

Fellowship Thesis

By **Peggie Vallejo Hall**, *M.Photog., F-ASP*



I belong to that vanishing species, the artisans, who learned their craft from their parents. My father taught me about photography, as his father had taught him. I am part of the third generation of photographers in my family, and as I recall, I did not have much of a choice: I was raised as a photographer. At no time did I ever stop to think whether I was going to be a photographer, because that was what I did. The natural way in which I became a photographer allowed me to become familiar with the tools of the trade: lighting, retouching and the laboratory.

That learning process has enabled me to create images, and it has also taught me that pressing the shutter, the moment when one makes the decision to capture the image on film, is only one part of the process. This has been frequently overlooked and even forgotten in recent years. Mastering the tools of the trade enables you to go beyond them: it allows you to

print that idea on paper, to play with it, to change it, and to get that image you are looking for. Many times it helps you to find things you had not been aware of. That is the magic of photography: it is like alchemy. You sprinkle the magic powders and behold, an image emerges.

I think that I fell in love with photography mainly because this process of discovery fascinated me from the start, and because photography allowed me to express through images the ideas and thoughts I could not express otherwise. Photography has made it unnecessary for me to go into therapy: I have always found it difficult to put my thought into words, and photographs have become the alternate language in which I express myself. They are my catharses, my way to discover and to understand myself and to give meaning to my life.

I believe that photography is a passion for life, for people. It is to them that we give the memories of their best moments, those that make up the history of their lives. They may not be the most transcendental moments in the history of mankind, but they are the most important for those who have lived them, people like you and me. The portrait photographer is important because he uses images to build a history of everyday life. Jorge Luis Borges, the great Argentinean writer, said that to exist is to be photographed. Photography points out and confirms our existence. It makes it somehow more real.

However, taking one family group portrait after another, one wedding after another, may lead to repetition and boredom. How do you keep everyday work from killing your creativity? How do you keep the pleasure of taking photographs alive?

My attitude towards it is to strive to make routine work feel like anything but routine. I take a great variety of shots, I employ a large repertoire of images. And I like to take chances. Sometimes things may go wrong, but sometimes you are right on the spot and you create new images, which become great additions to your repertoire. To keep creativity alive, you must nourish it with new images, yours and those created by other photographers and artists, and with study and discussion.

There are many photographers I admire. I am not sure to what extent I have been influenced by them, or how much their influence shows in my work, but I am

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President's Message



Dear friends,

Could you describe in "one word" what ASP stands for? Or perhaps if someone asked you what ASP represents, could you tell them about our association and its benefits? Unless you were a board member you may not know the answer to either of these questions? Perhaps I can give you a few ideas of what I believe the American Society of Photographers stands for.

First of all I believe that the society shares a common **Vision** in its goals to "promote education, foster fellowship and perpetuate the ideals of photography as a science and art." We have the **Opportunity** to "recognize and honor the qualitative achievements of our members through the Fellowship and Associate Degrees as well as the Gold Medallion and State Elite Awards." **Leadership** comes from its members who are willing to serve and promote the ethical standards of our organization. We are a **Unique** group among the

Professional Photographers of America forming the **Nucleus** of **Talented** artists who **Embrace** the **Ethical** qualities of professional photography. Each of us **Represents** the combined efforts of those before us and their aspirations to the advancement of photography.

Well, this is just a short view of how I think the ASP has helped so many of its members who are willing to work. For those of you who are familiar with the web, the ASP web site will be up and running very soon. The web site will be quite unique and will offer many benefits to you and your business. The State Elite Awards are blending with our membership and have been a great success in recognizing our members in each state. The ASP Traveling Loan Exhibit is available to members who wish to display this fine work of art at their business or some special exhibit. I can assure you that this display will no doubt create interest among everyone who sees it. Times are limited so plan ahead to secure your date. Contact **Buddy Stewart**, TLC chairman, BMacOnly@aol.com.

By the way, there is no charge for use of the exhibit.

You may have noticed that there were a few words in bold type in the second paragraph. Can you figure out a word in the form of an acrostic? I'll give you a hint. It's a person who offers to do something of his or her own free will or made up of these type people. Hope you can guess it.

Thank you for your friendship. May God bless you and your family in the New Year. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Your friend,
David Smith

ASP Website

by **Richard W. Trummer**, PPA Certified, M.Photos. Cr.

The exciting new ASP web site will be up and running by the end of December. Many new changes are in store, including many new member features, travelling loan bibliographies and prints, awards, contact information and member benefits. The address is www.ASofP.com. Members will even be able to renew their membership and apply online as well as get information

about the upcoming "Elite Series" programs coming to a town near you.

About Our Members

Our heartfelt sympathies go out to **Jay Stock** and his family on the death of his wife, **Julia May Stock**, on November 19 after suffering a severe stroke.

2004 Fellowship Candidate Information

Candidates for the Fellowship in 2004 should already be working on their thesis and portfolio. The judging is expected to take place in May of 2004. Those that have been previously notified of having 15 or more Fellowship points should already be preparing their entry. If you don't know your total, contact Executive Director **Roland Laramie**, ppanerl@aol.com for your current total.

The processing fee for 2004 will remain at \$250.00 (\$150.00 with the application that is refundable until March of 2004 and the \$100.00 balance to be sent with the thesis). The only rule change for 2004 will be that no print in the portfolio shall exceed 20x24 inches in size. The one exception to this will be for anyone who is resubmitting an entry and had prints larger than 20x24 in their previous portfolio may resubmit the larger size.

