PHOTOGRAPHY IN MY BONES

Half a Century of Images by

FRANK BARNETT

PHOTOGRAPHY IN MY BONES

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503 467-6602
frankbarnettphoto@gmail.com
www.frankbarnettphotography.com

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Half a Century of Images by

FRANK BARNETT

With a Foreword by

PAUL HAIST

Recipient of the 2017 Independent Publishers Award
Silver Medal in Photography

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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As Dad Lay Dying

Foreword

"Why do I photograph at these times? Perhaps it's one way I can distance myself from disturbing moments while becoming more connected to the events after the fact. We tend to bury our memories of difficult life passages."

– Frank Barnett

Photographer Frank Barnett believes 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 from those made by non-Jews.

Line up photographs by Jews Alfred Stieglitz, André Kertész, Robert Capa, Arnold Newman, Arthur Fellig (Weegee), Helmut Newton, 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* (world repair). 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" 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 begun to consider himself a professional photographer. I found that revelation quite amazing when I had the opportunity to examine his portfolio which covers several genres of superb photographic images, including fine art, photojournalism, portraiture, figure studies, photomontages and advertising for Oregon's food and wine industries.

Barnett is a true photographer and I believe he has been for most of his adult life that has included numerous professional careers. Throughout his life he has made things happen when he has set his mind to it. At 78, he looks back at a career in scholarly publishing, the founding of a successful bookstore, several fine art galleries, an advertising agency, a video production company, and co-authorship of a groundbreaking 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: parole is unlikely and most prisoners will die within its walls."

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 parole from Angola is rare – odds are, you're there either for life or for your full sentence – there is but one way out when one is dying from a terminal illness. When Barnett's wife, Sharan, was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer, 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 image was published in *Photo District News*, a national photography magazine, in 2012.

"Why do I photograph at these times?" Barnett mused aloud. "Perhaps it's one way I can distance myself from disturbing moments while becoming more connected to the events 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, the aged and the dying, which fact points to the often-asked question of why people – Jews or non-Jews – make photographic images.

In 1955, Barnett excelled in a high school photography class, his only formal training. A decade later, while traveling throughout Europe, the Middle East and Morocco, we can see a fine photographic eye evolving in his work. Still, it never occurred to him to call himself a professional 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 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.

Time Passing

Helen, Former
WWII Nurse

Three Convicts with Attitude

Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

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.

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 television 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 Dominican 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, now 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. In 2015 Barnett was invited to mount an exhibit at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education titled "FotoMacher: Examining Lives with Jewish Eyes" that was accompanied by a monograph of the same title.

As Barnett approaches his 80th year, I hope to see more of his work on exhibit and in print. His unique images are a revelation – even in an age when digital cameras have become ubiquitous and selfies abound.

Paul Haist
Astoria, Oregon

Paul Haist is the former Editor of the Jewish Review, 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.

Dominican Artist
Hampton Rodriguez

New York Harbor, 1964

Honorable Mention, Fine Art, Monochrome Awards, 2014

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image
to be woven as a limited edition tapestry.

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."

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 over-cast 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 handpicked by Boss Tweed and other Tammany Hall king makers.

By using the word "ambition" in the title of his iconic photograph, Stieglitz 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 tend to 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 tracked him down in Portland, Oregon.

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.

Frank Barnett

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

Embrace

Images Abroad 1964 - 1965

Hungarian Gypsy Caravan

Syrian Man Watering His Horses

Opposite Page: Mother with Child
Driving Camels, Turkey

Old Man Feeding Pigeons in Istanbul

Opposite Page: Greek Man
Boarding Bus with Live Piglet

On the Road to Ankara, Turkey

Opposite Page: Moroccan
Men in the Souk

Hagia Sophia, Istanbul

Minaret, Hagia
Sophia, Istanbul

Greek Butcher Shop Next
to a Tabepna (Tavern)

Opposite Page: Bullet-Riddled Apartment Building

A Remnant of the 1956 Uprising, Budapest, Hungary

Hungarian School Boys Behind the Iron Curtain

Hungarian School Boys Waving Goodbye
from Their Classroom Windows

At the Edge of the Bosporus, Turkey

Turkish Man With a Baby Camel

Traditional Beehive Homes, Syria

Young Money
Changer, Istanbul

Russian Soldier Photographing his Comrade at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, Germany

Opposite Page: Grave of a Soviet Soldier in the Former Yugoslavia

ALLIED
CHECKPOINT

MILITARY POLICE

YOU ARE LEAVING
THE AMERICAN SECTOR
ВЫ ВЫЕЗЖАЕТЕ ИЗ
АМЕРИКАНСКОГО СЕКТОРА
VOUS SORTEZ
DU SECTEUR AMÉRICAIN

10 km

The Berlin Wall, 1964

Opposite Page: Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin

Roman Aqueduct, Segovia, Spain

Village In Spain

Bombed Railway Bridge,
Former Yugoslavia

Railroad Tracks and Minarets,
Former Yugoslavia

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

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.

Navigating the Isthmus
of Corinth, Greece

My Shadow on the Deck of the
Lydia on My Way To Alexandria

White-Washed Greek Village

Outdoor Oven, Greek Village

Christian Church and Crucifix, Spain

Toledo, Spain

Paris Opera House

Opposite Page: Eiffel Tower

About Face

Todd Victor, Clown
aka Topper Todd
Jest In Time Circus

Flint Rasmussen, Barrel Clown

Named Clown of the Year for eight consecutive years
by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

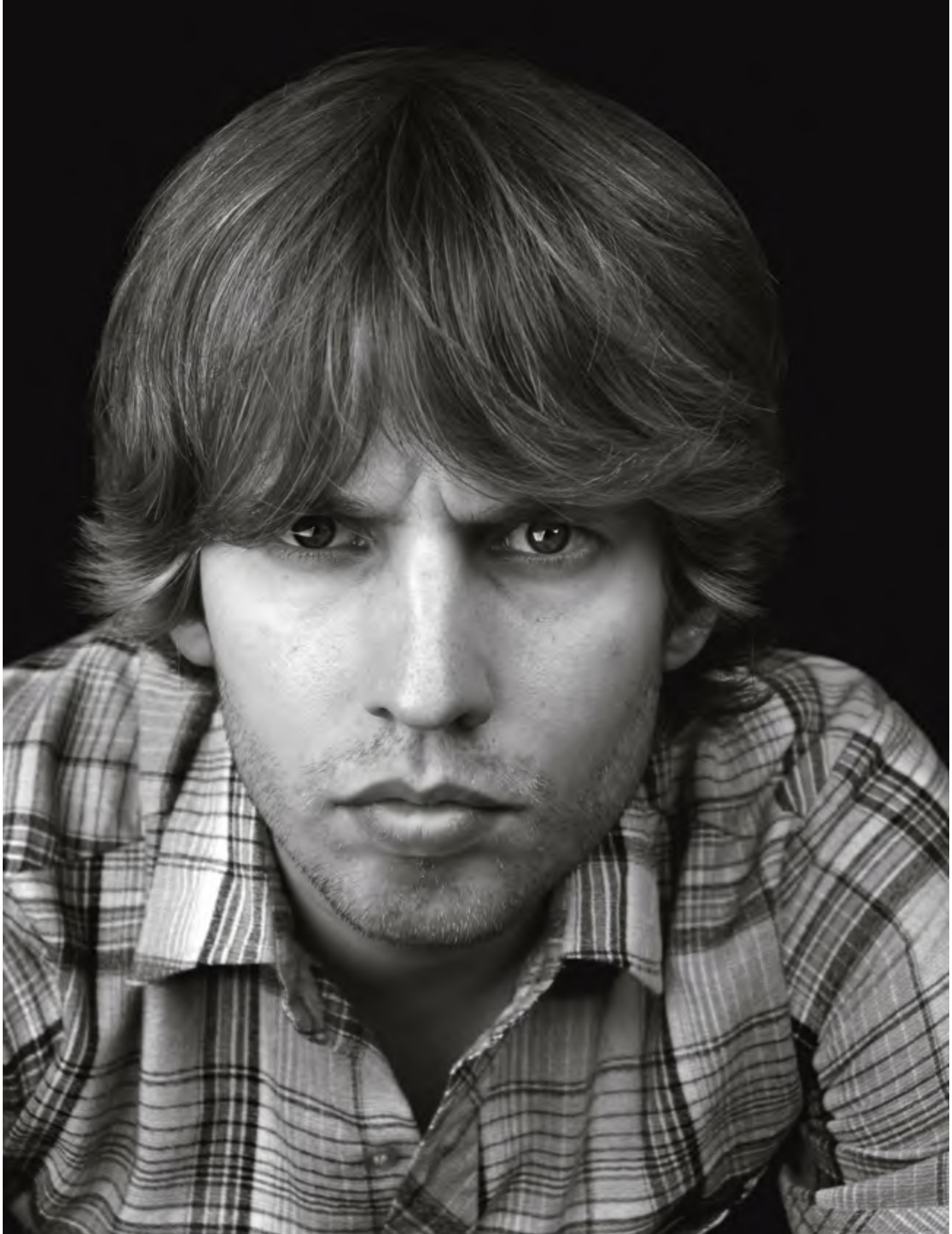
Opposite Page: Bright-eyed
Nursing Home Resident

