

Minnesota



MY PHOTOGRAPHY LIFE The Beginning Part 1

Albert Lea, MN

In 1968 at the end of the eighth grade we were asked to pick an elective for the ninth grade. I saw the class “photography” on the sheet. My best friend, Roger, who lived right next to me in Albert Lea was interested

in photography. He got a whole bunch of darkroom equipment from his uncle, and he was developing pictures upstairs in his room. *Photography would be a great slough course, I thought.* If I had any problems my friend Roger could show me what to do. I signed up for the class.

In the following year I was attending the ninth-grade photography class. Almost immediately I got hooked. I was always curious about what went on in the darkroom. It was something mysterious. It was like alchemy. Photography was a little bit of magic plus just a little bit of science. Nothing excited me more in the darkroom than to see my photograph slowly appear right out of the developing tray.

I went to the local camera store and bought some photographic paper and chemicals just like we used in that class. I used my mother’s laundry room for a

darkroom. I went into the kitchen to find kettles and pans to take down to the laundry room to pour my darkroom chemicals in to develop some contact prints. Since I didn’t have a safelight, I had to develop the pictures in total darkness.



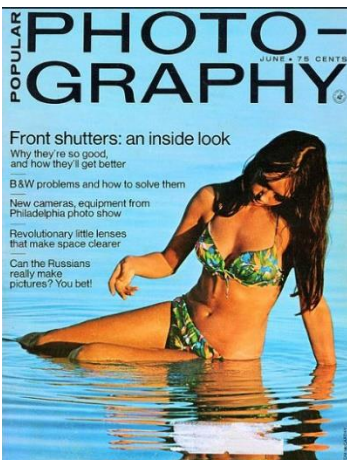
PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS — Left to right: Sanford Hanson, Dave Haggmann, Roger Paczkowski, Dave Schulze, Dave Chance, Mr. Harding, Lonnie Paulson.

I grabbed some #620 black-and-white negatives that were taken with my Kodak box Brownie Twin camera; I was going to make some contact prints. I looked at one of the 3 ½” square prints that the commercial processor printed; it was washed out and gray with little detail. The subject of the picture was a group of some of my families’ relatives. I was wondering if I could make the photo better. I made the print. After I turned on the lights in my mother’s laundry room, I was completely shocked. I couldn’t get over how I could do a better job in printing a photograph than the commercial photo finisher. There was a true black present and a true white and details in both highlights and shadows. It also looked sharper. At this point I knew since I could do a better job than the commercial processor who charged us money to make the prints, I would forever do photography for the rest of my life.

I asked my photography teacher, “How is this possible?” Why could I do better than the pros charging money for their service? My teacher told me the reason was the pictures that the photo finisher did were mass produced and they didn’t take time to produce a good picture. He said most people who take snap shots are only interested in seeing an image; they don’t care about the quality of it. But since I now have this skill, I can make pictures better than a photo finisher. That’s what excited me to learn as much as I could about photography.

In junior high school I used to take my Kodak box Twin Brownie to school and take pictures of the girls. They would scream whenever I pointed my camera at them, and the flashbulbs fired. Every week I would buy black-and-white film and take pictures of the girls at school. I would develop the pictures in my mother’s laundry room. For a Christmas gift my dad and mother bought me a diffusion type photo enlarger from Sears. My mother said that it looked like a milking machine. I started developing and printing photos for my classmates at night in my mother’s laundry room.

I wanted to find a part time job so I could save some money to buy a good camera. I always said I wanted a Mamiya/Sekor 1000 DTL 35mm SLR. Later in my life while collecting cameras I became the owner of this camera. To this day I still have it. Although my first professional type camera with complete adjustments for shutter speed and aperture was not an SLR. My dad would buy me a professional quality camera that took a larger negative so I could make high quality prints in the darkroom the following year.



In 1970 my dad gave me a five-year subscription to *Popular Photography* magazine. He bought various accessories for my photography too. We talked about photography schools. We had a door-to-door salesman contact us about what I believe was called *The Famous Photographers School*. I saw it advertised in *Popular Photography*. It was a mail order course on photography. I



Irving Penn, "Famous Photographers School Faculty Portrait" (1964) (all photos courtesy Yale University Art Gallery unless otherwise noted)

inquired, and they sent out a salesman.

