FotoMacher

Examining Lives with Jewish Eyes

THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF

FRANK BARNETT

Foreword by Paul Haist

Exhibit – April 22 – June 21, 2015

OREGON JEWISH MUSEUM and
CENTER for HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

The advancement of the human species has been served well by photography, its invention leading to a broadly humanizing phenomenon. It educates, informs, cajoles, and beautifies our existence. As a vehicle for communication, photography is an extension of the human intellect.

– Frank Barnett

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PHOTOJOURNALIST

Portland, Oregon USA

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To my grandchildren, be witnesses to the world around you according to the biblical imperative, zakhor, the social responsibility to remember. In my case I have chosen to accomplish this with a camera. Each of you must choose your own tools to learn, teach, preserve and do. Remembrance is not a passive activity. It is one that requires a community and an audience. Zakhor embodies the belief that memories and wounds of the past become your memories and wounds. By integrating them into the very marrow of your being, you will be connected to the past, present and, yes, the future in uniquely meaningful ways.

Julia Ruth Barnett
Miles Reuben Longley Barnett
Griffin Maxwell Longley Barnett
Charley Lynch Taylor
Abbey Margaret Taylor

Opposite page: Smashed violin detail from the recreation of a village square at the Oregon Holocaust Memorial, Portland, Oregon, 2014

1939, the year Frank Barnett was born, Germany invaded Poland. Photographed at the Oregon Holocaust Memorial

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As Dad Lay Dying

Foreword

"Why do I photograph at these times? Perhaps it's one way that I can distance myself from difficult moments while, at the same time, becoming more connected to the event after the fact. It's my way to remember."

– Photographer Frank Barnett

Portland photographer Frank Barnett believes that being Jewish influences his work. He contends that his photographs are somehow intrinsically Jewish. But it's not his idea alone that being Jewish and being a photographer often lead to images that stand apart.

Line up photographs by Jews Alfred Stieglitz, André Kertész, Robert Capra, Arnold Newman, Arthur Fellig (Weegee) and Annie Leibovitz alongside photographs by non-Jews Imogen Cunningham, Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Harry Callahan, Julia Margaret Cameron and Alvin Langdon Coburn, and what you see in each image is a masterpiece.

But New York art critic Max Kozloff thinks the Jewish work is different. Jews, he suggests, tend to focus on the margins of society. An element of protest is common to their work, suggestive of at least a subliminal sense of *tikkun olam*. It's edgier. What is photographed is seen more from the perspective of an outsider, and the Romanticism and wistful vistas often evident in the work of non-Jews is almost altogether absent.

Just as Richard Avedon, the son of Russian-born immigrant Jacob Israel Avedon, photographed his dying father, Barnett created emotionally charged images of both his late wife's father and mother in their final hours. "As Dad Lay Dying," an unforgettable image of the man in a nursing home, his eyes shut, his mouth agape, an oxygen cannula underneath his nostrils, lent new meaning – and more than one meaning – to the term "still life."

Also, like Avedon, Barnett sought access to unusual and edgy, outsider subjects including the Berlin Wall before its fall and prison rodeo performers at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Kozloff addressed the theory of "a Jewish eye"

Opposite Page: Hungarian Schoolboys Behind the Iron Curtain Budapest, 1964

Above: Berlin Wall, 1964

Above: Convicts With Attitude,
Louisiana State Penitentiary

Opposite page: Angola Prison
Rough Rider in the Tack Room

in a 2002 photographic show at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan. He called the exhibit "New York, Capital of Photography." The show and its catalog were meant to underscore the essential role of Jewish photographers in capturing New York City.

Richard B. Woodward wrote about the show in *The New York Times*. He found no shortage of frayed threads in the fabric of Kozloff's argument. "Looking for evidence of a photographic 'visual' style in one ethnic group or nationality verges on folly," he wrote.

On the other hand, Woodward was not wholly unsympathetic: "In no other visual art form except cinema over the last 100 years were Jews such a shaping force. From first decade to last, in fine art, reportage, portraiture, fashion and especially street photography, a staggering number of influential figures have been Jewish."

In October of that same year, Barnett departed from Portland International Airport headed for Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport and from there by rented car to Louisiana State Penitentiary, home of the Angola Prison Rodeo. The rodeo is a popular spectator sport in the Bayou State that attracts fans from around the world. In addition to his carry-on luggage, he had excess baggage filled with studio lighting equipment for making fine art portraits.

His self-assigned mission was the capture of images of the convict performers in the prison's infamous rodeo, both in the arena as well as in the penitentiary's tack room where he would meticulously create stunning portraits of the rodeo's Rough Riders, a select group of Angola's trusty inmates. In both locations, during the action of the notoriously dangerous event and in the calm of the tack room tucked deep in the heart of Angola, the results of his work were remarkable.

Back then, when I first met Barnett, he was not quite 64 and had only a few years earlier turned to professional photography. He told me that one day he believed it conceivable that he might

be remembered as an important Jewish photographer. I confess that such an immodest statement coming from most would have put me off.

However, here was a man whose work in several genres of photography is superb and his expectations of himself may not have been overly ambitious. In this regard, Barnett is a true FotoMacher. Throughout his life he has made things happen when he has set his mind to it. At 76, he looks back at a career in scholarly publishing, the founding of a successful bookstore, three fine art galleries, an advertising agency, and co-authorship of a ground-breaking book. Then, at a stage in life when others typically retire, he reinvents himself as a commercial and fine art photographer.

He pointed to his trip to Angola as emblematic of his inclination to photograph, like other Jews, out on the edge of things – among the dispossessed, the outcasts, and the hopeless in our midst.

"I wanted to capture the human face of this population," he said, "For a long time, I've wanted to go into prisons and hospices. I think I discovered why when I went to Angola: there is no exit, no parole in Louisiana."

The rodeo images are so raw and uncontrived that, except for their technical excellence, many could be mistaken for casual snapshots. But, unlike Brownie photographs, these hard-edged images of some very dangerous men are at once unsettling and yet somehow familiar. We see all at once the badness and the goodness of these hopeless souls: what we are not – as well as what we are.

Barnett's photographs make us wonder how removed are we, in fact, from these men? In these photographs, we look not just at the imprisoned men, we look into ourselves.

Just as there is no parole from Angola – you're there either for life or for your full sentence – there is but one way out of a hospice. It is that fact that Barnett finds intriguing about these places, too.

During Barnett's visit to Angola, there was only a single inmate in the prison's hospice, and he was suffering from hepatitis C. Although the disease is not dangerously contagious, and is normally transmitted only via contact with blood or con-

Above: Oz's Hospice Vigil, 2009

Opposite page: Two Angola Prison Rodeo Performers Waiting in the Chutes

taminated needles, Barnett felt exhausted from his three day shoot and opted out of spending an extra day in the prison hospice ward. He needed to return to New Orleans where he could pass the day photographing the city and its inhabitants.

It would be seven years before he would have the opportunity to photograph in a hospice. Sadly, it was when his wife, Sharan, was dying from colon cancer and he chronicled her two-year struggle with the deadly disease. In her hospice room, he took self-portraits with his wife, and captured the moving image of her service dog at the foot of her bed that was published in *Photo District News*, a national photography magazine, in 2012.

"Why do I photograph at these times?" Barnett wondered aloud. "Perhaps it's one way that I can distance myself from difficult moments, while at the same time, becoming more connected to the event after the fact. We tend to bury our memories of difficult life passages. It's something I don't want to allow myself to do. While working on these images, sometimes even years later, the events of the past feel even more intense to me."

In early 2003, Barnett was given the opportunity to fully immerse himself in a state-of-the-art nursing home when he was hired to photograph the residents for a brochure and the marketing launch of a new Alzheimer's wing. When that project was completed, he had compiled an amazing visual record of the life of the aged in nursing homes, where a reported thirty percent of Americans will be spending their final days.

In the faces captured by Barnett in a prison, a nursing home, and a hospice, we often see our own selves as much as anything else in the faces of prisoners and the dying, which fact points to the often-asked question of why people – Jews or non-Jews – photograph.

In 1955, he excelled in a high school photography class. A decade later, while traveling throughout Europe, the Middle East and

Above: Helen in the Nursing Home with Her WWII Portrait as a Military Nurse

Opposite: Sobbing Nursing Home Resident with Stuffed Cat

Morocco, we can see the evolving of a fine photographic eye in his work. Still, it never occurred to him to call himself a photographer, nor would it for another 35 years.

While living in Los Angeles in 1960, he established a graphic arts firm and two years later he got serious about higher education and went on to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees in Anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Barnett sees a parallel between his past role as an anthropologist and his role now as a photographer and, going further, as a Jew. “The field of Anthropology embraces as a methodology the practice of non-participant observation,” he said, “You work outside your culture and there’s something Jewish about that. I think Anthropologists, as a group, are often alienated from their own cultures and that is what draws them to study foreign peoples and customs.

There is something attractive to them about dealing with their subjects in a language other than their ‘mother tongues’ and because of the strangeness of their subjects and the cultural artifacts they encounter; they are bestowed with a kind of enhanced vision. It’s like the first time you visit a foreign country, little differences that gradually become familiar and fade away at first stand out with vivid clarity. That’s perfect for a photographer photographing a person for the first time. New faces are foreign landscapes.”

He sees himself on the outside looking in. That’s what he did as an Anthropology fellow at the Neuropsychiatric Institute (NPI) at UCLA. He merely observed – electro-convulsive therapy, for example, and patients who were shocked in a different way when their voluntary psychiatric commitments were transformed against their will into involuntary commitments. “Sometimes I would leave NPI just shaking” he said. “That's part of being a good observer. And that’s part of being a good photographer, observing, but not participating.” And, in Barnett’s view, being on the outside in that way is Jewish, too.

He was born in Chicago in 1939, but grew up in Santa Maria, California, where “There was almost no Jewish presence. I could count the Jewish families in my small town on the fingers of a single hand and I grew up feeling like an outsider. Since childhood, I’ve felt like an outsider and that is a uniquely Jewish characteristic. I don’t expect I will ever become an insider. A common thread running throughout my life has been my lack of identification with, and estrangement from, the communities in which I live and have lived.”

While Barnett believes he stays on the outside, he has the ability to penetrate the world of those whom he photographs, to see them with the clarity of a stranger.

That’s evident not only in his edgy work like that at Angola, but also in his more mainstream work, the bread-and-butter portraits and the advertising and promotional work created by the marketing and public relations firm that he and his late wife ran for a quarter of a century.

Opposite Page: Female Vendor in Mexico, 1964

His portraits of individuals, families and children are uniformly informal at the same time that they are incisive and deeply revealing. He seems able to disarm his subjects in a way that allows him and us to see in their images who they really are, which is just what a portrait should do.

Barnett's decision to turn fulltime to photography at this stage of his life, the youthful energy and enthusiasm he has brought to this endeavor, and his confidence in his skill and his ability to achieve his goals seem typical of the man.

After he and his late wife created their advertising agency, Barnett & Barnett, they went on to write a successful book about couples who work together in equal partnerships. *Working Together: Entrepreneurial Couples* led to their recognition as experts in the field of couple-owned businesses. The book and partnership that gave birth to it led to appearances in the national press, on TV and radio.

When Portland art critic Richard Speer reviewed Barnett's 2005 retrospective at Guardino Gallery in the Alberta Arts District, he noted that the exhibit covered nearly every shade of emotion. He wrote that Barnett "takes us to Manhattan in the early 1960s with moody black-and-whites of New York Harbor, suffuses us in the Mardi Gras colors of New Orleans in the 1970s and 1980s, then heads west to the timeless adobe of Ranchos de Taos in New Mexico."

