Island; travelling was no fun after the 9/11 calamity. However, getting my stuff into **Heron's Nest** was a tough row to hoe; there was simply too much competition.

Vashon was known as an artists' colony. There were a couple of hundred artists living there; too many for the small population [~10,000] to support. There were only a handful **of outlets for artists' creations. It was a buyers' market to be sure.**

Like the proverbial tempest in a teapot, **the Island's artists had their own *politik*.** The clique at the Blue Heron Art Center ruled the roost; they decided who was in and who was out. Having a show at the Blue Heron was significant in the eyes of Islanders—it was like a seal of approval.

It would have been nigh impossible for me to ever have a show at the élitist Blue Heron; my work was too *commercial*. **For my ilk, the Blue Heron Art Center ran the Heron's Nest,** a gallery gift shop prominently located at the main intersection in Vashon town, right **across the street from the Island's number one restaurant,** the Hardware Store [named for the original business that occupied its historic building]. Talk about locations, that intersection was the golden quadrangle for Island businesses attracting tourists.

[Rant Alert: In the art world, photography has always been a second-class citizen. Only the weirdest manifestations of photography make it onto the walls of museums; experimentation is rewarded more frequently than real talent.

For me, good art has the kind of technical perfection that comes from persistence, from the school of hard knocks. But hey, I was a photographer my whole life; I knew the rules of the art game, the pride and prejudice. I was more interested in making money. I was happy being lumped in with other second-class artists **and craftspeople at the Heron's Nest gift store.** When I applied, there were already very good photographs of Vashon on **display at Heron's Nest.** Ray Fortner dominated the market; he was an Art Wolfe wannabe who actually worked for the famous nature photographer at the beginning stages of **Wolfe's meteoric career.** Ray had **big beautiful color prints hanging everywhere you can** imagine throughout Vashon—galleries, gift shops, restaurants and even the bank. Besides Fortner, there were a couple of others who were producing uninspired post-card-style **work.** **To get a foot in the door at the Heron's Nest, I needed something different, pictures** that would stand out. I reverted to panoramas; from my days selling Cyclopan's I knew that people were intrigued by super-wide-format pictures.



Olympic Mountains Vista was one of the first panoramas made for the Heron's Nest gallery and also the most popular.

I made a variety of panoramic Vashon scenes and sold framed versions as well as prints rolled-up in tubes. I made the pictures digitally, printed them with an Epson 2200, and framed them myself. They never sold very well; but they gave me exposure. Ever so slowly, people on the Island began to recognize my name as being someone other than the former owner of a defunct restaurant (Fork Inn the Road), **and/or Hita's ex.** Meanwhile, I continued my quest, to eventually have my work shown at the Blue Heron. **For a few years, I contributed artwork to the art center's annual Art Auction,** a posh event attended by the Islands élite. However, the (really) small amounts that my work (and others') sold for at the event discouraged me.⁷²

⁷² At the last Art Auction banquet that I attended, I was seated with a few fellow artists; one of them was a wood carver who had donated a hand-made table that could have fetched thousands in a Seattle shop; when the table got auctioned for just \$100, a stunned look came upon him, before he burst into tears and left the table; it was tough seeing a grown man cry. A few moments later, one of my pieces sold for \$25; I just laughed (and drank another bottle of wine).

Then, when I learned how much the Blue Heron staff were being paid, I stopped donating. My money was over-paying a few rich bitches; not much went to the purported purpose of the Art Auction—their art education program. I don't give to any big charities for the same reason: after management takes its cut, there's little left for those for whom I thought I was donating. In addition to panoramic Island scenes, I was doing traditional black-and-white art photography. I hoped my stylized look would catch the eyes of the Island's *art intelligencia*. To catch them, I reinstituted one of my most well received promotion techniques: *Pixies*—miniature exhibition prints. The first Pixies were made in 1970, at Mesney's Mad Medicine Show. >150 Christmas Star Pixies (below) were sent to select clients, colleagues and prospects.



Christmas Star Pixies were printed 5 X 4 inches [~13 X 10 cm] and mounted on 5 X 7-inch [~13 X 18 cm] pearlescent-silver mat boards.

I converted a tiny bathroom in the office wing into a darkroom. Despite its compact size (you could only enlarge up to 16 X 20 inches) it was the best of six darkrooms I built over the years. The main features were a 72 X 24-inch Ledal stainless steel sink [Ledal was the Cadillac of photo-processing equipment brands], filtered water, butcher block counters, IKEA cabinetry throughout and even a custom-made red-neon safe light. I still had the same gear that I bought when I was sixteen years old, when I built my first darkroom, in **the basement of my parents' Douglaston** house—an Omega D2 enlarger and a set of Nikkor processing equipment. I loved working in that snug little darkroom; it was especially cozy during winter and the rainy season.

However, my interest in darkroom work (and black-white photography in general) faded when my favorite printing paper (Kodabromide) was discontinued, replaced by a plastic resin substitute, called *RC paper*, that was simply awful. The new plastic paper was designed for machine processing and impossible to massage during development.



The old Kodabromide papers developed over the course of several minutes—as many as five, if you kept the chemistry on the colder side. During that time, you could rub parts of the print with warm concentrated developer, selectively producing deep rich blacks without destroying mid-range and highlight tones. But the new stuff processed in 30 seconds and didn't like cold chemistry.

Plastic *faux* paper was also difficult to work with after processing; prints didn't lie flat, their corners turned up. Worse, the emulsion was embedded in a transparent polymer coating that repelled aqueous airbrush paints and dyes and was impossible to etch.

With the old, cotton-fiber-based photo paper, I could use a single-edge razor to gently scrape away (scuff) areas of a print that needed lightening. I liked etching better than airbrush retouching because the sprayed pigments lacked the same texture as the grain structure of the print. Etching retained the original grain-texture of photo prints; however, the silver emulsion on polymer-paper prints could not be etched.

Nor could parts be easily cut out from the tough new plastic photo papers; that made it nigh on impossible to do assembly work—which was how I made illustrations—with plastic-paper prints.⁷³ The polymer-paper situation confounded me; I couldn't do the kind of work I would have liked.

Then I learned that photo chemicals were wreaking havoc in my septic system—something you never want to mess with. Those two downers, and lackluster sales, put the kibosh on fine-art black-and-white printing. Thus, the darkroom gathered dust while digital imaging overtook everything.

⁷³ Assemblies were made by carefully cutting out pieces of prints made on single weight paper using single-edge razors, X-Acto knives and surgical scalpels, and reassembling them into a new picture using rubber cement.] The only way to do montages with polymer papers was to make multiple exposure prints in the darkroom using masks; that was a chore. [Masks were used to selectively exposing various areas of a print. For example, to insert a full moon, a black circle the size of the moon would be laid on the photo paper, blocking that area from any exposure; a reverse mask—black sheet with a clear hole the size of the moon—was used to expose the moon into the circle area previously blocked.

2002 – Hydrogen Advertising – Trial Balloon

Tom Scherer was a prime prospect that I pursued for a few years.

Scherer was a founding partner and senior executive creative director of Hydrogen Advertising. He lived on Vashon Island and commuted daily on the passenger-only ferry [now called the King County Water Taxi] to his offices near Occidental Square in the historic Old Town district of Seattle.

The passenger ferry only ran during the morning and evening commuter hours; it held about 80 people and was frequently packed. It was a well-maintained craft but an old hull design that had a top speed of about 15 knots making the run between Vashon Island and Pier 52 in downtown Seattle in 30 minutes if the wind was in the right direction.

The evening I met Tom, riding the ferry felt like being in a sardine can—there was **standing room only, the windows were totally steamed up and you couldn't see a thing** outside; that made the packed cabin even more claustrophobic.

I commented on the conditions to the guy next to me, who turned out to be Tom. In the conversation that ensued Tom and I discovered that we had a lot in common; we both had the same kind of job (creative directors) and drove the same kind of car, 1992 Isuzu Rodeos.

One evening, I invited Tom over to the house for a drink on his way home. (He lived on the other end of Vashon Island, down near the Point Robinson Lighthouse, on Luana Beach, about as far away from my place as you could go on Vashon.) My studio blew him **away; he couldn't believe all the tech**—photo-studio, disco lounge, Watchout programming suite, huge picture archive and, of course, the 600-square-foot [55.7-square-meter] kitchen.

We hit it off; I served a sampler of various Swedish schnapps together with some of my fine, home-grown grass. **Our conversation flowed freely and Claude Challes' music caught** his fancy.

Soon after, he invited me to a beach barbeque at his waterfront home on Luana Beach. I met his wife, Bremner, and their teenage kids, a son and daughter. The family had just returned from a Mexican holiday; so, along with a bottle of tequila, I brought them a 6-foot [1.8 meter] print of *Tulum Sunrise*. (It was a good opportunity to informally promote my photo-illustration work.)

After that, Tom invited me to meet his colleagues at the agency, to present my credentials. On more than one occasion, we discussed using Watchout for sales meetings held by fitness-equipment maker Precor; but I never got hired by Hydrogen, neither for Watchout nor for photo-illustration work. That was a big disappointment.

Tom and I stayed in touch socially, on and off, until I moved back to Vancouver. Every time we bumped into each other, we traded notes about our Rodeos; they were great cars; when he sold his, the odometer had passed the 200,000-mile mark [321,869 kilometers], without a single major repair—except for a failed alternator; I got 160,000 miles [257,495 kilometers] without incident before selling mine, in 2014.

Yours Truly (left, with the gold star) and Tom Scherer at the Vashon Strawberry Festival. 2010.



Blair Wills was another top prospect, although indirectly. I chose him because I knew his father, Randy Wills, and there was a political opportunity to kill two birds with one stone.

Blair was my idea of a latter-day pioneer, the kind of guy who, a century and half earlier, might have packed a covered wagon and headed west along the Oregon Trail, to start a new life in the Pacific Northwest. Wills inherited his *will power* from his father, the late Randy Wills, a contemporary of mine, who ran Staging Techniques in New York; Blair ran the Seattle office of the company. What I appreciated about Blair was that he ran his **father's company as if it were his own. He ran a tight ship, had dedicated employees, and staged shows well.** Topping it off, Blair lived on Vashon Island, on the south end, where he and his wife, Kathy, were building a house by themselves (!) while living in a camper.

Blair commuted to Seattle on the 6:00 am ferry every day (that's where I met him and how I discovered he was an Islander) and returned to Vashon on the 6:30 pm [18:30] ferry; then he drove 13 miles down the Vashon Highway from the north end dock to his south end building site. That's what I called ambition, tenacious persistence—qualities I admired.

My ambition was to befriend Blair and Kathy in hopes of business referrals, possibly even from his dad. Anna and I had them over for dinner. The house was in top form then; the **photo studio was rigged to double as a "disco" with color lights and mirror balls.**

I put on an elaborate Indian spread which we enjoyed after a prolonged cocktail hour, during which I embarrassed myself by repeatedly calling Blair's wife Janet. They were polite enough not to correct me. (In fact, they didn't correct me for an entire year until, one day, Blair asked me, in a serious tone: "Do you know her name is Kathy?")

I never did work for Blair, directly. However, our professional paths crossed on a Microsoft show. **It turned out that Microsoft was Blair's one and only big client; his company functioned as an off-campus extension of Microsoft studios.**



Mesney by Randy Ettman, 1960

"Grin and bear it."

Father's Advice

My British father taught me to, "Keep a stiff upper lip." I became good at that; so good that in my early adulthood I prided myself at being able to take anything; I bragged about the fact that I kept my emotions under lock and key. Keeping your feelings trapped inside makes life easier; after a while you get numb to everything; nothing can hurt you; neither can you experience joy.

What are emotions for? Why do we have them? Emotions **are like the "Compass of Desires" that Captain Jack uses in *Pirates of The Caribbean*; or the *aethalometer* in *The Golden Compass*.** Emotions are clues that can help you know what you really want. People who follow their gut feelings about things get and do what they want more often than those who rationalize them intellectually; most of us suppress our emotions and get less of what we want as a result. The British are experts at it.

The life we experience can only be what is in our mind; no more and no less; life is consciousness—what and how you think about things, how you interpret them, how you **value them. Each of us has a unique way of seeing and working in the larger Reality, "out there," that offers a rainbow of choices—anything you can think of.** What I am now and what I become is up to me; it is the stuff I choose to think about and do. The lyrics to **Pink Floyd's *Eclipse*** [from their *Dark Side of The Moon* album] are insightful:

Eclipse, Pink Floyd

All that you touch
All that you see
All that you taste
All you feel.
All that you love
All that you hate
All you distrust
All you save.
All that you give
All that you deal
All that you buy,
beg, borrow or steal.
All you create
All you destroy
All that you do
All that you say.
All that you eat
And everyone you meet
All that you slight
And everyone you fight.
All that is now
All that is gone
All that's to come
and everything under the sun is in tune
but the sun is eclipsed by the moon.

The inspirational piece ends on a satirical note with an old man muttering:

There is no dark side of the moon really.
Matter of fact it's all dark.

2002 – 🍷*Marriage Fails – Demonic Devolution

"Never take an argument to bed."

Parental advice

Life was good, professionally; I was getting plenty of work and making enough money to keep ahead of the pack technologically.

Staying on the leading edge was an existential imperative for people in the media business, especially those in consumer and business entertainment.

In the halls of academia, there's an axiom that warns, "Publish or perish." In the AV world, that translated to, "Re-invent or become irrelevant." Technological migration had been happening for as long as I could remember. I was used to padding my operating budget up to 30% for R&D and related gear. Technology was a line item in many of my show budgets; after all, every dollar you earn costs.

Show business is as fickle as fashion; **everyone wants the very latest; one day you're in, the next you're out.**

In the slide-show business, the equipment makers came out with new machines every year; my profits went poof. Money had to be spent on new gear, without which my rig **would have been yesterday's news. Nobody wants to hire a chauffeur driving last-year's limo (or hearse).**

Life wasn't so good, personally. Anna was in therapy because of my drinking. I failed to take that seriously enough. I denied being an alcoholic, although I did admit to being a heavy drinker. **What was there to complain about me; I was successful enough, wasn't I?**

I tried to reason with Anna. I explained to her that, for the better part of my professional life, alcohol and weed enhanced my creativity, as it did countless other musicians, artists and theater people. Be that as it may, my mistake was not recognizing that Anna saw me as a drunk.

I was so busy—either producing shows or getting drunk—that the rest of the world sort of disappeared. I was living in a bubble, **disconnected from the "real" world**—the one Burners⁷⁴ call the *default world*.

Per my habitual lifestyle, cocktails began at 6:00 or 7:00 pm [18:00 or 19:00] and for the **next two hours or so I did my creative work. Unfortunately, Anna didn't arrive home from** her job at Sedgwick Road until after 7:00 pm, so for the better part of the week she only saw the manic, drunk side of me. She complained that I was two people.

Anna was right: when high, I became another person—a supercharged version of myself. But I also changed in subtler ways: I became more suspicious and more aggressive; my rambling thoughts conjured wild scenarios.

⁷⁴ Those who have been to Burning Man.

I've mentioned before that I live by Murphy's Law, that what can go wrong will; and that I am constantly prepping for disaster(s). That mode of thinking was enhanced by alcohol and weed.

Knowing that Anna disapproved of my drinking did not change my behavior; if anything, I drank more; especially on weekends, when Anna joined in the fun (she was no teetotaler).

The summer solstice fell on a Friday night that year; the sun set at 9:10 pm [21:10]; by then I was three sheets to the wind.

Anna and I got into spat when I asked to take her picture. We were in the kitchen;

I was making dinner; she had just finished exercising on the back deck; I thought she looked fabulous, like an sprite with a magic bubble; but she thought she looked a wreck, from her workout, and asked me to wait until she showered. That was impossible; the light would be gone, and the light was the thing. So, I snapped a couple of shots anyway; but more than the camera snapped.



Tears gathered in Anna's eyes; she accused me of never listening to her, of being too drunk to care. That got us going on the whole issue of my drinking; and that turned into a major blow-up.

My parents had taught me, never take an argument to bed; but we did that night. We slept in separate beds, me on the couch. I guess you could say, that was the beginning of the end. After that solstice, our days together got shorter.

Of course, the next morning the other me returned to his senses and apologized profusely for being a jerk the night before. I begged her indulgence and was sufficiently humble to **earn Anna's forgiveness. But did she mean it?**

Fearing a crack in our marriage, I went into damage-control mode. **I didn't stop drinking**, but tried applying emotional triage in other ways, spending more time with her.

But that was difficult because Anna started spending less and less time at home, more and more time with her colleagues, the agency chicks.

What do they say, "Familiarity breeds contempt?" By the end of July, Anna became downright snarky; she was contemptuous of both me and life on Vashon; I felt my age when she was around and worked harder at being fit; I increased my running loop from three to five miles. However, a pall of doom fell over me.

In August, Anna and I were invited by Skechers to an ultra-exclusive party at the Greenbriar Country Club near Las Vegas. It was a reward for my hard work on their show.

I didn't know what to expect; but I knew it would be a blast, based on an earlier ultra bash that I attended while producing the show. That extravaganza celebrated the **company's 10th anniversary; it was an outdoor block party held at Warner Brothers' studio lot—a replica of several downtown New York streets that you've seen in countless movies.** Close to 500 people attended that shindig. There were five bands at various venues in the metropolitan mock-up. What impressed me most were 20-foot-wide [6.1-meter] drinking bars made completely of ice, decorated with 4-foot-high [1.2-meter] ice models of vodka bottles. Cutie-pie bar tenders poured vodka shots into the tops of those big ice bottles; the vodka visibly swirled down a spiral chute, through a spout, into shot glasses. Cool!

Everyone at the Skechers party was drinking shooters or martinis; but nobody was really drunk. It was déjà vu all over again; like my old days, in New York. (In the Pacific **Northwest, people didn't drink much hard liquor; my friends and colleagues on Vashon** drank wine and beer almost exclusively.)

Skechers' birthday was the best party I had ever had the privilege to attend; I couldn't imagine, therefore, what awaited Anna and I at their Greenbriar soiree.

The Greenbriar turned out to be way off the beaten path, so far away that one had to take **a taxi or rent a car to get to the famous Las Vegas "Strip."** What it lacked in proximity to the action was an overabundance of luxurious amenities. For companies holding meetings **and events there, the Greenbriar's USP (Unique Selling Proposition) was being able to** keep everyone in one place, not lured away by the action at the big casinos.

The party at the Greenbriar was like a family affair; Anna and I found ourselves among Skechers inner circle of top sales people and consultants. It was the kind of event Dave Frey would normally have attended, to hobnob with the upper crust of his clientele.

We had a deluxe suite; it was as big as my studio; the tub was like a small swimming pool. I sobered up considerably, in anticipation of what was to come. Anna brought her most fashionable attire. Stepping out of the shower, she looked good and I felt frisky; but Anna repelled all my advances, gently at first, more forcefully when I persisted. Pushing herself away from me, Anna announced that she was leaving me; that it was already over—and **didn't I realize that? She quipped, "Let's just enjoy the party, ok?" Ha!**

After the welcoming cocktail party, Anna and I took a walk through the gardens. I was getting a bit tipsy; she warned that I might make a fool of myself—and her. That was the moment I saw the light—booze was destroying my life. I could no longer deny that fact.

I put down the drink I was carrying (a delicious Cosmopolitan) and promised Anna that I would stop drinking. I did, too.

[Spoiler Alert: For precisely one decade; I drank nary a drop; I kept my promise for ten long years; But when I climbed off the wagon, on August 3rd, 2012, Anna was long gone.]

We left Las Vegas on the first plane that we could get, a night flight. Waiting together was **weird; we didn't have much to say to each other; we spent the afternoon at movie theaters**, to escape the ~100° heat and the frostiness of our relationship. Everything was suddenly awkward. When we got home it got worse; trust devolved into distrust.

Perhaps because I was the victim, Anna seemed accommodative when I suggested that aim for a friendly divorce, to save the cost of lawyers. Then, I discovered that she had hired a top (expensive) Seattle law firm. Anna was a liar. How I discovered that revealed how paranoid and suspicious I was:

I took to hiding in the woods **behind the house, pretending that I wasn't home, to watch Anna**. Worse than that, I began searching her purse routinely. One night, I discovered her **lawyer's business card. I left the card out of place; I wanted to see her reaction when she realized I knew what she had done.**

Her purse was in the bathroom, which I could easily see from the shed in back of the house. I watched as she discovered the misplaced card; it was like a scene from a movie; she was standing by a mirror, I saw the revelation cross her face from two angles as she gasped and stood back. Let the games begin, thought I.

I aggressively resisted being served Anna's divorce papers. **It was expensive for her to serve me--Court couriers had to take the ferry across from Seattle, logging hours and hours of billable travel time. I was hoping that I could break Anna's bank with service costs. [Spoiler Alert: in the end Anna's legal costs exceeded her winnings.]**

Anna's legal team went through a half dozen servers; the last one was a guerilla who likened himself to Paladin, the renegade gun-for-hire star of a '60s TV series by the same name; on his card, he used a copy of his TV hero's logo—the black knight chessman.



The Paladin wannabe became a genuine pain in my ass; he continually stalked me. I blacked out all the windows in the house; on some of the windows I had smoky sun screens; he could not see in; but I could see that he was (very) pissed off.

Paladin got so angry that he put his own padlock on my gate, locking me into my own **property. What an asshole. When that didn't work, he got vengeful and deflated all the tires on my Isuzu (which was hidden behind the back shed).** He was a mean bastard.

In the end, Paladin gave up coming out to Vashon and just lied to the Court; he claimed to have served me personally when in fact he did not. That lie reminded me that our justice system is nothing more than an oxymoron, a corrupt one.

Anna eventually hired three lawyers the final one being Peter Buck; that was a slap in my **face; he was a dashing fellow and a close friend of Hita's, a legal expert she employed as an instructor for her law seminars.**

Buck had the looks of a TV star and a personality to match. I learned a lot from him—that not all lawyers are created equal (which I should have known). Buck took me and my lawyer, Nancy Sorensen, to the cleaners. It pissed me off that Sorensen insisted on her **full fee after losing my case. OK, I should have done my due diligence; but who'd have** guessed that Anna would hire a powerhouse like Pete Buck?

It wouldn't surprise me to hear that Hita arranged for Buck to represent Anna. A few months before we split up, Anna approached Hita seeking her advice, about my drinking. What sweet revenge for Hita, what schadenfreude, helping Anna bring me down.

The divorce brought out the worst in me. It began with my attempt to thwart service (as above) and ended with my snooping into Anna's **private life in search of evidence to hold** against her.

Anna started dating a married paralegal immediately after receiving her Green Card in June. I discovered that in her computer, when I started investigating her, after the Skechers party. I convinced myself that her para-legal boyfriend was prompting Anna on how to divorce me.

One summer night, I hid in the bushes around the Vashon ferry parking lot, waiting to take pictures of Anna with her new boyfriend. Geez were they surprised when I popped out of the bushes and started popping-off flash pictures of them together in his car.

How low can you go, eh? But I was a man on a mission; I knew that, when I came to evidence, it was better to overwhelm than to underwhelm. Intimidation of the enemy was more than half the battle.

In the end, Anna and I elected to settle through the arbitration process; that involved shuttle diplomacy before a retired magistrate whose decision was binding. As with a normal lawsuit, each side had to present all their evidence to the other—a step called, **"Discovery."**

To my utter amazement, the discovery phase revealed that Anna had photo-copied the entire contents of all my files—thousands of pages. Anna told the Court that the duplication was done while I was out of town, staging the Skechers show at the Wiltshire Hotel. That made our break-up at the Skechers party ironically symbolic.

I was pissed off, of course, but I was just as bad. I knew more about computers than she did, and her computer (at home) was built by my friends at Up Time Technology. It was easy for me to hack into that machine and copy all her data. I hired a Polish translator to get English versions of the emails sent back and forth with her parents regarding our **divorce. Those were important because they disproved Anna's trumped-up** assertions that I was a wife beater and philanderer; I was neither; I adored Anna and never cheated on her. **One of Bozena's emails explicitly stated that I was, in her opinion, a gentle man who** would never lift a finger against Anna.

Her mom, Bozena, asked Anna directly, “Has he ever hit you?” Anna answered no. But you know what? None of it mattered. In the end, Anna and I both ran out of money to pay our lawyers. That pressured us to settle and get it over with.

In the end, a Swiss bank account—opened when I worked at AVC—was my undoing.⁷⁵ When Anna and I started dating, I used the Swiss account to move money to Poland. After we were married, I had her open an account with the same bank.

Although there wasn’t much money in that Swiss account since the demise of Fork Inn the Road, the mere fact that it existed was damning testimony that I did not want entered into Court records for fear of possible ramifications with the IRS. Thus, Pete Buck had me over a barrel; if I consented to his terms, the subject of the Swiss accounts would be dismissed.

Though they had me in a bind, Buck and Anna weren’t vengeful. They knew that I had blown my fortune on the failed Fork Inn the Road restaurant. And from my financial disclosures they also knew that I was cash poor from my investment in digital tech.

Unfortunately for me the arbitration judge found no financial separation between me and my business. I was unable to insulate my professional equipment from the assets column in my financial disclosure concerning alimony. That was a problem because I had invested heavily in new digital Nikon and Watchout equipment during the time I was married to Anna. **Switching to digital cost me about \$100K... that’s a big roll of the dice. The investment hadn’t paid off and wouldn’t for some time. However, the judge ruled that I owed Anna half of the professional gear’s total value, less depreciation. Ouch.**

Either Buck figured, you can’t squeeze blood from a stone, or Anna became unusually compassionate; because they graciously settled for \$35,000 and gave me three years to pay off the amount. That was a reasonable considering the suspect circumstances—hearsay evidence (“he said she said”) and blackmail. Nonetheless, they might have forced me to sell the house and give Anna half of the proceeds. I’d like to think that it was Anna who put the kibosh on that. Ironically, with three lawyers, Anna’s legal bills exceeded what she collected from me.

For me, it was a devastating financial hit that came to \$50,000, including Nancy Sorensen’s fees. **Win or lose, lawyers make money. No wonder Mom wanted me to follow in Judge Taylor’s footsteps.**

The financial ding of the divorce became my demise. Those fifty thousand dollars would have been used for technological upgrades; without those I was lost. Within just two years, my rig became technologically obsolete. I was caught in the chicken-and-egg conundrum—I needed new gear to get work, but needed work to get new gear.

⁷⁵ When I was working for AVC I split my income, for the usual reasons.

Good paying gigs were an endangered species, **there weren't many around after the** Internet bubble burst, crashing the Market and ushering-in a cyclical business contraction—to say nothing of the 911 attack.

They say, money **isn't everything**. I've had plenty of opportunities to test that thesis. My **fortunes have risen and fallen with the world's economy**. Thrice I've done well and then gone bust. With all that practice, I was able to deal with my deteriorating financial condition. Dealing with the personal side of things was another matter.

The upheaval of the divorce left me in bad shape, emotionally. Yet again, my love relationship failed; I was a loser in love. I fell into a depression. That was partly the result of the physical changes I was going through. Recall that I quit drinking at the Skechers party; I also cut back on pot.

Without weed and booze to mask them, monsters rose up from the depths of my mind. **Dealing with the demons took time; they didn't all come out at once, one led to another**. Without intoxicants, I had nowhere to hide from feelings of inadequacy, longings for love. **They say that you must love yourself to be able to love someone else; that's where I fail;** then and now, I consider myself inadequate and unworthy. Thanks, Mom.



One evening, returning from Seattle, I passed a spiffy motorcycle with a for sale sign on it.

It was not just any motorbike; it was a Yamaha FJ-1200—a street-legal muscle bike—just what I needed to give myself a new lease on life, to restore my badly-bruised ego.

The FJ was more like a GTO [Pontiac] than a Corvette. **The big bike's sheer power came alive on the highways;** going with traffic at 70 mph [112.65 kmh] I could rev up to 100 mph [161 kmh] in a flash, without even downshifting. The acceleration was totally thrilling. The way it made me feel was even more thrilling; people looked at me in a whole new way.

My metamorphosis had begun.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The FJ turned out to be too much for me to handle; but it was glorious fun while it lasted.

Running became a source of therapy.

I needed to come to terms with myself. When I ran, I thought more clearly. I've heard that humans think better while walking; maybe that's why so many of us like to take a walk, if something is bothering us. My sister Kathy took running to extremes; I think she got up to 25-miles a day at one point, burning off anger. In my case it was more about physical health; an extension of anorexia; instead of dieting, one burns off the calories. Between the booze and my joy of cooking, I was packing 3,000-plus per day; running an hour a day knocked-off up to 500 of them.

Then there was the mid-life-crisis thing, about losing my masculinity; I was in all over good health (drinking aside). However, my teeth provided a constant reminder of my advancing age and declining physique. By this time, I had been seriously battling periodontal disease for more than two decades.

Swedish dentist Lennart Hübel worked out a solution that at least stabilized my condition; **however, I hadn't seen him since 1999 and my mouth was complaining.** John Starks, my very able Seattle dentist, wanted so much for the fix that it was cheaper to fly to Sweden and get treated by Lennart. So, at the end September, I flew to Stockholm, had my teeth fixed and visited many old friends and colleagues.

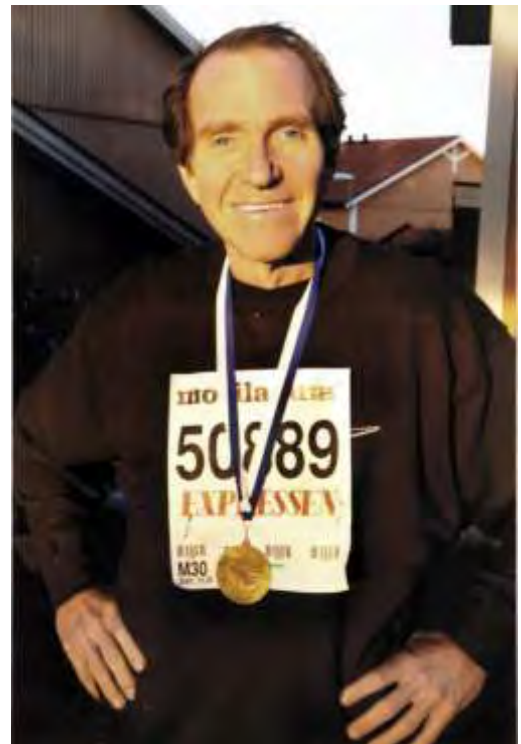
Among others, I spent a long weekend with Thomas and Lena Lagerqvist, at their home on Lidingö. As it turned out, that was the weekend of the Lidingöloppet, a 30-kilometer cross-country run. The Lagerqvists knew I liked running; they suggested I enter the race.

There was something like 10,000 other runners; the winner, Augustas Mbusya, a Kenyan, did the course in 1:36:51. My time was 3:32:55; my place was 5766.

Many runners must have dropped out because I was one of the last to cross the finish line, albeit on my knees.

My legs turned to rubber after I passed the 25-km rest stop; **because, to avoid wasting any time, I didn't stop** at the re-hydration stations, like everyone else.

What the hell, I thought; I don't feel thirsty. By the end, I could hardly walk and that night, the leg cramps were unbearable.



2003 – Nike *Breath* – Zen of Programming

Right after the Shanghai performance of the IBM Power to Win show, Dave Frey hired me to work with the Sound Images team to produce content for Nike’s Asia-Pacific sales meeting at the Hilton Wailea Bay Resort on Kauai [Hawaii].



In keeping with tradition, Nike’s Asia-Pacific show was a true extravaganza. AV content was rear-projected by seven, overlapping, vertically-oriented, Sanyo “2K” video projectors (totaling 14,000 watts) onto a 4:1 ratio screen measuring 80 X 20-feet [24.4 X 6.1-meters]. In front of the screen was a twenty-foot-deep [~6-meter-deep] stage, used by a troupe of two dozen acrobatic dancers.

In front of the stage hung a *scrim* screen made of see-through fabric (which can’t be seen in the picture), used to conceal the stage and rear screen before the show started, and for special effects during dance performances. Image choreography was programmed using Dataton *Watchout* software.

To digress for a moment, here’s Wikipedia’s explanation of scrim screens:

“Scrim screens both reflect and transmit light. This means that if a light from a front-of-house position is shone at a scrim, then both the scrim and everything behind it will be lit. This can lead to a variety of interesting effects:

- A scrim will appear entirely opaque if everything behind it is unlit and the scrim itself is grazed by light from the sides or from above.
- A scrim will appear nearly transparent if a scene behind it is lit, but there is no light on the scrim.
- A dreamy or foggy look can be achieved by lighting a scene entirely behind a scrim.
- If a light with a gobo [or slide projector] is aimed at a scrim, the image will appear on the scrim, but also any objects behind the scrim will be lit by the pattern as well.

“In general, anything that is lit will be seen on both sides of a scrim: scrim screens do not absorb light. Scrim can also be used in theatre in combination with a cyclorama or backdrop. The idea is similar to the other uses. When the drop is lit (or images or video are rear-projected onto the back of the drop), the images or colours projected are visible. However, when the drop is not lit, the images or colours will disappear. A scrim can also help dull the image, creating a greater sense of depth.”

The multimedia combo of front and rear projections with a full ensemble of stage lighting created an elaborate fashion show. Typically, Nike shows produced by Sound Images were spectaculars, with dozens of dancers modelling Nike fashions in big production numbers.

Doing sales meeting modules for Nike became a regular gig for me at Sound Images. For a couple of years, I could be reasonably sure that Dave Frey, would ring around the end of March and/or **October, to book me for Nike's spring and** autumn sales meetings. Gar Benedict did the US-show modules; I did the ones for the Asia-Pacific meetings. Dave pitted the two of us against each other. He was a sly fox; **he wouldn't call until the show** was three weeks away—capping the amount of time we could bill for. Ha!

Watch a video of the show at <https://vimeo.com/233406072>

It was hard to select which Nike module to post on Vimeo. I chose **"Breath,"** used to **introduce Nike's 2003 line of women's yoga fashions**, because the style was different from most other Nike modules.

Dave Frey **wasn't paying attention to me, he was more interested in working with Gar** Benedict on the (way) larger, (way) more important, US show. Left to my own devices, I went out on a limb and made a *Zen* show, using abstract trance music [*Breath* by Telepop] and long, slow dissolves. Nike shows were usually high-tempo dance routines, energetic stuff.

When I worked on shows for Dave, I usually drove my big 1990 Ford F-150 **"Luxury Liner"** down to Portland from Vashon Island. The huge van had enough cargo space to hold a big chunk of my quarter-million-slide image archive. At Sound Images, with 100,000+ pictures at my fingertips, I had the wherewithal to illustrate almost any kind of slide show; that resource was a one big reason Dave hired me as often as he did. I gave him a bargain rate on stock pictures; I think I charged something like \$5 each—a token fee.



However, by the time I was put on this project, **Dave's in-house** photographer, Dan Root (**"Rooter the Shooter"**) had completed and catalogued the pictures to be used in the show.

Indeed, Dave sent him to China to shoot lithe Asian beauties working out at a posh, Shanghai yoga studio.

That Rooter was one lucky boy. Nike jobs took him around the world, more than once, shooting major sporting events. During the five years or so that I freelanced at Sound Images, Root's work rapidly progressed from advanced amateur to full-fledged pro sports photographer. However, as good as they were, Root's pictures were "reportage" work—news-style pictures, too literal for what I had in mind for the *Breath* module.

Thus, I spent most of my **three weeks massaging Dan's images, with Photoshop effects**—everything from colorizing them to stretching and selectively blurring them, as well as applying motion-blurred mezzo-zoom effects. The effects stylized the show, focused attention, created points of interest and segued **from scene to scene. What's hard to see** in the video is a third image (created by two others, during a cross fade) of Buddha, who appears at the of the show.

Never in a million years did I think that Buddha would make it to the final cut. Buddha was supposed to be my red herring—the thing the client picked on. (As mentioned, several times before: clients thought making changes was part of their job; part of my job therefore was giving them things to change that I approved of.) However, Frey loved the Buddha and so did Mike Dougherty and Phil Knight; so, the joke was on me.

The choreography (programming) was done using Dataton Watchout. I spent the daytime hours doing Photoshop work, preparing the content, but waited until everyone else went home, before programming. **Then I'd light up some homegrown**, crank up the music, and get into the Zen of image choreography.

There was nothing as satisfying as sitting at the controls of a big slide-show rig; choreographing big, beautiful images; merging them with music. I preferred to program **by myself, without anyone else's help. I once told Dave that I charged fifty bucks an hour** for programming; but, if he helped, it would be fifty-five. Ha!

Derrick Jackman was part of the staging team lead by Steve Farris. Rooter the Shooter came along too; his job was shooting for a candids closing module. That show was **pre-programmed and assembled in Portland; all that was missing were the Rooter's pictures.**

Like all candids shows, this one was filled with tension in the final hours; time felt **compressed as the deadline approached. Thus, when Rooter's big-shot file got corrupted** it was a BFD.

Big Shot was the name of the candids module finale scene. It was a group shot taken at the beach just hours before showtime; there was no way to reshoot; organizing the shot had been a nightmare in the first place, like herding cats.

However, I was there when Dan shot the group. As he was setting up the shot, arranging the group, I shot groups within the group; I was thinking of happy-face pictures for future Nike mindblowers. Suddenly, they became the solution.



It took me an intensive four hours, but I managed to assemble a couple of dozen bits and pieces into a nearly-**perfect assembly for the finale of the Ko’olina candids module.**

Pulling that rabbit out my hat impressed even me. I was the indisputable hero of the show; Dave took notice and began hiring me for my Photoshop skills; Dan noticed that and began boning-up his Photoshop skills. The upshot was that I had the (temporary) advantage over Gar. Heh heh.

2003 – Opportunity Knocks – Bad Timing

Judith Doyle **came to visit me that summer; she couldn’t have come at a worse time, or a better one.**

I was thrilled to see my Purchasepoint colleague again. It had been a quarter century since we worked together on the Rank Xerox show, in London.

I was still pretty much a wreck, after the divorce from Anna. I had sworn off women, yet Judith seemed to be on the make. She was totally discreet, but flirty. Under other circumstances, it would have been the perfect set-up; the two of us alone on an island; **that’s the kind of plot they write movies about.**

The house had only one bedroom by then; I had just torn out all the walls, to create an open space. I set-up Judith in the studio, on a Hawaiian futon. I think she was put off by that, but she made do with it; she never tried to crawl into my bed, nor I into hers.

The problem was that Jude had put on a few stone and that turned me off. I was still in my anorexic phase; **although I’d conquered bulimia, I still had a skinny fetish;** I still dreamed about Anna. I told Judith about that one evening, after I’d had a few too many. **She reacted stoically. I’m sure she thought I was a bit daft, after she saw me trying to fix my Isuzu, earlier that day.**

To digress for a moment, with some background about that repair: A year earlier, I pushed-in the back door of my Isuzu Rodeo when I backed into the Luxury Liner one night. Stupid me, I forgot it was parked there.

After that, it was difficult to get into the back of the SUV; the hatch latches were partially jammed. When Judith arrived, I was in the process of trying to repair the door myself, having gotten a ridiculously expensive estimate from a professional body shop.

I managed to separate the inner shell from the outer, exposing the latch mechanism; that was a feat in itself, from which I saw that the problem was caused by the dent in the exterior sheet metal. The dented panel was connected to the spare tire, so I reckoned that I could pull-out the dent by roping the spare tire to a tree, and driving away, slowly and carefully, until the pressure on the door-latch linkage was relieved.

Judith was amused at my set-up—the car roped to a tree with a 30-foot [10-meter] length of heavy-duty poly line, and me digging up grass, trying to get traction. I looked like a guy trying to move a tree. But it worked; and although the looks of the Isuzu were not improved, I could, at least, open and close the back hatch.

The Isuzu episode seemed to enamor Judith to me even more; she seemed to approve of my self-sufficient lifestyle as a latter-day pioneer. Judith was just like me in that regard; she went off to Australia and built herself a house on upscale Dangar Island, near Sydney.

Judith and I could have made a perfect couple, had I not the affliction of anorexia. We were birds of a feather, no question about that; but it was bad timing. I was still a wreck after my divorce to Anna, more distrustful than ever of women; a new relationship was the farthest thing from my mind.



Judith kindly sent me the above scans of pictures in her scrapbook from the Vashon trip.

2003 – Crisis Management – Move to Vancouver

Work and booze are what kept me from falling apart from Life's emotional stresses and strains.

Since childhood, I hid from hurt by burying myself in work. Nearly every close relationship I ever had was victimized by my workaholic/alcoholic nature; my wives all complained that I loved my work more than them.

I guess I did.

When Anna left, I could no longer deny to myself that I was a drunk. I went on the mend; programs like AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] were not my style; but I understood their principles—that change comes from within. I needed new friends and new circumstances; the ones I had were all, in some way, supporting the habits and illusions of my former alcoholic lifestyle. I decided to start over in Vancouver, where I would be anonymous, where I could re-**define myself. Between Hita's and Anna's there were simply too many** ghosts in the Vashon house.

I drove up to the border and had a talk with Canadian Immigration, at the Blaine, Washington, border crossing. My permanent resident card had expired twenty years earlier; so, I had my fingers crossed as I explained why I had been out of the country for two decades.

Now I was ever so happy that Sandra had delayed divorcing me until 1996. While I was married to her, my permanent residence status was protected; her decision to delay our divorce, to protect her own immigration status in the States, meant that I only had to **account for eight years' absence from Canada.**

Sister Kathy and I were in a period of *rapprochement* at the time; she came to my aid, **providing me with a letter attesting to her need for my help, during her late husband's** long battle with prostate cancer.

The explanation I presented to Canadian Immigration was: that when Sandra and I separated, it took me a couple of years to gather the funds needed to move home from **Sweden; that I went to Vashon Island first, to help my sister during her husband's** terminal illness; that it took me another year to re-organize my life in preparation for the moving back to Canada; and that I was there to ask what I needed to do to regain permanent residence status in Canada.

Tucked under my arm was a dossier of documents I assembled, expecting to be required to re-**applying for permanent resident status; I had my sister's letter plus a half dozen** recommendations and personal endorsements from as many successful Canadian business associates that I could muster, including David and Sue Corley, their daughter Patricia Corley; Lew Price; and Trudy Woodcock.

My distant cousin, Better Ehrlich (né Bonner, from Toronto) also wrote a long and detailed letter explaining my Canadian ancestry (Grandma Kathryn Taylor was born and raised in Montréal, although her parents were immigrants—from the Munro clan in Scotland.)

However, as it turned out, I didn't need any of those character references; the letter from Kathy was sufficient.

After listening to my story and reading the letter, two agents spent an awfully long time at their computers; they occasionally went off to consult with other agents; it was nerve wracking; I tried my best to act cool calm and collected, knowing that there were a few cameras pointed my way, watching my body language.

Finally, one of the agents returned and informed me that she and her colleague had found a provision for humanitarian assistance in the statutes governing permeant residency; the time I spent assisting my sister was not counted against me. That was cause for celebration!

I thanked the agents for their generous assistance; they didn't have to do all that extra research; they could have just dismissed me—"Too bad fella, you were gone too long." Instead they found a loop-hole I could squeeze through and duly stamped my passport with a revalidation of my Canadian permanent residency. With a smile on my face, I crossed into Canada and continued to Vancouver, for a two-day reconnoiter.

During my internet research, I found real estate agent Sue Baird of Dexter Associates. I explained to her that I wanted a place in the West End. When she told me that she herself lived in the West End, I knew I had the right agent.

I rode my FJ-1200 up the I-5 to Vancouver and stayed overnight at the Oceanview Apartment Hotel in English Bay—an economy hotel (USD \$65) was just one block back from water, behind the prestigious Hotel Sylvia (USD \$200).⁷⁷

To digress for a moment, about bikes and biking: Earlier in the year, my sister Kathy got interested in bike riding. Like so many others, her idea was to be able to get to the head of the ferry line. She got a great deal on a bike from a local riding instructor, who also gave her lessons.

It was cool having biking in common with my sister, a new bond. The two of us drove up to a bikers' outfitter in Lynwood, Washington (about 15 miles north of Seattle). We both spent about \$700 bucks each on riding outfits; we didn't mind spending that much; biker clothes are specially made and super tough; you want to be wearing the right stuff when (not if) your bike goes down.

Alas, for Kathy it was all for naught. On one of her first solo rides she goosed the accelerator too much entering traffic on Vashon Highway and couldn't make the turn onto the highway.

⁷⁷ The Oceanview doesn't exist anymore, the land became too valuable for a two-story motel and it was converted into condos.

She ended up in a deep ditch on the far side of the road and hurt her shoulder pretty badly. Ironically, it was the kind of accident where her expensive motorcycle clothes offered no protection at all.

In fairness, Kathy's street intersected the highway at the end of a long sharp curve. Cars driving south couldn't be seen until they were right on top of you, at speeds up to 60 miles per hour [90 km/h]. Well, Kathy never rode her motorcycle again. The bike and accessories were promptly put on the block and sold. They say that if you ride a bike you will eventually go down; but, what a bummer to go down on your first ride.

Whenever I rode, I was aware that I could go down any time; I planned for it. Even so, I went down three times, badly. The first time was in Douglaston; when I was 18, learning to ride a 750 cc Norton Atlas, I slipped on wet autumn leaves at the bottom of Manor Road, crashed through dense hedges and skidded across a neighbor's lawn. I walked away from that one unscathed but shaken up.

The second time was while I lived in Flushing, with Leslie. The Norton slid out from under me when the bike hit an oil slick rounding a sharp bend in Kissena Boulevard, near Kissena Park. I slid between on-coming cars across four lanes of traffic, but walked away from that one, too, with a few bumps and scratches. The bike didn't fare so well.

The third time was in Seattle, on Denny Way, near the Space Needle, in rush-hour traffic. That time I had to drop the FJ intentionally, to avoid T-boning a car whose driver probably thought the stop sign was just a suggestion. I got a little tear in my expensive biker jacket; that pissed me off more than having to replace a \$400 side-view mirror.

Life is like riding a bike; whatever you do, you will go down. That's why the Boy Scouts say, "Be Prepared!"

The ride up from Vashon to Vancouver was epic; it was the longest ride I ever took on the FJ. I wore my expensive blue, white and black cruiser outfit, with matching Arai helmet. What did Gene Butera say, **"Dress for the part you want to play?"**

Sue Baird met me the next morning; she picked me up at the Oceanside in her sporty convertible; it was a warm and sunny spring day; Vancouver was looking its best. Vancouverites spend a lot of money on public gardens, and people keep their properties **looking spiffy. There's a lot of civic pride.**

Sue announced that she had lined-up eight properties to show me. The first one was at 1435 Nelson Street; a condo building called the Westport. (In Vancouver, most West-End buildings have names.) I had an immediate affinity to the building and its landscaping. It was a marvelous looking place built in the same cedar-sided style and color as my house on Vashon Island. Inside, I looked at suite 304, facing Nelson Street. The one-bedroom suite was perfect; it was everything I was looking for and in tip top shape—I even **approved the prior owner's blue color scheme. I told Sue that I wanted the place, but she** insisted on showing me the other seven. It was a nice tour around Vancouver and gave me a better sense of the various parts of the city. But no other neighborhood came close to the West End and in the end, I chose the Westport, the first place we saw.

2003 – Canadian Connections – Smooth Move

When I moved to Vancouver, Ron Jacklin was there to welcome me; he was my biggest supporter in Vancouver.

Ron and I met through Jim Kellner [Dataton USA]. He was staging a Watchout show in Seattle, for LexisNexis, a legal research and risk management firm. Rather than go through the hassles of importing his gear from Vancouver, he wanted to rent Watchout servers locally and Kellner recommended yours truly.

I delivered the gear to him at the Seattle Convention Center, where a huge trade show was underway. I stayed long enough to make sure the servers worked; Ron was under a tight deadline and there was no time for chit chat. I saw him again when the show was over and I picked up the gear. I invited him over to the Vashon studio; he was duly impressed; it was the beginning of a long friendship.

When I arrived with the first load of furniture, Ron was there to help me unload the Luxury Liner. I arrived well after dark on a summer evening, hours late after having to process all my goods with Customs at the Canadian border; that took some time because I presented them with an 80-page freight manifest. (In preparation for moving to Vancouver, I inventoried every single item in the Vashon house, documenting each with a photo and a corresponding entry on an Excel spreadsheet.)

The Customs agents had never seen anything as detailed as my massive manifest. The cross references with photos impressed them. They showed it around to their colleagues, **which added to the processing time. But I didn't mind waiting; I wanted to be on good** terms with Canadian Customs, because over the next few years, a lot of stuff went back and forth across the border, following the ebb and flow of my fortunes.

Ron brought along André Wirsig, to help with the moving. André **was doing a "practicum"** (working in a real-life situation; what they used to call *applied learning*) for a course he was taking back home, in Radebeul, Germany [near Dresden; formerly part of communist East Germany]. Ron was head of the New Media Department at British Columbia Institute of Technology [BCIT]. He had access to the international academic network and through various exchange programs had his pick and choice of top-talent interns. André turned out to be a terrific choice; he had brains combined with good work ethics and high standards; why many consider Germany to be the epitome of industrialized civilization.

According to the Westport's rules, we weren't supposed to be moving after 8:00 pm, but, with the help of André and Ron, everything was unloaded in record time. The real drama occurred after Ron and André departed, when I went to park the Luxury Liner in the **condo's underground parkade.**

It was a big van, extra long and quite high. The roof cleared the sprinkler system pipes by a half inch and it was a close call rounding the tight turns. When I finally squeezed into **my space, there was barely eight inches between my van and the cars on either side.** I'm sure the owners of those two adjacent cars took a good close look for scratches or dings and wondered how the heck I got in there. (It was a twenty-point maneuver—thank God for power steering!)

The Luxury Liner made a great moving van, it held a ton of stuff. Still, it took a dozen loads to move the necessary stuff from Vashon to Vancouver. They got to know me pretty well at the Border. Ron and André were there for me every time.

My plan was to maintain two residences, to have one foot on each side of the border, commuting between Vancouver and Vashon.

It was too expensive making the 380-mile round trip [611.5 kilometers] in the Isuzu Rodeo, at 20 miles per gallon [30 kilometers] or the Luxury Liner, which got only 12 mpg [19.3 kpg]; so, I bought a **'98 Honda Civic** to make the commute. I still drive the Civic. It gets almost 34 miles per gallon [54.7 kpg], holds a ton of stuff and handles like a sports car.

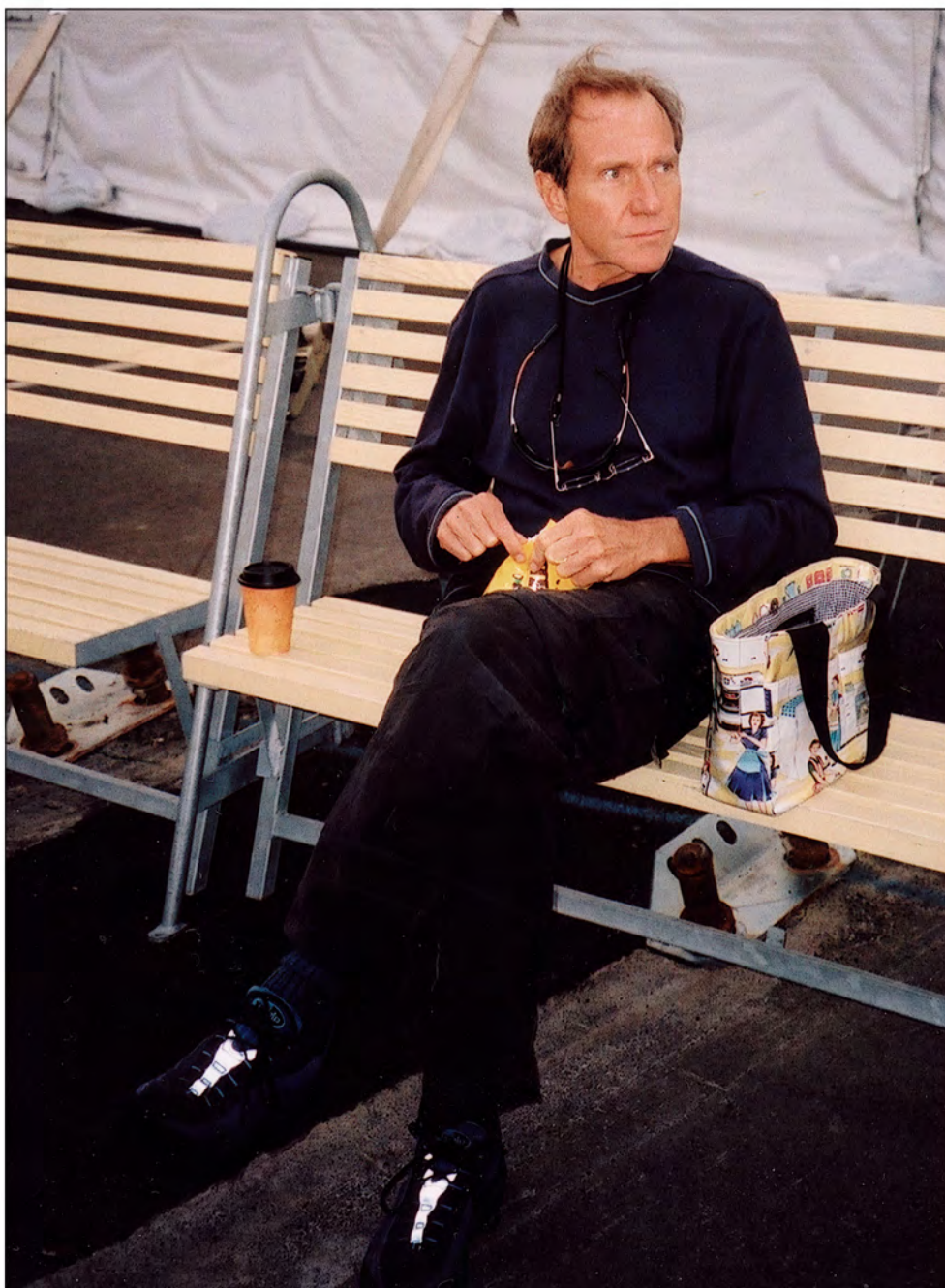
To digress for a moment about the Honda: How I got the car is a testament to the Law of Attraction. Having already decided on the make and model I wanted—the same kind driven my neighbors, the Lorentzens, who raved about their black '98 Civic hatchback—on one of my commutes from Vashon back to Vancouver, I swung off the I-5 in Mount Vernon, to see what Simm's Honda had to offer. Earlier that same day, another customer had traded-in the exact car I was looking for—a black '98 hatchback! I made a deal on the spot. The car was clean as a whistle and had only 43,000 miles [~69,000 kilometers] on the odometer. Talk about synchronicity and the Law of Attraction, that was it.

Straddling the border was politically and financially expedient.⁷⁸ I saw a future in *bi-lateralism*—showrooms and offices in Vancouver and a production studio on Vashon Island. I had plenty of gear, so outfitting both locations presented no problem.

Thus, I hauled a full set of Photoshop and enough Watchout computers to get going up to Vancouver, together with basic photo gear and my image archive. I laid-out the Westport condo on paper before moving; everything had a pre-planned space. Despite having made and executed such floor plans many times before, I re-discovered an axiomatic truth: things look different on paper than they do in real life. There was barely room for everything in the compact 500-square-foot [46.5-square-meters] Westport condo. The image library alone required 24-feet [7.3-meters] of six-foot-high [1.8-meter-high] Metro shelving (the metal wire type used in restaurant kitchens). I also installed 14 feet [4.26 meters] of counter space. The result was a catacomb of aisles through the counters and shelves. I worried that the sheer weight of the stuff in the suite would exceed the floor load of the wooden building. Once installed in the Westport, I set out on my bifurcated life. As always, new business was at the top of my to-do list. 2003 | Vancouver |

Westport Suite 304 | Plates 1-5

⁷⁸ That was then. Now I stay north of the 49th Parallel.



