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# Communication Arts



May/June 2004

Eight Dollars

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# Andy Anderson

## The Man From Lone River

Outside the plane window, at around 10,000 feet, the Idaho landscape appears like a Currier & Ives print: houses and trees bisected neatly by snowy quadrants. Forty-six miles east of Boise, in a landscape of high desert and snow-capped mountains, is the home base of photographer Andy Anderson.

People and places have their own distinctive voices,” says Anderson, who feels that this landscape of rugged terrain and tumbleweeds has chosen him. Mountain Home was the last post in his twenty-year career as an Air Force crash/rescue fire-fighter. Once known as Rattlesnake Station, and wisely renamed to be more attractive to settlers, Mountain Home may seem “Spartan to the layman, but it lets me breathe,” says Anderson. “The less there is, the more there is to me. I travel so much, when I come here I can just be myself.”

Anderson could be photography’s *Cinderella* story. Inspired by a John Huet photograph he found in a copy of *Communication Arts*, he was emboldened to become a photographer himself for his second career. Years later, Huet, moved by Anderson’s work, invited him to be one of twelve select photographers to document the Salt Lake City Olympics with access unprecedented since Leni Riefenstahl and the 1936 Berlin Summer Games. [See March/April 2002 for Matthew Porter’s feature on the XIX Olympic Winter Games, and the August 2003 Photography Annual, for a book review of *The Fire Within*, published by the Salt Lake Organizing Committee.]

He resists being identified as a photographer of masculine images, although he does capture nature, and man in nature in such an uncontrived fashion, that it’s impossible not to think of his landscapes, and those who people them, as anything but heroic. But, he can just as easily capture Julia “Butterfly” Hill, as radiant as a wood fairy in the midst of a towering forest of trees, much like the one she chose to call home for 738 days to protect it.

He is drawn to the things that formed America and made it great, and to the rugged iconoclastic individuals who are the heart and soul of this country. Places make an impact on him; he has trouble detaching—often revisiting favorite locales and

people—“I always come back to people that are remnants of days gone by. As we move into the new millennium and jobs are going away and becoming more digitized, it’s not the same as it used to be,” he says, lamenting the loss of true craft. “I want to celebrate that. I don’t want to demoralize that and make it feel less than it visually is, because almost in an obsessive way, I’m trying to capture this before it’s all gone.

“To be really good at photography, you have to be obsessed with it,” he claims. “Photography is a *craft* for me.”

Whether it’s a torero in Pamplona, an Idaho cowboy, or a fisherman in Maine, he is dedicated to honestly recording these voices. He cultivates characters and his portraits of these hard-working people are direct and sincere. No white seamless like Avedon, or careful poses, just direct engagement with his subjects, who often end up becoming his friends. Driving a loop around Mountain Home to show off its attributes, he waves at a truck full of cowboys, bringing their horses back at the end of a long day of branding. They pull over to say hello, and tell him where a friend he’s been looking for has been working. Their handsome yet dirty faces, well-worn hats and drooping mustaches appeal to Anderson, who regrets missing the opportunity to make a portrait of them.

He is moved by the paintings of the nineteenth-century German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich, who was described by his contemporary David d’Angers as the pioneer of a new genre: “the tragedy of landscape.” And indeed, landscape as icon is evident in Anderson’s photographs; landscape that is not prettied up, deserts with forbidding vistas and twisted fences, deep canyons with precipitous drops, sharp mountains against pale skies. He admires the paintings of Russell Chatham and Alfred Bierstadt, drawing more influence from landscape artists than other photographers.

Right: “Summertime, Fallen Leaf Lake. For a cover shoot for *Outside* magazine, creative director Hannah McCaughey had wanted to shoot a picture to celebrate summertime and the carefree attitude that it invoked. I had this idea in my head. Growing up in the South as a kid, this is what we did after fishing. The Lake Tahoe area is a grand place to shoot. The weather was fabulous and the light could not have been better. This ended up being Hannah’s all-time favorite cover.” Rob Haggart, photo editor.



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Anderson grew up in Orlando, Florida and, after high school, received a one-year scholarship in journalism at a local community college. While he enjoyed writing, he found it too difficult to consider as a career, and entered the Air Force at age 21. Not an unlikely career given that he describes his father as the Great Santini, a strict disciplinarian given to bouncing quarters off the bed to see if it'd been properly made. That drive toward perfectionism would come into play in his future career.



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“I started taking pictures when I was in the Air Force as a fire fighter, for magazines and things like that,” says Anderson. As he was nearing the end of his military career, one that had taken him to Honduras and Saudi Arabia among other hot spots, he began to photograph more seriously and worked on developing his business.

“I picked up a camera and I just started taking pictures of fishing, people... It was instantaneous. It just felt right to me,” Anderson explains.

During this period in the mid-'90s, Terry McDonnell, then the editor of *Men's Journal*, saw his work, flew out to Idaho and signed Anderson as *MJ*'s first staff photographer. “It was the biggest thing that'd ever happened to me in my life,” he says. He remained on contract at the magazine for three years.

