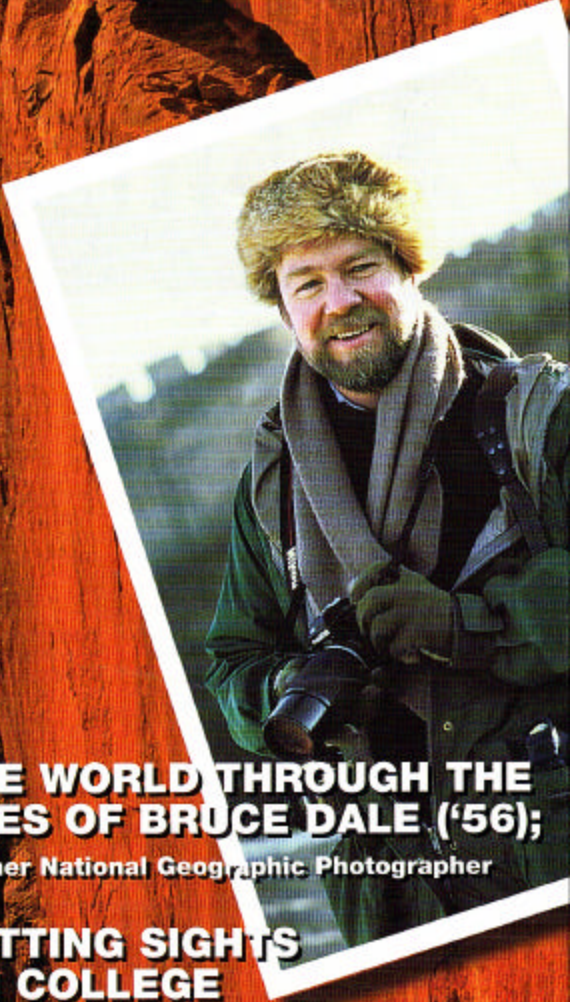


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THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF BRUCE DALE ('56);
Former National Geographic Photographer

SETTING SIGHTS ON COLLEGE
Planning for Life After High School



Seeing

"I do think that the journeys my work has taken me on has strengthened my faith in people... At times you find that you really have to rely on other people and in the end, you find that most people are essentially good by nature"

Photographer Bruce Dale has the look of an explorer and the eyes of an artist, a combination Indiana Jones adventurer and Ansel Adams imagist. Having been chased by an alligator in the Okefenokee swamp; having slept with frozen wolves in the Yukon; having dangled from an airplane over the Panama Canal; and having been held at machine gun point at a Bulgarian gypsy funeral, Bruce Dale has the air of a man who has spent a lifetime roughing it through world travels and escaping close calls.

Yet, when Bruce Dale speaks, there is a sense of calm, a centeredness that must reassure in tense situations. When he talks, his eyes sparkle with a distant gaze blue at the horizon as they focus on the sometimes long ago and the somewhat faraway, often recalling encounters in distant lands and the fleeting friendships that once accompanied them. For ultimately, Bruce Dale's life and career has been first and foremost about people, be they the subjects of his photographs or the acquaintances, colleagues and friends that have made the corner of the world where he has pitched his tent someplace special, someplace worth capturing.

"I do think that the journeys my work has taken me on has strengthened my faith in people," says Dale, his soft-spoken manner and engaging storytelling demeanor belying the leather-jacketed maverick with a camera that has won numerous awards and was one of National Geographic's crackerjack photographers for three decades. "At times you find that you have to really rely on other people and in the end, you find that most people are essentially good by nature."

Spanning over 30 years and 75 countries that translated into some 50 articles, Bruce Dale won two Magazine Photographer of the Year awards by the National Press Photographers Association and the 1989 White House "Photographer of the Year" title. He was once referred to in *The Washington Post* as "a jewel in the crown of the *National Geographic*" and one of his photographs now journeys beyond the solar system on board NASA's Voyager Spacecraft.

In addition, he has endeavored into vari-

People as they See Themselves

Bruce Dale Discovers We Truly Are A Global Family

by Matt Weiland

ous technical and special effects-style photography, orchestrating elaborate pictures in which it sometimes take days to adequately capture an image. He worked with pulsed laser photography to help produce a hologram of an exploding crystal ball painted as planet earth for *National Geographic's* 100th anniversary cover. And for a story on air safety, he mounted two cameras on the tail of a Lockheed TriStar jumbo jet, capturing spectacular views of the immense jet in flight.

But where Bruce Dale truly shines is in his pictures of people. His day-to-day images of children and parents — be they a Chinese family riding a bike or Eastern European gypsy children pushing a wheelbarrow or a toddling boy in Nepal watching a hockey game in 30-below zero weather — all radiate a universal warmth, a connection of smiles and souls that reinforce the notion of world as village, people as neighbors.

