

MY PHOTOGRAPHY LIFE The Community College Years Part 2

Community College Years

Since I could not find a job in photography in Austin, and did not want to freelance full time, I decided to go back to school. In the fall of 1974, I enrolled in Austin Community College. I got money to go to school from the Veterans and Social Security benefits. My father was a Vet, so I got benefits through him. I studied business through a clerical program which through the second quarter I changed to more marketing classes. The second year I decided to major in art. I thought it would help me with the aesthetic side of photography; it did. I had two art teachers. I took art history, introductory to art, design, and independent art study. The woman teacher who taught me intro to art was a very good teacher. She really helped me to see artistically. At the beginning of the first year, I did some photography for the college paper *The Devil's Advocate*, but there was a teacher who also taught a basic photography class that told me he would prefer to do the photography himself, so I backed out. These two years in community college from 1974 to 1976 offered a lot of opportunities in photography. Below I will explain what I did in photography during these two years at college.

Legal Photography

I remember an interesting freelance job that I did around 1974. I did a photo assignment for an attorney. We call this legal photography. This lawyer wanted a black-and-white photo taken of a specific school bus. He picked me up. I took my Rolleiflex, a tripod, some Kodak Tri-X film, and



my Luna Pro light meter. We got to the bus barn, and he showed me the back end of the bus that he wanted to photograph. He said he wanted to show all the lights in the back end of the bus. He said he would have someone drive the bus out of the barn for me so I could photograph it. I took a light meter reading, and I told him the light here is soft and it will show the detail that he was talking about getting. I could photograph this bus right here in the barn. He told me, "It's too dark in here, I can't see much of anything in here." I assured him that the film would pick it up. My exposure was long, but I had the camera on a tripod. After I took the photos, I don't think he still was convinced I knew what I was doing, after all I was in my early 20's. I

developed the negatives; he asked for a 5x7" print, so I gave him the print. When he saw it, he said, "I don't believe it! I was there with you, and I could not see much of anything. This is so detailed and sharp." He wanted to know how I did it. I guess that's the magic and science of photography.

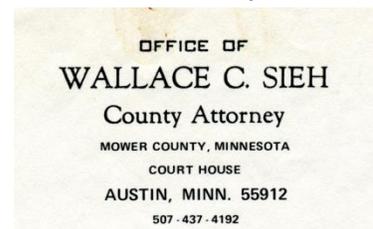
During the first year in college, I decided to order some lighting equipment for my studio. All I had right now was a 1,000-watt tungsten flood. So, I ordered three 650-watt quartz floods with barn doors. I also ordered two mini-spots. Barn doors and snoots were ordered with the spotlights. The photographer I looked up to the most to emulate was Peter Gowland, glamour photographer. He was known for his pin-up photography which illustrated calendars and magazines. As a young man I wanted to photograph beautiful girls in these cheesecake poses and make money doing it. I read every book that I could find on glamour photography. Peter Gowland was a pioneer in this type of photography. Peter Gowland used to advertise Reflectasol™ which was a flat umbrella used for lighting. It would open flat like a reflector or be opened to a similar shape to a lighting umbrella. Reflectasols came in super silver, white, gold, blue, and black fabric. I already had a 27" Reflectasol. I bought three super silver 36" Reflectasols. Reflectasols would help me with my glamour photography and any other photography where I needed soft light.



During my community college years, I photographed many girls for my glamour photography. I was learning posing and lighting and getting a lot better at glamour photography. What really excelled me in the photography of people was when I enrolled in a professional lighting course through the mail. It was taught by a member of the Professional Photographers of America (PP of A) who held a master's degree from the PP of A in portrait photography. I knew that to be more successful at glamour photography I should have a good sound knowledge of lighting the human form. Every month I would get a new module through the mail that had text and slides. I would study this and do the assignments. One of my models was my grandmother. This lighting course which included both lighting and posing would put me a step ahead of the students when I went to photography school.

When I was photographing these pretty girls, I had someone spying on me. I would put ads in the *Mower County Shopper* advertising for models. I advertised for girls ages 16-23 for photos in bathing suits, lingerie, & sleep wear. The County Attorney and a local detective started to become interested in what I was doing. Although I would look at girls who were underage, a signed model's release was required by all models. Any model under 18 had to have a parent or guardian consent.