But it is, according to Speer, in the realm of portraiture that "…Barnett's unique vision becomes clear. His portrait of Alberta Street artist Hampton Rodriguez is a revelation. The subject's sad eyes and wild, side-lit hair capture the viewer's immediate attention but yield to subtler, almost painterly details: the painting Rodriguez is nonchalantly working on, the way the paint staining his jeans and shirt echoes the paint on the canvas behind him, and the uncanny sfumato as foreground grades imperceptibly into background. It's hard to tell where Rodriguez the artist ends and his art begins – something that could be said of any artist worth his salt."

A high achiever, Barnett seems unwilling to settle for good enough, and that's a trait that is revealed in his photographic work. His prints, all digital, possess an astonishing luminosity and a range of gradation that make them indistinguishable from the best work on silver paper. Today, digital photography has come of age, and Barnett, an early adopter, appears to have established himself, not only as a master of the technology but as one who also has been set free by it to soar.

Paul Haist
Astoria, Oregon
2015

Paul Haist is the former Editor of the Jewish Review which published from 1959 until 2012. He is a self-taught fine art photographer in his own right who has spent most of his life as a newspaperman – a reporter (with camera), then an editor and publisher. But, no matter how he was earning a living, Paul was always making pictures as well. Street photography always has held him in thrall. He has never tired of looking through the images of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Imogen Cunningham, Brassai, Vivian Maier recently, and others.

Dominican Artist
Hampton Rodriguez
at Work in His Studio

Living off the Grid
with His Best Friend

Preface

New York Harbor, 1964
photographed prior
to departing for a
year in Europe

Preface

"In 1964, on my way to a year in Europe and the Middle East, I created a remarkably similar photograph of New York harbor, having never seen Stieglitz's image taken from almost exactly the same vantage point more than 50 years earlier."

– Photographer Frank Barnett

Hoboken-born Alfred Stieglitz was perhaps the quintessential Jewish photographer, the son of German Jewish immigrants.

As the Industrial Revolution reached full steam, Stieglitz was honing his skills and mentoring his contemporaries while promoting photography as a legitimate art form.

In 1910, he created "The City of Ambition," an atmospheric New York harbor skyline in which the city's growing number of skyscrapers struck boldly upward into a grey, brooding sky. No less than five plumes of steam merged with the overcast hanging over the metropolis, emblematic of the nation's steam-driven age.

Here we witness the artist's representation of a society's achievements. But, perhaps more important than what had already been accomplished was, we can deduce from Stieglitz's own title, what was yet to be achieved – the ambition of its builders, driven by an unstoppable Capitalism and an army of often corrupt political leaders hand-picked by Tammany Hall's king makers.

By using the word "ambition" in the title of his iconic photograph, he imbued the image with a sense of aspiration that would require continued hard work and determination to be realized.

Metaphorically, to attribute "ambition" to a city suggests a uniquely Jewish take on industrial growth and development. Like the very goal of assimilation, so prevalent in the culture of first generation Jews at the margins of society, becoming American would also require ambition – hard work, the adoption of a dogged determination, and the fulfillment of an immigrant's dream.

In 1911, Stieglitz printed "The City of Ambition" as a photogravure rather than opting to reproduce it as a silver gelatin print. In so doing, he believed that process elevated his image to fine art, and I would agree.

In 1964, on my way to a year in Europe and the Middle East, I created a remarkably similar photograph of New York harbor, having never seen Stieglitz's image taken from almost exactly the same vantage point more than 50 years earlier.

The City of Ambition
Alfred Stieglitz
Photogravure, 1911

It would be four decades before I made that connection. To be more accurate, it was actually fine art printmaker, Russell Dodd, who would share with me just how similar the two images were.

At that time, Dodd was creating limited edition photogravure prints for *LensWork* magazine. I had learned about him from an article in *Photo District News* and contacted him.

After reviewing my portfolio, he agreed to make a very limited edition of my *New York Harbor, 1964* as a photogravure. It is my identification with Alfred Stieglitz's work and the images of many other Jewish photographers that first led me to believe there was something uniquely Jewish about my "photographic eye." The readers of this book may draw their own conclusions.

I want to express my appreciation to editor and publisher, Paul Haist, formerly of the *Jewish Review,* published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, for his insightful Foreword to this book. Much of his contribution originally appeared in a 2002 review of my work.

He graciously agreed to expand his earlier commentary and bring it up to date a dozen years later for this book. A scholar of photographic history and a fine art photographer in his own right, Paul is an active member of the art community in Astoria, Oregon, and an exhibitor at the Lightbox Photographic Gallery.

For the past several years, Martha Solomon, my wife, has been tirelessly working at my side to catalog what has turned out to be thousands of images, both from my earlier film work as well as my copious digital output.

When it comes to a knowledge of the history and technical aspects of photography, she comes to the subject with keen enthusiasm and a contagious passion. For the past twenty years she has been an avid 3D photographer. During that time she served on the Boards of the 3D Center of Art and Photography in Portland, Oregon, and the National Stereoscopic Association.

Opposite page: Printmaker Russell Dodd
Pulling an Artist's Proof of New York Harbor, 1964

Throughout our relationship, we have worked together as a creative writing and photographic team with Martha at the keyboard and me behind the camera.

Finally, I want to thank Judith Margles, Executive Director of the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, as well as the members of the Museum's Exhibit Committee, for the opportunity to share my work with the public, and in particular, a Jewish audience.

Frank Barnett
Portland, Oregon
April, 2015

Above: Oregon Holocaust Memorial, Washington Park

Two Jewish Men in Conversation, 2013

Jewish Ties, Jewish Eyes

Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs, my Dutch ancestors painted by an unknown itinerant artist in pastels, circa 1740

My memories are fundamentally visual. As a small child, I used to wonder what it would be like to live my life without sight. I would sit at the upright piano in our living room, pretending I was blind, closing my eyes while feeling out melodies with only my fingers. My visual recollections are, in fact, so vivid, I wonder at times if they are accurate or merely products of an overactive visual cortex.

I've come to believe that this is a result of having been surrounded by photographs, paintings, and portraits that populated so much of my childhood home. I cannot recall a time when the imposing portraits of my ancestors, the Jacobs, weren't hanging on our living room wall. The portraits had traveled with the Jacobs' daughter from Amsterdam, first to Suriname Dutch Guyana, and then through New Orleans to New York during the Civil War. By that time, they were in the possession of Sarah Gomperts Rafel, great-granddaughter of the Jacobs.

I still have the fragments of a pass signed by Major General Butler permitting Joseph Rafel, his wife, mother, sister, four children, and two black servants to travel to New York in August of 1862. When my late wife, Sharan and I made aliyah to Israel in 1992, the Jacobs' portraits were in our shipment of household furnishings. Having survived the Holocaust, these grim and austere images of my Dutch ancestors made not one, but three, transatlantic voyages without a single mishap.

What made the Jacobs so unusual is that they not only had portraits made of themselves, painted in pastel by a nameless itinerant artist, but in 1737, they also commissioned a spectacular Haggadah illustrated on vellum. The Jacobs represent the earliest visual ties to my Jewish heritage and, I believe, to the development of my distinctly Jewish perspective.

Cover of the Jacobs family Haggadah illustrated on vellum, commissioned in Amsterdam in 1737

It wasn't until I was over 50 that I learned the significance of my father's lineage. While attending Temple Shaarie Torah for the first time in 1990, Charlie Schiffman, then Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, asked my family name. I replied, "Barnett." To that, Charlie responded, "No, I mean your *real* family name." Almost without thought, I answered, "Brisker. My grandfather changed his name from Feivel Brisker to Philip Barnett when he was in England in the late 19th century." Charlie's jaw dropped. "That's a very important name!"

I remained unimpressed until I undertook my own research which revealed that the Soloveitchik dynasty of rabbinic scholars developed the Brisker method of Talmudic study, so called because it originated in Brisk (Brest-Litovsk in what is today Belarus), the former home of my grandfather, Feivel Brisker.

The official rabbi of Brisk was known as "the Brisker Rov." Several of the first Soloveitchik rabbis held that position. Since only rabbinic scholars were allowed to take the name Brisker, I've come to believe what Charlie, who was to become a close friend, told me was correct. Brisker *is* a very important name. Knowing that, today I have a heightened awareness of my responsibility as a Jew to honor my heritage and celebrate my unique perspective. I've often wondered if my father, Samuel, knew the religious and cultural significance of his Jewish background, and if he would have accepted the very secular attitude that our family adopted had he known.

I was reared without religion in the small coastal community of Santa Maria, California, where the Jewish families could be counted on the fingers of a single hand. I've always felt very Jewish and, as news in the aftermath of the Holocaust amassed in greater and more horrific detail throughout the 1940s, my Jewish identity gained even greater significance.

On the occasional Sundays when my parents were away, our Catholic sitter would take me and my older sister, Gladys, to attend mass. Once inside the impressive cathedral, I would be enveloped by fear and apprehension. I was convinced that my Jewishness would betray us and I was terrified by that thought. As a child I had come to recognize how my appearance differed from the other children around me. Many of them had blond hair and blue eyes. My hair was dark and my eyes a chocolate brown, often underscored with dark circles which gave the appearance of sullenness – even when I was feeling light-hearted.

During World War II, while my family was still living in Santa Maria, my mother Katherine volunteered at Camp Cook Army base driving a troop transport. That was the beginning of my parents' relationship with German-born Frank Perls who was then serving in the U.S. Army as an interpreter and later as a "Monuments Man."

In 1948, when we moved to Los Angeles, that friendship with Perls continued. Two years later, he opened his art gallery on Camden Drive in Beverly Hills. The Frank Perls Gallery introduced Los Angelenos to European artists Perls consid-

ered the best examples of modern art including his good friend Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, Alexander Calder and Marc Chagall, and many others whose works now grace the walls of museums worldwide.

Not yet a teenager, I would ride my chrome-fendered Schwinn bicycle from our home a few miles away to visit his gallery during the day and often return during the evening with my parents to attend artists' receptions and demonstrations. I have the strongest memory of watching Pablo Picasso stand before a blank canvas, draw a single bold line, and announce his estimate of its price. I can't be sure that my recollection is correct, that it was actually Picasso, but the artist before the easel spoke with such bravado that I have come to believe it was he – a real memory or the product of my imagination has left an indelible impression. In fact, when my mother praised one of my early paintings, I responded, "Yes, but would anybody buy it?"

I am confident that my early exposure to The Frank Perls Gallery was a major influence in my decision to open three fine art galleries during my lifetime and to become a fine art photographer later in life.

My only formal photographic training was during a single high school photography class in 1955, where I learned my way around a "wet" darkroom and the rudiments of portraiture using a view camera and sheet film. A decade later, during a year's travels across the British Isles, western and eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, I began amassing what would become a large body of work, using a 35mm Canon camera. I still shoot with Canons, but today they are high resolution digital SLRs.

Self-portrait taken in 1955 while a photography student in Los Angeles

In retrospect, this early burst of photographic creativity was, sadly, interrupted by life – undergraduate and graduate degrees in Anthropology from the University of California, and a career that began in publishing at UC Press and continued with my own bookstore and gallery in Oakland, California. Then I founded an advertising agency that operated for 25 years and, of

course, there was the rearing of my children, Anthony, now a doctor in Seattle; Elliott, an urban planner in Tacoma; and Kimberly who still lives near me in Portland, Oregon.

However, throughout those years, much of my professional life was spent mounting photography exhibits in my galleries and acting as a photographic art director for my marketing projects. Gradually, I began relying less on other professional photographers and started using my own photographs in my commercial work: annual reports, brochures, corporate videos and later, on the Internet. Increasingly, my images found their way into periodicals and books, picking up a few awards along the way.

Last year I was given the opportunity to exhibit my photographs at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education in the spring of 2015. For that show, I produced, with my wife, Martha Solomon, a 12-minute video and this book to expand on the photographs represented in the gallery.

