

“Passion’s Journey”

by

Joe Campanellie

M. Photog., Cr., CPP, F-ASP

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Passion's Journey

**We need to dream better dreams...
and then work hard to make those dreams our reality.**

Like most of us who have found ourselves in the photographic field in one capacity or another, the events that led me to where I am today all seem to have happened quite by accident. Whether it was Fate or Karma, I'm not sure. My wife would say that these events were all part of a grand plan for me. She believes that all things happen in life for a reason, even if it doesn't seem clear to us at the time or fit in to what we see as our true calling in life.

In a seminar I attended recently by Janine Peters Killian she referred to these moments as "life's winks." Most of these events seem to be rather insignificant occurrences in our lives when they happen. In actuality, many of them prove to be very significant for the paths that our lives ultimately take. It is life's way of "winking" at us to make sure we're paying attention. For the most part we aren't paying attention and just go on as if nothing has happened. It's usually not until much later that we realize how important these events were to us at the time and what they really meant.

When my dad passed away suddenly in July I came to understand just how much of an influence he had on my career...both as a child and as an adult. He was trained as a photographer by the Navy at Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida. Going through some of his photographs the day before his funeral, I came to realize that the apple did not fall far from the tree. It was obvious where I inherited my photographic talents. My fondest memories of my dad will always be as a kid following him around in the darkroom. I found the smells and the process fascinating. I can remember like it was yesterday, getting my hair all greased down and my sister and I sitting for hours under those hot lights as he tried to create the perfect portrait of us. This is now a family tradition that I have continued by harassing my own children for hours on end while creating our annual Christmas portraits.

My dad also bought me my first camera, a Brownie Instamatic, when I was eight years old. I'm sure I was a real pain while photographing everything around me and bombarding him with endless questions. But, my interest in photography was not seriously sparked until I was in my first year of college when a friend of mine bought a 35mm camera and set up a darkroom in a walk-in closet. My dad helped me set up my own darkroom in our spare bathroom and taught me how to process my first roll of film. In the

days of film, photography was a little more magical and in some respects, half sorcery and half science with all the chemicals, the red lights, and the mysterious atmosphere of the darkroom. From that first roll of film I developed to the first print that magically appeared in the tray, my passion was born. At the time, I just didn't notice because I was busy going to college and pursuing a degree in sociology and child psychology.

I finished college and prepared to enter a career in child psychology...or so I thought. Fate chose to intervene and I found myself a newly-wed without a job. I went to work temporarily as a "lab rat" for my dad. He gave me every disgusting job that he could come up with to chase me back to the career and college education he had paid for. But, the more I worked for him, the more I liked what I was doing. When my dad finally accepted this, he made sure that my "on the job" training was productive and thorough. He was responsible for giving me the tools and the knowledge that made me the photographer I am today. My training included all aspects of both black and white and color printing and processing. He made sure that I understood what was necessary to capture a good image on film and then make it even better through the darkroom technology that was available at that time. And he instilled in me the very work ethic that I abide by today... that there is always time to do the job right the first time and that there is just no excuse for not doing your best. No matter what the circumstances are.

As time went on, I did a little of everything. I worked as a lab technician and supervisor for some of the most advanced labs in the area. And, as for learning to photograph, I received a very broad range of experience while hanging out of helicopters with the doors off, working at NASA as a subcontractor photographing the space shuttle and various satellites, and as a corporate photographer for the company that built the infamous Watergate bugging devices. Each new assignment brought new challenges that had to be overcome, such as location, lighting techniques, and equipment selection to obtain the desired photographic results.

For my own interest, I began to pursue nature and scenic photography. Chasing the sun and the world around me became my passion whenever I had the chance. My wife and I didn't have any children yet so there were many opportunities to travel and photograph new places. We began photographing weddings and then portraits out of a makeshift studio in our basement as I became more serious about the art and craft of portrait photography. All of this was done for "fun" and a little extra money at the time. I spent the next fifteen years in the world of corporate and industrial photography, a far cry from portrait photography. My world consisted of f64 and large format view cameras for multiple exposure imagery of electronic surveillance equipment.

After fifteen years with the company I was laid off or "outsourced" as they called it. My "safe" world came crumbling down around me. Life happened, leaving very little time for passion. My passion for photography was replaced by the need to earn money and pay the bills. Along came a daughter and then a set of twins, and before I knew it, life was

moving faster than I could have ever imagined. My long walks in the parks in pursuit of my passion were replaced with the responsibilities of parenthood. Changing diapers, homework, ballgames, and all the things that come with being a dad took precedence over everything else. What was once a hobby soon became a way to put food on the table and to support a family of five.