2003 | HAPPY SNAP AT CIRQUE DE SOLEIL BY JUDITH DOYLE | PLATE N° 1

Judith's visit was ill timed. | I wasn't over Anna.



2003 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 304 | PLATE N° 1
My first Canadian studio, at 1435 Nelson Street, in Vancouver's West End.



2003 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 304 | PLATE N° 2

Top left & below: Watchout servers and display monitors. Right: Watchout & Photoshop production machines

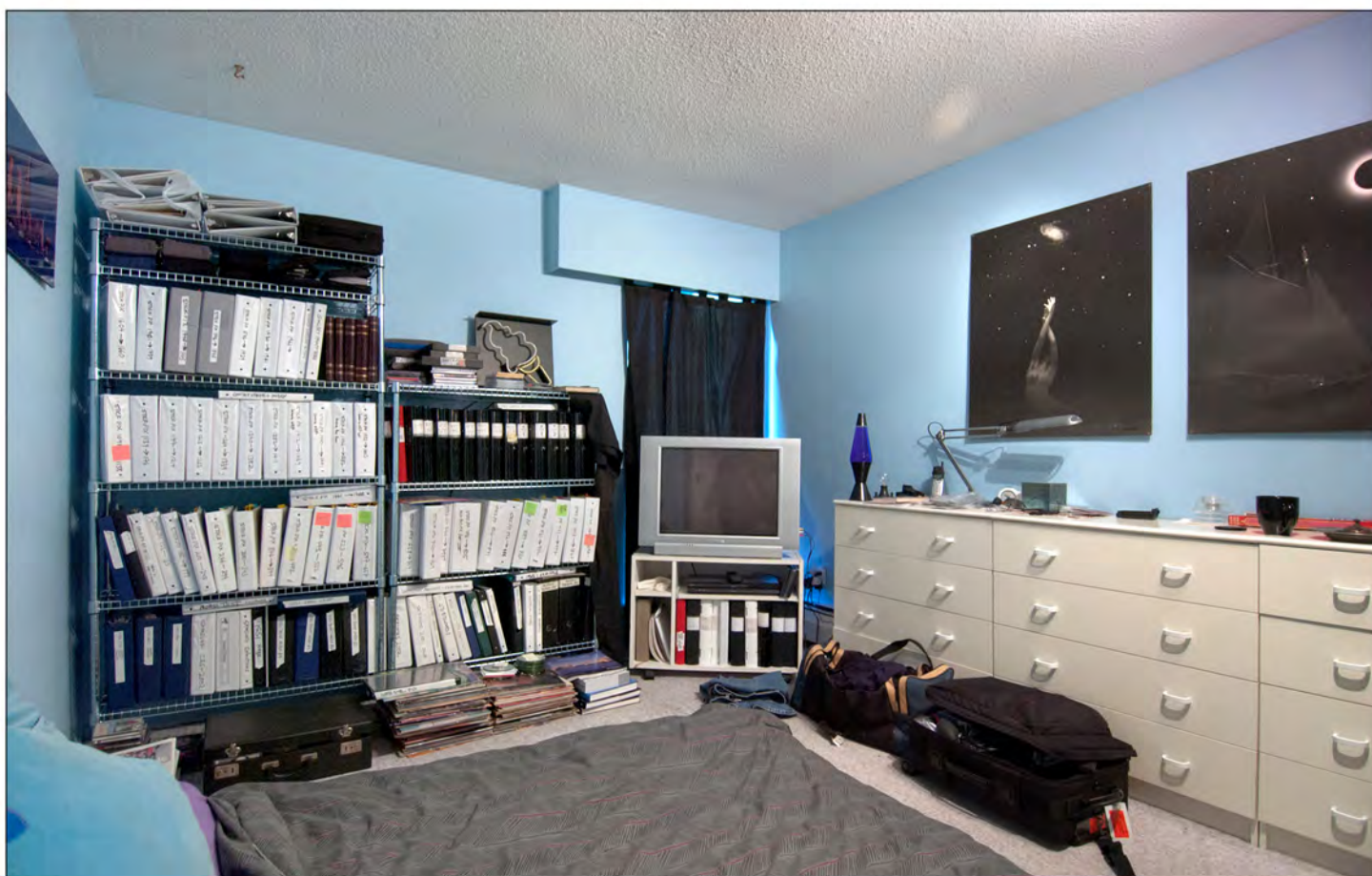


2003 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 304 | PLATE N° 3

Above: Watchout and Photoshop programming machines. | Below: View into Watchout production studio.



2003 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 304 | PLATE N° 4
Kitchen and picture library.



2003 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 304 | PLATE N° 5

Bedrom and picture library.

2003 – Twice Burned Once Shy – Glutton for Punishment

In anticipation of moving back to Vancouver in 2003, I re-connected with Paul Smith.

His esteemed company had gone through a lot of changes. In 1995, Creative House was reincarnated and re-named, Envisioning & Storytelling (a clunky name, IMHO); **subsequently, that morphed into Paul's latest** incarnation, Storysmithing, Inc. (nice play on his name, eh?) **Anyway....**

I hauled a five-display Watchout rig from my Vashon Island studio to prestigious West Vancouver, where I set-up my demo shows in the lobby of **Storysmithing's** impressive digs, across from Eagle Harbor Marina. Paul asked that I leave the show there for a week, so that the entire staff could see it.

I was surprised that they didn't already know about Watchout; Paul had a reputation for being ahead of the curve; I hoped that his seeming naivete would give me an advantage. Imagine my surprise when absolutely nothing came of my substantial efforts; in fact, I never heard from Paul again.

Another rejection by Paul Smith was more than a major disappointment; it was a blow to my Vancouver business plan. I assumed that Smith would add me to his stable of freelance specialists.

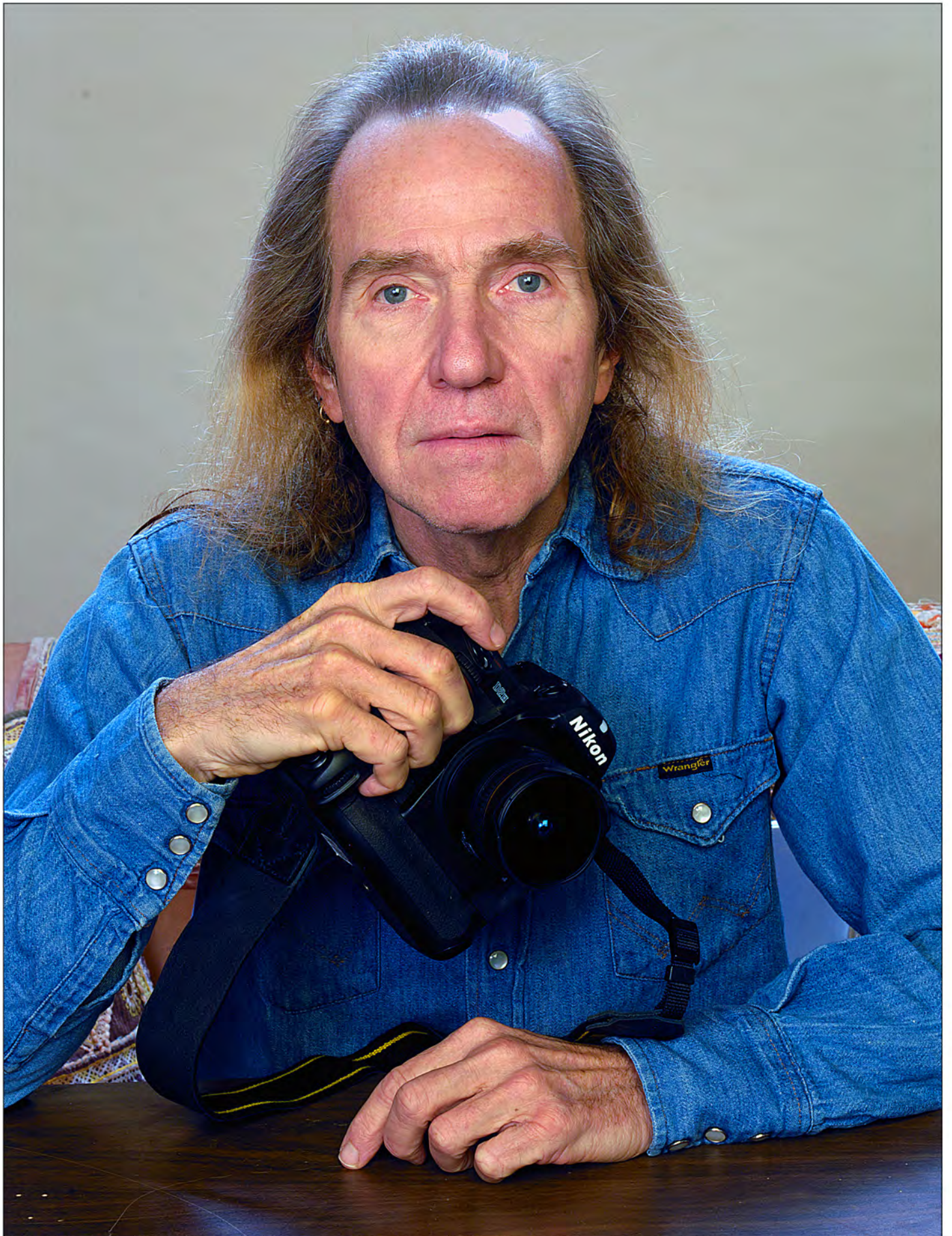
What happened? I can only surmise that Paul had NIHS—*Not Invented Here Syndrome*—a descriptive term coined by Geoff Nightingale. People afflicted with NIHS rarely used freelancers; they preferred to do everything in house, to avoid any leakage of proprietary techniques or information.

I suspect that Smith probably looked at my Watchout demo, then set up his own Watchout programming suite. It was déjà vu all over again, to quote Yogi Berra; a bitter repeat of my first failed encounter with Paul 20 years earlier; when he took my plans for an Air Canada show at the 1986 Vancouver Expo and handed them to another producer.

Or, maybe I was just ahead of my time; maybe Storysmithing **just weren't ready for Watchout; maybe they weren't impressed with my presentation; that happened to me** more than once before.

After I was fully operational in my new Westport condo, I tried to make a connection with Paul Belserene, Paul **Smith's writer and** close creative collaborator. Some say, Belserene was the creative genius behind Smith; but, after a year or two of trying, nothing came of those efforts, either. My style was likely too over the top **for Belserene's conservative** tastes.

Such was life in the casino of commerce; sometimes I just **didn't make the cut**. But let it be said, in the case of Paul Smith, **it wasn't for** lack of trying.



2005 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 6

Selfie | The financial drain of alimony was taking a toll on my business and health.



2005 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 1

I moved upstairs to a larger suite as the studio transitioned from audiovisual to fine-arts production.



2006 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 2

Studio during transition from audiovisual to fine-arts production. | Note sleeping loft upper left.



Photographed with ultraviolet (UV) light.

2006 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 3

Studio in transition to fine arts. | Above: 360-degree panorama (2005). | Below: 180-degree panorama (2006).



2006 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 4

Studio in transition to fine arts. | Above: 360-degree panorama (2005). | Below: 180-degree panorama (2006).



2005 | VANCOUVER | WESTPORT SUITE 405 | PLATE N° 5
Gazing-ball selfie.taken in the new studio. | Scene is reflected in camera lens.

The whole Anna affair was spiritually debilitating; it forced me to reassess myself at a very basic level. After the divorce, I wanted to start over. Although I was successful, I was not happy. I took a couple of trips to recharge my batteries and invest in my stock photo business (I was still contributing to The Stock Market—photographer #369). The picture agency was also in the throes of digital conversion. A disruptive battle of standards impeded progress. Stock agencies insisted on bulky tiff files. Universal file formats, like pdf, **had not arrived on the scene yet. The agency did not like Photoshop'd pictures, image alteration was *verboden***; and they were very fussy, especially about scanned film images.

To digress for a moment, about scanning: In the beginning, as slide scanners became available, every photographer in the world got in on the act of digitizing their libraries. Picture agencies were flooded with digital images in all shapes, sizes and file types. There were three levels of scanners available: very expensive laser *drum* scanners; semi-pro scanners like Imacon [now Hasselblad]; and prosumer level units made by Nikon, Canon, Epson and a host of others. The quality of a scan depended on the density of pixels and the quality of those pixels. Pixel quality varied quite substantially depending on the type and quality of CCD [Charge-Coupled Device] sensors used to capture images. For example, Canon used a different sensor than Nikon. An experienced eye could look at the pixel structure and differentiate between the two. In my humble opinion, both were equally good, although Nikon's looked less electronic (crisp, hard) and thus more film-like. Whatever the case, my agency was not pleased with the scans I made using the Nikon LS-2000 and LS-8000 scanners.

Today, with a more thorough understanding of how the whole digital image process works, **I can safely say that the reason they didn't like my scans was pilot error**; I was using Silverfast software to drive the Nikon scanners and didn't know how to properly use the controls. That is, I knew what the controls did but didn't know what a good scan should be, technically. **For example, I didn't know what a histogram was**; I judged picture characteristics by what I saw on my monitor screen; I would dial-in color, intensity, saturation, etcetera until I liked what I saw. But what I saw was not necessarily what other people saw on their monitors. **However, the agency's main gripe about the Nikon scanner was that it didn't provide enough pixels**; the Nikon scanners produced ~20-megabyte files; but the agency wanted ~50-megabyte files. There was no simple fix for that; **I couldn't simply double-up the pixels using Photoshop**, because those extra pixels were derivations of the original ones, there was no change in sharpness or quality compared with the original image.

My income from stock picture sales had been declining since the turn of the Century, when Corbis took-over The Stock Market picture agency. There were a couple of reasons for that. For one, I wasted a lot of time and money digitizing old images that ultimately got rejected. Another reason was the disruption of the Internet. Market share for expensive, licensed images gave way to cheap, *royalty free* images; the Internet provided unlimited access to an infinite variety. It took a while to realize that I was fighting a losing battle; **that compared to what a picture could earn, it wasn't worth the cost of production**. Before coming to that realization, I deduced that my time was better spent making original digital content rather than ~~doctor-up~~ digitize my old film images. Certainly, I had the facilities to do that.

The Vashon studio was totally digital by 2003; I was managing two computer networks, a 10-work-station, intra-studio network as well as a 20-server network for Dataton Watchout show production. Given those capabilities, I reckoned that all I needed to do was send Corbis all-new, all-digital content. Rather than reshoot places I already had on film, I decided to set off in search of new destinations. Thus, I reasoned with myself that a trip to Mexico **would be an “investment” that provided a wealth of new stock pictures** and satisfied myself that the costs were justified. I debated the viability of the Mexico trip for **some time; it wasn’t a snap decision. With Anna’s alimony payments** depleting my capital, I had to think smart. The first trip was to the Yucatan peninsula. My colleague Trudy Woodcock upped and moved from Vancouver to Merida in 2001; she had visited there on **business in the ‘90s and decided then that she wanted to live in Merida.**

Trudy sold her picture-agency business and bought a one-way ticket to Mexico. I didn’t hear from her for a couple of years. Then, I got an email from Trudy telling me about her new business, Illuminado Tours, specializing in customizable tours of the Yucatan and Mayan ruins; I got in touch with her right away and offered pictures as part of my payment. We came to terms and I enjoyed a fabulously productive and affordable excursion as a result—one that expanded from a fortnight to a month-long mini-Odyssey across the Yucatan to Belize and then Guatemala.

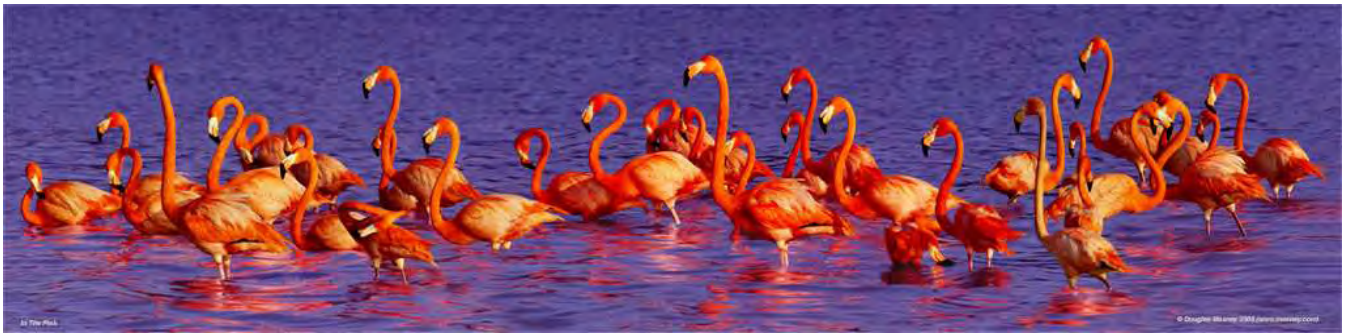


The trip started in Merida. **I was one of Trudy’s first customers (maybe *the* first). Trudy’s friend, Loren Jones**, was also visiting. We had her full attention for two weeks. I told Trudy I wanted to photograph as much as she could cram into a two-week schedule. We drove a few hundred kilometers through rough, winding roadways, from Ek Balam to Chichén Itzá to Uxmál. Upon my arrival, Trudy set me up in a room at a **friend’s new B&B, Los Cielos Guesthouse.** Lorna-Gail Dallin had nicely renovated a 2-storey town house right in heart of Merida, not far from the town square.

Loren Jones (left) and Trudy Woodcock at Chichenitza, Yucatan.

[By the end of our stay in Merida, Loren Jones and I became friends. She invited me to **visit her home, in Lillooet [BC]; it’s an old gold mining town on the Lillooet River, a** tributary of the Fraser River. Real estate was very affordable; I considered moving there, but it was just too far from Vancouver (a 4-hour, 155-mile [249 km] trip) and Vashon.]

Los Cielos stood out because it looked nice from the outside. Why is that odd? People in Merida—and many other parts of the Third World—hide their well-being. The streets of Merida were lined with walls of dusty, dented corrugated-steel sheets. Behind those rusted walls were fabulous haciendas. One such house that I visited, invited by friends of Trudy, was artistically tiled throughout and built around a central, open courtyard—a feature that *made* the house. I would never have seen that house without the services of a person who is part of the zeitgeist, like Trudy. Having been the managing editor of a picture agency, Trudy knew exactly when and where to take me for good shots. She already had the beginnings of a network, of resourceful natives; those connections came in handy a couple of times when I wanted to go off-limits for a better shot.



In the Pink, 2006

One such occasion was when we visited Celestun Wildlife Refuge to film the flamingos.

The refuge was a big lake and the flamingos were way out there. We hired the services of a boatman, one of several there, who Trudy worked with. The boat stopped a safe distance from the flamingos; but it was too far from them for good shots. Although I had a Nikkor 200-400 mm zoom, **with a doubler, I couldn't** use such long lenses in a rocking boat.



After a bit of over-dramatized pouting on my part, a few words from Trudy (in Spanish), and a small wad of pesos, the boat inched forwards until we were so close, I was afraid the birds would be spooked and fly away. Eventually they did, taking-off together in an fantastic flurry of pink; but not before I captured a plethora of super shots that pleased Corbis and were later used as content for the *Oceano* show at the Peppermill Casino Hotel, as well as for fine-arts illustrations.

I could understand why Trudy chose to live in Merida; the Yucatan is different from the rest of Mexico; you feel like you are in another, non-Mexican country. (Actually, that was **once true; the Yucatan is Mayan country; the people there maintain their ancestors'** unique culture.) Being in the Yucatan reminded me of the cultural differences between Basque [northern] and Moorish [southern] Spain. **I've never been to Egypt; but I suspect** that, in terms of photo opportunities, the Mayan ruins in Mexico and Guatemala certainly rival the Valley of the Kings. Wherever Trudy took me, each location was better than the last. I shot everything; it would have been a 900-roll shoot, had I been using film, and unaffordable for that reason alone. But, with digital media, there were no film and developing costs—photography was *free*—except for the cost of hard drives, CDs and other storage media.

The Nikon D1X and D1H cameras I used shot about as many pictures on one 640-mb memory card as I used to get on a 36-exposure roll of film. The cards were expensive; but they were reusable, by transferring their contents onto other storage media, e.g., hard drives or CDs. I carried twenty memory cards, equal to about 20 rolls of film. Digital photography was geeky. I had to carry special gear to save my digital-image files. As usual, it was the gear manufacturers who made a fortune on the digital revolution. Photography was a bonanza for storage-media makers; giant-sized image files required **plenty of storage space. Thus, digital photography wasn't free at all; it actually cost more** than using film.

Besides the added cost, there was added aggravation. I couldn't just hang-up my hat at the end of the day. Instead, memory-card files had to be transferred to external hard drives or CDs. In the days of film, I had my evenings off and could enjoy some R&R. With digital, evenings were spent eating take-out food in my hotel room, transferring files—presuming your hotel had secure power. Storage solutions were exceptionally quirky back at the beginning of digital imaging. Again, it was a question of standards, electricity being one of them. The designers of early digital storage devices must have been so satisfied at being able to store data in their laboratory that they never took real-world conditions into consideration—or so it seemed. Power outages weren't the only curse for digital media; current cleanliness was another issue. For digital imaging one needed a signal without noise; noise degraded signal reception and data integrity. Back in Merida, the electrical power at Lorna-Gail's guest house had both of those deficiencies, it was intermittent and noisy. Transferring pictures from the camera's film cards onto hard drives, was sobering; I still wasn't drinking, but sure could have used a shot of tequila on more than one evening. Whenever there was a glitch in the power, the hard drive (or CD) lost its memory and I had to begin again.



Playa del Carmen, 2003

After two weeks under Trudy's guidance, I headed out on my own, to explore the rest of the Yucatan peninsula. Trudy told me that Paul Smith was making a presentation for a big new resort development on the Mayan Riviera. Thus, I shot in Playa Del Carmen (above).

Besides Smith's presentation, up-to-date photos of those popular destinations for were always in demand, at Corbis. Against everyone's advice, I rented a car from a local agency in Merida; Hertz and Avis were unaffordable and I reckoned that I knew how to avoid being shaken down. I had heard all the horror stories, about how local car agents scammed customers by billing them exorbitant amounts to fix superficial damages that you or I would say was wear & tear. The car-rental agent balked when I explained that I was going to drive the car to Belize. As I was warned she would, the agent explained that I was responsible for any damages. We both examined the car; I had her make note of every little ding and dent I could find. Satisfied, I headed off, in mid-morning, hoping to have dinner in Cancun. (That was before I discovered the *topes*— speed bumps.)

As I drove away, the rental lady shook her finger and emphatically warned me that Mexican insurance was no good in Belize. I had to choose between taking the longer perimeter road around the tip of the Yucatan peninsula, or a shorter, diagonal route through the Yucatan interior; I chose the latter; that turned out to be the wrong decision.

When I hit the first *tope*, I must have been going 60 or 70 miles per hour (90 or 105 km/h), having great fun speeding along a barely-paved, single-lane “road” that twisted through the dried-out landscape. Tearing through the back roads of the Yucatan felt like the old days, like being on a Car and Driver gig. As I was drifting through an exceptionally long curve, the mother of all speed bumps suddenly appeared; hitting **it was unavoidable. I braced, thinking “this is it;”** but the little car somehow survived the brutal impact. The rough road and topes tapered my tempo. When the sun went down my pace slowed to a crawl. As darkness descended, I found myself in the deepest part of the jungle.

An incredible electrical storm came out of nowhere; so, did a Madonna memorial, all lit-up, out in the middle of nowhere. The photo op was irresistible; so, at the risk of further delay, I got out my gear and shot the images that became an illustration called *Cresh of Thunder* (right).

It was near midnight when I came to the end of the jungle road, in Tulum. There were only two hotels, a fancy-looking, brightly-lit one and another, more intriguing-looking, a few blocks away.



I drove over to investigate; the intriguing place appeared to be closed; however, upon backing out of the reception area, a friendly Caucasian lad ran up and asked if I was looking for a room; he introduced himself as Ry Koteen, proprietor of the El Crucero Hotel. We negotiated a good rate on the spot.



Cresh of Thunder, 2006

Ry Koteen turned out to be a very hip Canadian expat who was developing the hotel with the able-bodied assistance of his good-looking wife. They sent porters to deal with my bags and invited me for a *cerveza* [beer] and something to eat in the lounge, where we sat together and chatted under an enormous, 30-foot-high [9.1-meter] palapa;⁷⁹.



They were trying to close, but they stayed open late to fix me a meal. The food was fresh and fabulous, not the usual, greasy Mexican slop. I bought them a round and they told me about their dream—the El Crucero—and I told them about mine: digital stock photography. My room was comfortable and eclectic; the walls featured hand-painted murals; the furnishings were made from driftwood; Ry proudly explained that every room was different, that the artworks were his own.

I was glad to have met the ambitious young couple; they inspired me; I told them about all the mistakes I made with Fork Inn the Road; I was finally able to laugh about it.

2003 – Sailing Odyssey – Belize & Guatemala

Ry Koteen advised me to get an early start at the Tulum ruins; that was good advice. **Tulum's Mayan ruins** were high on my list of stock photo subjects. The night before, I explored the set-up at the ruins, even before looking for a hotel. I got the lay of the land; **I didn't want to waste any time in the morning. It was still dark when I got to the entrance;** I wanted to park up front, to be the first on line when the box office opened. The weather cooperated and all went as planned; there were a couple of other hard-core **photographers, but we stayed out of each other's shot and the grounds were big enough** to absorb the few of us there.

For the first hour, I got clean shots; then a procession of tourist buses arrived and disgorged several hundred gawking zombies. From that point on, it was impossible to shoot landscapes of the landmark; so, I shot some close-ups and called it a day and was back at El Crucero in time for breakfast. Ry asked why I was back so soon. I explained that all was good; that I got what I wanted; that he was right about the tourists, about getting there early. I thanked him again for his good advice.

⁷⁹ Wikipedia: A palapa (a Spanish word of Malayan origin, meaning "pulpous leaf") is an open-sided dwelling with a thatched roof made of dried palm leaves. It is very useful in hot weather and, therefore, very common in Mexican beaches, such as in Acapulco. It is perhaps one of the most important architectural contributions of Philippine culture to Mexican West cultures.

As I was leaving, Ry mentioned that he planned to have a gallery and gift store at El Crucero. He asked me to send some prints of the pictures I took. He offered to sell them in his shop; that incentivised me to create *Tulum Sunrise* and *Tulum Storm* (below).



Tulum Sunrise, 2003



Tulum Storm, 2006

[Spoiler Alert: I sent Ry a half dozen giclée prints of the two illustrations; that was about a year later. In the interim, something happened that caused Ry to abandon his El Crucero venture. **Maybe he was bought out by a big developer, he didn't want to say.** I chalk it up to: nothing ventured, nothing gained.]

The next day, I turned south, avoiding Cancun; **the weather wasn't right to shoot skylines** or hotel properties; they sky had a milky look that made the ocean look less friendly; besides, I had a 12-hour window to catch up with John Connolly and his tour group in Placentia, and no way to contact him if I was delayed. To refresh your memory, the Connolly family lived on Manor Road. **Although our parents didn't socialize (Dot and John Connolly Sr. hung with the yachting crowd) we kids did.** John Jr. was the same age as my sister Kathy; his brother Kevin was two years younger; and little Cindy was a peer of my sister Barbara. **While we were growing up, I didn't hang with any of the Connolly clan; I was three years older than Johnny and didn't give him a thought until he rang me at the Vashon house to say that he was living in Seattle with his Turkish wife, Ipek, in a condo on the east shore of Lake Union.** They came over to Vashon; we got to know each other over dinner. I learned that Connolly had become a world-class yachtsman; he worked with Modern Sailing School and was one of a just a few instructors who taught rich élites how to sail super-sized yachts.

Just before I left for Merida, Connolly called to say that a member of his Caribbean sailing class cancelled and he had a vacant berth for that cruise; did I want it? The dates coincided with my Yucatan excursion, so I signed on. My plan was to make the 200-mile [320 kilometers] drive from Tulum to Placentia [Belize] in one go, overnight somewhere in Placentia, and find Connolly in the morning. I got a late start leaving Tulum, having been entertained most of the night by my expat Canadian hoteliers, with endless pitchers of killer Marguerites (for themselves, not me); as a result, I crossed the border from Chetumal, Mexico, into Belize after business hours; all border services were closed, including the car-insurance agent. I was in a conundrum—my car-rental agent specifically told me to get insurance for Belize, but that was not possible until then next day, which would make my rendezvous with the sailing crew impossible. Plus, there were no places to stay at the border. Since it was already getting dark, I decided to risk it, drive through the night and buy insurance in Placentia the next morning, before meeting Connolly.

I headed south on the Northern Highway, toward Belize City, **the country's capital**. The roads in Belize were better, but I held to the speed limit. The scenery improved as the parched desert morphed into a lush jungle. Passing through Sand Hill, I continued south on the Burrell Boom Cut until I got to the interchange with the Western Highway, outside Hattiesville. The traffic circle was a busy place, even at 11 pm [23:00]. A cadre of cops, two of them at each of three interchanges, were stopping every car. They looked like they were checking IDs; I got my passport ready to show them. However, they were only interested in my insurance papers. I got pulled over for not having an insurance sticker on the windshield. The constables informed me that I had broken the law. I explained that the services at the border were closed, that I intended to get insurance in Placentia the next morning. They explained that, as I had already broken the law, I would have to pay a fine in the morning at the court in Hattiesville, and spend the time until then in jail. Before I had time to react, the police got distracted; they left me to stew in my juice while they dealt with some other sorry driver. Then a herd of several dozen unattended cows totally disrupted the comings and goings at the interchange; it was sheer chaos for a quarter of an hour. Some drivers started sneaking away. I was tempted to follow them; but the risks were too great; the police were not going to let a presumably rich American slip through their net. My greatest concern was a search of the car and confiscation of my equipment—the digital Nikon kit, plus the computer and hard drives containing my pictures of the Mayan ruins.

When the cow commotion abated, one of the ~~soldiers~~ policemen returned. After reminding me that I was in big trouble, he told me, in a mock-apologetic tone, that he was doing his **duty; but in his heart, he didn't want to put me in jail. He added, stroking his chin, that he** was trying to think of some other way to deal with the problem. Aha! *Some other way*. Hearing those words, a light went on in my sometimes-thick skull. I suggested that I give him the money, that he gives it to the judge for me. He was agreeable and asked how much money I had. When I took the cash out of my wallet, he took it and counted the money for himself. There was \$800 and a bit; that disappointed him. He invited me into his jeep and said he would drive into town, so I could use an ATM [cash machine]; whereupon I opened my wallet to reveal that I had no credit cards (I hid them in my briefs during the bovine brouhaha).

My lucky stars must have been shining over me from above that night, because the cop never searched the car. He thanked me for paying the fine and said he would give it to the judge the next morning; I tried not to smile.

Then he did something that made me suspect he was more than happy with “only” \$800—the cop gave me some advice as to how to proceed without insurance papers. He told me that there were two more police checkpoints between Belize City and Placentia; that I should stay off the Western and Coastal Highways; that I should cut through the jungle on a back road. That route through the rainforest turned out to be something less than what you and I would call a road, even a dirt road. Tropical rains had eroded the road, exposing sharp rocks and small boulders.

For long stretches of that rugged terrain, I lumbered along at walking speed, or less. There was a half dozen major bumps and scrapes under the car; I winced thinking of the insurance implications back in Merida when (if?) I returned the car. The back road was about 40 miles long (60 kilometers); it took me most of the night to cross the jungle. There was a bright moon that night. Animals and birds darted in and out my headlight beams; distant shrieks gave me the willies. At one point, the jungle experience was so intense that I stopped the car, got out, smoked a joint and just soaked it in; until an loud cry nearby got me back on track. I didn’t want to miss the boat.

I rolled into Placentia at the crack of dawn. I emerged from the jungle at the outskirts of town. People there lived in shacks on stilts, painted with bright colors. Trying to get directions, I discovered that most of the native residents of Placentia were angry Caribbean blacks with chips on their shoulders. Placentia was a three-block town; finding the harbor was easy; trying to guess which boat John’s was wasn’t. It was dawn, no services were open. I was driving on fumes after the long jungle detour. I slept in the car for a couple of hours at the town’s only gas station; it was just a block away from the pre-arranged assembly point for the Connolly sailing trip—an open-air restaurant under a two-story-high palapa that was a local landmark, called the Purple Space Monkey.

It was a circular space with some tables and chairs clustered around. The place turned out to be the central meeting point where local Ex-Pats and visiting yachtsmen met and mingled. It was also the only place where you could get an internet connection.



Captain Connolly sits at the center-right table.

In those days, before wireless, one needed a good phone line to access your email; that could be a hard thing to find on the fringes of civilization, in places like Placentia. At the palapa bar, I had to queue for an hour, to get an RJ 11 phone-jack receptacle for my Dell Inspiron 8200 laptop. I was the first one in when the restaurant doors opened at 7:30; I was hungry as a hog and ordered a huge breakfast. Around 10:00 am Connolly rolled in. We shared a hug and the sailing adventure began. The rest of the crew rambled in before noon. After exchanging greetings, we headed down the town dock to get a ride out to our boat. John had rowed to shore in the mother ship’s dingy; but I had too much gear for that small boat, so he hired a local man with a bigger one to take me.

It was an uncomfortable crossing; the boat and its owner were not well off; he ogled my gear and I was afraid he might make a mental note of which boat said gear was loaded onto. As we left the shore, I watched the tin-shack town of Placentia shrinking into the background while the foreground filled with super-sized luxury yachts of all sorts. The juxtaposition of poverty and wealth was striking; it would have made a good picture; but, I dared not open the camera cases and reveal their contents to the boatman. There would be times when the whole crew was ashore; thieves know that; they watch and wait.



Our boat was a Lagoon 380 catamaran, **called Cala'Mia**, big enough to hold all ten of us— John and me, plus four couples. My fellow sailors were élités, there was a scientist from Australia, a banker from San Francisco... **you get the idea. We** each had our own cabin; mine were tight quarters although the cabin was designed to sleep two; I needed every square foot to store my photo gear and set-up a digital darkroom.

Johnny wasn't expecting me to bring so much gear; I got the feeling I was becoming a problem, especially when my electrical needs became apparent. I needed clean power for my electronic imaging system. I brought the necessary converters and inverters, but **having enough connections to the sailboat's circuitry was a challenge**—there were only four outlets. I had to share those with the rest of the crew, and each of them had cell phones, cameras and laptops which needed daily charging. After some initial petty quarrelling, I won their favor by rigging up tandem 5-socket power strips, so 10 devices could be simultaneously charged. We worked out a rotation system; they got current during daylight hours; I got all the juice after dinner.

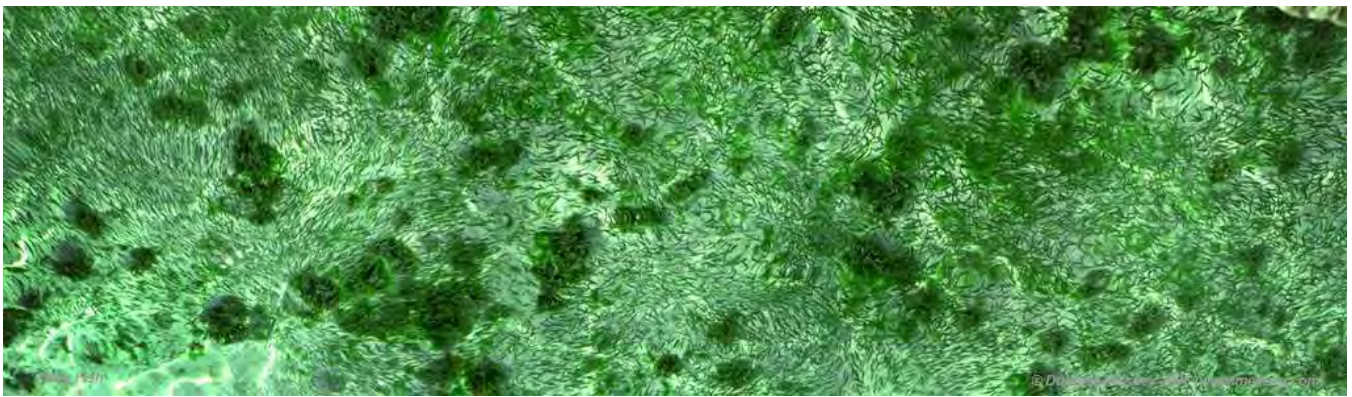


Another challenge was the pitch and yaw of the catamaran; sometimes, the waves were so big that stuff would fly off the tables and shelves. Anticipating the rock and roll, I brought along a bunch of net baskets; I hung my laptop (see picture), hard drives and photo accessories in the bags, attached to a support cable stretched between the two bunks in my cabin. The gear could sway every which way, while the connections remained tight and uncompromised. We headed out to sea, leaving Placentia behind. I prayed that my car would still be at the gas station when I got back. I arranged to park it there for the week we would be sailing. After that momentary trepidation, I quickly re-focused on the beautiful world that was unfolding before me. I saw clearly why Johnny liked to sail the waters of Belize. It was an unspoilt marine wonderland, **a photographer's paradise.**



Hunters' Cay Sunrise, 2003

The first night, we anchored off Hunters' Cay; it was like our own private island. The atoll had a strange profile because a savage storm had blown the tops off all the palm trees; from a distance the islet looked like a guy with a four-day growth in need of a shave.



Baby Fish, 2003

We went ashore in the dinghy; the waters were crystal clear. Millions of little fish swarmed through a patchwork quilt of bright green moss and caustic light patterns. They are the subject the picture called *Baby Fish* (above). At this small size, the minnows are hard to see. That night, we were treated to a light show by Mother Nature. Little bursts of soft blue lights began blinking like fireflies at the bottom of the sea. **The effect didn't start until after midnight; I was still awake, transferring files—a long, boring process. I went topside, to while away the time; that's when I saw the tiny flashing lights. The twinkling sea-floor puzzled me; I wanted to get to the "bottom" of the mystery (hahaha) and possibly get a picture.** Trying not to awaken anyone, I slipped into some snorkeling gear, took a couple of big tokes, and silently slid into the sea, off the back deck. Underwater, the flashing **stopped. That's odd, I thought. If I held my head above the surface, the flashing could be seen, but not underwater.** I swam some distance from the boat in search of clues about the mysterious effect. The water was only about ten feet deep; I was able to hold my breath long enough to dive down and examine the creatures living on the bottom in some detail. On one such dive, after holding my breath for as long as I could, I shot to the surface and gasped for air just in time to hear a huge (and I mean, really-big) splash, just a few feet away. I turned to the sound I saw the dark silhouette of a huge fish right in front of me. A shark? The next day everyone was keen to hear my story. Johnny reassured everyone that he knew of no sharks, that I had more likely encountered a dolphin. Had I known that, I might have enjoyed the encounter without being scared witless.



2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 1
See caption for details.



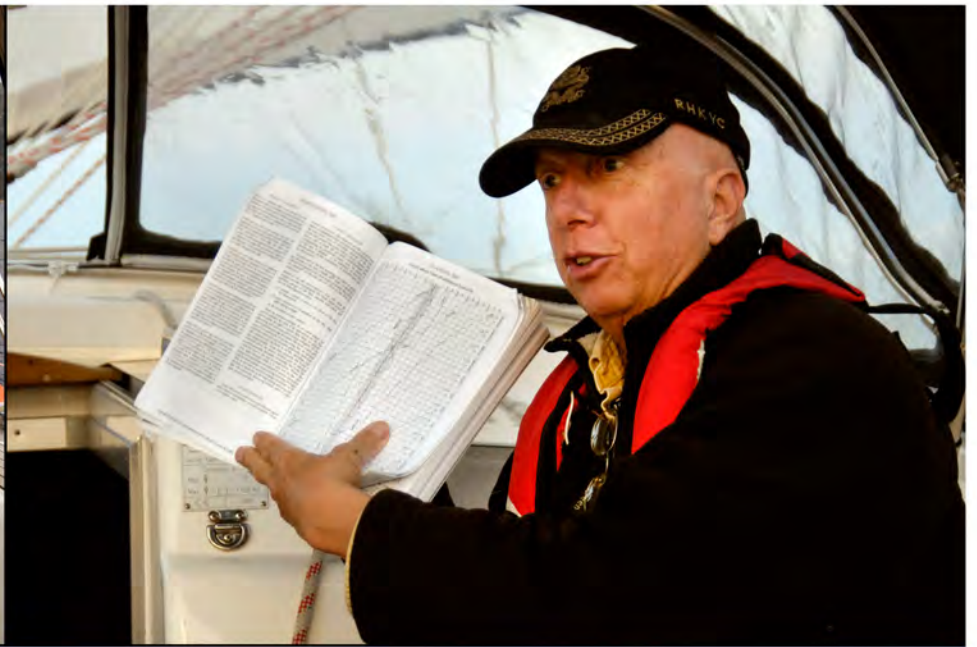


2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 3
See caption for details.



2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 4

See caption for details.



2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 5
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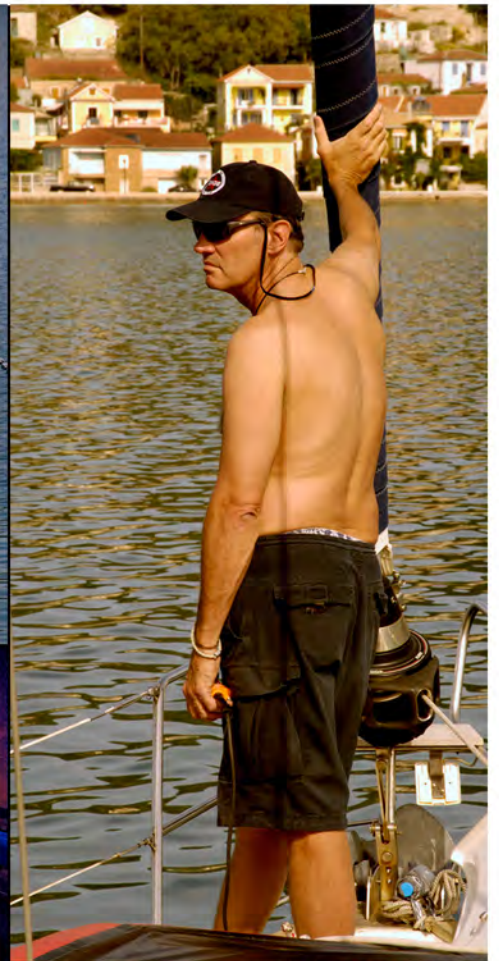


2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 6

See caption for details.



2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 7
See caption for details.



2007 | MODERN SAILING - GRECIAN ODYSSEY | CAPTAIN JOHN CONNOLLY | PLATE N° 8

See caption for details.

We sailed up the Rio Dulce River to a little town in Guatemala aptly called Frontiera. That **outpost was the end of the line, in terms of services; if we sailed further, all we'd have** encountered would have been (unfriendly) natives. Frontiera was a destination long on **Johnny's bucket list. I think he was a little disappointed and, like me, a little scared. Not** too many boats made it this far up the river; we were the only yacht in the small harbor. To the folks in that shantytown, we were like moon men—rich ones. Walking through town gave me the same at-risk feeling as had the boat ride across Placentia harbor, with that drooling boatman. I switched to the longest lens I had (a Nikkor 70-210 mm zoom) to shoot close-ups without being obvious. However, after an hour, virtually everyone in that town was aware that we were there.



We ate lunch at a riverside restaurant (left) but had dinner on the boat that night; nobody wanted to be in town after dark. There was a moment when Johnny (left) almost changed his mind and headed into town; I would have gone with him if he did. The two of us had made a nocturnal excursion in Palcentia, wandering down back streets in search of a hot local hangout; we knew that there had to be one, it was just a matter of finding it. Nightclubs usually attract hip people who seek their own cool kind; the club that Connolly and I found was no exception. After their initial surprise, the all-black crowd got back to dancing while Johnny and I headed for the rum. The club was a shanty, with a few colored lightbulbs hanging from the unpainted 2 X 4 rafters that held up a corrugated tin roof.

The sound system was not as good as it was loud. Johnny explained that they were over-driving the amplifiers; I believed him; he knew a thing or two about sound, having once produced big rock-and-roll shows. The poor-quality audio got to Johnny in short order; we left the club and discovered that, after a few rums, we lost our orientation. We took a circuitous route back to the boat through some very dark back streets; the silence of the night and the sound of the sea were punctuated by occasional screams; were they howling at the moon, or something worse?

During that trip, I discovered a lot about John Connolly. Anyone who does one thing to the exclusion of all others is either a very interesting or very boring person, depending on your own orientations. For me, the voyage with Johnny was a world-class photo op, a stock photo bonanza. I asked for and received signed model releases from everyone on board; that gave me *laissez-faire* to shoot anyone doing anything, anytime, without the hassle of cropping out or obscuring particular people. John was keen to have new pictures for Modern Sailing Academy; he was quite an egomaniac; a narcissist, actually; but a **master sailor. Photographing Connolly's sailing classes, I bushed-up** on my own sailing skills. As a 10-year-old, I learned navigation and small boat handling at a Coast Guard course, before being allowed to drive the family motorboat. I was fascinated by celestial navigation; Connolly knew the sextant like the back of his hand. His skill handling big boats was masterful.

Back in Merida, I had a problem on my hands—the car; it had been through a lot. If the lady at the car rental agency found anything wrong, I would be charged for the repairs; along the line, the more people I spoke with, the more horror stories I heard, about tourists getting ripped off for hundreds even thousands of extra dollars by unscrupulous and scrupulous agencies alike.

I explained my dilemma to Trudy and she rounded up a crew to detail the car; it cost me what, fifty bucks? That was money well spent; the car was cleaner when I returned it than when I took it out—so clean that the car agency lady called in a male friend to help her **inspect the car; together, they couldn't find a thing, so my contract was signed off.**

Two days later, back in Vancouver, the 12,000 pictures, taken in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala, became a major archiving project. A month was required to pre-edit, name and back-up the picture files, then reorganize and archive them on hard drives and (later) CDs.

[Spoiler Alert: In 2013, I transferred the contents of 3,000+ CDs onto hard drives, before trashing the disks at the Vashon Dump. Compact discs were claimed to be archival storage media; but that claim was debunked five years later, when some of my CDs started failing. The safest storage was (still is) hard drives; but hard drives must be plugged in and refreshed at least once every five years, because magnetism dissipates. I still house an archive of 50+ hard drives. **I haven't turned them on in a long time;** so, my fingers are crossed.]

2003 – Vancouver - *Texas Forever*

Charlie Watts surprised me in the late spring, asking for help with another Watchout project.

The new gig was a digital conversion of a Watts-Silverstein slide show, called *Texas Forever!*, made for Larry Spasic at the Texas Museum of History (left).

The Texas Museum of History was located beneath the San Jacinto Monument—one of the most important memorials in Texas, commemorating the Battle of San Jacinto which, along with the Alamo, grabbed Texas territory for the USA from Mexico.

The show was the museum's cash cow; it had played for nearly ten years, seen by hundreds of thousands of visitors & students.



Charlie and Gar Benedict made the *Texas Forever!* multi-image show back in the early 1990s, and it was seen by literally millions of paying customers. However, the last set of slides was fading; within a year, they'd be out of business.

Texas Forever! played every hour in a deluxe, walnut-paneled, 200-seat theater, featuring surround sound and a 20 X 30-foot screen, very large for such a petite show room. Busloads of tourists and thousands of students from all over Texas arrived daily to tour the Museum, see *Texas Forever!* and take the elevator ride up to the top of the Monument (the world's tallest obelisk).



With considerable foresight, **the museum's Director**, Larry Spasic, had originally purchased 10 copies of the show from Watts-Silverstein; at 24 slide trays per copy, that was 240 trays, nearly 20,000 slides—a bundle of bucks for Bruce and Charlie. Now, ten years later, the last copy was being screened; the other nine had long-since faded into oblivion. Larry called Charlie seeking new sets of slides; but they were impossible to make because slides were dead, nobody made them anymore. Charlie recommended that the show be transferred into video (so that his ~~son's~~ video company could **do the work**). However, traditional video, even the best, didn't have enough resolution [clarity] for large screens like the one in the *Texas Forever!* theater.

Larry Spasic in a 2015 photo by his right-hand man, Barry Evans

Larry next inquired about digital projection possibilities; he had read about Watchout in a museum magazine. That was why Charlie was calling me; neither he nor his son still knew a thing about Watchout production. **Charlie's offer surprised me: I would deal with the client and produce the show; he would re-make the soundtrack as a subcontractor and bill me for his services.** I am sure that Charlie would never have made that offer if he had any idea what a Watchout conversion involved. He cut himself out of 90% of the budget and handed me the client on a silver platter. I had carte blanche to contact Larry Spasic directly and to form my own bond with him—a strong bond that has lasted until this very day. When the *Texas Forever!* job came in, I was already up to my neck with an enormous project—the *Oceano* show—for the Peppermill Casino in Reno, Nevada. I needed help and called Ron Jacklin for suggestions about good assistants.

Ron had just gone out on his own having left Duocom, the Canadian division of MCSI, a big American AV company, for whom he produced slide graphics for meeting and events. Ron called his new company Jacklin Creative; it was a partnership, with Zach Shore and Danielle Borosoff; they were recent graduates of the New Media program at BCIT, where Ron was department head.

Clever was Ron's middle name. As mentioned earlier, his position at BCIT gave Ron access to a limitless talent pool from which he staffed his company—at little to no cost—with "interns." His top students were offered the opportunity to fulfill their practicum requirements **interning at the teacher's company, Jacklin Creative.**

André Wirsig was part of an international student-exchange program, between BCIT and a German university; he was a swap student who came to work with Jacklin Creative for six months.

Maybe Ron forgot to tell his wife, Tanis; but **she was not pleased with André's arrival.** Tanis would have no part of having a *stranger in the house* (Ron's office was in the basement of their house). The fight over André was epic and probably one of the reasons Ron divorced Tanis shortly thereafter. The episode left Ron in a fix; he was responsible for André for the summer.

When Ron told me that André was available, I hired him on the spot.

Despite what André says, I feel like I got the better part of the deal. André was my most eager, clever and dedicated apprentice; he was intense, tenacious and persistent; an embodiment of German willpower.

I had to throw André out every night; he just kept on going, like the Energizer bunny. I thought I was a work-a-holic, averaging 16 to 18-hour days; well, André would match me and never complain.

Our job had three parts: first, take apart the slide trays and reassemble the slides for each scene in slide pages; then, digitally convert the slides into jpeg files measuring 3072 X 768 pixels. [Those dimensions were based on the size of our Watchout projection system, which was composed of three overlapping 1024 X 768-pixel video images.] And **finally, marry the new, digital images to Charlie's refreshed soundtrack.**

The monster job began at the Vashon studio; there we disassembled the trays of the last slide copy of Texas Forever! I could tell André was excited about going to Vashon; it was a bonus trip, to America!

We drove down to Vashon in the Luxury Liner. André grew up behind the Iron Curtain, in **East Germany (Radebeul, in Saxony); they sure didn't have vans like the Luxury Liner** where he came from, folks there drove clunky Trabants back then.

I was high as a kite on the drive to Vashon when I got pulled over a half-hour north of **Seattle. I wasn't worried about the officer searching the car; I ate the remains of the joint** when I saw the flashing lights in the rear-view mirror; **but I didn't want any more points** on my license; I already had three points, for speeding through Blaine, Washington (at 25 miles per hour) to get an ice cream cone for Anna, before crossing the border.

The officer said I was driving erratically. I popped a Ricola mint into my mouth and **explained to the constable about the van's susceptibility to the wind. He let me off with a** warning. Back under way, I glanced over at André; he was white as a sheet; he explained that police **in Germany aren't as nice.**

It was night by the time we got to the ferry dock, in Fauntleroy, West Seattle. Ferries were more exciting than crossing bridges.

Occasionally, from the Vashon ferry, you could see whales and other creatures during the 20-minute voyage across Puget Sound, but not at night. André remarked at how rural it was and, right on cue, a deer jumped across the road ahead of us.

Getting the Luxury Liner up the steep driveway to the studio was like riding a bucking **bronco; the van's loose, front-heavy** suspension bounced over the moguls; the rear tires spun on the lumpy gravel road and lost traction. I had to make a second try, building up a head of steam at the base of the driveway, then flooring the accelerator up the hill, leaving behind great clouds of dust.

The house was stone cold; attention turned to getting a beer, starting fires in the woodstoves to heat the place, and making dinner. André adapted well, like a kid on a camping trip.

The next day we set up two long rows of tables in the studio; we laid out all 24 trays along one side, with slide pages and archiving supplies along the other. There were nearly two thousand slides in twenty-four trays; every one of the 150 or so scenes in the show was made-up of some combination of those slides; anywhere from three to a dozen slides might be combined, like a jig-saw puzzle, to project a single scene on the screen.

Our job was made considerably easier—dare I say even possible—because Gar Benedict, who put together the original Texas Forever! slide show, did such a thorough job preparing both a technical storyboard of the show and a scene-by-scene list of slides, by number. Between those two lists, André and I could disassemble the trays scene by scene.

For example, scene 11 might be composed of slide 4 in tray 3, slide 7 in tray 14, and slide 6 in tray 21. We would fetch those slides from the trays and place them into a View Sheet labelled **"Scene 11."**

The coded sheets were sorted by scene number, in show order, to confirm that all scenes were accounted for according to the storyboard. To double-check ourselves, we compared the sheeted slides with a VHS video of the show that someone had made along the way, probably filming off the screen at Watts-**Silverstein. The video quality wasn't very good,** but we could make out enough to corroborate what we had done.

After a three-day weekend on Vashon Island André and I produced 24 empty trays and a **dozen fat binders full of slide pages. It wasn't all work: we made a sightseeing trip around** the Island and had dinner at my old Fork Inn the Road restaurant; that was now a Mexican family restaurant called La Playa; (The Mexicans rent the space from Hita, she **still owns the building; it is still Vashon's only waterfront restaurant.**)

Back in Vancouver, André re-organized and re-sheeted the slides into in shooting order, according to the lists he prepared in Excel—all left-screen slides in one pile, all right-screen slides in another, to oversimplify. On his own, he worked out important sorting systems by which we kept track of the 2000+ slides. His sorting system gave André the ability to shoot scenes according to their technical specifications, instead of show order (from beginning to end), as one might normally be inclined to do.

Digitizing the scenes in *Texas Forever!* was a daunting task because it was a panoramic slide show; each scene involved at least three overlapping images that were blended together with soft-edge masks. André reverse engineered the show: **each scene's slides** were taken apart, re-registered with each other, re-photographed (scanned), and reassembled into a single, digital image using Photoshop.

In many cases, in fact I would say most, copies of the old slides didn't hold up well enough for video projection. Digital images were much cleaner (sharper and detailed) than film, and they were brighter; everything showed-up better, including flaws. So, we ended up making new artwork using parts of the old wherever possible, for efficiency.

At first, the plan was to scan the *Texas Forever!* slides using a Nikon LS-2000 scanner and Silverfast software. **That plan didn't work**; the scanner was too slow and, worse, it had a mind of its own. The scanner automatically adjusted the exposure and color balance of each slide; that sounds good until you remember that each panorama was composed of three slides. The Nikon scanner shot each slightly differently, resulting in color and density differences between the panorama parts. Those differences made the panoramas look weird.

André solved the problem by building a special slide holder for an Epson flat-bed scanner. His three-slide jig enabled registered scanning of entire panoramas, in one shot.