My father had previous experience as a photographer's assistant; so, he knew a few things about photography and working in the darkroom. The darkroom is what first attracted my interest in photography. My dad bought my first quality adjustable camera. I contributed \$10 for the camera. It was a Yashica Matt 124.



It was a medium format twin lens reflex camera which takes 120 and 220 roll films. As early as 1971 I knew exactly what I wanted to do for a career. My father encouraged me to become a professional photographer. He saw it as a sound way that I could make a good living and not have to work at a job you hated for the rest of your life.

My dad was planning on building me a darkroom. He also decided that after I graduated, I would go to Brooks Institute for photography. Brooks has always been one of the best professional photography schools in the world. I had heard that in 2016 that Brooks Institute closed their doors. Sometimes dad would just give me \$20 to go out and buy something for my photography hobby. In July of 1971 my dad died of a heart attack.

I was 17 years old then. My mother and I would move from Albert Lea to Austin Minnesota to be with her mother. Before we moved, I bought a Yashica Super 8 movie camera. My mother bought me a movie projector for it. I was shooting some movie footage before we left for Austin. I would continue shooting super 8. My mother bought a house in Austin where the three of us lived. So, I lived there with my mother and grandmother.



Eleventh & Twelfth Grades in Austin, MN

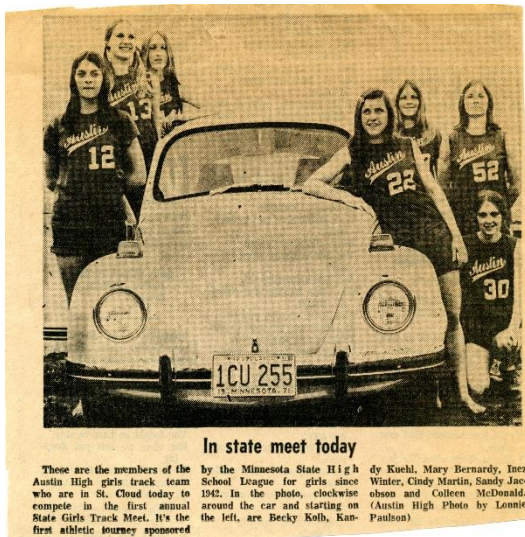


Once we came to Austin, I wanted to get a 35mm SLR. The advantages were that I could get a little closer than with my TLR. I could also interchange lenses of different focal lengths. My mother and I stopped at a camera store called Pako Filmshop. That is where I met Ken Hanson, manager of Pako Filmshop. I bought a Mamiya/Sekor 500TL SLR with a 50mm f/2 lens, Vivitar 135mm f/3.5 telephoto, and a Vivitar 2x

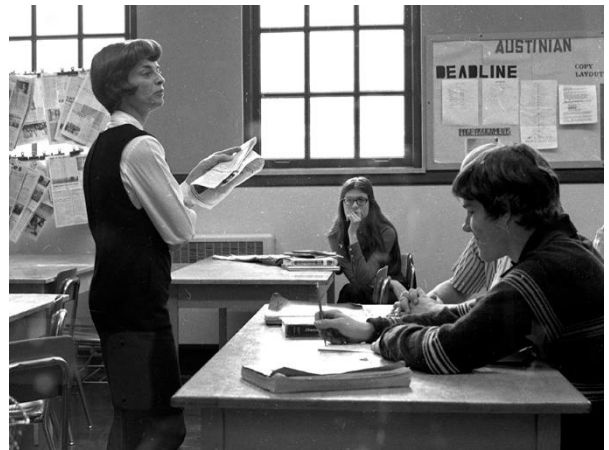


teleconverter. I still have negatives and color slides taken with that camera. I became friends with Ken Hanson.

My Uncle Les, an electrician, built me a darkroom and wired a studio area in the basement, so I could have a photography studio. I was attending the 11th grade. I supplied the darkroom with all kinds of developing equipment. The studio was wired for 220 amps. My uncle said I should be able to plug in up to 5,000 watts or more. I spent a lot of time in these two rooms. The studio walls and floor were all painted matt white every month to keep it clean and photographable for models and other subjects. I would store all my photo equipment here too.