"I try to photograph people through their own eyes," says Dale with a genuine sense of compassion for his subject matter. "I try to capture people as they see themselves." Toward that end, he has published two books of photographs and exposés, one entitled *Gypsies* and one *American Mountain People*, both offering sensitive insights into the lives and terrains of these peoples and both of which are considered among the finest books published by the *National Geographic Society*. He also produced a 30-minute documentary slide show on *Mountain People* that was translated into Chinese for use in Asia. Among his other *National Geographic* books include his work *Journey Across China*, *The Soviet Union Today*, *Images of the Worlds* and *The Photographs*.

More recently over the past few years, Dale's camera and attention has been drawn to the John Wesley Powell west, photographing the mountains and gullies and ranges of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Arizona that were first discovered by the eccentric explorer, examining Powell's life from childhood in Ohio through death in a coastal Maine cottage. For the exposé, Dale traced Powell's footprints to Shiloh, where the explorer lost an arm in the Civil War battle waged there, then on through the western land first explored by Powell. Through extensive research, Dale was able to pinpoint one of Powell's favorite spots where he took the artist Thomas Moran to capture the famous "Chasm of the Colorado" painting, hiking for two days along the North Rim to reach the site at Powell Plateau and Dutton Point.

"Serendipity — making fortunate discoveries while on any kind of assignment anywhere — is an important part of my successful pictures wherever I travel," says Dale. "I look for these types of discoveries in Canton, China, in Canonicito, New Mexico, or even in my own backyard. These are the types of photographs I can't possibly visualize in advance, but ones I hope for and am always ready for."

Growing up in the Lakewood and West Park areas, Dale credits St. Edward teachers with not only providing him with his initial — *ahem* — "exposure" to photography, but with also providing him a sense of possibility and mission. "I still recall the tremendous impact that Br. Francisco Drury had on me," says Dale. "He taught art and English and he not only instilled a sense of appreciation within me, but also a

sense that I too could follow an artistic path. He was very encouraging to me in that way and that type of reinforcement at such a pivotal age can make all the difference in the world."

Dale worked through high school at several studios and camera stores. Most notably, however, he had over 50 pictures published in the *Cleveland Press* and *Plain Dealer* — from high school football games to fires — by the time he graduated. "There were times when the newspapers used my photos over their own staff photographers," says Dale, "though they were only paying me around \$10-\$25 per photo."

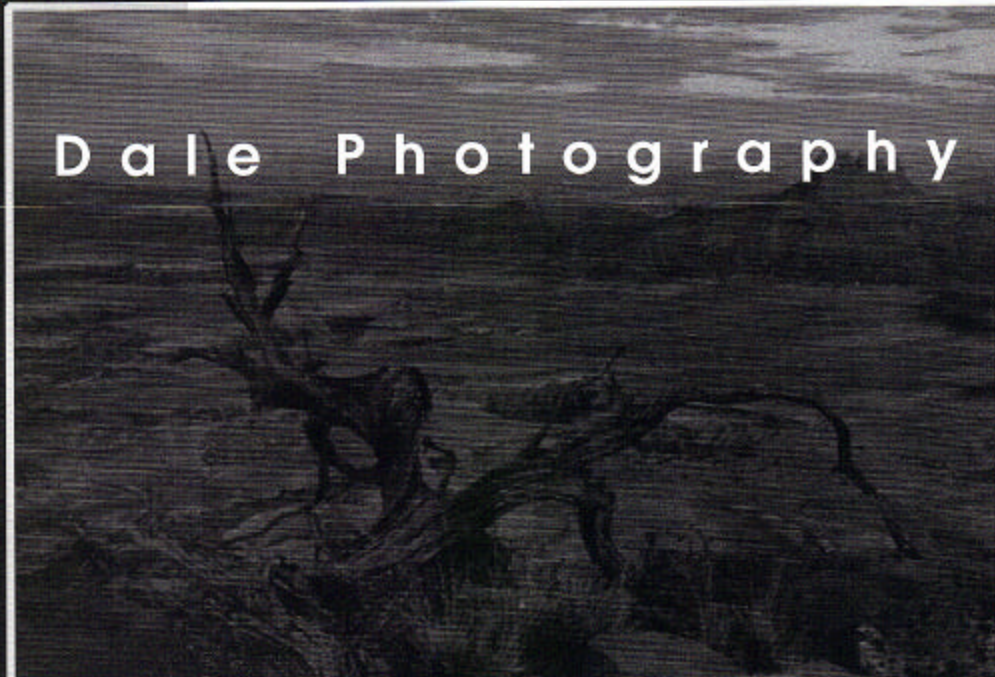
After graduation he worked at the Cleveland Clinic Hospital for a year as a medical photographer gaining "a good background in color photography" before heading off to the *Toledo Blade*, where he worked for seven years. During that time he attended photography seminars at renowned journalism schools such as the University of Missouri and Syracuse University, returning as an instructor later in life. And he doesn't spend his summers idle either, having taught at such seminars as the Maine Photographic Workshop, New York's International Center of Photography, Summer Vail, Colorado and the Palm Beach Workshop in Florida, all the while cultivating an affinity for teaching that channels his appreciation of people into a tutor and mentorship-sort of role.