At some point every photographer asks himself, "What are the influences that have informed my motivation and, naturally, my imagery throughout the course of my career?" Now 76, I wonder if I am at the end of my productive years. Or can I look forward to many more years of creativity, new subject matter to examine, and artistic growth in directions yet unimagined? Many of my photographic heroes, from André Kertész to Alfred Stieglitz, enjoyed exceptionally long lives. Clearly, whatever the answer to that existential question, I am at a place of reflection, examining the past and looking into a very uncertain future – for myself and our planet as well.

Much has been written about the influence of Jews in the fields of cinema and photography. In making my case for the existence of "a Jewish eye," three immutable facts are my undeniable Jewishness, my education as an anthropologist, and the era into which I was born.

Always, I am examining lives with Jewish eyes. Both Jews and anthropologists are outsiders with a capacity to penetrate truths that those within are often unable to recognize. Both operate within an intellectual diaspora of sorts – anthropologists because they study cultures other than their own using linguistics as a primary tool for communication, and Jews because they have been dispersed from their original homeland.

The third fact, my birth into a world embroiled in a conflagration beyond comprehension – a firestorm of fear, hatred, persecution, extermination, and genocide seen on a scale as never before, has informed all of my being.

The result of these three influences is that the camera in my hands becomes a tool for documenting the human condition with all its flaws, emotions, inner turmoil, and unpredictability that few others are willing to examine.

This is what the viewer will confront in my images of prisoners for whom there is little hope for parole or reprieve, aging residents in nursing homes, many destined to live out their lives dependent on the care of others, and the

Giving Comfort in a Nursing Home

Sharan Floating at Belknap Hot Springs

terminally ill, who have been handed a life sentence from which there can be no appeal.

Although the exhibit intermingled images of these three diverse populations, in this book they are presented by subject matter. All, in one way or another, share the inevitability of their separate fates, and yet, some will learn to float while they fall.

Why do I photograph at these times? I've discovered that photography is one way I can distance myself from difficult moments while, at the same time, becoming more connected to the event after the fact. Photography has become a very important creative vehicle for me, not only to document, but to cope as well.

Without you, my audience, my observations would be for naught. Your job is to bear witness to my discoveries and remember the meaning of zakhor – so much more than mere remembrance. Once the images have been burned into your memory, zakhor or remembrance requires both the recollection and the actions that are a result of remembering.

We're Number One
Three Angola Prison
Rodeo Performers

Louisiana State Penitentiary Inmates
In the Chutes at the Angola Prison Rodeo

Angola Prison Rodeo

Once a slave-breeding plantation, the 18,000 acre Louisiana State Penitentiary (larger than the island of Manhattan), is now infamous for its prison rodeo, an event far less about athleticism than it is about Christian redemption.

For inmates of this maximum-security prison, nearly eight out of ten of whom are African American, appeal is almost always futile. Nine out of ten prisoners will die within the walls of Angola. The 11,300 seat arena, built with convict labor, had been completed just prior to my photo shoot in October of 2002.

I was driven by a desire to understand what it was that prompted inmates, who were not trained as rodeo performers, to participate in a life-threatening "sport" that is more a gladiatorial event than an athletic undertaking – a brutal religious pageant sanctioned, designed, and promoted as entertainment. And behind the event was the prison's warden, Burl Cain, known by some as "The God of the Rodeo."

During my shoot, I was even more shocked than I had prepared myself to be. I had years of experience photographing professional rodeos from the center of arenas. I had learned that, by contrast, professional rodeos are carefully orchestrated events designed to minimize injury, both to the performers and their animals. Like the gladiatorial events of ancient Rome, and not unlike the lynchings of America's South, spectators come expecting to see the prisoner-performers injured, to exact a kind of revenge for their crimes. Rarely are they disappointed.

My emphasis was not on capturing a performer's eight seconds on the back of a raging bull – the most dangerous eight seconds in any sport – or the perfect form a rider must have while perched atop a bucking bronco. My interest was focused on the micro-moments that made up the "just befores" and "just afters" of each event.

At Angola, those moments were made up of images of inmates mired deep in mud, helping fellow inmates hobble out of the center of the arena, mud-caked blood streaming from their faces, or suspended briefly mid-air before returning to the ground after being thrown skyward off the horns of a 2,000 pound Brahma bull from which no escape could be imagined.

Later, deep in the heart of Angola, in the Saddle Room, I set up my makeshift studio and made portraits with respect and compassion for the prison's Rough Riders, all of them trusties. Undoubtedly, some were hardened criminals, while others had merely been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and were members of the wrong race. Often, their crimes were committed and convictions handed down while inmates were still juveniles but sentenced as adults – some to death penalties that were later reduced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

For some reason, I couldn't help but think, as I photographed these men, of their mothers, their loved ones, and in many cases children left behind. I sensed that the prisoners were counting on me to take them out and over the walls with the images I was making. It felt like magic, if not some kind of witchcraft.

Mired in Mud

The Glory Riders
Word of God, King of Kings

Prayer Circle

Angola Prison Rodeo Performers
Carrying Out an Injured Buddy

Angola Prison Rodeo Performers
Being Dragged Through the Mud

Cowboy Poker
A 2000 pound Brahma bull is about
to charge. The last convict seated "wins."

Inmate Friends in the Chutes

Convict with Mississippi State Flag

Fear Jesus

Prison Tower Guard

Angola Prison Guard

Warden Burl Cain
God of the Rodeo

Spectator, Angola Prison Rodeo

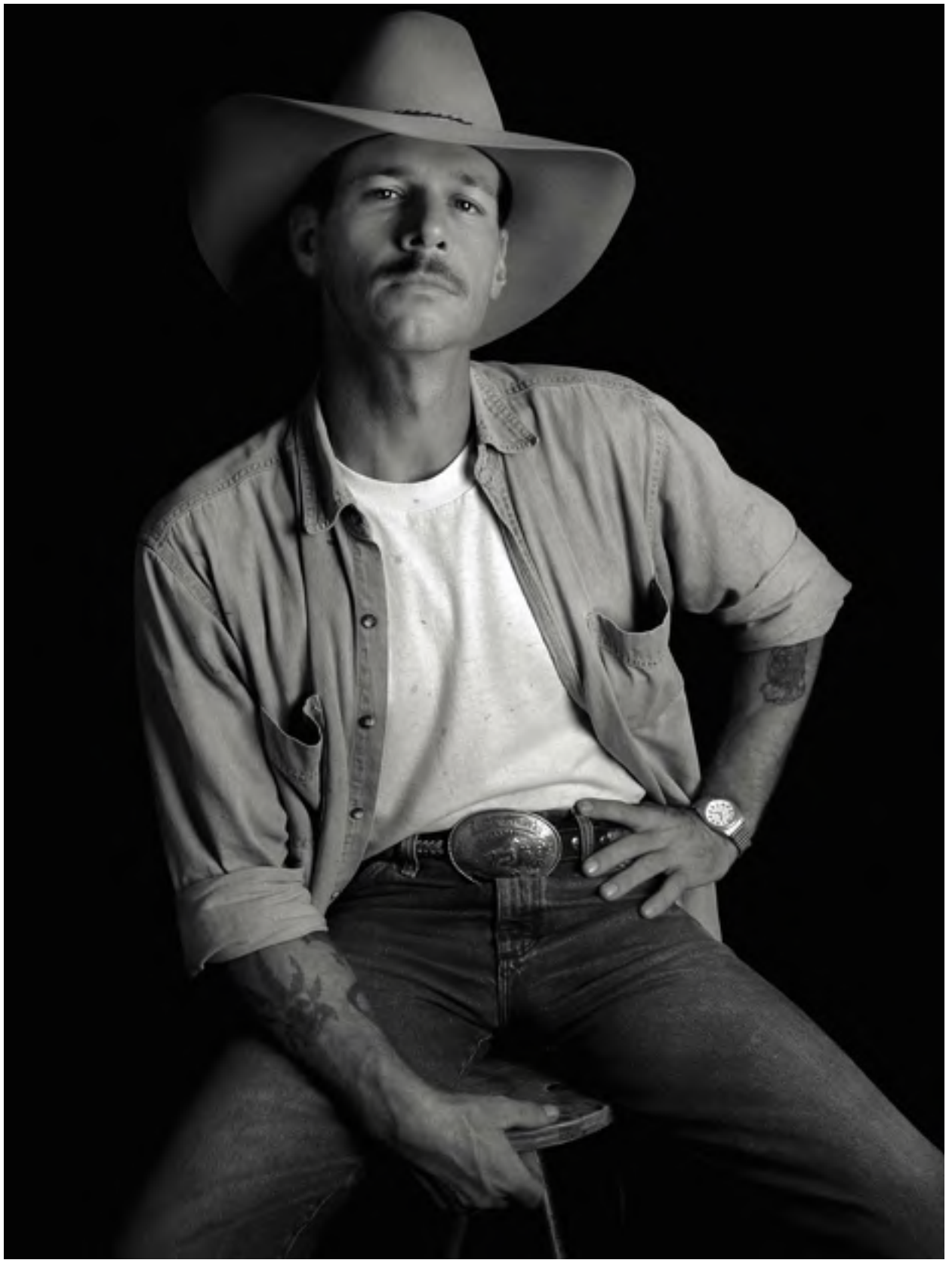
Grinning in the Angola
Prison Rodeo Chutes