I wanted to take photographs for the school's yearbook and paper, so I contacted Mrs. Seltz who was the photojournalism teacher and head of the school's newspaper and yearbook. When I came to the Photojournalism department to apply for a photography position, Mrs. Seltz did not know me, but they had a problem. No photographer was available at that time to photograph "B" squad football. I told her I would do it.



She didn't want to try anyone new for the pictures, but she couldn't find a photographer so she sent me out and told me to do the best I could. I took my Yashica out to the football field and developed the film and contact prints in my darkroom at home. Mrs. Seltz really liked the photos I took. She said I saved the day and there would be photos in the newspaper of "B" squad football. I was now going to be one of their photographers. When Mrs. Seltz got to know me, she always said she liked the way I used available light. She always trusted me. Since I liked to take photos of girls, I let the writers and editor know and I got many assignments where I photographed girls. I was a photographer for the school for both my 11th and 12th grade years. Some of our photographs appeared in our local paper called the *Austin Daily Herald*. Mrs. Seltz would send out press releases to the paper and they would publish many of our photos and give us a credit line.

When I first stepped into the darkroom in the journalism department, I saw someone developing film in a NIKKOR film developing tank. It was Pat McFarland. He and I became friends from the first time I saw him. Pat would do all the ordering of photography supplies in the school's photojournalism department for the darkroom, and we went through a lot of film. During our high school days, we were always taking pictures together. We would go in the darkrooms of the school, and we would also use my darkroom. We would sometimes photograph in my studio at home too.



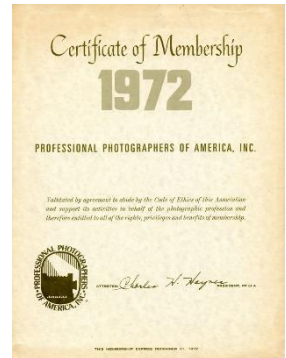
Pat McFarland

The Explorers scouting program through high school set up career programs for students taught by professionals in a chosen career field. Pat and I joined the Photographers Explorers group which met at the Hormel Corporate Annex building in the Hormel Photography Department. There I met Jerry Sarenpa who was the teacher and a professional photographer for the Geo. A. Hormel Company. We became good friends, and he helped me get my start in professional photography. Jerry Sarenpa became my photographic mentor. In 1972, Jerry Sarenpa recommended me for membership in the Professional Photographers of America (PPofA). I became an associate member of the PP of A.

I got very interested in glamour photography. I started to photograph many pretty girls from high school as models. I wanted to sell these pictures to magazines and



other publications. I read everything I could about photographing women. Lynn Goodmanson was my first model that I tried to do any serious photography with. She was a blonde 5' 9" tall. Jerry and I first took her and her friend Lori out to Helmer Myre state park in Albert Lea to do some photography. In the future I used her as a model several times along with Lori and several other girls outdoors and in my studio. I also started doing my own color printing in the darkroom. This would give me an edge over students when I took formal training in photography. This was the start of my interest in photographing beautiful women. Through the years I would always be interested in photographing women.



Pat McFarland was using a 35mm SLR Miranda camera. The Miranda camera system has an interesting history. I had acquired one once in my camera collecting days. Miranda had gone out of business several decades ago. Pat's father





bought a Rolleiflex f2.8 which was a collectable camera and worth some good money. His father gave the Rollei to Pat, but later Pat wanted to go back to a 35mm SLR, so Pat gave me an offer. He asked me if I would be interested in the Rolleiflex and that he would do an even trade for my Mamiya/Sekor 500 TL. So, I said yes, and would trade. I gave him the camera with its 50mm f/2 lens and a Vivitar 135mm f/3.5 lens with a Vivitar 2x tele-converter. I was happy as a clam to have the Rolleiflex camera. Later, I would purchase a 35mm SLR again.

In the spring of 1972, I decided to buy a 35mm camera to replace the one I traded to Pat. I finally decided to buy a Nikkormat FTN. It came with a NIKKOR 50mm f/2 lens. It was an inexpensive Nikon camera. The reason I decided on Nikon was that my friend Jerry Sarenpa had two Nikons and various NIKKOR lenses. He said that if I bought a Nikon camera, I could use some of his lenses. I bought it in the camera department at Austin Drug. I paid \$320 for it.

