

Aloha Classmates,

My interest in photography first showed itself when as a freshman I sought, through contrived and posed photos, to try and impress my friends "Back home again in Indiana" with the Dartmouth experience. Everything was shot on an Instamatic and then taken down to the camera shop on Main Street to be processed. Sophomore year I added our family's Super 8 movie camera to my arsenal and the rest, as they say, is hysteria!

During my junior or senior year, I saw the movie "Blow Up" at the Hop or was it at the Nugget theater on Main Street? Several of my friends caught the bug, bought a 35mm Nikon or Pentax and started creating artsy-fartsy B&W photos in the dark room. I continued to take snapshots with my Instamatic and home movies with my Super 8.

About a year after graduation, as Paul Simon sang, "I got a Nikon camera" started to shoot Kodachrome and moved out to Colorado.

Through some Dartmouth contacts I got hooked up with legendary ski filmmaker Roger Brown, '57, who let me tag along with his crew and do some still photography. What an amazing opportunity to simply be in the presence of and observe how a true visual artist plied his craft! And then through some other Dartmouth contacts, Clay Freeman, '58 and Rick Isaacson, '64, I found myself in the company of and taking photos of Jean-Claude Killy and Arthur Ashe. I've always told folks I started at the top and have been working my way down for the last 48 years.

When young folks, or anybody for that matter, asks me what the secret is to being a "successful" photographer, I answer with what's become my mantra, "It's all about light and relationships."

That statement is illustrated in the 15 images I've submitted. I first photographed Andre Agassi in 1974 when he was 4 years old and to this day I count he and his wife, Steffi Graf as very close friends. My interview in [Unexpected: 30 Years of Patagonia Catalog Photography](#) published in 2009 was a wonderful punctuation point to my years of being a professional photographer. Serendipitously meeting Yvon Chouinard and his wife Malinda bouldering outside of Las Vegas back in 1985 allowed me to create wacky, soulful, authentic, sometimes beautiful images for their iconic catalogs. And perhaps more importantly it allowed me to meet and create friendships with countless wild and wonderful funhog Patagonians around the world.

As I sit here on the Big Island of Hawaii, dictating this to my artist wife, Alexis (I never learned to type or use a computer), I thank God that somehow, I stumbled into photography and then found out that it was my true calling/vocation. It has been a vehicle to introduce me to more people and places than I could have ever imagined growing up as a simple Hoosier boy in Middle America. I am one grateful dude.

Mahalo i ke Akua! (Thanks be to God!)

John C Russell