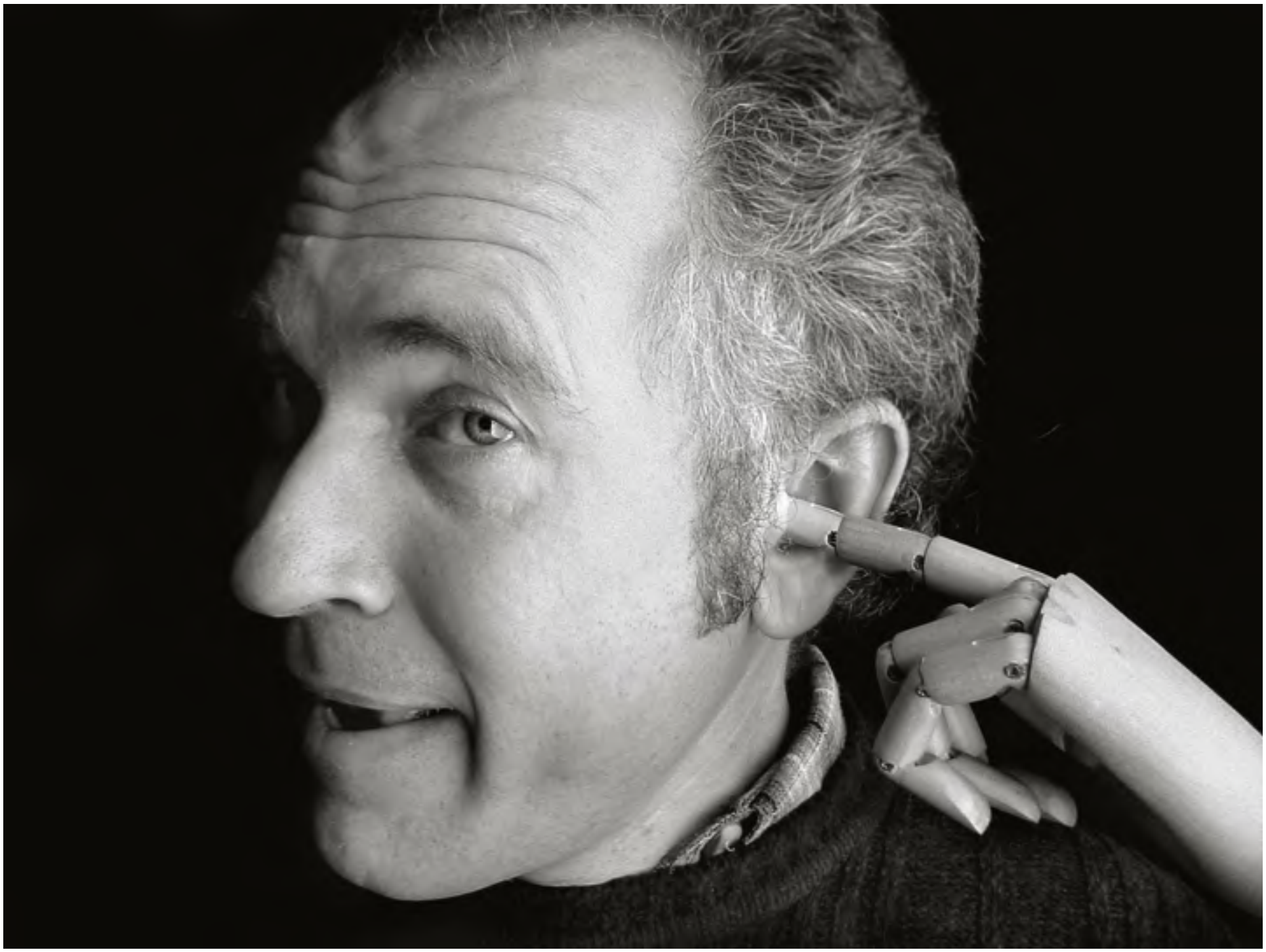
Opposite Page:
Jacob, 2016

Right: Angola Prison
Inmate In the Rain

My Sons, Elliott and Anthony

The Exhibitionist





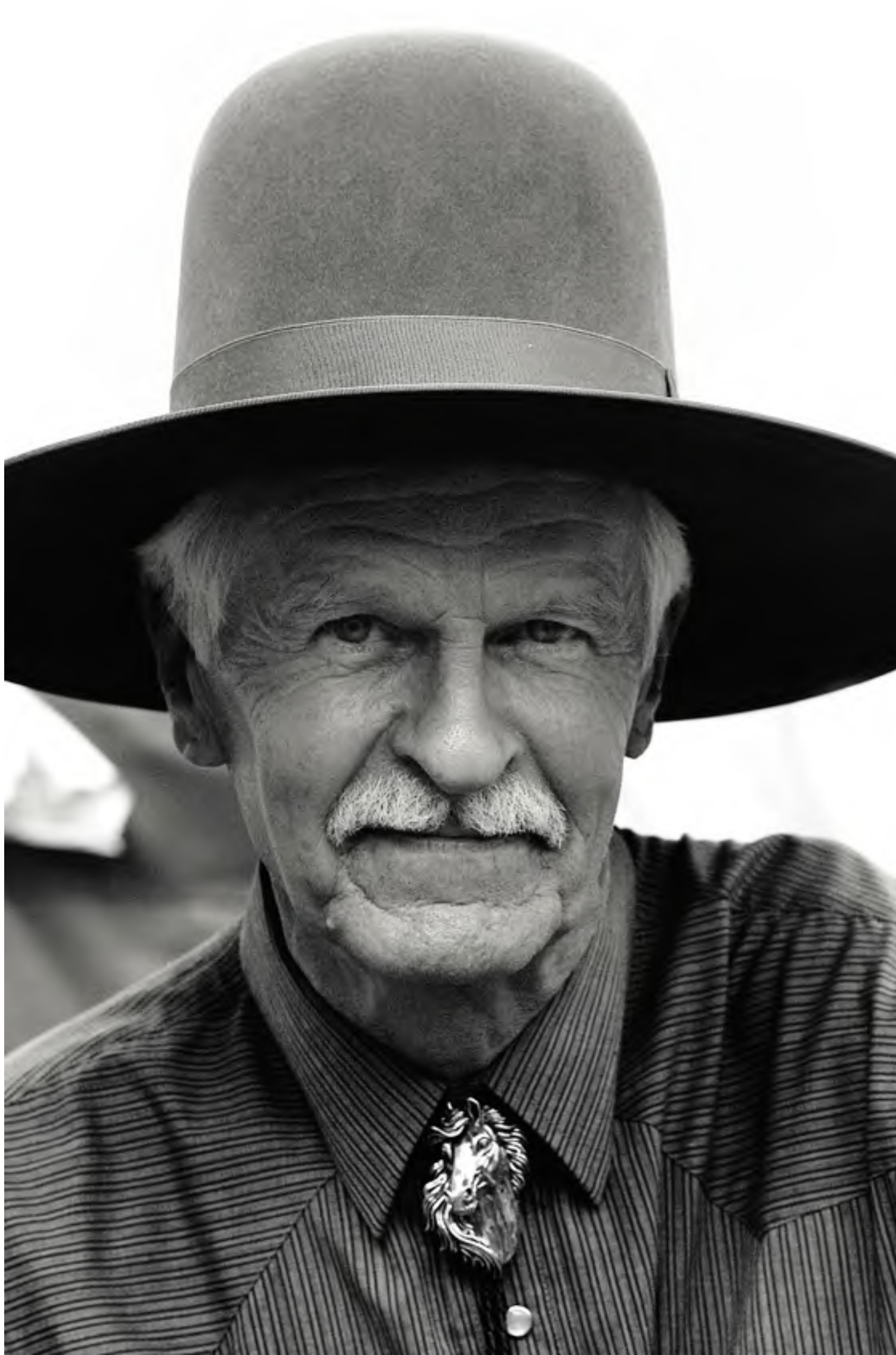
A Clown Is Funny
Even Without His Makeup

Opposite Page: Jon Heder, Actor

Sam and Natalie

Greta

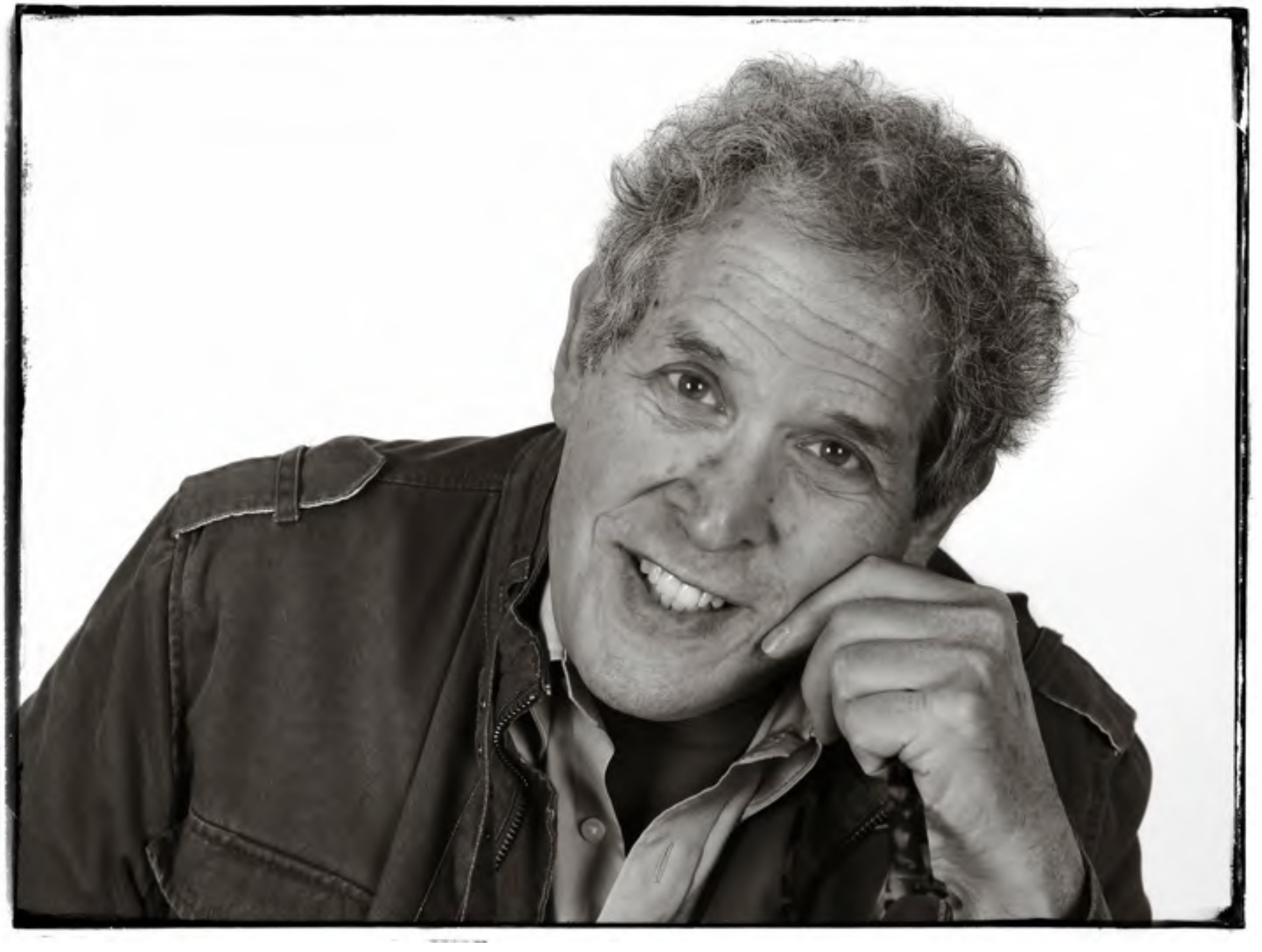
Roy and Richard



Ten Gallon Hat

Americana 2013

Squinting Cowboy



Self Portrait 2017

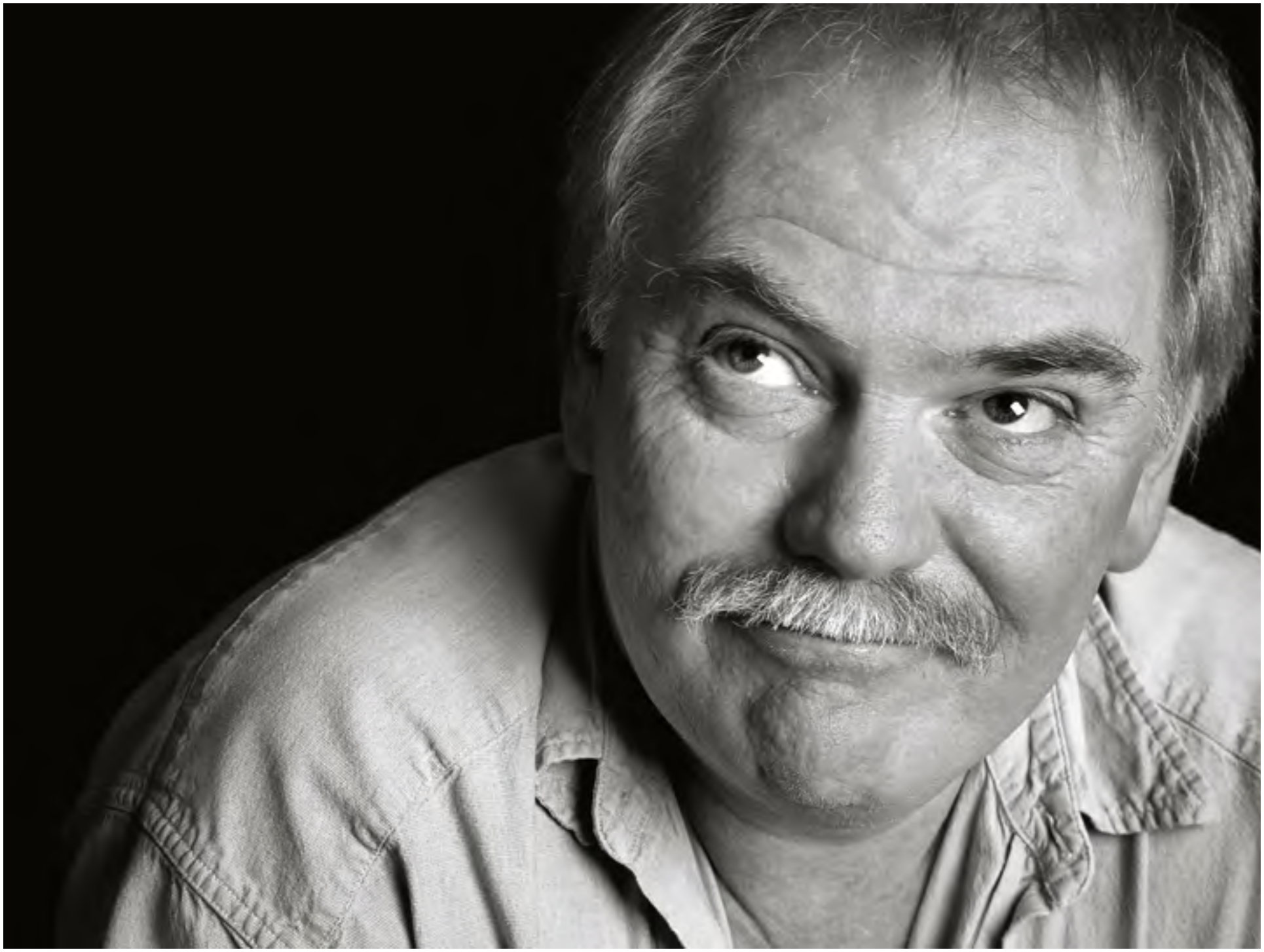
David Lett, "Papa Pinot"