Trying to run a business that was our sole source of income was very difficult. Looking back I wonder how we managed to succeed. Let's face it; owning your own business is not for the faint of heart. It can put an incredible strain on your marriage and your personal life. We are forced to wear so many different hats. At times we are the marketing person, the CPA, software engineer, hardware engineer, salesperson, and retouch artist, only to mention a few. When we have some extra time, we may actually fit in some paying sessions.

At some point in time I lost my way and my passion. Photography was now just a "job." Days turned into months and months turned into years as I just struggled to survive and provide for my family. The passion was gone and it showed in my day-to-day photography and attitude towards my work. I started to question the very reason why I had been put on this earth. There had to be more than what I was experiencing at this point in my career. There had to be a way for me to recapture the passion that had defined my earlier days as a photographer and had fulfilled me as an artist. I firmly believe that without art...there is no passion, and...without passion there is no art. I needed to find a way to rekindle the creativity that once drove me, but I had no idea where to turn.

Then fate intervened once again in the persona of several photographers. I have heard many times from my mentors that when the student is ready, the teacher, or teachers in my case, will appear. The first of these was Joyce Wilson. From Joyce I learned that it was necessary to give yourself "permission to play." She taught me to tap into my creativity. I still remember her advice today, that it is "perfectly fine to let yourself soar with the eagles." Little did I know that I would take her advice so literally some years later.

Another source of inspiration came at the Maryland Photography Convention. Tony Sweet was a guest speaker and I was totally spellbound by his imagery. But, even more importantly, he sparked the passion that I had lost. It was definitely one of my big "ah-ha" moments. During his program I became excited about my possibilities as a photographer all over again. I updated my 35mm equipment and found myself making time for personal projects in order to find what I had lost.

Through Tony I found another teacher in Arthur Morris. Artie is one of the foremost avian photographers in the world, and I found him at just the right time. As a birthday surprise, my wife sent me on one of his Instructional Photo Tours and it was through Artie that I started to develop the style, which you will see in my portfolio. From my first

moments with Artie I knew there was something about avian photography that brought out the kind of creativity and passion that I had long forgotten.

I have spent many hours in the field getting to know and predict the behavior of my photographic prey. It takes a lot of education and patience to have real success. It's much more than the "f8 and be there" that I have heard so many times in my career. Most of my friends think I'm a little nuts these days and have nicknamed me the "bird man." It takes a particular personality to be willing to lie in the freezing snow and ice of Alaska or trudging through the stinking mud and bug ridden swamps of Florida for hours on end in the hopes of capturing just one image that makes your heart race with excitement.

The passion I feel for this type of photography is hard to explain. That time of day when the rays of the rising sun first become visible and the birds take flight in search of their favorite hunting grounds is indeed very magical. I stand at the edge of the swamp as the fog gently lifts off the cool waters. The wind is still and the air is heavy with the aroma of the lagoon. The birds are just awakening and stretching their wings. Some perch motionless with their wings spread waiting for the sun to gently touch and warm them before they take to the skies. The early risers are already busy looking for their morning meal. It's a time when the water lies still and the reflections are almost life-like. The colors can move from cool to warm in the span of just a few moments. I become excited with the photographic possibilities and at the same time I feel helpless, knowing that I have so little control over my morning's chosen subject.

Sometimes in the blink of an eye, it's all over as the entire flock of birds that I just drove hours to photograph exit in one mass blast off! For no apparent reason or physical signal, they have all left, leaving me to gaze out over an "empty" landscape. And yet, it's alright because in that brief moment I have been allowed to witness first hand the beauty and majesty of Mother Nature during one of her finest moments. Few people are willing to spend an entire day with the possibility of coming back empty handed, and still feel exhilarated about the day they just had. For me, it's not just the images I capture that is so fulfilling, it's about getting out and taking the time to reconnect with nature. It's a time to decompress and get a whole new perspective on life.

I have had the opportunity to make multiple trips to Florida to photograph the graceful inhabitants of South Florida and two incredible trips to Homer, Alaska, in pursuit of our national treasure...the American bald eagle. The images that you will view in my portfolio are from those trips. It was never my intention for this to become a body of work that would define me as the photographer I am today. In the beginning my goal was just to take my camera for some long walks in an attempt to decompress and find the passion I had lost for my life's work. In the end it led to that, and so much more. The passion was indeed rekindled and my spirit renewed.