I was sent a letter by the County Attorney outlining various local moral laws. I remember something they wrote about keeping a disorderly house. A local detective would always drive by my house and just stop to watch. I remember this big, long sedan loaded with long antenna wires. In the evening, my grandmother would always pull the drapes in the living room almost closed but leave them open just a slit. She didn't want all the sun coming in when the sun was getting low in the sky. While



listening to my FM radio on my stereo system in the living room I heard a voice talking over my radio from the detective's two-way radio. He said: "I'm here across the street from the band shell. I see he has pulled his drapes almost shut, but not quite. I'm going to stick around here for a while, it could be some sort of a signal." All the antennas on his big sedan reminded me of the character Roscoe P. Coltrane from the TV show *Dukes of Hazzard*.

Independent Art Study

In my second year of college, I was mostly involved in art classes. I took Introduction to Art, Design Classes, Art History Classes, and I also had an Independent Art Study which I was in private study with the teacher. My independent study was artistic photography. I would photograph different subjects and looked at them abstractly or differently. Some of the things I photographed were wire, glassware, patterns of snow. I used a female art student to photograph her long hair. She was very tall and had hair down to her bottom. I also took a photo of some translucent colored 3M film that I adhered to a sheet of clear plexiglass.



Let me give you an explanation of the color photo on the left. I call this photo Self-Portrait because that is my left forefinger in the composition. I made this photo by cutting out a piece of thin translucent 3M color key material that I stuck to a piece of clear Plexiglass held in place by static electricity. In the back was a black background with colored Christmas tree lights attached. I focused my lens on the cut-out shape with a large aperture and let the colored lights go out of focus. I put my finger in front of the lens, my finger imaged in the out of focus highlights. We photographers call these out of focus disks "circles of confusion" which is an optical phenomena. This photo was taken in 1976 with a Nikkormat FTN 35mm SLR with a Nikkor 135mm f/2.8 lens. The exposure was made wide open at f/2.8 to blur the background. I used Kodak High Speed Ektachrome tungsten film rated at ISO 125. I developed this film in my own darkroom using Kodak E-4 chemicals.

Independent Study: Artistic Nude Photography

While in independent art study I became interested in nude photography as an art form. I discussed this project with my art teacher, and she wanted to see what I came up with. I put an ad in the *Mower County Shopper* advertising for nude female models and found a lady who was interested. I only had her for one session, and I got some very good results. By this time, I knew more about lighting. I used a bank of three lights on each side of the model from head to toe. They were tungsten quartz floods with attached barndoors. The three lights on each stand were mounted piggyback on the light stand. So, each light stand was like a long light panel from head to toe. Each light bank was placed in a kicker position about 120 degrees from the camera and functioned as one key light source. No fill-in lighting was used to compress the contrast. I wanted a high contrast photograph. I was not looking for any detail in shadow areas. I photographed her in black-and-white and used a fine-grain compensating film developer (Kodak

Microdol-X). I diluted it 1:3 for finer grain film. I used a Rollieflex F2.8 with an 80mm f2.8 Carl Zeiss lens. This lens is one of the sharpest lenses in the world. I used Kodak 120 Tri-X Professional film rated at ISO 320. I paid the model a small modeling fee of \$10 per hour and photographed her for two hours and she bought several photographs from me. So, I made more money on the deal, and she got some very nice photographs of her that I printed in my darkroom on a special portrait paper by Kodak. Later when I went to photography school, I had some 16x20s mounted of the session and had a pro-texture spray lacquer applied to the surface to give a classic brush stroke look. I entered the photos in some photography exhibits. The only photograph that I saved of this photographic session was a photo of a single leg of the model. Notice the contrast between the highlights and the shadows. This is because there is no fill light.

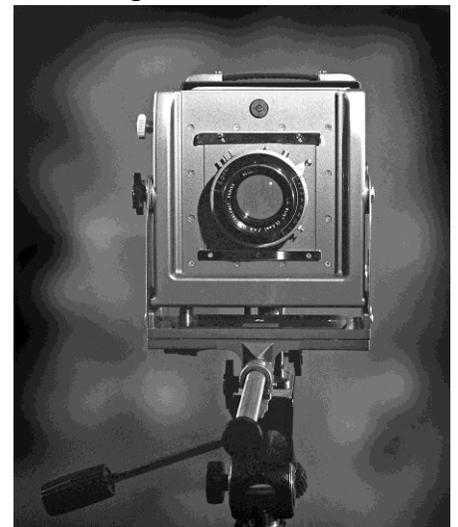


Stock Photo Agency

When I was still in college and 21 years old, I was able to get listed with a stock photo agency. They would pay me 50/50. It was a small agency. I would call the owner of the agency and ask him what he wanted. Taurus Photos was in New York city and would store and sell my photos. The agency would send me a list of subjects to shoot once a month. I guess I never got that serious about working with Taurus Photos. When I stopped submitting photos to them, they had over 100 of my images. I have never heard of them since. I do not believe they are still in business. Most of my stock photos at that time I would submit directly to the prospect. As a young photographer I was primarily interested in selling my photography of women to publications. I photographed a lot of models.