Sarah in the Middle

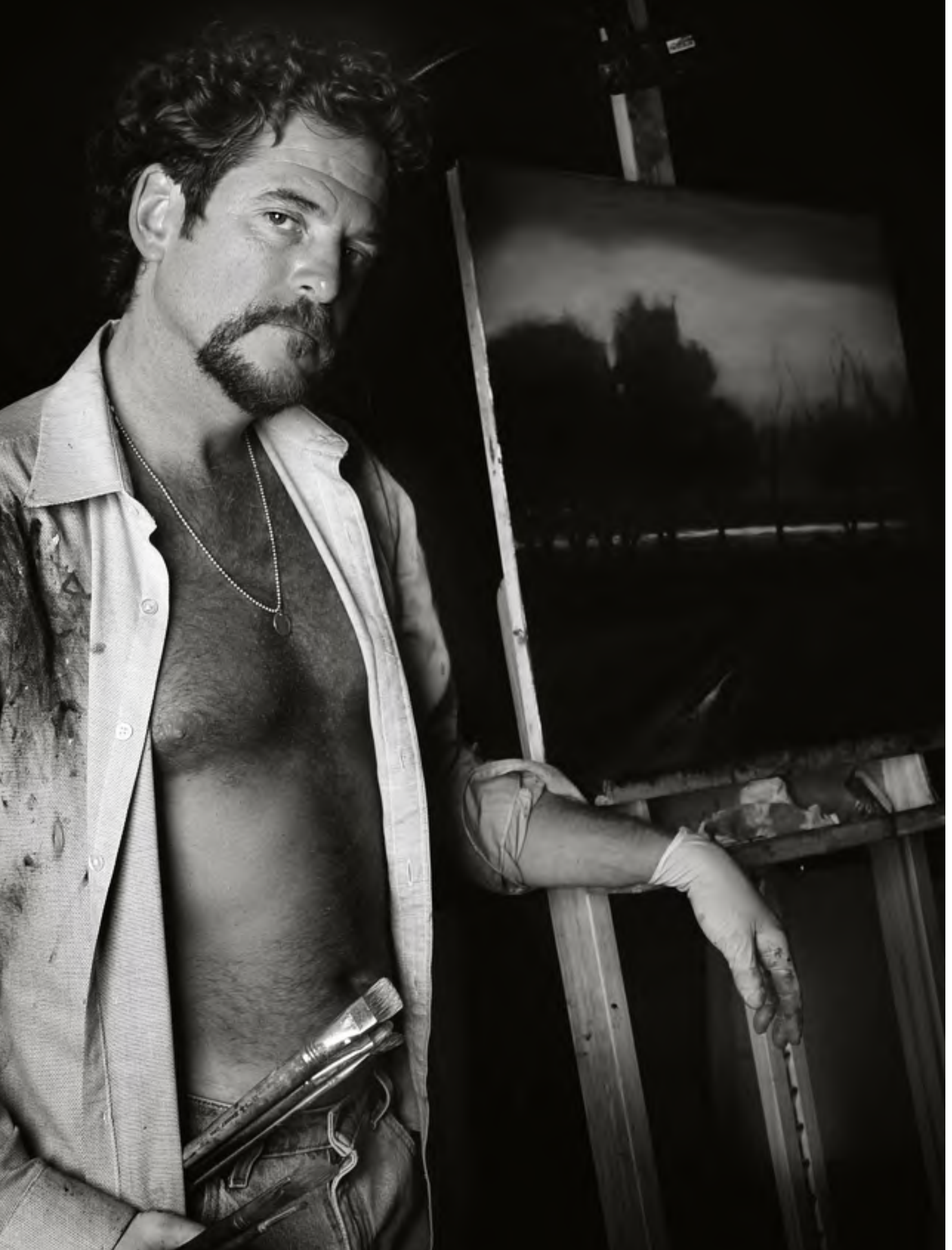
Firefighter E306

2002 Paragon National Gold Medal Award for Best Black & White Photography

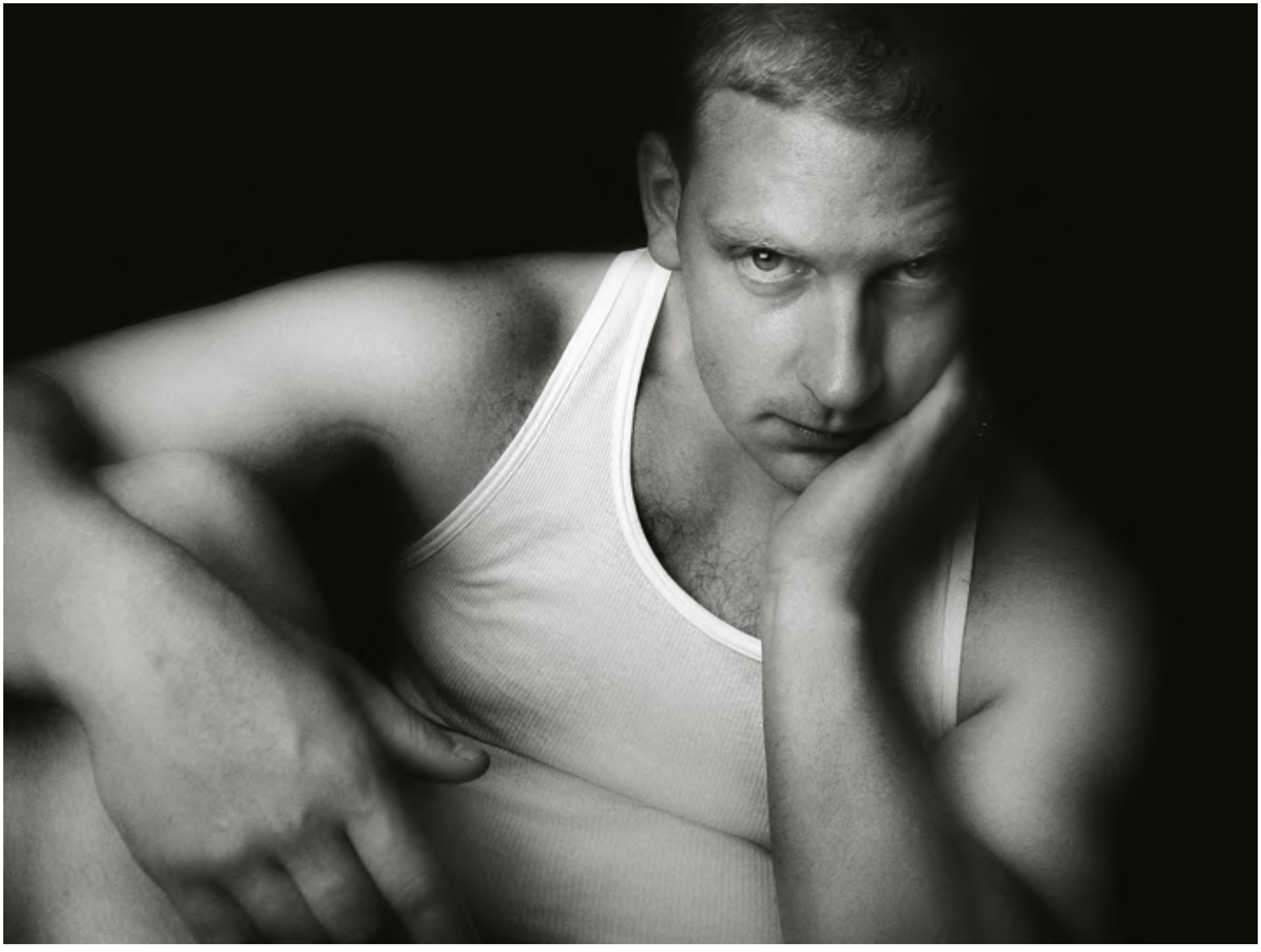
The Mechanic



Max Marbles, Bookbinder



John Van Dreal
Artist



Tim

Ari Gold
Actor and Director

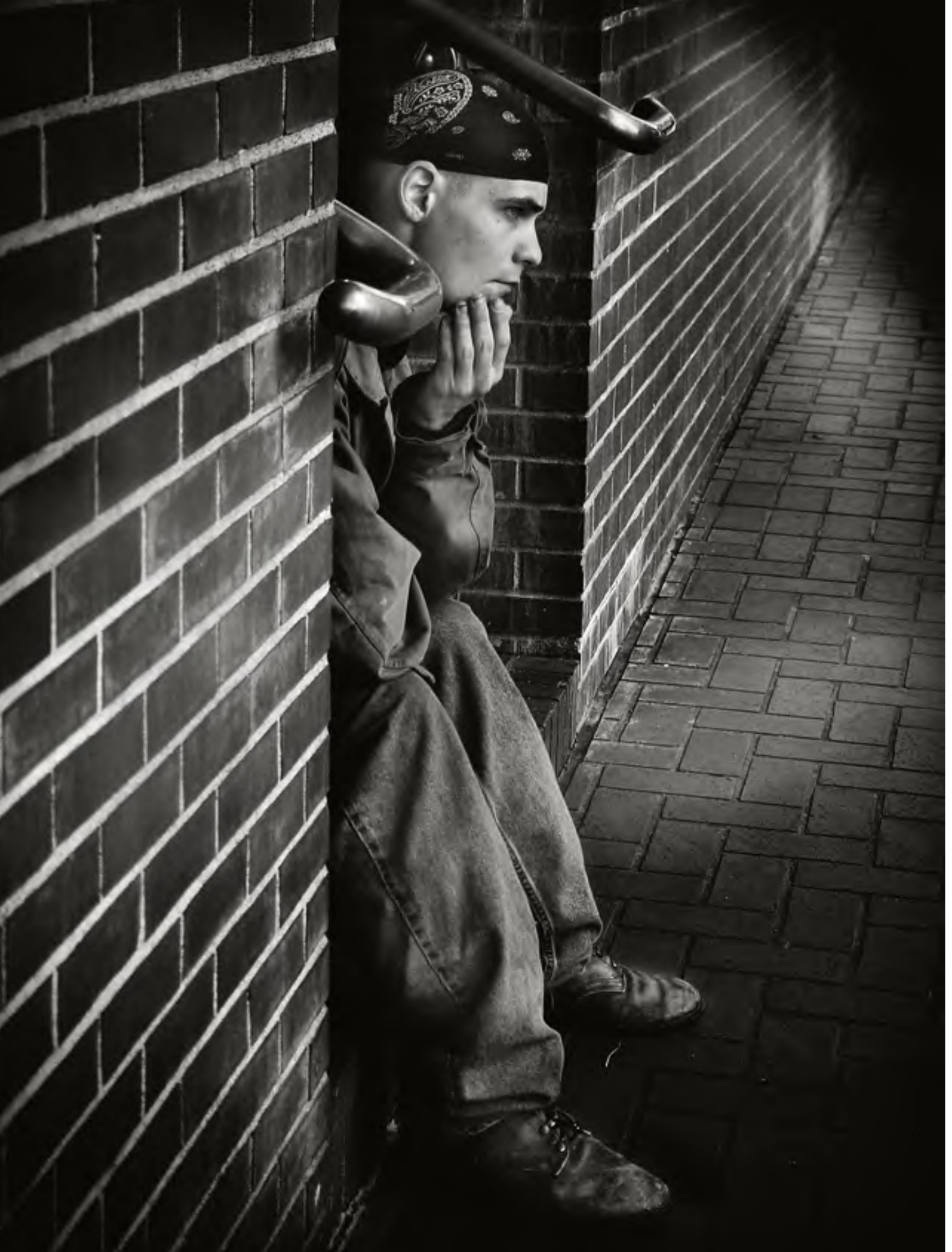
Opposite Page:
My Wife,
Martha Solomon

Ron Craig
Director and
Film Festival Organizer

Howard Libes
Author

Ring Bearer

Opposite Page:
Black is Beautiful



Alone on the Streets

Bronc Rider Carrying His Saddle

On the Way to School
New Orleans

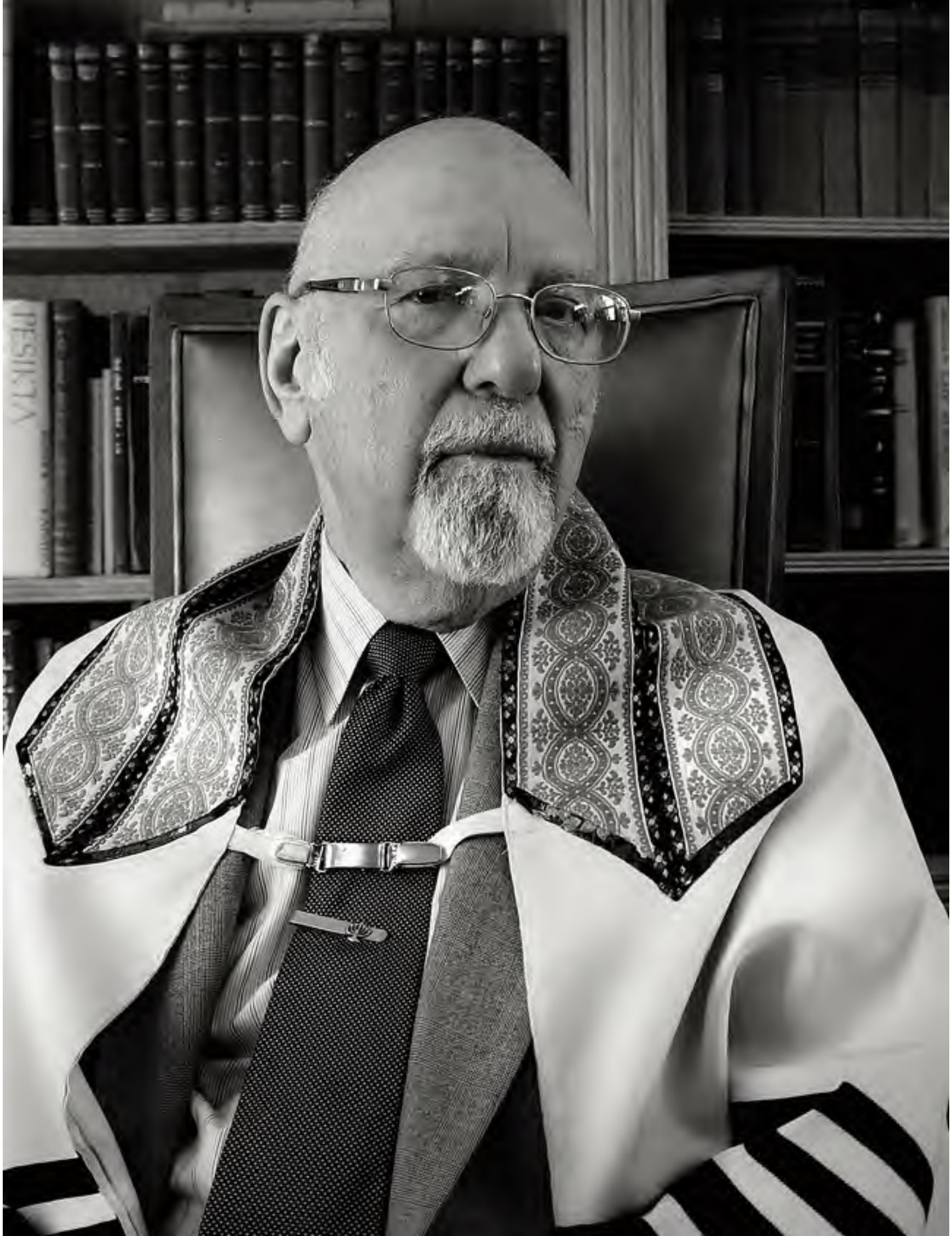
Opposite Page: Charley, 2015

Cody Martin
Saddle Bronc and Bull Riding Champion

Opposite Page: Andy with His Dog

Rabbi Emanuel Rose

Opposite Page:
Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm
with Siddur


PRESIDENTA

Two Jewish Men in Conversation

Opposite Page: Rabbi Yonah Geller

In the Tub

In His Father's Arms

Tribal Elder
Pendleton Round-Up

Native American
Mother and Child

Self Portrait at the Oregon Holocaust Memorial

Opposite Page:
Lizette Guy, Clown
aka Li Li Zucchini
Jest In Time Circus

Rodeo Culture

Cowboy Pickup

Honorable Mention, Photojournalism, Monochrome Awards, 2014

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image
to be woven as a limited edition tapestry.

Right Out of the Chute

Digital photography has resulted in the democratization of the craft, which I suppose is a good thing because there is 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 is much less so.

However, my early adoption of digital photography has greatly influenced the way in which I work. During photo sessions where I can share images and elicit feedback, my portraiture results from a genuine collaboration with my subjects.

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 twentieth century photography is characterized by at least two significant commonalities: its emphasis on black and white images, and subject matter or vantage points 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.

Photographers and their images come immediately to the mind's eye: Robert Capa's 1936 "Fallen Soldier" taken during the Spanish Civil War, the haunting Depression-era image of Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother," and Nick Ut's shocking and unforgettable photograph of a young Vietnamese girl running naked down the road after a napalm attack in 1972. Then, of course, there is fine art, including photographs of the human form by the likes of Ruth Bernhard and Edward Weston, and landscapes in rich tonal values by Ansel Adams.

My mantra of memorable photographic opportunities has always begun with "*access, access, and more access*." I initially gained entre to rodeo arenas as a videographer when my advertising agency was filming a tourism video in Oregon. That production won my firm the distinction of "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 in an hour-long video. That short segment always got my adrenaline pumping!

It was during my initial shooting that I discovered a subculture I had only seen in western movies. Once exposed, I was hooked. The cultural anthropologist in me simply could not look away. 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.

I approached Kevin Smith, the promoter of the Fourth of July Rodeo in St. Paul, Oregon, 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 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.

By the beginning of the millennium I had become fully committed to shooting with a digital camera. The immediacy of shooting digitally allowed me to return to my studio and, without sleep, work until dawn on the images I had taken and place them in a portfolio as proof sheets to show Kevin what I was capable of capturing with my still camera. Much impressed, he allowed me to begin working in the chutes that very day.

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 seasoned PRCA photographers. Recognizing that this subculture of rodeo performers and devoted fans existed right in my own backyard, I resolved to dedicate several years of my life to documenting that segment of "western culture" that was totally alien to anything I had ever experienced.

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 flag-waving spectacle

Opposite Page: Widow Maker


PENDLETON ROUND-UP

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!* Now in my sixties, 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 un-Jewish spectator sport known to man.

At first, I created my own small circuit of Pacific Northwest rodeo venues: St. Paul, Puyallup, Santiam, Joseph, Ellensburg and, of course, the famous Pendleton Round-up. As my body of work grew, my daughter, Kimberly, suggested that I should go to Angola and document the rodeo there. My first reaction was: why would I go to Africa to continue my documentation of rodeo culture? Kim then introduced me to the Louisiana State Penitentiary, perhaps the nation's most notorious prison and its semi-annual prisoner rodeos – events that are far less about athleticism than they are about Christian redemption.