This led to advertising assignments from Carmichael Lynch (Harley-Davidson), Mullen (Wachovia Bank), Red Cell (Nike) and editorial work for *Outside* among other magazines and the birth of Lone River Productions, where he has two full-time employees, office manager Maria Clark and assistant Todd Meier. He bought the 2,500 square-foot two-story wooden building in a small center on the outskirts of town in 2002. This cold January day, large flakes of snow drift down outside the impeccably organized studio where a wall of file cabinets is neatly labeled with project names and descriptions. Anderson renovated the rooms himself, with their forest green beams and floors. Antique cases hold his vintage camera collection, cameras that aren't just for show; he delights in using them on assignment and scours eBay for new finds. Occasionally he sends one as a gift to an art director he likes, or he will go on a road trip with a favorite art director, shooting purely for personal pleasure. Antique trunks, a comfortable rocking chair and framed photographs create a homey atmosphere. While the studio boasts modern equipment, including an Epson Stylus Pro 7600, and several computers, it exudes an

old-time charm with its warm wood furniture and the open vistas outside the curtainless windows.

He has a large well-appointed darkroom where he prints to his exacting specifications late at night or on the weekends, so as not to deprive his family of his company. He works minutes from the gracious home he shares with Shelley, his wife of 25 years and their three children, Haley, 16, Zachary, 14 and Gabriel, 12. “My wife, she's the best,” he says with great warmth in his voice. “She doesn't really care about the advertising business because it's not in her world, she just knows what my passion is and wants me to be happy, which is the purest form of love you can find.”

Anderson's work relationships are as long-term as his personal ones, he has worked almost exclusively with producer Lynda Ashley for years, and has been with San Francisco-based rep Heather Elder for five years. “Andy has made such wonderful friendships along the way,” says Elder. “His passion for his work is only paralleled by his genuine interest in the people he works with. He is wonderful at getting to know people and keeping in touch. And for Andy, it is not about getting more work, but instead, sharing ideas, being inspired and staying friends.”

Deadlines are not a problem for Anderson. “I was in the Air Force. When somebody said to get it done, you just *did* it. No B.S. about it!” It's his vision, work ethic and generous spirit that has drawn clients back to Anderson's work.

Jeff Martin, creative director at Denver, Colorado, agency McClain Finlon Advertising, says, “From my point of view, Andy is a constant in a not so constant environment. I shot my first job with him almost ten years ago, on a weekend, because he was still in the Air Force at the time. While his

Right: “I traveled to Central Texas to photograph **Josh Beckett** at his ranch just before he went off to the spring training for the Marlins. John had asked me to take a picture of Josh in his natural environment. We drove around Josh's large ranch in his pickup truck, so I could find a place to photograph him. Don't tell John, but we threw a few balls. Not only is he an amazing pitcher, but an equally great person.” Henry Lee, art director; John Toolan, deputy photo editor; ESPN The Magazine, client.

“**Picador's Horse**. While in Pamplona shooting personal work on toreros during San Fermin, I was able to get access to the Patio de Caballos where chaos is always the common thread. There is a tunnel that leads to the Plaza de Toros where the toreros and picadors are awaiting the drum beats to signal their next movement. In this tunnel was this magnificent animal standing very proud and courageous. The colors of the blanket and scarf that covered its eyes were so beautiful. A lot of things were going through my mind almost in a stream of consciousness. The noise was deafening, and people were bumping up against me and all I could think was did this horse know what was about to happen. I think it truly did. If you have ever been to a Spanish bullfight, you will know what I mean.”

“This image was shot for a feature story for ESPN on **John Howell**, a football player for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Howell lives in Mullen, Nebraska, and I wanted to illustrate where he lives in the off season. It was freezing cold when I shot this and a snowstorm was about to cover me with snow.” John Toolan, deputy photo editor; ESPN The Magazine, client.



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style has changed over the years, his ability to capture an honest, timeless image hasn't.

"On top of a lot of talent is a drive that reassures me everything is going to turn out great. The confidence he has in himself to deliver 'the goods' is infectious, and soothes a lot of nervous souls hanging around the shoot."

"Andy inspires me," concurs Ray Fessenmeier, creative director at Carmichael Lynch. "His passion and dedication to his art is

only surpassed by his love for family and friends. And while success can breed inflated ego and self-promotion, Andy remains humble and genuine. His images speak for themselves as do the smiles from the people he meets."

A decade later, Anderson remains content with his second career, happy to celebrate the changing beauty and life of the landscape he has chosen as his home and ever eager to find new places and subjects to paint with his cameras. **CA**

Above: "**Sideshow Series.** While traveling in the deep South working on a personal project about people and places of romantic wanderings, I was able to make friends with some traveling circus people. I wanted to photograph the last traveling sideshow in America. My goal was to celebrate these and other people who have made this country so great."

