

**An uphill struggle:
Where there is a will there is a way**

Maz Mashru

M.Photog, Cr.Photog(USA), FMPA,FRPS,FBIPP,FSWPP,FBPPA,FMIPP,QEP,ASP

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The Beginning

My roots are from India, but I was born in a small town in Uganda, Africa where my father had moved to in search of work in the early 1940's. My father settled in Uganda, having gone back to marry my mother, in the hope of a better life for his family compared to one he could have provided had he remained in India. My parents had six children with me being the eldest. In our village, education was very basic therefore my parents sent me to a boarding school in the nearby city of Mbale.

At the boarding house, I became fascinated with cameras and my passion to own a camera grew. In the boarding house, spending money had to be deposited with the "superintendent". We were only able to withdraw the equivalent to £1.00 (in the money at that time) per week and as I was becoming more and more eager to own a camera, I made an excuse that I needed a new pair of shoes, so I could withdraw more money.

The money allowed to me the purchase my first camera, an Agfa Clack (roll film camera), which cost the equivalent of £3.50 (in the money at the time). At the time, £3.50 was deemed to be a lot of money therefore a camera was perceived as a luxury item. The camera had manual settings; therefore initially I could only obtain four-five perfectly exposed black and white images.

Although I was proud to own my camera, I had to keep it a secret from my father, as he was not aware that I spent the pocket money he had given, for essential expenses and medical fees, on this luxury item. My mother however knew and accepted my decision to buy the camera, but thought I bought it as a "new toy", expecting that I would soon become bored and soon abandon it. Eventually I informed my father and, as expected, he did not welcome the news. He was strongly against photography at that time, expecting me to spend more time on my studies and build a professional career as a doctor, dentist or a lawyer.

Photography in those days was not a well-respected career in society but with my mother's support and discretion I took photographs for my friends. I did not charge my friends for the photographs as I saw the opportunity as my education but processing the pictures was expensive. In the 1960's, even black and white photography and processing was a luxury. As I started learning more about the camera and produced good images, my passion and love for photography had increased. Regular practice helped grow my confidence in my skills and the work I was producing.

One of my friends who was very knowledgeable about photography, manually developed films and produced negatives. Even though he refused to teach me how to produce images, he did allow me to stand outside his converted dark room. I had to shout for time on each chemical process from outside. He also had a tendency to tease me by producing photographic prints however this only fuelled my curiosity towards processing and developing images. Eventually he taught me how to develop a film.

As chemicals were not readily available, I used the same ones continuously and as I could not afford a developing tank, all of my processes were done in trays manually. A stopwatch was also seen as a luxury, so I had to process the films by counting with my eyes closed which would sometimes cause me to over develop a film but nonetheless I enjoyed mastering this process. I eventually made my own contact sheet from hand-made contact frame and used this to develop the prints. I had to process a contact sheet in three chemical trays and my safe light was a very low red bulb. Over time my self-confidence increased, so I started charging my friends to primarily cover material costs. Gradually, I began to make a profit and with my savings was able to invest in a second hand enlarger to make larger prints.

My mother had always been extremely supportive of my photography work and my passion for photography grew extensively and I would practice during any spare time. After finishing all my homework, and knowing that my father had gone to sleep, I used to convert the bathroom into a dark room and conduct my prints. I could not afford a glazing machine or a dryer so dried my prints on the washing line and collected them before my father awoke.

One day, I was hired to produce a wedding album for a neighbour's daughter's wedding. I charged the equivalent of £10 for this and with the money bought my first twin lens reflex camera: a Yashica 635. I was an extremely bright student in my school, always stood in the top three positions in the class. My teachers, all of whom I had a good relationship with, knew of my passion in photography and consequently nominated me to lead a photographic club. It was my responsibility to cover the photography at school events, resulting in the first ever school magazine, which included my photos.

I even took pictures of a fatal accident that took place in my town and sent them to the national newspaper called Uganda Argus. The newspaper decided to use one of the photographs and rewarded me with a small fee in return. This was a very proud moment! It was my turning point; I covered more events and newsworthy photographs in my town. My images were rapidly becoming recognised and I began to receive small payments for them. I entered one of the images entitled "playing in water" in a UK competition, which was chosen as the winning image and I received a financial prize that I put towards my home grown business.