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. For inmates of this maximum-security prison, nearly eight out of ten of whom are African American, appeal is almost always futile. The 11,300 seat arena, built with convict labor, had been completed just prior to my photo shoot.

Three weeks before my flight to Louisiana, Lili, the deadliest and costliest hurricane of the 2002 season, made landfall there. When the storm had spent its destructive force, lives, property and crops had been lost and I would soon discover that the ground was saturated to its limit, leaving the newly constructed arena an unmanageable bog.

At the terminus of Louisiana State Highway 66 stand the unimposing gates of Louisiana State Penitentiary, home of the infamous Angola Prison Rodeo. In another setting, perhaps the border between Oregon and California, the low-slung structure could be mistaken for the agricultural checkpoint where you're asked, "Do you have any fresh fruit in the car?" A guard directed me to the office of Cathy Fontenot, then Director of Public Relations, later the prison's Assistant Warden under her mentor, Burl Cain.

Scratch the surface of the affable Warden Cain and you'd have found a menacing gatekeeper adhering to a biblical dogma that, for the 5,100 inmates, three quarters of whom were African American and 86 percent of whom would die at Angola, the only reprieve was through Christian redemption. Investigative journalist James Ridgeway wrote, "If you ever find yourself inside Louisiana's Angola prison, Burl Cain will make sure you find Jesus or regret ever crossing his path."

Now, I was on the "secure side" of the prison walls, on my way to Fontenot's office. Unless you were a member of the paying audience, the only way a photojournalist could access this theater of violence was with the consent

In the Chutes

Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

Mired in Mud

Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

of Cathy Fontenot, which I had been granted as a result of my previous photographic experience in rodeo arenas in the Pacific Northwest.

Sitting across from Fontenot, a totally in-charge, hard-edged bureaucrat whose outward appearance belied the iron fist beneath the velvet gloves, I was assigned a handler, told the rules, and was off to the arena. This pageant of punishment and ritual purification, where the audience colludes in the linking of religion, redemption, and punishment, begins with the dramatic entrance of the Glory Riders, banners fluttering with biblical sound-bites – Word of God, King of Kings, and Army of the Lord.

Now, an almost biblical scene was framed in my camera's viewfinder. A convict seemed to be struggling, not out of the mud, but from the very bowels of a mire. Extraction was next to impossible, particularly for an injured inmate. While fleeing a 2,000 pound bull, the convict had sunk deeper and deeper into the sludge. I couldn't help but recall the prison break scene from "Raising Arizona" where John Goodman and William Forsythe emerged from the mud into a torrential rain, as if being reborn.

Before me at Angola was a similar parturition fraught with danger, a labor of desperation, a gladiatorial spectacle. And the spectators were getting exactly what they wanted – punishment and revenge within a pious system where there must be the creation of scapegoats in a barbarous ritual of purification.

In her article, "Punishment and the rite of purification at the Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana, USA," Mary Rachel Gould, Assistant Professor of Communications at Saint Louis University, described the Angola Prison Rodeo, along with the public viewing of executions for capital crimes, yet one more example of what Dwight Conquergood termed a "theatre of violence." In this theatre of violence, "Spectators bear witness to the punishment suffered by untrained and unskilled rodeo participants, most of whom are pitted against much more seasoned and skilled opponents (trained rodeo animals)."

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 experience photographing professional rodeos. That experience had taught me 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 came expecting to see the prisoner-performers injured, to exact a kind of revenge for their crimes. Rarely were they disappointed.

My emphasis in the arena has never been 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. Rather, my interest was focused on the micro-moments that made up the "just befores" and "just afters" of each event. And, 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.