My First Nude Photography

I did my first nude photography in February 1973. I was able to talk my mother in to letting me photograph a nude



model. I went through a modeling agency in Minneapolis. It cost me \$50 an hour and I had to have her for two



hours. I also had to pay for her transportation. I took a lot of rolls of film, but I really didn't know what I was doing. The composition was poor, and I only had one 1,000-watt

quartz light. I used my mother's bedroom to photograph her in. I wanted something somewhat glamorous or erotic. That night after the model went home my mother asked me, "Well, son, do you know now what little girls are made of?"

The best results I had in photographing that model was through a mistake. The light source I was using was tungsten. I had bulk loaded 35mm tungsten Kodak Ektachrome and had got some daylight Ektachrome rolls mixed in. The roll or two of daylight film that was shot under tungsten lighting looked better. The walls of my mother's bedroom were a light blue which turned a neutral gray under the tungsten lighting. The model was white and did not have a tan, her skin turned an amber orange. Her red lipstick and red fingernails went into a very deep dark rusty red. The white bedspread turned amber. The pictures looked very warm; they had an antique color grading. This is the effect of using daylight balanced film under tungsten illumination. Out of this photo session I made some prints from that daylight film. I had an internegative made from the slide and printed some 16x20 canvas mounted prints on stretcher frames with a paintbrush lacquer coating. I gave one to the model. I no longer have any of these photos.

I always wanted a better enlarger for my darkroom. I still had the old enlarger with the diffusion head. I wanted a condenser enlarger. This was an enlarger that had large concave and convex

lenses in the lamphouse. You got the sharpest photos with this type of enlarger. It was the type of enlarger we used in the high school darkroom. I found a local professional portrait photographer who was willing to sell me his. It was a Simon/Omega black and white condenser enlarger that took 35mm and 6x6cm film in its lamphouse. It had an extra-long girder, so I could get larger prints. I paid \$125 for it.



Before I graduated from high school my mother gave me \$500 as a graduation gift. I spent it on two lenses for my Nikkormat. I bought a NIKKOR 135mm f/2.8 lens which would get me very close to my models. I could get a full frame head shot with this lens without the distortion from a 50mm lens. I also liked wide angle photography, so I bought me a NIKKOR 28mm f/3.5 lens. I also wanted a top-of-the-line incident light meter. Jerry Sarenpa used a Luna Pro light meter. It was a very sensitive light meter. The Luna Pro was known as the Cadillac of light meters. I bought the Luna Pro light meter.

After High School Graduation

After graduating from high school my mother became seriously ill. As a result of her type one diabetes, she contracted kidney failure. I spent the next three months in the hospital with her. On August 23, 1973, she died of kidney failure. So, it would be just my grandmother and me now living in the house. The house was transferred to me after my mother's death.



In 1973 shortly after graduation I opened a bank account to start Beauty Is Beautiful, which was going to be my photography business photographing women. However, most of the money I would make in photography was from commercial photographic jobs.

But my dream was to photograph beautiful women and make money at it by selling stock photos to publications. I did photograph beautiful women, but I did not make much income. Mostly it was either the models or their mothers that would buy the photos from me. However, I was constantly sending out photos of girls through the mail to publishers, hoping to make sales.



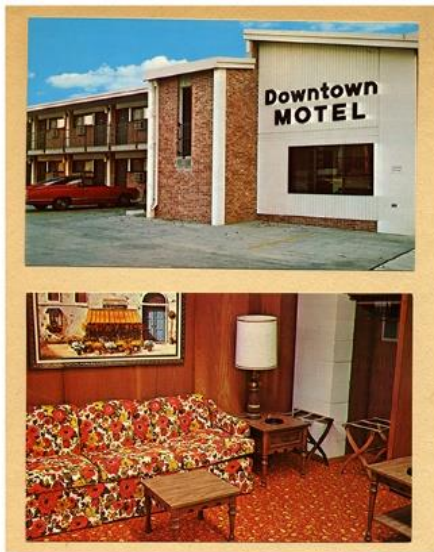
First Job: *National Barrow Show & Geo A. Hormel Co.*

The following month Jerry Sarenpa got me a job as a Photo Technician working part-time for the *National Barrow Show* which was promoted by Geo. A. Hormel Company. I worked many hours in the darkroom developing photos of pigs. This assignment lasted for two weeks. In the following month, Geo. A. Hormel put me on their payroll as a Photo Technician. I did all black-and-white film developing and printing and did E-3 Professional Kodak Ektachrome processing. Occasionally, I would assist the photographers in the studio with various still life photography sessions, mostly food