Having studied hard and receiving excellent grades in my senior Cambridge exams (equivalent to 'O' Levels) I was offered a scholarship to continue my education at university. Education in Uganda was privately funded and expensive. I decided to sacrifice my education to assist my father, who was struggling to pay education fees for my siblings and me. My father accepted my decision to provide extra income for the family and helped me secure me a job with a family friend. I however declined this job; much to my parent's dismay as mum had supported me to do this as a hobby, but not as a career. They denied my wish to become a photographer and did not deem it to be a well-respected career. I later established that this was due to the fact that I had to interact with females (positioning their hands and face), This was seen as unacceptable in our Indian society who also perceived photography to be a low class, unskilled job.

Start of photographic career

Eventually, my parents were convinced that I was more suited to a career in photography than medicine. Nevertheless, my father informed

me he was unable to help me purchase the equipment required for a photographic studio so I decided to build a roofed canopy in our courtyard to protect the studio from sun, rain and any other adverse weather. I also bought neutral blue material, which was used to make a background.

I could not afford to purchase expensive equipment so decided to build my own lights using basins as reflectors. I painted the inside with silver paint and the outside with black matt. I made holes in the middle to fit light sockets and bulbs. Two nuts and bolts were fitted on the sides to tilt the light. Lighting stands were made using conduit pipes of two different sizes so they could slide into each other with holes drilled at two inch intervals to raise or lower my lights and then held in position with a help of a nail. I welded a flat U shaped piece of metal to hold my basins (reflector) and welded base to the light stands. My studio was finally ready!

I offered free sittings to my friends, so I could practice and build my portfolio. An established photographer in my hometown thought my venture was a joke but soon, I had built my client base and my business increased. I approached Kodak to supply me with goods, but was refused help because they already had a local established agent and did not want to upset him.

Uphill difficulties

Consequently, I decided to purchase my raw materials at a higher price from another town. As I was getting established, I offered my supplier a 50:50 partnership in the business. I would run the entire business and their only involvement was to supply the material at cost price. He agreed and asked me to look for independent premises. On securing premises, I approached my partner who subsequently changed his mind and refused to keep his promise and therefore had to set up a studio independently with additional overhead.

Following this, as I did not have supplier once again, I had to purchase my stock from another local agent in a nearby town. Eventually, I came into contact with an individual who had previously offered me a

scholarship for further education. He offered to act as a guarantor and arranged the supply of Agfa products. This provided the opportunity to grow my business rapidly. My services started to get noticed and I started attracting new clients. I began to attain government assignments, college contracts, wedding and portrait work. I invested in better equipment and offered processing and printing services.

At the age of 19, I was the youngest independent studio owner in Uganda and other suppliers, including Kodak, who then were willing to supply their products to me directly, were noticing my progress. My competition became weaker and my business resulted in an established photographer, who had never changed his style or attitude had to close. Having already established myself in my town, I eventually earned recognition in the whole district including being appointed as an official photographer for the District Commissioner followed by the Ministry of Cultural and Community Development appointing me as their official photographer. I secured photographic contracts from 2nd Battalion of Uganda army based in the town of Moroto, Northern Uganda. Due to my excellent relationship with the editor of the national newspaper, I was given a press card and a contract for the East African community (union).

Being the eldest son in an Indian family, my parents wanted to find me a bride (arranged marriage was the norm in our culture) but at the time, I refused and on the basis that I would not marry until I was self-supportive. I was eventually persuaded by my cousin to marry his sister-in-law Rekha. He assured me that she would be a supportive partner and help towards my dream. I was convinced and in 1970 married Rekha; who assisted in the growth of my business. She learnt how to manage our studio and mastered the management, processing and printing images. As there were no automatic machines at this time, all work had to be conducted manually.

I concentrated in securing more contracts and became an official photographer for the national newspaper in my district. The general manager of Kodak even paid a surprise visit to my studio and was

amazed to see the youngest couple in East Africa running a successful photographic business and assured me the full support from Kodak.

By 1971 my parents had received the “**refusal to stay in Uganda**” as they were British subject and not Ugandan citizens resulting in my family having to be split; my parents along with my three youngest siblings forced to return to India. Consequently, I was required to financially support my entire family in Uganda and India.

Coup in Uganda: Idi Amin Reign

Uganda had a coup and Idi Amin became the president of Uganda. I obtained an original negative of the new president. I was awarded the contract to supply official framed images for government offices, schools and public places, ultimately selling thousands of these images. The business flourished with the work for the president and his government and as a result employed three more staff members. We began supplying Amin’s portraits all over Uganda along with other products carrying the images such as badges and posters.