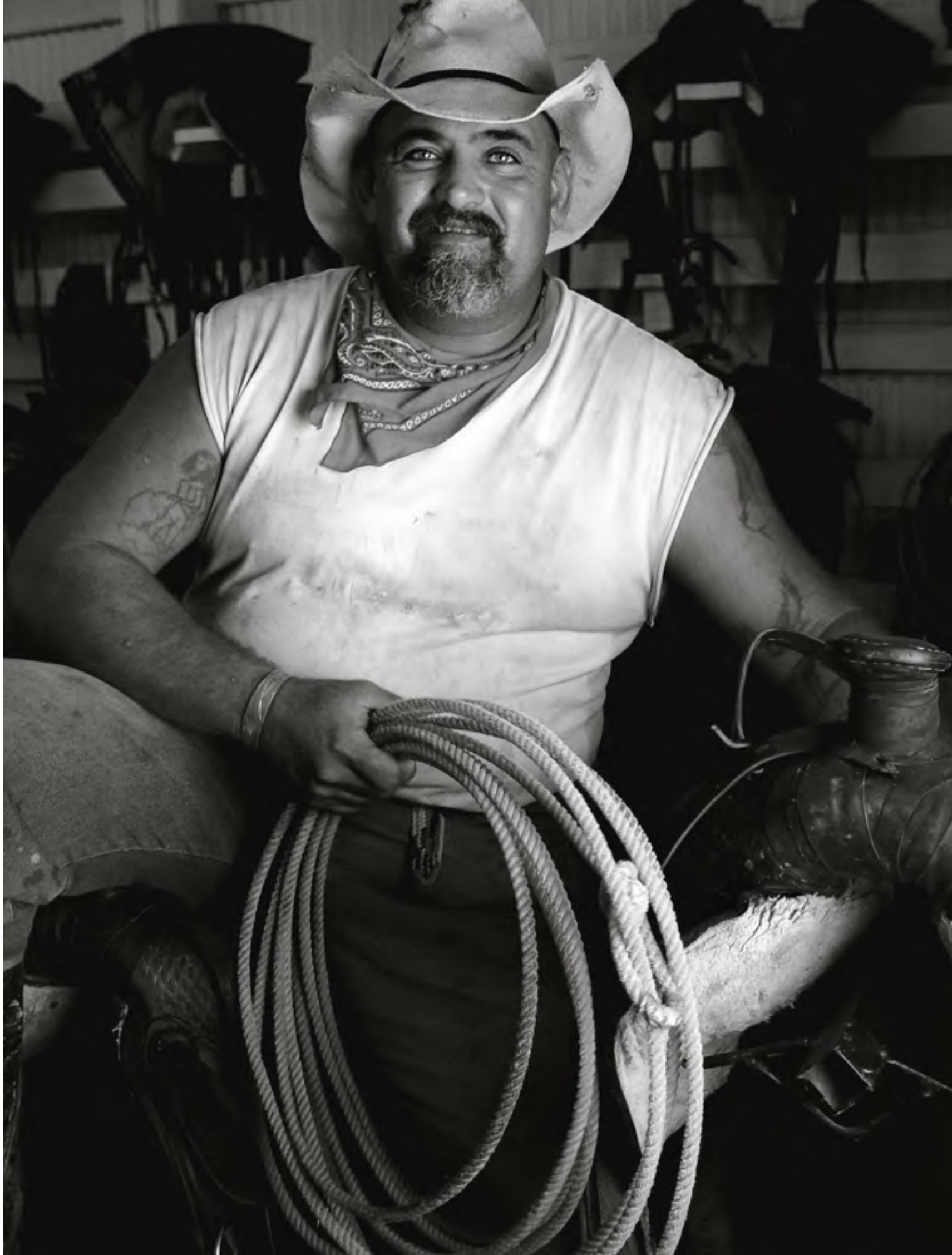
Later, deep in the heart of Angola, in the Saddle Room, I set up my makeshift studio and made portraits with respect and compassion for the prison's Rough Riders, all of them trusties. Undoubtedly, some were hardened criminals, while others had merely been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and were 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. Oddly, I felt safer in this environment than I had in the Warden's conference room or across the desk from Fontenot.

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 prison inmates 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.

When I examine my photographic work in its entirety, I believe that my rodeo images, both in free arenas and at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, constitute the most important and complete category within my larger body of work, and most clearly reflect my training as a cultural anthropologist.

Above: Dragged Through the Mud

Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary



Angola Prison Rodeo
Rough Rider
with Lariat

Visualizing in the Chutes

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

Barrel Racer

Wild Horse Team

Following Spread
Left Page: Bucking Bronco with Shadow

Right Page: Barrel Clown Flirts with Danger


nmt
MOBILE TELEVISION
ST. PAUL RODEO
ST. PAUL RODEO

Calf Roper

Steer Roping Action

Prayer Circle

Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

Inmates Holding Hands

White inmate with swastika tattoo holding the hand of a black inmate,
Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

The Glory Riders

Army of the Lord, Word of God, King of Kings
Angola Prison Rodeo, Louisiana State Penitentiary

Inmate Holding the Mississippi State Flag

The Mississippi state flag is the only state flag in the US to incorporate the Confederate battle flag – the Civil War has never really ended.

Bucking Palomino

Opposite Page: Crow Hop

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image to be woven as a limited edition tapestry.

After the Ride

Convict in the Arena
Walking Away

Angola Prison Rodeo

Bucking Pinto

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image to be woven as a limited edition tapestry.

Opposite Page: Eight Seconds to Glory

Kid Clown

Flint Rasmussen
Barrel Clown

Flat Out in the Chutes

Bullfighters Hollywood Yates and Loyd Ketchum
Coming to the Aid of a Downed Bullrider

"When every bullrider walks away safe, it's been a great day at the office." – *Loyd Ketchum*

The Signage on the Chutes Says It All

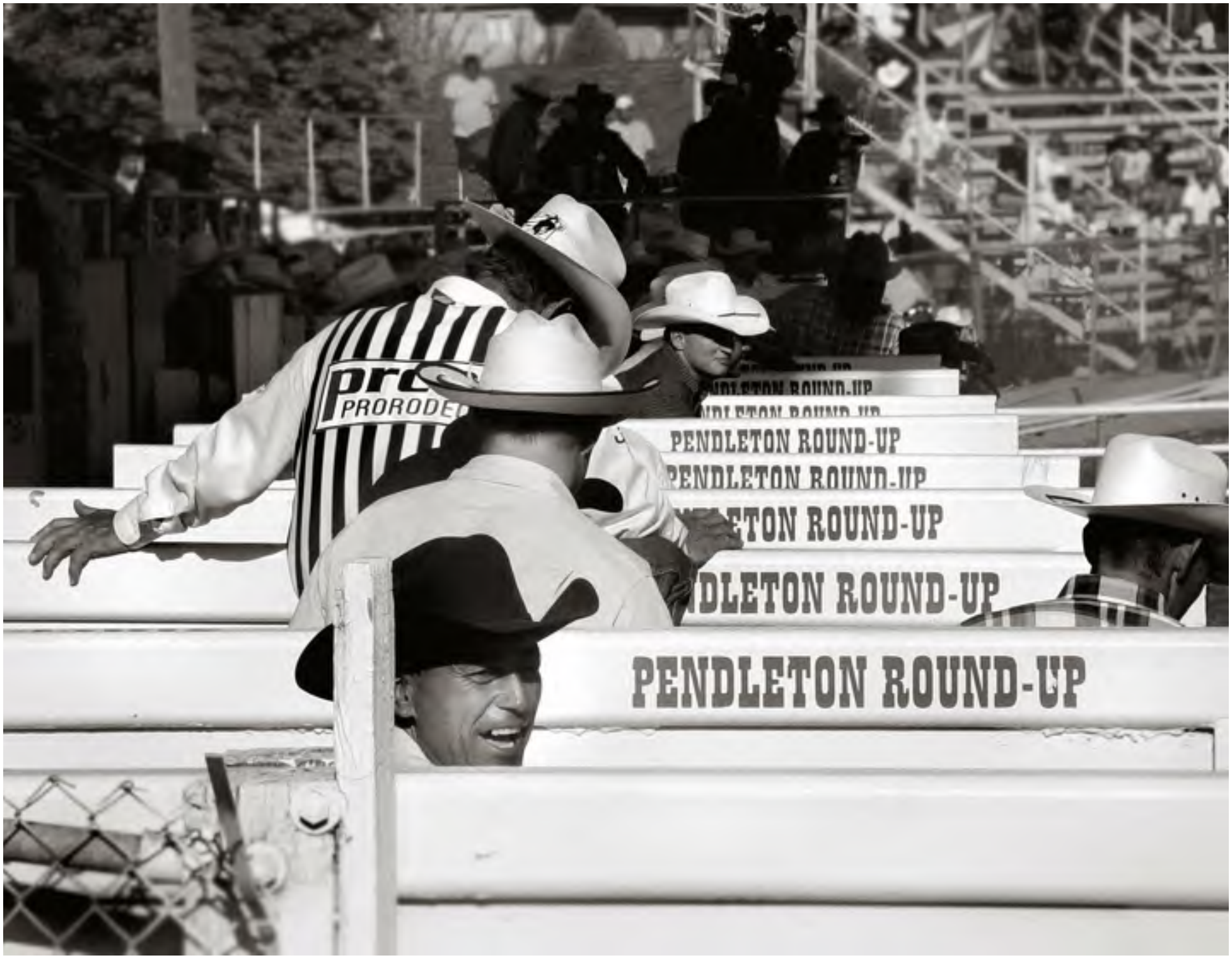
Opposite Page: The Gravesite of Johnny Brooks

Brooks was a Legendary Angola Prison Rodeo Performer, Inmate No. 86002


JOHNNY BROOKS
86002

Young Junior Bullrider and Shy Friend

Junior Bullriders



Prairie Dogging in the Pendleton Chutes

White Hats in the Paddock

Cowboy Poker, a.k.a. Convict Poker

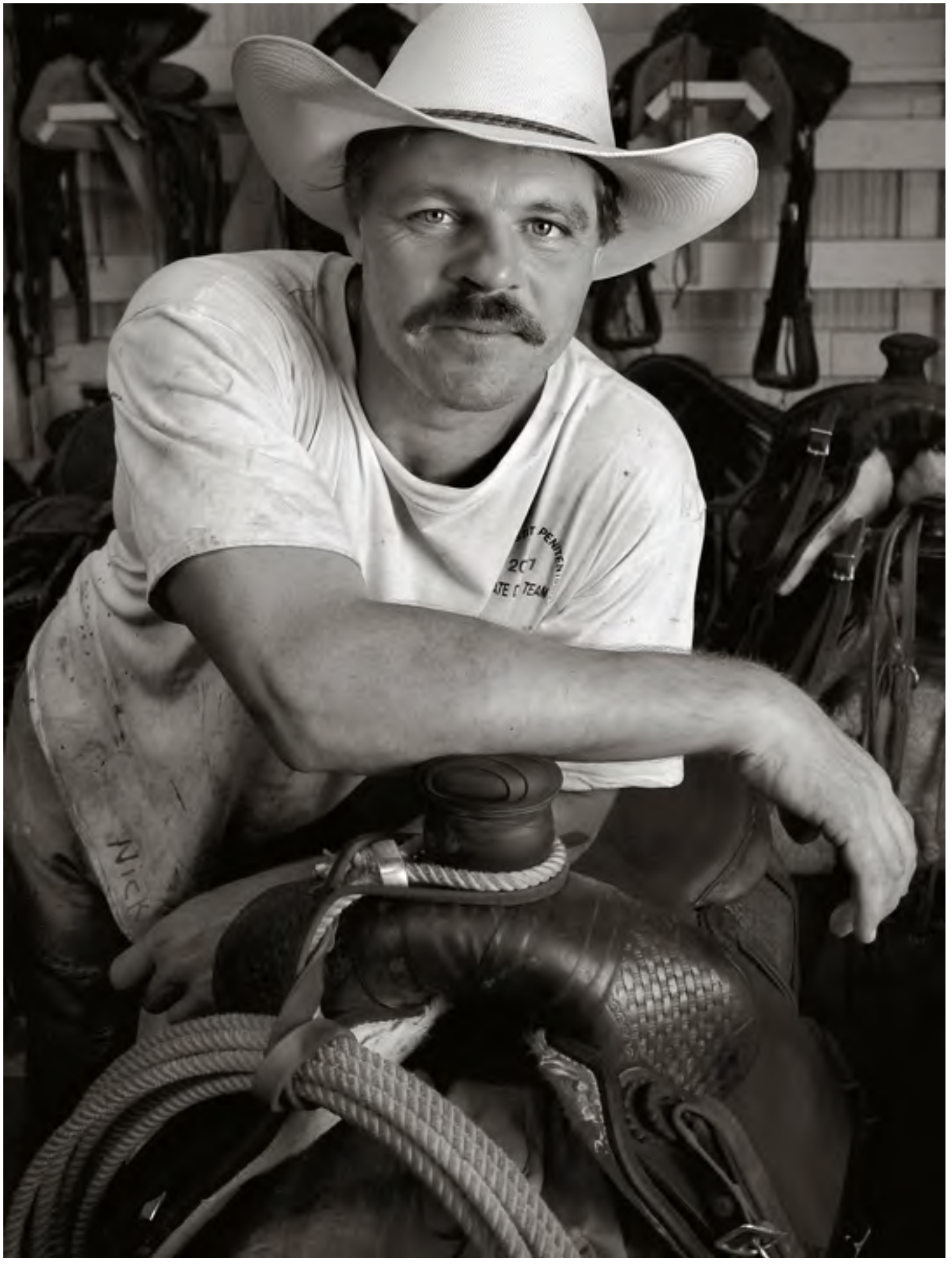
Banned at many rodeos, cowboy poker is a favorite at the Angola Prison Rodeo. The last inmate seated when a raging bull charges "wins." .