Then André worked out a series of Photoshop algorithms—called Actions—that would “slice and dice” the Epson scans into three parts [left, right, and center screens] and re-assemble those three parts into perfect digital panoramas. With his automated system, André was able to single-handedly digitize the 2000+ slides in only two weeks. To say I was impressed is an understatement.

While André busied himself digitizing the *Texas Forever!* slides and doing rough clean-up work on the finished panorama scans, I applied some spit and polish to them, using Photoshop.

As I began mixing André's digitized scenes with Charlie's soundtrack, an unforeseen problem emerged—the show was a dozer. The narrative was about 40 minutes and there **weren't enough visuals to maintain interest.**

Although long scenes may have been tolerable in the slide-show version Gar stretched **some so long you wanted to shout, “Slide, please!”** (In all fairness, Gar had no choice—he had a limited number of slides to work with; slide trays held 80 slides.)

Not only was the original *Texas Forever!* show a dozer, during the ensuing years, as video usurped slide shows, audiences got accustomed to faster-paced presentations.

To make *Texas Forever!* look good as a *Watchout* show, extra scenes needed to be made; long scenes needed to be broken into several shorter ones or animated, with zooming and panning moves. Thus, remaking *Texas Forever!* became a more complex chore.

I used the original scenes as raw material for a complete redesign of the show. The new version had four times the number of scenes. By the time we were done, André and I were experts at retouching and enhancing old-time photos.

The show that Gar made was a super-sophisticated multi-image program. Parts of the original show involved motion work shot as 35 mm movies then converted to slides. They hired actors, dressed them up and recreated the Battle of San Jacinto.

Gar created a unique old-time movie effect by selecting key frames from the motion picture footage, converting them into slides, and programming them to play at 6-slides per second.⁸⁰

Recreating those old-time-movie scenes in *Watchout* was the hardest part; Gar's silky-smooth image transitions were facilitated by the *lag* of incandescent slide-projector lamps.⁸¹

However, in a video projector [used to play *Watchout* shows], the high-intensity lamp (usually xenon) was always on; black (dark) was created by blocking the light, using liquid crystal displays [LCDs]. To get a dissolve effect, the light passing through the lens was tapered, by varying the density of the liquid crystals.

Mike Fahl [Dataton] worked out how to *ramp* [taper] LCD and LED image displays by turning them on and off very quickly, creating a flicker effect that mimicked a dimmer.

However, a show that looked terrific on one kind of projector might not look as good on another, because no two display or projector types behaved the same. *Watchout* programmers had to adjust the ramping amount and timing to make allowances for the display system being used.

You can appreciate that, at six slides per second, that was a lot of ramping and timing **adjustment. Cloning cues or sequences (using master moves over and over), wasn't** always possible, either. A dissolve between two normal pictures might not work for a transition between a dark and light one. Then too, little pauses here and there added to the motion effect, as did varying the ramp speed. For example, if one soldier shot **another, I would pause briefly on the moment of impact, on the dying man's expression.**

All that to say that it took a long time to finesse the old-time-movie effects in the battle scenes; probably longer than it took Gar to program the original slide show.

When we were done, André and I took the show down to the Vashon Island studio and set it up there with projectors, to do the final program adjustments. (We worked on monitors in Vancouver because there was no projection space.)

As with differences between projectors, there are even bigger differences between the way images look on monitors compared to projectors, particularly during transitions, such as dissolves and wipes. Thus, there was another few days of program tweaking to smooth out the 40-minute show, to milk every scene to the max.

⁸⁰ Movies were shot at 24 frames per second [fps]; Gar used every 4th frame and projected them at 6 fps (6 X 4 = 24).

⁸¹ Tungsten-filament lamps take a fraction of a second—called *lag* time— before becoming incandescent or cooling off; thus, Incandescent lamps “taper” on and off, whereas an LEDs and LCDs turns on or off instantly;

The only snags we had were with the audio. The theater was built for quadraphonic sound using four tracks; Charlie had done a masterful job re-making a four-speaker soundtrack **for the show; but the early version of Watchout we were using wasn't happy and didn't** want to play the rear speaker pair.

When I left for Texas with the show, the sound still wasn't working. It was righted on site after a few tense hours on the phone between me, in the San Jacinto Museum projection booth, and David Branson, in his Michigan office.

When it came to Watchout, David Branson, Dataton's US agent, was almost as smart as the software's creator, Mike Fahl; Branson could troubleshoot almost any problem, and some of them were real brain teasers.



Above: Larry Spasic had the theater in the San Jacinto Museum totally refurbished for the new, digital Texas Forever! show. A bigger screen—26 X 8-foot [7.9 X 2.4-meter]—was installed and the sound system upgraded to quadraphonic. Right: Projectionist Barry Evans and a 1990 architectural rendering of the Museum's theater, designed by Ray Bailey Architects.

By the time I arrived with the new show, all the old slide gear was lying in a heap on the basement floor, like a pile of dead dinosaurs. Projectionist Barry Evans (not to be confused with my former assistant, photographer Barry Evans), already had his three Show-Sage Watchout computers and Sanyo video projectors in position and ready for line-up.



Getting the show installed on the new gear didn't take long; but audio problems plagued us for the first three days. I didn't want to call Branson until I totally capitulated; both he and Mike Fahl got pissed off if you pestered them with problems that you could have/should have been able to figure out for yourself.

Initial projection tests looked exceptionally good on the new, brighter screen. The three projectors lined up beautifully, thanks to their semi-telephoto lenses. The screen was 74 feet away; that is a long *throw* for video projectors, requiring long lenses. To our benefit, longer lenses projected straighter lines and righter angles; they improved the accuracy of image overlaps.

I wouldn't let anyone but Barry see anything until the sound problems were fixed. My rule was, never show anyone anything until it was absolutely finished, or else you were asking for trouble.

Larry had seen a preliminary version of the show at the Vashon studio, when he came to approve it; I say preliminary, because until the client gives the final OK—and you get the check—nothing is final.

To digress for a moment, about approval sessions: There was a Eurythmics song—*Sweet Dreams*—that went: “Some people want to abuse you; some people want to be abused.” That could describe the dynamic of an approval session, especially one that got out of your control.

Getting approvals could be a tricky business, unless you knew your client and had a handle on their character. Clients came in all flavors; some were agreeable, others not, no matter what you did. My goal at approval sessions was to direct the conversation. I ran such presentations like press briefings, taking questions from the audience, one by one.

I had no problem addressing real issues (fortunately, there were seldom any of those); however, when changes were whimsical or arbitrary, I got argumentative. Some clients seemed to ask for changes just because they could, not because the change would contribute anything significant.

I always tried to avoid approvals by committee; things could get out of control easily in a group session. I had a committee approval session once, with IBM, that degenerated to the point where those in attendance couldn't even agree amongst themselves what color a particular emblem should be; I ended up having to make it in five colors, so they could see what each looked like.

The first time that happened, I went along—it was part of the good service. Subsequently, I offered to make those kinds of changes at cost; those were not insubstantial, given that graphics usually involved elaborate special effects—effects were why customers hired me.

Clients didn't generally approve things straightway; I couldn't blame them; until they saw the show, they had no real idea what I was doing. My best storyboards, even animated ones, couldn't come close to conveying the look and feel of a finished production.

Besides that, as someone (Richard Shipps?) axiomatically observed: “Multi-image shows are never finished, they are abandoned.” That was certainly true in my case; there was always something more that could be done, to improve a show. Like retouching a picture, as large blemishes were removed, smaller ones were revealed.

When I watched my shows for the first time—straight through, top to bottom—I almost always made changes, sometimes big ones, based on my initial impressions. Reliving a first impression is impossible; they only happen once; you have just one chance to make a first impression.

When I finally managed to get the quadraphonic sound operating, Larry was invited into the theater to see his show on the big screen. He was more than satisfied with our work; he immediately invited the gentry of Houston to see his new baby; it was their contributions, to the museum-modernization program that made the new show possible.

A month later, Larry called me with a couple of changes—mostly nit-picky stuff. But there was also a big change. There was one section, at the beginning of the battle scenes, where Larry felt that the show lagged; I had to agree (having left that section a little dull, as a “red herring”) and already had a fix up my sleeve.

Larry flew me back to San Jacinto and I shot a motor-drive sequence while crawling through the long grass along the edge of the battlefield; then, I programmed the long sequence of pictures into a slow-motion “movie” depicting what a Texan soldier, hiding in the grass, might have seen, while sneaking up on the enemy.

The easy fix, compliments of the chef, added a little shine to my halo. I left Texas with the dual satisfaction of having pleased the client and having made an historically important show, one with lasting value that would be seen by hundreds of thousands of people. So often, the shows that I made were like fireworks—enjoyed by a few then gone forever.



Later that year, Larry decided to release DVD's of *Texas Forever!* as part of a fund-raising initiative.

As a postscript: While writing about the *Texas Forever!* show I made it a point to check in with Larry, to see if he was still at the San Jacinto Museum of History; he was indeed still there and had this to say:

“My estimate is at least one to one and one-half million people have seen the show. Hey, this show is one of the great ones!! You should hear guests at the end of each show applauding and the smiles on their faces as they leave. This experience means something to them. It touches them in a real and positive way. People remember *Texas Forever!! The Battle of San Jacinto. As they should! ...*

“And thanks for your hospitality when I visited Seattle and for your help in improving the show. It is even better now than it used to be. Of course, I take all the credit for that! Not really. P.S. We will not mention the fact that you almost got arrested photographing refineries because you thought they looked cool. Artist!! Geeez!! It’s a national security zone!!”

[See more in the Appendix: *From Larry Spasic.*]

Larry was referring to an incident that occurred one beautiful evening, when I went down to the bayou in front of the Museum, to take sunset pictures of the refineries across the water. The scene was spectacular—refineries silhouetted against a red-orange sunset, reflected on the mirrored surface of the bayou.

As I was setting up my camera, visions of big \$\$ from Corbis flashed through my head—until I saw the flashing lights of three Houston Police cars heading my way. I must have been easy to spot, standing on top of the levee, hunched over a tripod with a long-lens pointed at the oil refineries.⁸²

Although there were no signs anywhere prohibiting photography, I was apparently not supposed to be there. They looked the way policemen used to look, not like the guerilla SWAT team soldiers that patrol today;⁸³ **so I wasn’t frightened or intimidated. Still, there were five of them and one of me.**

The policemen ringed me and started asking questions: who was I and why was I there? **When they saw my Canadian driver’s license, they didn’t want to believe my story, that I was an American, that I had a US passport back at my hotel.** When I explained that I was working for the Museum, that story seemed too far-fetched to have any credibility.

It became clear that my case was beyond the jurisdiction of the patrol cops; the matter would have to be settled back at the Station House. Hmm, it was getting serious.

They escorted me back to my car. When the trunk was opened, I found the driving instructions Larry had given me about how to find the refinery overlook. The instructions **were written on the bottom of an old Fax bearing the Museum’s logo. The Fax looked official enough to get the cops’ attention.**

⁸² I was using a Nikon 70-210 mm zoom lens to shoot multi-frame panoramas of the scene; I loved that lens for multi-image work because it shot straight, with no barrel or pin-cushion distortion and gave a good, flat perspective.

⁸³ Bill Clinton approved the disposal of excess and/or used military equipment to local police forces around the USA; that seems logical, even clever, on the face of it; a great way to dispose of the gear left over from past and present wars. But, consider this: the US armed forces are not allowed to fight on American soil; that is stated in the Constitution. What to do about that? Simply arm and train local police forces to be a facsimile army, a stand in for the real thing. Now even local constabularies are outfitted like Darth Vader. Intimidation is the order of the day. Then, after 9/11, the Patriot Act was passed by Congress, depriving Americans of liberty and further disregarding the Constitution.

Larry had also written his phone number, in case I got lost, or something happened. (Ha!) Long story short, the cops called Larry at home. He was fortunately there to answer the **phone and assure them that I wasn't a terrorist or spy. I still shudder to think what might** have happened; according to the Patriot Act I could have been spirited away without anyone ever knowing about it. OK, eventually I would have been found; but, what a hassle.

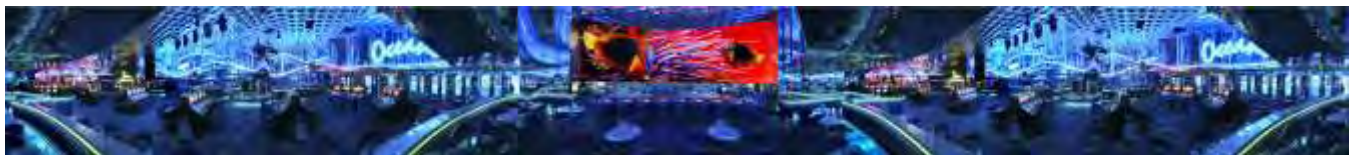
Today, a photographer would probably consider a police encounter like that normal. Back then, that level of police response was new to me, but understandable; it was, after all, only two years since the 911 attack

[A video showing parts of *Texas Forever* (the battle scenes) can be seen on Vimeo at: <https://www.vimeo.com/233255707>]

2003 – QAV – Peppermill Casino

While *Texas Forever!* was in production, André Wirsig and I were simultaneously working on a show for the Peppermill Casino in Reno.

Actually, *show* is the wrong term; we were making *content* for a giant screen that was part of an ambient entertainment system being installed by Quantum Audio Visual [QAV] **in the casino's Oceano Lounge.**



Circular 540-degree view (one and a half camera rotations) taken from center of Oceano Lounge.
The red area was the 40 X 10-foot [~ 12 X 3-meter] screen.

The idea was to have a hip but relaxing oasis **amid the casino's cacophonous commotion.** Dean Rossi and Joe Ness had gotten my name from Jim Kellner at Dataton. They flew up to Vashon Island, to meet me and see some demos. I showed them a couple of Nike shows, the Samsung show done for Charlie Watts, and the NEC-Dataton mindblower.

Dean and Joe got all excited when they saw what Watchout could do; they hired me on the spot and we sat down to work up a plan to fill at least two hours with cool music and visuals. The obvious solution was to create a loop, a show that repeated every couple of hours. Repetition would not be an issue, we believed, because most lounge customers **wouldn't stay longer than two hours; and if they did, by then they would likely be too** plastered to notice any repetition.

The Oceano show was the perfect job for me; I had a huge image library from which to draw scenes. That gave me a tremendous advantage over my competitors; they would have to source pictures from expensive commercial picture agencies.

However, my image archive **wasn't enough in the sense that the content needed a "red thread"** to avoid looking too haphazard.

Given the name Oceano, I sold them on the idea of doing a series of underwater modules about exotic fish. I produced those with pictures taken at all the big West Coast aquaria: San Diego and Monterey, California; Lincoln City, Oregon and Vancouver, BC. (Later, I shot additional scenes at the Atlanta aquarium after working with Pete Bjordahl on a Microsoft show at the Atlanta Convention Center.)

Back in Vancouver I sorted through 10,000 aquaria pictures and composed illustrations with bits and pieces of them. Some of the scenes were quite complicated; but I was **having fun learning what could be done in Watchout; I didn't mind the tedious work and long hours.**



Coral Reef, 2003

For example, in one scene, called *Coral Reef*, a school of four dozen little blue fish swim across a coral reef while larger fish linger around them. Putting together that five-second scene required more than fifty picture elements. There was a coral reef in the background; that was a repeating loop of 12 frames—a motor-drive-picture sequence of underwater plants waving in the currents, giving the impression of a living reef. Over those animation layers, individual fish (cut-outs from other pictures) were sized, positioned and programmed to move randomly in different directions, at different speeds. The school of little fish was made by making eight master fish and cloning six copies of each; each fish was placed on its own layer (in Watchout) so that its size and position could be individually controlled. It sounds more complicated than it actually was. First, I got the background going, then dealt with each fish individually, giving each one a personality (swimming style) of its own. For example, the little blue fish were jittery; they nervously followed their leader in short, fast, tentative dashes. The effects were **surprisingly lifelike; they looked fantastic in Watchout's high resolution [3072 X 768 pixels]**. For the soundtrack, I had the luxury of using any music I liked. The Peppermill Casino was a major buyer of music rights; they had blanket-use deals worked out with the big publishers. Music wise, Dean and I got along famously; that was important; he had his own ideas about the soundtrack for the show.

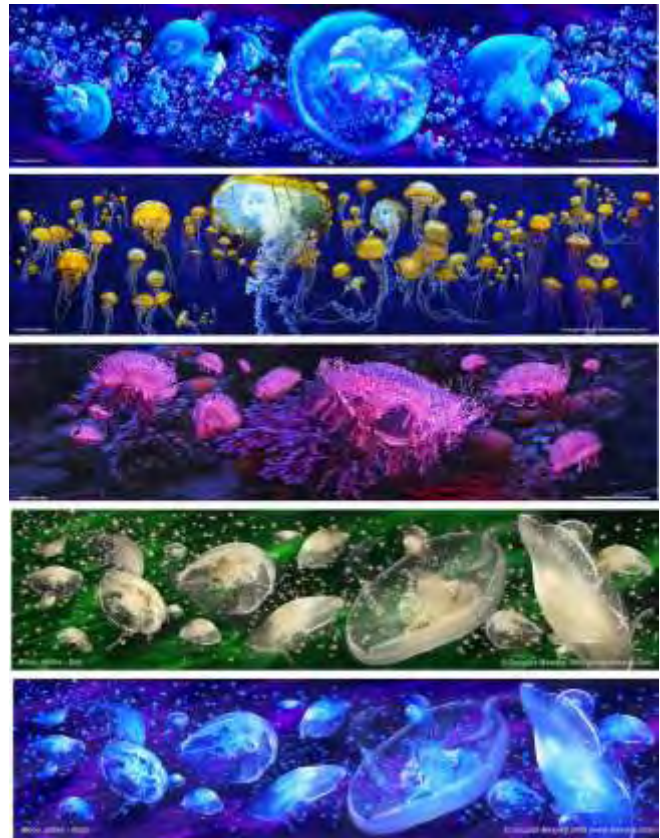
To digress for a moment, about my “son:” Dean Rossi was a serious musician, an accomplished drummer. He was as comfortable playing solo as he was performing ensemble. Dean was so good that he was selected to be one of twelve drummers performing at the closing ceremonies of Burning Man in 2015. We were so proud of him.

I put together a list of music candidates for the Oceano show and let Dean make the final selections. My selections mostly came from the *Café Del Mar*, *Frequent Flyer* and *Hotel Costes* collections. I was totally dialed to lounge music, making enough money to amass a collection of ~200 CDs that I still enjoy.

I set André to work sizing, organizing and labelling the thousands of bits and pieces in the Oceano show; **organization was André's middle name**. While he did that, I worked on separating all the moving elements; be it a cloud, a hot air balloon or a little blue fish, anything that moved needed to be separated from the source picture and isolated on its own layer (in Photoshop and Watchout). Each also had to be color coordinated with the other elements in their scene(s). For about two months, I spent the better part of each (12-hour) day doing Photoshop work, filling folders with files of fish and a few hundred other picture elements.⁸⁴

André assisted me for nearly half a year before his visa ran out in December. He returned to his home town, Radebeul, Germany, and became a reportage photographer for the local newspaper before going into business for himself, taking on commercial assignments.

Selection of jellyfish scenes from the Oceano show.



Before he left Vancouver, we had a Thanksgiving celebration at Hamburger Mary's on Davie Street in Vancouver; they featured an authentic, American-style, roast-turkey dinner. (I didn't have time to cook up the feast in my big kitchen at Vashon, as I would have liked.) André has sent me a Christmas stollen every year since he left Vancouver.⁸⁵ The ones André **sends aren't just any stollen; they come from the birthplace of stollen—Dresden**—where the first ones were made in 1536. After André left, I carried on with the Oceano show for three more months. Pete Bjordahl helped me; I hired him to do the motion graphics work. Pete had as much fun as I did dreaming-up scenes for Oceano. I gave him a lump-sum budget and asked him to give me as much tasty stuff as he could. Geez, did he deliver.

⁸⁴ To separate an element from a background, I traced around its outline making a series of dots using the Pointer tool in Photoshop, when connected, those dots created a "clipping path," allowing it to be separated from the background. The more dots I made, the more accurate the clipping path would be; I worked at a magnification ranging from 300-700%; cutting paths for complex forms could take hours, even days; for example, to isolate a cell-phone tower took my assistant Ryan Grenville nearly three eight-hour days; if he wasn't stoned, it might have taken longer.

⁸⁵ Stollen is a dense cake (called "cookie" by some *pâtisseries*); it's like a cross between scones and Scottish butter shortbread, filled with dried fruits, candied fruits and nuts, and drenched in confectioners (powdered) sugar. Each authentic *Dresdner Christstollen* comes with a serial number in a box that it officially sealed by the Dresden bakers' guild. There's a lot more about the famous yule confection at: <http://www.dresdnerstollen.com/en/Stollengeschichte> for more information about Dresdner Christstollen.

Most of my time was spent in Vancouver. I made it a habit to go to Vashon for a few days every three weeks, to keep the house alive and pick-up my mail from Tom & Bea Lorentzen. (I always brought them a liter of the very best Canadian maple syrup, as a thank you for watching over the house and collecting my mail.) Going to Vashon became **a mini holiday. I kicked up my heels at Sporty's or Bishops Pub. That was challenging,** given that I had given up drinking. Try ordering a Diet Coke in a beer hall full of wannabe **rednecks (actually, don't). Life was solitary; but I was overwhelmed with work and didn't** have time to feel lonely. Making alimony payments to Anna hung over my head like the Sword of Damocles; coming up with \$15,000 a year was difficult, given that I was supporting two residences. However, I was confident about the future because the Oceano Lounge show was meant to be periodically refreshed with new content. I reckoned that I could probably count on a six-figure annual income servicing the Peppermill Casino with a wide range of images for both AV and print. Above all, I was anxious to get *Oceano* up **and running, to blow Bill Paganetti's mind;** when he liked something, money was no object.

Oceano was initially rough-programmed in Vancouver, using NEC CRT monitors; that program was tweaked at the Vashon studio, using Sanyo 2K projectors. However, at the Oceano Lounge, the show was projected with Sanyo 10Ks (10,000 lumens). [For more about this see the Appendix: *From Dean Rossi.*] **As I've mentioned, all electronic image displays perform differently. Using cars as metaphors, you've got everything from Mini's to Mercedes;** some are built for comfort, others for speed. And so, it goes with displays. **Translated, that meant a show's choreographic code had to be tweaked for each type of** display, to look its best. More specifically, the projection-lamp ramp curves were adjusted in Watchout; those were very fussy procedures. Sometimes, the content needed tweaking, too. For example, the NEC-Dataton demo show looked washed out because the projectors were so bright. In that case, each image was adjusted using Photoshop; if I remember correctly, the mid tones were reduced by 20% and color saturation was boosted 10%.

When I saw *Oceano* on that big screen, there was a lot of tweaking that needed to be **done. It didn't make sense to make fine adjustments in the Vashon studio because the** projectors being used for the Ocean show were ten times bigger and brighter. Another reason was that, sophisticated screen choreography could only be programmed when the pictures were seen at full size, preferably in situ. That was necessary to get the timing right. Moves programmed on a (small) monitor screen appeared quite different than they did blown-up on a large screen. The larger the projected image, the bigger the visual speed discrepancy. **QAV's studio wasn't big enough, so Dean arranged for us to use one of the casino's warehouse spaces; one wall was painted white and scaffolding projection** towers were positioned to project panoramic pictures that were 40-feet wide and 10-feet high [4.2 X 3.1 meters]. My programming station was positioned beneath the center projection tower; I was just **10-feet from the "screen;" the images were giant-sized from my perspective—that's how they would appear to folks chilling in the Oceano Lounge.**

Dave Branson made himself available during the installation—that is, he just showed up, to make sure everything was OK (we were using Show Sage servers). He said it was part of the good service. Ha! I am sure he wanted to get closer to QAV (and even closer still to their client, Bill Paganetti, owner of the Peppermill). Plus, a Watchout success story at the Peppermill Casino would be a good case history with which to promote Watchout at bigger venues in Las Vegas.

To be candid, I was a bit intimidated to present my work with Branson present. He was a successful producer of large-scale productions for Detroit car companies; he also design-built a sophisticated stage set for country music starlet Reba McEntire; **I didn't need to** have him critiquing my work.

From start to finish, the Oceano show loop lasted nearly three and a half hours; nobody stuck around to see the whole thing; by the time it got to the forty-minute mark, Branson **called it quits for the day. He didn't say a word about *Oceano***; at least he saw the best parts (Watchout wise), the animated fish. I think he must have been overwhelmed; he knew full well how much work had gone into the show, to say nothing of its quality and *coolness*. Dean was ecstatic; he spent a good part of the next week with me, watching me tweak the choreography. Little did I know that he was absorbing my style and techniques, to use for QAV productions made with his partner, Joe Ness.



Ocean Lounge in the Peppermill Casino.

During the nearly two-week-long installation of the show at the Oceano Lounge, Bill Paganetti put me up at the Peppermill, in a deluxe room. Dean and his wife Andrea took **me out to eat nearly every night, frequently at the Peppermill's finest restaurants—the Romanza, Oceano, and White Orchid, a private dining room**; we ate food fit for kings and they enjoyed expensive wines. Dean and I became bosom buddies; Andrea wanted to be my friend too; but, there were hidden dangers there. Those came to light one day when Dean got busy and she took me on a sightseeing trip, over the mountains to Lake Tahoe. I had my camera and took some pictures of her; she liked the attention. I sensed that **Dean wasn't paying enough attention to his wife; her restlessness revealed cracks in Dean's marriage that (maybe) he didn't see.**

[Spoiler Alert: They eventually divorced and QAV pushed me aside. Dean and Joe convinced Bill Paganetti to replace the Watchout system with a vast network of video **screens, installed throughout the casino, playing "Windows of The World."** Production of video content took them around the world for three years. Dean was so embarrassed, **about cutting me out of the Peppermill, that he didn't respond to any communications** from me for many years. Finally, ten years later, I put out a feeler and he responded. Now we are friends again. He invited me to his camp at Burning Man last year [2015] and we are hoping to rejoin them again this year [2016], if we are lucky enough to get tickets.

[Watch a video of *Oceano* on Vimeo at: <https://www.vimeo.com/237015183>]

2003 – Burning Man – Life-Altering Experience

Dean and Andrea Rossi had already been to Burning Man, many times.

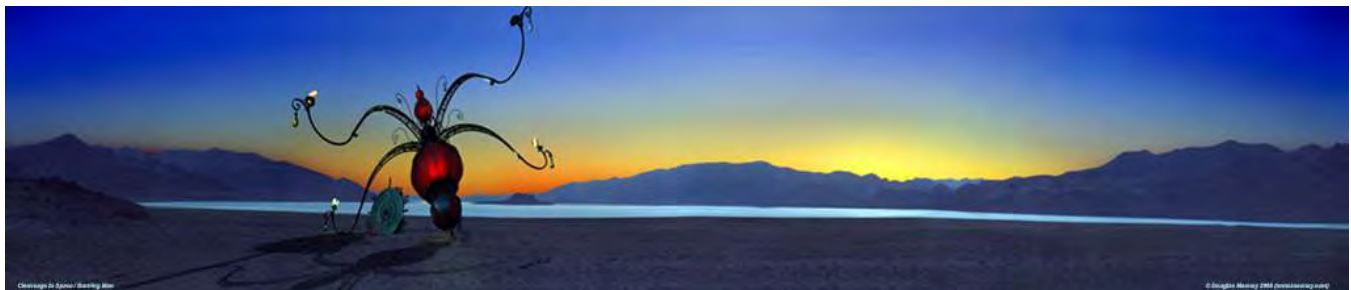
The stories they told me about the art festival got me so excited that, arriving home to Vashon Island after the Oceano show, I turned right-around and drove back to Reno, in the Rodeo, to go to Burning Man with them.

I brought my tent, an ample supply of smoking material, and a full set of photo gear. My plan was to photograph Burning Man, then take the scenic route on my way back from Blackrock City, photographing national parks.

I stayed at Dean's place before we left Reno for Burning Man; he had a nice place with a comfortable guest's room, out in Hidden Valley, a half hour east of the city. Dean and I stayed up late the night before leaving, too excited to sleep. We both had wild ideas about audiovisual shows.

Andrea was back at her place, packing; we picked her up in the morning and went **shopping for food and supplies at Solari's (Reno's most expensive food store)** before heading out to the Blackrock Desert in the late afternoon, to places the likes of which I had never seen.

The whole area around Reno, all those deserts, were once the floor of an ancient ocean, an inland sea since reduced to small dried-up lakes (they were pretty big, actually); mere puddles in geologic terms.



Cleavage in Space, 2003

At sunset, we passed by Pyramid Lake, a spectacular scene of geological splendor. Detouring off the main road, Dean drove up close, so I could shoot some panoramas; they later became the background for an illustration themed on an art installation I saw at Burning Man, called *Cleavage in Space* (above).

After the detour to Pyramid Lake, we didn't arrive at Black Rock City [BRC] until after dark. No matter, everyone's first arrival at Burning Man should be at night. Night is when BRC comes to life, in magical ways. (In the daytime, people tend to stay in their shelters, hiding from the blaring sun.)

We didn't have tickets; Dean was confident we could get them at the entry gate. Today, there would be no chance of that; it was nearly impossible that night, too—until Dean

added a few hundred bucks to the price of admission (only \$300 back then). Having greased the wheels with a little baksheesh, three tickets suddenly appeared.

Except for the lone ticket taker, the entrance was devoid of people, aside from us; that is probably why Dean was able to pull off such a brazen deal. Plus, there were only two days left of the week-long event; so, in a way, who would notice or care anything about our arrival?

Once in, we had some difficulty finding a place to camp; all the good spots were already taken. We ended up on one of the outer-ring intersections. My jaw dropped as we drove around looking for a spot; it was like a scene out of *Mad Max* on magic mushrooms. Once we got our camp organized, we lit up and left to explore.

The sheer size of Blackrock City—35,000 souls that year—was awesome. There was every kind of encampment, from pup tents like mine to pavilions housing large groups, including RVs, converted pick-ups, and customized Prevost coaches.

Rumbling through the streets of BRC were *Mutant Vehicles*, so-called because they are former motor vehicles remade into mobile artworks, everything from Pirate ships, built on bus chassis, down to a *shark* built from a Corvette Stingray (that was one of my favorites; I even asked the owner how much it would cost to have him build me one).

Most of the mutant vehicles and art installations involved fire displays; there was a dragon, for example, that shot ten foot [three meter] flames from its nostrils.

Many camps had exotic burn barrels, some of them enormous, made of plate steel fashioned with artistic cut-outs (left).

There were live acts galore, fire eaters and fire dancers.



I went wild taking pictures; between the incredible art projects and peoples' wild attire (or lack thereof) there were photo ops everywhere.

Around 3:00 am, Andrea called it a night. Dean and I carried on; we walked a three-mile short cut across the middle of the Playa, to get to the far side. At one point, in the middle of nowhere, a two-story-high mutant-vehicle pulled up out of the darkness, flashing with multi-colored lights and playing some of the coolest music I ever heard; it paused for a moment near us and then disappeared into the blackness.

The next day we walked the entire Playa, to photograph the larger art installations as well as visit the Temple and the Man. Way out there, at the very end of the Playa, is where I discovered *Cleavage of Space*, a twenty-foot-high [6.2 meter] chandelier that appeared to have fallen from the sky. [See *Cleavage in Space* picture, above.]

Equally mind boggling was an installation of giant hanging boulders; there were four of them, suspended from arcing steel beams thirty feet across [9.3 meters] and fifteen feet high [4.6 meters].

Each of the rocks had a few people standing or sitting on it, which gives you some idea of the size and scale. Then there was the Temple, a huge structure about half the size of the Taj Mahal, with as much ornate detailing.

Those attractions, and most of the other incredible artworks, were to be burned the next night, together with The Man. The burning of The Man was the existential part of the Burning Man experience, a metaphor of Life; it reminded me of the mandalas made by Tibetan monks, that are swept away upon completion, leaving nothing but a little pile of multi-colored sand.

Dean forewarned me about the harsh conditions on the Playa, especially the dust—a fine alkali powder (some of it nano sized) that gets into absolutely everything and ruins fine machinery, like cameras. I brought sealed bags for the cameras, the ones I normally used for snorkeling; nonetheless, my gear needed professional cleaning afterwards; it was an expensive weekend but life altering.

We left Blackrock City having made a pact to do an art project together at the 2004 Burning Man. **Back at Dean's house, I spent a day transferring picture files from *flash cards* [digital film] to hard drives. I couldn't do that at Burning Man because of the dusty conditions and lack of power.** There were forty cards to unload before I could use them again. Even exercising great self-control, I nonetheless quickly filled the pair of hard drives I brought and had to find a computer store in Reno to get another pair.

File-transfer speeds were much slower a decade ago; hard drives weren't as big or robust as today's models; the *Cloud* hadn't even been dreamt yet. By 2004, I already had more than a dozen hard drives archiving digital images; eventually that collection grew to more than 50, before I stopped making pictures.

On the drive back to Vashon, I headed first to Crater Lake; a huge caldera filled with deep, crystal blue water. I was planning to spend two hours taking pictures of Crater Lake before moving on; however, the lake was immense, much bigger than it looked in pictures.

Like the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and so many other places managed by National Parks Service [NPS] or Bureau of Land Management [BLM], Crater Lake had official observation points; the rest of the park was off limits. Therein lie the problem, those observation points were few and far between; it took me two hours just to get to the first of them; the next was a good hour away. When I got perched at the first observation point (with only an hour left before sunset), I could see that the classic shot, the one I wanted, with Pyramid Island in the foreground, was from the opposite rim of the caldera. Ha!

After Crater Lake, I next drove along the Umpqua River; its intriguing name caught my attention. When I inquired, a local gas station attendant told me there was some beautiful scenery up river a few miles, including many waterfalls. I shot my way along a riverside road, stopping along the way to shoot panoramas and motor-**drive "movies" of water** patterns, white-water, and little waterfalls. The scenery was reminiscent of places in the Adirondacks, around Lake Minnewaska, New York, where I used to shoot models in streams and waterfalls, as well as cars and motorcycles on winding roads through lush forests. [Spoiler Alert: Not many of the Umpqua River photos ever made the final cut in any of my AV or fine-arts work; it was all good, just not sensational.]

2003 – Winter Excursion – Yellowstone Adventure

After a half year of intense production, capped off with intense partying at Burning Man, I was ready for something *less* frenetic. As if on cue, my life-long buddy, Allan Seiden, called to see if I would like to join him for a winter excursion to Yellowstone National Park. **You bet! Seiden was attending a travel writers' conference at the Old Faithful Inn, an** enormous, historic lodge dating back to 1904. There was no room for me at there, so I bivouacked at the more affordable City Center motel in Yellowstone town.

I had trouble operating the camera gear, I was so cold, especially the big telephotos. I brought those along in case we ran into any wildlife (we **didn't**). **The best shots turned out to** be scenic. The best of the lot was *Icy Oasis* (right); it's a Photoshop composition of 22 picture elements.



After Yellowstone, we carried on to Jackson Hole and a tour through the Teton Mountains. Neither of us want to splurge on a pricey in-town hotel, so we stayed outside of town in a motel halfway between Jackson Hole and Wilson. On the way into town the next morning, there was spectacular vista of the snow-covered peaks. I set up a tripod to capture a commemorative picture of the two of us.

By this time, Pete Bjordahl **fancied himself as a Watchout producer; he didn't need me anymore—after all, there wasn't much to Watchout if one were proficient in Photoshop and/or After Effects—and Pete certainly had command of those two applications.**⁸⁶

Bjordahl adapted to a new-business opportunity offered by Peter Howland—to produce the content for all his Microsoft shows, as a subcontractor. Howland was another former colleague at Watts-Silverstein/Caribiner; his cubicle was right next to mine; I got to know **him listening to conversations I couldn't help overhearing.**

Howland was a transplanted Brit, but thoroughly Americanized; the fact that I had worked in Europe and had a British passport made us instant chums, sort of; but our work ethics were worlds apart—Howland was a producer, I was an artist and Bjordahl was somewhere in between.

When Watts-Silverstein was destroyed by the venture capitalists who controlled the Caribiner organization, Howland ~~got fired~~ left and opened his own business; he took a good chunk of Microsoft business with him and got in cahoots with Bjordahl to produce the content for his shows.

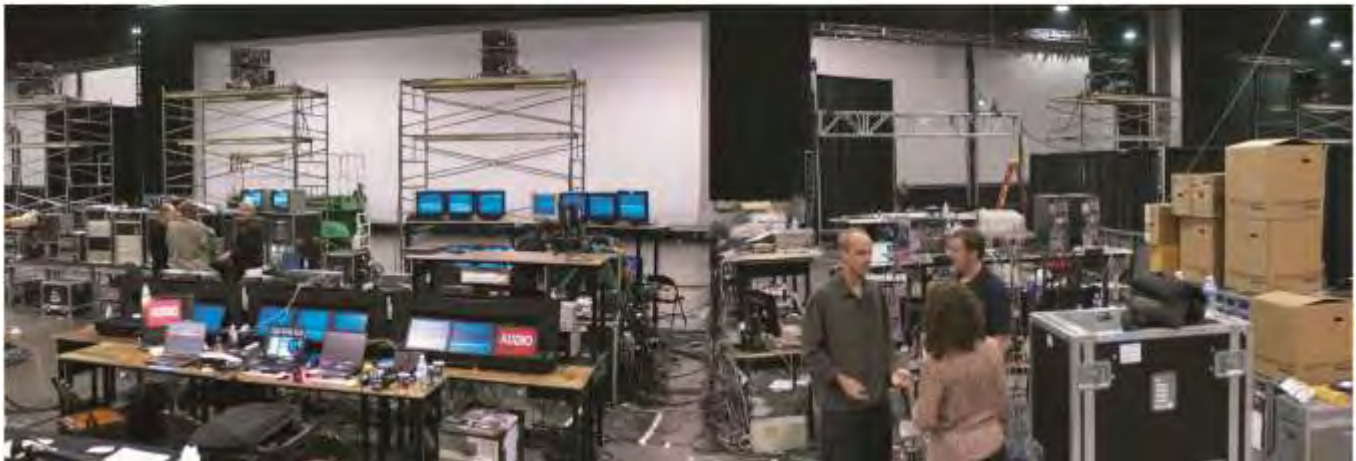
With all due respect, Howland was in his element with Microsoft; he was a talented, creative producer; he had good ideas; and he made a good choice in Pete Bjordahl, to manifest his core creative. I got involved with Howland when Bjordahl asked me to **provide the Watchout equipment and technical support he needed for Microsoft's Global Summit [aka MSG], at the Atlanta Convention Center.**

In a reversal of roles, I became Pete's helper. I had all the gack [gear] he needed. It would have cost him close to \$60,000 to buy all the gear and Watchout licenses needed for MSG; instead he rented a rig from me on the cheap. I accompanied Pete & Peter to Atlanta and helped them stage their super-wide-screen, panoramic presentation.



The MSG show spanned an 80-foot-wide [~24-meter-wide] stage using available panoramic screens; it was a big rig, as you can imagine, especially considering that video projection was included in the mix, stage left and stage right.

⁸⁶ As mentioned earlier, producing the images was 90% of the job; choreographing and sequencing images in Watchout was simple, albeit tedious. In Watchout, images and/or movies [digital videos using codecs like M-Peg 4 or Windows Media] were dropped onto a timeline, as were complete soundtracks and/or audio elements, like sound effects.



Backstage, during and after the show. Watchout desks can be seen on left, while Pete Bjordahl chats with other stagehands.

The opener for the Atlanta MGS meeting was a wide-screen Watchout show—a thought piece, not a mindblower. The module began with a dramatic sunrise scene of Stonehenge, the huge iconic stones silhouette in blinding golden sunlight; a continuous scroll of graphic symbols crawled up the left and right sides of the screen throughout the three minute show, as the background visuals morphed from one iconic landmark to another, including the Pyramids of Giza, the Coliseum in Rome, etcetera, all presented symbolically, as silhouettes.

A dramatic soundtrack added *significance* to the narrator’s words of wisdom, that I have long forgotten (making me think I didn’t write them).

After the opener, the screens returned to Bjordahl’s master graphic, of waves, rendered in shades of green. The wave graphic worked particularly well on the super-wide format of the stage and screen; it was simple, but effective.

The rest was, as they say, shit perfectly cooked; that is, standard style speaker support—text slides, charts and graphs, as well as pre-recorded (video) interstitial interviews with MS staffers and execs.

At that show, the winners of a sales contest were announced; their prize was a holiday trip to Hawaii—all 100 of them.

For those élites, Microsoft held a gala party in the Honolulu Convention Center, where Pete & Pete provided audiovisual ambience for the closing party, which was highlighted by a dramatic audiovisual fanfare for a performance by *Willie K*, a headliner band in Hawaii at the time. For that closing party, a 100 X 100-foot party room [~30 X 30 meters] was carved out of the vast Convention Center space by enclosing the area with light-colored muslin curtains, upon which were projected abstract imagery created by Bjordahl; he remembers it as being “...some sort of lava/water theme. The food matched so the meat was in the fire section and the sushi in the water section. Then there was a lot of Hawaii themed imagery.”



For the reveal of the band, images—projected on curtains—changed to fire on one side of the room and water on the other. The fire and water met center stage. Then the curtains opened to reveal the band.

For me, it was an uncomfortable gig; it seemed like Pete & Peter were keeping me hidden, backstage; only the two of them participated in discussions with the client; I never even knew who the client actually was.

I think they were afraid I would steal the Microsoft business from them and they weren't taking any chances of that happening. They knew I was a friend and colleague of Jon Bromberg; JB was still a powerful figure in Microsoft's audiovisual affairs, being the head of the company's Shows 'R' Us department, JB oversaw the production of visual support for Bill Gates' presentations, as described earlier.

Although Bromberg had nothing to do with the MGS show, he was in attendance, **monitoring Howland and Bjordahl's production. Inevitably, JB would be judgmental.** In an ironic twist of fate, although Pete & Peter were hiding me, I bumped into Bromberg in the lobby of the Convention Center on my way to work one morning. We were both surprised to see each other there.

I asked him what he thought about what he saw on the screen; he made some terse comment but otherwise said nothing. I took his silence as a thumbs up, which pleased me; **I put a lot of effort into the show's opener.**

[Spoiler Alert: Bromberg lost his job after being accused of what is now called sexual abuse. His version of the story held enough sway to keep him out of jail, but the whole thing smelled bad enough that JB was shunned by his colleagues and left Microsoft with his tail between his legs; at least that is how he described the situation the last time I spent any quality time with him. That was a long time ago, during his last visit to the Vashon studio, with his wife Jan. They came for dinner but we had plenty of cocktails before hand and Jon became unusually candid. I think he was spurred on by my own candor—I told him about Erica Eriksson's accusations and about being questioned by detectives at the Seattle Police Department, of taking a lie-detector test, etcetera.]

Bjordahl went on to do quite a number shows for Howland. The two of them were like brothers; they were the same age, with complementary temperaments (Howland the extrovert, Bjordahl the introvert); so, their partnership worked well. (Actually, they **weren't partners at all; they just worked together. IMHO, Howland took advantage of** Bjordahl, big time; but, Bjordahl needed the work; he had a family to support.) Within a couple of years, Bjordahl did, in fact, become a full-fledged Watchout producer. He bought a half dozen Watchout keys from me, when things went south between me and Anna and I was forced to sell a bunch of stuff to pay her off. He acquired my Watchout server computers in payment for his services putting together my website. (He did a great job on that; his master code still commands the framework of mesney.com.)

2004 – Bigger Digs – Hotter Gigs

When I heard a rumor that Westport suite 405 might be going on the market (the owner's partner died of AIDS) I went straight upstairs and bought it.



180-degree view of Westport suite 405 in 2007. The sleeping loft can be seen above and behind me. Under the loft were my digital-imaging work stations. A shelf with three Sanyo video projectors hangs from the ceiling, directly above me. The room on the right housed the image archive and Epson printers. Part of my crystal collection can be seen on the mantel-piece. The studio is filled with fine-arts illustrations that I began selling at Oh My Godard gallery in 2005.

[See: 2005 – Fine Arts – Oh My Godard.]

2005-2006 | Vancouver | Westport Suite 405 | Plates 1-6

An Incredible Epic | © Douglas Mesney 2019-2025

Suite 405 had 650 square feet foot [60.3 square meters]—there was enough room to **bring more photo gear from Vashon and outfit a mini photo studio. That’s where I shot the** neon and ultraviolet erotic stuff of Sol Diaz and Jennifer Caldwell.

Those sessions were ostensibly for the Peppermill Casino, hot new content for the *Oceano* chill-lounge show that Dean Rossi and I had recently installed there; but, casino owner Bill Paganetti thought the stuff went a bit too far; instead, I ended up using bits and pieces of the material for fine-art purposes a year later.

I loved studio 405; it was a unique, split-level space. Most of it had 14-foot ceilings and there was a loft storage area that I converted into a bedroom & lounging area with big, blue-velveteen throw pillows; the ceiling height in the loft was less than four feet; you **couldn’t stand up, which was what made it so cozy.**

With so much vertical space, I hung a Watchout projection rig from the ceiling, from two shelves, on different levels—to screen two different shows: *Oceano* and the *NEC-Dataton demo show*.

After getting established in 405, I decided buy suite 507 as a rental investment. I leveraged 405 and got a mortgage with terms that netted me a small income. The whole deal fell together as if by magic. 507 became available simultaneously with Ron Jacklin’s decision to leave his wife, sell their house in Surrey, and move into Vancouver.

Ron knew the city well and wanted to live in the West End; but his funds were tied up in the divorce; he needed a place to rent. Thus, Ron became my tenant, for nearly two years, before I decided to leave the Westport strata.

Ron was dating Andrea Pixley; they seemed pretty serious, although she was more of a boozier than Ron. He held a birthday bash for Andrea at Romano’s Macaroni Grill, a high-profile West-End restaurant that was situated in a Victorian mansion on Davie Street.

About twenty people attended. In his inimitable way, Ron managed to get everyone to pay their own tab (and I suspect his). The food was nothing to write home about, but the company was awesome. Eric Gessinger was there; that was when we started to form a friendship.

Ron was the perfect tenant; checks came in on time. However, after a while, his neighboring tenants started complaining about the noise coming from 507. When I investigated, Ron had gotten a foosball game. **He confessed his friends got “excited”** playing foosball.

However, before that became a real issue between us, I decided to leave the Westport because of issues I learned about by being on the Strata Council of the building—that there were some major repairs on the horizon—things like roofing and siding. Before levies were made for those repairs, I got out.

[Spoiler Alert: In the autumn of 2007, I sold both 405 and 507 to acquire an 860-square-foot [79.9-square-meter], two-bedroom condo at 1655 Nelson Street, two blocks closer to the park.]

2004 – **Barbara's 50th** Birthday – LA Excursion

When she turned 50, my kid sister, Barbara, decided to throw herself a party.

Although Barbara hadn't attended my 50th, back in '95, I decided to attend hers.

I was persuaded by sister Kathy. Her idea was to gift Barbara with an antique grandfather clock, like the one we had growing up in Douglaston [before Mom and Dad went bust and had to sell it]. That one had a big, upright cabinet, made of noble woods and brass, with a **clock works and chime like Big Ben's.**

Although the gift clock was a faux antique, it was an extravagant gift that cost a pretty penny. Kathy convinced me to cover half the cost, about \$600. That was a lot of money; and there was another grand to attend the party—flying to LA, renting a car, staying for a three-day visit, etcetera. I considered the costs an investment in better family relations.

The party was worth the price of admission. I got to know my sister's partner, John Graysmark, a whole lot better. John's storyboard work and portfolio samples demonstrated his immense talents as an art director and fine artist (oils). As mentioned earlier, Graysmark was the art director for such epic Hollywood films as *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*. However, at the time, his good fortune was unraveling; macular degeneration was robbing him of his eyesight; for a *visualist* like him, that was disaster. It eventually placed a huge burden on sister Barbara; she ended up in the role of caregiver for a couple of years, when he went blind and could no longer drive. He died **only a few years after Barbara's 50th birthday bash.**

Barbara's talents were reflected in the names on the guestlist—big-name cameramen, lighting directors, artists and scenographers. Frankly, I found the whole scene at **Barbara's party very alluring; there was something very appealing about Hollywood and the California lifestyle.** Later I learned through experience how all-consuming the movie business can be; every day is do or die—**kind'a like the slide-show business; you know, *the show must go on*.** People in the movie business have no life; rather, their work is their life, because they have no time for anything else. Hollywood is a paradise for compulsive workaholics, like Barbara and I.

A lot of that has to do with the way movies are made now. Back in the day, the production of movies was carefully preplanned. For example, Alfred Hitchcock storyboarded every scene of his films; from his sketches and instructions, the crew knew exactly what was needed—the number and type cameras, lenses, lights and accessories. Actors and crew came to work on regularly-schedule hours—more like a 9-5 job. Today, **there's so much money sloshing around Hollywood that production crews bring everything** to every shoot; whatever you need, they have it. Rather than preplan anything in detail, **directors make it up as they go; I've worked on sets where the actors had to wait around while the writers finished the next scene; it's a wasteful way to work; everyone has to be** ready for anything, anytime; so much for having a *life*.

2004 – Burning Man Redux – High-Deaf Theater

A highlight of 2004 was going to Burning Man again with Dean Rossi and his wife Andrea.

Dean and I made good on the promises we made while watching The Man burn a year earlier, to stage an AV show on the Playa at Black Rock City. My part of the project was to make a de-branded version the *Oceano* show (all Peppermill logos removed) and provide the projection rig; Dean took care of everything else.

The projection rig included three pairs of Sanyo 2K projectors and Show Sage server computers. Each pair was housed in a hermetically-sealed case, to protect the sensitive gear from weather and desert dust.



Dean Rossi (left) and I set up the High Deaf Theater in the parking lot of the Peppermill Casino to give the rig a test run.

Inside the projection pods, there was a Watchout server computer on the lower shelf and a Sanyo 2K projector on the upper.

The Watchout servers were Shuttle computer modified by Show Sage.

The three projection pods were positioned along one side of an old flat-bed truck on which Dean built a 20 X 5-foot [6.1 X 1.5 meters] screen.

Here's Dean: "The screen itself was made from two twelve-foot custom-order pieces of MDF (medium-density fiberboard) ...needed to get the overall twenty-four-foot length. It was 5' tall. I painted it flat-white and framed it with 1"x 2" pine wood painted black for aesthetics."

[Read more in the Appendix – *From Dean Rossi.*]

The screen was hinged to **the bed of Dean's truck**. It shipped flat for travel, under all the gear and furniture, and folded up for shows. It was the centerpiece of Camp OCD.⁸⁷

Our living quarters were behind the screen, under a 20 X 20-foot [~6 X 6-meter] tarp. The screen provided a solid wind-break wall for one side; my van and Dean's RV for two others; one side was open.



My "Luxury Liner" Ford Van formed a secure second wall. Inside, together with my sleeping quarters, were the show controls.

The Watchout control computer sent signals to the projection pods by RJ45 network cables. An amplified audio signal was sent to Dean; he split it between two sound systems, one for the show, the other for the camp.

Here's Dean again: "The sound system was basic. We used two Bose model 802III loudspeakers w/panaray [sic] digital controller. Speakers were on stands. Amp was a QSC Powerlight 2, 800W. And the mixer-preamp was an Ashley MX206 single space mic mixer all housed in and SKB rack inside the cab of the F-600 Truck fed from your audio server in your master control van [my 'ol, pimped-out, long wheel base Ford F-150 van, nicknamed the "Luxury Liner."]

⁸⁷ Obsessive Compulsive Dean



For audience seating, Dean and his business partner Joe Ness, collected old couches; those got put on top of Peppermill slot-machine pedestals decorated with neon lights. The sign was lit with programmable LEDs in a rainbow of colors. We had about a dozen people living at Camp OCD; they included my colleague Pete Bjordahl, who brought a gal who **might have become his wife if she wasn't so stoned.**

The sound system was awesome, not just in the theater area, but throughout the camp. Dean Rossi was fanatical about sound; audio was an obsession (so were drums); his home theater (where Dean had us listen to music in darkness, quite an experience) was a remodeled two-car garage. The room was totally pimped; the walls were draped in black velvet, defined by blue and purple accent lighting; there were a dozen black-leather Laz-E-Boy loungers (with built in speakers). The sound system ran him something like \$50,000; but I have to say, I never heard anything like it, before or since, even in the best new digital movie theaters of which we are blessed with many in Vancouver.

That was the first Camp OCD. After a dozen more camps, Dean had Burning Man down to a science. Dean told me that, for a time, his camps had a professional chef, who served gourmet, sit-down dinners on a long, candle-lit table, under a little crystal chandelier; between meals, the chef served fresh gelato—frozen with liquid nitrogen. Cool!

2004 | Burning Man | Plates N^{os} 1-4

Plate N^o 1: High-Deaf Theater during performance.

Plate N^{os} 2-3: Camp OCD at dawn. Top: Camp OCD was at the intersection of Neptune and 8:30; front & back views. Center & bottom: front and back views. Our living quarters were behind the screen, where Dean built a tented enclosure.

Plate N^o 4: Top: We had plenty of help loading the outbound truck.

Bottom: Just Dean, Joe and Yours Truly packed out. My Luxury Liner is behind the truck.



2005 | BURNING MAN | CAMP OCD | PLATE N° 1
High Deaf Theater



2005 | BURNING MAN | CAMP OCD | PLATE N° 2
Campsite at Dawn



2005 | BURNING MAN | CAMP OCD | PLATE N° 3
Campsite at Dawn



2005 | BURNING MAN | CAMP OCD | PLATE N° 4
Top: Heading to Burning Man | Bottom: Heading home

2004 – QAV – Montego Bay

The bond that Dean and I established at Burning Man soon generated another big job for the Peppermill Casino.

The new gig was to produce a dozen light-box murals for **Bill Paganetti's new** Montego Bay restaurant and Paradise Grill, **at the Peppermill's Wendover, Nevada, casino. What, you** never heard of Wendover?

Paul Tibbets flew the Enola Gay bomber (named after his wife) from that remote airstrip to Guam and then to Japan, to drop the first A-bomb on Hiroshima. More recently, Wendover had become a little oasis in the desert, where folks from righteous Utah—just across the border— could kick up their heels and have some fun.



When the transparencies of my pictures faded, they were replaced with someone else's (above).

Paganetti's idea was to install giant 6 X 18-foot (1.52 X 5.48 meters] panoramic pictures, faux views through faux windows, decorating the Jamaica-themed restaurant.

The pictures were made to fit the 3:1 ratio of the Oceano show screen; in that way, new material could be shared between the restaurant and show, spreading the costs of a Jamaica photo mission across two budgets.

By now I knew that the Peppermill was a money machine; **Bill Paganetti's cash cow**; his pride and joy. I also knew that Paganetti appreciated quality and was willing to pay for it; he was a reasonable man, in other words.

So, I didn't cut corners with my budget; I didn't have to prove myself, I only had to justify costs.



The production schedule was tight; the Montego Bay restaurant was going to open about two months hence.

A considerable number of those sixty days had to be given to the photo lab—Ivey-Seeright, in Seattle—to make the murals, and to the **installers, who couldn't finalize their** light-box installations until they had the huge, back-lit transparencies in hand.

The upshot was that I had about three weeks to get my part of the job done—photograph Jamaica in the middle of hurricane season [late autumn] and create a dozen panoramic illustrations.

Jobs like the Jamaica assignment were like shooting craps. I had no idea what the weather would do; but I could control just about everything else, to squeeze the most out of every day.

Straight away, I searched for and found secure accommodations and a private driver to take me around the Island.