Questions may be sent to **Robert D. Golding**, Fellowship Chairman at 2035 Richmond Street, Philadelphia, PA 19125. Bob's telephone number is (215) 423-6363; his e-mail address is golding@bhimag.com.

Traveling Exhibit Available

The ASP Traveling Exhibit containing one hundred twenty-six great images by some of the best image makers in the world is available for an exhibit in your area. The exhibit is self-contained with its own impressive display unit, which can be set up in just a couple of hours. The show makes a great attraction for a bank lobby, library or museum or can be separated into smaller units for multiple displays in a store with limited space or for a few locations within your community. It has been used this way by a bookstore and would work in any business that wants to attract viewers.

The Exhibit is sponsored by Fuji Photo Film, U.S.A. and is free to ASP members. The exhibit has several time slots available in the first six months of 2004. To schedule a date and time to have the exhibit shipped to you or for more information, please call **Buddy Stewart** at (662) 327-4617. He can also be contacted by email at bmaconly@aol.com.

ASP Elite Award

by **Ernie Johnson**, *M.Photog. Cr.*
ASP Elite Award Chairman

The ASP Elite Award series finished its first year with great success. A big thanks to Miller's Professional Imaging for the sponsorship in memory of William Miller, the founder of their lab and the feedback from all of the state representatives, which were all positive. Most of the winners' images were accepted into the PPA Loan Collection.

We are starting a new year with the Elite series. The rules are the same, the highest scoring image by an active member (dues paid) of ASP at the state convention will receive the award.

The awards are ready to be given away so get those prints ready. I ask that all ASP state representatives contact me at least three weeks before your convention so we can be sure that you receive the award in ample time. Following the convention, please be sure to get a photograph of the recipient as well as the winning image so that it can be published in a future issue of this newsletter.

To request the award or for more information, you can contact me at photo4u2b@aol.com.

THE ASP NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly by the American Society of Photographers

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American Society of Photographers ASSOCIATE POINTS FORM

Name _____ PP of A # _____

Address _____

City _____ State or Province _____ Zip _____

Excerpts from the ASP Constitution:

Article IX, Section 3(c) - Issuing Associate Points: For professional services to photography for teaching, writing, speaking and judging merits. The number of points to correlate with the number of PPA merits awarded for that function. All other PPA service-type merits are not acceptable for Associate points.

Article IX, Section 5 - Filing Associate Points: Forms to obtain Associate points will be sent annually to all members by special mailing or through the newsletter. To substantiate PPA merits, members should complete the secretary's form and return it with the photocopies of the PPA merit forms. These should be received by the Executive Director annually between January 1 and May 31.

FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO QUALIFY FOR APPLICATION FOR THE ASSOCIATE THIS YEAR, THIS FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED NO LATER THAN MAY 31, 2004.

Mail to: Roland Laramie, Exec. Director
American Society of Photographers
P.O. Box 316
Willimantic, CT 06226-0316

Please list PPA merits that are eligible for Associate Points:

NOTE: Please do not ask PPA to confirm merits.
The acceptable form of proof is a copy of the merit certificate attached to this form.

aware that each one of them has shown me at least one different way to look at things and to feel about what I see. Some photographers that come to mind now are Julia Margaret Cameron, Man Ray, Arnold Newman, Ansel Adams, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Herb Ritts, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ouka Lele, Annie Leibowitz, Peter Witkin, Toni Catani, and Sebastiao Salgado.

I have also tried to learn about the art of portrait, the use of light, and composition, from other forms of art, such as painting and films. Films in particular are an inexhaustible source of images. When I am asked what inspires or what motivates me when I take photographs, it is really hard to come up with an answer. Motivation may come from any direction: from a scene you saw in a film, from that painting that impressed you, from the position of that sleeping child, from the way light shone into a room and filled its space, or from the many colors and textures of an old hacienda. Those images are stored in your brain, and they may show up in the ideas reflected in your work.

My development as a photographer has not followed a straight line. There have been people, moments, and places that have shaped it. My family provided me with the basic knowledge, and gave me a start in the technique of the portrait. At college, I met friends who introduced me to art photography, and when I started working with Marisol and we opened our studio I became more interested in forms and contents. Taking photographs at my father's studio when he was traveling was my first experience as a professional photographer, and attending photographers' conventions in Mexico and in the United States made me feel more confident about my skills as a portrait photographer, confident enough to send my pictures to contests.

Taking part in exhibitions with art photographers opened up another world of possibilities for me. Working with Marisol has led me to try to combine two different ways to be a photographer: taking photographs to make a living and taking the photographs you live to take.

I do not believe that there is a sharp line that separates art from commercial photographs. They have much in common, because every image has an aesthetic value. No matter what kind of work one does, one must always try to do it right and make it

beautiful. It may be commercial work, but this does not mean one does not have a responsibility to be creative. You may not choose the subject, but you must give it an artistic value. The distance between art photographers and commercial photographers has been artificially promoted and accepted by photographers themselves. We need only remember that until very recently art depended entirely on the sponsor, and in some cases it still does. Until the nineteenth century, artists worked for the church, for the State or for rich patrons, and they did not have much of a choice on the subject of their work. But who would question the aesthetic value of the Byzantine frescoes in Ravenna, Leonardo's "Gioconda" or Velazquez' "Meninas"?