President Amin suddenly decided to expel all British nationals and those affected were required to leave Uganda within 90 days and refrained from taking any money or valuable possessions with them. My family and I, who had not already moved to India, were therefore forced to leave the country and leave behind all we had worked so hard for over the previous years. An “informant” notified me to leave immediately as my name was on a “hit list” having worked closely with government officials. We had to vacate on the same evening in order to save our lives fleeing the country penniless as refugees.

Arrival in the UK as a refugee

I arrived in Stansted airport with my wife and sister on a cold autumn day in October 1972. Upon arrival, we were given shelter in a disused army camp where we shared rooms with other refugees. Our main aim was to settle rapidly and build a new life for the family. Our life and struggles in Uganda taught us to work hard and how difficult earning money was.

High level of media propaganda and a speech by a top minister mentioning of ‘Blood Rivers’ prohibited us from feeling welcomed. My

application for a photojournalist was turned down as I did not possess a NUJ Union Card and was further refused work as an assistant to a professional photographer as I did not hold any paper qualifications.

The desire to settle quickly motivated me to obtain any job related to my passion of photography and got the opportunity of selling cameras at a nationwide electronics retailer. My manager asked me “being an Indian can you communicate with customers?” He further said, “Customarily Indian people were coolies (porters) or accountants”. I quickly accepted the challenge and advised him to fire me if I failed to perform.

In one month I broke all the company’s records in selling cameras and soon became the top sales man within the company, followed by a promotion to the head of the department. I was however informed that I would be unable to reach the next position as an assistant manager, due to my background and the colour of my skin.

In 1973, my wife was expecting our first child. As I saw no further prospect with my job, I decided to do part-time wedding photography from home and my wife left her job to manage the clients. This idea was however short-lived as the council prohibited the business from running at home so decided to rent a space and run a small studio in a highly Indian populated area.

As we still did not have much money, I purchased studio lights on credit, bought a second hand Bronica camera. Gave my business the generic name “Photo Centre” and started my own business albeit alongside my camera sales job. With no bank support and other local practicing photographers seeing me as a threat to their business, life was difficult but I was determined to succeed.

Subsequently in 1975, I left my job with the electronics retailer and became a full time photographer. My family who were in India eventually joined us and we resided together as an extended family. As they helped look after my first-born, my wife and I were able to concentrate on the business but neither of us had any photographic education in the UK. With the aim of growing our customer base, we maintained our prices in line with, or lower than other photographers.

I joined a local camera club to gain further knowledge and attended a seminar by Charles Lewis, which encouraged me restructure my pricing. I subsequently increased my prices for my work.

Thereafter, Jack Curtis came to launch his book and deliver a seminar, giving me the opportunity to study images from other photographers. From fear of embarrassment, I tried to hide my images however Curtis's wife spotted them, asked me to show my work. She gave me guidance on how to improve my images and the quality of the "end product". Inspired by the constructive criticism, I purchased Curtis's book "Behind the Camera". Curtis's book contained examples of top photographers and I discovered the work of other great artists. This raised my standards allowing me to charge more money for my work.

I soon became familiar with the work of top wedding photographer, Rocky Gunn whose work inspired me to travel to the USA and research further thus learning more romantic style of wedding photography.

I decided to invest in further education, attending workshops and seminars of top photographers. I never copied their images but used them as inspiration to create my own individual style. Through attending seminars I met Bill Stockwell, known as "casual king", and became good friends. He demonstrated how to work rapidly at weddings and be a showman, enabling me to learn about candid wedding photography.

I met Leon Kenemar who taught me additive and subtractive light, Don Blair, Victor Avilla, Frank Chrichhio, Hanson Fong, John Howell, David Peters, Dean Collins, Jay Stock, Tibor Hovarth, Ken Whitmere, Bill Mcintosh, Frank Kristian, Linda Lapp, Lisa Evans and many more. All these photographers influenced me to create my own style and taught me numerous effects such as posing and proper lighting. I learnt that photography was an art. My approach to photography then changed immensely.

Turning point

My work improved immensely and I started winning awards for my images. This was a turning point in my life. My fellow photographers who

had rejected me and prevented me from joining their organisation extended a warm welcome. I learnt about PPA and WPPA (which is known as WPPI) and by joining these American organisations, I was exposed to American photography and more photographers.