I had no time to waste looking around for the right spots; I needed a driver who knew the Island inside out, who knew where all the postcards were shot.

I found that driver and an amazing accommodation at the Anchor Listing Villa Estate.

The place was a compound of buildings surrounding a swimming pool, built on top of a 500-foot [152.4 meters] cliff hill; cantilevered out from the slope; overlooking Montego Bay, five miles away.

Seven of the twelve murals installed at the **Peppermill's Montego Bay restaurant in the** Wendover casino.

Every room had a balcony that extended out into the treetops. My room was like living in a tree house; there was a spectacular view of the famous beach town.

I took dozens of Nature shots from my balcony—tropical flowers, huge black birds, and colorful little geckos. Those and more filled my editing bins with bits and pieces that were soon transformed into fantasy illustrations, using Photoshop.



Hunting Hawks, Jamaica, 2004

The Villa was built around a central swimming pool. The upper floors had the most spectacular views, whether relaxing around the pool, in the living room or while enjoying gourmet meals in the dining room. As I was the only guest, the two servants—a very capable young couple—John Chambers and his wife, Carlene—were at my beck and call. When they learned that I liked their hot Jamaican cooking, the pair went wild in the kitchen. Yum!

It was an odd experience booking Anchor Villa; the owner, Anida Rose, lived in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. We talked at length about my special needs; she assured me that John and Carlene would be able to take care of my every need. I took her on faith **and my hunch turned out right; John and Carlene couldn't have done more to make my stay a total success.**

The Chambers clued-in to my mission immediately; they both knew what to do and got to it. Instead of fancy meals at the Villa, Carlene made deluxe box lunches that would survive long trips to the ends of the Island. For John, it was a great adventure; for me, it was all about security. I felt safe with him around; he watched my gear when I went far afield to get unusual angles and perspectives.

We spent 10 hours a day on average, driving around together from location to location, all over the Island. It was a bitter-sweet, educational experience; there were photo ops everywhere (the weather fully cooperated for the entire week); but, along the way, I learned a lot about the plight of Jamaicans; about the workings of their totalitarian government; how people find work-arounds.

To pre-edit my shoot, I built a digital darkroom in my Villa room. Every night, when we got back from the shoot, I would disappear into my room and start transferring files from flash cards to a pair of LaCie hard drives.

I brought a Dell Inspiron 8200 laptop, running every application needed to make digital content of all sorts. In off hours (I had to give my driver some time off) I used the time to sort files into basic categories and start roughly assembling illustrations. I created scene folders to organize and store foreground and background images—clouds, waves, birds, flowers and so on. That preliminary work saved my skin when I got back to Vancouver and started making the final artwork.

As the week worn on, dinner in the dining room became room service. Like so many other Third World countries, **Jamaica's electricity** was unreliable and noisy. It was difficult to clean-up the power in my room enough to transfer files without risk. I was super paranoid about hard-drive failures, having already had thousands of pictures wiped out during drive-to-drive back-ups.

Back then, the *infrastructure* of digital media was fragile. Many things could interrupt **either the power or the signal quality. With even a momentary interruption, a hard drive's File Allocation Table [FAT] could be lost together with the drive's entire contents. I was** familiar with the problem and came prepared with electrical test gear, to make sure the mains could carry the load and that the power was clean.

With Chamber's help, we managed to find some electrical isolators as well as two UPS [Uninterruptible Power Supply] battery packs; those solved noise and short-gap problems. After that, my only worries were black-outs; those were not rare; but I took my chances—I had to.

As long as only one of the two external hard drives was used at any given time, and the other was turned off and unplugged from the mains, at least one copy of my digital-image files was safe. My policy was to only connect a hard drive for the time it took to move files in or out; then, unplug the drive and put it back on the shelf, where nothing could harm it short of an earthquake or strong magnet.

Ivey Seeright was hired to make the back-lit transparencies; they were the biggest and most professional lab in Seattle, possibly the entire West Coast [my understanding was that they were part of a larger, Japanese-owned, industrial-photography company].

When I brought in the Montego-Bay-mural job, the lab gave me the royal treatment; it was a big job, the costs approached six-figures. Although I had done business with the lab for a decade, nothing I had done with them approached this scale. Their eyes crossed when they heard that my client was a casino restaurant in Nevada; so, I put them in touch with Dean—he was a master at making deals work.

Dean managed to work out terms with the lab and the work commenced. The technicians there were on their toes and made an extensive series of tests that I had to initial, every step of the way. I became a commuter between Vashon and the Ivey Seeright lab at 428 Eighth Avenue next to the old Glazers Camera Store (424).

[Spoiler Alert: those buildings don't exist anymore; they were torn down by Paul Allen for redevelopment as part of a medical-technology campus.]

I liked what I saw in the tests and the job moved through the lab in what I am told was record time; even so, the twelve giant transparencies were ready just 48 hours before the delivery deadline, as detailed in the purchase-order contract. Dean, I and the lab were on tenterhooks; everyone was going as fast as they could; but, not fast enough to ship the work to Wendover in time. The shipment was too big and too heavy to fly, so none of the airlines would touch it. Even FedEx **wouldn't guarantee delivery without an outrageous** surcharge for a personal messenger.

Instead, with the help of the lab, Dean hired a private courier; a guy with a van who drove straight through from Seattle to Reno, across a snow-bound mountain pass that was technically closed, to get the trannies to the Montego Bay restaurant before the clock ran out.

2005 – Peppermill – Angry Epilogue

Although I will never know for sure, I likely cut my own throat when I completely misjudged Bill Paganetti.

Some time after the Oceano show, after Burning Man, after Montego Bay, Halloween and **Thanksgiving, a big chunk of my invoice had still not been paid by the Peppermill; I didn't** know what to make of that; previous experience with other seemingly reputable clients made me think that maybe my money was at risk.

Some clients tried to string me out with interminable delays; others tried to make me accept a lower payment; still others found fault with my work and withheld some or all my payment. As mentioned earlier, I was stiffed by the likes of Apple Records (a Beatles company), Mr. Pants (Lynn Stewart), even Cadillac-Fairview; they, and a few others, taught me to distrust people in the fashion and entertainment industries.

Paganetti himself called me personally, long distance, about my bills; he started getting **mealy mouthed, weaseling his words, saying that maybe the show wasn't as good as he** originally thought it would be.

Well, I went ballistic; I totally lost it; I accused him of trying to avoid paying me; I said that it felt like having a red-hot poker shoved up my ass. He took offence at my metaphor; he paid my bill directly and I never heard from him again.

2005 – African Birthday – Peak Experience

To celebrate her 60th birthday (February 5, 2002), Hita von Mende climbed to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Her trip did not actually coincide with her birthday; the timing coincided **with her son Jesse's school recess at Christmastime, in the winter of 1992.**⁸⁸

We didn't know each other well then. Her conquest of Kilimanjaro was one of the things that drew me closer to Hita; it was so symbolic of her quintessentially Aquarian nature. I decided to make the same ascent when I turned 60 and the idea stuck. When the calendar rolled up to 2004, I put my plan in motion. Hita had travelled with Thomson Safaris [now called Thomson Treks]; she recommended them. I followed her advice and soon after her footsteps. Using Kilimanjaro as a pivot, I organized a more extensive trip; **it wasn't often one had the opportunity to go to Africa.** Besides a birthday trip, my plan was to make the excursion a photo expedition, to shoot new stock material—not for Corbis (I was no longer with them)—**for shows as well as the "art" pictures** that I was starting to make.

Corbis and I had a parting of the ways. The Kilimanjaro shoot was at the tail end of that. There was never anything official; no letter of resignation, no termination of contract.

⁸⁸ Jesse's birthday (January 28th) was the same as mine; he was 17 then, I was 57.

It was more existential than that—stock photos were costing me money, not earning it. The new stock-picture paradigm was all about making many small sales instead of a few biggies. In the old days, a picture could fetch a thousand bucks. I knew a guy—Chad Ehlers—who made \$100,000 on a single picture; you didn't need too many of those, eh? However, when Corbis took over The Stock Market, they installed new, younger editors; old memes were out. 99% of my slides were returned; they were only interested in digital images. Deep inside, I knew the jig was up when that happened, although it took time. I kept submitting stuff as I morphed into digital imaging; but they only kept one out of twenty submissions; and even those didn't generate any sales. By now the Internet was flooding the world with stock pictures. It was a buyers' market. Remember that \$1,000 picture? Now it sold for \$10. But, as I said, that didn't happen overnight.

While putting together the Kilimanjaro trip, I was still in denial about the real-world stock photo market. I reckoned that the Kilimanjaro shoot would show Corbis a thing or two about Douglas Mesney. The African odyssey turned into a major investment of time and resources. The complexities of digital imaging turned the climb into an expedition. In the old days, all I needed was a camera and some film. Now, I needed a portable digital darkroom; that is, the ability to transfer files to storage media. My gear required three extra Sherpas, which I happily paid for, considering the alternatives. My personal Sherpas schlepped 60 pounds [~27 kg] of gear, including a Dell 8200 laptop computer; two LaCie hard drives; batteries (4X each for cameras and computer); and a Gitzo tripod (carbon fiber).



The Sherpas wore jeans, cotton shirts and ratty-old running shoes. In contrast, I was decked out in full mountain-man regalia acquired at considerable expense from the Seattle REI store. The contrast was striking; the Sherpas bounded up the boulders and skipped across the screen; **I almost didn't** make it.

Thomson offered a package deal; I upgraded the ascent of Kilimanjaro with a 5-day safari package. **I was aiming to be on the mountain's summit on my birthday, January 28th, but that was not possible according to Thomson's schedules; so, I ended up** celebrating my birthday on the Serengeti. Their operations base was in the remote Tanzanian town called Arusha. Getting there required connections to small regional air carriers; those could only be made at major airports. The closest airport serviced by Star Alliance—with whom I had my frequent-flyer award miles—was Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. So, I bookended the Tanzanian leg of my trip with an Ethiopian escapade. It ended up being a month-long digital photography odyssey. I spent months planning for the expedition. Thomson imposed strict baggage limits; there was not only a weight limit, but the bags had to be within certain size parameters, favoring large duffle bags.

Duffle bags may be a terrific way to pack stuff for travel—they are standard issue among the armies of the world—but duffle bags are not very good for gear. Nonetheless, in the end, I had no choice other than figure a way to get everything I needed into two duffle bags weighing no more than 70 pounds each. Considering that I was bringing a set of cameras and digital darkroom in addition to mountaineering equipment (tent *et al*), mine was a huge pile of stuff. I spent the late summer and early autumn evenings putting that pile together, in the middle of the studio floor, on Vashon Island. Getting everything to fit into two duffle bags was like doing a 3-D jigsaw puzzle. As the gack [gear] was acquired, everything was packed into the duffle bags, to make sure it fit, that there would be no packing problems at the last minute. I was ready by the end of Thanksgiving, well ahead of the holidays. I spent Christmas and the New Year on Vashon; I used the occasions to visit with my sister, Kathy, and my neighbors, the Lorentzens, not only for social reasons, **but to give them certain powers over my affairs and properties, in the event I didn't come back from the trip.** Shit happens, eh?

I started the trip with two days in Addis Ababa, spent planning and organizing an Ethiopian tour for a fortnight hence, after my Tanzanian adventures. Finding and booking hotels in Addis Ababa was not easy in those days; telephones and travel agents were **expensive, while international connections to the Internet were still dodgy. For safety's sake, I telephoned, long distance, and booked myself into the government travel agency's top choice—the Ghion Hotel Panorama (with a name like that, I couldn't resist).**

They didn't speak English very well at the Panorama. When I called, the connection was poor and it sounded like some crazy stuff was going on in the background. Every so often, the gal I was speaking to would go off-microphone and yell at someone or something. She seemed to say they would send a car to meet me at the airport when my flight arrived.



But there was no car for me at the airport when I arrived at 2:00 am. I waited for an hour before getting seriously concerned; I had been in similar situations before and decided to be patient. After I declined their offers, one by one, the taxis all left; one kiddingly offered to pay me, to let him drive me to the hotel; I should have accepted his offer. At 4:00 am, I decided a phone call to the hotel was in order; but there were no phones other than a pay phone for which I lacked local coins (or any idea how to use it). So, I hauled my duffle bags up fifty steps, across a wide plaza, back into the terminal, for safety and in hopes of finding someone, anyone. Eventually, a tired looking taxi driver came in looking for a fare; salvation! The next morning my complaints to the hotel manager were met with a shrug. I got a sense that the fun was just beginning.

The Panorama Hotel was rated five stars but deserved less than three; so it goes in the Third World; ratings are overblown. That said, my room was a huge space defined by cinderblock walls thinly disguised with crumbling stucco. Shutters covered open spaces where one might otherwise expect to find windows.

Instead, decorative iron bars prohibited unwanted entry of men and/or animals; but they were pretty rusty; I figured I could kick them out if I had to; that, or a thief could kick them in. Did I need to worry? **(Of course; that's me.)** I had twice as much baggage as most other guests, the whole staff at the hotel must have **heard about me. I didn't rest** easy, although I was well prepared. **Year's earlier, when I was courting Anna,** I met a photographer on the ferry from Sweden to Gdansk, Poland. Professor Jan Rabek, Director **of the dental school at Sweden's prestigious** Karolinska Institute, was as much an adventurer as a photographer. He taught me a dozen safety tricks, some of which I still use today. As a result of meeting Professor Rabek, I had what I needed—chains to lock-together all my baggage; tools and supplies to electrify the burglar bars; and a folded copy of a local newspaper, in which to hide my passport. Without exposing my valuable kit to anyone, I needed to unpack all my gear and make sure everything worked before going farther; that was another reason for my two-day **"pre-production" visit to Addis Ababa. Fortunately, my room faced the courtyard; I didn't have to worry about being** observed from a nearby building. Although it was possible, it was unlikely that anyone would climb the big courtyard trees, whose limbs extended within a yard [meter] of my suite.

Sure enough, while testing my equipment I discovered a problem, a real whopper: my brand-new, Nikon D2H was DOA [Dead on Arrival]. I knew all the tricks, how to kick-start the hearts of digital life forms; but nothing worked. With 48 hours left before my departure for Kilimanjaro, I got in contact with Nikon Professional Services; however, it was Christmas in Ethiopia (they are Orthodox Christians); getting anything done was a problematic. Even so, Nikon replied to my telefaxed plea of desperation. They were willing **to give me a loaner. (!) However, I had to organize the shipping. What do they say, "So near, and yet so far?"** As it was two days before the Thomson group was due to rendezvous, the rest of our group was still in the States. Thomson gave me the name and **number of a New York client who hadn't yet left. I managed to get hold of him; he accepted my FedEx shipment from Nikon and brought it with him. [Told y'a, I was born under a lucky star.]**

With my camera out of commission, I zipped up my duffle bags and concentrated on seeing Addis Ababa and organizing the Ethiopian tour. The next day was Christmas eve. I **walked the city, well most of it. In the evening, I hired a car to take me to the city's main cathedral.** There was no way to get close; thousands of Pilgrims formed the longest line **I've ever seen,** spiraling around and through the church, all night long. In the blue moonlight, the hooded pilgrims **made an ethereal scene, the kind photographers' dream** about; but for me it was just eye candy. Without a camera or a chance of getting into the church, I told the cab to take me back to the hotel. As the cab wound through back streets of Addis Ababa, I got a taste of things to come.

I had dinner at the same restaurant both nights that I was in Addis Ababa. It was a "high end", expensive place; **but there weren't many (decent) restaurant choices,** Addis Ababa **wasn't a popular tourist destination and the native population couldn't support them. The choice was either the tourist trap I ate at, or a Chinese place. I didn't want to risk eating at a restaurant frequented by locals because I didn't feel safe in Addis; the poverty was too intense. I didn't wander too far beyond the hotel zone, the safe part of the city.** I ordered the Ethiopian national dish—a huge pancake (*Biddeena*) the size of an extra-large pizza, covered with different types of *Wat* (stew) and assorted fresh toppings.

It was so good that I had it again the next night. I remember thinking I should pass on the chicken; but it was really spicy and I ate the whole thing. A few days later, I started burping foul gas that smelled like rotten eggs. I recognized the smell and knew that I had **a problem. I'd had amoebic dysentery** twice before, each time from bad chicken. The first time was in 1973, after enjoying chicken salad sandwiches on an Arab Wings Learjet flight from Aqaba to Amman, Jordan. The last time was in India, in 1993; at a five-star hotel dining room in New Delhi, where I enjoyed one of my favorite Indian meals—chicken tikka—before heading back to Malaysia. I knew the tell-tale signs of dysentery all too well. When I started burping during our ascent of Kilimanjaro, a chill went down my spine. Before those tell-tale burps, I got the shits; they progressively worsened until I had full fledged dysentery. The shits began on my trip from Addis Ababa to Moshi Airport [QSI]. There was no direct flight; I had to connect through Nairobi Airport [NBO] in Kenya; there was a six-hour layover between flights. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport [NBO] was **Spartan. Besides shopping for souvenirs, there wasn't much to see or do. I sat and** worried about my gear; duffle bags were much easier to tamper than road cases. My **stomach was feeling queasy so I didn't eat much; the coffee was lousy, too. I wanted to edit pictures on my laptop, but it didn't seem safe enough to pull out all that gear; there** were no police or soldiers, just a few Africans eyeballing the only white man in the airport. So, I just sat in the empty departure lounge, idle for hours.

Eventually the departure hall filled, a small turbo-prop aircraft arrived, and the pre-boarding process began. I wanted to be first on line, to secure space in an overhead bin for some of my hand baggage; I knew the **stuff wouldn't fit** under my seat, in that small airplane.



However, just before boarding began, I had the uncontrollable urge to shit and thought I was going to crap in my pants. I ran to the toilet and took care of business—a messy affair that took some time to tidy-up. When I got back to the gate, the other passengers were already aboard; they had been calling my name through the airport speakers and were just about to close the doors and take off when I showed up.

I found the only vacant seat left, a second-row window position. The overhead bins were already full. Getting two camera bags under my seat was an impossibility; they ended up where my feet should have been and my knees were tucked under my chin. The **stewardess started to make a fuss; but her English wasn't terrific and the flight was** running late; so, she gave up and I spent the flight hugging my knees to my chest, **praying I wouldn't need to use the on-board toilet.** But my bowels behaved and for a few days I thought I was back on track.

There were twelve in our group, making the ascent; each had his or her own Sherpa. Another eight Sherpas brought the basic camping equipment and supplies. There were also advance teams of Sherpas who dropped food, drinks, and other perishables at pre-arranged camp grounds.



Our group of twelve climbers and their five private Sherpas midway in the ascent.

The Thomson crew made our climb comfy and cozy every step of the way, even near the summit. At the 15,000-foot [4,572-meter] Barafu camp, the crew set a 12-foot-long, candle-lit dinner table and served a restaurant-quality hot meal, accompanied by fine wines and whiskeys. Omelettes and oatmeal were ready at the crack of dawn every day. **My Sherpa woke me just before sunrise, with a hot cup of black coffee; "Mister... mister... I am here now!" he would say, tugging on my sleeping bag.**

I got along famously with the Sherpas; they could see I was on a mission. I made it a **point to do a photo essay on the Sherpas' encampment straight away; I was so impressed** with their service; so many, serving so few; our little community of mountaineers was a metaphor of Life.

As we got higher, the views were like looking down on towns and villages from an **airplane; but those scenes didn't fly by; I had time to contemplate humanity, as seen** from on high. The towns looked like sores on the Serengeti, a blight on the otherwise pristine landscape.

I purchased the 7-day trek, which actually took 10 days. After acclimatizing for two days in the town of Arusha, we ascended the long western slope over six days, then descended the steep eastern slope in just two days.

The initial ascent, to the Machame camp, **was a trek through "standard-issue jungle."** **I didn't need any more pictures of palm trees, but the monkeys** were tantalizing. **However, I didn't have a lens long enough to shoot wildlife; the longest I had with me was** a Nikkor 70-210 mm with a doubler [to achieve 420 mm]; but the jungle canopy blocked too much light to use the doubler and the monkeys eluded me.

Instead, I focused on the Sherpas and the others in our group; I wanted everyone to get used to seeing a camera pointed at them—so they **wouldn't get** embarrassed or, worse, smile for the camera. If I photographed them enough, people eventually forgot that I was there.



The ascent gradually got more difficult as we climbed to the Shira 2 camp; but it was still easy stuff. Flora and fauna had largely disappeared by the third day, when we reached the Barranco camp. On our way to the Karanga camp, we passed through a valley inhabited by giant groundsels, called *Dendrosenecio kilimanjari*, and long-beaked birds. After that, as we climbed to the Barafu camp at the 15,331 [4673 meters] foot elevation, lichens were the only living things we saw. At the higher altitudes, things got distinctly dicier; **that's when the oxygen started getting noticeably thinner and the weather way colder.** Worse, there was no longer a latrine. Up until then, we had the luxury of doing our duty in an outhouse; the Sherpas carried our shit off the mountain, quite literally. We were told to **bury our crap discreetly; it was hard to find places that hadn't already been dug up and "planted;"** that made me wonder how much more manure Kilimanjaro could endure. It was becoming an acute problem; my limited supply of toilet paper was getting wiped out (hahaha) at a great rate.

After the Barafu camp the going got tough; the slopes were nothing but boulders and scree. Hauling myself over the rocks was tough enough, but the loose scree was disheartening—with every step up, I slid most of the way back down. The climb was made more difficult by the thin atmosphere; after every step, I had to catch my breath. I was also getting much weaker because of the dysentery **my body was battling. There weren't** as many Sherpas after Barafu; only a minimal encampment was needed before summiting. The final camp was just 500 feet below the summit. The crew prepared a light **meal; but I couldn't eat it. Not only was I ill, I was afraid of having to take a crap on top** of the mountain.

Instead, I focused my attention on the huge ice formations enclosing our camp; the melting remains of once massive glaciers. Global warming was becoming a big issue. Al **Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*,** put the international spotlight on a problem that was easy to see on the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro; 90% of the glaciers had already melted; it was hard to illustrate their drastically diminished dimensions.

A short distance from our summit camp was Kibo, the largest and highest of three cinder-coned calderas that crown Kilimanjaro.



2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 1

Top down: sherpas line up at Machame trail head | hiking the foothills | setting up radio communications.



2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 2

Barafu camp 14,905 ft [4,543 m] | Karanga camp 13,200 ft [3,962 m] | Karanga kitchen and dining tents.



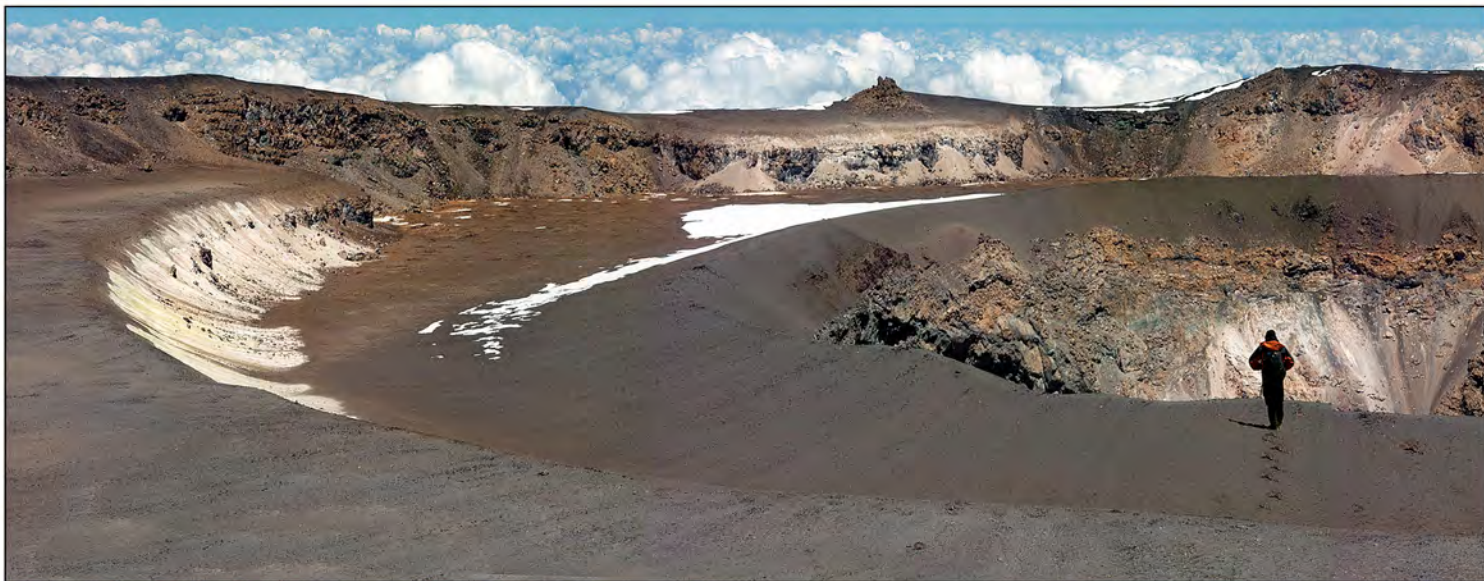
2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 3

Top down: hikers group | crossing high desert | Karanga Valley flora, lichens & giant groundsels | Barranco camp.



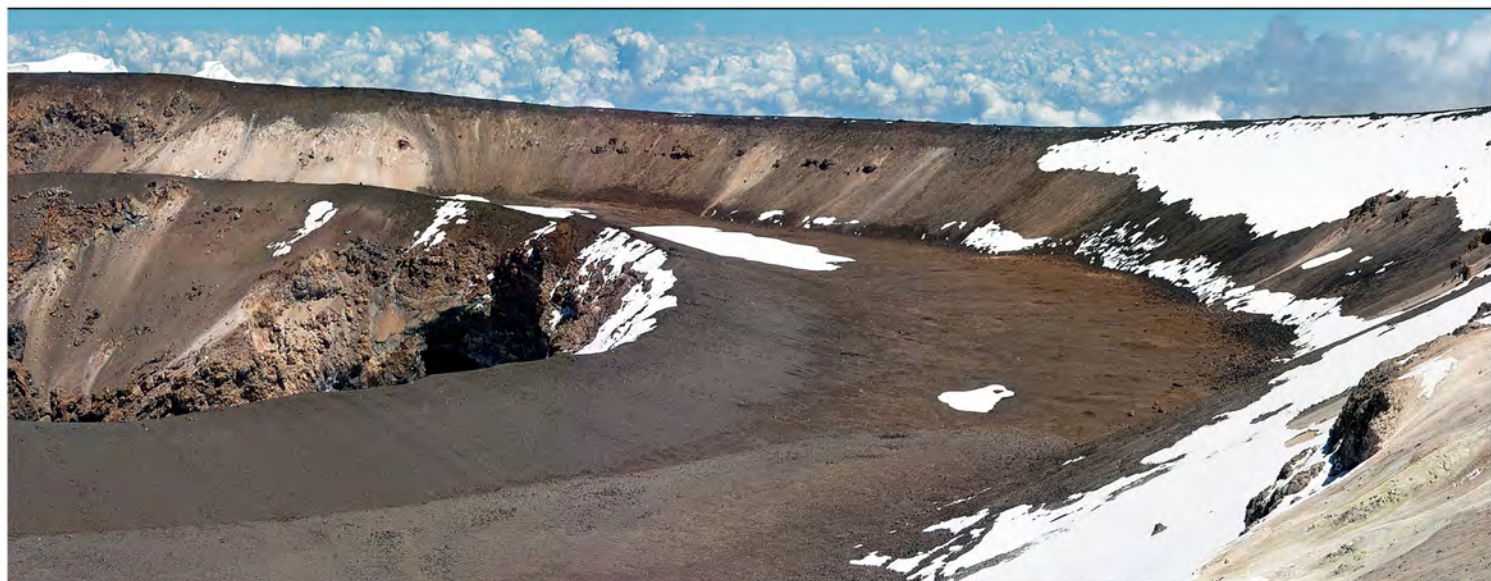
2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 4

Top down: sherpas team | crossing high desert | Karanga Valley vegetation | Barranco camp 12,950 ft [3,947 m].



2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 5

Kibo caldera 19,340 ft [5,895 m] | Retreating glacier at Kibo | view of Mount Meru | very sick Yours Truly.



2005 | ASCENT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO | PLATE N° 6

Kibo caldera 19,340 ft [5,895 m] | retreating glacier at Kibo | the ten who summited 19,300 ft [5,883 m].

The Kibo crater was not at the summit where you'd think it belonged. The mountain's apex, called Uhuru (Swahili for Freedom), was actually on the rim of the Kibo crater.

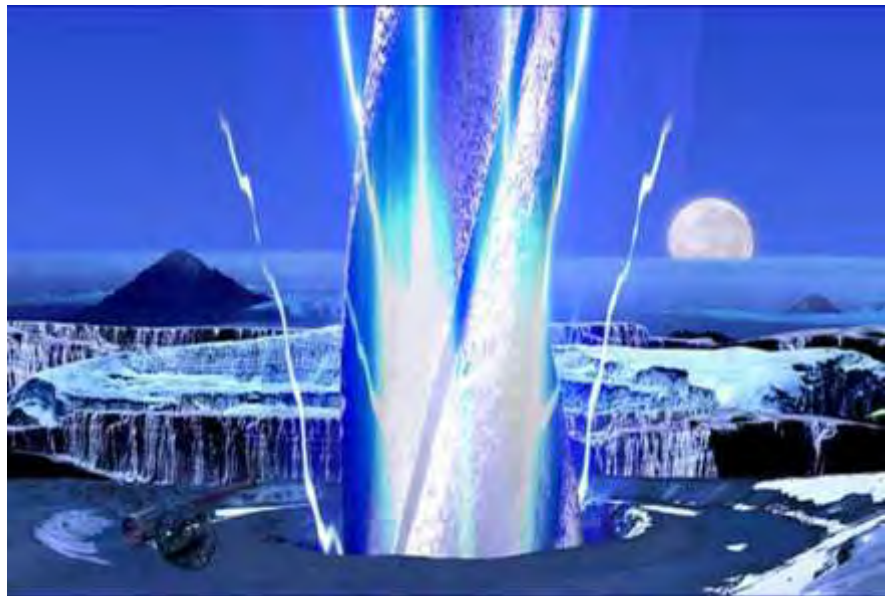
Kilimanjaro's summit was a lunar landscape; I had the feeling that I was on another planet, in another world. I filmed Kibo from every possible angle; I could have shot a lot more, but held back, waiting for the bigger glaciers at the summit. I had plenty of flash cards [digital film]; but batteries were an issue—they fail faster in cold climates; and at nearly 19,000 feet [5791 meters] our mean daytime temperature was -8.8 F [-22.8 C].



Pictures of Kibo crater were the only ones I ever used in any of my shows or illustrations.

The caldera became the foreground for the illustration, *Giving*, one of a pair called *Giving & Receiving* (left), made to decorate the portals of Quantum AV's offices.

Giving, (leftmost) portrayed a giant antenna-like shaft emerging from the center of the caldera, broadcasting energy (Life) high into the sky. *Receiving* (center) depicts a bubble orb that gathers and distributes energy, Life itself, symbolized by water.



Detail from base of *Giving* shows the caldera of Kilimanjaro and Mount Mero in the background.

The final ascent of Kilimanjaro began well before dawn. My Sherpa brought me tea instead of coffee at 3:00 am and asked if I was OK; everyone knew by then that I was ill.

The last leg was climbed in the dark because sunlight would melt the surface ice, making climbing more treacherous. Although the climb was only 500 feet [152.4 meters] it took four hours to reach the top.

I had to take several breaths between every footstep and honestly wasn't sure I was going to make it. The Sherpas had to give me a helping hand, a couple of times.

We summited as the sun crept over the horizon; it was glorious, the weather was crystal clear—a somewhat rare event at Uhuru.

(Hita and Jesse's ascent to the top was completely obscured by fog and clouds. Bummer!)

We were told that we only had 60 minutes at the top of the world; we had to get back to the Barafu camp before dark.



Besides taking pictures, I was a man with another mission: Sol Diaz had given me a valuable diamond ring that had belonged to her mom. Sol asked me to take the ring to the top of Kilimanjaro and find a resting place for it there. That was easier said than done; the summit was teeming with tourists, maybe fifty people; it was difficult to be discreet.

Noticing that others were building little cairns [shrines made of stacked rocks] I set to work building a few of my own. When I was pretty sure that I had become part of the scenery instead **an object of attention, I slipped Sol's stone between the rocks,** made a picture of the sacred little stack, and nonchalantly strolled away.



To digress for a moment, about Sol Diaz: She and I were part of a love triangle, her boyfriend being the third party. Sol answered an ad I put in the Vancouver Sun, seeking a rep to show my portfolio to the advertising and publishing community in Vancouver. The next day I found myself face to face with a gorgeous young gal who had brains to match her good looks.



Sol (pronounced “sole”) had never been a rep. She was looking for a job to help support herself and her co-habiting boyfriend. He was an accomplished but under-funded oil painter; she was his protégé; her work showed potential. Sol was hoping that she could show her boyfriend’s work together with mine. I didn’t have a problem with that; his work was totally different; there was no conflict of interest. Thus, Sol became my rep. It’s fair to say that I had the hots for Sol. Soon enough I talked her into posing for a series of nude body-paintings, made with phosphorescent paints and photographed using ultra-violet lights. [See: *Cistern Dancers above: 2001 – Greece & Turkey – Calm Before the Storm.*]

When it became obviously that we were getting emotionally involved, Sol got another job. Her boyfriend made her choose between us; she chose him. She told me about her decision at the Peet’s Coffee shop near her live-work studio-loft on Powell Street; that’s where Sol gave me her mom’s ring and asked me to take it to the top of the Kilimanjaro. As I strolled away from the cairn, I couldn’t help wondering who, if anyone, might ever find the ring; is anyone wearing it right now?

The trek down the mountain was infinitely harder than the climb up. Funny, but people train hard to climb up, thinking that down will be easy; however, because you use completely different muscles descending, and because mine were untrained, my legs turned to rubber about halfway down to the Barafu camp. I had to be helped by our tour **guide; I couldn’t walk without his shoulder for support. My dysentery complicated things;** I had to stop frequently and find some cover to do my duty; it was a major pain getting in and out of double-layered the mountaineering trousers. We got to the camp well behind the others (crappy pun, sorry). The Sherpas made me some soup for dinner and I went straight to bed. By morning, my legs were able to support me again; I made it down from the Mweka Millennium camp on my own two feet.



On our last evening, there was a gala farewell feast **at Thomson’s home base in Arusha.** All the Sherpas and ground-support crews joined the festivities and sang tribal songs for us. Finally, we trekked to the Kia Lodge at Boma la Ngombe near Kilimanjaro Airport [JRO]; there I was finally able to locate a pharmacy selling the dysentery antidote.

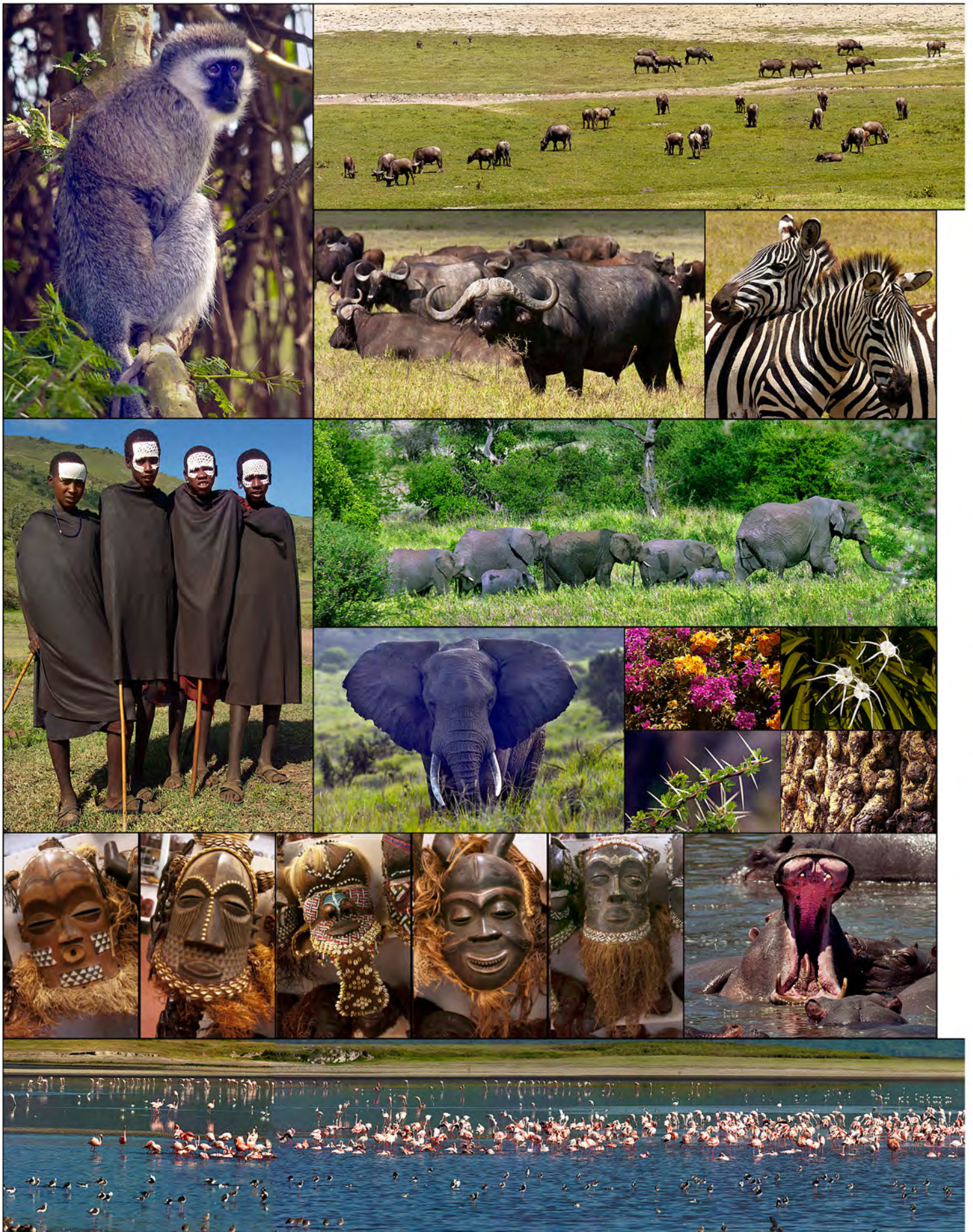
Our group split up the next day. One third went home, one third to Dar es Salaam, for a beach holiday, and the last third of us went on to the Serengeti for a five-day safari that turned out to be the most frustrating part of my whole African adventure.

When you think about a safari, I'm sure you, like me, conjure mental images like the ones we see in National Geographic magazine, or on the Nature Channel. I expected to get up close to animals, to see the whites of their eyes, so to speak. However, that was not in the cards. Thomson groups were only licensed for the outskirts of the Serengeti. To get close to animals I would have had to hire private guides and get expensive professional-photographer licenses; I would have gladly done that and paid more, had I known about the alternatives. As it was, there was no way to get any meaningful shots with a 420 mm lens. From the vantage point provided by Thomson, even a 1000 mm lens would be insufficient. **For example, here's one comical incident: The six of us were in the back of a Land Rover safari truck, riding through the high savannah, when our guide suddenly exclaimed: Lion! We all strained our necks looking in the direction he pointed to; eventually, we could make out a tiny moving shape obscured by grass... the lion.**

Our safari trip started in Arusha; we overnighted at the same hotel that we stayed at before the Kilimanjaro ascent. Everyone going on the combo tour had left surplus stuff not needed on the mountain trek in storage at the hotel. After collecting my stuff, I spent a long night with my laptop, backing-up the Kilimanjaro picture files to an additional LaCie hard drive; it was a laborious process fraught with the danger of power problems; but Arusha was as good as it was going to get, until I got back to Addis Ababa. As the pictures were on the laptop hard drive and still on the flash cards, I took the risk. Only after the Kilimanjaro picture files were on two hard drives were the flash cards formatted for the Serengeti shoot.

The safari group set out for Lake Manyara National Park the next morning. It was only 60 miles [90 kilometers] from Arusha but the trip took the better part of the day. In the late afternoon, we drove around the tall grasses and saw a lot of birds, but that was about it. We overnighted on the savannah in big tents; the dining tent had a long table set for silver service, with candelabras; real upper-crust camp stuff. Thomson called their experience *Nyumba Camping*; **their literature promised, "...the chance to experience the African wilderness like never before, combined with Western-style amenities."** We were treated like kings, but there were absolutely no animals in sight while we were camped **there, just the "wilderness"** Thomson promised. There were a few tantalizing animal cries in the distance that night; **I hoped we'd see some wildlife the next day; our trip was 20% over already; I didn't have any dynamite shots.**

The next day we headed for Ngorongoro Crater where the highlight of the day was photographing hippopotamuses. I learned that hippos sleep in the day and feed at night. They rummage through miles and miles of savannah by the light of the stars, eating grasses. There were fifty hippopotamuses in a small lagoon, trying to escape the harsh **sun, with barely enough water to cover them. Those who couldn't fit in the overcrowded lagoon were flopped on the muddy rims, comatose. The lagoon was totally gross; a foul, slimy brew of water and excrement. In the murky depths, I could make out the carcasses of dead hippos. Incredulously, those animals were living in a cesspool made fouler by the rotting remains of their relatives. With fair regularity, tempers flared among the hippos in the lagoon; the photo ops were amazing. They'd bare their tusk-like teeth and growl at each other if disturbed. Ferocious fights would occasionally break out. I was after that classic shot of a hippo saying "ahh"** but the shot proved elusive, like shooting sports; I never knew which hippo would growl next, or where to point the camera; I got a lot of "yawns" and, just as I was being pressured to hurry-up, finally got the "tonsils" shot.



2005 | SERENGETI SAFARI | PLATE N° 1

A sampling of Serengeti scenes.



2005 | SERENGETI SAFARI | PLATE N° 2
A sampling of Serengeti scenes.

We stayed at a deluxe lodge near the Ngorongora Crater. Dinner was served on the patio. After a leisurely dinner that stretched through sunset; I was caught by surprise when our waiter brought in a huge, candle-lit cake and everyone sang Happy Birthday to me. It was a lovely gesture; I bought a round of drinks in appreciation. There was plenty of scuttlebutt around the table that evening; everyone was excited to be heading deeper into the Serengeti the next day but apprehensive that the animals might not be there for us.



We knew about the animal migrations on the Serengeti. Most of the animals start in the southeast, in January, and work their way clockwise around the perimeter of Serengeti National Park. **Wouldn't you know, most of the herds had already moved farther south, deeper into the Maswa Game Preserve.** Bad news. The good news was that the savannah scenery was sensational and the weather superb. I shot plenty of scenic panoramas and a bunch of dramatic skies, **but there weren't any animals, at least not the top three—lions, cheetahs and leopards.**

Rationalizing, I reckoned that I'd eventually photograph animals in zoos and put them into the African backgrounds. Ha! Our guide certainly tried his best for us. He radioed around and eventually got bearings on some good-sized herds of zebras, gazelles and wildebeests. We got close to animals only twice: once by accident when a memory of elephants crossed the road right in front of our Land Rovers and the other when we passed by a tower of giraffes; at least they were big enough that I could fill the frame using my short-tele lenses and doublers (210 mm X 2 = 420 mm).

I returned to the Panorama Hotel in Addis Ababa after the safari and off-loaded my picture files from the camera memory cards during a one-day hiatus; it took most of that time to copy them onto the LaCie hard drive. The far-**north city of Axum (Aksum) was next. It's is Ethiopia's thirty-second largest city (~45,000 in 2005) and a UN World Heritage Site known for its archeological sites and artifacts dating back to the Aksum Empire from 400 BC into the 10th century.** Locale lore suggests that Makeda, the Queen of Sheeba, lived there. But I saw very little of that; it was too hard to get around. There was little in the **way of tourist facilities, save a few enterprising "taxi" drivers hungry for dollars. Oh, and "guides", kids actually, from ten to fifteen or so.**

Every morning a dozen of them waited for me outside the hotel, clamoring for attention. **The "concierge" tried in vain to shoo them away.** I took to covering my eyes and blindly pointing into the pack, to choose my boys. They led me around the town, but knew nothing about the archeological sites. The only things I saw, we stumbled upon. But I was happy to have them, especially in crowds like the sprawling outdoor market. Ethiopia is a poor country, mostly rural, like India. Where we went there were few other tourists, sometimes none; I would have been an easy target, on my own.

And there was an amusing incident when one young guide asked (in broken English) **where my wife was; he couldn't believe I wasn't married. In dead earnest, he told me that was no good; every man needed a woman.**

He was insistent that he take me to meet a wife. I was tempted; many Ethiopian woman are long, lanky and strikingly attractive, with Caucasian features and black skin. But I let discretion be the better part of valor.

After two days wasted in Axum (no great shots) I hopped the bus to Lalibela, a much smaller town (~17,000 souls in 2005) about ~270 miles [400 km] south of Axum. There was less hustle there and the main attractions – rock-cut monolithic churches – were within walking distance. They turned out to be wonders of the world, entire buildings carved into and out of solid rock. **The taxi drivers there weren't like the shysters in Axum.** For thirty bucks I could hire one for the whole day. We drove all over, into the hinterlands surrounding Lalibela, and I got some reasonably good shots of the rural farming culture.

Finally, there was a one-day foray to the Afar Rift, the rugged region in the East of Ethiopia where archeologists have discovered the oldest human fossils – a 4.4-million-year-old female skeleton, nicknamed Ardi, that is 1.2 million years older than the skeleton of Lucy, or *Australopithecus afarensis*, also found there. The site museum had little to offer and the landscape equally unimpressive, photographically. However, I did manage to **see Lucy's skeleton in Addis Ababa at the National Ethiopian Museum.**

Immediately after returning to Vancouver, I went down to Vashon, concerned about the well-being of my pond fish—the summer before, I had built the pond and was worried how the fish were making it through the winter.⁸⁹

The pond was part of a remodeling job on the house done after Anna left. There were too many ghosts, on the one hand, and on the other, no need for her private room. So, I tore out the walls between the two small bedrooms making one big suite out of them—two mirror-image chambers. Simultaneously, the wall separating the bedroom suite from the studio was replaced with glass doors.

The new layout was completely open; there were no more walls anywhere in the house; you could walk through the whole place, unimpeded. The original plan was to replace part of the exterior wall of the bedroom suite with sliding glass doors that opened onto a patio deck overlooking the water garden and koi pond. I got the pond built, but never did the deck or exterior sliding doors.

Nonetheless, the pond became my Zen space; I fashioned it after a Chinese water garden; water engenders tranquility and contemplation. My sister Barbara and her artist boyfriend Wayne Olds visited just after the pond was completed. Wayne said I should work for Disney, that the pond looked like it had been there for years.

After a month away, the fish and bird feeders were empty. I was counting on the winter **cold to slow the fish's metabolism, making them less hungry. They were all fine despite** the pond having frozen over and the food never reaching them. Under the ice, they hung motionless in various states of suspended animation.

⁸⁹ During the first years, before the water lilies filled in, I covered the pond with water hyacinths. Those annuals died away in the winter leaving the fish with nothing to eat. It was going to take a couple of years for enough bioculture (muck and goop) to accumulate on the bottom, providing a food source for the fish. Until then, I used automatic fish feeders, sourced from the UK; they held about a pound of dry fish food; a battery-powered portion wheel dropped pellets into the pond once every day; I used two of them, one set for early morning and the other for late afternoon. The pair of feeders held a two week supply of fish food—but I was gone for three.



2005 | ETHIOPIAN MIN-ODYSSEY | PLATE N° 1

A sampling of Axum, Lalibela and the Afar Rift | Upper left: subterranean, rock-cut, monolithic church.



2005 | ETHIOPIAN MIN-ODYSSEY | PLATE N° 2

A sampling of Axum, Lalibela and the Afar Rift | Center: my three young guides with the hotel “concierge”.

Back in Vancouver, I was itching to dig into the thousands of pictures shot during the month-long African epic. It took a week just to organize the picture files into a useful archive, with proper names instead of file numbers. Then, after a tantalizing overview of the pictorial possibilities, I got bogged down with Watchout work. As a result, the African archive has sat for all these years, waiting for me to do something with it. (I grabbed a few skies and a few Kilimanjaro scenes for use in some fanciful illustrations, like *Giving*, seen above; but, aside from that I have never even looked again at all those pictures, until a month ago (October 2021). The best of them can be seen in the plates included in this Third Edition.

2005 – Oligopoly – New York Life



Photo of himself courtesy of Steve Oliker

Oligopoly Productions hired me to work on a New York Life sales meeting shortly after I returned from Africa. It was my second job from them; I was flattered that Steve Oliker (left) had chosen me again as there was another big outfit vying for his work.

Oligopoly produced one of four major sales meetings for New York Life [NYL]; that other big outfit handled the three others. Steve was hired because New York Life had a policy of never having only one supplier for a given product or service. He (and the other big outfit) had been doing NYL meetings for some time. When they started using Watchout, **Dataton's Jim Kellner** recommended me for the programming job.

I was flown to New York and put up for two weeks in a suite hotel while I worked with the Oligopoly team to produce the meeting content. Steve Oliker was the overall producer; his partner handled sound and lighting while a small group of other freelancers designed and produced the content that I programmed and projected using Watchout. New York Life had an extensive in-house show production facility called Studio 51 (**after the company's address, 51 Madison Avenue**); **it occupied an entire floor in the basement of NYL's** landmark building (between 28th and 29th Streets straddling Madison and Park avenues). Studio 51 was run by Brian Bill; his job, managing show production, was essentially that of a shuttle diplomat, interfacing between upper management, meeting presenters, and the Oligopoly production team. Bill would hand-**hold the presenters; he'd bring their** scripts and ideas to project coordinator Scott Rice, to get logged in; Scott would pass them on to graphic artist Redge Yoshida, for execution; Redge would pass me the finished graphics, to be inserted into the show program. After assembling a show at Studio 51, the crew took it on location for a week, to some swank resort, for a three-day company meeting for an audience of about 600 elite NYL agents. The hardest part of my job was dealing with all the last-minute changes. The presenters quickly caught-on that making changes in Watchout was fast and simple, compared to the agony of making changes to a slide show. A couple of dozen execs made presentations, some of them—especially the **CEO's**—were quite elaborately supported with AV content. We rehearsed those presentations for two 16-hour days. It was God awful. Talk about changes, one guy tossed his script and wrote a new one—that meant all new artwork and Watchout work.

I found myself staying late every night. After the rehearsals finished, at 8:00 pm [20:00], I would be up another few of hours making programming changes and backing up files. Those chores took twice the usual time because we were running with two parallel control systems, each with five Watchout servers. Each of the three show days involved performances in the morning (six-o'clock call) from 8:00 to 12:00.

Backstage view of the Watchout rig.



After lunch, we'd begin rehearsing the presenters of the next day's program. It was an exhausting schedule; but most meetings and events were like that; crew members and stage hands were expected to put in at least twelve hours, but it was always fourteen to sixteen-hour days for me. It used to take me two weeks to recover from performing at meetings and events. For the rest of the team, the job was done at noon on day three, save the disassembly of the stage set and the pack-out. **That couldn't happen until after the final event—a black tie banquet—** which I handled on my own.

Steve Oliker surprised me with that one; I learned about the banquet at the on-site, pre-show crew meeting, when Oliker went over the event schedule. He had nothing planned **and asked me to please "put something together" for the three-hour dance party** that followed closing-banquet dinner; **"...some music and a few pictures."** Steve sugar-coated the poison pill, adding that, **"I love your taste in music."** (Steve had commented on the music I played backstage, for the crew—mostly *Buddha Bar* and *Nirvana Lounge* stuff.) I was flabbergasted at first, then annoyed. Finally, I took it as a challenge, to blow everyone away; they were expecting one or two backgrounds; I gave them a full-blown ambient-entertainment experience. It was easy because I had two 500-megabyte LaCie hard drives packed with pictures, including the full library of scenes from the *Oceano* show. In the end, I had more pure fun doing that banquet show than any other AV show I ever produced. (!) Slinging together the music track was easy—I had 10,000+ songs on a third hard drive. Following the meeting closer—everyone holding hands and singing **"Auld Lang Syne"** together (I kid you not; it seems corny, but was very emotional, actually; nothing like Walmart people singing together)—the crew enjoyed personal time while I programmed a sequence of 540 scenes—an average of three per minute, times 180 minutes [3 hours]—a pretty good tempo for backgrounds. (I used nice, slow dissolves to stretch out the pictures.)

During the dance party, I put on my DJ hat and played the program live. It was a joyful experience, in the truest sense of the word, combining my favorite pictures and music; blending them on a giant screen—crystal-clear pictures projected by top-notch gear with music played by a state-of-the-art sound system. Those were the times I lived for—running a big rig.



The *coup de grace* was a rose background. It was displayed during dinner and bookended the dance-party picture show. I made it on the spot, like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Oliker was blown away.

Stage set for dinner and dance party. The ten-piece band's equipment is center stage.

Roses were the banquet's **décor theme**; **each of twenty tables was bedecked with red roses** and guests were given roses as they entered the banquet hall—long-stem roses for the ladies, boutonnieres for the men.



Serendipitously and coincidentally, I had recently photographed a bountiful bouquet of red roses, while visiting Dona Tracy at home on Cape Cod, **in Martha's Vineyard. (That's another story.)**

Using those shots as *fractals*, I assembled collages containing hundreds of roses—a rose wallpaper; the scenes were gorgeous.

It goes without say, I accomplished my mission; Oliker et al were totally blown away by the dance-party show. They hired me on the **spot, to do the next year's meeting. They told me I'd become part of the New York Life family.**

After returning from the New York life show, re-installing the projection gear in the Vashon studio, I headed back to Vancouver to continue the ongoing digitization of my image library.

When it came to digitizing my pictures, I felt rushed—particularly about old pictures from my childhood, school days and early professional work. The black-and-white work was safer from the ravages of time than the color work. But some of the earliest color slides and prints were already beginning to fade, some badly.

As I converted those old classics, I also started to piece together a preliminary biography for my websites—mesney.com and incredibleimages.com. That biography, put together in 2005, became the inspiration and framework for this memoir.

2005 – Sound Images – Nike Asia-Pacific Sales Meeting

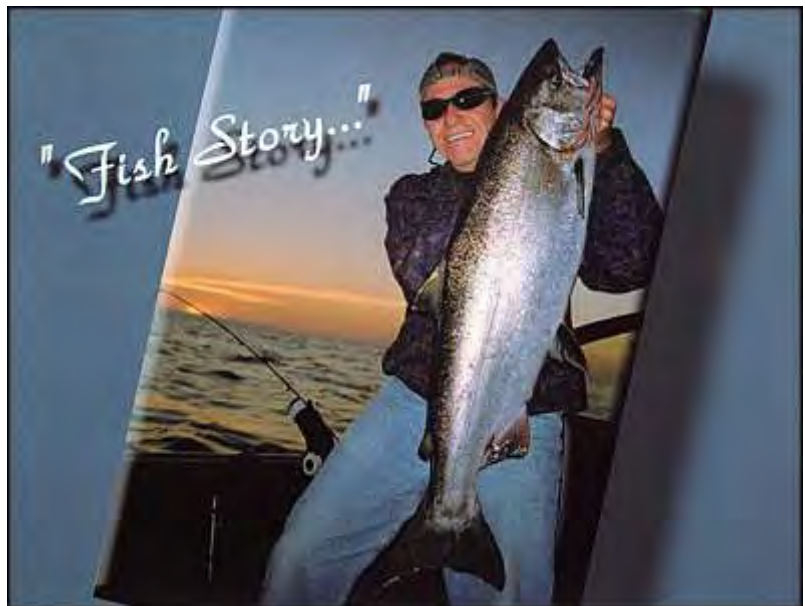
Dave Frey called just after Easter to book me for the Nike Asia-Pacific sales meeting. It was going to be held in Hawaii later that spring and (great news) Gar Benedict **wasn't** hired for it. I would be designing the entire show by myself.