Now, thanks to digital technology, commercial photographers may venture into art photography more easily. Projects and ideas that we could only imagine, or that were very difficult to realize, can now be undertaken with comparative ease and in a short time. Nevertheless, digital photography requires not only mastering the tools of the photographer's trade (such as lighting, printing or retouching), but also training in the use of computers and programs, as well as continuing to develop skills in design and other arts, like painting. The arrival of digital technology has become a new challenge for me, and even though it still involves a high degree of difficulty in controlling both the process and the result, its value as a wonderful new tool to create images cannot be denied.

At the studio we take I. D., advertising, executive, fashion, children and family group photographs. We also take photographs at weddings and other occasions. We make copies and restore old photographs. Contrary to what might be assumed, doing all these different types of work is very enriching, because each one of them contributes something to the others. When I see one of our wedding photographs, for instance, I realize how much it owes to our fashion photographs.

My studio and my photographs are a reflection of myself, always moving between the traditional and the contemporary, from taking portraits to art photography. I also want my photographs to reflect on my culture, using the spaces we Mexicans have inherited from centuries of history: our colors, our light, our spiritual culture,

and the customs of our people. And last but not least, I want our images to recreate the times we have lived in, the uniqueness of people and their relationships, and my love of photography, its art and its history.

I have had many satisfactions in my career, and some of them I remember very fondly: when I received my Master Photographer Diploma from the Mexican Society of Professional Photographers; the first time one of my pictures won a Best Photograph of the Year Award in a National Convention; or when Ron Stewart and Michael Taylor, now my friends, invited me to join the XXV Society of Photographers, or the enthusiastic response to the program we presented in Pasadena, California in January 2000. Something I am specially proud of is the time when Lourdes Almeida, a well-known Mexican art photographer, saw some of my photographs and considered them to be good enough to be shown at an exhibit of art photographs held in Mexico City in October 1998. That was a landmark in my career, and since then I have tried to take every opportunity I find to work on art photography. Now I have discovered digital photography, and it has opened entirely new ways to look at my work.

Most portrait photographers I know take only portraits, and sometimes they do some advertising work. They seldom take any of those photographs that are taken not to be sold, but out of a mere need to express themselves. If you are in love with photography, you will find that you will also need to take art photographs, architectural photographs, landscapes, nudes, and so on.

I believe it is very important for photographers to take many different kinds of photographs. They must enjoy taking them, experimenting, sending them to contests, going to photography and art exhibitions, reading books and publications, studying the great masters of photography. They must see as many images as they can, and study composition so they can develop and improve their ability to see. And, of course, they must take photographs, their photographs.

Trying your hand at other kinds of photographs and having an education in design helps develop a different sensitivity and a different creativity when you take portraits, and it makes you a more complete photographer. I believe that the excessive

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All programming subject to change without prior notice

• **Two Great Parties:**

Join WPPI and your fellow photographers for food and fun at our Opening Night Welcome Reception on Feb. 22. Plus, join us Wednesday night, Feb. 25, for the Awards of Excellence Awards Ceremony, where we will announce the IWPPA (8x10) Award winners and the 2004 Awards of Excellence Print and Album competition winners. We will also honor our Accolades recipients and present special industry honors and awards.

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REGISTRATION FEES

Convention Registration (first guest free, add 1 guests \$95):

- WPPI Members: **\$199** (price online: \$175)
- Non-members*: **\$298** (price online: \$274)

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specialization we have been heading towards in recent times has become more of a limitation than an improvement. As people and as photographers, we must strive for more comprehensive knowledge and skills.

The way in which I usually take those special photographs is simple: I have an idea (starting from a location, I develop a theme, or a theme leads me to search for a location), I make a sketch of that idea, and then I carry it out (which involves production, choosing among proofs, printing and finishing). Along this process, the idea evolves and takes its final shape.

Understanding a form means interpreting it, that is, retracing the process which originated it, and discovering in its origins a formative intention. Creating means imagining, building, and using colors and materials. In other words, it means composing. And, just as well, a large part of the creative process involves doing things which are immediately rejected and done over, tried out and reviewed.

One must know the rules of composition. Such knowledge does not rule out spontaneity: quite the contrary, it modifies and improves on the original concept. The eye and the brain are much more important than the canvas or the lens of a camera. The act of taking a photograph is based on an emotional impulse that must be followed by a constructive thinking process. The artist has feelings to be expressed, but his work will have value only if composition is important. As Reynolds said, "We must reject and discard the false and vulgar notion that rules are chains of genius. They are chains only for those who lack genius; like an armor, which is an ornament and a defense for the strong, but a heavy burden for the weak, who instead of being protected by it are overwhelmed". You must learn the rules before you learn how to break them. A photograph may not be technically perfect, but it must be expressive. It must communicate feelings, and do so as beautifully as possible.

It is advisable to devote some time to study and to think about your own work in search of the ideas which lie subconsciously beneath it and, when they come to light on paper, define your style. Louis Sullivan, a famous American architect, used to say that you cannot express yourself if you do not already have a system to think and to perceive. And you cannot have a system to

think and to perceive unless you have a basic system of life. What is in your mind determines what you see. We are never a blank slate: we are loaded with information.