At *National Geographic*, Dale found that he had carte blanche creatively and a sense of pioneer autonomy when it came to logistics. "We were given assignments and then it was up to us to take care of everything from air travel to translators," he says.



Geronimo's spirit lives on in Robert Geronimo who has fought countless brawls defending the family name. "Everybody wants to say he fought Geronimo," sighed the 61 year old former rodeo cowboy. "I guess I'm just taking after the footsteps."

Bruce Dale Photography



A trio of English Gypsy children fetch water for their camp while tending their baby sister.





This Han Chinese family from the crowded east has been relocated to the Taklamakan Desert in northwestern China, to help swell the population in a sensitive area near the Soviet Border.

“ I try to photograph people

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themselves.”

Photographed as a baby on his grandfather's knee, Edward Trujillo, 77, sits atop the remains of his grandparent's home in deserted Guadalupe, New Mexico. He recalls his grandfather's tales of Billy the Kid. Edward maintains the church, built by his great-grandfather.

PORTFOLIO

"The trips themselves can be very stressful, somewhat like a plane crash. You're glad you survived it and it will always make a great story, but you don't necessarily want to do it again. Then, there are other times when you've had the best experience of your life."

As one of the first journalists allowed into China following President Nixon's normalization with the communist nation in the early 1970s, Dale had his fair share of political obstacles to cross as well. Since a man with a camera always attracts attention — if not outright suspicion — he was always on his guard. "Most often, your life on the road becomes a combination of response, reaction and improvisation," says Dale. "You may get clearance from the main government in Beijing to travel and take pictures, but that holds little water when you get into provinces and villages where there's a whole new hierarchy of power and you've got to deal with each tier."

Fairly fluent in French and able to understand Chinese, Dale managed fairly well while in China, despite constant surveillance and even wire-tapping. "One time I was doing a piece on China railroads with writer Paul Theroux and as I was talking on the phone with my editor, an operator chimed in and said, 'Excuse me, can you slow down? I have to change the tape.'"

The anecdotes, however, are not always so charming. "The camera gives you the illusion of a wall, such as in combat," says Dale. "So you have to be careful in real situations because you feel somewhat insulated by the lens. It's a combination of instinct and intuition with response and reaction. Being able to sense when people object to having you photograph a scene or an individual."

Some of his most harrowing experiences, however, did not come from such incidents as the band of gypsies holding him at gun point in Bulgaria nor the threats of local bureaucracies in communist China. Rather, they came on the journeys themselves, particularly the short commuter flights piloted by men with questionable credentials.

"We're flying a short jaunt from Ouagadougou to Timbuktu in Africa — roughly about the distance from Cleveland to Akron — and the horizon was a wall of darkness on which a storm was raging and which caused the plane to hover above the treetops for the duration of the flight. And our pilot spoke little English and we had no radio contact. Those are the times you wonder if you'll ever see another sunrise."

"On another shoot in Alaska I was photographing a trapper," he continues. "We were similarly hit by a snow storm on a short excursion flight, and again you're not sure who your pilot is or where he's gotten his license and it's like, take a left and follow

the river toward a safe landing; take a right and hit a 10 million pound mountain."

"Then there was the helicopter ride in Panama," he continues. "I was sitting in a doorway when a pocket of turbulence turned the helicopter upside down, leaving me holding onto the entrance to keep from falling out."

Yet another time he was working with Jaws novelist and friend Peter Benchley in the Bahamas and they needed to get from one island to the other before a hurricane landed. "Benchley was afraid of flying and I got sea sick riding on the boat of our friend Teddy Tucker (on whom Robert Shaw's shark-hunting character in the film is based) and yet we needed to get to the island so we flipped a coin. Benchley won and I, of course, did indeed get sea sick."

Considering his work and travels in the far-reaching corners of Asia, Europe and Africa, it is somewhat surprising that the Boston Mountain in Arkansas' Ozarks is the spot that gives Bruce Dale's eyes a glint of warmth when he speaks, the place that he has most enjoyed and which has touched him the deepest.

Having done the book on the mountain people of Appalachia, the Ozarks, the Rockies and the Sierras, he cites the special affinity he felt with the people of the regions and was touched by their genuineness and sincerity. "Ideally I'd like to do three months of exposé work like that, three months of commercial work a year, three months of workshops, and three months making and restoring furniture," says Dale, himself a resident of Washington, D.C. since 1964. "The mountain people that I covered were some of the nicest people I ever met and I can't really pinpoint why that touched me in such a special way. But in the end, it's always people who become friends that make places special."



All photographs in this story were taken by Bruce Dale and are property of Bruce Dale Photography