Rodeo Spectators

Inmate Friends in the Chutes

Angola Prison Rodeo

Opposite Page: Rough Rider Leaning on His Saddle


NICK

Smiling Angola Prison Rodeo Rough Rider

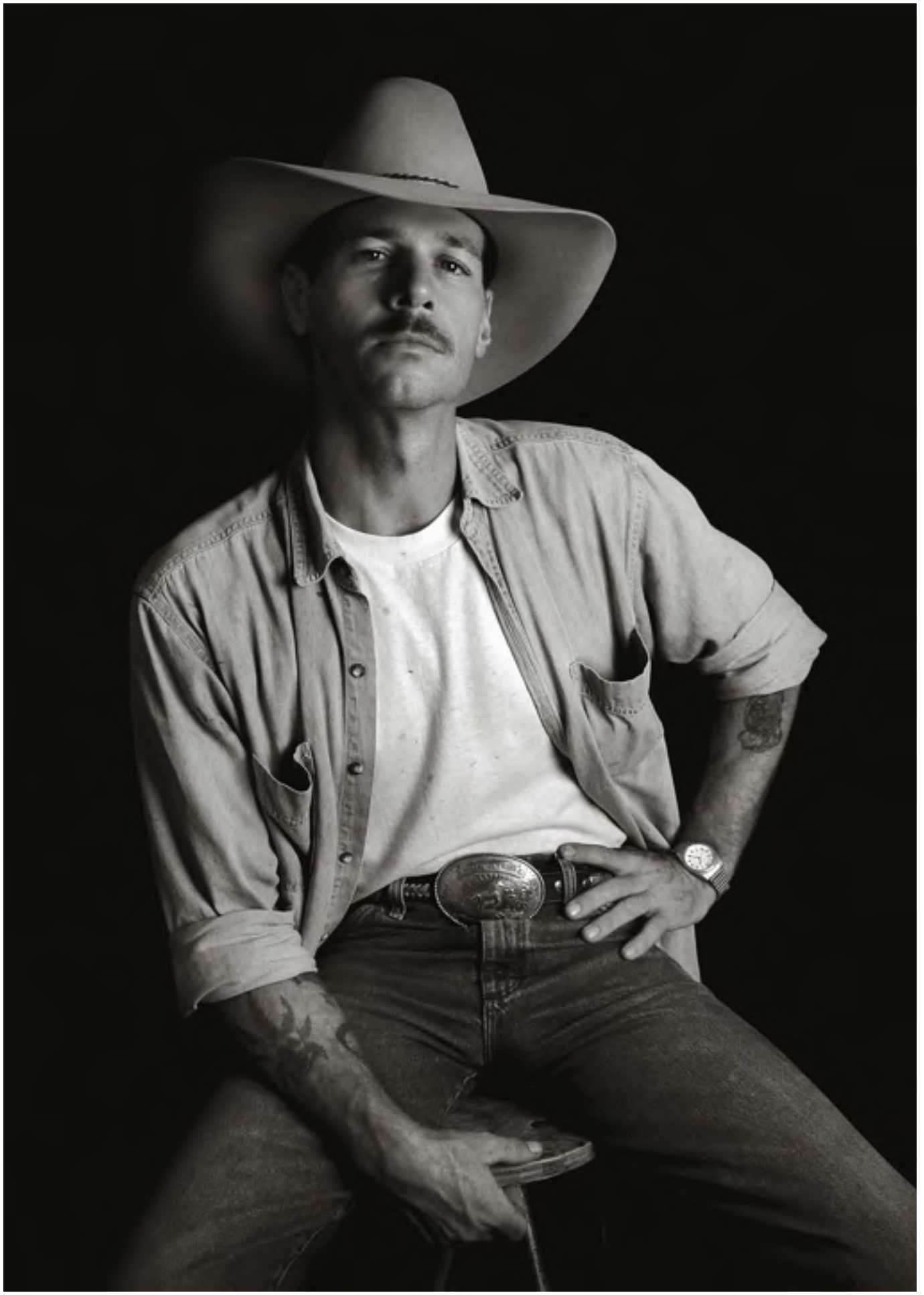
Rough Rider Enjoying a Cigar in the Tack Room

Trusty in Leather Cowboy Hat

Angola Prison Rodeo

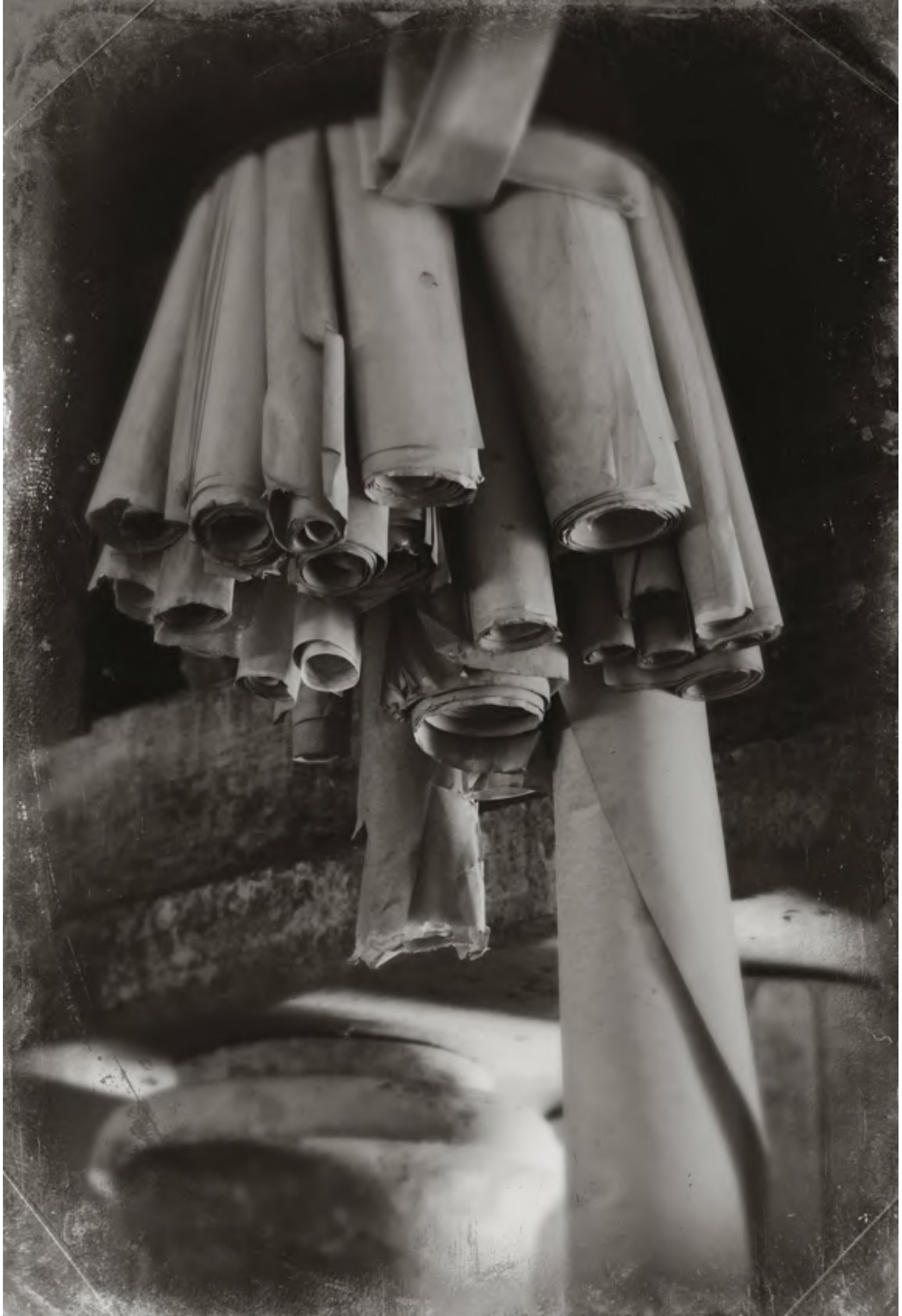
Trusty with Cannabis Tattoo

Angola Prison Rodeo



Fine Art

Brussels Sprouts Triptych



Terra Cotta Frieze

Gladding McBean, Lincoln, California

Opposite Page: Vintage Plans for
Terra Cotta Architectural Details

Gladding McBean, Lincoln, California

Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image to be woven as a limited tapestry.

Congregation Beth Israel, Portland, Oregon

Jackson Square, New Orleans

Opposite Page: Bourbon Street, New Orleans

Pendleton® Woolen Mills selected this image to be woven as a limited edition tapestry.