Every human being has a unique face, unique fingertips, and a unique way to search for knowledge. Every circle drawn by a different human being will be a different circle. How do you identify a style? You need to look at the means of expression, the method, and the technique, but mostly at the similarities of form and of contents. A style is each individual's unique way to work with images, his or her personal imprint, the particular and recognizable stamp that human being leaves on his or her work.

The style is conditioned by the intentions of the photographer, but it cannot be established beforehand. If it is genuine, it will emerge later, and it will be seen throughout the work of the photographer. You don't choose a style: it is shaped by your daily work, by your craft. As Picasso said, "I don't look for things, I found them".

When I first opened my studio, I thought about the kind of photographs I wanted to take, the kind of images people expected, and how I could satisfy both my intentions and their expectations. I realized that the visual culture of the younger generations has been shaped by advertising and the media - fashion and lifestyle magazines, films, television, music videos - which employ unusual lighting and show people moving or even out of focus. They are exposed to images that may not have been created by photographers. We the photographers must be open to other forms of expression. We must not be afraid of crossing barriers, or be chained to old-fashioned views on what is right and wrong when taking portraits. We must have an appreciation for the work of other professionals and their images, and allow the art of the portrait to evolve.

Today, people want fresh images, where they can recognize themselves as they would if they looked into a mirror. They do not want to look false, or be intimidated by the camera or the photographer. They want to look like the models in a magazine. One must try to capture their most natural attitude. People do not want to be seen in photographs identical to those of their parents any more than I want to take photographs like those my family used to

take. People have different ideas about the image that they project, too: women have a career, and they are not as passive as they used to be. "Machos" have almost become extinct (even in Mexico), and men are more about their appearance. These are some of the things we have to consider when we are taking photographs.

Being a portrait photographer means working with people, creating a relationship with others through the camera. We must never forget that two people are involved in a photographic session: the model and the photographer. Even though it is the photographer who usually gets the credit for a good photograph, that photograph could never have been taken without the participation of the model or models. The greatest challenge for a portrait photographer is the communication with the models. You must make them participate and get involved in the process, and you have to create a friendly relationship with them. I believe you need to fall a little in love with your models, and make it show in your photographs.

Every human being is at the same time unique and universal. We are the products of a very specific culture, but we also share a set of universal values and, especially in the globalized times we live, we are influenced by other cultures. We are the product of our past and we live in a present that is building a future we are all responsible for, because every creation expresses values that have an effect on other people.

The values of art are cultural and historical values, and they change across time and space. Our photographs can help to rescue the values of our culture, and at the same time they can make us look at ourselves and at the others in a different light. We may then discover new ways to relate to all and to everyone around us. And if we are capable of creating something that becomes part of our culture, and that can be called art, then our work will have had a meaning.

Even though creating art with a capital A may be difficult, and we may never create images worthy of that word, what really counts is trying, taking the chance to strive for it in our everyday work. In the end, art is not just a matter of aesthetics: it is the creation of those who experiment, those who build and those who discover.

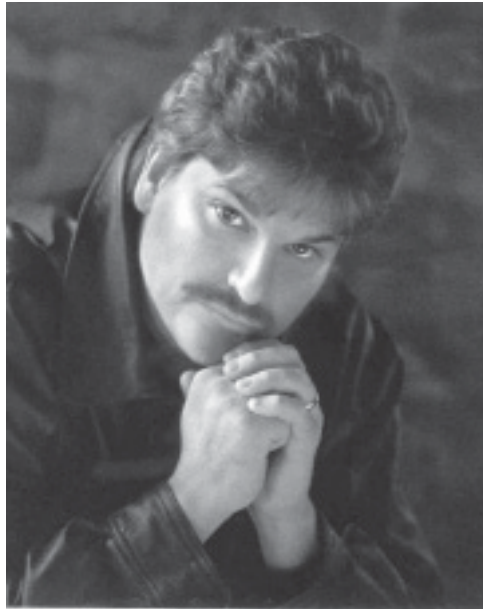
Meet the New Governor **Rick Trummer**

Rick Trummer, PPA Certified, M. Photog. Cr., F-WPPA, F-SCPA has considered himself a photographer for the majority of his life. At nine years of age, Rick began doing yard work for the internationally known artist, **Aaron Bohrod**. After a day's work for the Bohrod mansion, Rick enjoyed watching Aaron work on his famous still life paintings that hang in some of the finest museums and galleries in the world. Although Rick's interest in painting and drawing was great, he never progressed in those areas; his love and passion always belonged to the camera. At the young age of ten, he asked his mother to co-sign the loan papers for his first camera and the rest is history.

Rick was born in Marinette, Wisconsin. Six months after his birth, his father, **Robert John Trummer**, passed away. Rick's only regret to this day is never knowing him, but he still has his father's passion and goal orientated ambitions that are remembered in his work of the present day.

His photographic talents blossomed in high school, where he was the main photographer for the school yearbook for three years and even taught classes in the photographic area. After numerous awards in junior competitions, Rick attended Madison Area Technical College to receive formal training in the photographic field. Shortly after receiving degrees in both Photography and Visual Communications, Rick not only started his own business, "Trummer Photography", but began to teach photography and darkroom techniques at his Alma Mater and the University of Wisconsin Extension. Rick then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison to further his education and finish his degrees in Art and Visual Communication.