Eyeing Me With Suspicion

Injured Angola Prison
Rodeo Performer

Displaying Injuries from an Earlier Rodeo –
Missing Teeth and a Broken Palate

Rough Rider, Angola Prison
Trusty in the Tack Room

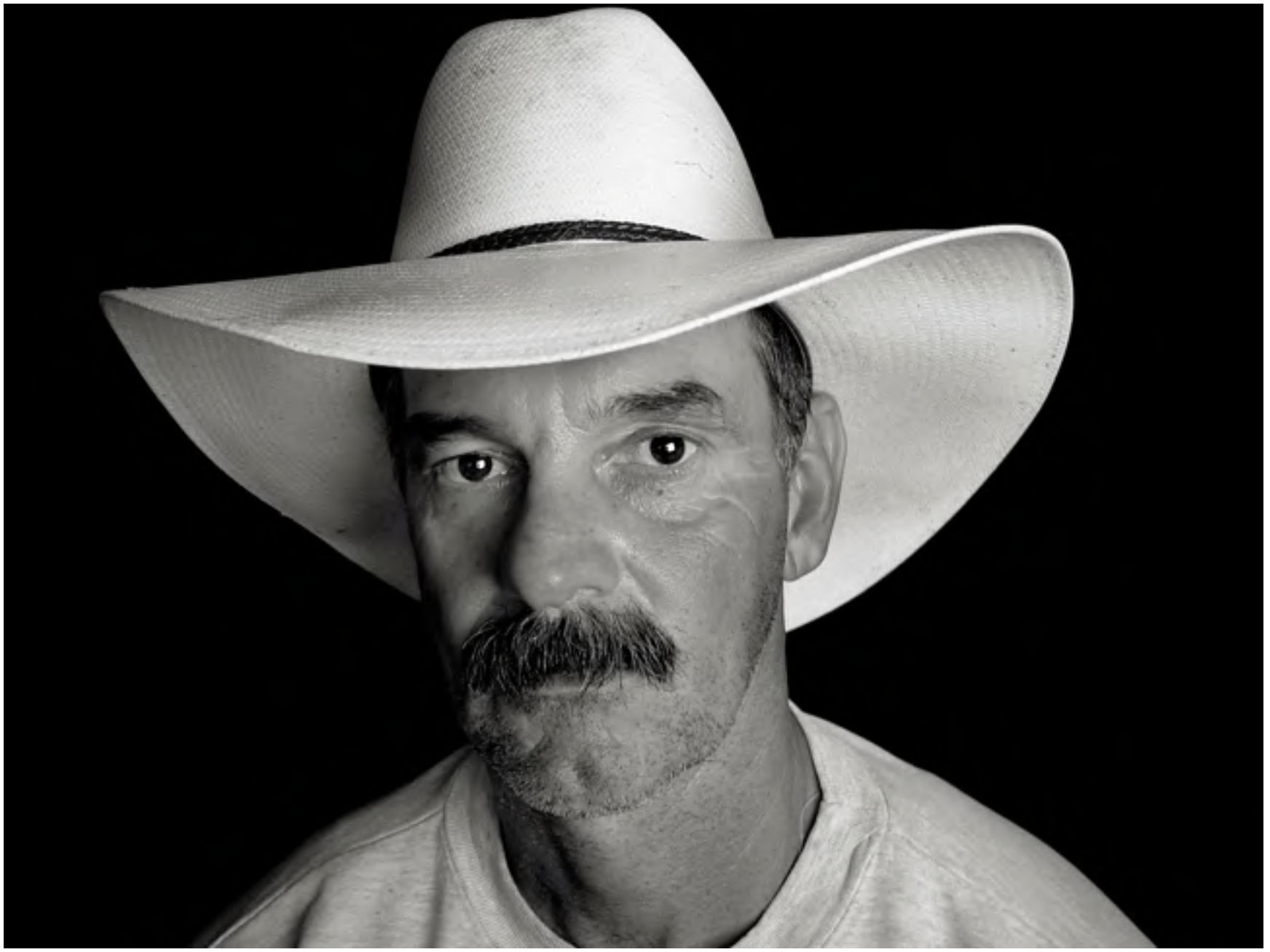


Rough Rider Trusty
With Cannabis Tattoo

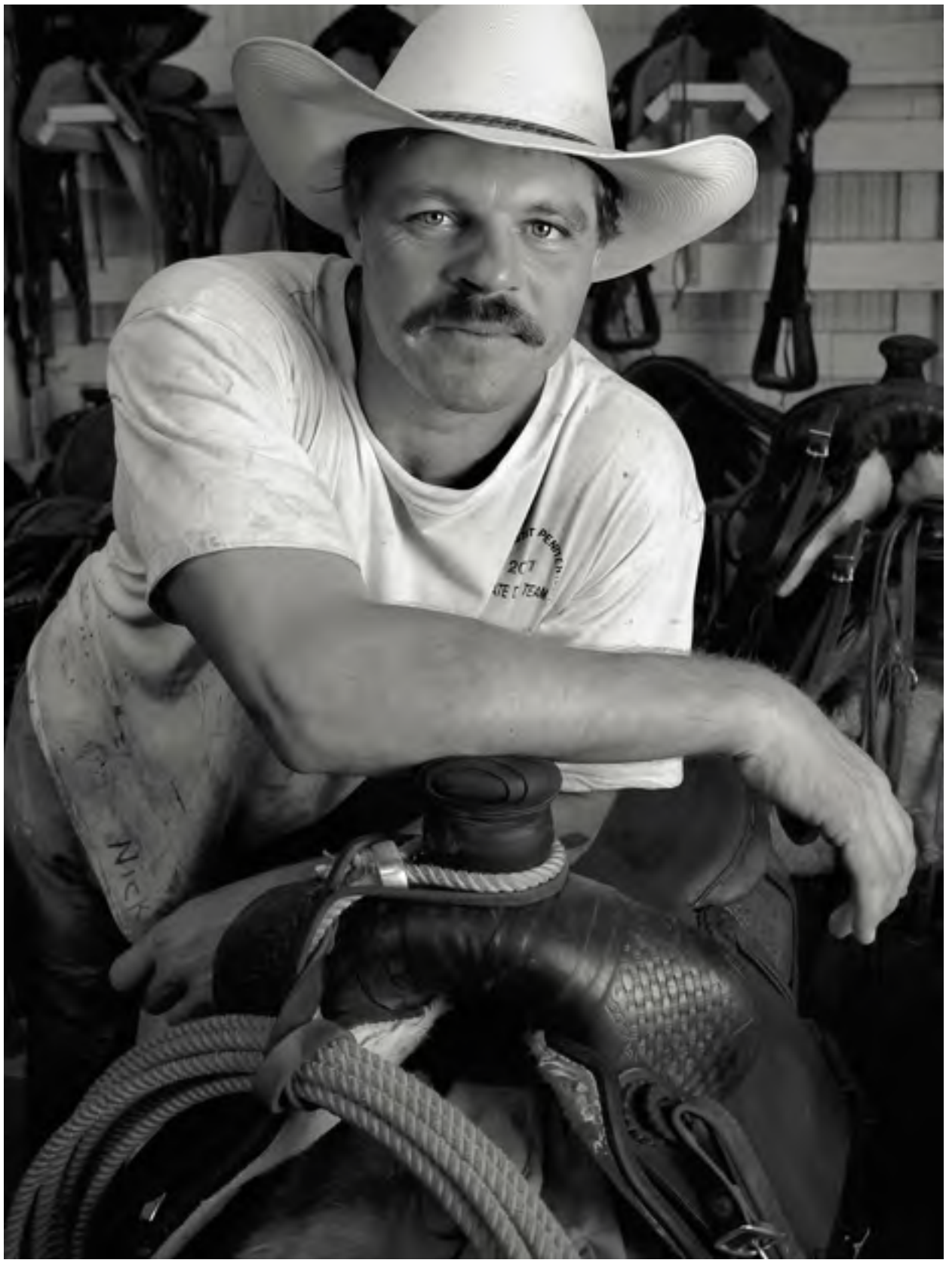
Smiling Angola Prison Rodeo Rough Rider

Rough Rider Enjoying a Cigar in the Tack Room

Prison Trusty In Tack Room
Wearing Leather Cowboy Hat



Angola Prison Rodeo Rough Rider
Wearing a White Straw Cowboy Hat



Angola Prison Rough Rider
Leaning on His Saddle

Prison Trusty With Dog

Convict in the Rain

Convict in the Arena
Walking Away

Angola Prison Rodeo
Rough Rider in the Tack Room

Belt Maker – Angola Prison Rodeo Crafts Fair

Judged Security Risks, Some Inmates Are Restricted to a Fenced Enclosure

Angola Prison Inmate in the Fenced Enclosure


JOHNNY BROOKS
86002

The Signage on the Chutes Says It All

Opposite Page: The Grave site of Legendary Angola Prison Rodeo Performer Johnny Brooks, Inmate No. 86002

"Do I know you?" Helen, who once raised poodles,
quizzically greets a visiting companion dog
to her nursing home bedroom.

Facing Life in a Nursing Home

Today, nearly seventy percent of Americans will spend their final days in a hospital, hospice or nursing home. I have had some experience contributing to the care of my late wife's aging parents as they grew older and became unable to manage life in their own home. My father-in-law had advanced Parkinson's Disease and his wife had suffered what seemed at first to be a mild stroke but proved to be more debilitating. The couple ended up in the same nursing home. During that time, I chronicled that stage of their lives in photographs as my own way of coping.

I also spent a great deal of quality time in a nursing care facility when my marketing firm was hired to handle the public relations for its new Alzheimer's unit. Mention dementia or a nursing home today and you may find you've suddenly raised the anxiety level of your audience.

Historically, our aging parents remained in their own homes which housed extended, rather than nuclear, families – typical of a more agrarian America where everyone had a function and the elder members of the household were respected repositories of family history and life experience.

Given today's highly mobile society, it's not unusual for parents to find themselves hundreds of miles from their children. Separated from family members who used to live under one roof, the need for nursing homes has evolved into a major industry. There are over 15,000 nursing home facilities in the United States with the capability to house up to 1.7 million of our rapidly aging population.

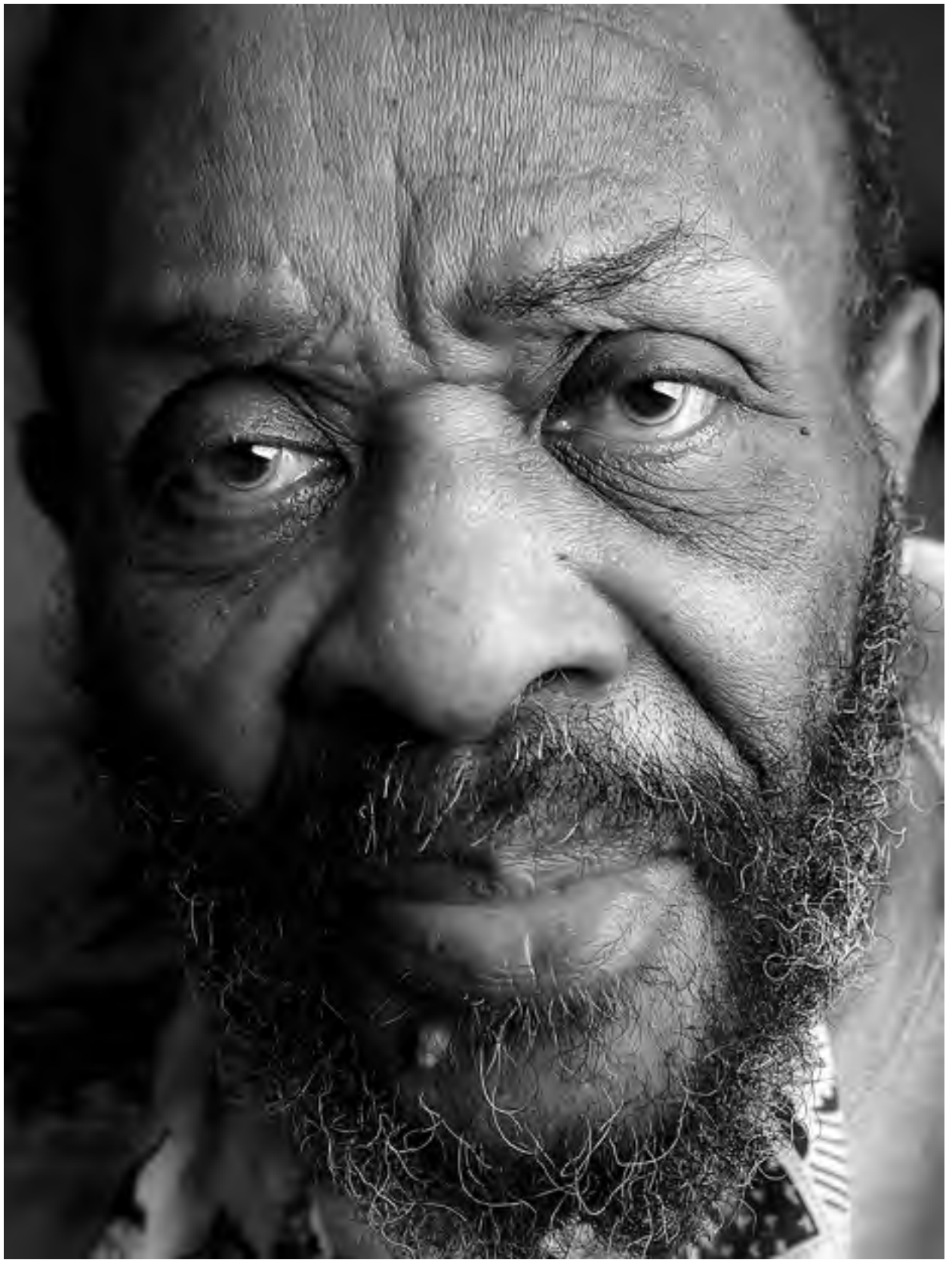
As I photographed this particular nursing home's residents, I witnessed not only their frustrations and trials, but also their joy and the love that staff members obviously felt for many of them.