I had nothing against Gar; but life was a bit like a pissing contest with him around, trying **to get Dave's attention and approval. I knew Gar was Dave's favorite freelancer**, and for good reason: they both thought alike. I was a bit too hyper creative. Nonetheless, the job rolled along smoothly during the production phase, at Sound Images studio, in Portland. **I got closer than ever to Dave; he hadn't yet figured out that I was a dope smoker. I wondered if he knew that Gar smoked weed, too. Was that why Gar wasn't hired for this job?**

Dave Frey was a conservative man, **urbanely religious; he didn't approve of hippies. One** weekend, he took me out to the Oregon shore to go salmon fishing. We drove his fishing skiff to Tillamook. It was a quality rig, an aluminum craft outfitted with a protective Bimini, for foul weather. We headed out a few miles from shore, to troll our way along the coast. The first day, Dave got one hit but failed to land the fish. The next day turned in to a repeat of the first until, out of desperation in the final hours of our excursion, I resorted to a trick I originally learned in Sooke, BC, a few years earlier, when I chartered a boat to salmon fish there. Like the skipper in Sooke, Dave had been calling the trolling depth and rigging our lines accordingly.

We were fishing deep, using downriggers with a lot of weight.

As the sun sank low on the horizon, **Dave announced that we'd** call it quits in an hour. That was when I decided to ditch the down rigger and just let my baited hook float to its own depth, down in **Davey Jones' Locker. Dave scoffed** at me; but he soon had to eat crow when, in the final moments, on my last cast, I snagged a 35-pound salmon and landed the monster. Dave just shook his head and smiled broadly. He and I were permanently bonded in some brotherly way after that.



The Nike meeting was held at the Grand Hyatt Resort on Kauai, near Poipu, where I shot Cyclopanes of condominiums for Peter Henze [Vacations International] a decade earlier. I brought a full kit of photo gear, to profit from the unique opportunity to photograph a major Hawaiian resort from the inside out. I used my time off from the show to capture **images of the resort's beautifully-kept property.**

Dave had a house up-island, in Kapaa. We stayed there a couple of nights before the Nike show (**his son Tyler lives there now and produces digital content for Dave's current Nike programs**). I felt like I was part of the Frey family and got a chance to watch Dave windsurfing; he was an athletic guy, fixated on fitness, a runner, like me. The difference was, he did the Atkins diet every time he gained a few pounds; I just starved myself.

I also got much closer to Steve Farris on that job. Without Gar around I had his full attention. The two of us oversaw setting up and running the shows; Dave handled the client and only came backstage during line up, or to bring us changes requested by the client.

Farris was the perfect guy to work with backstage; he didn't flinch under fire or shrug at hard work. Dave didn't like to admit it, but Steve was better at calling shows than he was. Dave would get nervous being the director; he watched the show from too many angles. On one show, Dave blew an important cue during the finale and never lived that down.

Farris and I had a particularly fun time calling that Nike meeting—Not! We were using an early version of Watchout (1.7 as I recall). For an unknown reason, the software would periodically fail to read a stop command and advance to the next scene. The errors were embarrassing, but not catastrophic; there was a way to get back on track, but it involved a momentary screen black-out.

Steve spoke at length with Mike Fahl in Sweden, from Maui, Hawaii; the costs of those calls must have blown a hole in the show production budget. But worse, Mike was clueless; we were on our own.

As a result, Steve and I lived on tenterhooks for the better part of a week. In the end, there were two glitches in the final performances. By then, Steve had a procedure that minimized the problem—he extended the run time after each stop by 2 seconds—**enough time to react if the computer rolled past the stop. Steve's adjustment, which cost us a few hours, re-writing code, saved the day.** The client was none the wiser and Sound Images survived to live another day in the annals of AV history.

Calling shows was something I hated doing; my blood pressure used to skyrocket before playing a show; my finger would tremble as I pushed the start button; I knew that if **anything went wrong with the pacing or sequence of the show, I'd be the first one to blame.**

Multi-image shows were so problem-prone that running them could be a real gut churner. **It was so stressful that Don O'Neill couldn't be in the room when his shows were performed;** he was sickened by knowing that there was a good chance of failure. Maybe watching him made me tougher?

In my career, I called maybe two dozen shows; it was by living through some glitches that I learned to keep my cool under pressure. I got so good at self-control that I was able to pass a lie detector test, that time when I got accused of abusing an underage girl.

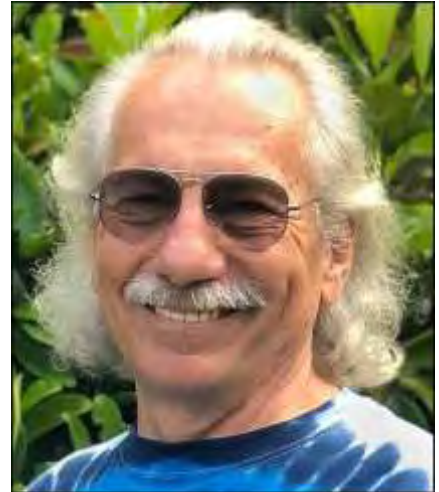
I got that control by sitting in the hot seat, by calling shows, by forcing myself to be calm.⁹⁰

My dad advised that handling difficult situations was a question of “mind over matter.” My wife Pam agrees with that; her credo is that we are what we think and can choose what to think about. For example, because TV news makes her feel badly and have negative **thoughts, she doesn’t watch the mainstream media. Some would say that Pam is in denial; but that is the point—she denies negativity and defines her reality with positive thinking. Following that train of thought: ending stage fright is as “easy” as simply not thinking scary thoughts.** I did it another way: I stopped calling shows.

While in Hawaii, I made time to see Kevin Scanlon. He was living on a nice property in the Iao Valley, near the revered Iao Needle, with a new wife and a few rental cabins – nice.

We talked about Watchout software. He said he wanted to dust-off an idea exploited by Rusty Russell two decades earlier—a new *Hawaii Experience* show. Rusty made a small fortune with an audiovisual extravaganza called *Hawaii Experience*. **Kevin wanted to follow in Rusty’s footsteps; his idea was to make a new version of the successful old show.**

He took me to see a small café space that was for rent in Wailuku, a town of 15,000 west of Kahalui, at the mouth of Iao Valley. The place turned me off. Wailuku was too far off the beaten track to attract the number of tourists needed to make any real money.



Kevin Scanlon in 2021 by his wife, Linda

I tried to talk Kevin out of it, explaining that migrating technology made digital audiovisual a financial black hole. In the old days, when phones had rotary dials and slides were controlled with variable resistors instead of digital semiconductors, you could count on a piece of gear to last up to ten years before it broke or became obsolete. Back then, even tax deductions on equipment were based on a 10-year depreciation allowance. The ten-year time span allowed for an eventual ROI [return on investment]. Now, gear is obsolete in two years. Some fanatics and ultra-pros upgrade all the time. Tech-equipment makers love it; they laugh all the way to their banks; conversely, we, their ~~debt-slaves~~ customers, cry on the way to ours. I knew of whence I spoke; when Anna divorced me, the settlement sucked up all my business earnings for three years; I had no money for new gear or upgrades; I was a like a chauffeur driving an old limo. But I am getting ahead of myself, again.

Shortly after I got back to Portland, Steve Farris married his girlfriend Shari. The whole Sound Images gang was at the wedding, including Gar. I gave the newlyweds an 8-foot-wide [2.44-meter] light-jet print of *Baby Fish*. Steve and Shari never sent a thank you **note; maybe it didn’t go with the couch.**

⁹⁰ The day I conquered fear was the day I learned how to control my breathing. The next time you feel your steam gauge is red-lining, focus on your breathing; try to slow yourself down, find the slowest possible breathing rate; your heart will slow down too, lowering your blood pressure. [Slowing your breathing is also a great way to fall asleep, instead of counting sheep.] **Fear requires a high metabolism; with a lower metabolism, you won’t be as scared; it’s a fact, believe me. Just slow down your breathing and the fear disappears, logic and reason reappear, and you will be back in control again.** As I say, the hardest part is finding situations to practice; however, you could become a show caller. Ha!

2005 – CDC | CED – Louisville/Atlanta

I thought the high point of my AV career was a 120-slide-projector show that I produced for Nike, at Sound Images, in 2001, until a new challenge topped that record. I joined a team of two dozen specialists chosen by Linda Batwin [Batwin & Robin, N.Y.] to produce a 19-screen Watchout show, called Global Odyssey, for the museum at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] headquarters, in Atlanta, Georgia.

It was a collage of 19-screens that spanned an area 200-feet wide [61 meters] and 30-feet high [9.1 meters]. The content library [database] for the random-access extravaganza contained nearly four hours of material, sliced and diced for the 19 screens.

It all started when Jim Kellner **called me, while I was working on Nike's Asia-Pacific** sales meeting, at Sound Images; Kellner was my unofficial booking agent; he gave me tips about shows for which he felt I was the right talent; they were usually big shows, this one was no exception.

Jim advised me to call Bob Ernsperker, at Commercial Electronic Design [CED], in Louisville [Kentucky] about a project for the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDC] in Atlanta. Ernsperker was the business manager for a tight little team of AV consolidators;⁹¹ they were five guys who made big things happen.



The "engine room" at CDC Museum. Left to right: John Sacrenty, Riley Creed, Cameron Milby, Tim Creed, Jeff Rager

⁹¹ Consolidators design-build complete AV systems/solutions; for example, Linda Batwin called Tim Creed and told him her 19-screen idea; CED made the idea happen, "consolidating" numerous suppliers to build the CDC extravaganza.

Tim Creed was the leader of the pack; his kid brother, Riley, was the road manager. Cameron Milby **doubled for Tim except for problems that required Tim's** Mensa mind. Cameron was assisted by John Sandman, a free-lance roadie hired for the CDC install. Mike Lutes was the sales guy, his job was mostly cold-calling potential clients; Lutes had a tough job; it was hard to define what CED did; how do you describe a wizard?

I excused myself to the parking lot behind Sound Images to take Kellner's call, for privacy. The work environment at Sound Images was essentially one big room where everyone worked together, save for the administration offices and video-editing suite.

Gar Benedict and I were both producing content for the Nike meeting; he was producing the big meeting opener; I was working on content for fashion show interstitials. Gar worked in the back half of the studio; I had a piece of the front half; we both wore headphones. Derrick Jackman, **the staging manager, didn't wear headphones; he had a** little boom box and played British rock in the equipment warehouse he called home. **Although nobody was paying attention to me, I didn't want to discuss any non-Nike** business for lack of privacy.

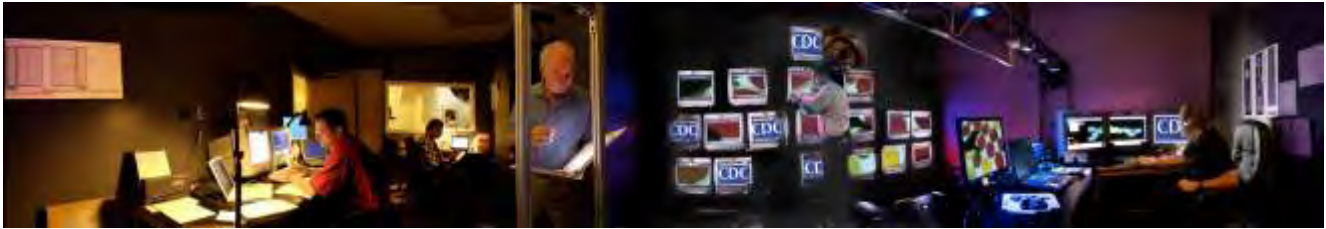
Kellner gave me enough background info to realize that CED was a major player in corporate show business and theme parks; he explained that I would be bidding on a very big job; well, not exactly bidding, rather coming up with a fair budget. Some jobs are so **unique that they can't be put out for general bidding**; only one or two people know how to do them; they might already be booked. In the AV business good people were booked months, even years, in advance.

Ernspiker wasn't interested in anything except how much I cost; he totally accepted Kellner's recommendation and was ready to hire me on the spot, if my rates were affordable. Standing in the parking lot I found myself in a prolonged negotiation to arrive at a job price; they had six months to produce the project and wanted to buy a two month block of my time. Wow.

The CDC job ended up taking two months; the first month was spent at CED's studio in Louisville, the second on site, in Atlanta, at the CDC museum.

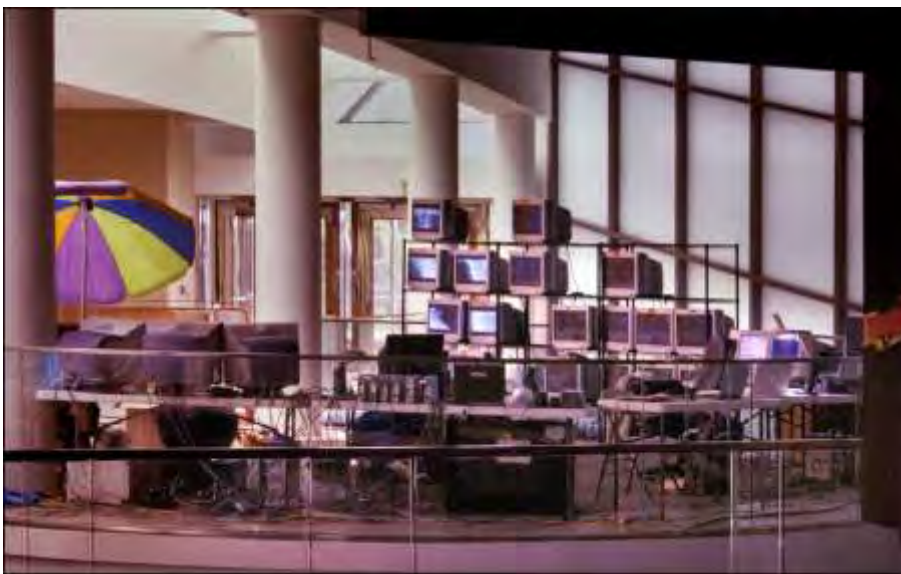
Watchout was new to CED, they didn't have enough gear; I was encouraged to ship my own programming rig to their Louisville studios; I sent a half a ton of gear via Pilot Air, including a pair of my favorite 24-inch NEC CRT color monitors; they were the best I ever had for doing fine color work; they shipped in heavily-padded Benson Boxes, built as 36-inch [91.5 cm] cubes; very awkward to handle and, geez, were they heavy.

In Louisville, CED did their best to convert a conference room and two offices into a 20 X 40-foot room [6.1 X 12.2-meter] production studio for the CDC show. The huge amount of equipment needed to run the show—22 Show Sage computers, networking & switching gear, miles of cables, and a kluge of flat-screen video monitors of various types and sizes—was arranged on Metro shelving, across from my programming desk.



180-degree "trick picture" view of programming suite at CED studios in Louisville, Kentucky. Left to right: John Sacrenty, Bob Ernsperker (in back room), Tim Creed, John Sandman (at monitors) and Yours Truly. If you connect the two ends of the picture, you'll see that Sacrenty and I were actually next to each other.

I was sandwiched-in like a sardine, behind my own set of four computers and three monitors. Next to a Photoshop work station, I set up my Watchout programming rig, comprised of two master-control PCs and the two big NEC monitors. My rig plugged into a rack of 22 Watchout servers [19 for the screens, 2 for audio, 1 spare, for backup].



Programming set-up on balcony of CDC Museum.

It was the biggest Watchout set-up that Dataton had encountered.

The Swedes sold CED a bulk-licensing scheme, designed to keep the costs of Watchout license fees reasonable in large-show situations, like this one—at \$2500 per individual license, Watchout costs became prohibitive. However, from a technical perspective, Dataton wasn't ready for bulk-licensing.

Our Watchout system didn't work unless every server had an individual USB license dongle plugged into it. That number of dongles wasn't readily available from Dataton USA. To solve the problem, I loaned CED twenty-two of my own dongles; it was a generous offer on my part, gratefully accepted by all, especially Kellner, who was saved considerable face.

John Sacrenty was hired as the Medialon show-control programmer. I first met John Sacrenty at G&T Harris, a New York audio-production studio; the occasion was the New York debut of Clearlight's slide control equipment.⁹² Jon Bromberg, who was Harris' manager, called to tell me not to miss seeing the *Clearlight Fantasy* demo show, produced by John Sacrenty. John who?

⁹² Florida based Clearlight was a direct competitor to AVL; their equipment, like Dataton's, was functionally superior to AVL's; but they were late-comers to the party; most producers and staging companies were already using AVL or Arion. It's hard to get people to switch from a Ford to a Chevy, eh?

I'd never heard of John Sacrenty; but his show really set me back on my heels; in fact, I was flabbergasted by what I saw—animations that were smoother (way smoother) than mine.

For example, Sacrenty visualized **"clear light" with an animated super-close-up of a beautiful-woman's eye, blinking. I'd once made a nearly identical scene; but, Sacrenty's was superior to mine; the programming was much smoother—thanks to Clearlight's more sophisticated crossover curves.**



After *Clearlight Fantasy* the AV world certainly knew who John Sacrenty was!⁹³

While I programmed Watchout, Sacrenty programmed everything else. John was using a device-control program called Medialon Manager.⁹⁴ **John's** job was considerably harder than mine; his algorithms controlled Watchout content as well as special-effects lighting and sound equipment.

Medialon was an application which provided a friendly GUI [Graphic User Interface] to make algorithms, the formula-codes used to control many of the machines and tools we use in our daily lives. Sacrenty once used Medialon to control a roller coaster; the coaster had to know when and where to start and stop, to let passengers on and off, etcetera. **John had to provide for every conceivable "what if" scenario; for example, what should the coaster do if a safety mechanism failed during the ride?**

I remember photographing a guy, two guys actually, programming a robot at an ASEA factory in Sweden; ASEA made the robots that assembled Saab cars, which is why I was there. The two programmers were going nuts, trying to make the robot pick up a little **bolt; the bolt kept slipping from the machine's claw-like grippers. They probably didn't** realize that I spoke some Swedish, or they would have controlled their language a bit more than they did.

After a while, I got the gist of what it was they were doing. (That was my job, as a reportage photographer; to find out how things worked and illustrate the process; that type of work was originally called *process photography*, as mentioned previously.)

⁹³ John Sacrenty told me, much later, that *Clearlight Fantasy* was the first show he ever programmed. Say what?!

⁹⁴ Medialon Manager is a Windows® based control software. Its legendary ease of programming and reliability has made it widely used in simple as well as critical control applications such as: Museum media control, Theme Parks and Attractions Show Control, Architectural video & Lighting control, Convention Centers audio & video remote control, etc. Medialon Manager can control any audiovisual equipment using any protocol and network. Being software based it integrates perfectly with IT opening a wide range of new applications. Control of audio & video streaming, links to database, media management, and facility wide control is possible.
[www.medialon.com/showcontrol/manager-v6-software]

They were building a long string of code (an algorithm) based on points in space; the example we used for the photo essay was the instruction to have the robot move its fingers 22 mm [0.87 inches] to the left; that formula began with the instruction to determine where its fingers were, to remember where they were before. Such a simple instruction, yet so difficult for two grown men to figure out and write so that a machine understood. And there was Sacrenty, light-years ahead of them, programming roller coasters and, now, the 19-screen Global Odyssey.

To my amazement, Sacrenty understood how Watchout worked on levels rivalling, even surpassing, those of Mike Fahl, who wrote Watchout; in fact, Fahl confessed that he was amazed at what Sacrenty had accomplished with his software—Sacrenty used Watchout for tasks Fahl had never even dreamt of. For example, **John's program allowed** people to select specific modules, e.g., shows about AIDS or Ebola. When a specific selection was made, whatever was playing on screen transitioned nicely into the requested content; that was no mean feat.

Consider that Sacrenty's job was to create a content data base from Watchout modules that I coded. The Watchout-content data base was linked with interactive kiosks, where **viewers could choose to see specific programs. The system also had to "know" how to** interrupt the default program—called *Random Coolness*)—to play requests and restore to the default program after the requests played.

The hardest part, John told me, was that there was no beginning and no end—content played randomly. To accomplish randomness, the play list had to constantly change, i.e., no looping.

The need to avoid repetition was something I learned about on the Peppermill *Oceano* show; although there was nearly four hours of content, the bartenders and waitresses in the lounge rebelled against the long loop after just a month; for them, the show was a repetitive torture.

The CED team took marching orders from Linda Batwin, co-founder and co-creative director of Batwin & Robin [B&R], a New York creative agency whose staff employed a dozen core artists and writers, fleshed out with freelance talents as needed, for specific projects. (The smart way to run a creative media business.) B&R masterminded shows of **World's Fair magnitude; they made museum shows, trade shows, theme parks, and other major Experiences.**

The CDC (and all of us involved in the Global Odyssey show) were beneficiaries of **Bill Clinton's largesse. Clinton** ordered that 3% of Federal building budgets be set aside for **Art. As a result, the CDC found itself with an obligation to spend \$5 million on "art" to** embellish their new museum and communications center (which includes a TV studio, various auditoria, and a well-staffed media production department).

Not knowing what to do with that much money, CDC enlisted the aid of Batwin & Robin, who came up with the plan for a 19-screen epic AV experience, suspended in the CDC **Museum's thirty-foot-high atrium, above the traditional, 3D displays.**

After selling-in their plan, Linda Batwin turned to her trusted tech consultant, Tim Creed, to turn her vision into reality; he turned to Kellner at Dataton.

The CED team spent the first month in Louisville defining the nature of our task. John Sacrenty and I ran a series of tests and blocked out some basic “moves” (scene transitions), like simple cuts and dissolves. CED’s studio space was too small to create a composite image; at best, everything we did there was an approximation.



I couldn’t program any wipes or other patterns because I couldn’t see the screen. Sure, I could see the 19 monitors; but it was impossible to see the composite picture. The situation was like jigsaw puzzle pieces lined up in rows—I could see the pieces, but not the puzzle. Nonetheless, the basic systems had the bugs worked out of them by the time we left for Atlanta; so, the crews’ spirits were high (mine were extra high, bolstered by some Vashon home-grown, smuggled in a computer).



The team set up on the mezzanine, overlooking the atrium. Watchout monitors can be seen at the upper right. My desk is on the left, under the beach umbrella. In this scene, Linda Batwin addresses the team during one of her rare appearances.

At the CDC Museum in Atlanta, Sacrenty and I took input from Batwin & Robin and got it up on the screen. They had a team of nearly a dozen on site at the CDC, sitting along side John and I, feeding us content; even more came from the New York office, delivered on a LaCie 500-megabyte hard drive **that got FedEx'd back and forth between Atlanta and New York.**

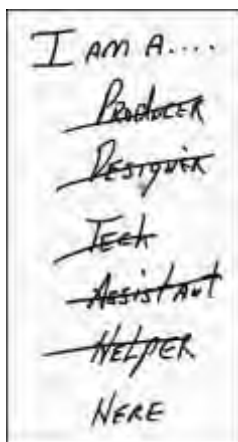
There was no wasted talent or effort; all those people were needed to process the bazillions of files needed to fill the show archives with enough content for a few hours of so-called *random coolness*.

That was a lot of content, especially considering everything got multiplied by 19, for all the screens. It was a huge amount of work, involving all kinds of specialist talents. For example, there was a New York techie on the team whose sole job was slicing and dicing master scenes—cutting apart master scenes into 19 pieces. We all worked in tight **coordination; Sacrenty's math was the glue that held everything together.**

For the CDC show, Sacrenty worked out algorithms that interpolated the differences in pixel densities between the two types of displays being used—projectors and plasma screens. The smaller plasma screens had more pixel density than the projectors, pictures appeared smaller on them; that made it impossible to integrate them with projected images. For example: say all 19 screens—10 small plasmas and 9 large RP screens—were **used to present one picture; it wouldn't look right unless they all had the same pixel density.**

To solve that problem, Sacrenty created a double-stage programming environment in Watchout (which flabbergasted Mike Fahl) that reconciled the density differences between the two display types. I was flummoxed; I could have never figured that out; I framed **Sacrenty's math formula**—written on the back of a napkin.

[Spoiler Alert: Mike Fahl subsequently incorporated pixel-density-reconciliation algorithms like Sacrenty's in later versions of Watchout.]



John and I were both a "loners;" we kept to ourselves for the most part, concentrating on the considerable tasks at hand. John would sometimes sit for hours, wringing his hands, trying to work out formulas; I could tell it was intense stuff.⁹⁵

Once in a while, we got into conversations; one was about dreams; what are they? We didn't figure that out; but John revealed that his dreams often involved three-dimensional grids and matrices as well as challenging formulas. How different we all are; I have never dreamt about a matrix or formula in my life. I reckoned that Sacrenty was a tortured man.

Note on John Sacrenty's desk said a lot about the man that I didn't understand at the time.

⁹⁵ John Sacrenty was a mathematician; algorithms cannot be written without math—that's why I never got involved with Medialon. I never fancied math; I like to bend or break the rules occasionally; that's not allowed in a math-based reality. In John's world, things either worked or they didn't; it was black or white, on or off.



While John Sacrenty (left) sweats, Batwin & Robyn's producer, Alex Vrack passed the time making lighthearted remarks.

To be sure, the talents of people like Mike Fahl and David Branson were needed to tame the technical complexities of very-large-scale **multimedia installations**. **Branson's** Show Sage computers came tuned-up, providing the high-performance necessary to play Dataton Watchout shows flawlessly. Branson also provided a complete check list for **making the adjustments needed to tweak his machines**. Yet, even Branson's list was insufficient for the complexities of the CDC show.

The complications lay in the pixel density differences between the plasma screens and projectors. Pixel-density differences created frame-rate problems during video playback. **You know how annoying it is when the speaker's mouth is too fast or too slow for the words being spoken?** Now, imagine that 200-feet wide [61 meters] on 19 screens. Those **errors took CED's crew nearly three weeks to fix**.

The frame-rate gremlin made Creed and his crew crazy. At first Tim was reluctant to call Branson—it was a pride thing; tech giants have big egos; for Tim to call Branson was an admission of defeat. In the end, Branson and Tim spent hours on the phone; they even got Mike Fahl involved over in Sweden. Eventually they found the bug in the Microsoft operating system. Ha!

While installing the show, home was a Courtyard Marriott in Decatur, Georgia, a fifteen minute ride from the CDC Museum, in Druid Hills, next to Emory University. I was happy living there; it was situated on the edge of town, adjacent to an established, affluent residential community, ideal for running.

I was at the peak of my (anorexia-inspired) health-nut period, running 5 miles [8 kilometers] a day, rain or shine. Typically, I'd get back from work around sundown, at 7:30 pm [19:00], and immediately go out running. My route took me down into a deep valley and up the other side; alternatively, I'd run through the suburbs, to clue-in on the upscale lifestyle of affluent Druid Hills. When staging assistant John Sandman got canned (for smoking dope), I inherited his room at the hotel; it was a first-floor suite in a far corner, overlooking the valley forest. Nice.

After my run, I'd buy my veggies at a local market, make a salad for dinner (with tomato juice dressing), smoke some weed and fall asleep watching CNN.⁹⁶ I can vividly recall watching CNN's reportage of Hurricane Katrina ravaging New Orleans, on August 23rd.

In the mornings, I'd wake in time to enjoy a pot of hot coffee, a raisin bagel and a puff or two, before heading to work. They rented Sacrenty and I a car to share; but that didn't work out because our work routines were so different; so, a second car was rented. Free at last.

Because I didn't eat with the rest of the crew, I was labelled anti-social; however, I just didn't want to eat restaurant food, and I didn't drink. Most AV techs I knew lived on Coca-Cola and Krispy Kreme donuts before noon, with Red Bull and McDonalds or Chick-Fil-A for lunch and dinner. My eating habits were totally unlike theirs; they thought I was strange and called me a health nut.

What really got them, however, were the exercise ball I sat on (in lieu of the \$500 office chairs provided) and my set of 10-pound weights; every hour or so I would take a stretch break and do a 5-minute routine with the weights, right at my desk.

Even though the crew thought me peculiar, during the 420-mile [676 km] drive from Louisville to Atlanta, the five of us in Tim's car (me, John, Tim, Riley and Cameron) got to talking about health and foods. I was surprised by their level of interest in my regime. They weren't just killing time or pandering to my interests; they posed complex questions about specific things.

Tim, for example, suffered from extreme allergies in the springtime; I told him about my success using stinging nettle supplements to deal with a similar allergy problem. (Taking two stinging-nettle capsules per day for three years cured me of plant allergies.)

The crew got so interested in my regime that they all came along when I went to a health-supplements store in Atlanta. In those days, everywhere I went, I made supplement shopping my *vacilando*; I was taking ~100 different ones by 2010; the cost of them was like having a second mortgage.

Pam eventually convinced me to stop taking the supplements; she had been a nurse so I listened to her. She explained that supplements should be reserved for times when I needed a boost or got ill; that if I hyped myself up all the time, I couldn't use them for a boost.

⁹⁶ Wherever I went, I always had weed with me. Because I pulverized it, the stuff was easy to hide in the nooks and crannies of my gear.

I took her advice and discontinued 99% of them over the course of a year (suddenly crashing your system is not healthy); the remaining 1% was cannabis, which I still enjoy.

People are impressed when I tell them that I programmed a 19-screen Watchout show, but writing the Watchout code for the CDC Global Odyssey was anything but exciting. For the most part it was an endlessly repetitive process; making even the smallest timing adjustment, for example, required new instructions for all 19 screens—like writing this sentence 19 times. **Whatever “sport” there was came from Linda’s** requirement that repetition be avoided. Part of my job was to invent new ways to transition from one scene to the next; that was the fun part.



There is a video approximation of one CDC show module on Vimeo address that follows.



To watch such a spectacle on a tiny monitor screen is almost a joke; but that is the only way to see it, unless you can get to the CDC Museum in Atlanta, while it is still up and running there. <https://www.vimeo.com/233415178>.

[Spoiler Alert: Sacrenty died in his sleep at the age of 50-something, almost twelve years ago; I'll bet it was from being tied-up in knots inside, trying to solve self-created riddles.]

2005 – The Bottom Line – Financial Alterations

"We get too soon old and too late smart."

Kurt Boenhstedt

Understanding a bit about the mechanics of the financial world came to me late in life.



Bob Ernspeker. Photo courtesy Commercial Electronic Design.

I never thought about money, never thought of myself as getting old.

It was only when I worked with Bob Ernspeker at Commercial Electronic Design that my eyes were opened to the deceits of the financial system the world lives by.

In the old days—only a few decades ago—government and municipal bonds were considered a safe investment; blue-chip corporate bonds were, too.

However, our fiat-money system is based on debt. Debt is the new money.

The whole thing is an economic experiment that started in 1971, when Nixon delinked the dollar from gold.

Our debt-based system works like a Ponzi scheme, it requires more and more debt to stay afloat.

Eventually, inevitably, mathematically, the system reaches peak debt (aka *debt saturation*.) **That's the situation the world finds itself in now. The levels of indebtedness are unsustainable; they are so big they'll never be repaid, ever.**

As I write these pages the world teeters on systemic economic collapse. They say that gold will be the proverbial last man standing after the next big one. Will happen in my lifetime?

Ernspeker—and others since—explained to me that absolutely every fiat money system that ever existed has failed; that only real property survives the collapse of monetary systems—things like precious metals, precious stones and real estate.

Ernsperker and Riley Creed were keen on precious metals. As well-off investors, they knew a lot about the markets in general, especially how things worked. They made a strong case and I got interested enough to carry on in their footsteps.

Adjustments were made to my modest portfolio, I cashed out of all paper instruments, all retirement accounts and mutual funds. I moved the proceeds into cash and metal; I **became a “gold bug.”**

As part of my self-education, I studied artisanal mining and bought gold-panning gear. Then, I got all the parts and built a prototype of a filtration system, to slurry fine gold particles from panned concentrate, using a cyclone of water in a series of tubes.

I had my eye on panning for gold along the Twisp River, in eastern Washington, where my neighbor, Kirk Beeler, went fly fishing. **From Kirk’s pictures, I could see that the Twisp —** located in gold mining territory—looked just like the rivers they showed in my gold panning guide books. Ha!

[Spoiler Alert: the gold panning plan got put on hold when it came time to move from Vashon.]

2005 – Rejection – Dejection

There was much to be thankful for in my 60th year; but there were a couple of bumps in the road, the kind that really knock the wind out of you.

The first was the realization that my stock picture business was over—*finito*.

The new editors at Corbis, Sarah Traviss and Lori Ryan, returned 99% of my pictures. I was losing money producing stock pictures anyway, as mentioned earlier. Over the course of just a few years, my earnings had declined from about \$15,000 per year to less than \$1,000, in 2006.

At the time, though, I was outraged. I protested Traviss & Ryan’s decisions; I went over their heads, appealing directly to the managing editor, Gerry Thies. I spent a small fortune printing and binding nearly 100 of my digital pictures and illustrations, to prove my worth; but, to no avail.

The picture books were returned with a polite note explaining that my work was not the **kind of stuff the agency was looking for anymore; that my work had a “dated” look**, like Life magazine and National Geographic; they had too much of that stuff and not enough of the newer *edgier* looks.

Edgier indeed; the stuff they wanted looked like bad pictures in my estimation—cameras cocked on weird angles, washed out colors and gratuitous points of view.

Pictures taken with cheaply-made pin-hole cameras were all the rage. Photographers shot through Coke bottles or other distorted glass to break-up the focus and add some *grunge*. I could never produce such trashy pictures. If that was what they wanted, I was in trouble.

Simultaneously, crowd-sourced stock agencies appeared on the Internet selling pictures for as little as one dollar. It was a new paradigm; culling through millions of pictures sent in by amateur photographers, they ended up with thousands of saleable images; and by selling them at a buck each, they made millions of sales.

Professional photographers couldn't compete with such cheap prices; they became an endangered species that has since largely become extinct.

Then another whammy: I lost a mammoth photo assignment after a purpose-made portfolio was rejected. It was a job I thought I had in the bag, because the client was an old colleague from the days of Incredible Slidemakers—Ralph Katz. **Ralph and I were ol' buddies; I reckoned that gave me a shoe in.**

Katz was an account executive with Burson-Marsteller when we first met. However, he and V.P. Andy Cooper left B-M and started their own agency—Cooper-Katz, Inc.

Ralph asked me to submit a portfolio; he explained that they were looking at quite a few. I made an entirely new portfolio, with examples of my work spanning three decades, with emphasis on my recent work for Swedish Match—those pictures were a close match to what Cooper-Katz' client, **Amway**, wanted—a corporate-portrait collage with an emphasis on happy workers.

To show my digital dexterity, I pre-pressed all the pictures with an emboss effect and drop shadow, made in Photoshop. I bound 100 jumbo prints into a fancy binder. The final **result looked totally put together; I didn't see how it could fail—but fail it did.**

Ralph didn't explain why I was not awarded the contract. He told me they were looking for a unique point of view, not standard pictures, no matter how good.

Cooper-Katz's rejection put me in a state of dejection. The dejection morphed into reflection, about myself and my place in the world.

The world had changed, while I hadn't—photographically speaking.

I came up short when I compared my current work with my old stuff—the pictures I made before AV took over. When the big money started rolling in, I got more and more conservative, stylistically. **I no longer thought the way I used to, visually speaking. That's not to say the pictures weren't as good; they were truer to life; i.e., standard.**

The devastating part was that, I had always relied on my photography to pull me through hard times. Both times Incredible crashed, I reverted to being a photographer; same thing when Fork Inn the Road went under; those earnings pulled me through. Now, I could no longer rely on commercial photography to plug the holes in my financial dike.

I interpreted the rejections as proof that my decision to abandon commercial photography in favor of the arts market was the right one. I doubled down on making a *product line* of fine-art illustrations to sell in art galleries.

[Spoiler Alert: A lot of other photographers had the same idea. Many of them worked in China. In less than a decade, the market for art prints was flooded with their collective **output. Cheap Chinese stuff destroyed the market for my stuff; I couldn't compete, price wise.**]



Fall Leaves, 2008

"You can't live the afternoon of your life according to the rules of life's morning."

Kaj Wynn Berry

Now, in the evening of my life, I don't know who I am anymore. I used to think I did; but maybe that was an illusion [it was—everything is]. What if my life was all an act?

Peter Sellers confessed to not having a personality he could call his own; he was always playing roles, either scripted ones or others that he made up for himself; he became those characters; his personality changed accordingly. We all do that to some extent; we have different clothes and behave differently depending on the demands of various occasions. We live by a social pact with one another; herd behavior characterizes our lives; Madison Avenue and the Fourth Estate **tell us what's hot and what's not.**

No, it wasn't an illusion. By my early teens, I was already a pragmatist, moving beyond Herman Hesse and Jack Kerouac to embrace the philosophy and writing of Ayn Rand. Between school, my vocations and avocations, I had little time for frivolity; instead, mine was always a purposeful, goal-oriented life. From the age of eight I earned my own money and paid my own way; that taught me to take control of my life and make my own future. The way to do that—by managing perception—was revealed to me during my studies of psychology and advertising at Queens College. I taught myself to play-act whatever role was needed to get what I wanted; my personality fragmented. My parents accused me of being selfish; I suggested they read *The Virtue of Selfishness* [Ayn Rand].

My morals were slipping away, even back then; I wasn't overly concerned about traditional ethics. My British father taught me to suppress my emotions and "keep a stiff upper lip;" I did, and forged ahead on my quest for glory; there was little to hold me back. I pushed myself hard and was nearly always successful in whatever I set out to do; I felt proud of myself most of the time—confident; I had a dominant personality; I knew who I was, what I was doing and where I was going. I reckoned that Life was like sailing a boat to a destination across the sea; you can either cast your fate to the winds or use them to navigate.

The more I think about it, my life was an act—I've played at being many characters: artist, businessman, writer, composer, producer and now *philosopher*. Like a chameleon, **I've changed costumes and personalities as needed to shoehorn my imaginings into my** surroundings, to manifest my desires, by managing perceptions—**my own and others'—**to get what I ~~needed~~ wanted.

I am still acting but have no audience anymore, other than a few like you. Living like a recluse gives me plenty of time for introspection and *deep thinking*. I spend my time distilling memories to get at their essence, searching for values that I once either took for granted or disregarded while distracted by commercial success—and failure.

Part Five

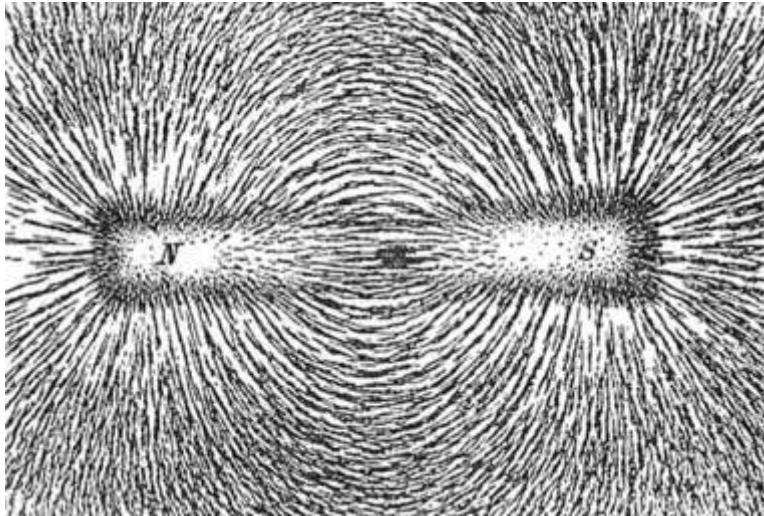
PHASE TRANSITION

Back to basics.



Vashon Island studio, during the Vashon Island Art Studio Tour, Christmas 2012

Photo by Pamela Swanson.



Wikipedia: Iron filings oriented in the magnetic field produced by a bar magnet.

"You are what you think."

The Law of Attraction | Abraham-Hicks

What more can you be, other than what you think? After all, everything you see, hear, smell, taste and touch (your navigation tools for the default world) passes through your mind. Consciousness itself is the manifestation of your *mind* at work; Reality is the **manifestation of your thoughts, your desires. Is "it" really "out there?" Or, is Reality** nothing but a collection of thoughts that you have about your surroundings and goings on? If I serve you a few martinis, altering your mind, your thoughts will change and with them your reality.

Abraham also says that one always gets what one wants. (Be careful what you wish for.) It follows that, since everything is a product of our minds, and our minds can be altered, you can alter yourself to become anyone you want to be and do almost anything you want to do. Harnessing that process to your advantage has a lot to do with emotions—they can guide to do the right things—the things that make you happy. You can choose to look at anything in any number of ways; optimism or pessimism are just two of many alternatives.

Building confidence has a lot to do with altering your consciousness and thoughts; as a once-**popular show tune put it, "Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative."** My parents told me over and over to believe in myself, so I did. I learned more about confidence when I was seven years old and started selling my hand-made pot-holders door to door. Those experiences taught me that, to a degree, I could change the world around me by living as if the change had occurred, participating in the world as I wanted it to be. Since we are what we are by choice, we can change any of it whenever we want. Whatever. Whenever. Therefore, success—getting what you want—depends on knowing *what* you want (and maybe why) as much as it does *how* you get it. Most of us want a lot of money, but how do you get it? Do the means justify the ends?

And, do you really want a lot of money, or do you want to want to have a lot of money; **there's a big difference between those two states of mind; you might think you want a lot of money but subconsciously want to get off the treadmill of the work-a-day world, to go live in a grass shack on a tropical island.**

I thought I knew what I wanted for a long time and, as you will read, was reasonably successful getting what I wanted—except in relationships. When my third marriage (to Anna Raus) failed—fourth, if you also count Elisabeth Ivarsson, my Swedish *sambo* (partner)—I went through a crisis that resulted in a metamorphosis; now, I am not the person I once was; my priorities have shifted considerably, and with them my range of possibilities.

When I hit bottom in 2003, dulled by the *ennui* of life my life, it finally dawned on me that I was the one who had to change; trying to change my world or the people in it **didn't** work. (Actually, **it worked, but the result was more of the same because I hadn't changed** what I wanted or what I was doing.)

I decided to give up commercial work; AV was no longer providing the lifestyle I wanted; **what was required to earn a living wasn't worth it; I guess I must have spent too many nights living in motels and hotels, but I didn't want to do that anymore.** Instead, I declined job offers and spent that summer at the beach in Vancouver, reading the Tao and watching the girls. I took some extended time off, living in isolation, trying to figure out the meanings hidden in the mystical writings of the Tibetan philosopher, Lau-Tzu; that taught me how to get into the *deep thought* space which many call meditation.

Deep thinking isn't hard to do; it is a lot like daydreaming; you let your thoughts drift wherever they want; psychologists call it *free association*. Being able to freely associate is an acquired skill; the more you do it the better you get at it. Eventually you realize that every association and every thought that you have is for a reason—they came from somewhere and are taking you somewhere. When you look for patterns, the truth about yourself is revealed.

My relationships failed because I didn't want them to succeed; I was duping myself into thinking that I wanted to be married; but I wanted to be free, to live and work alone, to **be frivolous. Why? I didn't trust women. The distrust began when my dad came home** from the war and Mom's **attention turned from me to him; I felt betrayed and spent most** of my life unconsciously (ab)using other women to *get even* with my mother.

But that was then. I got my wish and live alone. Now, my phone never rings and I only need to check the mail once a week; my time is mine, to do with what I will. At first, the liberation of retirement frustrated me, and I was angry. Now, I have learned to use the time to explore the recesses of my mind, to daydream, to manifest this memoir from vestigial remnants of the past—making history, as it were.

Although people considered me successful, I wasn't happy and didn't understand why.

I had so much and yet felt so little. Losing Anna—and my other failed relationships—weighed on my soul.

Another downer were the creative shackles I had to wear in my new career as a freelancer. I missed the days when I was the boss, when it was my decisions that mattered.

Part of my depression was no doubt my withdrawal from alcohol; after a year on the wagon, my defenses were down, my psyche was no longer sedated. I still smoked plenty of my good home-grown weed; but that stuff was different; my consciousness was expanded; demons were free to invade my mind.

Weed is good for contemplation. I did a lot of that during the summer of 2005, lying on the beaches in Vancouver.

My apartment was only a few blocks from Sunset Beach, on Burrard Inlet and the beach at English Bay (right).



I went to the beach every sunny day, to work on my tan. Tanning has always been part of my routine; having a tan makes me feel better about myself and life in general; maybe **it's the vitamin D; more likely it's my ego. On Vashon, I could sunbathe nude**; I had full-body color; that really perked my libido; I strove to look sexy. In Vancouver, nudity was prohibited. (Wreck Beach, near UBC, was an exception.) There was a lot of eye candy on Canadian beaches. Canadians, like Scandinavians and Asians, stayed fit for the most part. The women on the beach mostly wore string bikinis. Occasionally someone would go too far (usually men) and the authorities got called, usually for smoking or drinking.

I enjoyed hanging at the beach. Staring at the waves for three hours a day and making a 45-minute run along the Stanley Park sea wall were providing me with more contemplative time than I ever had before. I was beginning to drill down on my demons.

In the process of moving stuff between Vashon and Vancouver, a copy of the Tao Te Ching, by Lao Tzu, landed on top of a pile of books waiting to find new homes.

My sister Barbara had given me the book a decade earlier, at a time when I was having **similar personal challenges. I couldn't pass it on, it was a special gift. Instead, I took it off** the pile and brought it with me to Vancouver. My plan was to read the book at the beach.

In case you haven't read it, the Tao is a complex work of few words, a series of short verses—**Lao Tzu's observations about Man's relationship with Nature**. I found the poems challenging, but dedicated myself to understand (or trying to) why the Tao is considered so important by so many.

I approached the challenge by reading only one poem per day, then contemplating it while **watching the waves and clouds. I'm not sure that I'll ever understand Lao Tzu's writings;** but thinking about them helped me to understand that I was living in opposition to Nature, particularly my own nature.

I came to realize that I was not being true to myself; **I was living by others' rules, trying** to be trendy and popular—you know, wearing the right clothes, following accepted polemics, deviating from the norm just enough to be considered creative.

I decided to start over, to remake myself in the image of an Ayn Randian character, self-sufficient in every way.

I longed to make fantasy pictures, whatever came into my mind, instead of having the corporate eye looking over my shoulder. Thus, I gave-up commercial assignments in general, working only for a select few who allowed me to do my own thing, e.g., Dave Frey and Steve Oliker. Thenceforth, those two clients would have to support me, as I reorganized my career and morphed into fine-arts illustration work.

As I read the Tao, I began to understand denial, how my brain worked, always assigning responsibility for my failures to other people and/or outside conditions beyond my control. I never considered failure as my fault; there was always some other reason. However, I came to realize that everything I think, everything I am, is a product of my mind—including failures and unhappiness; therefore, solutions must also come from my mind, from within. In simpler terms: I could only change myself. If something was bothering me, I could make it go away by concentrating on what makes me happy.

Thus, I decided that the most important thing to do was make money doing things that made me happy. Extending that thought, when I examined the arc of my life, I saw that making pictures was the red thread, that just about every job I ever had involved working with pictures.

I decided to revert to being a photo illustrator, making pictures—but only ones I chose to, i.e., not for hire. Furthermore, the new pictures would be on paper or canvas—audio visual pictures were insubstantial, elusive and impermanent; they disappeared when the show was over.

It distressed me that I had nothing to show for the many years I spent in the slide-show business. There was no way that anyone could ever see that work again (except for videotapes). Not only were slide shows out of favor, slide equipment was no longer made.

There weren't many fine-art galleries in Vancouver; the few in business only sold original oils and watercolors, no New Media.

I made the rounds of every art gallery listed in the phone book, but couldn't find one that would represent my illustration work until, one afternoon, walking home after the latest rejection, I happened past a sizeable gallery called Oh My Godard **on Vancouver's once** trendy (now wannabe) Granville Street. **They weren't on my list, or on anyone else's;** being new to Vancouver, Oh My Godard **weren't listed anywhere.**

Godard's was an unusually modern gallery with a *sophisticated-punk* atmosphere. Everything was black--the walls, ceiling and carpet—**except Godard's pictures, lit by** pencil-beam spotlights. His vividly-colored cartoons gleamed; they appeared to be floating in space, in front of the dark walls.

With nothing to lose, I walked in and introduced myself to Kelly Arnold and Paige Tesluck, the gallery owners. When they saw my samples, they agreed to give me some wall space. I was flabbergasted and exuberantly organized a show. With that, a new era began.

The Oh My Godard gallery was a quasi-franchise deal with Michael Godard, a successful **cartoon artist known as "The Rock Star of the Art World."**

Michael Godard's business model was precisely what I was after. Godard's paradigm was like Thomas Kinkade's. Kinkade was a traditional artist whose paintings of quaint, European-looking villas and villages sold (well) at hundreds of galleries, in cities and resorts around the world.⁹⁷

Kinkade's success formula was based on digital-printing technologies developed in 1985, by Iris Graphics, in Stoneham, Massachusetts. Their Iris printer reproduced a wider range of colors (a larger gamut) than any other printing process.

Iris prints were intended to be used for prepress proofing, but they also gained popularity among photographers and graphic artists who sold prints of their work that looked just like the originals.

To digress for a moment, about proofs and printing: Printing jobs usually included a *contract proof*—a test print—to assure that the job is accurate, particularly the colors. It was expensive to make test on an actual printing press (press proofs); proofing held-up valuable press time, while the pressmen fiddled with the colors.

⁹⁷ Wikipedia: William Thomas Kinkade III (January 19, 1958– April 6, 2012) was an American painter of popular realistic, pastoral, and idyllic subjects. He is notable for the mass marketing of his work as printed reproductions and other licensed products via the Thomas Kinkade Company. He characterized himself as "Thomas Kinkade, Painter of Light", a phrase he protected through trademark but which was originally used to describe the British master J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851). According to Kinkade's company, one in every twenty American homes owns a copy of one of his paintings.

Iris printing technology offered a way to make economical off-press proofs which accurately simulated the look (color range) produced by most printing machines. Each type of printing machine has built-in color biases.

Iris achieved a wider range of colors with new pigment-application technology called ink-jet printing (based on the mechanical principles of spray painting).

Epson, Hewlett-Packard and Canon brought out the first commercially available inkjet printers in the 1970s; they were designed for and mainly used to print the digital output of Apple and PC computers.

Iris refined inkjet technology to levels that made the new process commercially viable for professionals involved in image making on an industrial scale. Because Iris printers reproduced more colors than any other, the machines could imitate the narrower gamuts of traditional processes like offset, letter-press, lithography and silk screen; thus, their value—making accurate simulated press proofs—was established in the prepress world. Iris prints became ubiquitous at ad agencies and publications where they enabled designers to present their clients and printers with more accurate artwork.

Graham Nash [of Crosby, Stills & Nash fame] was the first to use inkjet printing for fine arts. The rocker was also a photo buff and experimented with the Apple Macintosh and a Fujix inkjet printer at UCLA without great success. When some of his pictures were printed using an Iris 3014 printer, he bought one of the \$126,000 machines and started a digital fine-arts printing company at his Manhattan Beach carriage-house studio, with his former road manager Mac Holbert; **they called their products “digiprints;”** but, later their technician, Jack Duganne, coined the term *Giclée*, which derives from the French noun *gicleur* [nozzle] and verb *gicler* [to spurt, or spray]. **Exhibitions of Nash’s huge 3 X 4 foot (0.91 X 1.21 meter) limited-edition prints were smash hits; the famous rocker’s pictures made headlines around the world.**

No doubt Thomas Kinkade **saw the publicity about Nash’s printing company. In 1991** Kinkade, who called himself *The Painter of Light*, organized his own printing company, Lighthouse Press. Like Nash, Kinkade realized that there was more money to be made selling prints of your work than in selling originals.

Artists, galleries and museums had sold poster-like prints for ages; but even the finest **lithographs were nothing like originals and didn’t fetch much.** **Giclée printing** changed the paradigm of fine-art printing. Not only were the colors more accurate, but pictures could be printed on canvas, watercolor paper, and any number of other substrates. The quality was so good that it became difficult to tell the originals apart from the giclée copies.

Voilà, a new art product was born: the Giclée. Now, instead of selling an original for fifty or even a hundred thousand dollars, Kinkade could make millions, mass-marketing copies at very affordable prices. **The original of Kinkade’s famous painting of the Magic Kingdom at Disneyland, called *Main Street USA*, would cost more than half a million dollars if you could buy it (you can’t), but you can buy a nicely framed giclée of it for prices ranging from \$230 to \$6,460.** It is said that a Kinkade pictures hangs in one out of every twenty American homes.

Michael Godard was born in 1960, just two years after Thomas Kinkade. They both grew up in California, both attended the Art Center for Design in Pasadena, California, and both ended up top-selling artists. However, they followed very different career paths.

Kinkade got straight into traditional oil painting but Godard spent his first forty years at a variety of other jobs including mechanical engineer and commercial illustrator. It was on the streets of Las Vegas, as a character artist, that his high-profile career took hold. Around the turn of this century, Godard opened his first gallery in Vegas.

Godard says that his signature style (cartoons depicting the antics of olive characters) evolved during time spent by the bedside of his daughter, Paige, entertaining her, to keep her mind off the brain cancer that killed her in 2006. The new works, depicting olives, grapes and strawberries as martini-drinking party animals, were an overnight success with wealthy Gen-**X'ers**. In relatively short order, he opened several more galleries, most as franchises, with a few owned and operated by Godard himself.

The Vancouver gallery was a company store owned by Kelly Arnold and Paige Tessuk—a ploy by Godard to bypass cross-border complications—but, the backing money came from Vegas; the two gals ran the day-to-day business and made their money on a commission basis.

Godard's work sold like hot cakes in Vancouver. The gallery was located near Yaletown, an affluent collection of high-rise condos with sky-high prices paid by wealthy Gen X'ers (Millennials, now). Granville Street, having a rep for being punk, was the perfect location to attract the 30-50-year-olds, Godard's target audience.

However, Oh My Godard was a large gallery, maybe 1500 square feet [**~135 square meters**] and **Godard's collections didn't fill the wall space; so, he gave the gals enough** leeway to add a few local artists to the mix, providing there was no conflict—stylistic or otherwise—with his work. Thus, when I walked through their doors, I was in the right place at the right time.



Act Nonchalant, 2006

I showed Kelly and Paige some miniatures of my illustrations—prints that I was making on an Epson 2200 inkjet printer. They signed me up on the spot, noting that my pictures **looked good alongside Michael's** without competing with them.

It was true—the customers that **collected Godard's work also liked** mine. The incredible coincidence was **that Godard's business model—**selling limited editions of prints instead of originals—was exactly what I had in mind. The serendipity was another example of the Law of Attraction at work; I got what I was after, what I put my thoughts and energy into.

2005 – Epson 7600 – Phil Borges

As my Photoshop skills improved, so did inkjet printing technology.

Glazer's Camera in Seattle, where I shopped for photo supplies, was dedicating significantly more space to digital media. Traditional photo papers made by Kodak and Agfa were put on their back shelf, while inkjet—ahem, giclée—art papers made by Epson, Moab and others dominated the prime space.

Glazer's even moved their entire darkroom department from the main store into an annex, so that their new digital printing department would have prime floor space. Omega enlargers were out; Epson printers were in.

I cut my teeth on an Epson 1200 giclée printer at Scania in Sweden, outputting illustrations made for the Scania millennium calendar. I fell in love with it immediately. However, the 1200 had drawbacks: the prints it produced were not archival and they suffered from metamerism;⁹⁸ those drawbacks made selling Epson prints problematic; the **pictures had a "use by date"** that some claimed was as short as five years.