In 1986 Rick's life changed dramatically. A car accident left him with serious back problems that would later require surgery and the eventual loss of his business. For more than a year of his life, he worked to put his life and business back together and started up "Fine Art Photography, Inc." in



1988. In the same time frame, he met the love of his life, **Glori Geier** who today stands at his side as his wife and driving soul of his inspired work. February 15, 1991, Rick's first son, **Taylor John Trummer**, was born. To this day, he considers it one of the two greatest moments of his life. The other is the birth of his second son, **Justin Michael Trummer**, born on July 23, 1996.

Rick talks of the merger of his business in 1992 with well-known portrait artist **Lee Larsen** as one of the most progressive moves of his career. "He has taught me so much of the photo industry that I ever dreamed of. He has made me a better photographer, businessman and leader than any other influence in my life".

In 1996 Rick left his General Manager duties at the Larsen Studio after a heart attack. Today, he is the Supervising Photographer at American TV, a 14-store franchise in the Midwest. He also runs a newly developed specialized photography studio, "The Image Design Group". Although his true love and the majority of his work is commercial photography, even in the portrait and wedding fields his artistry shines through. In his twenty-plus year career, he has been

creating commercial and portrait advertising that challenges the imagination. His award-winning style has been seen and highlighted on some of the top publications throughout the U.S. and Canada.

He has received numerous awards for his excellence, including five "Best of Show" commercial honors from the Wisconsin Professional Photographers Association, three prestigious "Kodak Gallery Awards", ten "Fuji Masterpiece Awards" and over 20 "Grand Awards" from the South Central Photographers Association. The SCPA has also bestowed the 1993-1997, 1999-2002 "Best of the Year" commercial awards, numerous "Court of Honors" and the "Outstanding Achievement Award" ten times. He has been presented over 250 "Par Excellence" blue ribbons for his photographic art in his career.

Rick has received "Special Service Awards" from both the SCPA and the WPPA and is a two-time President of the South Central Photographers Association. He is currently serving as President of the Wisconsin Professional Photographers Association.

In 1993, Rick became a Certified Professional Photographer. In 1995, he received Fellowships from both the WPPA and the SCPA as well as his Photographic Craftsman degree from the Professional Photographers of America; in 1996 he followed with his Master of Photography degree. The South Central Photographer's Association honored Rick with their first "Lifetime Achievement Award" in 2003.

Rick believes in an ever-growing quest for photographic knowledge. He is constantly pushing himself to the ends of the envelope to become a better photographer and person. Through his teaching and programs in 20 States, Rick has grown much in the last decade, not only in his photographic career, but his personal life as well. He continues to teach and share his knowledge with his peers and the photographers of the next generation.

Are Your Dues Paid?

Have you paid your 2003-2004 ASP dues yet? If not, this may be your last newsletter. Please pay your dues by February 15, 2004. Failure to do so will drop you from our membership. Removing your record will also cancel any Fellowship and Associate points you might have accrued. Please make your check for \$125.00 (the amount after December 31, 2003) payable to the American Society of Photographers and mail it to **Roland Laramie**, P.O. Box 316, Willimantic, CT 06226.

American Society of Photographers

2003-2004 Committee Members

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Chairman of the Board

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Randy Peterson	920 833 6357	APeter8730@aol.com
Aaron Pepis	845 429 3999	pepistudio@aol.com

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Parliamentarian

Jon Allyn	414 871 6600	jonallyn@aol.com
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President-Elect

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Secretary/Treasurer

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Bill Eaton	219 962 1987	mcrphoto@msn.com
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Tim Walden	606 263 2888	waldenky@cs.com

Traveling Exhibit

Buddy Stewart	662 327 4617	BMacOnly@aol.com
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Vice President

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Web Site

Rick Trummer	608 845 6034	rgtrumner@tds.net
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*Names in **Bold** denotes committee chair

PPA Stands Up For Wedding Photographers

Professional Photographers of America took immediate action when a shocking CBS MarketWatch article placed wedding photographers on a “ten most overpaid jobs” list.

PPA President **Bob Lloyd** and PPA President-Elect **Ann Monteith** both wrote strong responses to the journalist and set the record straight with facts and figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbook as well as a survey of photographers’ business practices conducted by PPA in 2000. Following is the original text as it pertained to photographers, followed by PPA President Lloyd’s and President-Elect Monteith’s responses.

Ten most overpaid jobs in the U.S.

Commentary: If only such largesse flowed to all of us

By **Chris Pummer**,
CBS.MarketWatch.com

Almost no one in America would admit to being overpaid, but many of us take home bloated paychecks far beyond what we deserve.

“Fair compensation” is a relative term, yet HR consultants and executive headhunters agree some jobs command excessive pay that can’t be explained by labor supply-and-demand imbalances.

And while it’s easy to argue chief executives, lawyers and movie stars are overpaid, reality is not that cut and dried.

Corporate attorneys earn \$500-plus an hour and plaintiffs lawyers pocket a third of personal-injury settlements, but local prosecutors and public defenders get paid a pittance in comparison. Specialty surgeons may earn \$1 million or more, but some young family-practice doctors are hard-pressed to pay off medical-school loans.

Hollywood stars making \$20 million a movie or \$10 million per TV-season qualify for many people’s overpaid list. But for every one of those actors and actresses, there are a thousand waiting tables and taking bit movie parts or regional theater roles awaiting a big break that never comes.

