

TRUE PASSION

“LOVE WHAT YOU DO—DO WHAT YOU LOVE”

It amazes me to sit and observe the difference in children who are born of the same parents and are being raised in the same environment. Each child has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Each child will grow to be an individual—different from his or her siblings as well as everyone else in the world. Yes, they will have similarities, but their ways of thinking and acting, as well as reacting will be unique. I believe, as children, we unconsciously begin to define our passions and dreams from an early age. Hopefully, we can all follow the path that allows us to pursue those things that are inherent in us to make us what we are. I believe that some people stifle their own passions to please someone they love—that they never really follow their own dreams. And some of us are lucky enough to have followed our passions, despite the struggle, and have learned to do what we love and to love what we do.

My path to loving what I do and doing what I love is sometimes straightforward. Other times, it is filled with many roadblocks, but I cannot deny who and what I am. I am an artist. My tools are lenses, cameras and my love for the craft. I love capturing images. I absolutely live for those details that other people do not notice or see. I seem to have a sixth sense in my ability to know when the light is perfect for my shot. I see what I want in my mind before I capture it. It is the capturing of an image that is our craft, and I still seek to perfect my technique because that is what I am.

If someone had observed me as a child, they would have seen me possibly watching what insects do on flowers, creating structures from rocks or playing with a beam of light from a flashlight—in other words, something visual. They would not have seen me reading a book, doing a puzzle, or playing board games. When I entered school, I was labeled as “lazy” and “stupid” because I didn’t want to do homework. During this time in my life, the artistic and creative side of my brain was developing exponentially. I struggled with everything else. Reading, writing and math just escaped my understanding. Today children with these patterns get help with their dyslexia. Back then, those of us who had that particular learning disorder were left to fend for ourselves and labeled as “slow”. This childhood struggle helped

define who and what I was. I continued my struggle through the years of elementary and middle school with the traditional subjects, but every chance I got, I avoided my traditional school work and found myself observing the way light reflected or refracted. I was drawn to the arts. I would observe the shapes of people's faces and take note of the lines that gave them character. When I was a sophomore in high school, a close family friend, who was very observant, (a professional photographer) took note of my strengths and weaknesses and he did an amazing thing--he bought me my first camera. The tool of his chosen profession soon became my passion.

Everyone makes choices in order to attain their goals. I was willing, whether consciously or unconsciously, to make the sacrifices necessary to become the best at what I loved to do. Every second of every day, I carried my camera and constantly practiced to perfect my ability. Not to mention I spent a lot of money. Each time I thought I was capturing something and the development of the film proved I had missed my target; it would motivate me to try again and again. I constantly sought to further my knowledge of my craft whether it be through attending structured learning courses, seminars, clubs, professional organizational meetings, or talking with equipment manufacturers

and reps. I could not really call myself a professional photographer yet, but that was the direction I was taking.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled in a traditional college to further my education and make my parents happy. However, I was a terrible student. Once again, I found myself avoiding the homework from these traditional classes. I soon quit and found myself floundering as I lost sight of what my passion was. I worked for a while as a laborer building homes. However, one of the best things happened to me that some people would not view as good. I was seriously injured on the job and that ended my building career. During my recovery, another close friend of mine started to look into photography schools, as she knew my love for the craft. She found the Colorado Institute of Art where I could study photography but avoid all the traditional classes. I jumped at the chance to learn more about photography. I knew this was my true career path. I threw myself into this photography school and learned everything they could teach. I was also pursuing ways to become a professional. After graduation from the Colorado Institute of Art, I returned home to the family advertising business thinking that I had the world by the tail. I worked very hard at telling everyone that I was right about lighting--after all, I had just finished collage! However, after

several clients wanted something that I never had done, I soon realized that I needed more than what I had learned at college. I, therefore, started a search and found someone with what I needed-- a willingness to teach me the finer points of lighting. I then traveled to California on and off and studied with him from time to time. He taught me so much about light and how to work with it. I considered him a good friend and realized that my lessons in light were also giving me the added benefit of gaining a friend in the process. Until his recent death, he continued with that willingness to help countless other young photographers discover the many ways to work with light.