Al Gilbert from Toronto, Canada became a very close friend and also my mentor. He taught me how to use wide-angle lenses to make a portrait and how to paint a scene with lights using the hyper focal distance. Other influential figures included: Peter Nicastro, Van Moore and Joe Zeltsman.

UK based photography organisations invited me to speak at their national conventions and across the country and also invited to deliver lectures overseas. My work obtained considerable international exposure and I covered weddings in countries such as Australia, India, Ireland, Canada, America, Dubai and many others.

As my business expanded, my landlord raised rent so I convinced my bank manager to assist me in buying my own premises. The Kodak General Manager was invited to officially open my new premises at the grand opening. The studio itself was relatively modern and Kodak even used it to launch their new product. They attracted the press, radio and television enabling my work to receive prime time exposure and increase national awareness.

My work was becoming recognised in the industry leading to me winning more awards in the UK and abroad. One of my proudest moments was having my LOAN COLLECTION image displayed at the Epcot centre in USA. I won three Court of Honors from New York State and several Kodak awards, including Gold awards resulting in me becoming a Kodak educator, partaking master classes.

I was invited by Kodak, Fuji and Agfa to head the photographic expedition in India along with other photographers capturing “images of India”. An exhibition was held in Dublin, Ireland during the “World conference of Professional Photographers”. During the exhibition I noticed something remarkably interesting: Whilst the images were captured together, researching the same subjects, we (the photographers) had all produced completely different images. I

concluded that no two minds are identical, we see differently to one another.

As India was celebrating 50 years of independence, the speaker of House of Commons was representing Great Britain and she presented to her counterpart a portrait created by an Indian. I was commissioned to capture her image. Given only 14 minutes to set up and create her portrait meant that I had a difficult task on my hands. I used the technique I learnt from my friend, Al Gilbert; using a wide-angle lens and painting with lights to capture the grandness of the room.

The image was highly successful so I was invited a second time to create her portrait in her official robes and this time was given 1½ hours to create a new portrait. This image was used in the speaker's autobiography. This endorsed my work and I was commissioned to photograph two Prime Ministers of the UK, along with the entire cabinet of ministers.

My bread and butter

In the earlier days I only covered church weddings and the events only lasted approximately 3 hours. This allowed me to capture two weddings per day: one wedding in the morning and a second in the late afternoon. I had to learn and embrace the culture to succeed and in the early days, it was difficult to gain acceptance from customers due to my ethnicity and their concern over me covering their big day. There were also a number of instances where I experienced such discrimination where people were hesitant in booking me after discovering my background and on one occasion was even told by the bride and groom not to approach one of the grandparents for this reason. By the end of this event, I left the day being a friend to the grandparent.

My work was soon displayed at a local railway station and this attracted good publicity of my images resulting in the opportunity to photograph a Greek wedding. My coverage of the wedding the final wedding album was so well received that for the following approximately 30 years, I had a total monopoly to cover Greek weddings in the Midlands and Northern England. Greek families believed in spending good money for

photography, so I ensured they received personal attention. The Greek community was a very close one and most of my work initially came through word of mouth followed by what seemed like an expectation within their community that I would be covering most weddings.

As time passed there were more and more divorces in the Greek community, leading to less spend on weddings therefore demands for my services shrank. I searched beyond the Greek market and discovered Indian weddings.

The second generation Indian community, became financially rich and appreciated lavish lifestyles. There was always a culture of “having a bigger and better wedding than the last wedding ” and a need to “outdo each other”. They ultimately hired the best venues for weddings, consequently spending a fortune. I had already learned that to work with various communities, I had to study their culture and language. For Indian weddings, I had a great advantage of knowing tradition and culture as well as the language. However, I had to learn about family set up so I would satisfy all other members in the family. I needed to act like a showman, making sure that all the guests noticed me.

It was important to capture all the details of the wedding: the décor, the colours and above all of the designer outfits and jewellery. Most of the bridal portraits were captured in any small room available where I would have set up a portable studio. Attending Monte Zucker’s workshop helped me to capture beautiful portraits of the bride and her family. As the venues were booked for a limited time, I would normally only get a few minutes to capture the memorable aspects of the wedding. Some liberal parents would allow me to capture the portraits of the couple in the grounds of the venue. As time is normally limited, my knowledge of posing and lighting learnt from the top masters has been advantageous. My photojournalism also enabled me to work efficiently.