“A lot of people are overpaid because there are certain things consumers just don’t want screwed up,” said Bill Coleman, senior vice president of compensation for

Salary.com. “You wouldn’t want to board a plane flown by a second-rate pilot or hire a cheap wedding photographer to record an event you hope happens once in your lifetime.

“With pro athletes, one owner is willing to pay big money for a star player and then all the other players want to keep up with the Joneses,” Coleman said. “The art with CEO pay is making sure your CEO is above the median — and you see where that goes.”

What follows is a list of the 10 most overpaid jobs in the U.S., in reverse order, drafted with input from compensation experts:

10) Wedding photographers

Photographers typically charge \$2,000 to \$5,000 to shoot a wedding, for what amounts to a one-day assignment plus initial client-meeting and processing time. Yet many mope through the job, bumping guests in their way without apology, with the attitude: “I’m just doing this for the money until Time or National Geographic calls.”

They must cover equipment and film-development costs. Still, many in major metro areas who shoot two weddings each weekend in the May-to-October season can pull in \$75,000 to \$100,000 for six months’ work.

Yet let’s face it; much of their work is mediocre. Have you ever really been wowed flipping the pages of a wedding album handed you by recent newlyweds? Annie Leibovitz and Richard Avedon they’re not, but some charge fees as if they’re in the same league.

Chris Pummer
Personal Finance Editor
CBS MarketWatch
825 Battery Street
San Francisco, CA 94111

November 11, 2003
Dear Mr. Pummer:

As the president of the world’s largest association of professional photographers I was surprised to see wedding photographers included in your recent article, ‘Ten most overpaid jobs in the U.S.’

The quote from Mr. Coleman is absolutely correct - consumers do not want their wedding photography ‘screwed up.’ As a one time event, a wedding is a situation where the photography has to be done right the first time - or not at all. Hiring a competent photographer who can capture the events of the day is certainly worth a premium.

While it may be impossible to agree on the exact dollar value of photographs that embody life’s most precious memories, salary figures are easier to pin down. Unfortunately, the salary information you provide is not in line with either our experience or other publicly available figures.

The claim of wedding photographers pulling in ‘\$75,000 to \$100,000 for six months’ work’ will no doubt cause many photographers to borrow your words – ‘if only we were all so fortunate.’ According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbook the middle 50% of professional photographers earn between \$16,790 and \$33,020 - a salary in the top 10% of the profession is \$46,890.

Even our members, who generally make more money than their counterparts, come nowhere close to your salary figures. A survey of our members conducted in 2000 showed that their median income was approximately \$34,000 a year. In earning their income a professional photographer can expect to work an average of 45 hours a week - which entails far more than simply showing up at a wedding and taking a few pictures. The most time consuming portion of a photographer’s job begins after the wedding - sorting through the images, constructing the couple’s wedding album, cropping and retouching images, and putting together client orders are all labor and time intensive processes.

So where does that \$2,000 for the wedding package go? Not in the photographer’s pocket. As one or two person businesses that create a custom product for each client, photographers have enormous overhead costs related to equipment purchases and maintenance, health insurance, continuing education, business related insurance and new client acquisition. All of these costs are in addition to processing and printing, the cost of the wedding album and any retouching of the images.

(Please turn to page 10)

PPA Stands Up For Wedding Photographers

(continued from page 9)

Make no mistake, there are wedding photographers who do very well for themselves. A fortunate few serve a very high-end clientele and can command a premium for their services, but only after years of building their business and providing value equivalent to their fees. However, the vast majority - like the clients they serve - are solidly in the middle class.

We appreciate the opportunity to bring these additional facts to your attention. We hope that you will also share them with your readers.

Sincerely,
Robert D. Lloyd
President
Professional Photographers of America

CC: Larry S. Kramer, CEO; CBS MarketWatch; 825 Battery Street; San Francisco, CA 94111

Mr. Pummer:

On Friday, November 7, I read your CBS MarketWatch column in which you listed wedding photographers as among the '10 most overpaid jobs in the U.S.' I wish to state that your position does not square with the business realities of professional wedding photographers.

In addition to directing photography studios in central Pennsylvania and western Maryland, I work as a financial management consultant to the industry-at-large as well as to studio owners. In the past 20 years, I have consulted with or taught business to more than 2,000 photographers throughout the country, so I am well versed on their financial positions. Presently I serve in a volunteer capacity as President Elect of Professional Photographers of America (PPA), the oldest and largest international association representing imaging professionals. In 2000 PPA undertook an extensive study of the business practices and results of its more than 14,000 members, many of whom are wedding photographers. Some relevant conclusions of that study are:

The average wedding sale was \$1,725 (median sale \$1,500).

The average studio's gross sales was \$123,500 (median sales \$118,000, with 64% of photographers grossing under \$150,000).

The typical photographer's salary was less than \$25,000 per year.

Total family income of the typical photographer was \$73,125 (median income \$60,750, which means that one or more family member contributed more substantially to the family income than did the photographer).

The typical photographer worked more than 45 hours per week, which equates to an hourly rate of approximately \$10.00 per hour across all aspects of the business.

28% of photographers made use of non-paid family members to help with photography and production.

I can assure you that since this survey was conducted in 2000, photographers have not fared much better. But for the sake of argument, let's say that the typical wedding sale is now \$2,000. Here are the financial realities of that sale:

Typically a wedding job that costs the consumer \$2,000 nets less than 30% for the photographer. In dollars terms, this means the photographer nets roughly \$600 for a minimum of 35 hours work (roughly \$17 per hour).