From the frigid fields of Alaska to the tropical swamps and lagoons of Florida I can say that I have truly been able to witness Mother Nature at the epitome of her finest hours. It is absolutely impossible not to be affected in some way on a spiritual level by these sights and sounds. The images that you will view have had no excessive digital manipulation. It's true; I am now a card-carrying member of "over shooters anonymous", but the goal of my photography has always been to retain the integrity of the images as they were captured. To that end, no elements need to be added or taken away in order to improve them. The post processing techniques that have been used on these images were purely to bring out the best in each image, not to create something that did not exist in the first place. These images are the result of careful planning and a great deal of patience. This attitude towards my photography and the images I now create comes from my old days of lugging a 4x5 camera into a helicopter with only a few sheets of film. I didn't have the luxury then of taking two hundred images in the hopes that a few were "keepers". Remakes were not an option and I learned to "get it on the negative" very early in my career. This was long before the days of Photoshop and the process to fix even basic photographic flaws was not only expensive but tedious and time consuming.

When viewing the images presented in my portfolio, I hope you will be able to appreciate some of God's wonders and that you will be as affected as I was when I was in the field capturing them. From a great white egret escaping with his prize to a courtship dance high above in the heavens, the avian inhabitants of Florida are sure to delight all that will just take the time to observe and quietly embrace their natural beauty. I also hope that through my imagery you will be able to feel the pure power and majesty of an American bald eagle and appreciate the delicacy and the symmetry of their fully extended wingspan. An eagle in flight is a sight to behold and one that I have tried to convey to the viewer.

It may sound a little overstated, but it's almost spiritual having a bald eagle fly so close that you can reach out and touch him. The events and sights that I have had the privilege of witnessing in pursuit of this new found passion leaves no doubt that we are all put on this earth for a reason. The puzzle we all face is figuring out what that reason is. Some find their true calling very early in life, others, like myself, need many years for their journey of discovery to unfold and reveal itself.

It has been said that life is a journey and it's not the destination that's important but how we travel and what we learn along the way. Birth and death are inevitable, what's really important is what we leave behind as our legacy. We are defined as human beings and remembered by future generations by how we have lived our lives and the impact we have had on those around us.

When I started on this quest I had no idea of what life had in store for me. Now I feel privileged to have had these experiences, and to have arrived at where I am today. When we are finally able to discover life's true path for us it is by no means the end of the journey. In fact, it's quite the opposite, because it is at that time that we are finally able to

open our eyes and our hearts to true self-expression and artistry. It is at that time that we are able to cast off the burden of trying to please everyone around us, and accept that the true artist lies within each one of us if we will only take the time to find it.

Life has taught me some important lessons over the years. First and foremost I have learned the importance of family and friends. Without their love and support I may never have come to this pinnacle of self-discovery. All the accolades would be quite empty if they were not there to share in my professional accomplishments as well as help me through the times when things didn't go according to plan. I have learned how important it is to give back to the profession that has been so good to me. I believe very passionately that if photography is to flourish as the true "craft" it is meant to be, then it is up to us to educate and mentor those who will ultimately follow in our footsteps. Education is a precious gift in our industry and the ability to bring this full circle from the role of an apprentice to that of a mentor is not only necessary, it is imperative for the very survival of photography as we know it today.

I have had the rare opportunity to embark on an incredible journey, and one that I look forward to continuing for many years to come. I have been blessed to witness many of the earth's greatest treasures. I have learned to stop, look and listen to the river. It is the first step to nurturing my creative soul. I have learned that to search for a beginning and an ending is senseless; yesterday is history and tomorrow is a mystery. Today is truly a gift from God that must be savored and appreciated for all it is worth. What began as a dream for me in search of lost passion actually became a new reality.

"To live upon this land, to take the gifts she gives us...

is a great and wonderful thing.

To listen to the river as it sings before it freezes,

it sounds like small bells ringing in the distance.

That water gives us life, and the land gives us hope,

and the sky a place to touch the face of the Creator."

— Keith Bear, Mandan-Hidatsu Story Teller & Musician

William Joseph (Joe) Campanellie

24713 Showbarn Circle
Damascus, MD 20872-2815
Studio (301) 253-6651
Cell (301) 807-0907

BIOGRAPHY:

Since graduating from college, Joe Campanellie has been involved in many aspects of photography for the past 36 years. From his first job as a “temporary” lab technician working for his Dad it was never his intention to pursue photography as a career. But nonetheless he spent the next 23 years developing his skills as a photographer and master darkroom printer. Drawing on this past experience, he and his wife Mary Jean opened Campanellie’s Portraits in 1996 which specializes in the personalized portraiture of families, children, and high school seniors. These portraits are created in the studio as well as on location and require an in depth understanding of lighting and other environmental challenges and how these can be manipulated and controlled to achieve the optimum results for each client.