Attending workshops, seminars and practicing in my own time has allowed me to develop and become an outstanding image-maker. At weddings I am a good listener and I work with the total flow of the occasion and has earned me trust and respect. I regularly get recommendations towards my next assignments; thus I do not need to advertise my business.

Sell portrait as family heirloom

At weddings I tend to produce family portraits to be enlarged and are regularly sold as signed wall portraits. These portraits hang on my clients' walls and silently advertise my work.

I ensure that my studio provides an enjoyable experience for families to view their images. I display all the beautiful images as a musical slide show. This creates a desire in the clients to own wall decors for their houses, as memories of the wonderful day. In my reception area, I have created a beautiful gallery of large portraits inspired by the work of Paul Gitting and Phil Charis.

When my son Roopin was born in 1980 my wife remained away for few months and generating extra income through selling portraits became my main priority. I focussed on weddings on weekends and on studio portraits during the week. The portrait business grew rapidly with many households purchasing large family portraits by me.

Digital revolution

The world I knew over the previous four decades radically changed as technology arrived! The digital revolution took me back to a fear I felt when I arrived as a refugee. I did not make a sudden change and at the start, no digital cameras attracted me, hoping it would be just a fad and continued with my Hasselblad and Nikon Camera. My laboratory made the digital change so I had to get all my negatives scanned. I learnt I could use these scans to create a digital slide show easily which saved me a small fortune in trans proofing, so I bought a digital projector and as time passed I invested in software to create impactful slideshows in less time.

Digital imaging was starting to impress me and one day Fuji sent me Fuji S1 digital camera to test. I was not ready but I was forced to use the camera side by side with my Hasselblad. My image produced with the digital camera won first prize and I became "Photographer of the year." The first prize was a Fuji DSLR camera and lens.

The following year I won a first prize again with title Photographer of the Year and won 16-inch Epson printer. This resulted in full digital

transition. I had to change my mind-set and took the wise step in moving into digital photography. If I had not moved to digital photography, my business would today be obsolete. I used the same education with digital as I used before by capturing my images by studying light and shadows to capture a masterpiece and therefore reducing the need for post-production adjustments or corrections.

The digital age has given me the freedom to alter and enhance images on computer as well as saving me time and money by using the computer to re-touch my images. As I have fully embraced the move to digital, I now employ a full-time editor to run my daily digital workflow. This allows me to spend more of my time in mastering the digital change to reflect today's customer demands.

Conclusion

I've learnt a lot over the years, the hardest being how to change with time. I had to dig deep to when I first arrived to the UK as a refugee to remember how not to be afraid as the world around me changed. The resilience and tenacity to get over a fear has helped to keep my business alive for over 40 years; in a job I started as my hobby with my pocket money. How lucky is the life of a photographer; I see people at their happiest and capture their milestones, freeze time and create history.

My uphill struggle has given me the best view over the mountain of life. I understand that there isn't anything I can't climb and reach. And as long as I have my camera, I have the knowledge and skills to capture the world as I see it.

Curriculum Vitae

MAZ MASHRU

M.photog USA | Er.photog USA | FMPA | FSWPP |
Hon.FBPPA | FBIPP | FRPS | FMIPP | QED | ASP

MAZ MASHRU

A master of classical portraiture, the Internationally acclaimed photographer Maz Mashru holds some of the highest accolades that any photographer can be awarded. Maz is a Photographic Lecture and photographic judge who regularly get invited worldwide to share his knowledge with other professional photographers.

Maz gained his knowledge from the Top TUTORS in the world. He has won almost every award in the world. Maz has been featured on National and Local Televisions, Radios, Newspapers and Trade Press. In spite of all the achievements he is modest and approachable.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Master Photographer Professional Photographers of America (PPA).
- Craftsman Photographer Professional Photographers of America (PPA).
- Fellowship of Royal photographic Society
- Fellowship of British Institute of Professional Photographers (BIPP).
- Fellowship of Master Photographer Association (MPA)
- Fellowship of Society of Wedding and Portrait Photography (SWPP).
- Fellowship of British Portrait Photography Association (BIPP).
- Fellowship of Malta Institute of Professional Photography (MIPP).
- Qualified European Photographer (QED).
- Won Kodak blue ribbon for bridal portrait.
- Named Kodak Photographer of the Year. Won £1000 prize money.
- Won several Kodak Gold awards for Excellency.
- Invited to join Kodak Gold Circle, Elite Group
- Won gold, silver and several bronze awards from British Institute of Professional Photographers (BIPP).