As soon as the new Epson 2200 came out, I got one to replace the 1200. Together with **Epson's new UltraChrome Inks**, the situation improved. Epson licked the metamerism bug-a-boo; but the inks were still not considered truly archival—they had a rated print life of 50 years, whereas museums and galleries wanted a print life of at least 100 years. However, the 50-year color fidelity claimed by Epson was good enough for me.



Center spreads of brochures for the Mexico (left) and Undercurrents Collections, 2006

To be considered a serious artist, one had to have a *body of work*. To generate such an *oeuvre* on an immediate basis, I adapted underwater and jungle scenes originally created for the Oceano show into canvases for sale at Oh My Godard. They became part of an experiment, to see what genres sold the best.

⁹⁸ Metamerism exhibits a reflective, metallic quality when viewed from oblique angles; more problematic, the type of viewing light also changed colors.

The Epson 2200 was a little giant; it fit on my desktop, yet it could make huge, 96 X 13-inch (33 X 244 cm) prints. A big print like that would sell for more than the cost of the printing machine. However, while the printers were cheap, the ink was expensive.

With representation by Oh My Godard in Vancouver, I needed to get serious about making **products to match or surpass the size and quality of Godard's work. When I heard that** Phil Borges was selling his Epson 7600 giclée printer, I decided to latch onto it. The 7600 it was a relatively new model.

Phil Borges was an icon of achievement in the Seattle pro-photo community. His business was a case history about how to make money selling giclée prints in fine arts galleries. His work, featuring rather straightforward portraits of the Masai peoples of the African Serengeti savannah (what I would call simple pictures) earned him enough to support a **massive studio on Seattle's exclusive Mercer Island**, and a brand-new Epson 9600 giclée printer.

Phil was upgrading, and so was I. Part of the reason I bought his printer, in particular, was because I wanted to meet him, to have a chat about how to sell pictures in galleries. Borges obliged me for a couple of hours; I was impressed with his set up; it was a lot like mine on Vashon Island, except his was a printing studio while mine was still set-up for AV show production.

I hauled Phil's Epson 7600 printer up to Vancouver and installed it in my studio (suite 405 at the Westport). As the Peppermill was a bygone, I had no reason to continue shooting nudes, or anything else for that matter; so, I converted the space into a frame shop.

My original plan was to print canvases and have them stretched by Fast Frames (999 Denman Street) a few blocks from my studio; but they turned out to be way too expensive; adding their costs made my pictures too pricey. Other frame shops **weren't much cheaper; that's how I came to learn all about canvas stretching and picture framing.**

I was operating on *Keystone* terms, traditionally used by wholesalers and retailers. Accordingly, the price of a good doubled each step of the way—if the producer charged one dollar, the wholesaler charged two dollars and the retailer four; each middleman got their piece of the pie. Thus, if I thought a piece should retail for \$1,000, I would sell it to the gallery for \$500, based on nominal production costs of \$250. Any cost that exceeded the \$250 target cut into my theoretical bottom line. Therefore, it was incumbent upon me to keep a handle on production costs and I decided to do my own framing.

As I saw it, a frame shop was basically a pedigreed carpentry shop; the highest skill required was cutting a perfect miter (45°). **That sounds easy, but it wasn't.**

After investing \$300 in a chop saw at Home Depot, I wasted a lot of framing material learning that there was a reason miter saws could cost much more than I paid. For help, I turned to Eliazar Adino, the Brazilian custodian at the Westport. Eliazar was more than just a handyman; he was a true carpenter who loved making complicated things. I got into cahoots with Eliazar when he helped me expand the loft in suite 405.

Eliazar installed an 80-tooth blade on my saw and tweaked the alignment; after that, it cut straight enough to carry on. (Later, he made curved, panoramic lightboxes for me, when I introduced backlit art at Oh My Godard.)

Making my own stretcher bars was a chore; but I had no choice when it came to the sizes I was trying to sell. For smaller pieces, I could get pre-fab stretcher bars in any size up to about 3 feet [91.4 cm]—but so could everyone else. Standard-size frames explained why so much pictorial art was the same size and format. However, I was out to break **paradigms; there weren't many panoramic pictures out there (yet). The super-wide** formats I used for AV shows were a new thing, for galleries, if not for screens.

Using Phil Borges' Epson 7600, I launched my career at Oh My Godard. I approached the whole gallery thing scientifically. My goal was to make things that had a reasonable chance of being sold. But, what kind of pictures would sell?

I marveled at Godard's ability to make big money hawking phantasmagorical cartoons that were selling like hot cakes. I wanted to find out more, about the sorts of subjects for which people were willing to plunk down their hard-earned money. I reckoned that IKEA would know a thing or two about what kind of pictures people buy—they sold thousands of pictures every day.

I went to IKEA's Coquitlam store early one Monday morning (a slow day) to get the answers to my questions. When I explained my intentions to the clerk in the art department —**that I was interested in producing work for IKEA (you never know...)**— the **young man was very forthcoming. There weren't any other customers and he enjoyed** answering my questions.

One thing leads to another; he started researching the answers to my questions on the company computer. Then, when another customer came in, he gave me access to the computer. (!) The data I pulled up was amazing; IKEA had the ability to forecast how many of each product picture would sell on a given day. (!!) The sales records told me what I needed to know—the top selling categories were landscapes, seascapes and florals; those became the three genres I *test-marketed* at the gallery.

The gallery gals gave me a 20 X 8-foot [6.1 X 2.4-meter] wall space to begin with; I filled it with three pictures from each of the three groups (landscapes, seascapes and florals), in three sizes and in three color ranges: red/yellow, green and blue. Big panoramas were between 9 and 12 feet wide [2.7 and 3.7 meters]; medium prints were 4 to 6 feet [1.2 X 1.8 meters]; small ones were 2 to 3 feet [0.6 X 0.9 meters]. To accommodate tourists, the panoramas were also sold rolled-up, in tubes, at a discount.

Over time, by changing pictures and sizes, I zoned-in to a collection of pictures which had sales consistency. Two pictures emerged as the money makers: a yellow/blue landscape of Vancouver called *Summer Sunset*, and a blue seascape of cairns at English Bay called *Inuktuk Orator*.

An interesting aspect of the gallery business was its similarity to the restaurant business. Both serve the public and both seem to be guided by a cosmic, herd mentality.

At my Fork Inn the Road restaurant, there were days when everyone wanted chicken, or pasta, or whatever. Likewise, at Oh My Godard, two copies of one particular picture would suddenly sell, after being overlooked for months.

Those were the heydays of my career as a fine artist; my good fortune endured two more tumultuous years. Sales picked up in 2006, after Michael Godard made an in-person appearance at the gallery. Besides autographing his artworks (providing a value enhancing second, *real* signature), Godard put on quite a show. Hundreds of young **professionals turned up for the event. The big attraction was watching Michael draw “one-minute wonders” on 16 X 16 inch [40 X 40 cm] pre-stretched canvases; they sold for \$500 each, to raise money for BC Children’s Hospital.**

It was an amazing to watch Godard—the tattooed cartoonist, dressed like a Hell’s Angel, was truly a rock-star artist. The show featured a Harley Davidson motorcycle that Godard painted, with his trade mark olive characters dressed as bikers.

Godard’s show was a PR coup. Although I stayed in the background, I was on hand that night fielding inquiries about my own work (which caught a lot of attention).

Having sold several of my first pieces, the gallery expanded their display of my work. Now, in addition to the initial wall space, I had an entire back corner of the gallery to show a new line of glowing *Nite Lites* pictures, illuminated by UV light. The UV pictures got a lot of attention, but not many sales. A short time later I installed a third display, of light-box pictures. Eliazar Adino built a series of four curved, panoramic light boxes; each was 4-foot wide [122 cm], 12-inches [30.48-cm] deep and 12-inches [30.48-cm] high. The curvature made them special.



Light box display in Vashon bedroom reveals different lighting modes, 2009



The four panoramic light-box scenes included *Summer Sunset* (top), *Summer Moon* (a cityscape of Victoria, BC), *Strawberry Hat Jellies* (from the Oceano show) and *Lupin Lions* (a landscape of the famous twin peaks that are part of the mountain backdrop that makes Vancouver spectacular).



The four panoramic light boxes were slick and modern looking, made of black MDF with timber edging. Each featured a backlit Laser-Jet transparency made by ABC Photocolour Labs (photographic film thrice exposed by a scanning laser filtered for red, green and blue).

There were two display settings: a bright one for daylight hours (left, top), illuminated by warm fluorescent lights, and a low, night-light level, lit by bluish, LED Xmas lights (left bottom).

A fifth, extra-large lightbox, 24 X 96 inches (61 X 244 cm) was placed in the front window of the gallery, displaying *Inuktuk Astronomers*; that was one of the two biggest pieces that I assembled at *Studio 405* in Vancouver (shown at left on display at my Vashon studio in 2013).

The biggest piece I ever made at the Westport was a 144 X 36-inch (366 X 91.5 cm) canvas of *Summer Sunset*; that piece was so big that I ended up stretching the canvas in the Westport commons, in the middle of the night.

That giant print of *Summer Sunset* was on display the **night of Michael's show; I was flattered when Godard himself made it a point to compliment me on the quality and style of my work.**

Left: *Impaired Vision*, canvas. Right: *Inuktuk Astronomers*, light box.

I sold a dozen and a half pieces in the first six months at Oh My Godard, that represented **perhaps 15% of the gallery's overall sales. Despite those relatively brisk sales, I wasn't making any money because I wasn't being paid my cut.**

I had generously conceded to paying the gallery a 50% commission on consignment sales (the range is traditionally a 60/40 to 70/30 split, with the artist getting the larger amount); even more generously, I gave them a pass when the first payment due dates came and went.

The gals claimed to be having difficulty working out accounting procedures with the Godard organization in Las Vegas. I (foolishly) believed them—I knew what it was like to start up a new business, the importance of cash flow and vendor credits. Mostly, I liked seeing my work on prominent display in downtown Vancouver and, as previously noted, no other gallery was interested in my work.

So, I put up with not being paid.

2000s | Illustrations | Plates N^{os} 1-70

The illustrations that follow were created over a span of roughly four years: 2005-2009. I debated but decided not to put each on a separate page. The panoramic pictures were problematic—too small when confined to a single page; but annoyingly split when presented in two-page spreads.

*Plate N^o 1: The Bubble Memory Collection was the result of Pamela Swanson's **production** of my Skies Collection, an internal production resource. She assembled a couple of hundred skies for me, many of them multi-frame panoramas, from images captured primarily in Africa. I had big plans for this collection; bubbles imply many different kinds of messages. However, the series was begun too late in the game and was never populated with more than four illustrations. Top down, left to right: Illuminated Transmigration, Ray of Hope, Bubble and Broken Circle.*

*Plates N^{os} 2 to 5: John Emms' **remarkable** microscopic pictures of crystals, shot with polarized light, were the basis of the Crystal Collection. I reckoned the abstract images would appeal to corporate sensibilities. It was made well after the Vancouver gallery failed; during the time I was running Vashon Island Imaging. Had life allowed, I planned to peddle the Crystal Collection to a corporate-art leasing **agent**. **There's plenty of money** to be made renting office art (and furniture). My buddy Allan Seiden once sold a few hundred printed reproductions from his archive of Hawaiian art, to decorate the walls of a Waikiki hotel. He made a tidy bundle on that deal; I fairly drooled when I heard the amount and reckoned, since I had an art-printing company, hotels and corporate offices were logical target for the Crystal and Bubble Memory Collections. The individual works in the Crystal Collection are identified by number instead of name.*

Plate N^o 2 (top down, left to right): #8, #5 and #4. .

Plate N^o 3: #1, #2, #6 and #7.

Plate N^o 4: #9 (red), #9 (blue) and #10.

Plate N^o 5: #3

*Plates N^{os} 6 & 7: The India Collection **is described sufficiently in the text**. **I'll add that, when I made the trip to India for Pandey's wedding**, in 2007, I was deep into illustration work. **I didn't do straight pictures anymore. Pure photography** was out; photo-assembly was in. Thus, many of the scenes in the collection were preconceived on site, whereupon I went about shooting all the elements needed—more than a hundred in the case of Kashmir Dream and Golden Temple Pilgrims—to assemble each illustration.*

Plate N^o 6: (top to bottom, left to right) Golden Temple Pilgrims, Taj Reflections, Indian Bride, Golden Temple Twilight.

Plate N^o 7: Kashmir Dream, Golden Temple Sunset, Shikara Sunset, Temple Towers, Ganesha Rose, Kashmir Moon.

Plate N°8: Giving and Receiving is a pair, in three parts. That is, two of them were to flank the portals of Quantum Audio Visual's **pretentious new HQ building, in Reno, Nevada**. The idea was a pair entitled, Giving and Receiving, metaphors for what communications—the *raison d'être* for anything audiovisual—is all about.

I made the first version of Giving before going to Africa. The energy-giving **"antenna" is a Swedish-glass egg sitting top a classic column** photographed at the American Museum of Natural History. At the base of the column are strange-looking flowers that were more architectural art in Portland, Oregon. The nude observer is Sol Diaz.

When I got back from the Kilimanjaro adventure, with pictures of melting glaciers and lunar-looking volcanic caldera cones, I made a new version of Giving. It features a giant antenna emerging from the Kilimanjaro caldera and broadcasting energy. The antenna, in real life, was a concrete column at the entrance to a boutique hotel on West 48th Street, in New York. Receiving is a complicated kluge of many disparate elements. The crown **supporting the bubble was a municipal objet d'art at an intersection in Portland, Oregon; I** nearly got ticketed for obstructing traffic when I shot it. The bubble sits atop the walls of an extinct volcano (Diamond Head, Honolulu). The waterfall is a collage of three, mostly Multnomah Falls, Oregon. And the flowers were all photographed on Vashon Island.

Plate N° 9: Glass Eye features Jennifer Caldwell as an acrobat seen through a actual glass eye from the Swedish glass works, Orefors. Caldwell is nude; the patterns—shot at the Peppermill Casino—were projected onto her. The curtains were in my flat (Westport studio 405). Through the curtains are seen a flock of flamingos crossing Celestun, Yucatan. I just told you where the flowers came from. Rainbow Rider was made for a Peppermill Casino **restaurant menu cover. It's 100% conceptual, that is, made in Photoshop, except for the bird**, which came from my picture archive. 777 | My Lucky Day was shot at the Peppermill Casino for a show celebrating their neon art. Triple seven is also the date on which Pamela Swanson and I met. This picture was made as a gift to Pam, and dedicated to her. Within Reach has a hunter-hunted theme. The main attraction is the spider web, which I painstakingly separated from a shot taken on my Vashon porch one summer sunset. Two other spider-web illustrations were made; the amount of work necessary to isolate spider webs is hard to believe. I did it to be incredible.

Plates N°s 10 & 11: (top down) Cosmic Wave was made on spec for an ultra-hip Vancouver fashion retailer called Aritzia. It was to decorate the walls of their flagship store, on Robson Street—a super-long panorama (only a portion is shown here). My work was turned down for a comic book, Flash Gordon style. Guess I was already too old. Patterns of Life was shot at the Peppermill Casino for the neon-art prelude to the Oceano show. I did it by using slow shutter speeds, around one-second long, while panning the camera across neon signs and artwork. The dashed lines reveal alternating-current (AC) power, which pulses sixty times per second (in North America). Sunrise Strip was made for the **developer of Panorama Towers, in Las Vegas, to show the condo towers' central location on The Strip**. Billiards Sunset was put together for a bowling alley. Seriously. Think about it: the wall space above all lanes was an extremely wide panorama. The background of the scene is composed of elements shot at Burning Man. The billiard balls were shot in Vancouver; getting them to look like they were made of glass was a royal pain in the arse.

Plate N°12: Icy Oasis was shot in Yellowstone National Park, on a 2003 photo trip there with my lifelong friend, Allan Seiden; he was attending a travel-**writers' conference**; **I tagged along**; it was a chance to see an old friend and get some good stock photos. That was one of the three coldest days of my life. Cleavage In Space / Burning Man was an **assembly of an actual Burning Man objet d'art into a background shot at Pyramid Lake, Nevada**. Cistern Dancers combines a nude of Sol Diaz, shot with UV light, with a BG shot of an **art-glass objet d'art hanging in an Istanbul art museum occupying a former cistern that dates back to the Middle Ages**.

Plate N°13: Repent is an assembly of elements shot at Burning Man. Points of Departure is a collage of **Vashon Island elements: the flowers are from my garden; the "dinosaur" was a metal objet d'art belonging to a neighbor; Mount Ranier** was shot from the south end of Maury Island. The subject of the picture, unseen by most, is the exoskeletal remains of a dragon fly's **underwater incarnation, clinging to the stalk of a hollyhock**. Worlds Within Worlds combines underwater scenes of jellyfish with a step-and-repeat image of a glass **enclosure for a Jacob's Ladder** (a lightning-generator made famous in the original Frankenstein movies) and an art-glass egg made by Susan Bates.



Plate N°14: Ripped Flag should rightfully be in the Early Works Collection; it goes way back to my beginnings. The original black-and-white shot was made on Block Island, in 1967, as part of at The Sea Chest essay. [See, 1960s | Portfolio | The Sea Chest.] It was **released as a Pixie in 1976, the year of America's Bicentennial**. I like the original (above) better than the hyped-up, starry version made in 2005.

Plate N°14: The steamy stream and fishermen in Frosty Moon were shot near Willow Creek, Montana on the northern border of Yellowstone National Park. That foreground was kluged with a picture of the Teton Mountains shot northeast of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and dressed up with my favorite eagle and Canadian geese.

Plate N°15: The full moon in May is called the Flower Moon; that seemed like a better name than Purple Iris. **That's Mount Washington in the BG; the totem pole** was shot in Victoria, B.C.; the rhododendrons were at the Vashon studio. This was the infamous picture that my Epson 9800 and 9880 printers could not handle; the one that was eventually replaced with a model 9900 **when Epson couldn't fix the others.**

Plates N°s 16 to 19: The Inuktuk Collection was made for the Godard gallery; they were the first of my fine arts illustrations. The piles of balanced stones were shot along the **rocky shoreline of Vancouver's Stanley Park**, where various artists display their skills for tourists and locals strolling along the sea wall.

Plate N°16: Inuktuk Orators is comprised of more than 100 individual elements. The moonlit sea was shot at Wreck Beach. Beneath it, Inuktuk Imitators, was one of the last of the series; it features balanced rocks from more than one location and a cormorant shot on Vashon Island. At the bottom of that page, Inuktuk Observers was the first of the series.

Plate N°17: Inuktuk Migrations was the last of the series and the most imaginative. Inuktuk Apostle and Inuktuk Astronomers reflect my fascination with the Aurora Borealis, which is difficult to draw or paint, even with light.

Plate N°18: Out of the Blue is a personal favorite, perhaps because it required so much work to isolate the ship from its original BG (it was shot in the fog, off Block Island); that took almost four days. The foreground is taken from Inuktuk Orators.

Plate N°19: Inuktuk Sentinels was made to round-out the collection with a piece glorifying a single balanced rock.

Plates N°s 20 to 27: The Jamaica Collection was made for the Montego Bay Restaurant at the Peppermill Casino in Wendover, Nevada. The scenes were shot during a week-long photo blitz across the island of Jamaica.

Although they look like simple snapshots, each of the scenes in the Jamaica Collection was **an assembly of multiple elements. Stylistically, I didn't stray too far from the natural** looking, as the idea was for Montego Bay Restaurant patrons to recognize places they may have been, in Jamaica.

In addition to restaurant murals, the shots were used in the Peppermill's Oceano show.

Plate N°20 (top to bottom, left to right): Seaside Palapa, Dragon Bay, Boston Beach and Fandango.

*Note: Fandango was an exceptionally long panorama meant to wrap around the bar of the Fandango Casino in Reno, Nevada. The developer was architect Pete Wilday, who also designed the Peppermill Casino. From the money he made there, he bought the second-rate Fandango and renovating the casino. His idea was to have a tropical mural that extended around all the walls, or at least most of them. He asked me to come up with something. It just so happened I had a super-wide panorama of Jamaica made to scroll across the screen as part of the Oceano show. Wilday loved the panorama but was put off by the printing and installation costs. Dean Rossi said that was just as well; that Peppermill owner Bill Paginetti **wouldn't be please at my using material he paid to have produced decorating a competitor's casino; he thought Wilday was a traitor.***

Plate N°21: Montego Bay Vista, Banana Trees, Yellow Hibiscus and Fandango.

Plate N°22: Marie Brae River Rafting, Buff Bay River and Breadfruit Tree.

Plate N°23: Bougainvillea Butterfly and Montego Bay Valley.

Plate N°24: Coral Hibiscus, Bamboo Art and Red Hibiscus.

Plate N°25: Tropical Hat, Batik Beachware and Mayfield Falls.

Plates N°s 26 & 27: Rick's Café Sunset (top) and Seascape Sunset .

Plates N°s 28 to 31: The Mediterranean Collection features scenics shot during trips to Greece and Turkey, with Anna Raus, and a subsequent sailing trip through the Ionian Sea with John Connolly.

Plate N°28 (top down, left to right): Paxos Sunrise, Hagia Sophia Mosque, Blue Mosque Ceiling #2, Blue Mosque Ceiling and Sophia Rosetta.

Plate N°29: Santorini Sunset, Turkish Lamps and Santorini Moonrise.

Plate N°30: Lindos Moonrise, Lindos Vista, Rhodes Harbour and Acropolis Moonrise.

Plate N°31: Rhodes Vista and Volcano View Hotel

Plates N°s 32 to 39: The Mexico Collection was put together from images shot across the Yucatan Peninsula and Belize, in 2003. In Mexico, my guide was Trudy Woodcock of Illuminado Tours. In Belize, I joined the crew of a catamaran for a week-long voyage through the cays and up the Rio Dulce River, in Guatemala.

Plate N°32: Uxmal Night.

Plate N°33: Chichenitza Storm and Cresh of Thunder [originally Madonna House].

Plate N°34: Sunset Runner, In the Pink, Frigate Birds and Tulum Sunrise.

Plate N°35: Playa Del Carmen and Tulum Storm.

Plates N^{os} 36 & 37: Flamingo Sunset and Baby Fish.

Plate N^o 38: Hunters Cay, Cavern Mirror Pool and Burning Cane Fields.

Plate N^o 39: Fruit Lady.

Plates N^{os} 40 to 45: The Undercurrents Collection was put together for the Peppermill Casino's Oceano show, in 2003. As those scenes were ready to go, this was one of the first three collections exhibited at the Oh My Godard gallery, in 2005.

The images to create these illustrations were shot at West Coast aquaria including Birch Aquarium at the Scripps Oceanographic Institute in San Diego, California; the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport; Monterey Bay Aquarium, also in California, and the Vancouver Aquarium.

Each scene is a composite of many elements, made to look photo-realistic but with enough vibrant coloration to survive video projection (in the Oceano show).

Plate N^o 40 (top down): Moon Jellies (Night), Moon Jellies (Day), Flower Hat Jellies, Sea Nettle Jellies and Champignon Jellies.

Plate N^o 41: Leafy Dragon Fish, Scorpion Fish and Calamari Baby.

Plate N^o 42: Aquarium and Red Coral Fish.

Plate N^o 43: Lion Fish.

Plate N^o 44: Act Nonchalant.

Plate N^o 45: Big Blue Fish, Clown Fish, Tube Anemone #1 and River of Life.

Plates N^{os} 46 to 55: The Vancouver Collection was created for the Oh My Godard gallery, between 2005 and 2007.

Plate N^o 46: Vancouver Sunset, Blue Moon | English Bay Fireworks and Twilite Time.

Plate N^o 47: Thin Ice features a breaching gray whale, shot by Dona (Lakin, Plink) Tracy, and a beluga whale shot at the Vancouver Aquarium, with snow-capped Lions Mountain, North Vancouver.

Plate N^o 48: Southern Migration and Whistler Moon.

Plate N^o 49: Whistler Sunset and Whistler Springtime (a duet).

Plate N^o 50: Mountain Lions and Star Gazer | Lions Mountain.

Plate N^o 51: Up the Creek | Yaletown.

Plate N°52: Twilite Time 180, Lupin Lions, Last Light at Lake Alta and Fox Glove Falls.

Plate N°53: Magic Moon | Yaletown.

Plate N°54: Driftwood Rudolph.

Plate N°55: Inukshuk Aurora.

Plates N°56 & 57: The Vancouver Island Collection. Top down and left to right: Summer Moon | Victoria, Whale of a Night, Herons Cove | Nanoose Bay, Passing Storm, Salt Spring Sunset and Idol Island.

Plates N°58 to 70: The Vashon Island Collection became a bit of a catch-all grouping that included a lot of nature scenes, many of them shot around the pond at my studio. Almost none of these scenes ever hung in galleries; most were made late in the game, just before the jig was up. Some of them were adapted for Baby Bird Books.

Plate N°58: Olympic Mountains Vista | Puget Sound, Vashon Christmas Tree.

Plate N°59: Seattle Sunset Celebration, Summer Serendipity.

Plate N°60: Pond Politics.

Plate N°61: Winter Green and Between Friends.

Plate N°62: Beginning of The End.

Plate N°63: Beginning of The End #2 and Christmas Birds.

Plate N°64: Evening Light | Point Robinson.

Plate N°65: Fallen Leaves, Fallen Leaf and Fall Leaves.

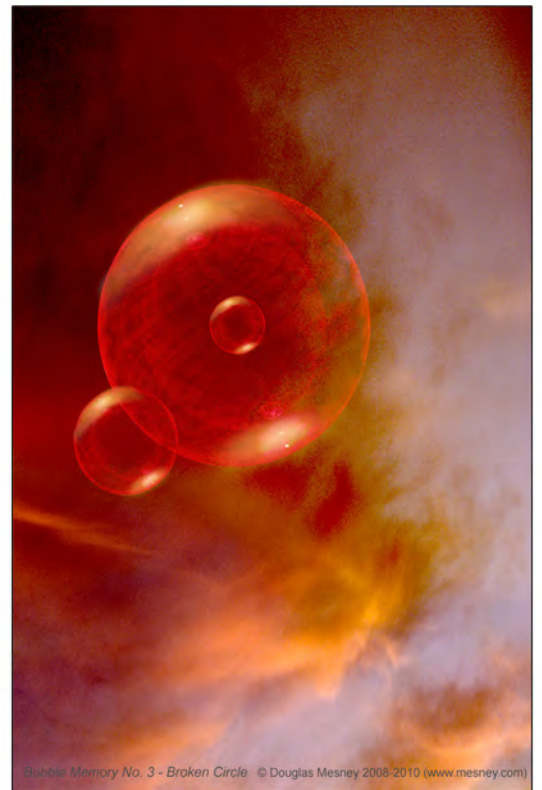
Plate N°66: Lavender Moon and University of Washington.

Plate N°67: Water Lilies and Pond Politics #2.

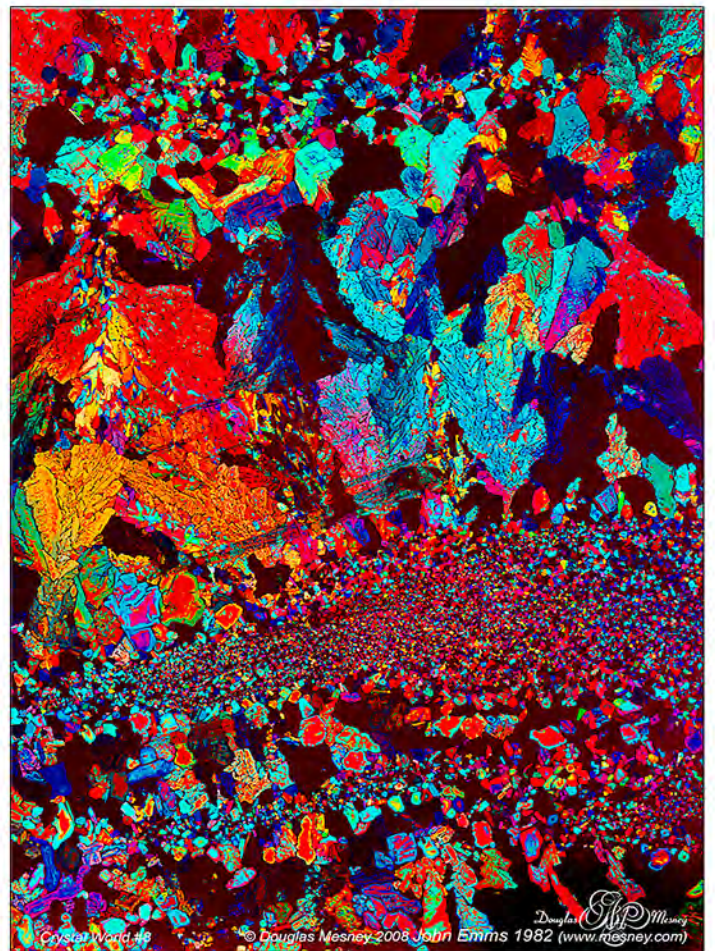
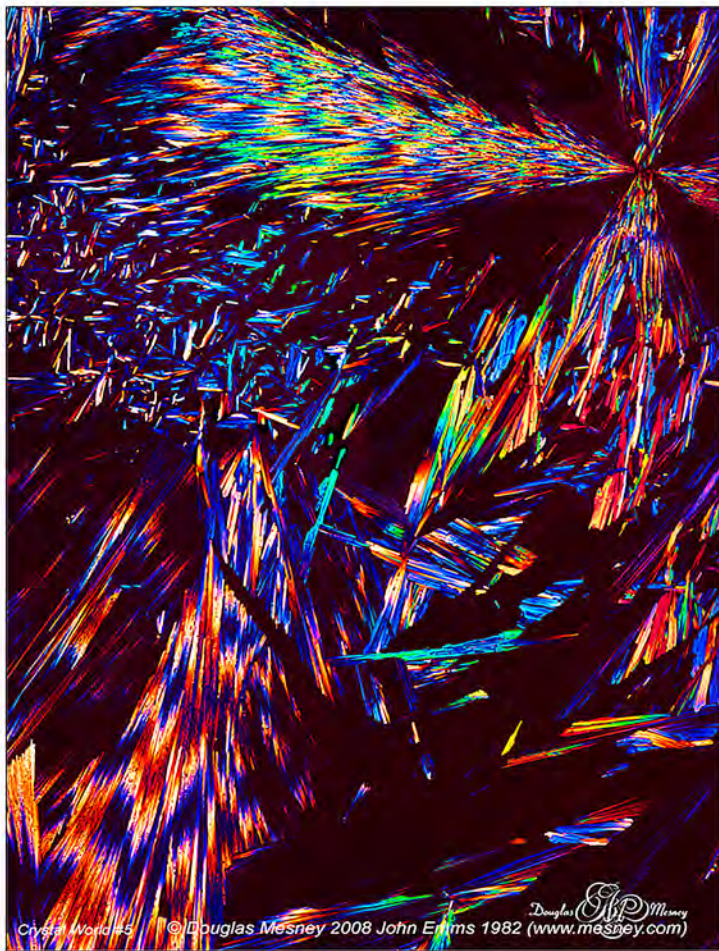
Plate N°68 (top down, left to right): Follow Your Heart, Seattle Sunset, Vashon Snow (the Vashon Studio) and White Iris.

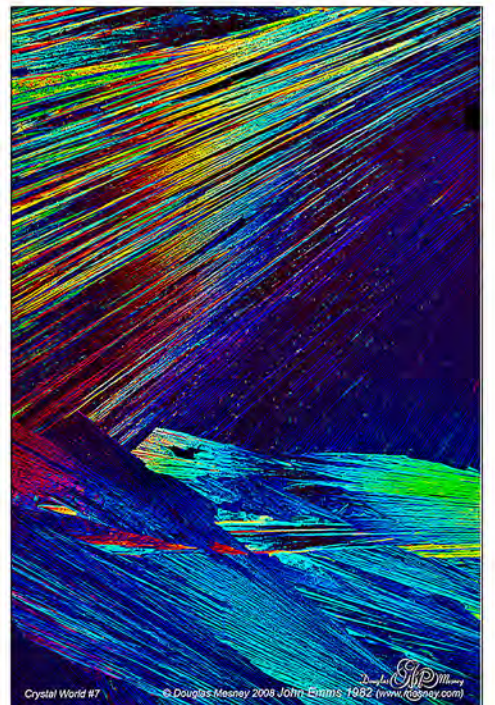
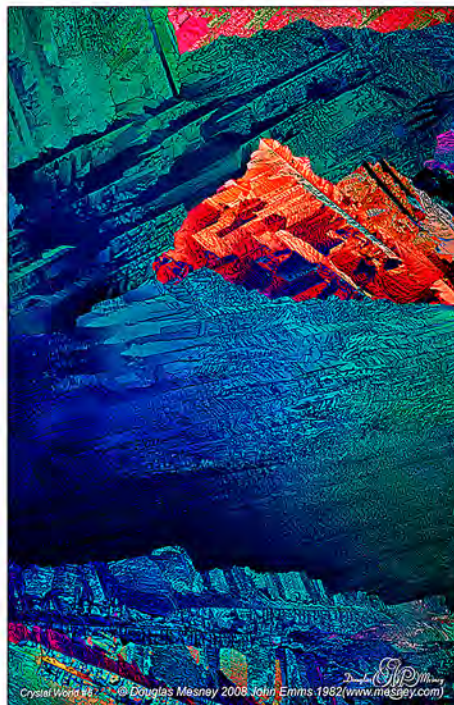
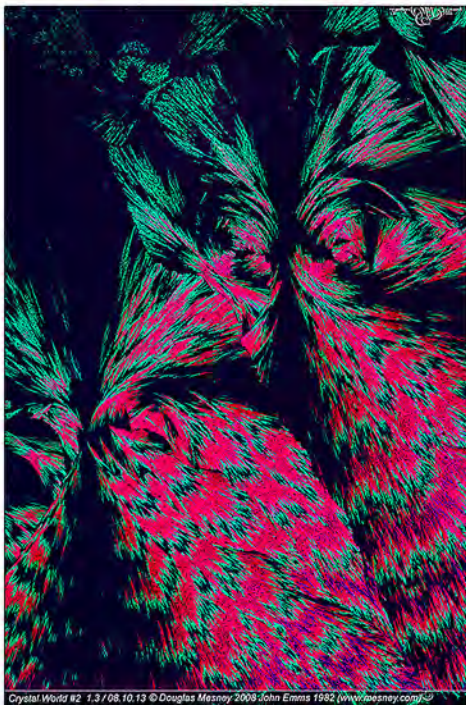
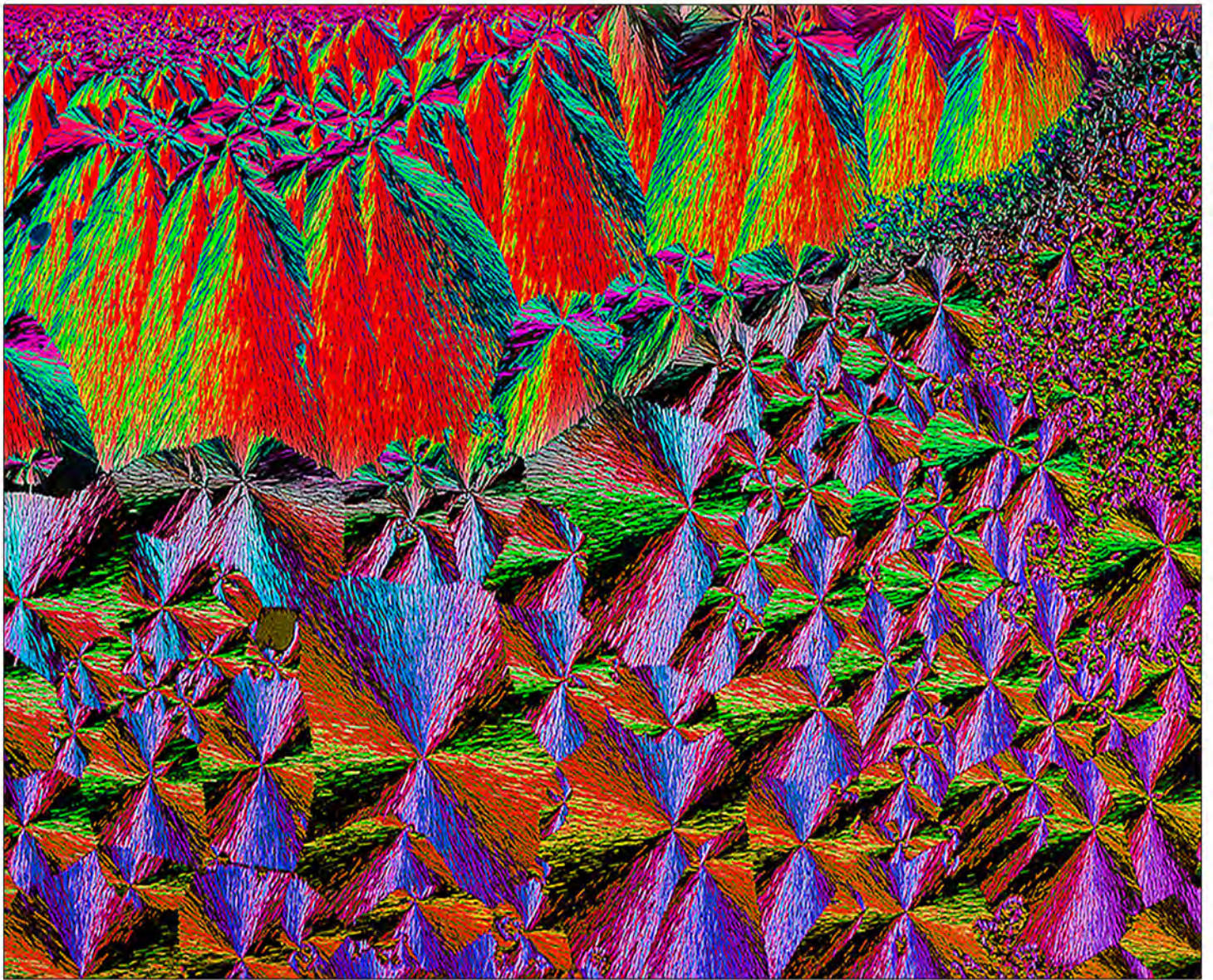
Plate N°69: To and Fro | Vashon Ferry

Plate N°70: Kite Day | Point Robinson.



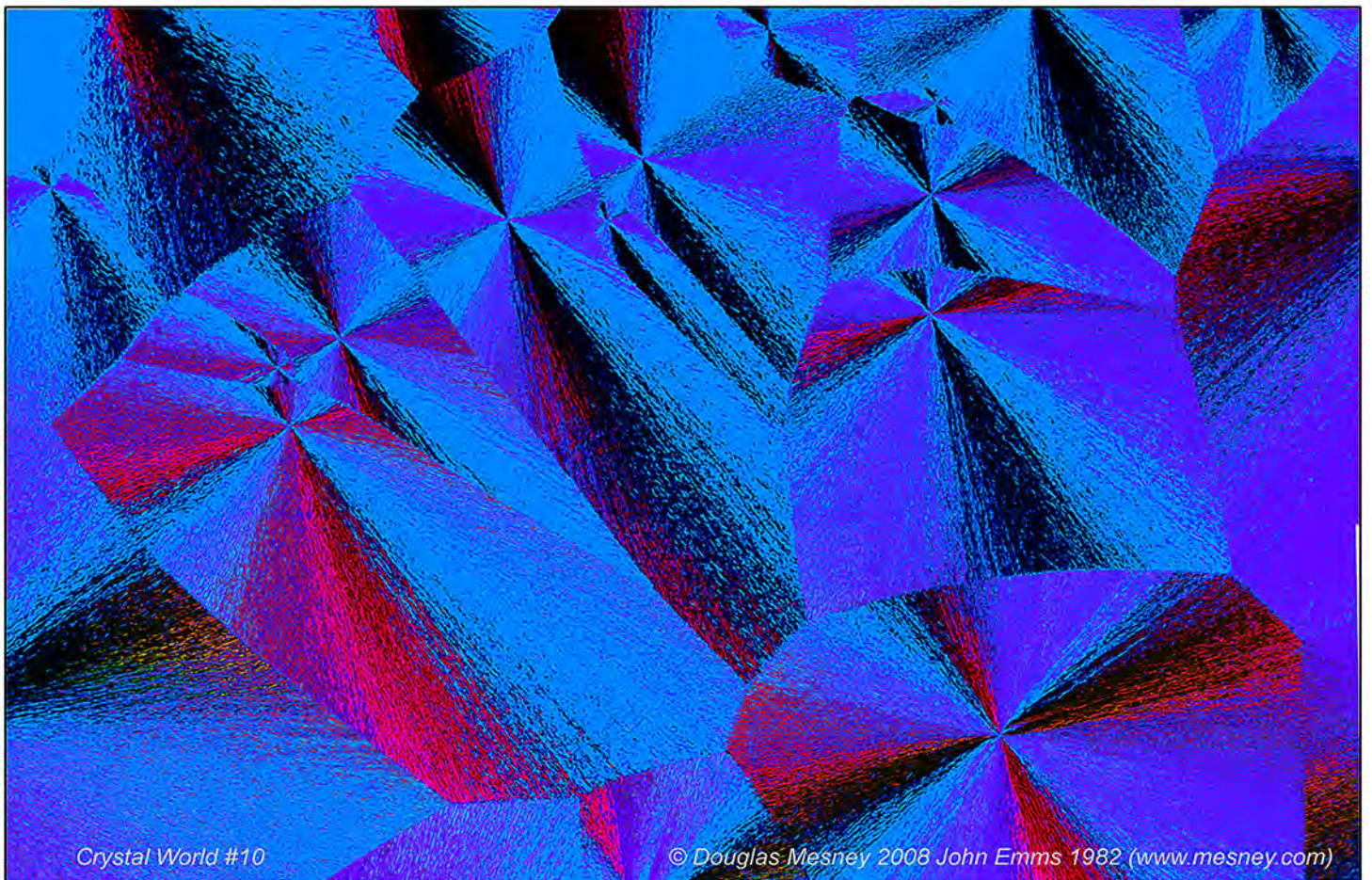
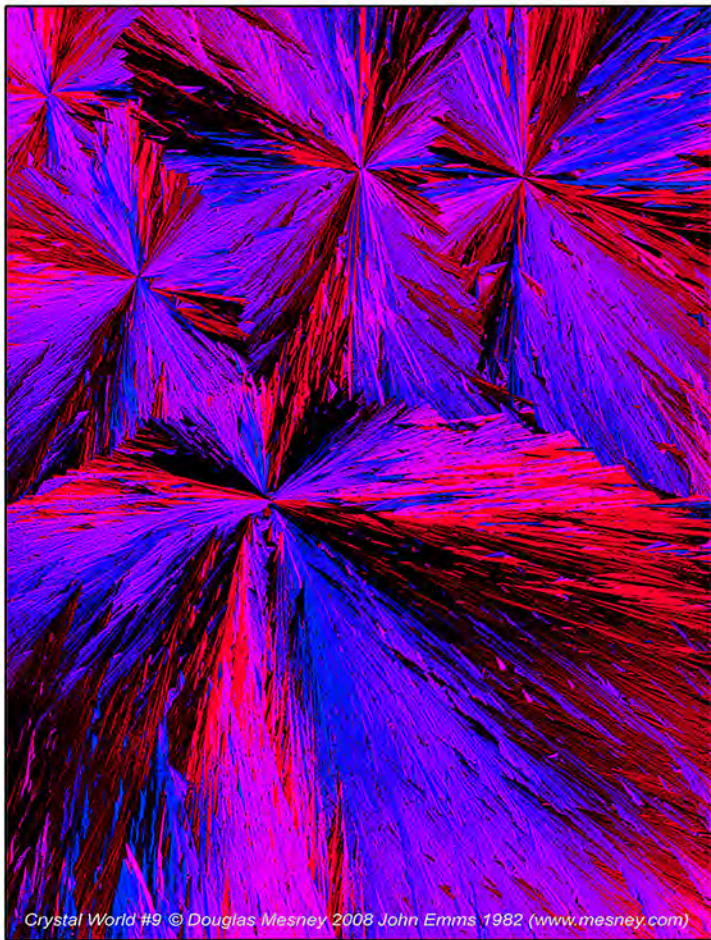
2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 1
Bubble Memory Collection | 2007

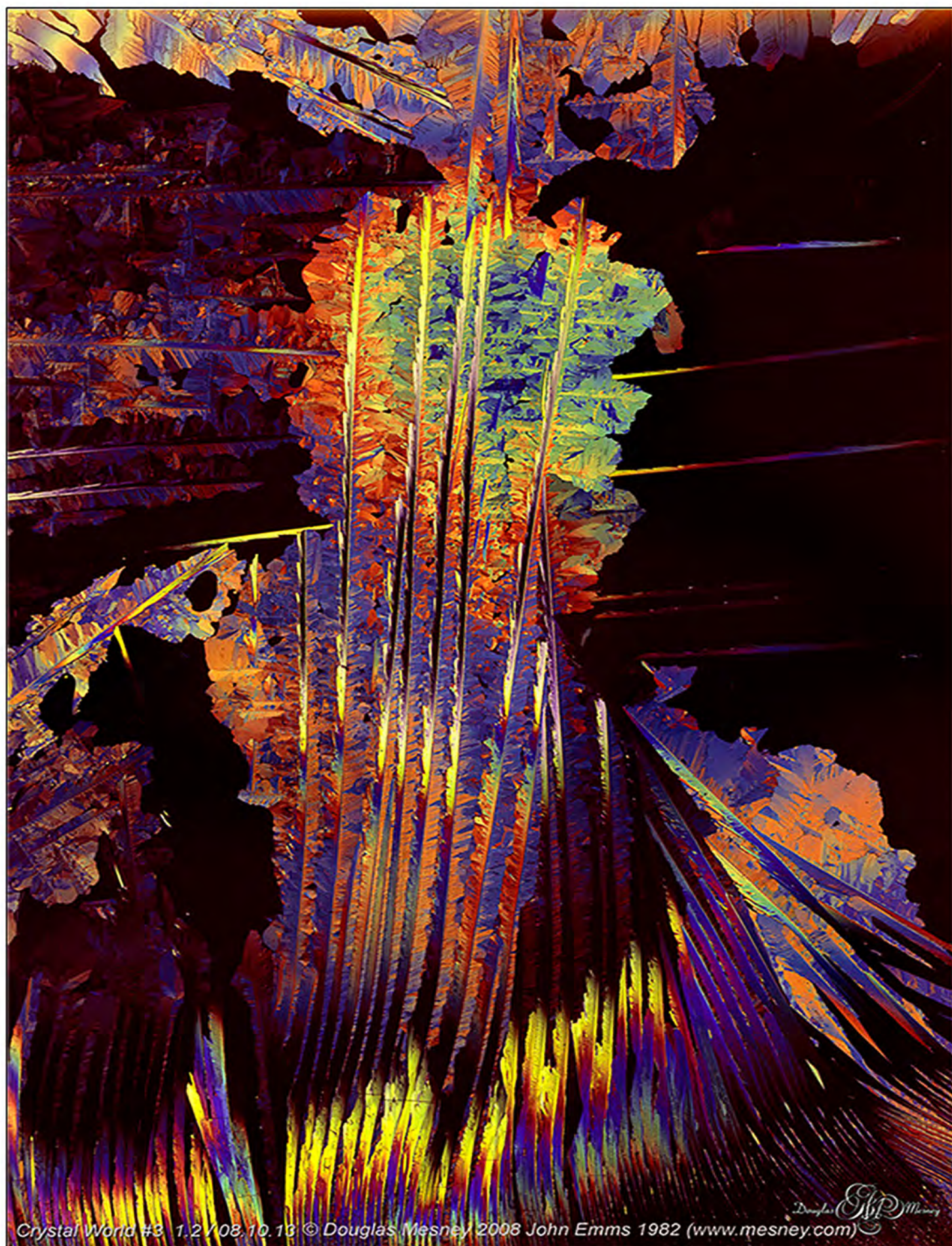




2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 3

Crystal Collection | 2007 | John Emms

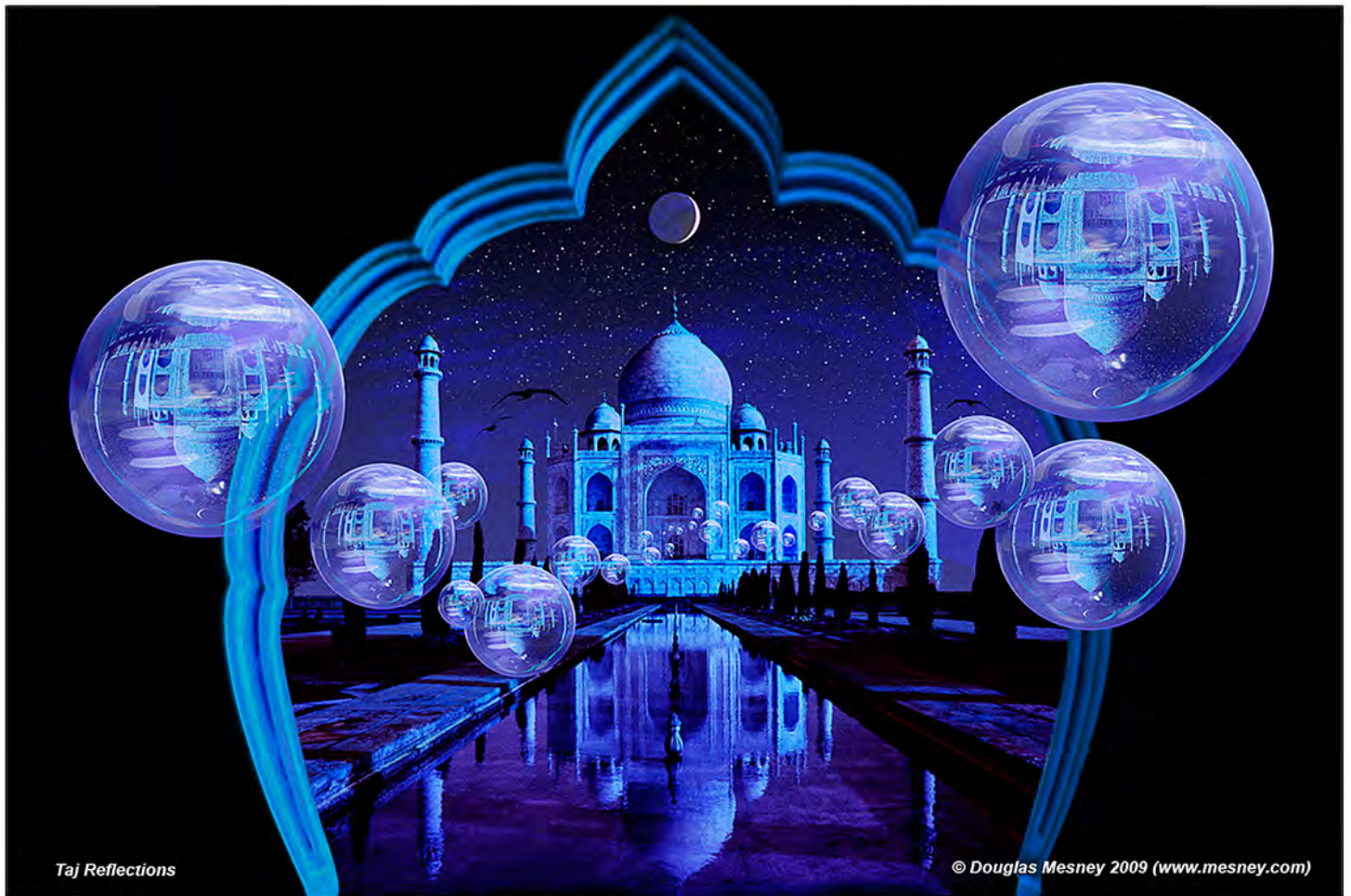


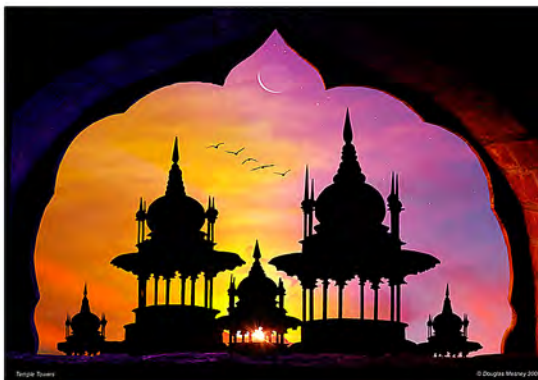
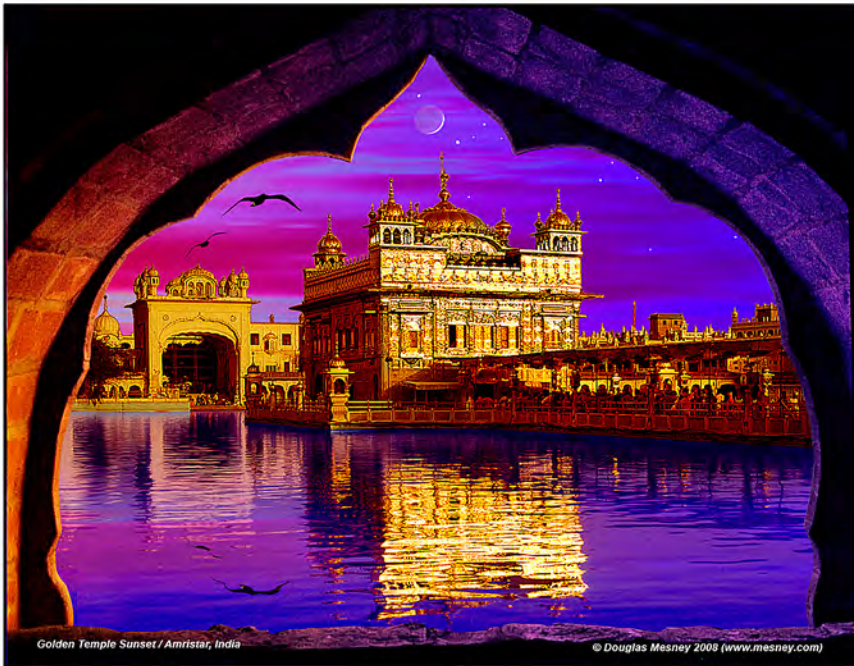


Crystal World #3 1.2/08.10.13 © Douglas Mesney 2008 John Emms 1982 (www.mesney.com)