The other 70% of the sale goes to pay the photographer's Cost of Goods (hard costs for film/digital media, proofing, processing, wedding album(s), framing and packaging); and General Expenses (monthly costs for advertising, business-facility overhead, employees, outside services, administration, and equipment depreciation).

Yes, some photographers do have sales of \$5,000 and above, but certainly they are not the average. And when larger sales do occur, consider the circumstances surrounding the 'high-end' sale:

Some weddings are 'high-profile' occasions - elaborate affairs hosted by wealthy families and/or celebrities, often costing the hosts as much as \$100,000 . . . even more. Typically, such an event requires additional time on the part of the photographer in terms of planning, hand-holding, and expanded activities to cover such content as an engagement session, wedding rehearsal, outdoor wedding portrait session, etc. Just check out the costs for wedding attire, flowers, catering, etc. of such an affair, and you'll find that the wedding photographer - who alone is held accountable for preserving the wedding activities from start to

finish (not to mention shepherding the major participants during a stressful time) - is the one wedding professional who financially benefits the least from such a wedding celebration. Does that make the other wedding-service providers overpaid?

Some \$5,000 sales are made to middle- or upper-middle-class families. However, this is not a windfall for the photographer, because the sale typically is a function of the couple and their family and friends ordering more images, additional albums, framed portraits, etc. This increases the photographer's Cost of Goods and requires additional hours of production time. Bottom line: The occasional photographer who averages \$5,000 for his wedding work is not getting rich! Please keep this in mind: few wedding photographers can expect to photograph a wedding every single weekend. In fact, most one-man studios do about 30. Even with a high-end net of \$1,500 per wedding (30% of a \$5,000 sale), a photographer doing 30 weddings walks away with only \$45,000 in annual compensation. And remember . . . this is an unlikely best-case scenario, as the average U.S. photographer earns only around \$25,000 per year.

So, Mr. Pummer, I ask you to reconsider your perspective of wedding photographers as being over-paid. In fact most wedding photographers ply their trade for the love of their craft, not for the money. Without their dedication, priceless wedding memories would not become the cherished heirlooms they represent to so many families.

Consider also what wedding photographers give up by doing so: Because most weddings fall on weekends, photographers cannot attend important family activities or take part in many weekend social activities. This family-time pressure is one of the primary reasons why photographers stop photographing weddings and look for other ways to make a living with a camera.

In writing your MarketWatch column, you have unfortunately and unfairly demeaned a class of working people who deserve much better. I hope you will reconsider your position.

Ann K. Monteith President-Elect,
Professional Photographers of America,
Annville, PA

(Ed. note: I may have been one of the first to respond to Mr. Pummer after receiving the article from Emma Lou Horrell (Jackson, Mississippi). Following is my response.)

I don't know how much you earn for the work you do, but you obviously know nothing about wedding photography. A wedding easily takes 36 hours of work to produce. Photographing the wedding is the least time consuming and that is 8-12 hours - often without being fed. I realize that photographers are the help, but they often begin their day 90 minutes prior to the ceremony at the bride's house (8:30 a.m. for a 10:00 a.m. ceremony). This is followed by a drive to the church for the ceremony, which could be 30 minutes, or it could be over an hour for a Mass. After the ceremony they travel to a park or very pretty area for the posed group photos, which could take 60-90 minutes (it could be a 30 minute drive), then back to the reception (another 30 minute drive) to photograph all of the important events that take place the rest of the day. Some photographers that begin the day at the bride's house at 8:30 don't finish until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. Many are not fed. Can you work a strenuous day for approximately 12 hours without eating?

The conferences before the wedding usually take approximately 90 minutes to two hours. Following the wedding, the photographs are matched with negatives or some who are working digitally still have to work with the images. This takes a minimum of 2-3 hours so that the photographs tell a story when the bride and groom come in to pick up their preview album. When the bride and groom return the previews to place their final order, even though they have had them for 2-3 weeks (sometimes longer), the photographer or someone from the staff has to sit down with the couple to go over what they are ordering and to help them make selections (we are professionals). This easily takes another 90 minutes to two hours. After the final order is placed, either the negatives have to be pulled, carded, sometimes enhanced and then ordered. Again, if it is digital, the images selected have to be culled from the entire set of images, cropped on the computer, sized and then ordered. Masking negatives takes longer, but in either case, you're easily looking at 3-4 hours of labor.

When the final order arrives back at the studio, they have to be checked to see if everything ordered came in, to be sure the color is correct, albums have to be put together and gift photos collated, placed in folders or frames and labeled so that the bride and groom will know who gets what photos

(they never remember - it's our job). This is another 6 hours of labor.

This does not include telephone calls to ask questions about their order or the last minute changes the couples make to their order, holding everything up and sometimes making you start all over again.

All of this time does include the cost of the film, previews (proofs to someone who doesn't understand professional photography) processing the finished photographs, albums, frames.

Overpaid? Hardly!

You complain about a photographer receiving \$2,000-\$5,000 for photographing a wedding, how much were you paid for your article and how long did it take you? I'll bet no more than 45 minutes to an hour. You may not have received \$2,000, but if you figure the average hourly wage, you are grossly overpaid compared to wedding photographers.

