

The background of the entire image is a marbled pattern in shades of pink, magenta, and light blue. The pattern is organic and fluid, with darker blue veins and lighter pink areas. A solid light pink horizontal band runs across the middle of the image, serving as a backdrop for the text.

I Love It All

I Love It All



by,
Nancy Emmerich
Master Photographer
Photographic Craftsman

Prologue

This is written with love to the many people in my life that
have taught, nurtured and encouraged me along my way.

These friendships that have shaped my life
and blessed my soul.

I thank you.



Standing in the bathroom, two things come to mind. One, for most of my life, my bathroom has had a red light bulb screwed into the light socket and an enlarger on top of the sink. And two, man I'm getting old!

I fell in love with photography when, as a senior in high school, I met a really cute guy. He had just come back from Vietnam with a bunch of camera equipment. He let me play with his camera. One evening I loaded his Minolta 35mm and took my niece and her mom into my mom's backyard for my first portrait session. When I got the film developed, I thought, **Wow! These are great!** Little did I know that I had gone under the cover of a tree in the beautiful end of day's sweet golden light. I was hooked.

I had grown up a doodler, which is really just another word for daydreamer. Without even realizing it, I managed to turn every notebook, homework assignment, and piece of scrap paper into art. Flowers were a favorite subject, drawn with delicate shading or sometimes hippy style fun. People, places, anything really—I just loved to draw. But my practical side (my mom's voice in my head) kept telling me that I couldn't make money doing this, that it was time to move on. Maybe I could make art with a camera.

During one of my countless trips to the camera store I bought my first enlarger. I researched color printing roller tubes, chemistry, and precise timing. This was far too complicated for me, so I decided on black-and-white. With the purchase of that enlarger, as well as a red light bulb (for a safe light), I became a fine art photographer. Fame and fortune lay just ahead.

Soon, every piece of clothing I owned was marked with fixer stains. But it didn't matter. Watching an image come to life in a tray of developer was everything. Looking at a simple image I made of my father smoking at the breakfast table filled me with an amazing sense of love. What a powerful thing this photography.

One day I called a studio in town and asked if they were hiring. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, right? I ended up getting the job and started printing weddings and learning portrait photography. Finally, I photographed my first wedding. It's so funny to remember how confident I was about a genre of photography I had never done. I'm sure I wasn't very good. I just didn't know it at the time.

Before long, I did weddings every weekend. I worked with a rangefinder style camera, the kind in which you have to make two images align in order to focus. Forget that; I soon trained myself to zone focus instead. If that wasn't enough of a challenge, camera and flash settings were manual back then. There was a piece of tape on the lens marked so you could look down and reset the aperture after focusing each shot. Mistakes were bountiful at first but then I found that I could go "ok, I'm at eight feet that's f8 take the picture". As my expertise grew, I started to photograph as many as three weddings a weekend. At \$25 a pop, I felt confident that I was well on my way. Success was surly just a click away.



My excitement for weddings eventually waned, so I decided to take my skills in a different direction and went to work for the county coroner. There I was able to continue my love of black-and-white printing and also learn how to dip and dunk color slides. All of the lab equipment was state of the art, and I could print my own work after hours. I printed everything the medical examiners photographed, as well as the research doctors' work.

The work was so varied and you never knew what was on the roll you were developing. Then it happened, I loaded a negative and slid it under the enlarger and there was a young girl murdered, stabbed to death, in some heart-wrenching ritual. I remember thinking that at some point she knew that help was not on the way. I was so upset that I quit the next day.



I fell in love married and had two wonderful children. Sadly, like so many other marriages, mine dissolved. When my dreams of being a stay-at-home mom disappeared, I went back to my first love, photography. Right away, I printed business cards stating that I specialized in, well, everything. And I was in business. Our family life could often be hectic with all the weddings, portrait sessions and events. Needless to say, the enlarger and red bulb was back in business in the bathroom.

One day I was photographing a stock show and wandered into an arena to watch the rodeo. By the way, I live in Oklahoma, cowboy country. "What fun," I thought, "wonder what their photographer does." Asking around I learned that they didn't have one. Well they did now!



I studied and asked questions, bought different equipment and became the official photographer for the Oklahoma High School Rodeo Association. Each weekend my kids and I would go to three different rodeos on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It was so much fun. We loved it. I even produced a yearbook with images of each athlete in their events.

Accidents happen, it was a Sunday afternoon when a barrel rider ran me over with her horse. (Have you ever had a concussion?) The following weekend a bull tried to do the same, and I decided that God wanted me to do something less stressful. So I went back to weddings!