741

Rue Bourbon

Bourbon

Steve S. Dupre's United Cab, New Orleans

Outside My Hotel, New Orleans

Old New Orleans French Market

Opposite Page: OK Barber Shop


PROUD TO BE
AN AMERICAN
"UNITED WE STAND"
O.K.
BARBER SHOP

Carousel Horse Being Carved

Antique Doll

By The Garden Gate

Homage to Ruth Bernhard

Light Through a Chair Back

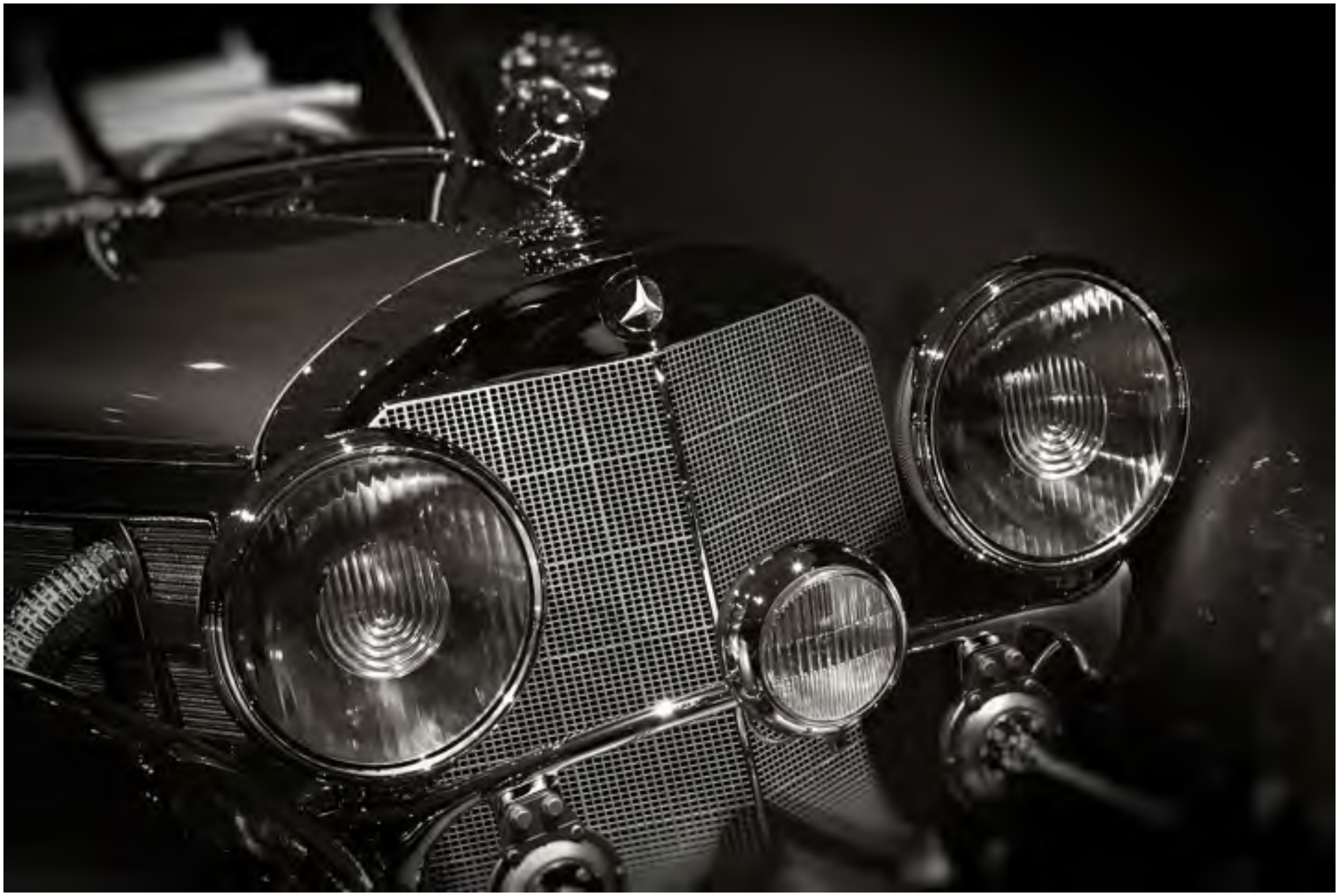
Graceful Torso

Drawing Her Bath

The Slip

Sitka's Bed

St. Teresa of Avila Church,
Bodega, California



Vintage Mercedes Benz

Transmission

X4449 Daylight Pistons

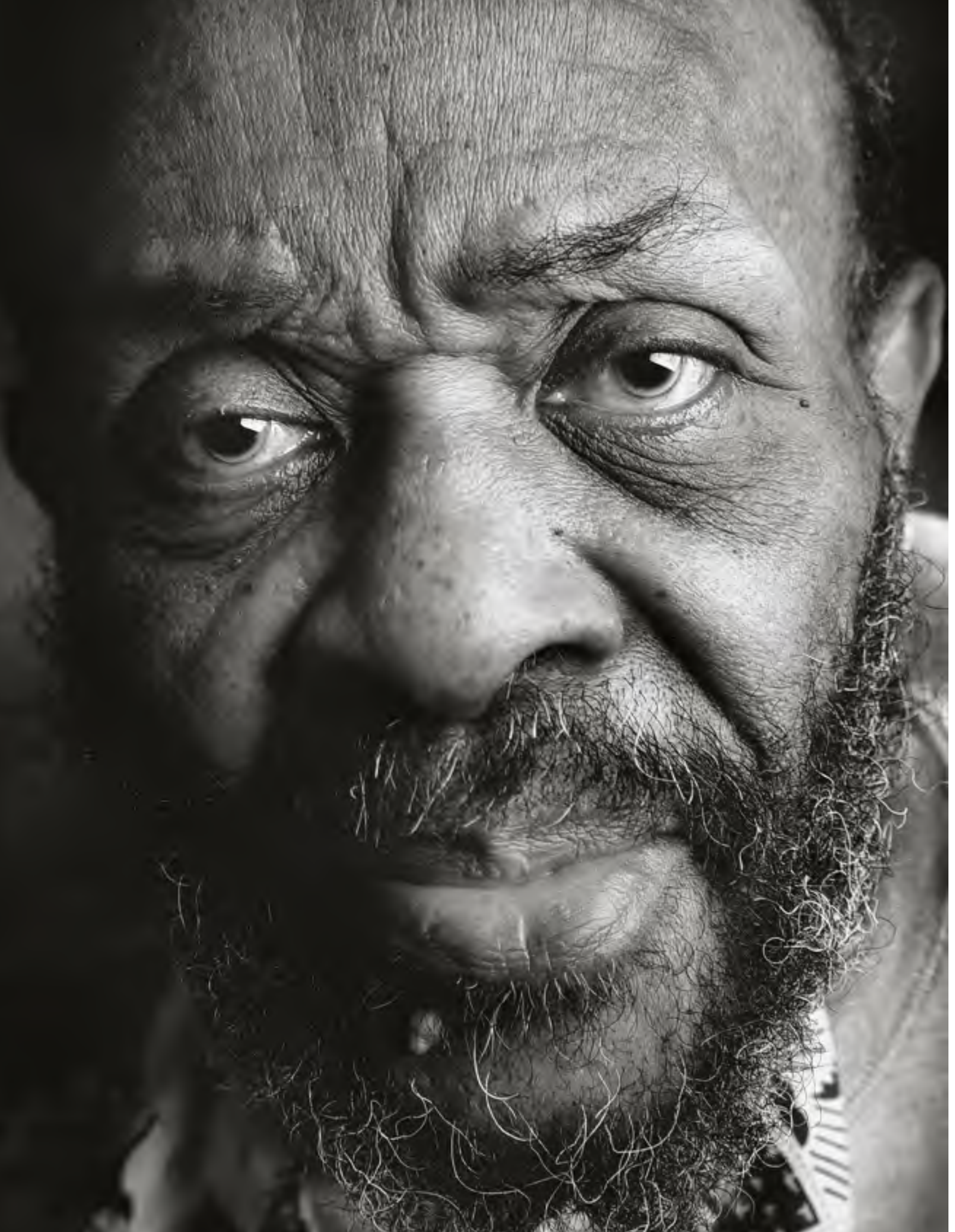
Full Steam

Draw, Pardner

Camera Shy

Life In a Nursing Home

Two Percent



Clyde

Today, nearly seventy percent of Americans will spend their final days in a hospital, hospice or nursing home.

Mention dementia or a nursing home today and you'll discover the anxiety level of your audience has kicked up a notch.

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.

When my marketing firm was hired to handle the public relations for the launching of a new Alzheimer's unit in a state-of-the-art facility, I spent a great deal of time speaking with and photographing the home's residents. Many of those images are now on permanent exhibit in that facility.

Historically, our aging parents remained in their own homes, homes that housed extended, rather than nuclear, families. This was 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 capacity to house up to 1.7 million of our rapidly aging population. That's a whole lot of folks.

As I photographed the nursing home's residents, I witnessed not only their frustrations and trials, but also their joy and the love that the staff felt for those in their care.

I was surprised to discover that often residents didn't recognize themselves in my photographs. 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. Thanks to digital technology, I was able to share his image with him immediately on the back of the camera. He studied it for a long moment and gave me a thumbs up. No words were spoken.

The next morning I ran into Clyde sitting in his wheelchair. By this time, I had an oversize print of the image created the day before. "Clyde, would you like to see your photograph?" 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.

"Do I Know You?"

Helen greets a therapy dog.

Giving Comfort

Deep In Thought

They Called Him "Cowboy"

Centenarian

Opposite Page: A Caring Kiss

101 Years Old

Remembering

Facing Terminal Illness

Self Portrait with Sharan in Hospice

Sharan's 5-FU Pump

My photograph of my late 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 care-giver, medical advocate, devastated spouse, and photo-documentarian.

The powerful combination of drugs contained in the infusion pump she wore after each chemotherapy session was simply called "Folfox." The "5 F-U" pump delivered a cock-tail of chemicals so toxic that Sharan had to carry a hazmat kit when she was in public. In her words, she had become "Poison Baby," a name she gave herself from a childhood game, and called her little pump "my five fuck me machine."

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. How absurd was that? Dripping wet, Oz weighed less than 25 pounds. Still, I acquiesced. I had no idea how important her canine companion would become to her treatment and peace of mind. For my part, photography allowed me to cope with the unthinkable.

When the vest arrived, Oz remained at Sharan's 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 wonderful." By April, she was gone.

A Year Before Her Diagnosis

Sharan's Last Portrait with Her Daughter, Kimberly

First Place Award – Elders In Action Photography Competition

Sharan and Oz on an Early Visit to the ER

Opposite Page: Day One Without Hair

Calm and serene to the last, she was a marvel of composure.

Replacing Her Eyebrows

Throughout her illness, Sharan never stopped caring about her appearance.

Selecting Wigs with Oz

Medicine Cabinet

Pills and medical paraphernalia began to fill our home as we battled Sharan's cancer.

Henna Curls

My wife made the most of her beautifully shaped head.

Cancer Hates Exercise

Sharan and Oz
On Portland's
Light Rail (MAX)

Hope for the Future

Sharan shared Obama's hope for the future. Here she's on an outing with my younger son, Elliott and grandchild, Miles Ruben.

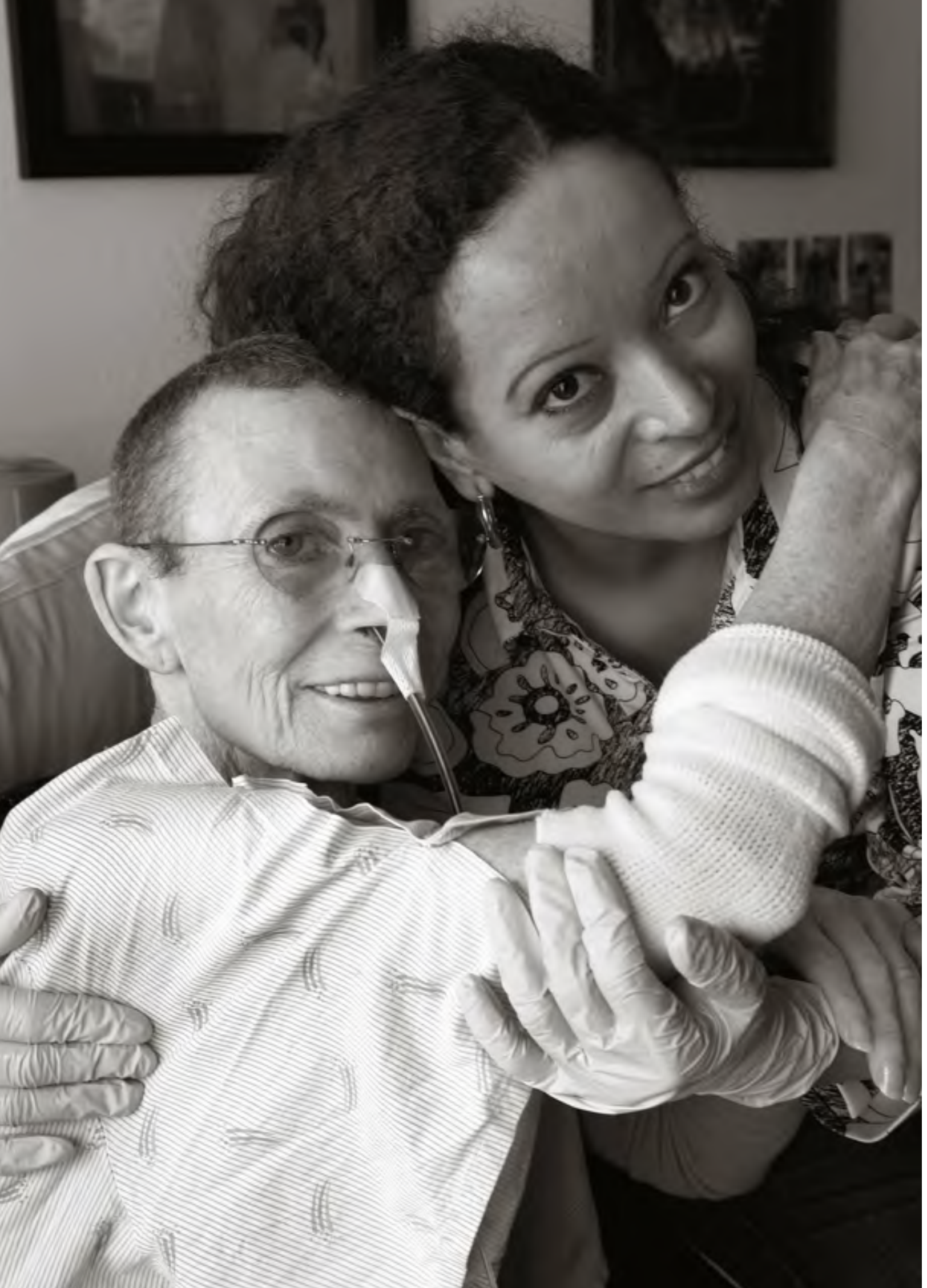
A Dream Realized

Sharan lived to witness the inauguration of the nation's first black president.