2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 5

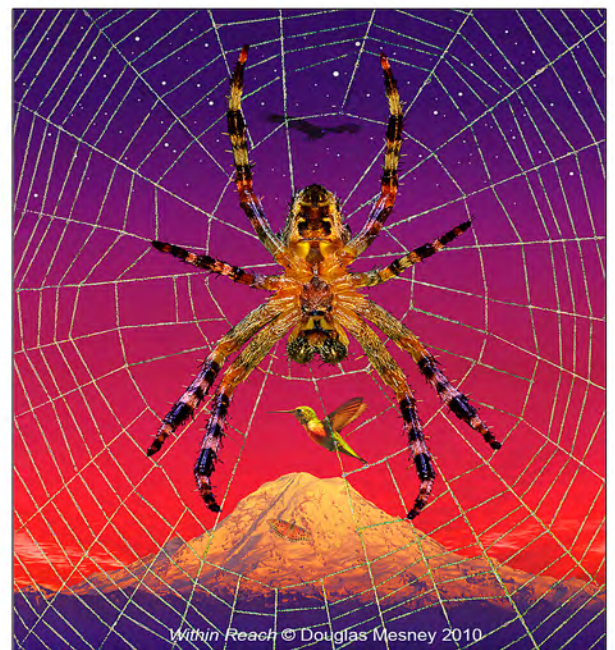
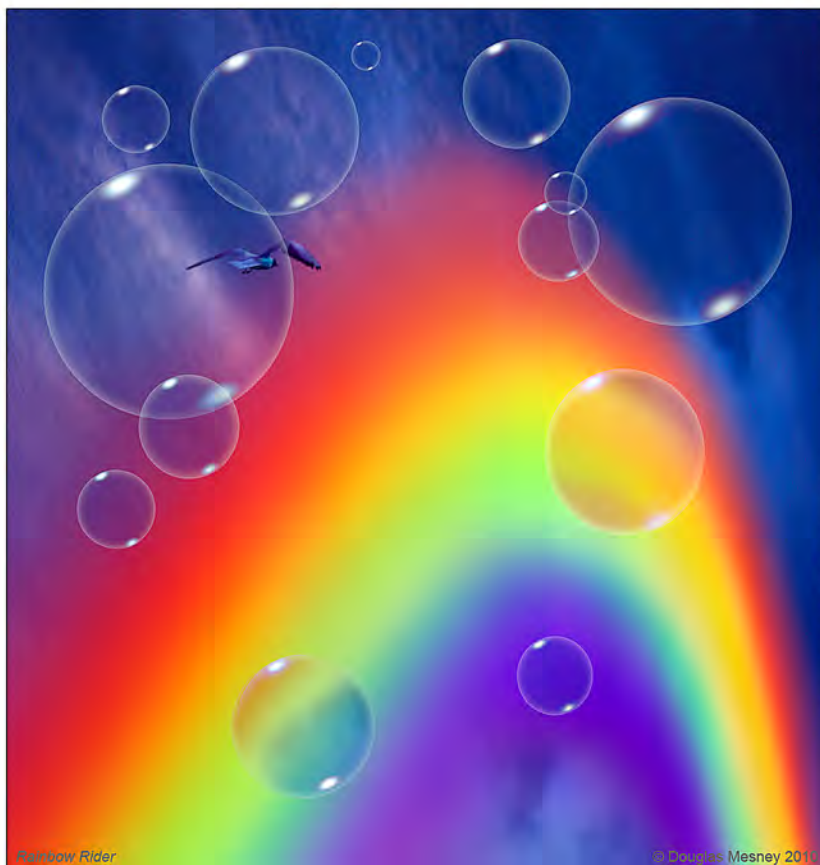
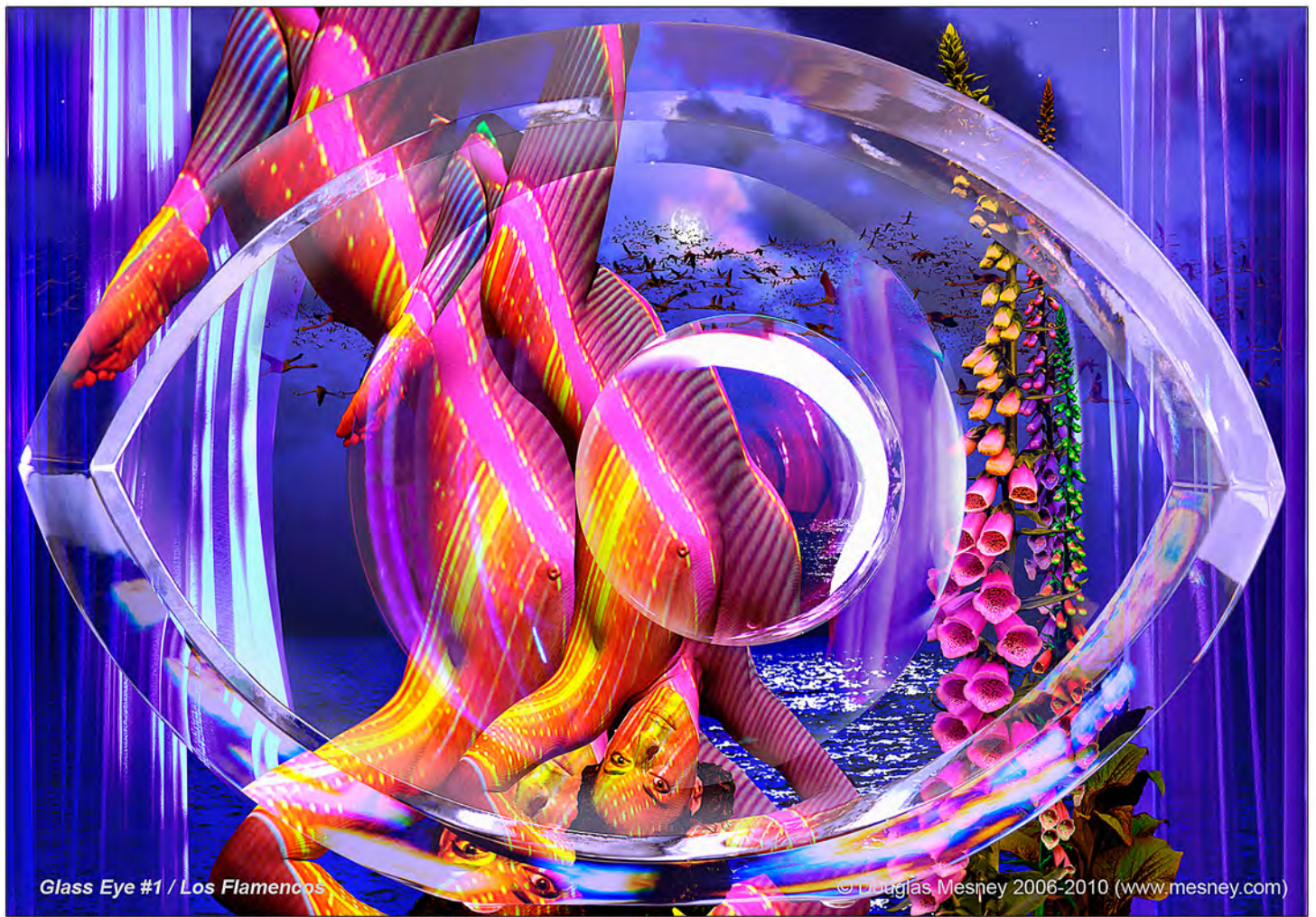
Crystal Collection | 2007 | John Emms

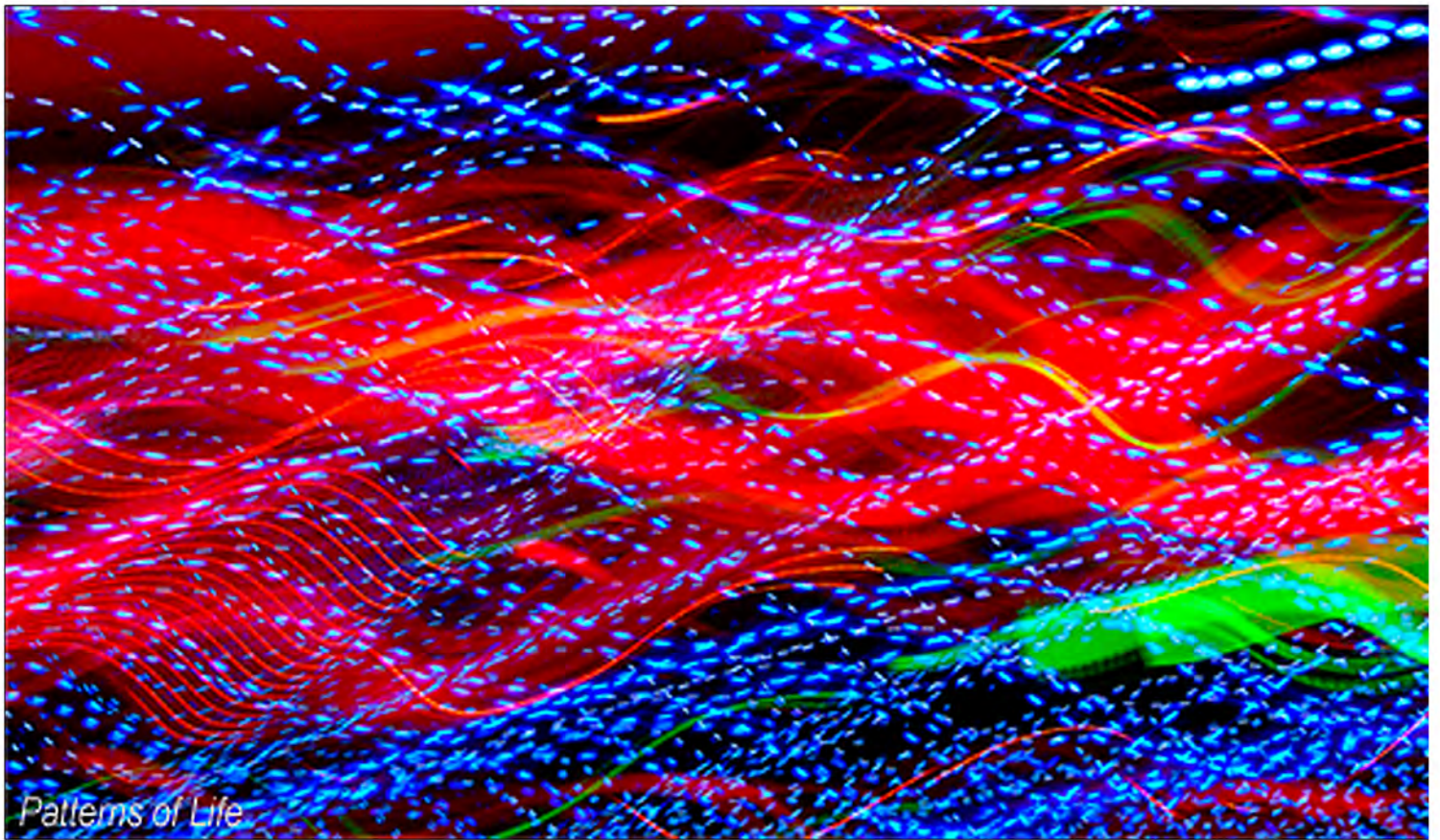


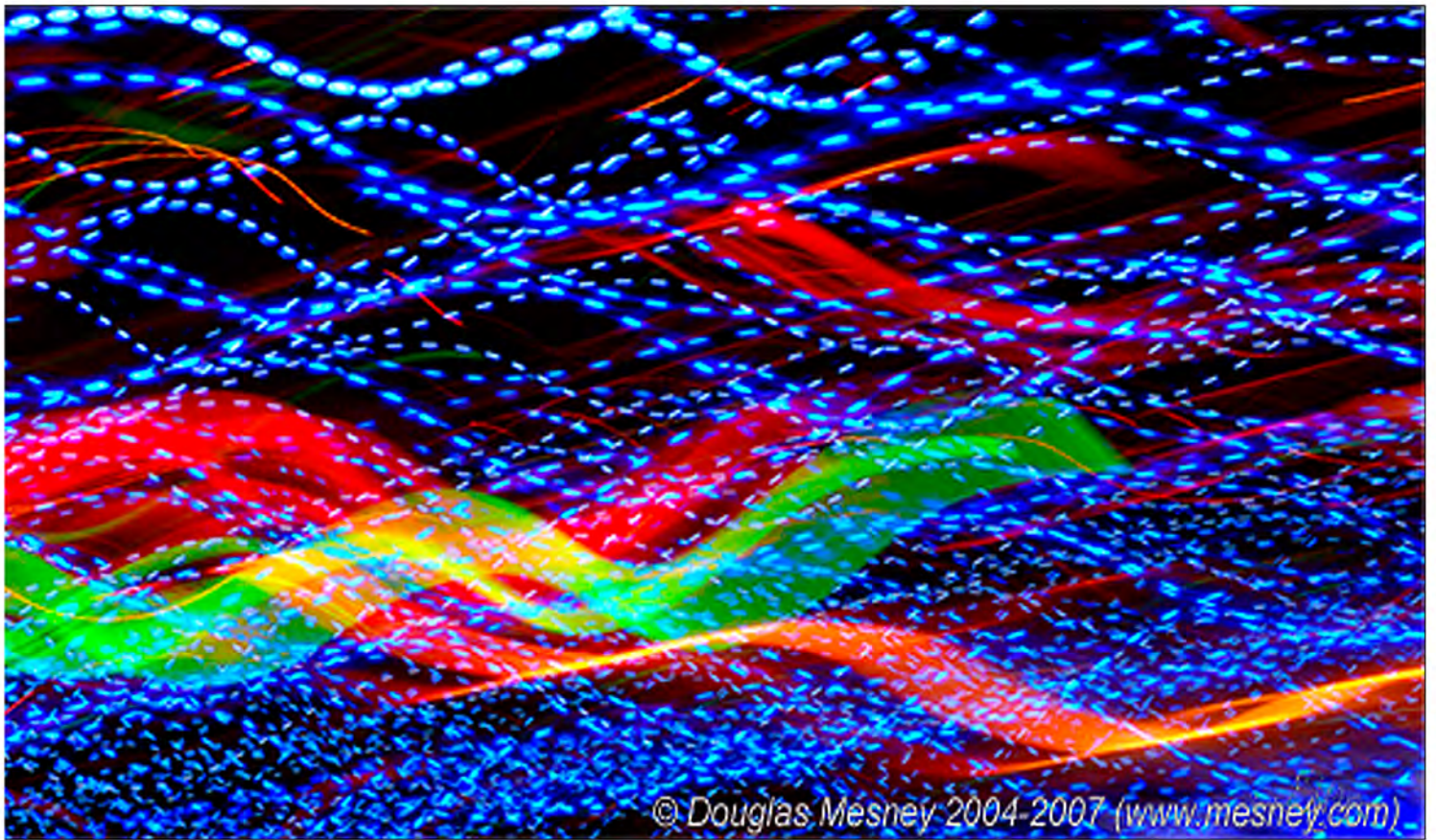


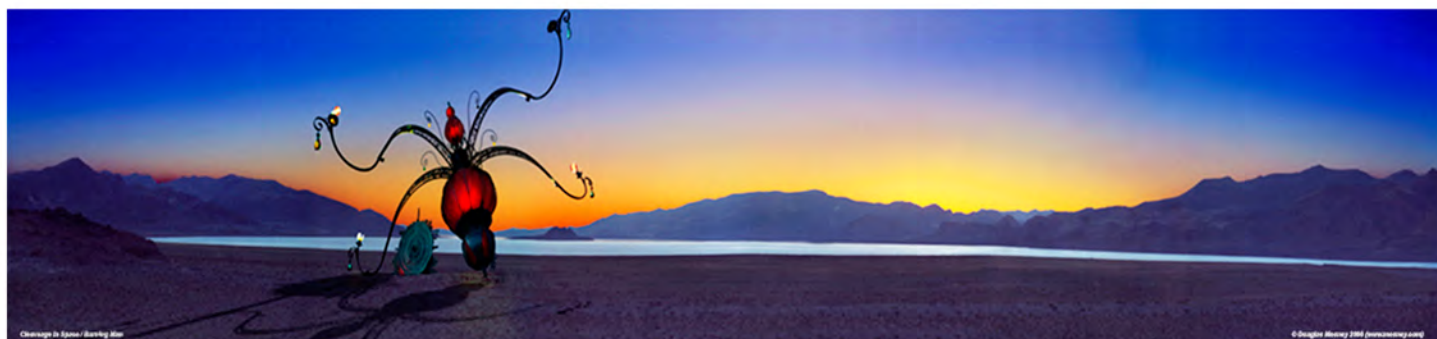


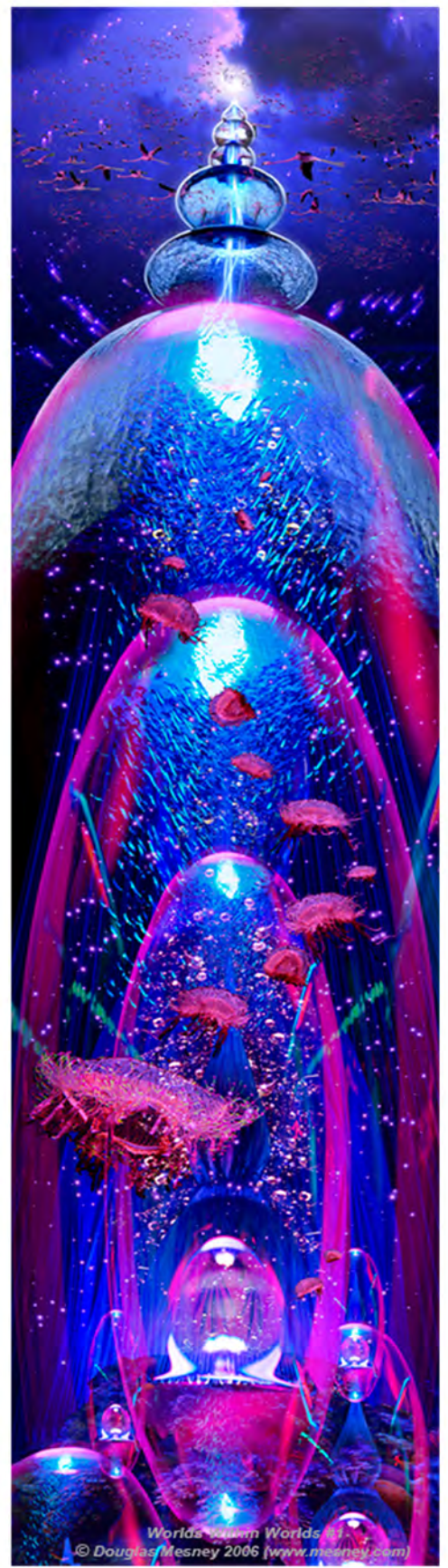
2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 8
Individual Works Collection | 2005-09











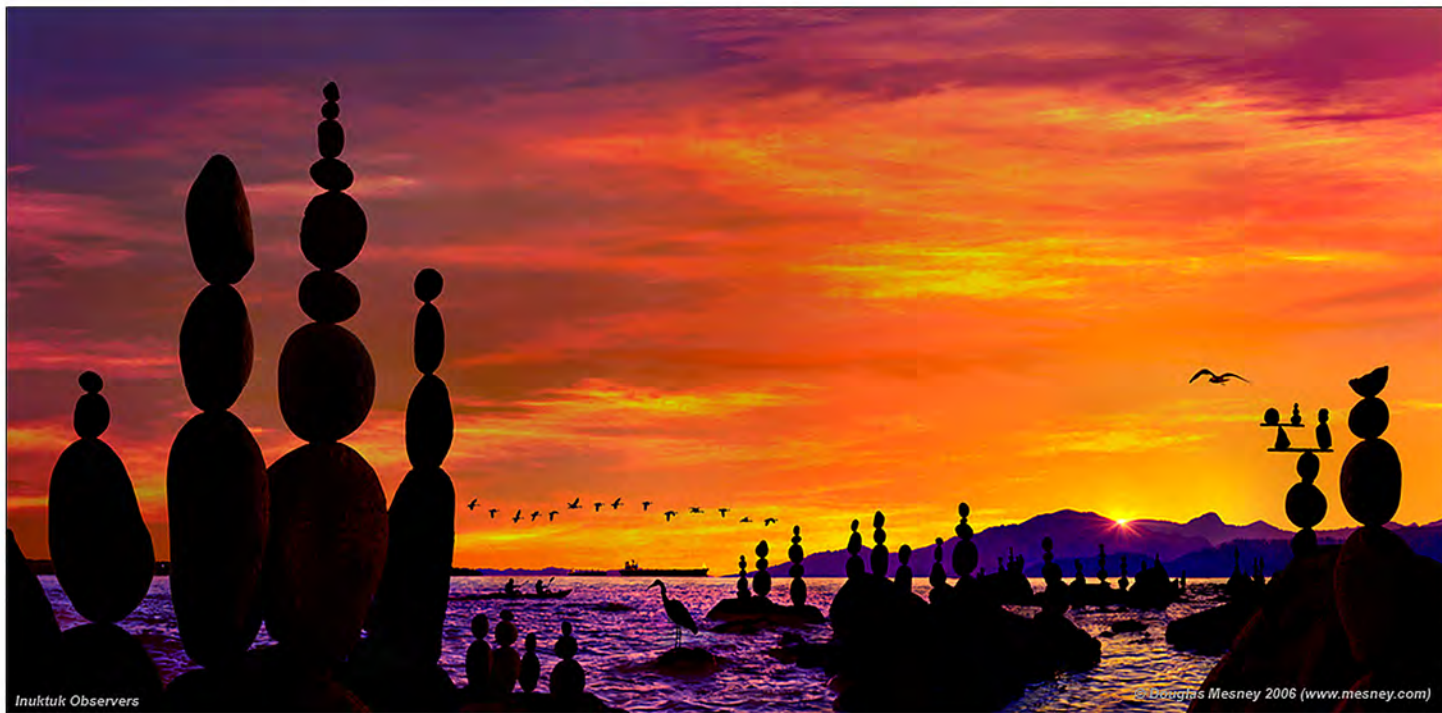


2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 14
Individual Works Collection | 2005-09

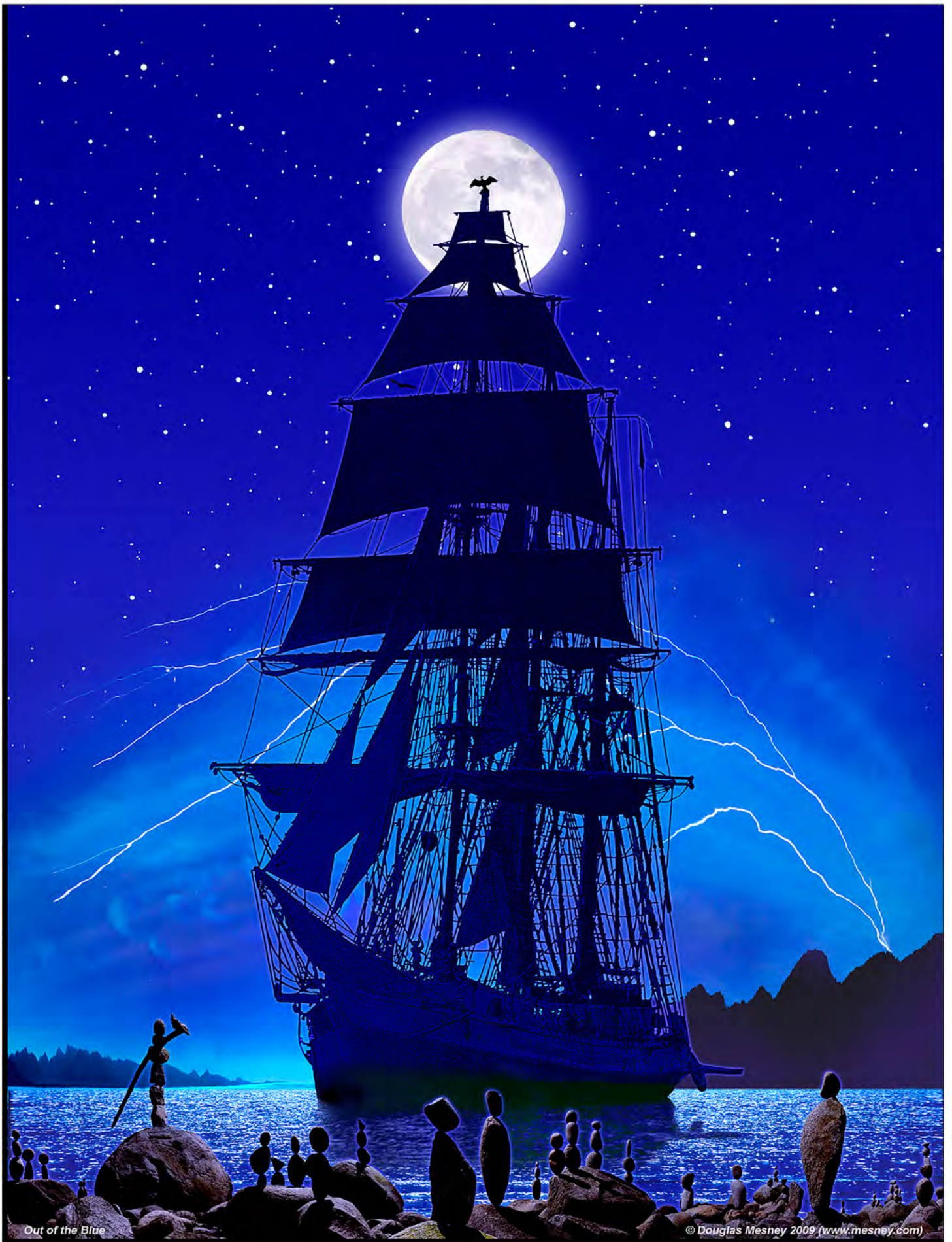


Flower Moon / Gulf Islands, BC

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Out of the Blue

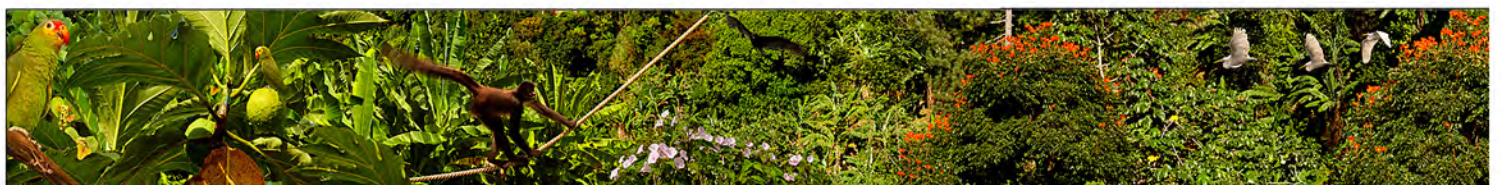
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2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 18

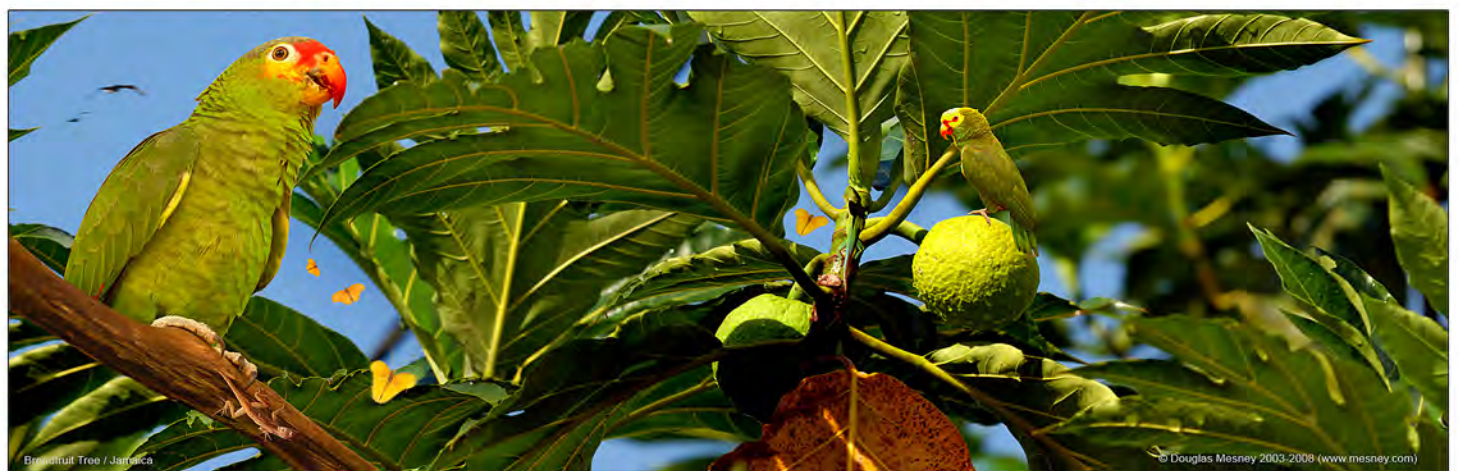
Inuktituk Collection | 2006-09



2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 19
Inuktituk Collection | 2006-09



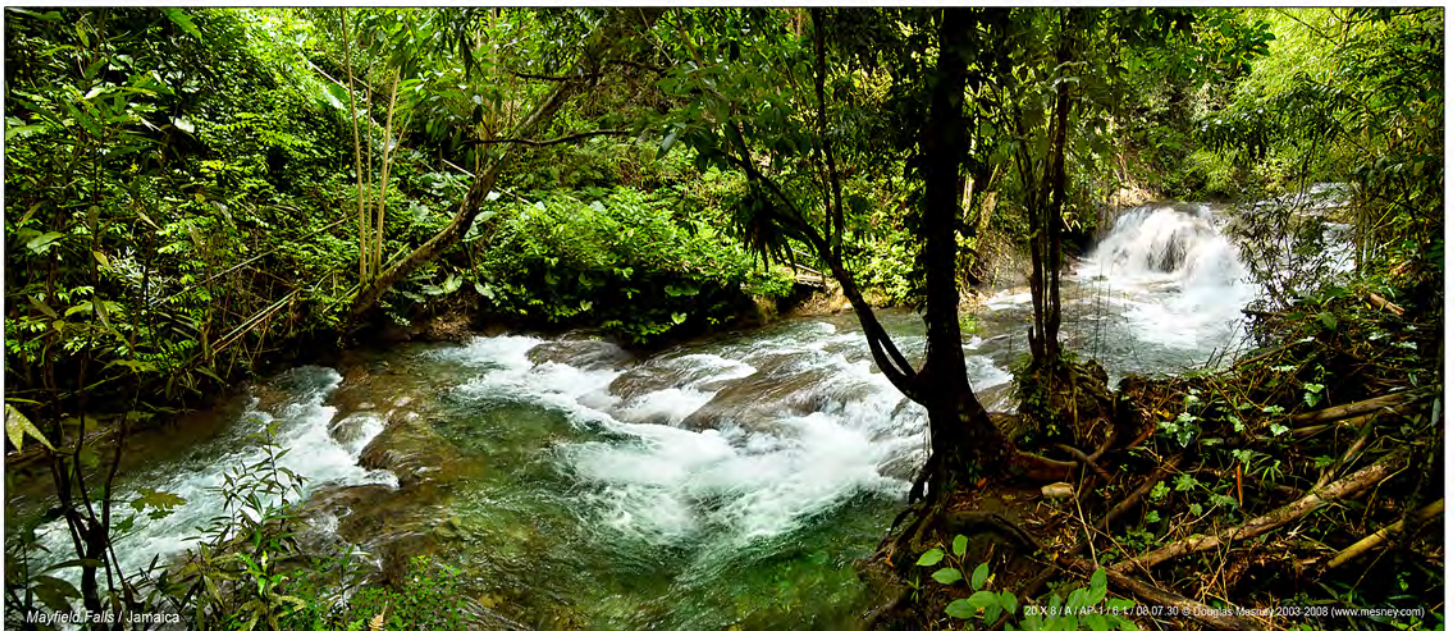
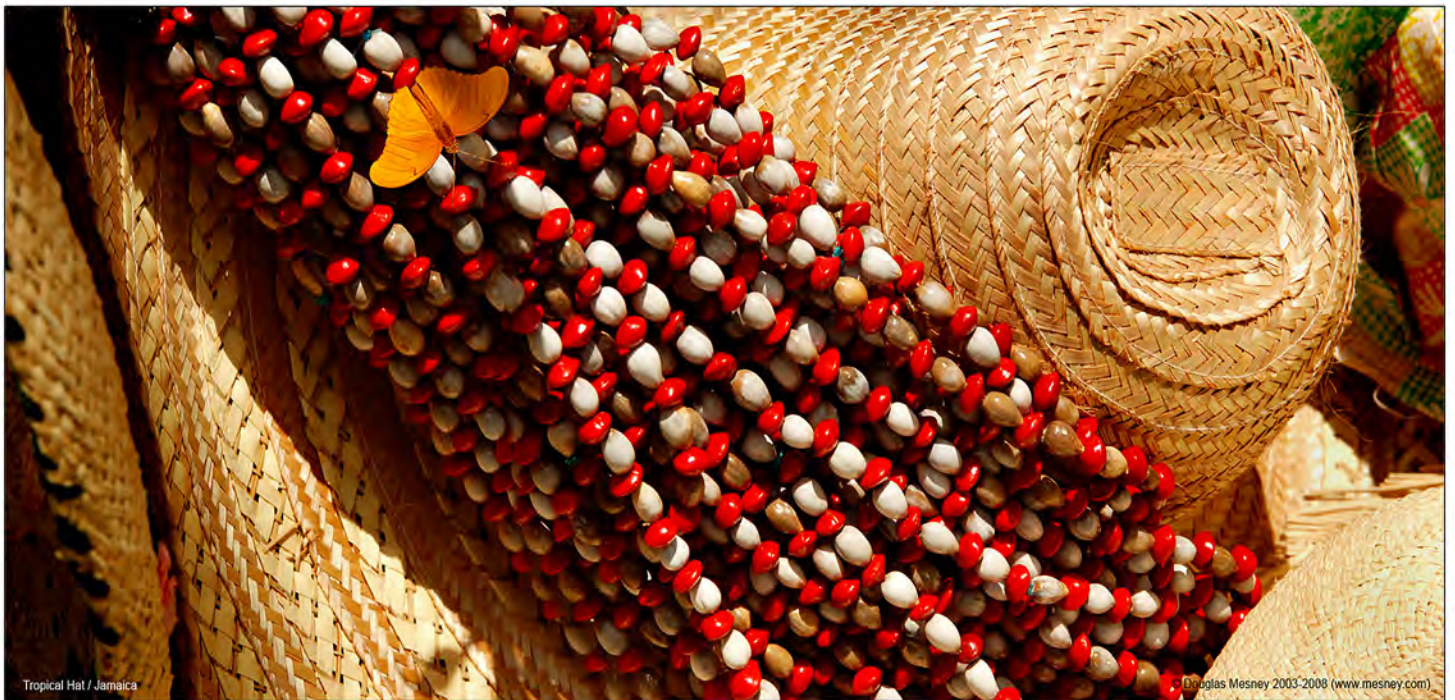








2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 24
Jamaica Collection | 2004

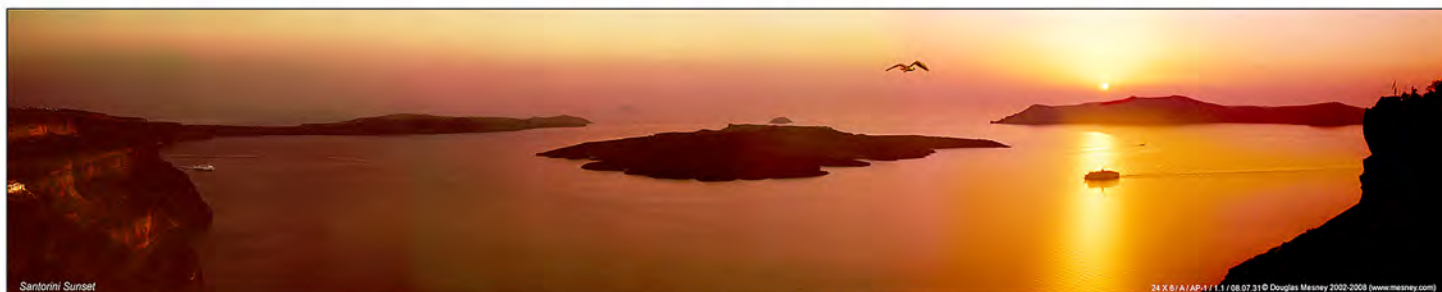




2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 26
Jamaica Collection | 2004



26 X 14 / B / AP-1 / 3.5 / 08.07.30 © Douglas Mesney 2004-2008 (www.mesney.com)



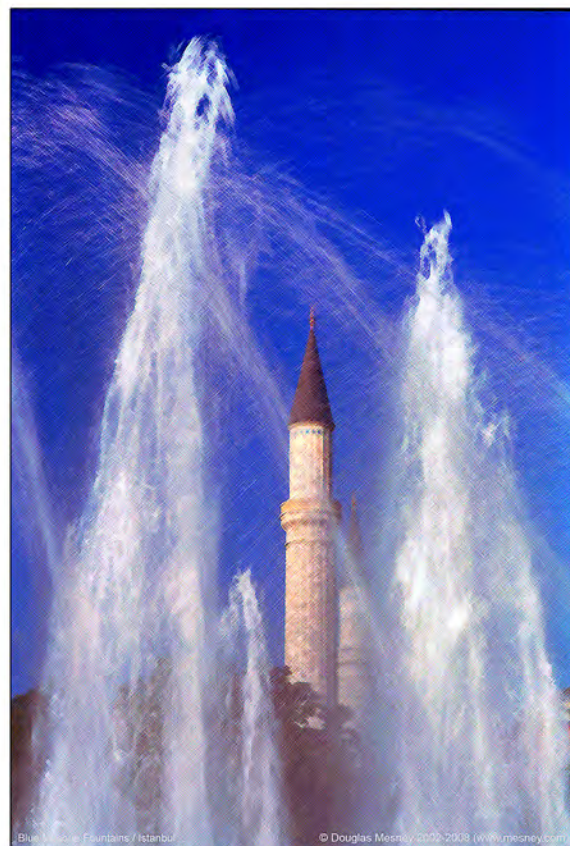
Santorini Sunset

24 X 8 / A / AP-1 / 1 / 08.07.31 © Douglas Mesney 2002-2008 (www.mesney.com)



Turkish Lanterns

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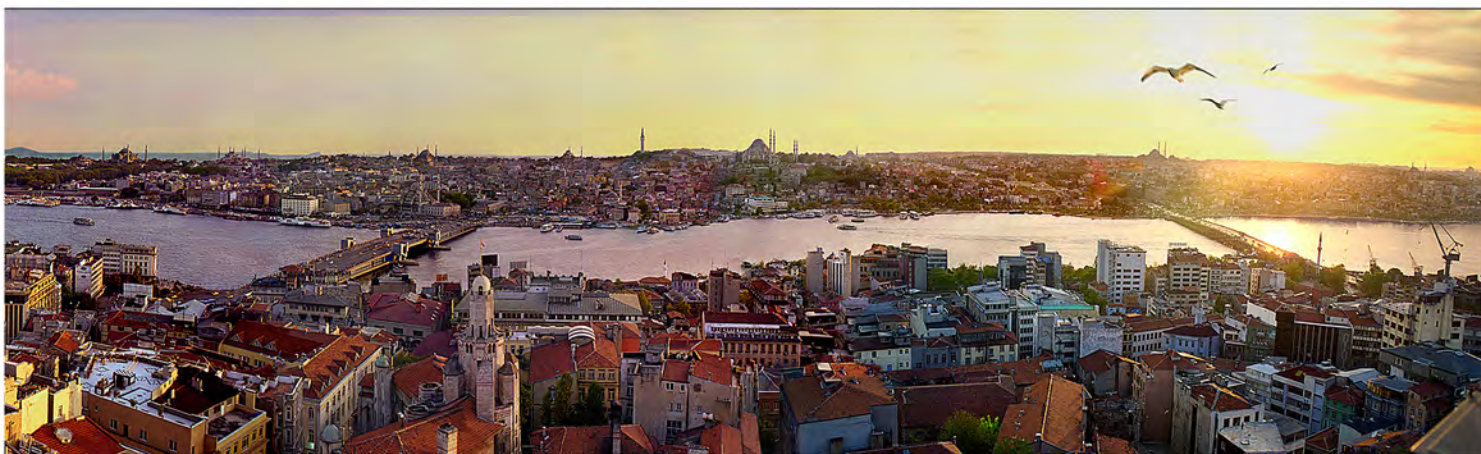
Blue Mosque Fountains / Istanbul

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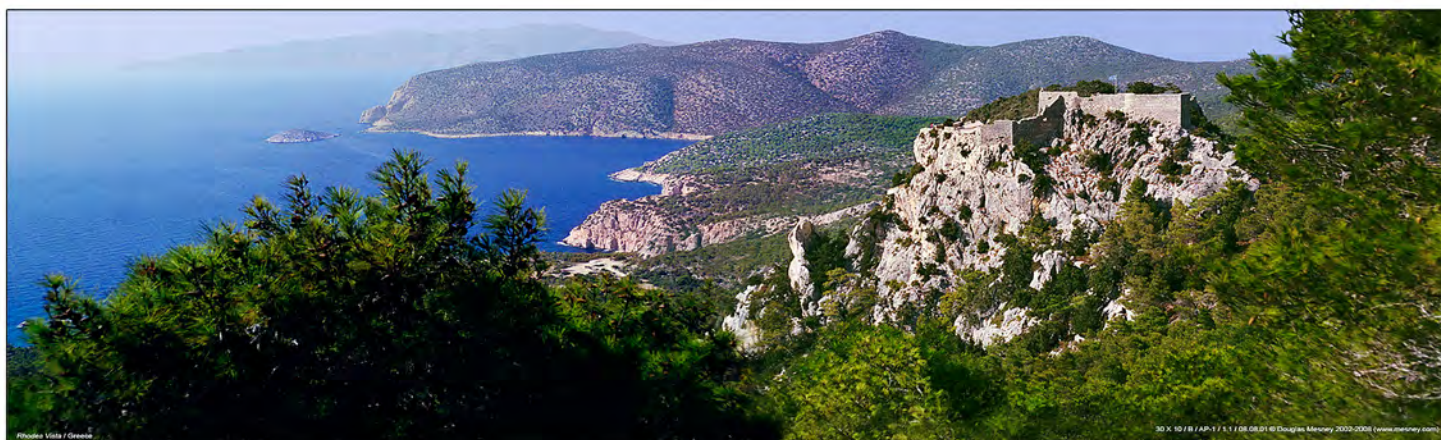
Santorini Moonrise / Greece

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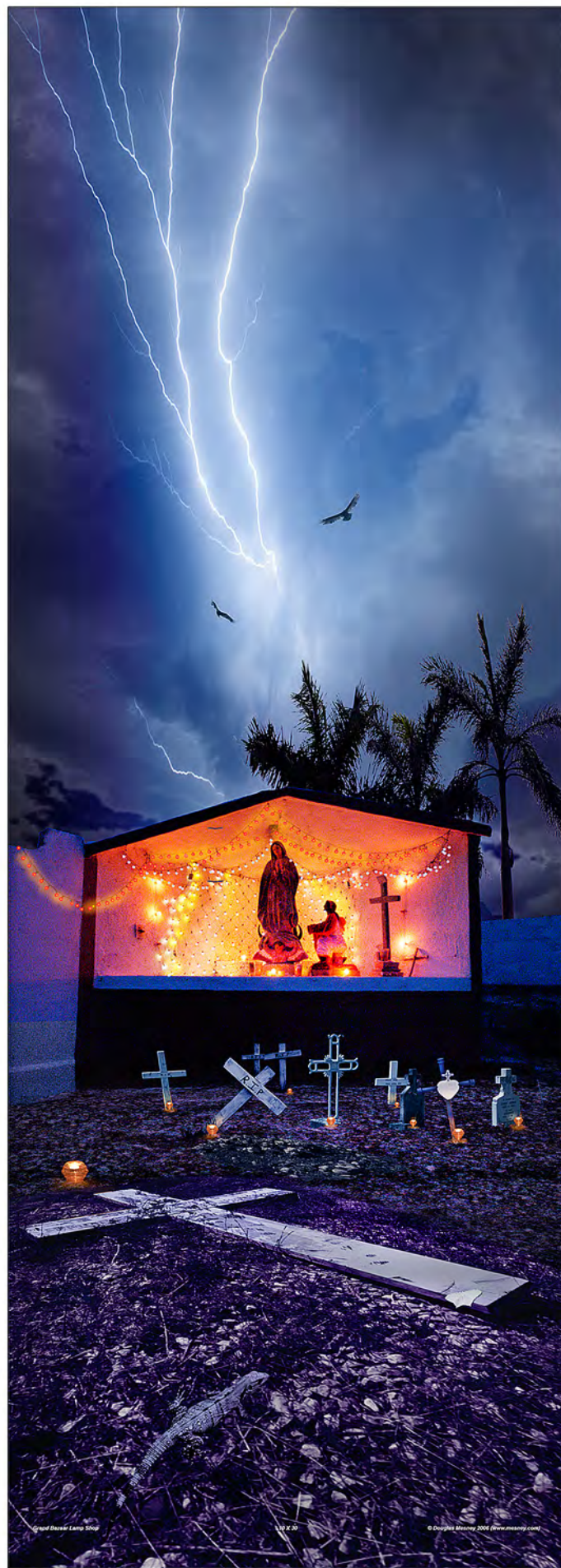


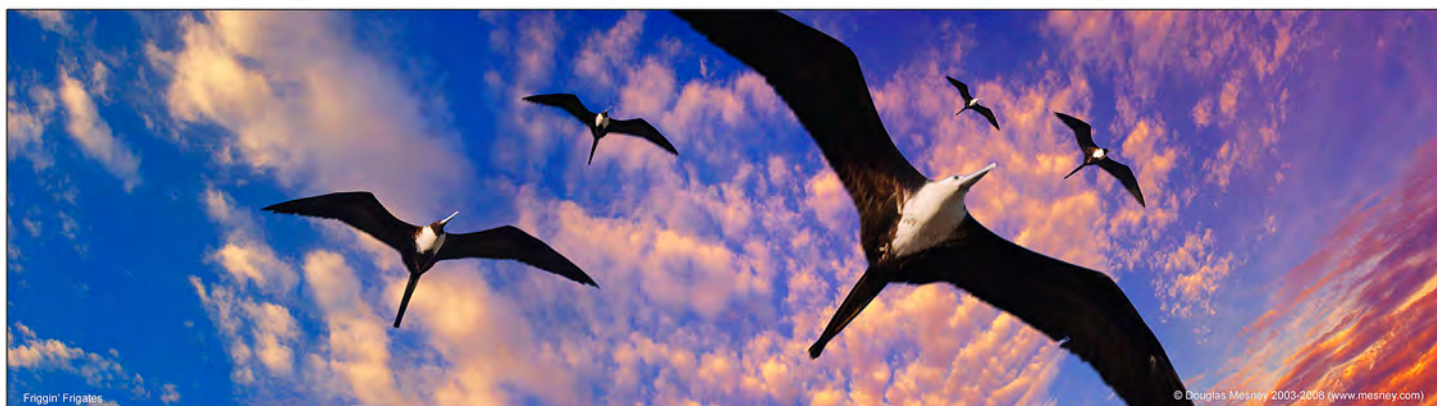




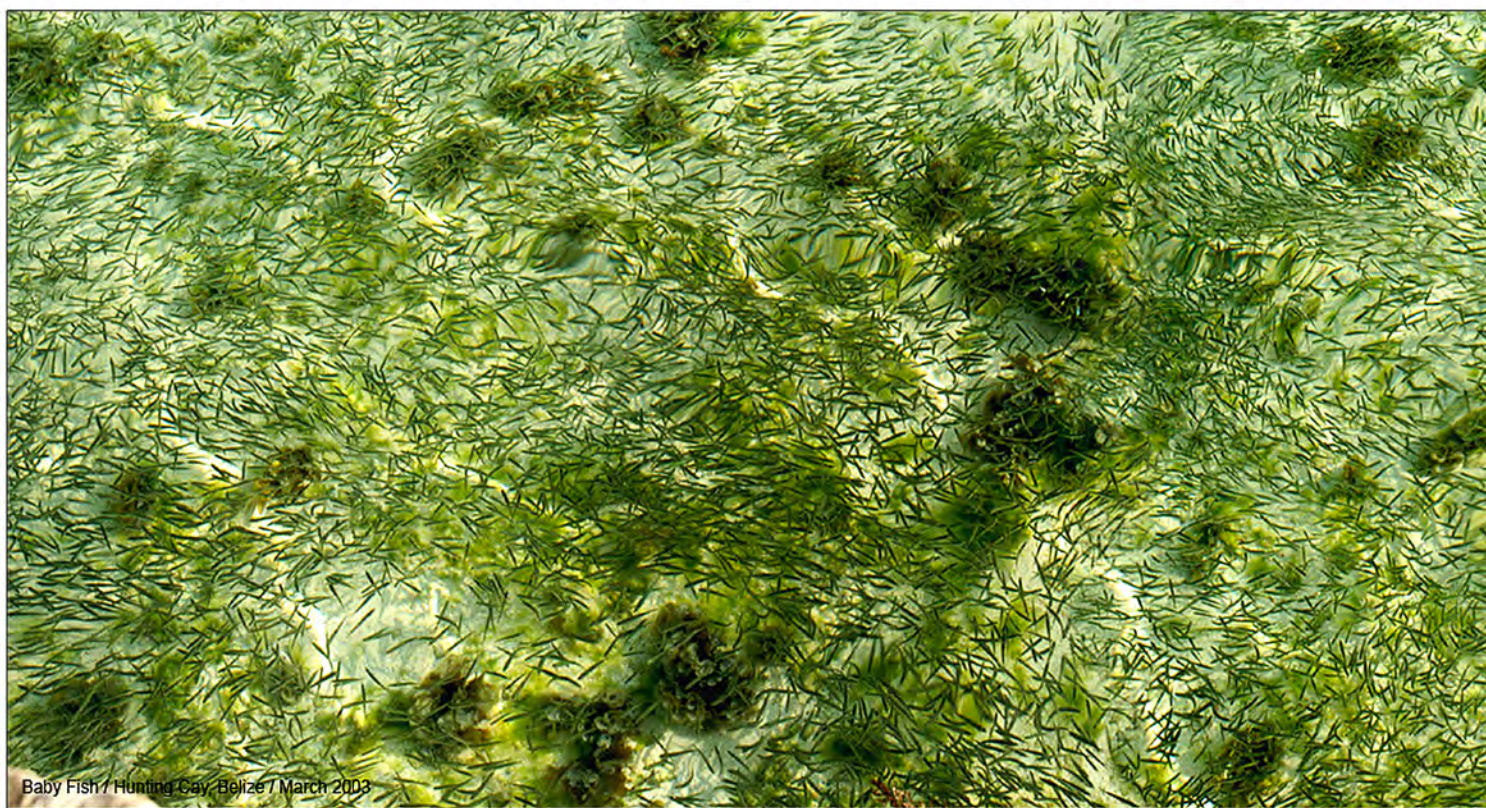
Uxmal Night / Yucatan, Mexico

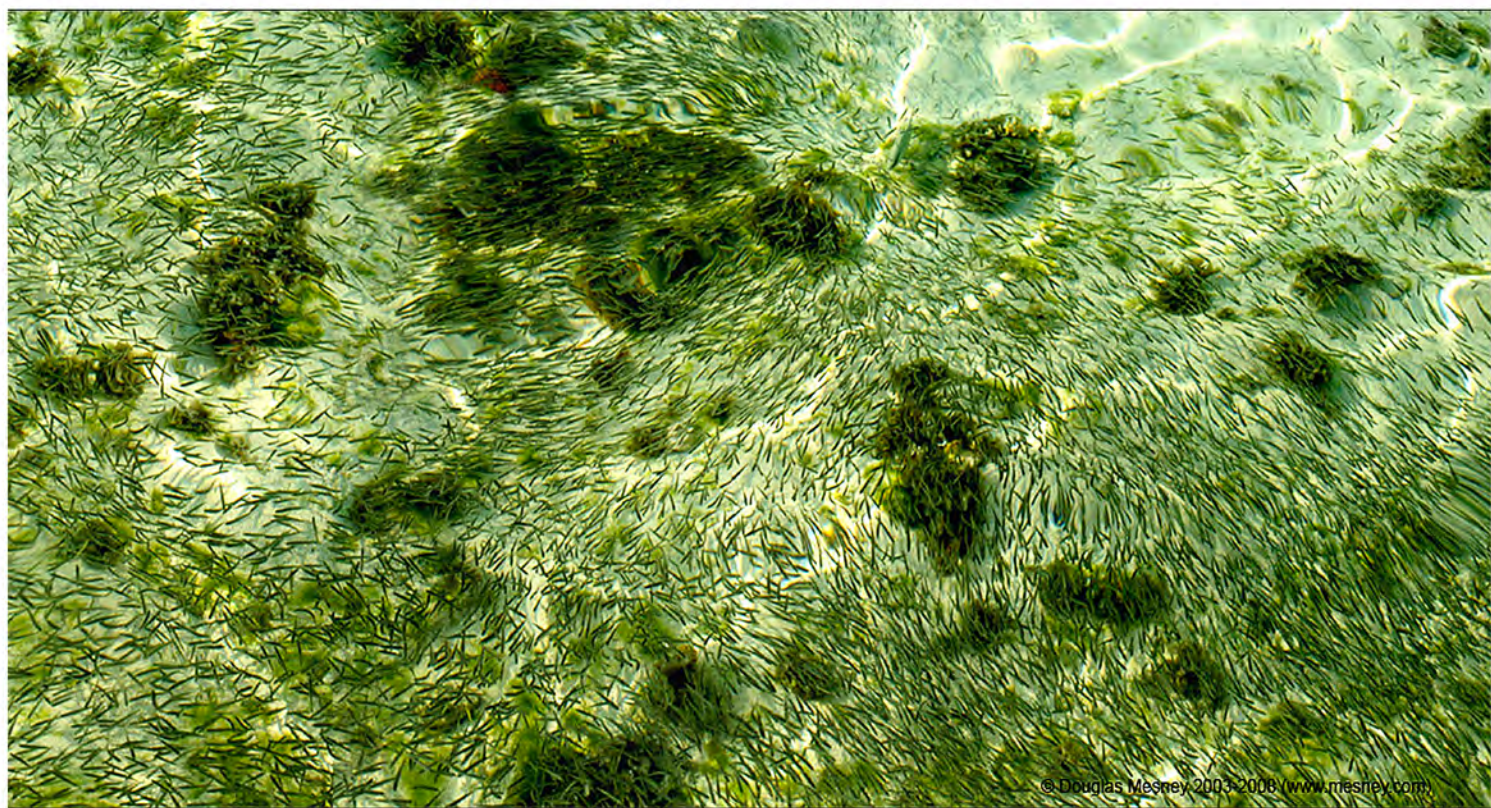
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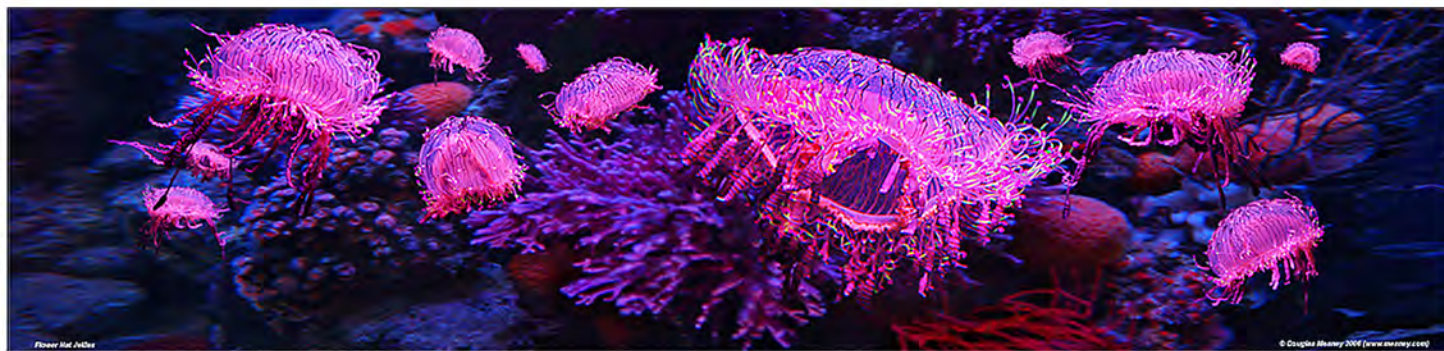