Joe has also pursued a career as a fine art nature and scenic photographer. His work is currently displayed in a number of galleries and private collections in the United States. After being a full time commercial and portrait photographer for many years he re-discovered his real passion in life. It was at that time he realized how important it was to give yourself permission to explore your own creative pursuits in order to avoid burnout.

Joe is very active as a guest lecturer on advanced portrait and lighting techniques, nature photography, and as a print judge for professional photographic associations. As a member of both the Maryland and Pennsylvania Professional Photographic Associations, Joe has put in countless hours in an effort to further promote these associations and photography as a craft and not simply as a hobby.

Joe has been married to Mary Jean for 37 years. They have 23 year old twins Tony and Melissa, who reside in Florida, and a 28 year old daughter, Cyndi, who lives in Maryland, with their 12 month old granddaughter, Emma Rose.

EDUCATION:

1968 – Wheaton High School, Wheaton, MD

1970 - Montgomery College, Rockville, MD Associate of Arts Degree

1973 - Towson State University, Towson, MD Bachelor of Science Degree
in Child Psychology and Sociology

PAST WORK EXPERIENCE:

Watkins-Johnson Co., January 1980 – November 1995

As Head of Photography, my position was the culmination of all past experiences in photography. The Photo Lab was an in-house operation which provided photographic support for facilities in Maryland, North Carolina and California.

Engineering Graphics, Inc., October 1978 – January 1980

As Production Manager my duties included various aspects of the day to day operation of the reproduction and photographic departments which comprised this company. Was responsible for the scheduling of work, the hiring and training of new employees, quality control and personnel supervision.

National Air Survey, October 1977 – September 1978

Responsible for daily production work in the color printing department as well as contracted photography assignments. Photographed political functions on Capitol Hill and worked closely with the Department of Education in the development of multi media presentations which were used in nationwide training seminars for educators. Sub-contracted to NASA to handle on-site equipment photographic assignments and photographing satellites during pre-flight tests in various clean room and high speed deployment environments.

Photo Science, Inc., October 1973 – October 1977

As Group Supervisor was responsible for scheduling work to meet deadlines, quality control, training new personnel, equipment maintenance, scheduling repair work, and preparation of initial billing sheets from job control forms. Responsible for custom color printing and various phases of color processing including the multi-staged production of Cibachrome mosaics generated from NASA ERTS satellite imagery. Performed aerial photography from light planes and helicopters with 4x5 and medium format equipment

**PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS
AND AWARDS:**

1988 through Present - Member of the Professional Photographers of America (PPA)

1988 through present - Member of the Maryland Professional Photographers Association (MDPPA)

1995 through present - Member of the Professional Photographers Association of Pennsylvania (PPA of PA)

1989 through present – various positions within MDPPA

1993, 1994, 1995, and 1997	Board Member at Large
1993, 1994, and 1995	Newsletter Editor
1993, 1994, 1995	Official Photographer
2000 and 2001	MDPPA President
2002 and 2003	MDPPA Chairman of the Board
2006, 2007, and 2008	MDPPA Elections Chairman

1993 – Southeastern Award (SEPPA) for Service

1993 – PPA Certification

1996 – PPA Master’s Degree

1998 – PPA Craftsman Degree

2000, 2001, and 2002 – PPA of PA Board Member

2003 – PPA National Award for Service

2005 through 2009 Pennsylvania Image Maker of the Year

2005 through 2009 Maryland Image Maker of the Year

2006 and 2008 – Recipient of the Kodak Gallery Elite Award

2006 - PPA Photographer of the Year – Gold Level (2 loan prints)

2008 - PPA Photographer of the Year – Gold Level (2 loan prints)

PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

AND AWARDS (continued):

2009 – ASP Fellowship Degree

2009 - ASP Gold Medallion Award

2009 - PPA Photographer of the Year – Diamond Level (4 loan prints)

2009 - SEPPA Regional Print Competition
First Place and two Distinguished Awards

2009 - PPA Excellence In Imaging Award to be presented at the 2010
Convention

23 Kodak Gallery Awards

11 Fuji Masterpiece Awards

74 - PPA Print Merits

134 - PPA Service & Speaking Merits

605 Maryland Print & Service Merits

Maryland Associate Fellow of Photography Degree

Maryland Fellow of Photography Degree

Maryland Combined Degree

396 Pennsylvania Print & Service Merits

Pennsylvania Service Degree

Pennsylvania Print Degree

Pennsylvania CPP Medallion