"**Pete Terhune, a.k.a. 'Poopah,'** a midget clown who has worked in the sideshow for 52 years and is now 74-years-old. His outfit was extraordinary to say the least. The craftsmanship was flawless; he said it was crafted in Europe in the late '40s. It was one of many suits he wore throughout his career, but this was his favorite. The colors were very different and muted." Bella Tallulah Picture Company, retoucher.

"**Manuel Malera, a.k.a. 'Cha-Cha the Clown.'** He told me that his whole life he always wanted to be a clown in a circus; he came to America from Venezuela. This is his passion and he can think of no other life he could enjoy. There is an old Irish prayer and a part of it says 'take time to laugh, it's the music of the soul.' For me it's not about getting and taking pictures, but of receiving something much more fulfilling. Right on Cha-Cha, life is truly grand for you and me!"

"**Bruce Snowdon a.k.a. 'Howard Huge.'** He had traveled with the Ward Hall Shows for 26 years. These vintage backdrops were all hand-painted on canvas. He said those years were so fulfilling for him and that sideshow people are often misread as misfits. He said that was so not true; that he chose this life and loved his life as a performer. These pictures kind of remind me of days gone by." Bella Tallulah Picture Company, retoucher.

Right: **California Coast**, one image from a six-shot print campaign. Headline: What can handlebars tell us about financial partners? "Bill and I had already traveled about 1,500 miles shooting locations for the other ads. We had very little time because this was taken on Highway 1 and traffic control was limited to only about five minutes. My assistants and I would run onto the highway and place the 8 x 10 camera on pre-taped marks on the

road and at the same time move the bike into position and take a few sheets before having to clear the road." Bill Starkey, art director; Denzel Strickland, creative director; Mullen/LHC, ad agency; Wachovia Banks, client.

"**Julia Butterfly Hill.** No words to describe her other than simply stunning. Julia and I met in San Francisco for the shoot. She had just returned from Bolivia a day before, after being deported for protesting against an American mining company that was polluting there. The idea I had was to take a picture of her as this iconic guardian of the forests. The stylist and I picked out a dress made of linen. Julia was resisting the dress and the idea, but after explaining I had nothing to gain by depicting her as other than this beautiful spiritual person she agreed. Julia later wrote me saying how special this picture made her feel." Rob Haggart, photo editor; Hannah McCaughey, creative director; Outside magazine, client.

"This image was shot for the **Blue Cross Blue Shield/True Blue Campaign.** Headline: True Blue. Integrity Matters. The art director and creative director wanted to photograph people in everyday situations in and around the Washington area. One item that was a constant in the campaign was a hint of blue in each of the twelve images. We wanted to make sure the shade we selected did not compete with the portrait." Bob Petkofsky, art director; Craig Coughlin, creative director; Lot 44, retoucher; Arnold Worldwide/Washington, ad agency.

"**Brooks Lake, Wyoming.** This is one of those pictures that is never planned and that I was lucky enough to get. This location was selected for a five-shot Johnston & Murphy print campaign. It is especially wonderful for its quality of light in the fall. I was standing in the lake with my waders on and my 8 x 10 and I turned around and saw this graphic of water, light and trees. Kevin and I said nothing, but rushed frantically to move the canoe with the help of my assistants to this spot on the shore before the light left." Kevin Hinson, creative director; Bohan, ad agency.





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Left: "**Lost River Range, Idaho.** This was shot during one of our very bad fire seasons one fall. After watching the weather I saw we were going to get a fall storm. We met the guide, positioned him in the river, shot four sheets of film and the light went flat. The orange surreal light was the sun filtering through the fires." Dale Lantz, creative director; Horton Lantz & Low, ad agency; Sage Fly Rods, client.

"Unpublished image for a **feature story on Dean Potter**, who spends his summers in Yosemite climbing. I love his free spirit and great sense of adventure. This shot was taken on a climb named 'The Rostrom' overlooking the valley below where he was camping. My assistant and I had to portage my 8 × 10 camera over very large rocks in order to get this vantage point." Rob Haggart, photo editor; Hannah McCaughey, creative director; Outside magazine, client.

This page: "**Winter Olympics 2002.** This picture was special for me as it was the day Eric Bergoust (USA) won the gold for the aerials competition. The kind of iconic nature of the jump I love also. This was shot with a handheld 4 × 5 camera." Ron Stucki, art director; Libby Hyland, creative director; Pauline Ploquin, photo editor; SLOC commemorative book, The Fire Within, client.

**Print ad for Simms Fishing Products.** Headline: Needs: Microfiber hat. Bungalow shirt. Skiff shorts. Airlines to go on strike. "I love this picture because the person sitting in the boat is an old guide I have fished with personally on Andros Island for about ten-plus years. His name is Wellington Markay, he always has a pleasant smile and a great joke to tell. And, yes, the skiff is something Welli actually fishes with." Jim O'Brien, art director; Jim Hagar, creative director; Mullen, ad agency.