Well equipment had come a long way. With an automatic flash and a Mamiya 645 I was in business. With all of the knowledge I had acquired my motto was "f8 and be there." I had also wised up a little and was now charging \$75 to photograph a wedding. At that price, weddings were plentiful.

Then, fate stepped in one Saturday morning when I was delivering proofs to a Hilton Hotel. I walked by a darkened room and peeked in. Clearly they were having an art judging. I watched awhile and then realized they were judging photographs. Then I realized, "Wow, I'm not any good." But I was intrigued. I wanted to be part of this. This was my introduction to Professional Photographers of Oklahoma, PPA and Don Blair.



You never forget your first teacher and I was lucky enough to have Don. I paid \$69 for an all day class with Big Daddy. Maybe when people come together at just the right time something special happens. He became my teacher, mentor and friend. "Lucky, lucky me."



Before long, I had fallen in love all over again. Print competition was so exciting; conventions and learning were everything. I went everywhere and did everything I could. I wanted to be great. Then one day the most incredible thing happened. The Louisiana Photographers asked me to speak. Me. It wasn't the money they offered; it was that someone cared about what I thought, what I knew. Then Arkansas asked me to judge. Really. Me. Judge. Wow, yes! Judging is having the best seat in the house. Could it get any better?



Yes, it could because a few years later I met my sweetheart, Don. Who knew how fun it could be to have someone love photography as much as I did. He taught me scenic photography—when, where, and how to do this lovely work. I knew I was addicted when, during a snowstorm one morning, I went driving without him and took a beautiful image of a tree-lined road. Imagine I found my art just around the corner.



Since we met, Don and I have traveled everywhere together. Finally, he took me to his favorite place, Yellowstone. There are simply no words to explain how beautiful it was. Thankfully I had a camera!

We photographed from before dawn until dusk for five days and at the end of that week I had captured the most glorious fall I had ever seen. It didn't matter if someone had stood there before images these were mine.



Meanwhile, the studio continued to grow. High school seniors brought cheerleaders. Fabulous cheerleaders. They are such a big part of the studio. What a thrill it was to enter my first cheerleader composite and have it go into the loan collection.

Cheerleaders introduced me to dancers. Dancers are simply wonderful to photograph because they understand their bodies and how to move them with ease and grace. Each year I work to find new ways to showcase these talented individuals. The dance business has grown so much that we recently split Studio Art Photography into an additional business specializing in dance called Spotlight Dance Photography

Don also gave me a passion for all things digital. "After Midnight", is woman's portrait that was taken in a bedroom in bright daylight. It was to be a gift for her husband in Iran. She was the mother of three and wanted to feel sexy again. I worked some magic in Photoshop and turned it into an intriguing midnight mystery, it is one of my favorites.

Once I gained proficiency in Photoshop, I moved on to Corel Painter. Oh my goodness how cool is this program. What a wonderful way to turn my images into pieces of art. I love the soft and easy feel of watercolor images. That's my favorite style. It's funny that everything has gone in a circle, back to my dreams of being an artist. I'm now learning to paint on canvas and working to develop mixed media images. I think of myself as a computer generated image-maker as much as I do a photographer.



I almost forgot another love, Infrared. Okay, now that's just amazing. I tried it with film and never got it right. But with digital I can do it. Whether it's a simple picture of a piece of ivy or better yet, let's float a lady in a hot tub with a piece of lace for a blanket. The hot water is like the sky and goes black and the skin looks iridescent. You can add grain to give it an organic look and feel. We liked the look enough to have a camera converted to IR. Ugly light for portraits, means pretty light for IR.



It's been over thirty years since I screwed in that red light bulb. Negatives have been replaced by pixels, bits and bytes. My enlarger has been updated to a Canon printer with a wonderful array of papers. Everything keeps getting better. The challenge is to never stop learning.



Looking at my portfolio, I'm thinking that here is my heart, printed right in front of me. I wonder what's next? I do know that I love my life and I'm so grateful to God for all the wonderful things that have happened to me through photography. It just may be that looking back I see His wonderful plan for my life. I've made mistakes aplenty. Life would have been easier if I could have stayed on the path. My only constant is photography.

They say if you love what you do you'll never work a day in your life. I don't know about that because, I've worked and worked hard. But, I still get up in the morning and love going to work, learning, teaching and judging.

I love it all.



"For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11



Accomplishments

Past President of the Metro Professional Photographers
Past President of the Oklahoma Professional Photographers
Photographic Craftsman PPA
Master of Photography PPA
Board member of the International Photography Hall of Fame
International Juror PPA
Board Member American Society of Photographers
Diamond Award winner PPA
ASP Service Award
Cameracraftsmen of America member
Jury Chairman PPA
PPA Photographic Print Exhibition Committee
Grandmother of Tripp and Bella Coleman