Geo. A. Hormel had their own food stylist and used art direction services from a commercial artist who was from *Mower House printing*. Any food photography more serious than that was done by nationally known food photographers. During my employment as a Photo Technician, Jerry and I would continue with the Explorers Scouting program. He would be teaching students in the studio, and I would teach them in the darkroom. In January 1974 I was laid off from Geo. A. Hormel. If I would have been going back and forth to try and seek re-employment. I could have been working there still.

During my time at Geo A. Hormel, I was busy working on my portfolio. One day while reading the *Professional Photographer* magazine I saw an ad that was advertising for photographers to become postcard photographers. I ordered their kit to see what this was all about. The company, Koppel Color, was a postcard manufacturer looking for distributors to sell their line of postcards as advertising cards to businesses. I decided to take part in this venture. I would get a commission for selling the cards and I would charge the client for my photography. I made good money from this.



Here is an early sample of some postcards I photographed for the Downtown Motel in Austin. These photographs were photographed with a 4x5" speed graphic. The photography is not that good. I did not understand artificial lighting that well and the use of lighting ratios. I see many other things that I did not get right, but I got paid. A formal education in professional

photography would have been the remedy. I am an advocate of formal professional photographic training from photography schools. There still are photographers out there trying to do work that

really do not know what they are doing. However, everyone must start somewhere, and this is where I started.

Geo. A. Hormel & Freelance Photography

In 1973, Koppel Color recommended that the photographer use 4x5" color transparency film for the best results. I needed a 4x5" camera. I used Mrs. Seltz 4x5" Crown Graphic camera in high school to photograph groups when she or another photographer was not available. Plus, I used to load 4x5" film holders in the high school darkroom and as a Photo tech at Geo. A. Hormel. I also developed 4x5" film for both the high school and Geo. A. Hormel. I called various professional photographers in town and asked them if they had a used 4x5" camera they could sell me. I found a portrait



and wedding photographer who said that he had an old speed graphic that he removed the focal plane shutter from, and I could have it for \$100. He also gave me several film holders with it. He was an older photographer. He might have been the photographer who photographed my parents' wedding, but I'm not sure. So now I have a professional 4x5" camera that I could do some paying commercial work. In my opinion, all the Graflex Graphic 4x5" press cameras were the best cameras ever made in the United States. When they first came out, they were very versatile in their day. I started prospecting businesses for postcards, and I did get some sales. My business name was still under Beauty Is Beautiful. I still was hoping to someday make a living photographing beautiful women.

In the summer of 1974, I experienced an artistic breakthrough with my photography. I had read a lot of books on photography by this time and started to practice what I read. I had a photographic

idea to photograph one of my favorite models, Lynn who was in a bikini. I would photograph her at Todd's Park in Austin. This would be in the evening when the sunlight was low. I am now learning about outdoor lighting. I was going to photograph her with a Kodak 35mm Tri-X film with a normal focal length lens. I was interested in capturing her full figure. I also spread just a very small smudge of Vaseline on the edges of a UV filter to give a soft-focus dreamlike effect. The Vaseline worked to spread the highlights in the photo. So, I got all this soft cross-lighting throughout the background. For lighting I just used the natural outdoor lighting in the evening with no fill-in flash at all. This worked well in black-and-



white. You could not photograph this image in color, because of the bald white colorless sky.

The reason why I was photographing Lynn in a bikini was because I was contacted by a publisher that seemed interested in my photography and asked if I could submit some photos of some pretty girls in bikinis. The prospective publisher was the *Indiana Herald*. I sent a submission to that publication and never heard from them. I don't know if they used them or rejected them. I would always send a SASE with my submissions. I told Lynn about this publisher and we both thought that the photos would be published. After finding out that I was taken, I vowed that I would never tell a model of any publisher that I was doing business with or even if I thought it was a sure thing that the photo would be sold. This worked out for me in the future since in a couple of years I would experience another publisher interested in my photography; I sent out the photos but did not tell the model until I had the publication right in my hands with her photo on it.

The End of Part 1
The Beginning