My 4x5" Calumet View Camera

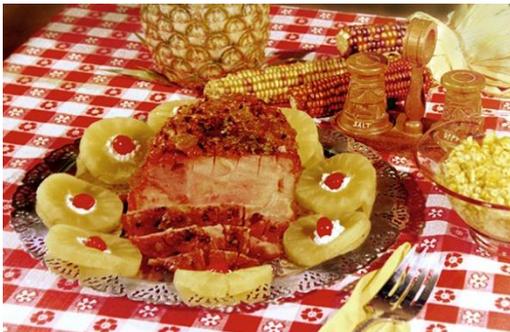
When I worked with Jerry Sarenpa at Geo. A. Hormel Co. in the darkroom my interest in commercial photography had grown. Even though I wanted to be recognized as a glamour photographer I liked commercial photography because it seemed so technical, and it seemed more creative than something like family portraiture or weddings. Commercial photography's workhorse camera was a large format view camera. This was a camera with a large ground glass on the back where you put the film holder and it had a long bellows, and you usually used a cloth over your head to see to focus. Commercial photography usually needed a large format negative or transparency. Advertisers demanded an image with the highest resolving power, and a large negative or transparency was the





answer. You also could control perspective with this camera by moving the back standard. You also could control the plane of focus with the front standard. In 1975 I bought a 4x5" Calumet 22" bellows camera with a Caltar 215mm f/4.8 lens for product photography. I started learning how to use the view camera. This would put me ahead of many of the students in photography school by buying and learning how to use a view camera.

Food Photography



I enjoyed it when I got a chance to assist the photographers in the Hormel Company on food photography. I remember printing a lot of these food photos in the darkroom. I would print a large 14x17" black-and-white print for the food stylist. I now had a view camera that I could photograph



food with. I also had a studio full of lights I could use. I would add these food photos to my portfolio. My grandmother would cook the food and prepare it. I remembered how the food stylist styled the food. I added my creativity to the styling. Here are a couple of food photos I worked on with my new view camera.

Ferris Furtney was the senior photographer at Geo. A. Hormel company. He was going to retire. I guess Jerry thought when Ferris retired that he would automatically become senior photographer, it didn't happen. The management told Jerry that they wanted someone with more

experience for a senior photographer. Jerry decided to look elsewhere for work. Jerry told me that he was taking a teaching job at Hawkeye Institute of Technology in Waterloo, Iowa. He was going to teach Basic Photography and Industrial Photography. He left the Hormel company around 1974.

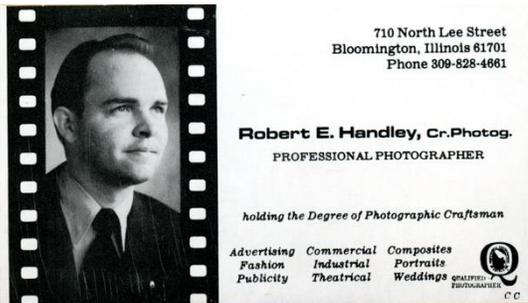


Winona Lake School of Professional Photography, Winona Lake, Indiana, Community College Cont....

In the summer of 1975, I attended a weeklong seminar at the *Winona School of Professional Photography* sponsored by the Professional Photographers of

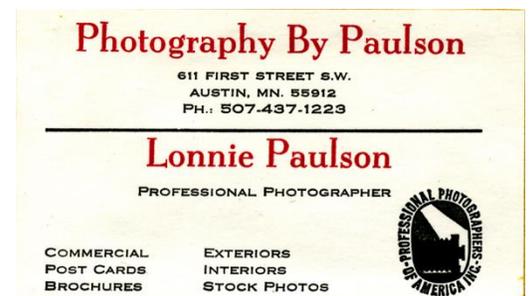
America. The class was called *The Principles of Commercial Photography*. The class featured hands on studio and location work. At the time this school was in the small town of Winona Lake, Indiana. The only camera we used was the view camera. Everyone in class used a 4x5” Calumet, which was the same monorail view camera I had just bought.

When I worked at the Hormel Company, they used the same camera in the studio. I was quite familiar with the Calumet view camera. The camera was manufactured in the United States in the Chicago area. In class we studied lighting for still life and large objects. We also did exterior and interior architectural photography. The only piece of equipment we had to bring to the seminar was a light meter. When I came back home, I had a wealth of information which would help me produce great photography. I got working on adding some more images to my commercial photography portfolio. The photo of glassware you see here was photographed at the seminar.