I was surprised to discover that often residents didn't recognize themselves in the photographs I made of them. I approached Clyde in the lunchroom one day and asked if I could take his picture. Since he didn't object, I composed my portrait of him. I was able to share his image with him on the back of the digital camera. He looked for a long moment and gave me a thumbs up.

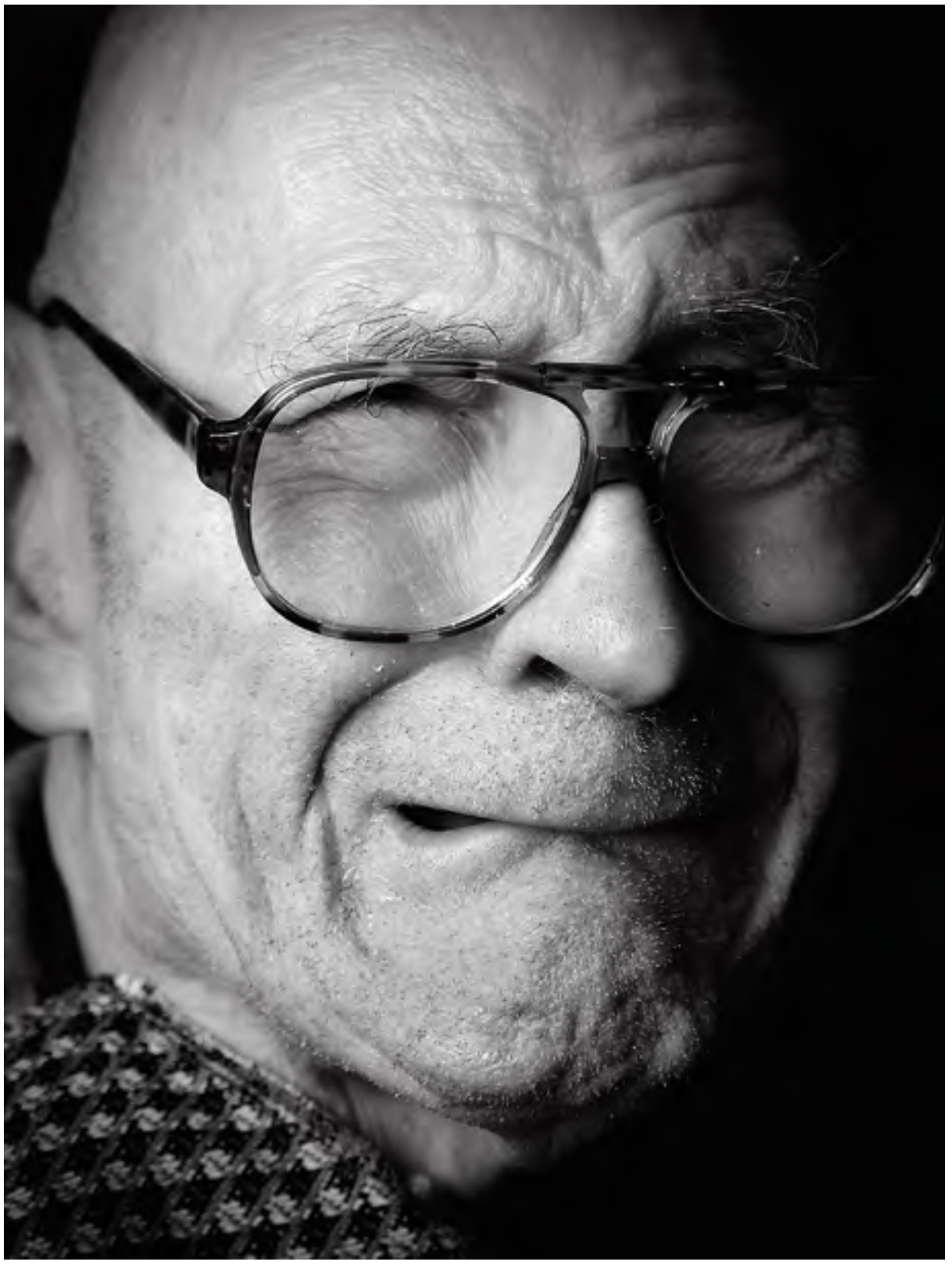
The next morning I ran into Clyde once more, sitting in his wheelchair. By this time, I had an oversize print of the image I had created the day before. "Clyde, would you like to see the photograph I took of you yesterday?" Again, there was no response so I held it up for him to see.

A long moment passed and I thought he wasn't going to respond. And then he asked, "Is that me?" speaking for the first time. "It sure is," I replied. "Aren't you a handsome fellow?" He broke into a broad grin. "Well, that's something else." My interaction with Clyde had turned a light on in his eyes and, at the expense of sounding corny, in my heart as well.

The emotions of the elderly often seem very close to the surface. I've watched both elderly men and women move from laughter to tears almost seamlessly, as though it was all part of the same emotional outpouring.



"Is that me?"
Clyde, a nursing home resident
reacts to his photograph



They Called Him "Cowboy"

Opposite Page: Crying Man in a Nursing Home

A Centenarian with Nursing Home Aide

Opposite Page: Bright-eyed Nursing Home Resident

Playing Bingo with 2% Milk Bottle Caps

Waiting for G57

He asked me if I wanted
to hear him play his guitar.

Nursing Home Resident on Exercise Bike

Smiling Woman Wearing Pearls

Charming 101 Year Old
Nursing Home Resident

Visiting Grandma in the Recreation Room

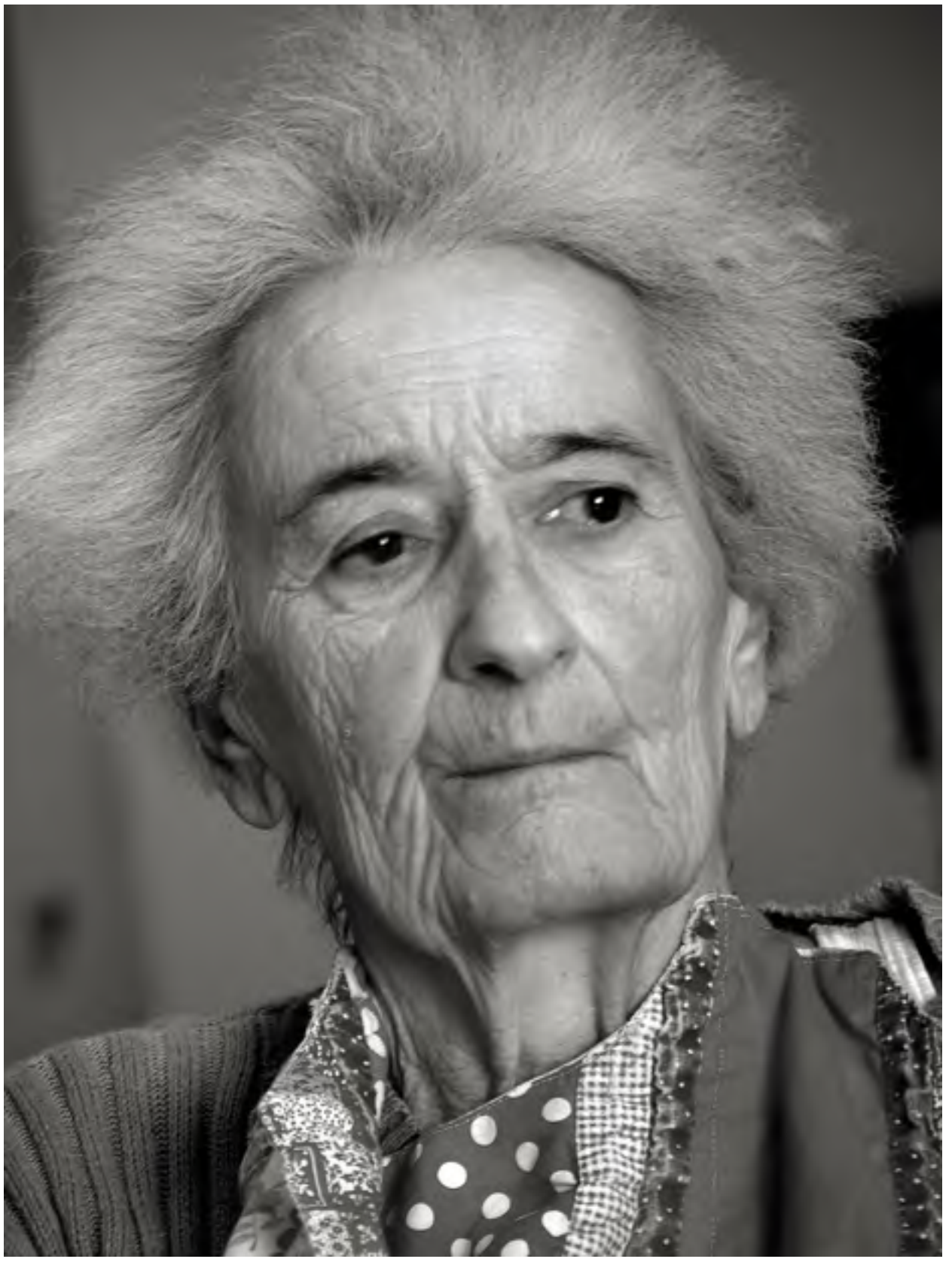
Brother and Sister Outside a Nursing Home

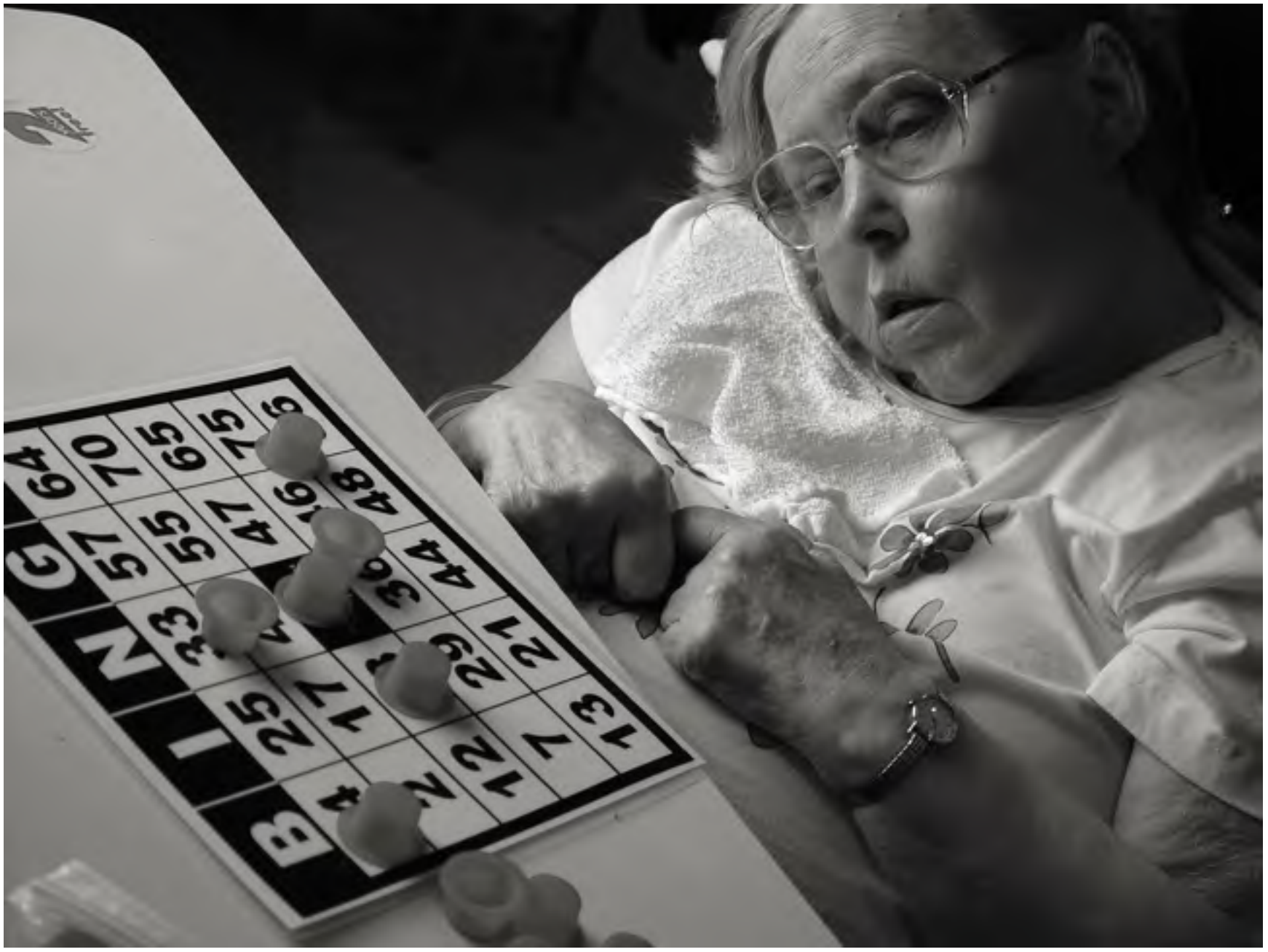
Elderly Woman with Water Glass

One of Several Centenarians in the Nursing Home

Nursing Home Resident Deep in Thought

Opposite Page: Wearing a Fabulous Hat





Waiting for Her Lucky Numbers

Opposite Page: Remembering

Reflected Wheelchairs

Time Passing

Watching William Holden

Sea of Wheelchairs in a Nursing Home Dining Room

Terminal Illness

Opposite Page: My Late Wife Sharan a Year Before She was Diagnosed With Stage 4 Colon Cancer