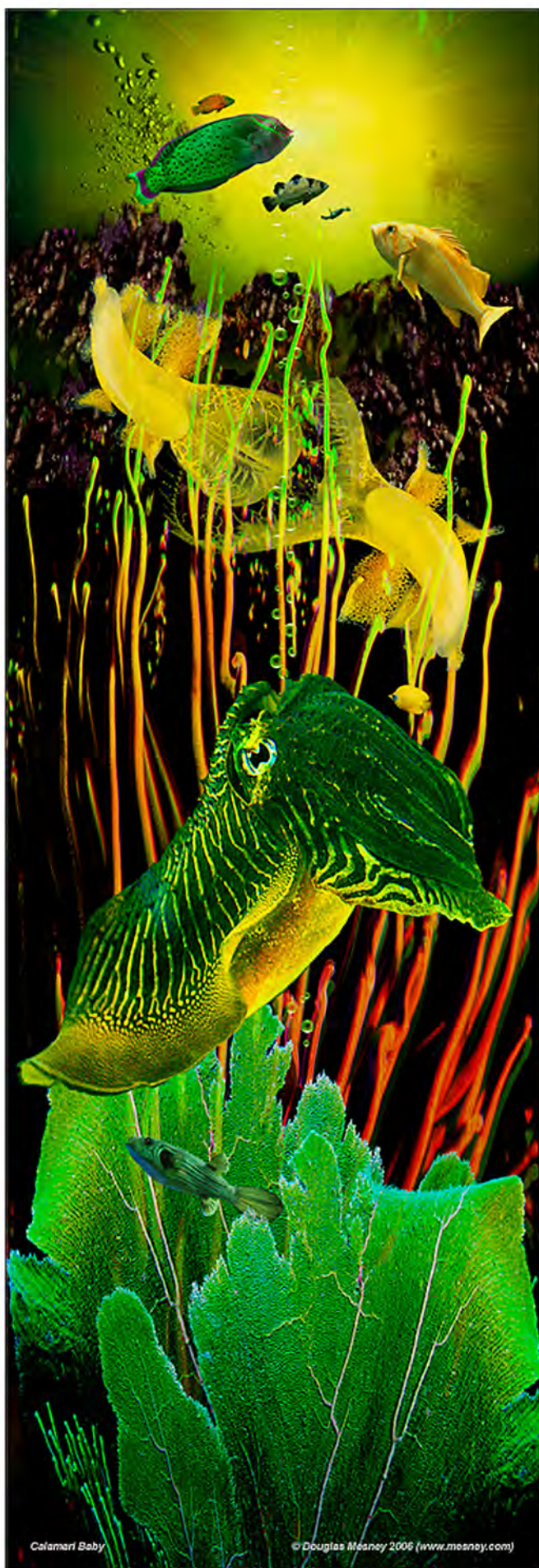






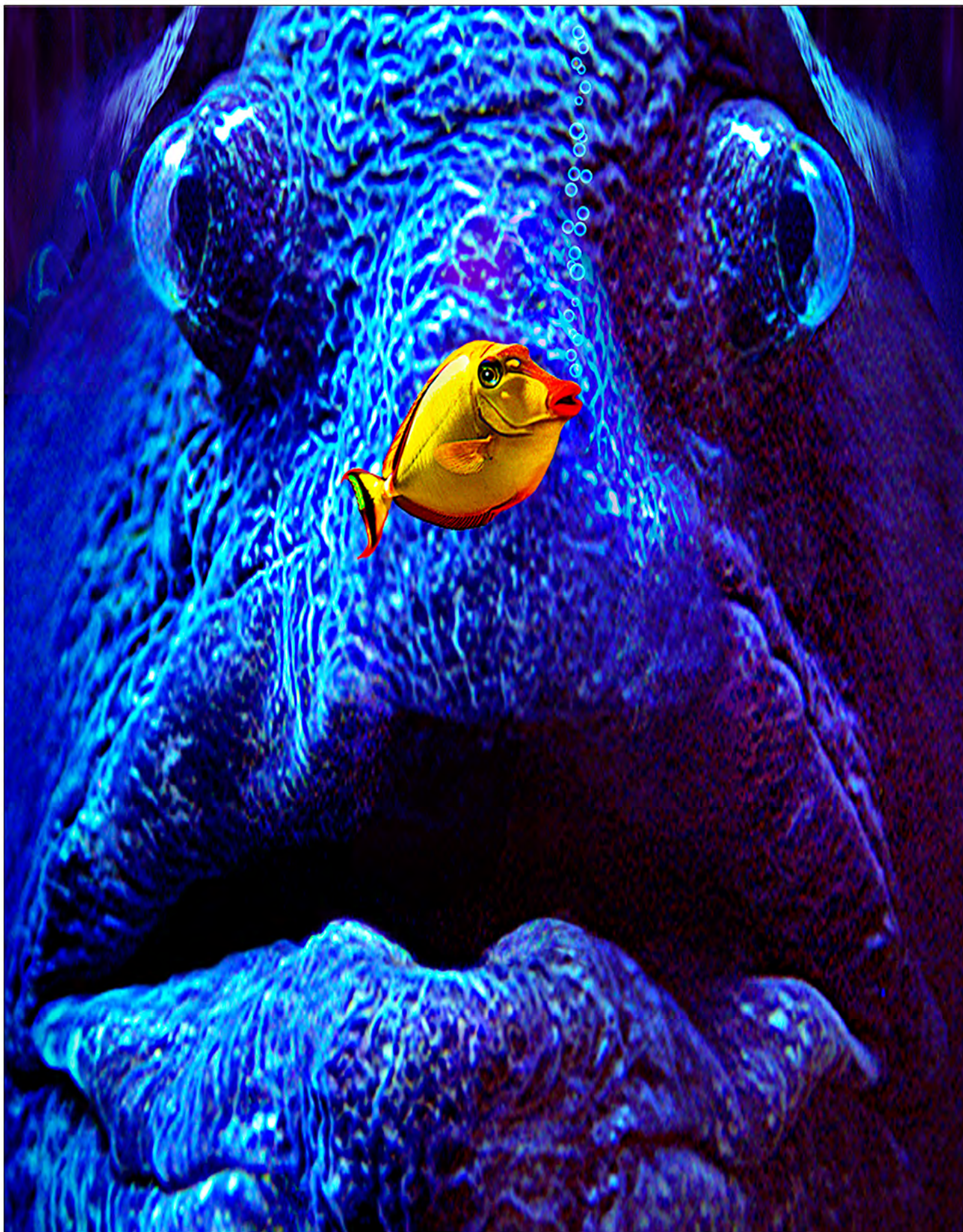
54 X 11 / S / AP-1 / 1.1 / 08.07.29 © Douglas Mesney 2002-2008 (www.mesney.com)







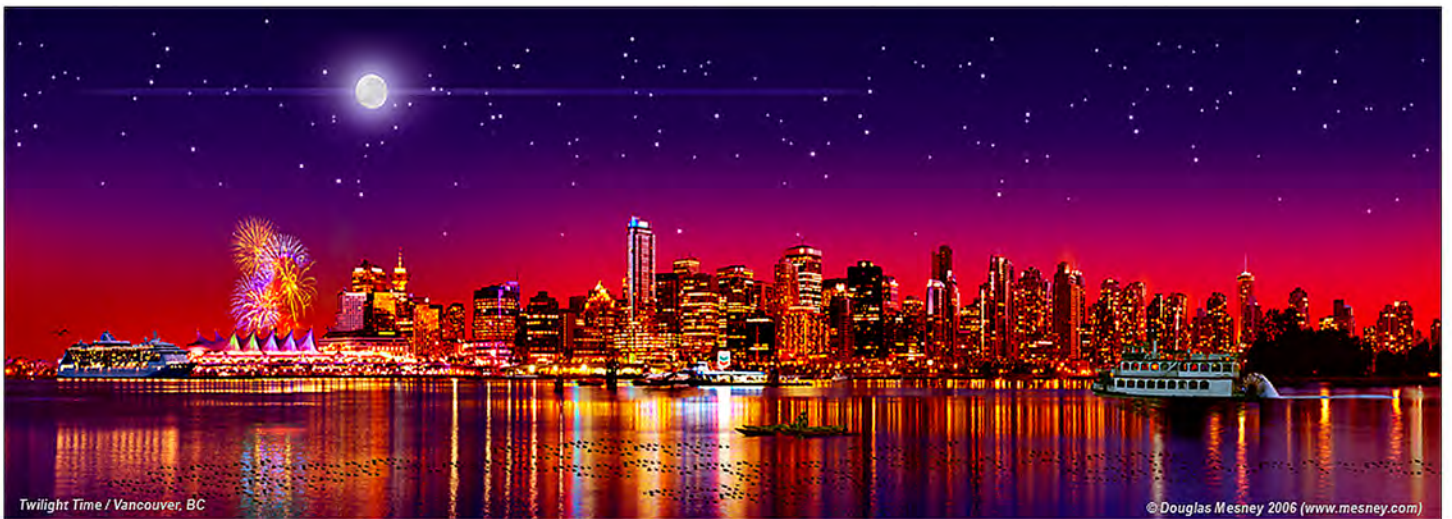


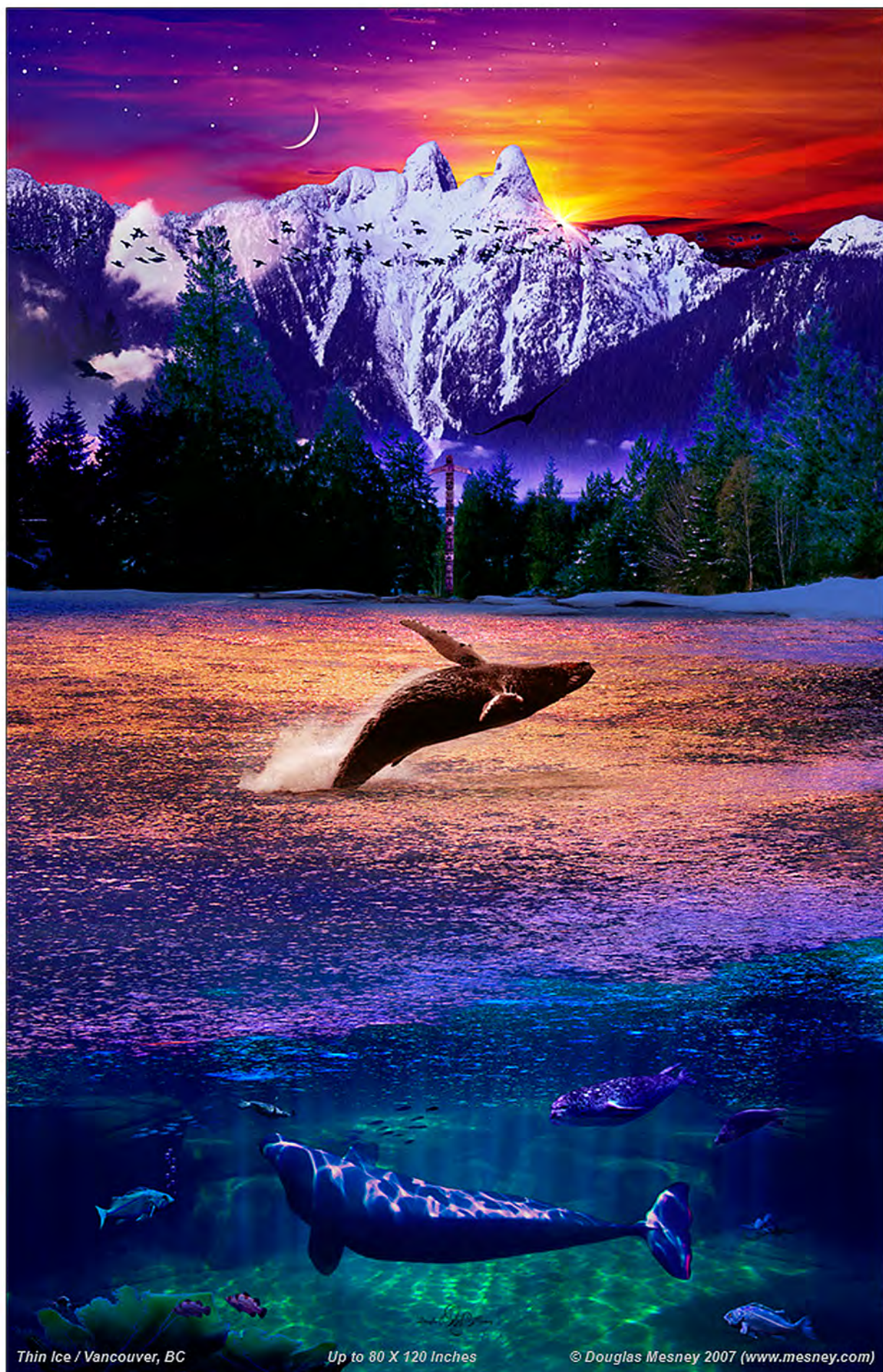


2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 44

Undercurrents *Collection* | 2003-06







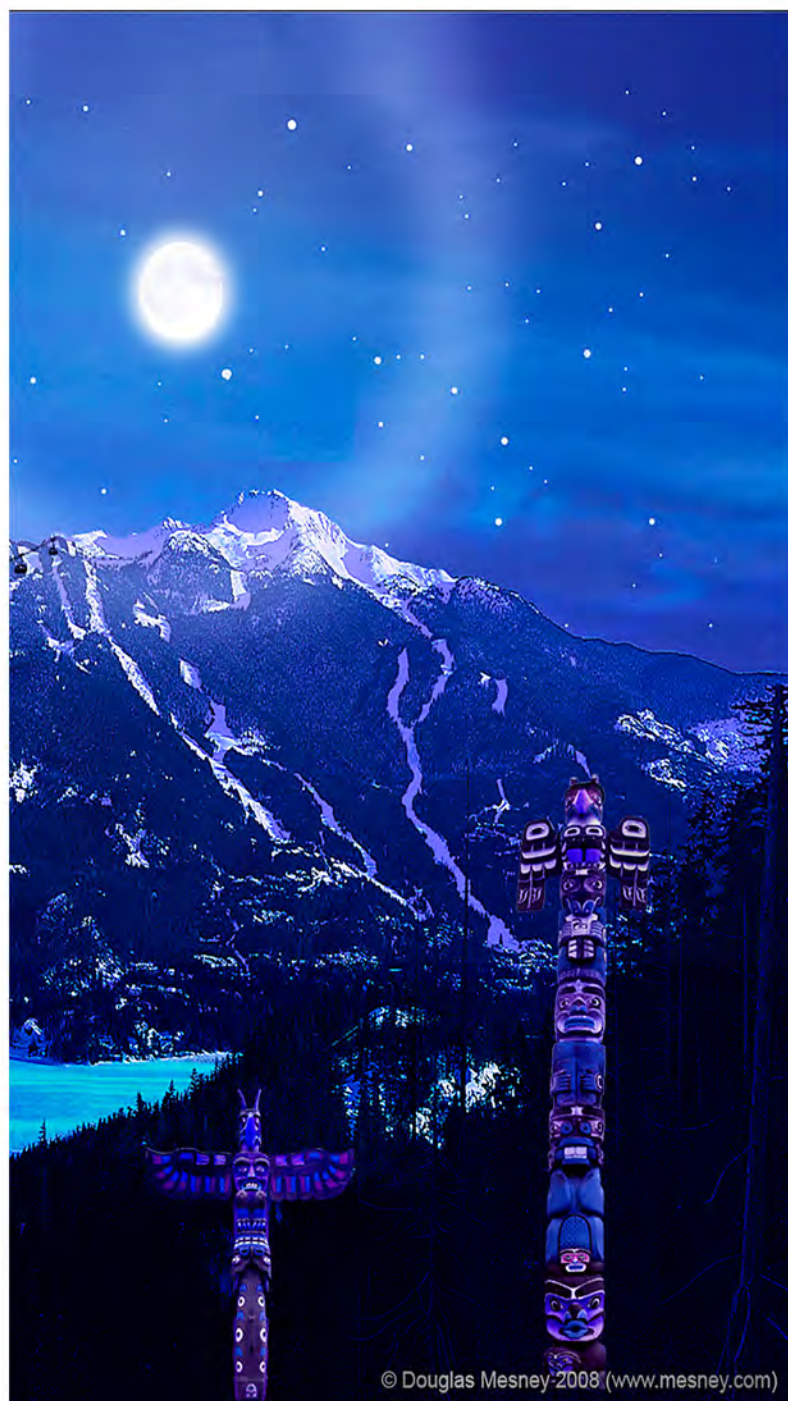
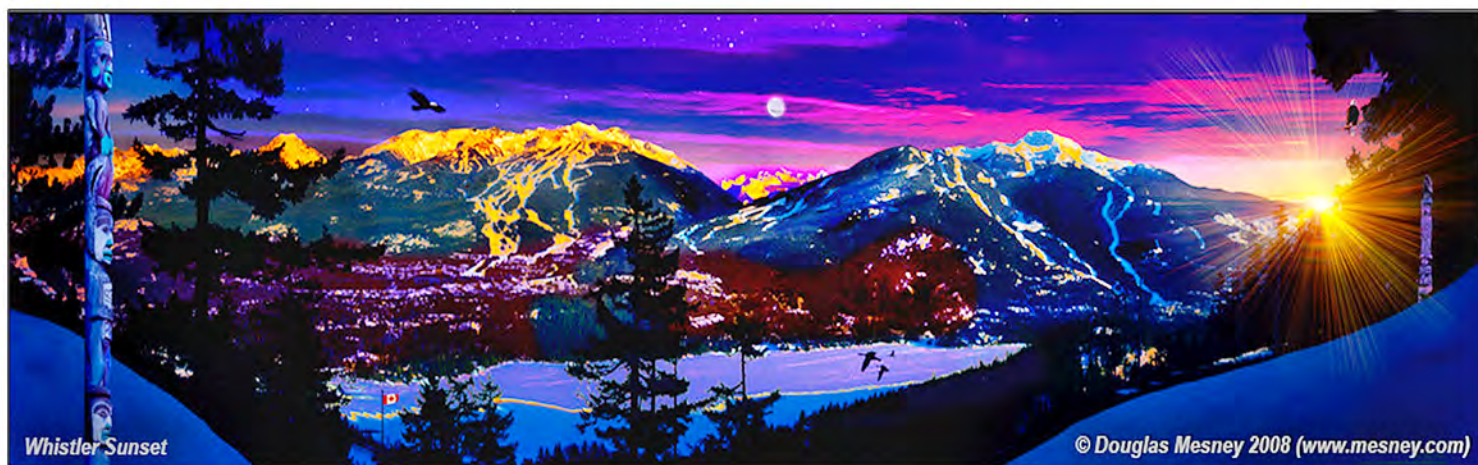
Thin Ice / Vancouver, BC

Up to 80 X 120 Inches

© Douglas Mesney 2007 (www.mesney.com)



Whistler Moon





2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 50
Vancouver Collection | 2005-08



Up The Creek / Vancouver, BC

© Douglas Mesney 2008 (www.mesney.com)

2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 51

Vancouver Collection | 2005-08



2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS| PLATE N° 52
Vancouver Collection | 2005-08



Magic Moon / Yaletown, Vancouver

Up to 64 X 80 Inches

© Douglas Mesney 2007 (www.mesney.com)



Driftwood Rudolph / Vancouver BC

© Douglas Mesney 2005 (www.mesney.com)



2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 55

Vancouver Collection | 2005-08







Olympic Mountains Vista / Vashon, Washington



Vashon Christmas Snow

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2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 58

Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09



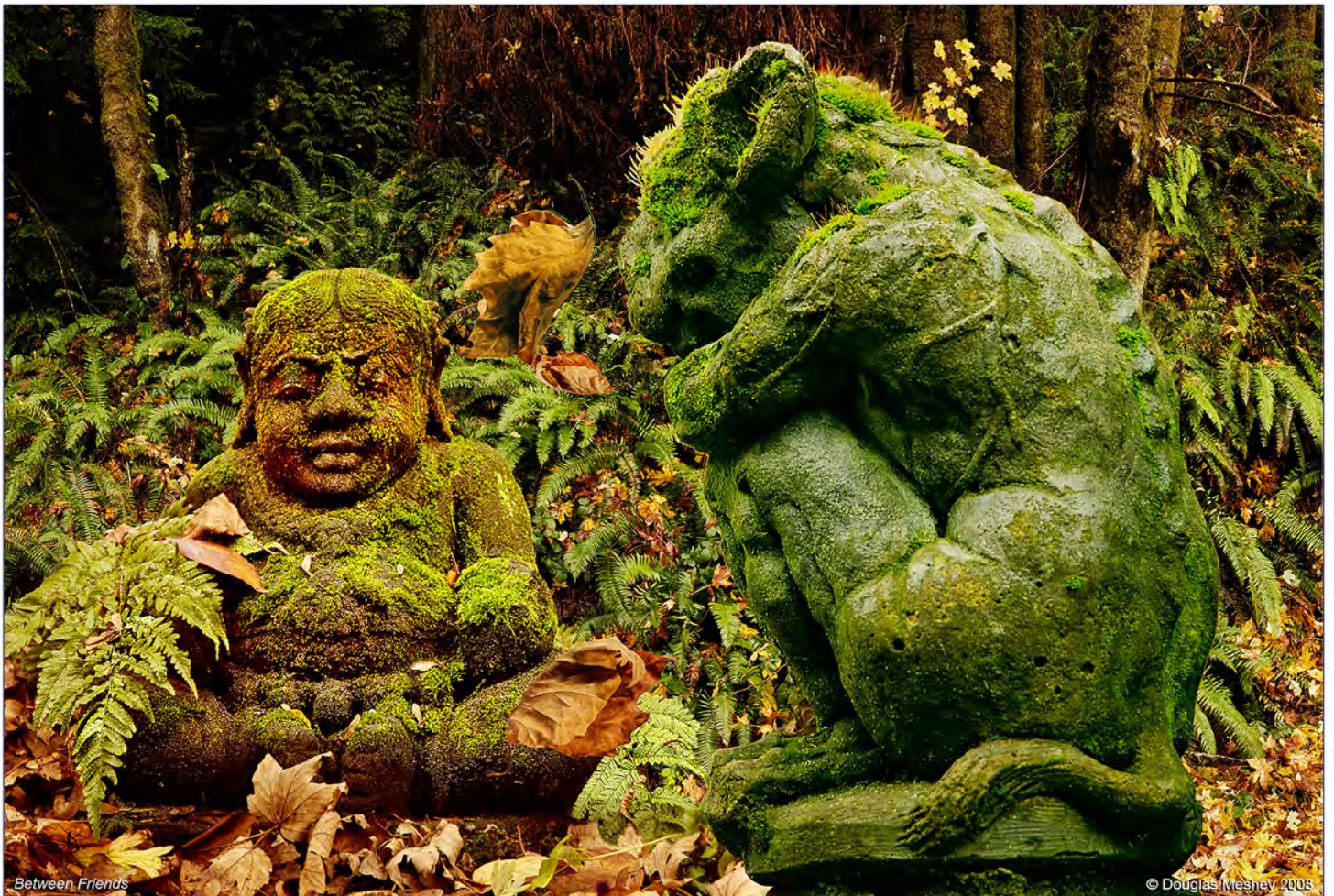


Pond Politics

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2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 60

Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09



Between Friends

© Douglas Mesney 2008



2000S | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 62

Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09





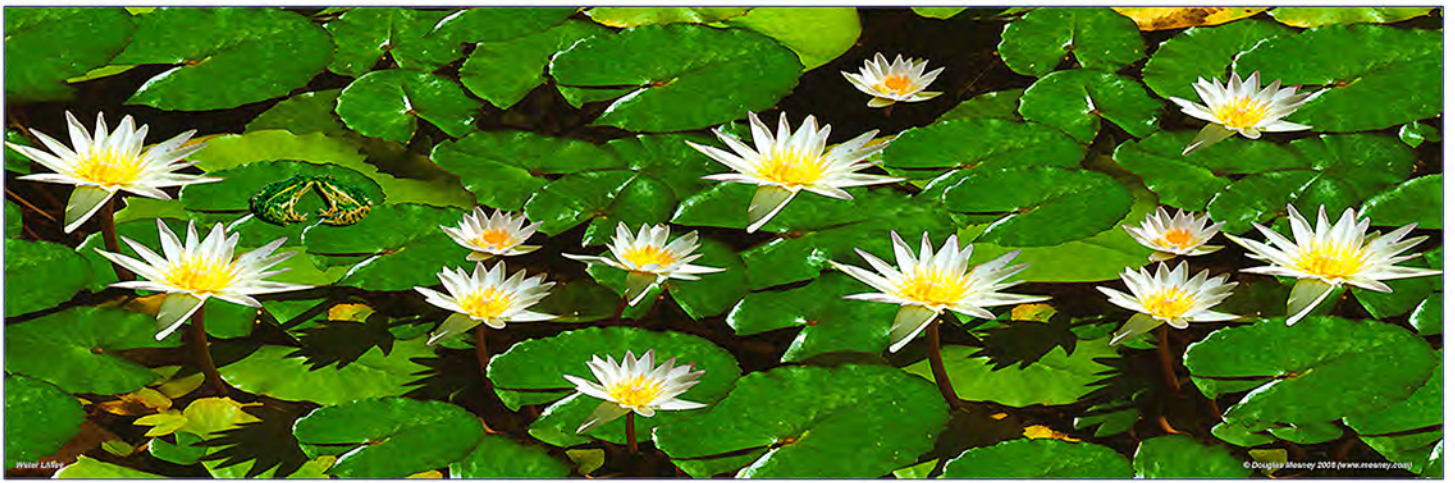
2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 64

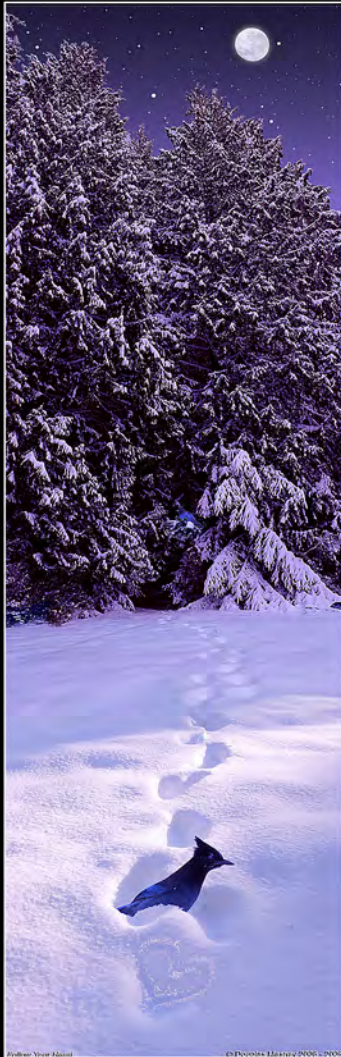
Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09



2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 65
 Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09











2000s | ILLUSTRATIONS | PLATE N° 70
Vashon Island Collection | 2005-09



2007 | PROMOTION PORTRAIT | PLATE N° 1

Susan Bates (above) operated the camera for this promotional brochure shot.

My operating costs were peaking.

I was carrying the costs of Vashon and Vancouver studios and funding my last alimony payment to Anna. Plus, I had huge print-production costs making stuff to sell at the gallery—ink for the Epson giclée printer cost nearly \$1,000 per load; canvas rolls \$100 each; add to those the costs of stretching and framing-supplies, as well as photo-lab costs (back-lit transparencies for the light-box-pictures cost nearly \$1500).

So be it: I was committed to my new business and considered the funds spent making art as an investment in my future.

Fortunately, there was enough AV business to fund my multi-faceted operations. Steve Olikier hired me for another New York Life meeting-content job. On the heels of that Dave Frey signed me up for another Nike Asia-Pacific meeting.

Jim Kellner came through for me, too; he put me in touch with Constantine Zachariou, who was an account manager for Avidex Industries, a Bellevue, Washington-based AV consolidator whose clients included Cisco Systems and the Seattle Art Museum[SAM].

Zachariou's staff of AV engineers and architects were building a digital signage system for the Seattle Art Museum. It was a straightforward, albeit complex, array of flat screens. The screens were arranged in clusters at strategic locations in the SAM building, as *message boards*. Multiple streams of screen content were distributed to the screens via an intranet; the content was organized with Watchout.

Programming Watchout was the easy part; teaching someone else to run the system—insert new content and delete old stuff—was another matter. Put it this way: I earned my money on that job. More importantly, Zachariou was pleased with my work and recommended me to Cisco Systems. He also wanted to be friends; we lunched together **several times at trendy restaurants, like Wolfgang Puck's.**

At Cisco, Zachariou and his Avidex team installed what was, at the time, the world's biggest Watchout rig—close to one hundred Watchout servers feeding three image walls in the company's lobby reception area, a superb "maze" of screens and several theaters.

Keeping a monster system like that up and running was no mean feat. With that much gack [gear], the odds of some piece of gear going down were high; it was a certainty that something would go wrong—a screen would go fail, a server go nuts, stuff like that.

At tech-giant Cisco Systems, failure was not an option; as a result, an AV technician had **to be on hand 24/7/365. Until he could replace himself, that was Constantine's job.**

Constantine made a considerable effort to get my foot in the door at Cisco. He arranged for me to meet the movers and shakers in charge of screen content. He and I flew down **from Seattle, to Cisco's HQ in San Jose, California.**

We brought a portable 3-screen, Watchout display system,⁹⁹ samples of 3-D slides (the ones I shot for Nike), and a tube containing several 8-foot-long [2.4-meter] printed panoramas—I rolled those out with great flourish across the conference table, during my presentation (they drew gasps). Parts of the Oceano show were presented on the three-screen display.

I left the pitch feeling confident; however, I realized that Cisco’s current content provider was totally qualified—the stuff on those image walls was high-quality work, albeit uninspiring. More germane, however, was the fact that, being a company employee, he had a lock on media production—as evidenced by the fact that I never heard back from Cisco or Zacharious.

A few months later, I called Constantine’s office; I was going to suggest lunch, or maybe dinner at my studio, to discuss an idea we kicked around on the flight back from San Jose, for a giant, walk-through kaleidoscope. But they informed me that Constantine died and that nobody knew why or how. (After Constantine was AWOL from work for almost a week, his colleagues went looking for him; then the authorities took over; that’s all I was told.) OMG!

In remembrance of Zacharious, I went ahead with the kaleidoscope idea. However, instead of Cisco, I presented the idea to Grant Stewart, president of Stewart Screen Company. I called him at company headquarters, in Torrance, California.

It had been a long time since anyone had seen serious 3-D content at any of the big audiovisual and lighting trade shows. The Stewart Kaleidoscope would be a sure-fire hit at **such events; that’s what interested Grant**—making a big impression. The idea intrigued him enough to dispatch Robert Brennan **from Stewart’s manufacturing plant, in Amelia, Ohio, to Vancouver, to hear more and discuss feasibility.**

The plan for the walk-through kaleidoscope called for a system of mirrors—a so-called *folded optics* arrangement—to project 3-D images onto kaleidoscope facets made of **Stewart’s silver-screen fabric. [3-D projections require silvery surfaces that don’t diffuse the light they reflect.]**

As the technical director of Stewart Screen Company, Brennan had concerns about multiple streams of **3-D projection. He heard me out, but I don’t think he took me seriously; it wasn’t** *me* so much as my *lair* and what it revealed about me.

My studio was rigged as a combination AV theater and art gallery, filled with some of my wildest work. The room had ultraviolet [UV] fill light; glowing pictures were my latest gimmick. Above the fireplace hung a giant print of *Cistern Dancer*, the first of the Neon Nudes series. [See studio picture: *2004 – Bigger Digs – Hotter Gigs.*]

Brennan and I shared nothing in common; he was a mid-west conservative; I was a middle-age hippie at the height of a metaphysical metamorphosis, from slide-show guy to fine-arts illustrator.

⁹⁹ The rig consisted of three 15-inch [38 cm] Samsung LCD monitors mounted in line; the trio fit perfectly into a Pelican 1720 long gun case.

I was in rare form during that pitch. I had the Nike 3-D work set-up on a 6 X 4-foot [1.8 X 1.2-meter] silver-screen sample that Grant sent me for the demo. After a few cherry-picked Nike shots, I switched to 3-D neon nudes; they were eye-popping but I probably should have shown him flowers, because I never heard from Brennan or Stewart ever again.

However, Kellner came through again, with a Watchout training job for his client, Jenny Costa, from Abba Trading Company, in Miami, Florida.

Abba Trading arranged imports and exports between the USA and Columbia. One of **Costa's clients was a multimedia company in Bogotá** [Columbia], Sphera Producciones; they wanted to buy a Watchout system together with a training course. Kellner recommended me, to be the Watchout instructor.

The job was a real junket; Sphera's co-founders, Sergio Vargas and Cesar Tovar, rolled out the red carpet; they treated me graciously.



Primitive technical sophistication was made up for by enthusiasm.

My student, Camilo Monsalves (upper picture, right), was a genius, making my job easy. Carlos Salazara (center), **Sphera's creative director, was also supposed to learn Watchout, but his English wasn't good enough, or so he said. Instead, Carlos videotaped all my instructions** (lower picture).

As mentioned earlier, Watchout was an easy-to-learn application—like putting ducks in a row, along a timeline. The hard part was making the artwork, in Photoshop, After Effects, and similar applications.

At our first lesson, I learned that Camilo didn't know anything about Photoshop or After Effects and Camilo showed no interest in learning them. Gadzooks, I thought; how's this going to work?

As it turned out, Camilo was adept at other programs that I never worked with—music programs and others with which he produced visuals, both stills and movies. We finished that first day over dinner. After a few rounds of the Colombian national drink—Aguardiente, an anise-flavored liqueur—I agreed that we would work with his content.

The next morning, Camilo was already at the Watchout desk before I arrived. He had his own laptop set up, ready to show me his stuff. I was totally blown away—**Camilo's music** was well orchestrated, complex, and rhythmical, in the vane of *Electronica*; and his visuals, though hard to describe, were graphic, abstract, colorful and a perfect fit for **Monsalves' music. We had good fun working together, assembling Camilo's first show; he** caught on fast. By the fourth day Camilo was teaching me his applications.

My contract called for five days, but Carlos and Sergio graciously paid my expenses for an additional two days of sightseeing. They took me all over Bogotá; and showed me the good, the bad and the ugly. On my last night, we went on a gondola ride up Mount Manserrate, to Restaurante Casa San Isidro. **A good tip to the Maître d' got us a window** table with a killer view over the entire city. We stayed through sunset, then toasted each other with a last *a tu salud* (to your health), and parted ways.

Originally, I planned to stay a couple of more weeks, to tour Columbia; I was especially interested in seeing the northern parts of the country, famous for their fabulous beaches and mountains. But, it was explained to me that my plan would be too dangerous; the FARC [(Spanish: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*—guerilla revolutionaries)] were still in command of that territory. Those terrorists used kidnapping as a means of making money.

Camilo stayed in touch for a couple of years. But as he got successful, he also got **famous; he didn't have time for personal messages anymore; his emails became** promotions, relegated to my spam folder.

Back on Vashon Island, I was counting on income from gallery sales to offset the huge amount of money it was costing to make the art. My coffers were being emptied faster than they were being filled. However, no funds were forthcoming from Oh My Godard; they were having their own financial difficulties, as mentioned earlier.

Negative cash flow was causing a conundrum: there was not enough money to pay for both art-production and AV equipment updates. To work for New York Life or Nike, I needed the latest versions of Watchout; those updates cost about \$500 per license. Plus, to play the Watchout upgrade smoothly, I also needed to get newer, faster servers from Show Sage— at \$2,000 a pop. All told, AV updates were running me around \$25,000 a year. On the art side, printer upgrades were costing \$5,000 and that cost was on the verge of doubling.

Something had to be done.

I sold some gear to fill the fiduciary gap; thus, began a pattern of devolution that would ultimately lead to the demise of Vashon and the beginning of a new life in Vancouver. The first to go were the ultra-pan cameras, the Cyclopan and Roundshot; they had been rendered redundant by digital-image stitching technology with which anybody could make panoramas. Both of those exotic cameras fetched dimes on the dollar. A collector bought the Cyclopan for \$600; the Roundshot, which originally cost \$18,000, sold for \$1,800. I felt lucky to find buyers, although I thought the Cyclopan would fetch more; it was such a unique camera. For the pittance I got for it, I should have kept the Cyclopan; I shot so many scenes with that camera, all of them now quasi-historic. (The negatives are in the hands of Pete Bjordahl; I trust his stewardship.)

Next to go was my much-loved Nikkor 13 mm lens, a replacement that John Emms found in Hong Kong, after my first one was stolen, in France. The 13 mm was a hard-to-find lens; not many of them were made. A Florida collector bought mine. It was one of my first successful transactions on eBay. Between the two pan cameras and the Nikon super-wide I fetched the \$5,000 I needed to make my final alimony payment to Anna. I probably should have been firmer in my payment demands to Oh My Godard. That could possibly have saved me a lot of legal costs and turmoil later. With the nearly \$30,000 they ended up owing me, I could have kept current in Watchout and maintained a modest income stream more or less indefinitely; in which case I would probably have kept the Vashon studio and life would have turned out another way. As it happened, I decided in favor of fine arts and effectively gave-up on AV.

2006 – *Blessing of Liberty* – At Wits End



Fred Brink hired me to work on a Watchout show for the National Constitution Center (left), being built in Philadelphia, PA. I spent the better part of a month freezing my ass in the barn behind the **Brink's** spacious house, where he had improvised a "**compact**" Watchout work area to produce the *Blessing of Liberty* show (pix on page 1160).

[Watch a video of *Blessing of Liberty* on Vimeo at:
<https://www.vimeo.com/233147687>]

The format was a 4:1 panorama created with three video projectors. (The quarters were so tight that it was impossible to get the projectors to align properly, making it especially difficult to program smooth moves.) The show was subcontracted to me by Fred Brink's Company, AMPU [A More Perfect Union]. It was one of the most agonizing shows I ever worked on. Fred and I did not see eye to eye on much. Worse, he had a hard time making decisions, as mentioned earlier. He agonized over every picture; every scene had to be tried several different ways. Working with him on the Kentucky Show should have forewarned me of the torments to come; but I needed the money and reckoned I could endure the pain.

One of the biggest problems was an over-abundance of visuals; Fred had worked out a package deal with the Associated Press to use images from their extensive image archive.

However, the images arrived in no particular order. It seemed like whenever I finished a section of the show, the next day a package of new visuals would arrive and Fred would start messing around with them.

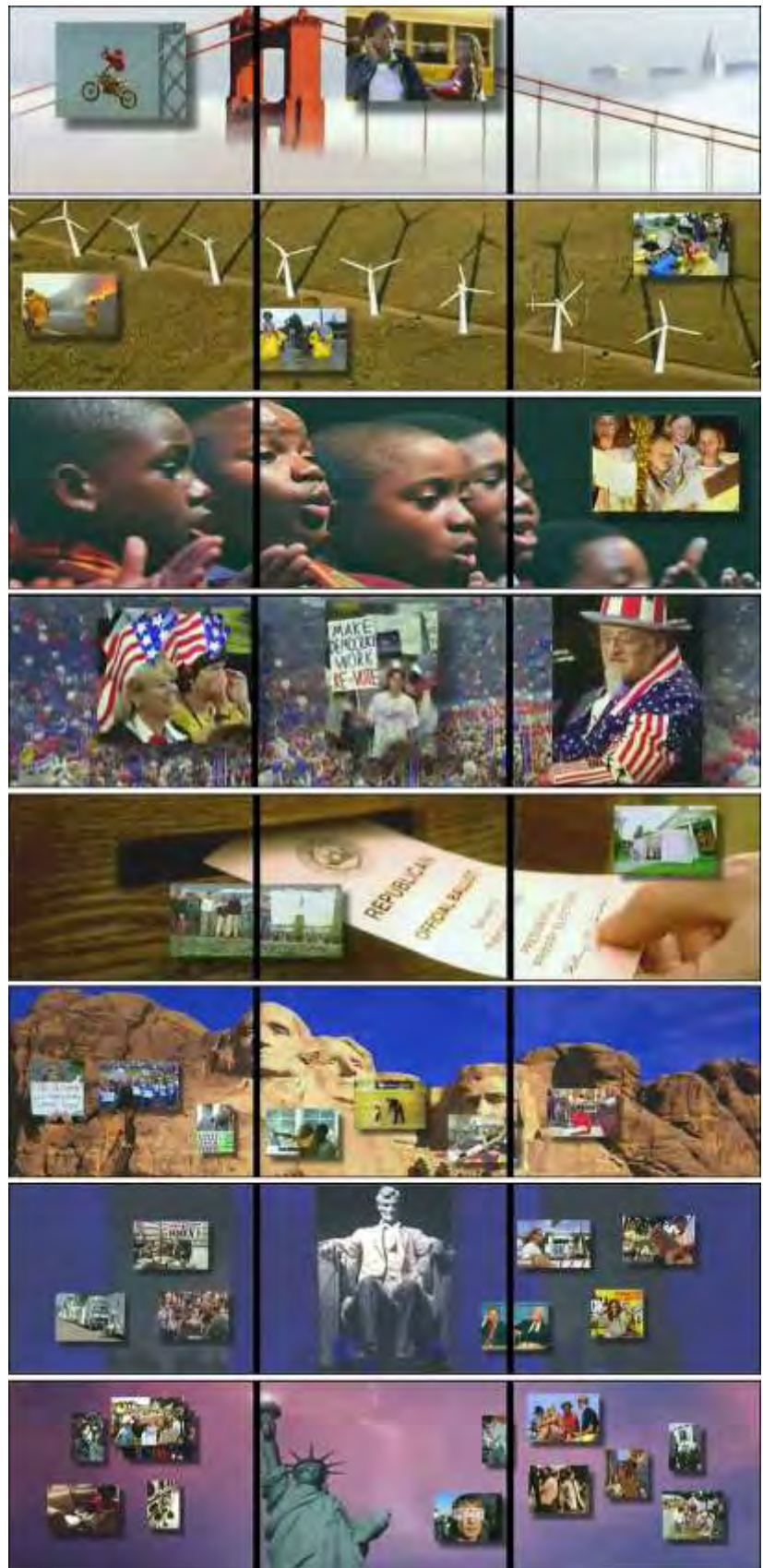
Eventually, he got tired of the AP pictures and made another deal with Corbis (which is why, if you watch the video of *Blessings of Liberty*, you see **Corbis'** logo on some of the thumbnail versions used for preliminary versions of the show).

Fred also liked to see all kinds of programming variations, to see what a picture looked like moving in from the left, the right, the top and the bottom of the screen.

With so many pictures and programming possibilities, he just **didn't know when to let go** and move on.

In the end, he let me go. Ha!

When the programming of the Blessing of Liberty show was 95% complete, Fred fired me and let his graphics guy finish my work. By that time, our relationship had degenerated to the point where we were calling each other names. Thus, the version of the show which I present is of the version I made, as far as I got before being terminated—an unfinished symphony.



Seven of more than fifty scenes. >300 little inset pictures were all animated.

Until our relationship fell apart, I was enjoying the gig. Fred lived in historic Milton, an up-market suburb nine miles [sixteen kilometers] south of Boston, where his wife, Amanda, was a successful real estate agent. I enjoyed jogging every afternoon. My five-mile circuit took me along the Nesponset River then up through the quaint colonial town of Milton.

Fred's huge house was situated on a triangular one acre [.4 hectare] lot. I lived in an attic bedroom which, though cold, was big, comfortable and private.

Fred sent me this picture of the studio in the barn, in summer mode. When I worked there, the desk was surrounded in an igloo of mirror insulation, with a pair of high-power heater fans. **Fred's desk was a 6-foot [~2 meter] fold-up table** to the right of the programming desk.



My room was attached to storage space chock-a-block with retired slide gear and show trays for a score of multi-image productions made for major aquaria, e.g., the **New England Aquarium, in Boston.** (Like me, Fred couldn't let go relics of his past.) We ate at home most of the time; his wife was a decent cook; she enjoyed entertaining. After dinner, we'd retire to the TV room and watch **Antiques Road Show** while eating ice cream. **Fred's dog rambunctious little dog competed for attention, endlessly spinning in circles, chasing his tail.** Boston got record snow with temperatures near zero most of the time I was there. Fred rigged up a mylar *igloo* in the barn, with three space heaters that surrounded me and the *Watchout* gear.

The Brinks circulated in Boston's high society. One night we ate out at a fancy place in Boston at the invitation of Nicholas Negroponte, head of the Media Lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT].¹⁰⁰ The conversation that night was mind boggling. Fred was a lot smarter than I originally gave him credit for.

Another night, Wiley Crockett and his wife Barbara (both deceased; Wiley just recently) drove up from nearby Rhode Island and we had dinner together at Legal Seafood in **Boston's Back-Bay.** I was surprised by how much weight Wiley had gained. He and Barbara excitedly told me all about their magazine businesses, *Northwest Sailing News*, which morphed into *Sailing Life*. Barbara previously worked at Yachting magazine. We had more than three decades of catching up to do, so there was no shortage of conversation. It was the last time I saw either of them. Barbara died a short time later, of a brain tumor mistaken for a pinched nerve in her neck. Wiley lives outside Providence; I managed to **get in touch with him, to fact check for this memoir.** However, he has Parkinson's and I don't hear back from him most of the time.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Negroponte is the co-founder (with Jerome B. Wiesner) of the MIT Media Lab (1985), which he directed for its first 20 years. A graduate of MIT, Negroponte was a pioneer in the field of computer-aided design and has been a member of the MIT faculty since 1966. He has personally provided start-up funds for more than 40 companies, including Zagats and *Wired* magazine.
<https://web.media.mit.edu/~nicholas/>

2007 – Existential Choice – AV Suicide

While the first quarter-year was spent generating working capital, my focus was on getting my work seen by more people—the more eyes that saw my work, the higher the chances of making a sale. My ambition was to get work hung in public venues and to publicize every show to the maximum extent possible. The fact that I was showing **prominently in Vancouver, at Michael Godard's gallery**, gave me new credentials when I presented my work to others.

I targeted galleries and retail outlets in Whistler and Revelstoke, BC, as well as Seattle and Vashon Island. However, before embarking on the new business foray there was a production problem that needed fixing: Epson printers suffered from *metamerism*.

The visible results of metameric failure are differences in the way colors look under different types of illumination. Recall that, relative to each other, fluorescent lights are greenish, incandescent lights are reddish, and daylight is bluish. The colors in each picture would look different depending on which light sources were used. A shade of aqua (cyan blue), for example, would look bluer in daylight, greener with fluorescent lighting, or grayer with incandescent lighting.

Pictures with bold saturated colors didn't show metameric failure as much as those with less intense, more neutral tones.

A few discerning gallery customers noticed metameric failure in some of my work and questioned me about it; I told them it was part of the effect; most seemed satisfied with that explanation; but I was embarrassed about it.

In late 2005, Epson brought out a replacement for the 7600 that used a new type of inks [Ultra Chrome K3]. Aside from curing the metamerism problem, the new machine produced a wider gamut using eight ink colors instead of seven (including 3 shades of black). My pictures looked even better overall. More importantly, perhaps, for customers buying art as investments, the new inks were more archival, rated at about 100 years. Such customers perceived added life to be synonymous with value.

I traded in the 7600, in early 2006, and bought a new 7800 model, from Chris Royals at Tricera Imaging [Vancouver]. The new printer set me back nearly \$5,000, even with the trade in; **that was a big bite out of my dwindling funds. I wasn't worried, though, because my two loyal AV clients would soon be calling: Dave Fry for Nike's Spring sales meetings and Steve Oliker with another New York Life show. But what do they say: "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched?"**

Steve called, right on schedule; but the call didn't go as planned. The conversation began with him asking me what version of Watchout I used. Huh? He went on to explain that New York Life was upgrading Studio 51's Watchout rig to Version Three and asked if I would be able to work with that.

Upgrading was an issue for me and had been ever since Anna's alimony robbed me of capital for three years. I never caught up, technologically; it was never necessary. Version Two did everything I needed to do. Version Three was simply a re-write of Version Two to **move the application onto a new platform, with a few new bells and whistles that weren't** mission critical. Besides, to upgrade also meant new servers, bringing the total per display (or projector) to about \$6,000; that was still a lot of money back then; and to do the NYL show I needed two sets of three (for panorama format), totaling \$36,000.

Making some quick calculations, I quickly concluded that I would lose \$10,000 doing the job and that was an impossibility; my finances were too shaky for a lose-money job.

Hearing myself decline Oliker's offer was like an out-of-body experience; my head was swimming; it was as if the rug had been pulled out from under me—the very definition of a *black-swan* event. My decision meant losing what could have been a long-term client, a kind of fixed income.

Steve asked me to consider carefully what I was saying; I said I knew it was the end.

And it was.

Dave Fry never called. When I checked with Steve Ferris, he told me that Sound Images **weren't doing Watchout anymore. Dave's son, Tyler, had finished school and gone into** business with his father. What with the state of digital production being what it was by then, the two could pull it off without me or Gar or anyone else. Steve still ran the office and staged their productions, he explained. By the end of the call I had a lump in my throat. It really was the end. My last show was behind me.

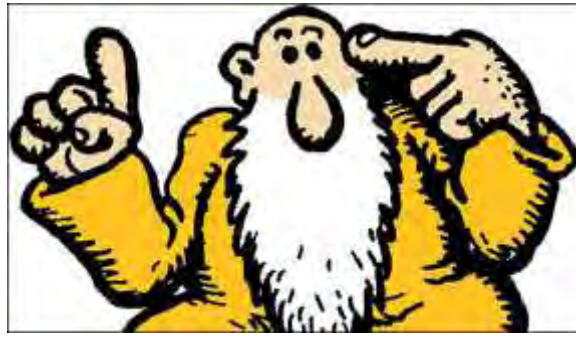
I had committed AV suicide.

In the future, I would have to rely on my skills as a fine-arts photo-illustrator. But that was OK; I had a handle on that and was quickly learning the ropes of the gallery world. **When people asked why I wasn't going to do AV anymore, I was quick to elaborate on the** success stories of Michael Godard and Thomas Kinkade. I convinced myself that I would soon be *hanging* with the likes of them.

I hung on for another five years, opening a fine-arts printing business, writing a book about giclée printing, teaching Photoshop at the British Columbia Institute of Technology [BCIT], and creating a learn-to-read program for children that included a series of five **picture books with accompanying wall art and puppets. You'll find all that and more in the** sequel to this book: *The King Is Dead, Long Live the King*.

Today, as I walked past the Sechelt Seniors Center, on my way to the Service Canada office to take care of some pension-related matters (annual *proof of life* reporting), the Seniors-Center sign, which features clever aphorisms, read:

"I started with nothing, and I've still got some." Ha!



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Lessons Learned (The Hard Way)

Go where your story leads you.

Temporary soon becomes permanent.

Mind your manners.

Look the part you wish to play.

Remember: nobody sees things the way you do.

Make no assumptions.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. [The Bible was right.]

There's no accounting for people's taste.

Don't make it look easy.

Ask and Ye shall receive.

The squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

You can't win if you don't play.

Assume success but plan for failure.

Do it now. [Advice from Burt Holmes.]

You'll never know when the last time is, for anything.

Adapt or die.

Keep your teeth as long as possible.

The End

EPILOGUE



"Writing a memoir is like looking at yourself in the mirror through a magnifying glass; a narcissistic exercise in self adulation." [Mesney]

When grandpa Mesney gave me a Minolta SR-2 in 1957, little did either of us know that he was changing my life—re-orienting my psyche from right brain to left, from verbal to pictorial. That changed my life.

My career was all about capturing life in pictures. I was so busy capturing life, I wasn't living it. But that was then. Now, with all those pictures, I can relive vast swaths of the past that. Without those pictures, I'd have forgotten long ago. My image archive has proven to be an invaluable asset for this book.¹⁰¹

We think pictorially. Our memory is based on images. If I ask you where you left your keys, an image comes to mind—of the place you left them. Your mind remembers things in a visual context. For example, I remember that my keys are hanging from a carabiner **that's hooked to the wire shelf in front of me. We are wired to track memories via images.**

It's been fun writing this memoir, a chance to spend a few years with old friends, reliving the past, searching for clues about who I am and who I have become—the well-worn version of myself that pens these words.

Do I miss my career in the slide-show business? I do. I miss the grandeur of it all; the giant screens and full-blown sound. And I miss the travel—going on location, setting up, getting it done and moving on. Every show brought a new set of challenges, many self made.

Those business trips broke life into episodes. Now, I have difficulty dealing with the monotony of a long-term daily routine **that involves the same 'ol day in and day out.** I am coming to terms with it, especially considering recent events that have brought mortality closer to home.

They say, a rolling stone gathers no moss. For all the excitement of a life spent travelling—I lived and/or worked in dozens of countries on five Continents—there was a hollowness to life when I finally settled down. Living abroad, I lost touch with old friends and family; **left behind, they weren't there for me when I returned; they, like me, had changed—hence the saying that, "you can't go home."** Complicating that, I have difficulty making new friends; **I don't suffer fools.**

The years spent working overseas distorted my perceptions, particularly of myself. Wherever I went, colleagues treated me like a star.

Braggart Alert: Few other slide-show makers, if any, came close to my skill level. My shows were better than nearly anyone else's;¹⁰² I always had a new trick up my sleeve; I was the top dog, Mister Big. Having lived on a pedestal, it's been hard stepping down; assimilating into society as just another guy.

¹⁰¹ While writing, I set aside anything to do with illustration and design; images and words are two disparate realms. **Having finished the writing, I've turned my attention to illustrating the book; that involves going through my archives and selecting and/or making pictures of that memorabilia.** In many cases, I find myself doing copy work, digitally re-photographing silver prints and color slides. It is tedious and involves almost as much work as it took to make the originals. **But the digital restorations are even better than the originals in many cases; the controls that today's image makers have—using Photoshop, for example—allow such infinite control that anything less than perfect just won't do.**

¹⁰² **At the time, I didn't know about guys like Dave Frey or Marc Rosenthal; I lived in an Incredible bubble.** I was a legend in my own mind.

Living in Sweden humbled me. My fast-and-flashy New York style was a cultural misfit in Scandinavia, and most of Europe for that matter. However, my ego regained control with the success of Incredible Imagers Stockholm. The work Emms and I did, especially for Saab, turned the tables. The aggressive, high-tempo style of our shows was mimicked by many, but none could match the ego-driven audaciousness of my scripts, or John Emms' mastery of imaging technology. That kind of *chutzpah* is a derivative of confidence. I always had my eye on the prize; fame begets fortune.

To win, you must want to win. But what is winning?

It's getting what you want. But here's the rub—few of us know, what do we *really* want?

I spent the better part of my life trying to impress people, to make friends, only to learn, late in life, that I really prefer to be alone. I could say the same about the women in my life, I never paid enough attention to them. I lived in my own world, a legend in my own mind—and still do.

On this auspicious evening, the last day of 2018, writing these last words, summing it all **up, I feel the need to say something "important," offer some sage advice, famous last words** and all that. I can think of only these:

Keep your eye on the prize; work hard to win **it; don't take no for an answer**; and, most importantly, do it *now*.

POSTSCRIPT 2018

It seems that memoir writing has something in common with slide shows: as Richard Shippis put it, **good shows are never finished, they're abandoned.**

Well, not quite **yet....**



As the third draft of this memoir winds up and my attention turns to illustration, layout and design, I worry that I have made some elision that I will regret later; every time I flip back a few pages and start reading, **there's more I want to add, stuff I want to re-word. But it's time to move on.**



I could always write a sequel....

Ha!

An Incredible Epic

Continues in Volume Six