At the seminar I met Robert E. Handley who would be another great mentor for me as a photographer. Mr. Handley was a professional wedding photographer who also gave seminars to other wedding photographers. He also enjoyed

doing commercial photography in his local area where he lived in Bloomington, Illinois. In the evenings that week I would meet him at the apartment where he stayed, and we would talk about photography. He was interested in helping me become successful. One of the first things he told me was to give up the notion that I was going to make a living doing glamour photography. He told me I could photograph the girls on the side as a hobby, but I should concentrate on what would really make me money and that would be commercial photography. He told me to drop the name Beauty Is Beautiful and my business card should say, Photography by Paulson. He showed me how I could promote and market myself. He also recommended that I join the PP of A as an active professional member and drop my associate membership. I could use the PP of A logo in my advertising and be listed in their professional directory which went to various ad agencies. Robert Handley and I would keep in touch by mail, phone, and cassette tape. He would critique my work and give me advice. He also wrote articles for the *Professional Photographer* magazine.



During my college years, Mr. Harding, my photography teacher from ninth grade came to the college in Austin to visit. He was thinking of starting a camera club in Austin and asked me if I would join him. We as a group of amateur photographers started meeting together. We had a lot of fun. We would enter monthly contests, do some field projects, and monthly programs. They

eventually voted me in as their vice president and program chairman. We also exhibited photographs in other photo galleries too. I won some awards at the Mower County fair.

I did work for the National Barrow Show two other times, but Geo. A. Hormel never put me on their payroll again. The last time I worked for the National Barrow Show, Geo. A. Hormel had two new photographers and a Photo Technician. The new senior photographer I talked to said he wished he knew about me; he would have hired me a while back. I guess I was too late. They said they needed somebody; I was attending college at the time.

After two years of community college in the summer I was able to get a photo assignment photographing show horses for a former student and his wife that I went to college with. The show horses were known as painted horses. The couple wanted the pictures for promotional purposes of their horses. They entered their horses in many shows. At that time my day-rate for black-and-white was \$200 plus expenses. I even did some special effects in the darkroom for them. I do not have these negatives anymore.

I also photographed the new Austin First National Auto Bank from a crane that I rented. I needed



to get 60 feet in the air to photograph this bank. I photographed it in both black-and-white and color. I also had done some legal jobs for an attorney and did a photo of an architectural model of a future restoration of the Austin Public Library. Since I was distributor for Koppel Color, I did some advertising photography for local businesses to put on postcards. I also continued to photograph the pretty girls for glamour photography.

Model Portfolio Head Shot

At this time in my life, I learned that “word of mouth” is very important advertising. I got a call from a lady that was going into modeling. She said she heard that I was the best person in town to have model pictures done. She told me who she heard this from, but I didn’t know those people. She said she needed head shots for a modeling agency in Minneapolis. She came over to my basement studio and she had a very beautiful face. I can’t remember what I charged her, but she paid me for some glossy black-and-white 8x10” photos. She asked me for some advice on



Historic photos

Austin Camera Club officers, Margaret Hogan, secretary and Russell Harding, president, recently signed the centennial photos in a book of towns in Mower County. The book will be presented to the Mower County Historical Society at the Club’s annual banquet March 5.



posing. I told her to put the fall of her hair to one side. This would give an asymmetrical balance for her face which would look more pleasing to the eye. Later she contacted me to tell me that the modeling agency told her that was a good idea to position her hair on the side, it would draw more attention to her face. I used my Nikkormat with a Nikkor 135mm f/2.8 lens to get close. The film was Kodak 35mm Plus-X at ASA 125. I processed the film and printed the photos in my darkroom. The model was pleased.

Rockford Labor News

I was sending a lot of these glamour photos through the mails to sell rights to use them. I sent out a direct mailing to publishers about my photos of girls. A publisher by the name of *Rockford Labor News* wrote back and told me they would like to see what I had. I sent a mailing of six black-and-white 8x10's to *Rockford Labor News* with an SASE and a model's release. They had decided to use one of the photographs I sent. It was a picture of Jan Schmidt who modeled for me who I met in my intermediate typing class in Austin Community College. She was one of my favorite models. I shot a lot of pictures of her and even her husband. Her husband worked for the television station in Austin as an engineer. He bought my Yashica super 8 movie camera. I called Jan as soon as I had the newspapers in my hand. I told her to come over and that I would give her some copies of the paper. She came over with a carload of people. She thought that was great that she was on the front page of that newspaper. She told her friends, "See that's me, That's me." The editor of *Rockford Labor News* later told me that they had sold tons of papers that week with that young lady in the swimsuit. They told me I could send them some more like this in the future. My big mistake was I did not pursue it.



The End of Part 2 The Community College Years