The photograph of my wife Sharan lying on the couch in our living room wearing her infusion pump says it all about the brave, stoic, remarkable woman I had come to know for the past 25 years. It also makes a resounding pictorial statement about everyone who bravely battles the ravages of cancer. After living and coping with Crohn's Disease for 37 years, Sharan was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer. I chronicled her two-year struggle, decline, and eventual loss of life to a ravishing and relentless disease. During that period, I was very much a participant observer – as caregiver, medical advocate, devastated spouse, and photo-documentarian.

The powerful combination of drugs contained in the infusion pump she wore after each chemo-therapy session was simply called "Folfox." The "5 F-U" pump delivered a cocktail of chemicals so toxic that Sharan had to carry a haz-mat kit when she was in public. She had become "Poison Baby," a name she gave herself from a childhood game, and called her little pump "My Five Fuck Me Machine." During our time together, Sharan and I had many successes, but our greatest accomplishment was our mutual acceptance of a difficult diagnosis and our determination to savor life to its fullest in spite of it.

Sharan and I learned that looking back at the past only conjures up could-haves, would-haves or should-haves. Similarly, imagining the future only engendered fearful thoughts of the unknown. It is only in the present, we learned, that we could be truly at peace, surrounded by the laughter of the moment, the exhilaration of creativity, the company of good friends, and the amusing absurdities that constituted the existence of our life together.

When my wife returned from the hospital after a host of medical crises, she began lobbying for a service dog vest for Oz, our miniature Australian Shepherd. I had no idea how important her canine companion would become to her treatment and peace of mind, and for me, photography allowed me to cope with the unthinkable.

When the vest arrived, Oz remained at her side almost constantly: on public transportation, visits to the emergency room, her doctor's office, restaurants and even movies. Throughout her illness, Sharan's link with the world of the normal was her little dog, who made her feel normal as well. When she died, Oz was at the foot of her bed where he had camped out since she first fell ill. If there was a single beneficial aspect of Sharan's treatment, it was her bond, love and dependence on Oz for his constant companionship.

When a loved one is suffering from a terrible disease, it can be crazy-making. Life hurtles back and forth between the knowledge that your partner is dying and the hope of a possible cure. In Sharan's case, a reprieve was not in the offing. In February, 2009, we celebrated her 62nd birthday with 70 family members and close friends. She wrote in her diary, "My birthday party was at The Lion and the Rose Bed and Breakfast. It was awesome!" By April, she was gone. Sharan lost her battle with cancer, but she won a personal victory when she learned how to float as she fell.

Sharan Wearing Her 5-FU Infusion Pump During Chemotherapy

Sharan in the Emergency Room with Oz

Opposite Page:
Sharan and Oz on MAX Light Rail
Portland, Oregon

Wig Shopping Becomes One
Of Sharan's Favorite Pastimes

Opposite Page: "Dome Alone!" Sharan Shaves
Her Head While Maintaining Her Sense of Humor

Pills and Medical Paraphernalia Began to Fill Our Home – From Our Fridge to Our Medicine Cabinet as We Battled Sharan's Cancer

Opposite Page: Avoiding Dangerous Infections During Chemotherapy Sharan Needed to Wear a Mask When She Became Neutropenic (Low Levels of Certain White Blood Cells)

Everywhere Oz and Sharan Went, Oz Made New Friends For the Two of Them – and Made Her Feel More Normal

Opposite Page: Sharan's Oncologist Said "Cancer Hates Exercise" So She and Oz Got as Much of it as They Could

Throughout Her Illness, Sharan Never Stopped Caring About Her Appearance

My Wife Made the Most of
Her Beautifully Shaped Head

Sharan's View of Oz on a Leash

Calm and Serene to the Last
I Marveled at Her Composure

Sharan celebrated her 62nd birthday with over 70 family members and friends.

There were so many well-wishers at Sharan's party, photographer friend, Martin Lavadie who took the images for this spread had to photograph them in two separate groups.

Sharan Saying "Good-bye" to Her Sister Carla

Opposite Page: Sharan with Her Granddaughter Julia and Oz at Her 62nd Birthday Party

Sharan's Last Portrait
With Her Daughter Kimberly

Lulu, a Hospice Caregiver, Giving Sharan a Hug

Linda, Sharan's Hospice Nurse Holds Her Hand

Holding Hands

Hospice Nurse Checking Sharan's Pulse

Opposite Page: Deep Sleep, a Welcome Reprieve

Nearing the End

Sharan Awoke Saying "I'm Ready to Go"
and Asked Our Daughter Kimberly and
Me to Take Care of One Another

A Universal Reality – Yet Always Unimaginable

Sharan Looking Delicate and Fragile

At 1:04 A.M.
April 15, 2009
Sharan Took
Her Last Breath

Oz at Sharan's Grave

During Sharan's battle with cancer, photography helped me to cope on a daily basis. After her death, I once again turned to photography as therapy. I created this photomontage that shows Sharan sitting on her own grave with her daughter, Kimberly. In the background at the left is her coffin and at the right is a burning yahrzeit candle.

Europe, the Middle East and Morocco

Opposite page: Roman Aqueduct, Segovia, Spain

White Washed Greek Village

Christian Church and Crucifix, Spain

Hagia Sophia, Istanbul

Opposite Page: Minaret, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul


179 91

Greek Butcher Shop

Opposite Page: Greek Man Boarding Bus with Live Piglet

Paris Opera House

Opposite Page: Eiffel Tower

Turkish Man with Baby Camel

Istanbul University

Outdoor Oven, Greek Village

Greek Woman Shaking Rug

Aftermath of 1963 Earthquake
Skopje, Yugoslavia, (Now Republic of Macedonia)
Left 200,000 Homeless and Nearly 1,100 Dead

Grave of a Soviet Soldier
Former Yugoslavia

Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin

Opposite Page: Soviet Soldier Photographing a Comrade Brandenburg Gate, Berlin

Traditional Beehive Homes in Syria

Damascus, Syria 1964

Mother with Child Driving Camels

Syrian Man Watering His Horses

Hungarian Gypsy Caravan

On the Road to Ankara, Turkey

Toledo, Spain

Segovia, Spain

Village in Spain

Railroad Tracks and Minarets, Former Yugoslavia

Old Man Feeding Pigeons in Istanbul

Moroccan Men in the Souk

Getting a Shoeshine, Istanbul

Greek Villagers

My Volkswagen Being Hoisted onto the Deck of the Lydia, Beirut, Lebanon

Opposite Page: Volkswagen Factory in Wolfsburg, Germany

The Lydia at Anchor
Today, the Lydia has become a museum, restaurant,
club and casino on the
Beach of Barcares, in the South of France

Opposite Page: My Shadow on the Deck of the Lydia
While on my way to Alexandria, Egypt, from Beirut,
bound for Naples via Greece

Navigating the Isthmus of Corinth
With My Red VW Wrapped Safely on Deck

Bullet-riddled Apartment Building
Remnants of the 1956 Uprising
Budapest, Hungary

Not My First Rodeo

Opposite Page: Crow Hop,
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon

Digital photography has resulted in the democratization of the craft, which I suppose is a good thing because there's nothing more humanizing than becoming involved in the creation of art, regardless of the medium. With the ubiquitous nature of photography today, when nearly everyone is carrying a camera of one kind or another, how do you differentiate the professional from the novice? Of course having an "eye" is critical, the equipment much less significant.

I've always believed that what separates the pro from the amateur boils down to access – that is, the subject matter, which hasn't changed much since the days of film. Memorable 20th century photography is characterized by two significant commonalities: its emphasis on black and white images, and subject matter not readily accessible to the average person. The images that have endured have been of famous (and infamous) people, historical events including wars, the Great Depression, street photography, sports, and other subjects that have lent themselves to photojournalism. Then, of course, there is fine art, including photographs of the human form and traditional landscape and still life subjects.

My mantra of memorable photography has always been "*access, access, and more access*." I initially gained access to rodeos as a videographer when my advertising agency was filming a tourism video in Oregon. That production won my firm the distinction of the 2002 "Business Member of the Year" from the Salem Convention and Visitors Association. But the exciting action-packed rodeo scenes amounted to only a small fragment of the larger production – just a few minutes of footage. It was during my initial shooting that I discovered a subculture I had only seen in western movies. Once exposed, I was hooked. Through the telephoto lens of my video camera I had my fist glimpse of rodeo life. At first, I was shooting from the media platform at the end of the arena where the press was positioned. That vantage point was far removed from the real action – a safe distance from all the stomping, dust churning, bone crushing power of 2,000 pound snorting Brahman bulls and Brahman crossbreeds that clearly had the advantage over the fragile human riders perched precariously on their backs.

In 2003 I approached Kevin Smith, the promoter of the Fourth of July St. Paul Rodeo, where I had filmed my tourism video. Now I was requesting access as a still photographer. Due to the inherent dangers of rodeo photography, only PRCA (Professional Rodeo and Cowboys Association) shooters are allowed in the arena. However, because I had distinguished myself the year before as a videographer, I was allowed to shoot from the paddock, the staging point for the arena where it was *relatively* safe. I shot all that first day around the paddock and through the slits in the large gate at the wildly fast-paced events beyond.