Sharan with Her
Granddaughter Julia
at Her 62nd
Birthday Party

Saying Goodbye to Her Sister, Carla

Sharan received her last wish, a fabulous birthday celebration at the Lion and Rose Bed and Breakfast attended by more than 70 friends and family members.



Sharan with Lulu,
a Hospice Worker

Linda, Her Hospice Nurse
in Conversation with Sharan

The Rapid Decline

Opposite Page: Checking Sharan's Pulse

Oz's Hospice Vigil, 2009

This moving image was published in *Photo District News (PDN)*, a national photography magazine, after receiving an award from the publication.

Looking Delicate
and Fragile

As Death Neared

Her Last Breath – April 15, 2009 at 1:04 A.M.

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "...in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Sharan hated preparing our tax returns and would have found it amusing to die on Tax Day.

Sharan and Her Daughter, Kimberly
at Her Own Gravesite

During Sharan's two-year battle with terminal 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 actual coffin, and at the right is a burning yahrzeit candle.

Opposite Page: Oz at Sharan's Fresh Grave

Photomontage

The Artist with His Model

During the two years I was the caregiver for my late wife, my photography served as therapy, allowing me to channel my emotions, and in particular my dread of the inevitable, into constructing images that don't exist in the real world. Initially, I began collecting images of artifacts in Sharan's life that I knew I would use later in my photomontages.

No doubt, my fascination with the idea of photomontage was influenced by my mother's artistic creations in the medium of decoupage. Throughout my childhood, I watched her create beautiful interior design pieces that were sold at W. & J. Sloane, a trendsetting New York retailer that opened a branch in Beverly Hills in 1948.

The Parsons-Barnett Gallery, my second art gallery in Oakland, California, was the venue for Romare Bearden's first West Coast exhibit in 1980. When he died in 1988, the *New York Times'* obituary described Bearden as "the nation's foremost collagist."

It was with enormous pride that I introduced Romare Bearden and his work to the West Coast and in particular, to the creative black community in Oakland. The opening night crowd of local artists, writers, musicians and politicians from the African-American community filled my gallery and overflowed into the middle of the street.

My work as a photomontagist, both in color as well as black and white, began with a series that incorporated an actual medical photograph of the interior of my left eye. My ophthalmologist was monitoring a nevus near my optic nerve. A nevus is like a raised freckle on the skin and, like these raised freckles, can also grow into a malignant melanoma. Mine, thankfully, has not. While my eye was being photographed, I could see its interior on the medical photographer's monitor. It was breathtaking! It looked like a golden orb and I asked if it would be possible to obtain a copy.

That element became the basis for one of my first photomontages and subsequently appeared as a featured component in a series that I created while Sharan was still alive. In each of these photomontages, I am represented by my eye which often floats above the scene. In my first photomontage (left), Sharan was represented by a pomegranate that was split open to symbolize her second major surgery. During that surgery, I had also been hospitalized as a result of my own emotional exhaustion, and in the photomontage, I'm trapped (in the form of my eye) behind a bamboo grove. I chose bamboo because of its symbolism in Asian culture.

Since Sharan's death, my body of photomontages has grown to represent a major portion of my artistic output, and I believe has drawn me closer to being a painter than a photographer. In a 2003 interview with Jim Kasson, Ted Orland, well known photographer, educator, and co-author of *Art & Fear* observed, "If you have a continuum that runs from traditional photography to painting, digital photography falls close to painting." In 2014 I received a Monochrome Award for Photomanipulation.

With tongue in cheek, I envisioned a huge hot shop. Beneath the gigantic chimney, the activity is centered around the glass blower who has just pulled a hot molten sphere from the furnace. The round orb he is shaping on the steel table is actually the interior of my eye. This element appears in many of my photomontages. The rabbi is there to make sure my eye, as a ritual object in my images, is being properly kashered.

Opposite Page: Kashering My Eye

Five Jodies

Opposite Page: Jodi in the Boiler Room

The city of Portland isn't just another city in another state – it's a whole different country. It's a big metropolis in a small package. It's a people-sized place where you can walk with ease from Forest Park to the banks of the Willamette River. It's a big town where garage bands are born and its residents – young and old – can unwind during pub walks, enjoy the arts on First Thursday, or visit the longest running market of its kind, the Saturday Market. And for the more adventurous, there are Zombie Walks, Naked Bike Rides, the ridiculously insane sport of Bike Jousting, and zoo-bombers who hurtle down Portland's steepest hills from the Oregon Zoo on tiny bikes, the smaller the better.

In Portland there are no indecent exposure laws prohibiting topless nudity, so if one is so inclined, she may stroll down Burnside Street – the city's demarcation between north and south – baring it all and there's a good chance that nonchalant bystanders won't even take a second glance. Who could possibly represent the vibrant drag queen mecca that Portland has become? My vote goes unequivocally to Darcelle XV – the Elder Statesperson of Drag Queens. I chose to depict Darcelle in a sweeping panorama – a complex photomontage that breaks the traditional frame that most viewers expect from photographers or their photographs. Darcelle is just too expansive, too unique, too joyously bizarre to be constrained in anything other than a broad canvas. Here you have her – one of Portland's most precious treasures, an entertainer who has performed over 50,000 shows and is still going strong at 86.

Darcelle XV

Homage to Fitzcarraldo

I first met filmmaker Ari Gold at an Alberta Street breakfast eatery. He was wearing bright orange coveralls and an electric blue hardhat. I commented on them across my Yukon Gold potato pancakes and spiked lemonade. He told me he was in town to promote "Adventures of Power," his 2008 homage to air-drumming that has become a cult classic, starring Ari in the title role, Michael McKean, Jane Lynch, Shoshannah Stern and Adrian Grenier. An official selection at the Sundance Film Festival, Ari's film won the Grand Prize at the San Antonio and Trimedia Colorado Film Festivals. This photomontage is an homage to another director, Werner Herzog.

Director With His Ingénue

That chance meeting with Ari led to my involvement in helping him generate audience interest for his film's premiere at a small jewel of a theater specializing in indie productions. It also led to an extended photo session with Ari and an enduring friendship. Since that fortuitous encounter, I've incorporated images of Ari into several of my photomontages. Here we have him on the imaginary set of his unnamed film noir. Jodi, one of my favorite models, clutches her little pug "Tuesday" as she eyes her director apprehensively. The set for this scene was built from elements I captured at Gladding McBean, now regrettably inaccessible to photographers.

Photography can be powerful therapy. After my wife Sharan died, I created "Cancer is Like Watching an Accident Happen," an image packed with symbolism. Sharan and her "service dog," Oz, stand in front of our house which I transplanted into the Hoh Forest on the Olympic Peninsula. The "Road Closed" barrier signifies the closing off of one therapeutic option after another. And if that sign were not enough, a road worker is seen sawing the road to symbolize that no successful therapy will "make it through to Sharan."

In the foreground, a dog has been struck by a motorcycle that had just run over Sharan's childhood teddy bear. Above this chaotic scene of utter disaster my ever-present eye observes helplessly. And yet, somehow, I did feel better after completing this photomontage. As I began to recover emotionally, the subject matter of my photomontages evolved and I returned to black and white imagery.

Cancer is Like Watching an Accident Happen

Cats are increasingly getting a bad rap. And some of their public relations challenges are well deserved. That lovable tabby may be soft and cuddly, but has been shaped by millions of years of evolution into one of nature's most efficient killers and one of the single greatest human-linked threats to wildlife. In my image, "Object of Desire," winner of a 2014 Monochrome Award in the category of Photo-manipulation, this feline companion clearly desires its mistress in very undesirable ways. Trapped in a fishbowl, mistress has become prey, the object of her pet's desire.

Opposite Page: Object of Desire

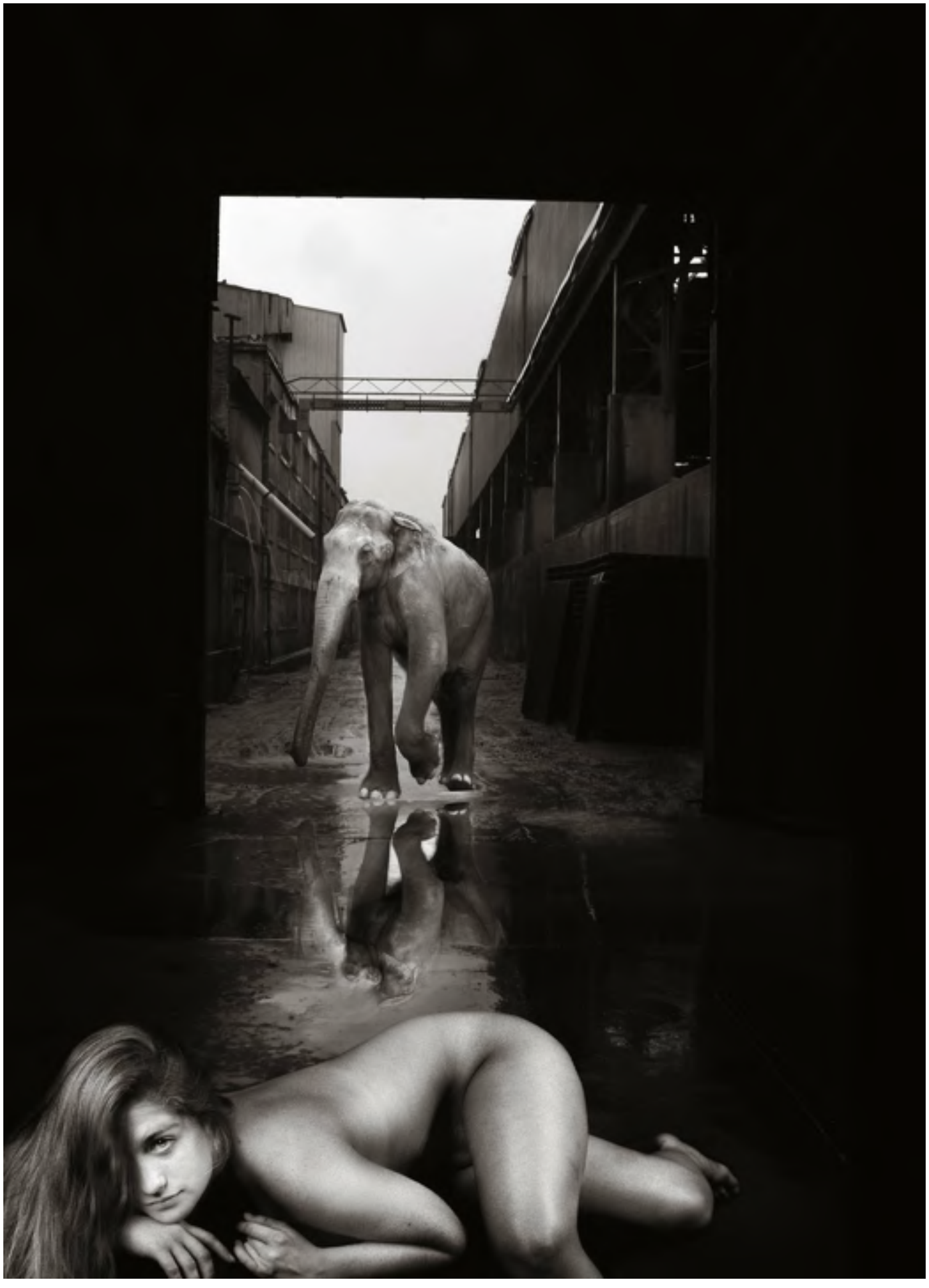
Honorable Mention, Photomanipulation,
Monochrome Awards, 2014

When I Die

Sharan once told me, "When I die, I want to go to Paris." In this scene, I have created the vehicle in which to transport her.

"What am I doing here?"

Sometimes, my photomontages are multi-layered, a photomontage within a photomontage.



In Search of His Eagle

In Search of His Eagle is my commentary on America in decline. With the election of Trump, this image has taken on even more significance. The seeker, dressed in symbolic feathers and hair to mimic the eagle's head, looks for the bird but does not see him, even though the bird's perch is clearly visible. The tree represents the United States, now half in decay.

Opposite Page: The Nude and the Elephant

The Elephant on Their Path

Roadside Cowboy

Village In Spain, 1964