I continued to grow as a professional photographer and also began to embrace new technologies, so when this new thing called "digital" came around I started a new search--to find someone who is the very best in the digital field who would be willing to share and help another professional photographer. I was lucky enough to find someone with the same willingness to share with me. Fortunately, we were already acquainted and started to form a friendship. At the time, he lived in Colorado, so I was able to convince him to come to my studio where we worked for three days and nights. His unselfishness and willingness to help others and me still continues today. Luckily, our friendship has also

continued to grow, and I can say that this passion has also given me the opportunity to have one of the best friends a man could ask for.

After thirty years of working in the family business, my responsibilities had changed to the point that it was no longer providing me with that same feeling and love of photography. So, I made the biggest decision of my life and left the family business to follow my heart and passion for photography. I have now started my own photography studio.

I noted earlier that I have gained many friends in the photography industry and that in itself is an added benefit to becoming involved in the professional realm of photography. Through those friendships, I've learned much more than any structured setting or trial and error on my part could have taught me. My friends push me to find new ways and ideas that help me continue to grow as an artist. When new equipment or programs become available, the first thing I do is contact my friends to find out if they are familiar with my new purchase and ask for any helpful hints. They do the same. This not only helps with deciphering new "toys", it helps keep me in contact with what's new in photography. Don't get me wrong, though. I'm not a slave to my

passion. I get to do what I love and because of that, I love what I do.

Through this growing process, I continuously have had to define my personal measure of success. What is success? That answer is different for everyone. I've learned that my idea of success has many variations. If you ask if I'm happy doing photography, the answer is without a doubt "YES"! If you ask whether I make a ton of money doing photography? The answer is without a doubt "NO"! However, my measure of success is not only involved money to the point of making a living. Of course, I would like to have unlimited funds, but there are other things I would like more. For instance, I am unwilling to sacrifice my family or friends purely to gain more wealth. So, I guess part of my measure of success does not include great wealth. My measure of great wealth is in having friends and family.

Is my measure of success how famous I am? Maybe. I would like to think I am known as a great photographer. However, I am smart enough to realize that there are many great photographers out there. My measure of success would be to one day being considered in that category of photographers with many of my friends.

Happiness is another measure of success for me. Am I happy? Certainly! I'm also smart enough to realize that my profession is not the only contributing factor to my happiness. I'm happy with my profession. That alone releases me to pursue other avenues of fulfilling my complete happiness.

Pursuing my passion of photography and having strongly defined my measure of success at my craft has allowed me to enjoy certain benefits. By doing what I love to do, I have a self-satisfaction that many people don't ever realize with their careers. I cannot ever imagine myself doing anything else. Also, by having a true passion, I feel I have begun to excel at my craft and can be considered to be part of the "cream of the crop". That gives me a certain amount of pride. I've had the privilege to work with and learn from many great photographers. Their unselfish giving and sharing of photography knowledge has taught me another important aspect that adds to my ability to continue to love what I do. Passing on what I have learned and helping others to grow in the art of photography is something all of us should do. It provides me with a sense of completeness. I have come so to say "full circle". An insightful photographer spotted a desire in me as a child, and now it is greatly fulfilling to find myself in his shoes.

I've spent many countless hours helping students and peers with problems that they could not solve on their own. Or, many times, I have discovered something or made a certain mistake with a piece of equipment or certain software, only then to pass on that knowledge knowing that many of my friends could use the same knowledge. The more I grow and help others grow, the more satisfied with myself I become.

I have learned to follow my passion that carries me in my career as a photographer. I truly love what I do and am lucky enough to do what I love for a living. From early childhood, my creative side screamed to take hold. Having the proper guidance and encouragement from key adults in my life helped to guide me towards my passion. Ignoring others who wanted me to follow a more traditional career and following my dream gave me the courage to step into my own light. While growing my talent, I have been fortunate to reap the rewards of true friendships and self-fulfillment, as well as increased skill and ability as a professional.