- Won prestigious awards at Master Photographer Association (MPA).
- Won 3 Court of Honors Professional Photographers Society of New York (PPSNYS).
- Won gold pin and Fuji award at Professional Photographers' Society of New York (PPSNYS)
- Had several prints selected for Loan Collection Professional Photographers of America (PPA)
- Earn regular print merits at IPC competition at Professional Photographers of America (PPA)
- Won many Kodak awards
- Won numerous awards at print competition at WPPI including 1st and 2nd place.
- Named photographer of the year at SWPP for two consecutive years (2006,2007).
- Won bronze medal and a prize of £1000 at Royal Photographic Society (RPS).
- Won numerous other awards, list would be too long to name all.
- Home Minister, Honorable Jack Straw MP presented me with a lifetime award for contributing to photography.
- Twice was named Mr. Leicester by the newspaper.
- Kodak chose my studio to promote (Christmas gift idea). This gave me national exposure on prime time television.
- My image was chosen to launch Kodak Portra paper
- PPA used my print for their website to promote degree programs.
- Lectured photography worldwide
- Have been national speaker at National conferences in UK and Ireland
- Invited regularly to judge photography completions'
- Epson chose me to be a judge at Photokina, Cologne, Germany.
- Founded Guild of British Portrait Photographers'
- Member of London Portrait Group
- Invited to join prestigious K Club
- Charter member of Charnwood Lions Club international
- Kodak selected me for 3 consecutive years to be their ambassador in running their master classes
- Elinchrome changed all my photographic lighting free of charge
- Chosen as a group leader to take British photographers to cover images of India
- Invited to be headline speaker at the first conference held in Dublin, Ireland called World Conference of Professional Photographers
- Invited regularly as a platform speaker nationally and internationally
- My image of a bride was selected for publication on a front cover of a Chinese magazine. It has the largest circulation in China.
- Served as an executive and regional chairman for Master Photographers Association
- My work has been regularly published in books magazines and newspapers
- National television and radio do regular interviews regarding my success.
- I was finalist for Agfa competition
- Long standing member of ASP

BIOGRAPHY: - MAZ MASHRU

I was born in Uganda, East Africa. My family came to Uganda from India.

I obtained a basic education from a boarding school but I was attracted to photography from a young age and I won my first major award at the age of nine.

My career in Uganda was split between photojournalism and wedding/portrait photography. I set up my first studio at the age of 19, the studio was well established when General Amin expelled all British Nationals from Uganda. I lost all my wealth and arrived in United Kingdom as a penniless refugee.

In spite of a cold reception from fellow photographers in the early days, I was full of determination and passion to pursue the art of photography. I worked tirelessly and my passion has allowed me today to be regarded as one of the best photographers in the industry.

My wife Rekha stood by me and helped me to achieve my success. During the opening of my studio in 1975, I faced many difficulties both financially and racially. I was focused on success and worked around these problems by surrounding myself around the best photographers at the time. I learnt from them and in turn my work became outstanding. As art has no barriers I soon became unique and exposed my service to all communities. I specialised in wedding photography and portraiture. I have broken all barriers and my photography is regarded as United Kingdom's foremost. Rekha and I are renowned worldwide for superb Indian wedding photography. We have both travelled extensively for photography including as far as Australia, India, USA, and France.

I have served as regional and national executive councilor for Master Photographer Association. I founded a group of top British photographers known as The Guild of British Portrait Photographers in the UK. As a platform speaker and judge, I have lectured throughout UK, India, Ireland, Denmark Norway, Italy, Germany, Canada, USA and Switzerland.

My list of achievements highlight the extent of awards I have received in my lifetime and for this I was given a Lifetime Achievement award, presented at The House of Commons by Honorable Jack Straw MP and I was invited to attend the Queen's Garden Party.

The Daily Telegraph, a national newspaper, produced an article entitled my story as "Rags to Riches" which is quite fitting from where I started. My daughter Rita has now taken over the day to day running of the business allowing me to solely focus on my photography.

I have gained every qualification in UK and earned Master of Photography and Craftsman Degree from PPA. In 2015 I was the British photographer to gain European Qualified Photographer title.

With my friendly and winning nature I have gained friends all over the world.