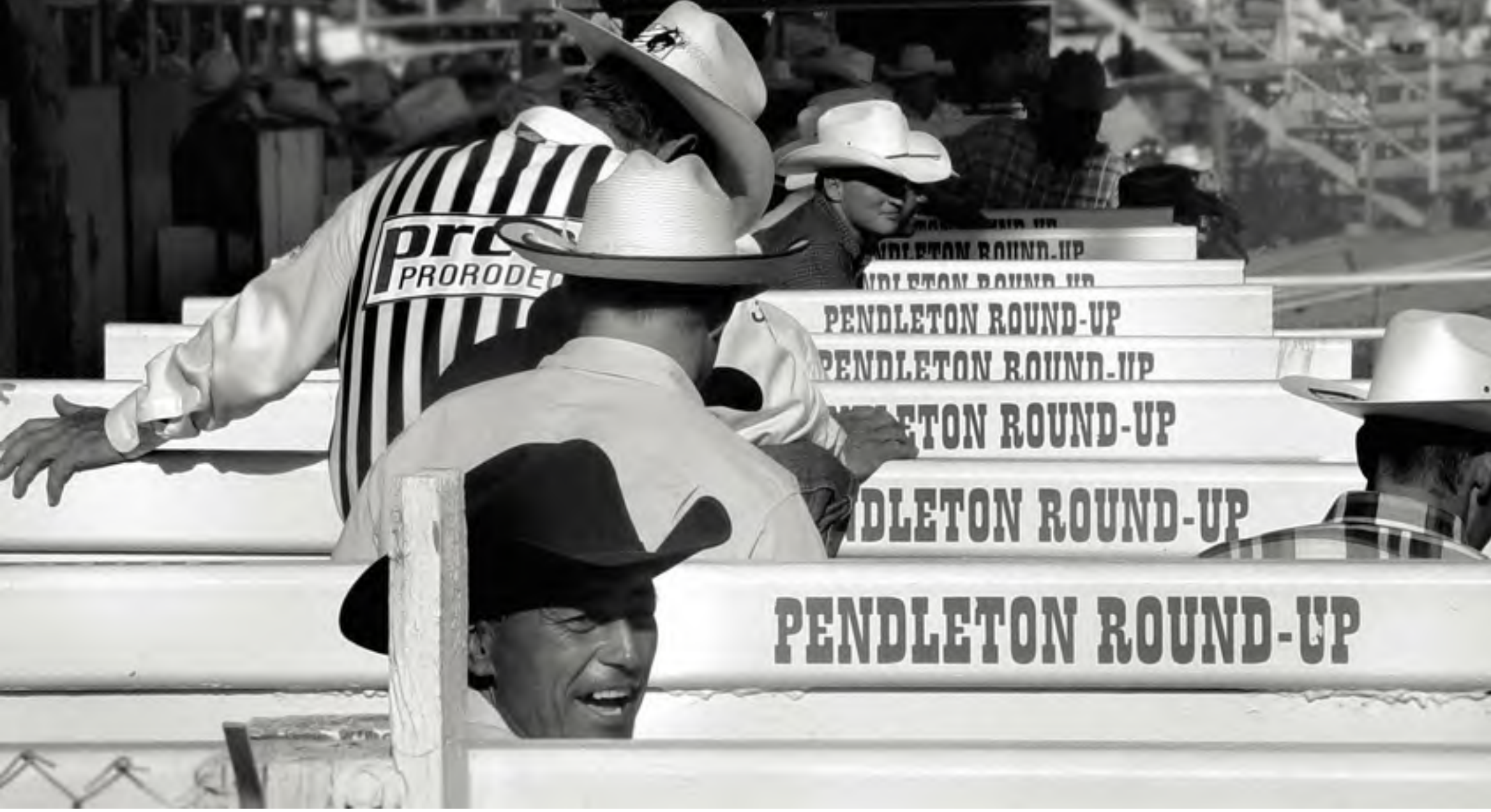
That night I returned to my studio and, without sleep, worked until dawn on the images I had taken and placed them in a portfolio as proof sheets to show Kevin what I was capable of capturing with my camera. He was so impressed he allowed me to begin shooting that very day


grodeo.com
RODEO
Wrangler

from the chutes. Now I found myself surrounded by the rodeo performers stretching, meditating about their upcoming events, or just stoically awaiting their fates. With cowboys to my left and right, the animals in the pen behind me, and the arena at my feet, I was embarked on a career as a rodeo photographer that would last for several seasons. It would soon place me right in the middle of the action, shooting while dodging bulls with names like "Widow Maker."

It wasn't long before I graduated to the center of the arena with a line-up of sanctioned PRCA photographers. I created my own small circuit of Pacific Northwest rodeo venues: St. Paul, Puyallup, Santiam, Joseph, Ellensburg and, of course, Pendleton. Eventually, my rodeo photography experience led me to the Angola Prison Rodeo at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

I was now shooting where few other photographers were allowed – where a truly American sport, and the only one to have evolved from an industry, was taking place. Almost overnight I found myself photographing a unique sport that, like other major sporting events, is performed by professional athletes in huge arenas filled with cheering spectators, and next to me in the chutes



were the ESPN cameras. At the National Finals in Las Vegas, more that 13 million viewers tune in each year to watch what I was now witnessing through the lens of my viewfinder: bull riding, team roping, saddle bronc riding, calf roping and the fast-paced women's event, barrel racing.

In order to shoot from anywhere in the arena, I was required to dress the part. There I was, this Jewish guy who hailed from Chicago, had grown up in West LA and attended UC Berkeley, known back in the 60s as the hot bed of radical political activism, at ground zero – sharing the experience with an audience of conservatives participating in a spectacle characterized by unbridled patriotism – and in full cowboy garb yet! Who would ever have guessed that I would one day be sporting a Wrangler shirt with pointed front yokes, patch pockets with western flaps, Rope 'em Justin western boots, Wrangler jeans – and to top it off, a genuine cowboy hat from the Resistol hat factory. *Yee-haw – ride 'em cowboy!* I was the old guy in the arena, but the new kid on the block who had just run off and joined the rodeo – what might be the most unJewish spectator sport known to man.

Bull's Eye

Opposite Page: Eight Seconds to Glory

Broken Nose

Bucking Pinto

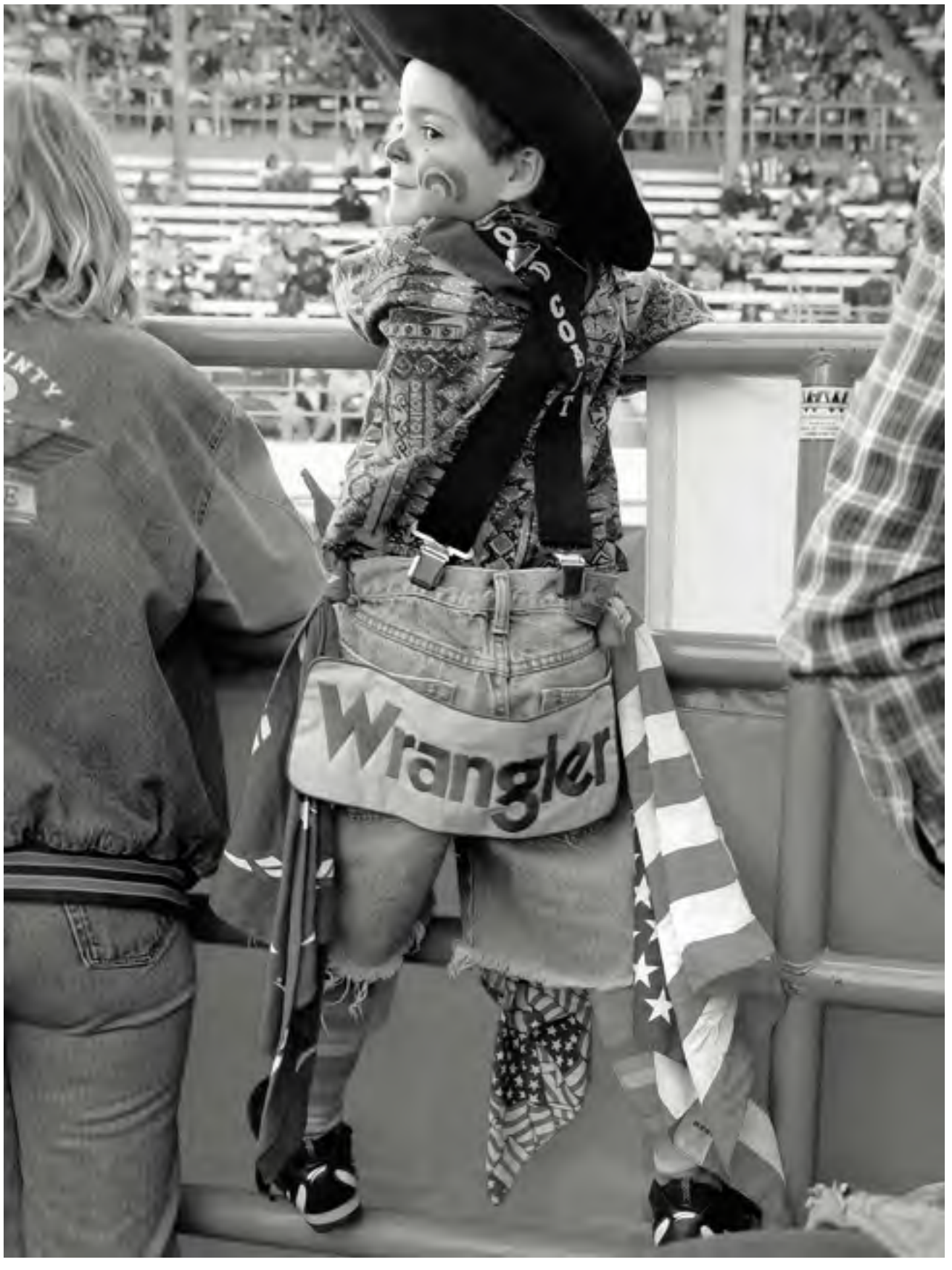

GOLD COAST

Rodeo Performer Carrying His Saddle

Opposite Page: Calf Ropper

Brother and Sister with Puppy
Chief Joseph Days, Joseph, Oregon

Junior Bull Riders
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon


Wrangler

Shy Young Junior Bull Riders
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon

Opposite Page: Kid Clown,
Puyallup Rodeo, Washington

Cowboy Pickup
Santiam Canyon Stampede
Sublimity, Oregon

Opposite Page: Widow Maker
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon


PENDLETON ROUND-UP


PENDLETON ROUND-UP

Bull Butts

Opposite Page: Right Out of the Chute
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon

Flint Rasmussen
PRCA "Clown of the Year" for
Eight Consecutive Years

Opposite Page: Rodeo Clown "Wild Child"
Troy Lerwill's Act is One of a Kind


Justin
Justin
Justin
Justin

Wild Horse Team
Ellensburg Rodeo, Washington

In the Paddock
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon

Next Page: Bucking Bronco with Shadow
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon


nmt
MOBILE TELEVISION
ST. PAUL RODEO
ST. PAUL RODEO

Flat Out in the Chutes
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon

Previous Page: Barrel Clown
Flirts with Danger

Steer Roping Action
A Partnership Between Cowboy and Horse

Spectators, St. Paul Rodeo
St. Paul, Oregon, 2013

Opposite Page: Cowboys in Conversation

Bret Frank's Championship Belt Buckle
Saddle Bronc Champion
Dodge National Circuit Finals
Pocatello, Idaho 2002

Bret Frank
Champion Saddle Bronc Rider


M&M
TRAILER MFG.