Sincerely,

Harvey M. Goldstein
former studio owner for 22 years

When Is the Correct Time to Use "ASP"?

by Helene Glassman,
PPA Certified, Cr.Photog.

and Tim Mathiesen,
PPA Certified, M.Photog.Cr., F-ASP

The use of the letters "ASP" is simple, however, it is important that they be used and displayed properly. The letters ASP stand for the American Society of Photographers. The letters themselves do not indicate a degree or level of accomplishment, but they do represent your membership in a very exclusive organization.

The following procedure must be followed when using the letters:

1. They are not to be used after your name or other degrees that you have earned.
2. They should be used in your resume or vita indicating membership in the organization.
3. You should use them in your letterhead and business promotion pieces indicating your membership.
4. If you have either the ASP Fellowship or Associate degree, the letters are used as follows, Fellowship: F-ASP, Associate: A-ASP.
5. If you have both degrees then the letters should be used as follows: F-ASP, A.

The proper use of the symbol will enhance your marketing and sales ability, as well as bring valued visibility to the American Society of Photographers.

PPA is Fighting to Give You Access to More Affordable Health Care!

Finding decent medical insurance, at a price you can afford, is becoming nearly impossible for small business owners. PPA members have an opportunity to do something to change that. Congress is considering the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2003 (H.R. 660/S. 545) which would permit professional associations to offer members group health insurance on a national basis, similar to the way large corporations and unions are permitted to offer employees in various states the same coverage. This bill has the potential to benefit all PPA members, most of all the 28% who are completely without healthcare coverage. We encourage you to contact your elected officials in Washington, DC regarding this important issue.

HOW TO HELP:

1. Let your representatives in Washington know that you support association health plan legislation. You can do this by letter, e-mail or by attending any town-hall style meetings legislators hold in your area.
2. We need your insurance stories. Personal stories help members of Congress understand the problems small business owners face, so let us know about your recent premium hikes and other insurance stories. A form for submitting your story may be found at www.ppa.com.

If you require additional information regarding association health plans or have specific questions, please contact the PPA Department of Copyright and Government Affairs at smorris@ppa.com or djones@ppa.com.

Overpaid?



For those who may have missed it, Chris Pummer of CBS MarketWatch recently wrote an article about wedding photographers being one of the ten most overpaid professions.

Wedding photographers were classed with major airline pilots, West Coast longshoremen, skycaps at major airports, real estate agents selling high-end homes, motivational speakers and ex-politicians on the lecture circuit, orthodontists, CEOs of poorly performing companies, washed-up pro athletes in long-term contracts and mutual-fund managers.

Perhaps Mr. Pummer did us a favor. Are wedding photographers overpaid? Hardly. If anything, they are the bottom rung of the ladder in professional photography as far as profit margin. Assuming that a commercial, portrait and wedding photographer all accept a job in their expertise for \$5,000, you do the math as to which has the highest and lowest profit margin when you take into account materials and time spent photographing and production of the job. Perhaps this is a wakeup call for professional wedding photographers to elevate their prices to coincide with the amount of work that goes into the event. Photographers ask to be treated as professionals, much the same as a lawyer, doctor or accountant. We are the only vocation that has to stipulate that we ARE professional. I often hear someone refer to himself/herself as a *professional* photographer; I have never heard anyone refer to himself/herself as a *professional* lawyer, *professional* doctor or *professional* accountant. For that matter, I have never heard of a *professional* plumber or electrician, and they get paid a lot more per hour than a photographer.

Although I am sure that there are some wedding photographers who do it only for the money, I am equally sure that the vast majority of wedding photographers do it for the love of creating beautiful images for the bride and groom on their special day. As

for mediocrity, I am sure there are mediocre photographers just as there are mediocre doctors, lawyers, accountants, plumbers and electricians. Are we in their league when it comes to their health and welfare? I would say no, except that if you fail to show for a wedding or photograph one and you leave the cover over the lens, the reaction from the bride and groom will be one tantamount to a death in the family (and rightly so). We are responsible for recording on film (or digital chip) the memories of this important and special event. If you have a camera malfunction while photographing their engagement portrait, you can invite them back for another session. You cannot invite their guests back to relive the excitement of the day. You have one chance and once chance only; it is truly an awesome responsibility.

Because wedding photographers work so many weekends during the "season", they sometimes are overcome with malaise and just go through the motions. With this attitude, weddings may become rote. A professional should treat each event with the excitement and energy that it deserves. You are entitled to charge "professional" prices for your work, but more importantly, be sure to give your clients a "professional" attitude and a "professional" product.



Regional Medallion Award

"Leo"

by **Chris Beltrami**, M.Photog.Cr., F-ASP

"Leo" was a homeless fellow I met on Boylston Street between the library and the Copley Square Church in Boston, Massachusetts. I photographed him from afar and then approached him for a conversation; we talked for 30 minutes. He was a Harvard grad who eventually got tired of the rat-race of conventional living. I asked probing questions about his life until he closed down that type of conversation; he then continued about politics and religion for 20 minutes and there was no doubt that he was a brilliant and well-read man. At the end of our conversation, I asked if I could take a close up ... he obliged me with only 2 shots. It was great.

I used a Leica R6 SLR / 80mm lens / ISO200 Kodak gold / 500th @ 4.0.

Chris and his wife **Pat** own and operate their studio in Barre, Vermont. This Regional Medallion Award was won at the 2002 PPANE Convention.