

30 Years

It's hard to believe, thirty years of professional photography.

It also means a 30 year high school reunion in 2008.

I can still remember going to work for Mary Vlasik at Varden Studios in Vestal, NY, right after high school graduation. It was a good experience because I wanted to be a photographer and I had the opportunity to work in a studio.

My desire at the time, and even now, was to be a professional photographer. Taking photographs was my passion. Working in the studio I had the opportunity to learn portraiture, weddings, sports, school and prom photography. What I wasn't expecting was also to learn the "back room" stuff, the not so glamorous side to the profession. There were senior proofs to be mailed, finished senior packages to put together for the customer. There were phone calls to make and calls to answer. And of course there were sales consultations when customers walked in with their proofs.

Where I gained the most knowledge was working directly with Mary. She had me assist her in the camera room taking senior portraits and helping with family or wedding portraits. She was also grooming me to be a wedding photographer. (Pun intended) I enjoyed weddings and quickly learned her style of photographing them. When portraits or wedding proofs would come back from the lab, she would sit with me and critique the photographs, looking at the pose, the angle of the camera, the position of the hands or flowers, even the placement of the feet. We would discuss what was in the background and how it could be eliminated by moving the subject or moving the camera position. Mary was an excellent teacher and I learned a lot from her. I only worked that summer full time, but continued to work for Varden and its new manager, Joe Zell, for the next 25 or so years. Joe and I became good friends and worked a lot of jobs together.

Today, I work mostly on my own, photographing team sports, weddings, portraits and concerts for a radio station. I belong to the Southern Tier Professional Photographers of New York, inc. where I continue to expand my knowledge of photography. Each month we have a print critique to learn from others what can be done to improve our photography.

Photography has opened many doors for me, allowing me and my family to do things and go places I would not have imagined thirty years ago. One of the most memorable and important events was meeting my wife while photographing her sister's wedding. I look forward to many more years of photography and to see where it will take me. Maybe it will include serving you. Mark