Cheyenne
Young Rodeo Performer
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon

Opposite Page: Cody Martin
Saddle Bronc Rider

Bucking Palomino
Santiam Canyon Stampede
Sublimity, Oregon

Opposite Page: Flag Bearer on Horseback
Santiam Canyon Stampede
Sublimity, Oregon


THE
FAIR
oors LIGHT
TOBAC

Fred Whitfield,
Champion Calf Roper

Don "Hollywood" Yates
Bullfighter, Actor, Wrestler,
Stuntman and Country Singer

Opposite Page: Visualizing in the Chutes
St. Paul Rodeo, Oregon

Praying Cowboys
Santiam Canyon Stampede
Sublimity, Oregon

Opposite Page:
Joe Baumgartner, Bullfighter

"Mamas, Don't Let Your
Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys"

Missing Tooth


Wrangler

Right: Rodeo Hand

Opposite Page: Two Rodeo Bullfighters

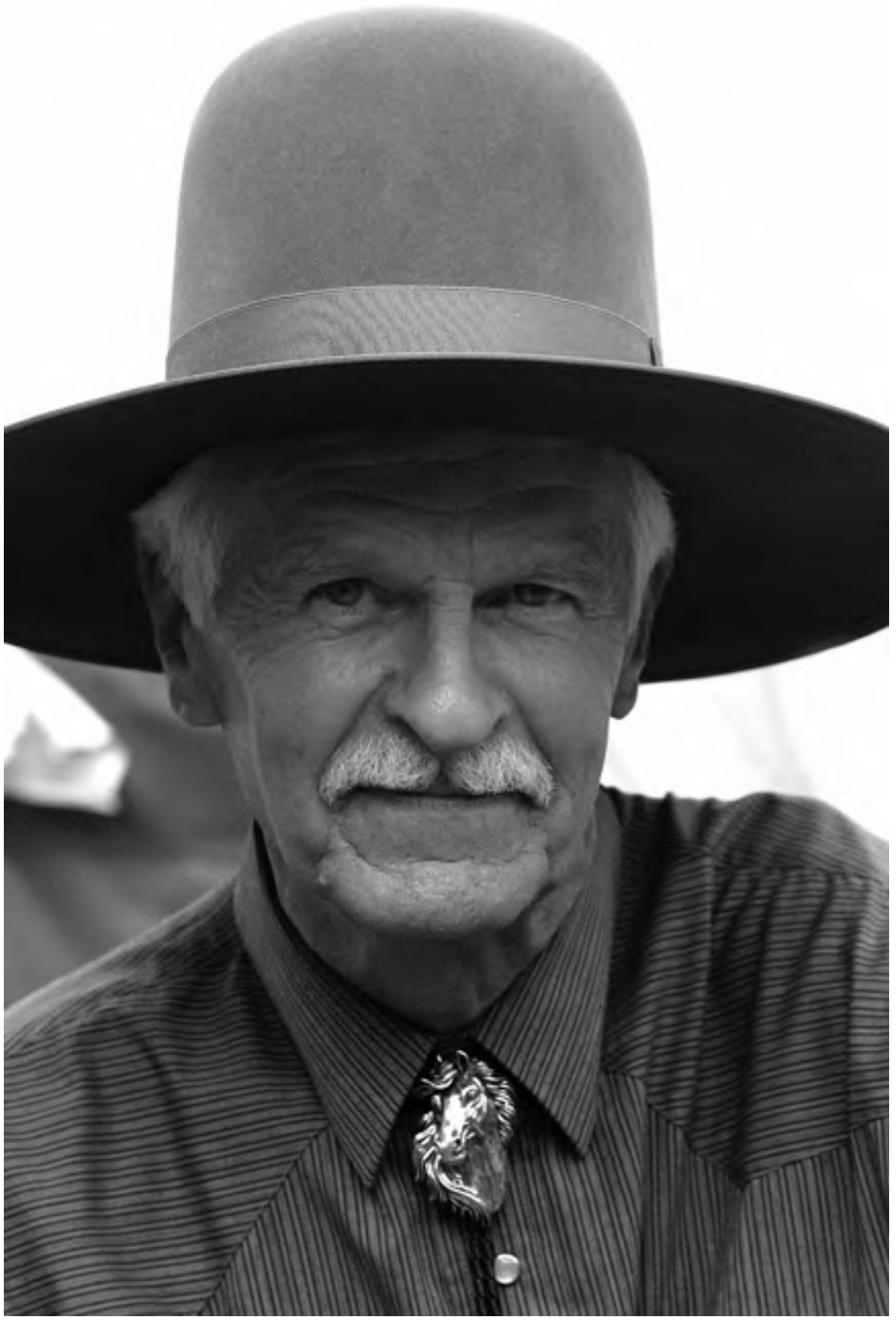
Bearded Man at the Rodeo Carnival

Native American Elder
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon

Native American Girl
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon

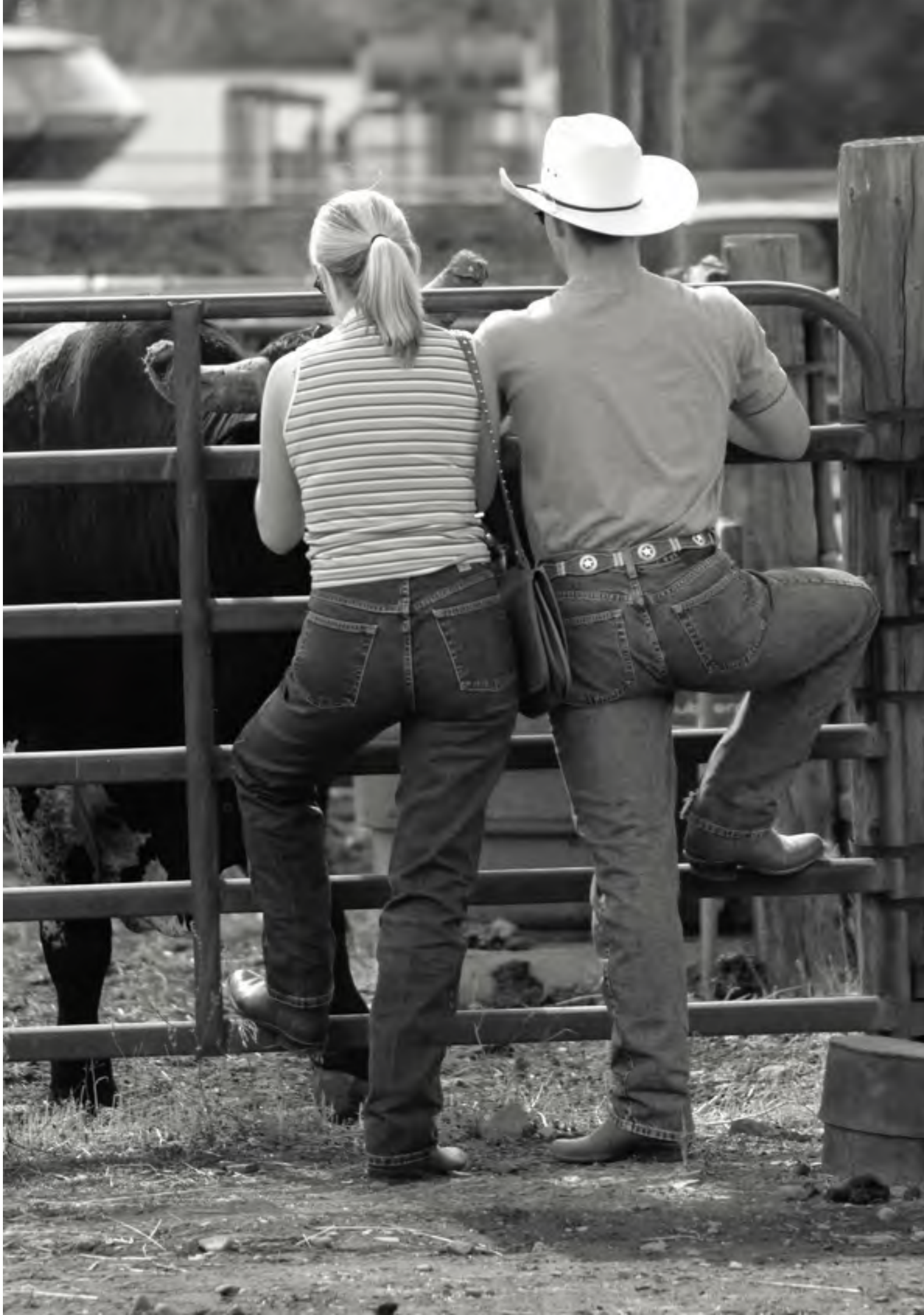
Mother and Child
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon

Young Child
Pendleton Round-Up
Pendleton, Oregon



Ten Gallon Hat

Canadian Cowboy
in the Chutes at
St. Paul Rodeo



Rodeo Couple
Joined at the Hip


GELT

Photomontage & Other Images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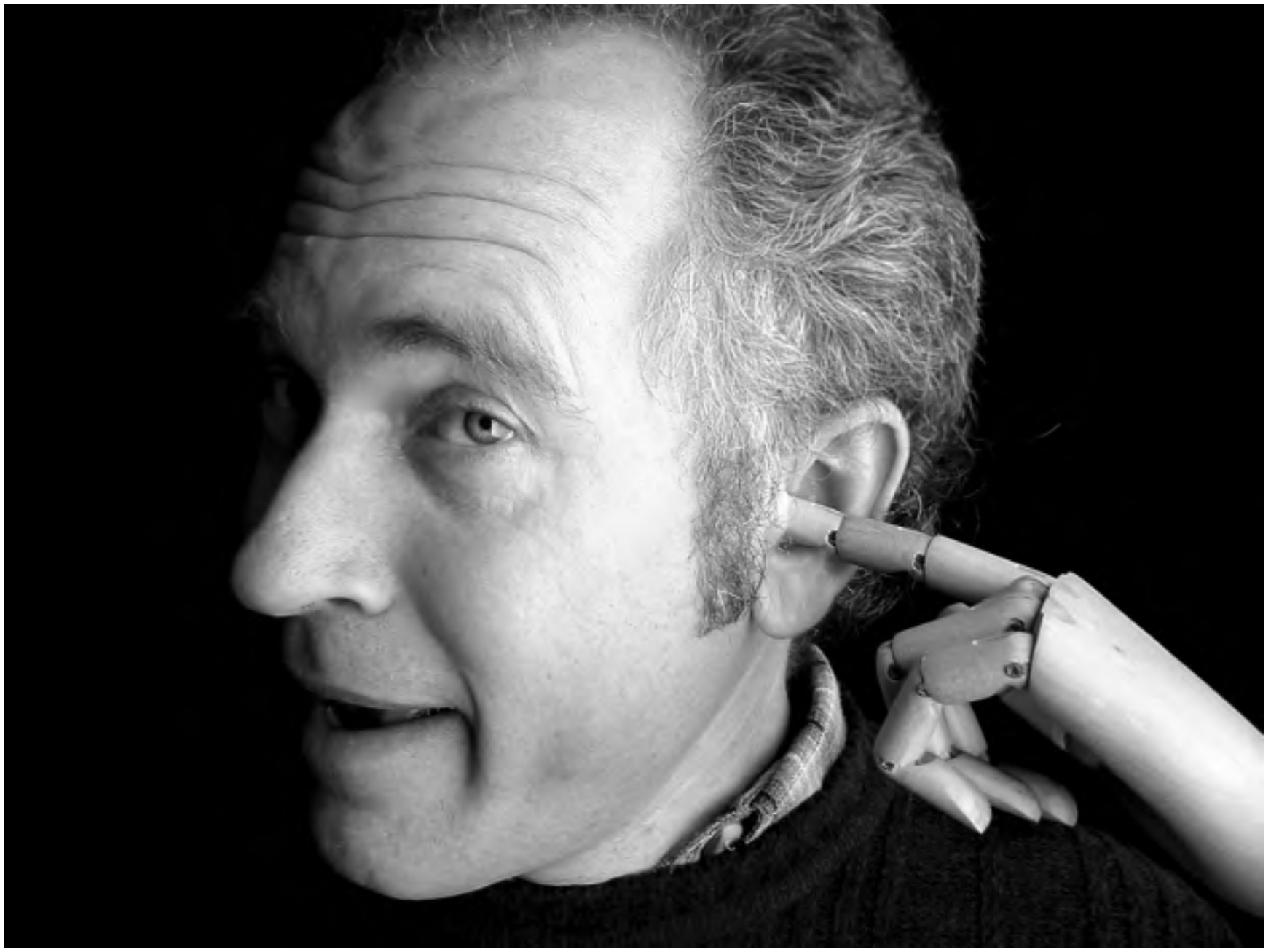


COSTELLO

New York Harbor, 1964