

FIFTY:REVISITED

JOE LIPKA

IMPORTANT BUTTON



Foreword

“Dad, what’s your favorite photograph?” An innocent question asked by my daughters last winter. “I don’t know,” I answered, “I have lots of favorites”. But, that question did start me thinking. I didn’t think too long, because I would have had to make a very tough choice to come up with just one photograph. Despite my initial refusal to answer immediately, a subliminal seed had been planted. Like all good seeds germination takes time and the proper set of conditions.

Early this year, I started thinking about the milestone of turning fifty. At this point in my life, it seems natural to take stock of what’s been done so far and ponder what’s yet to do. In photographic terms, my best efforts so far are on this Compact Disc. Over the past thirty years photography has played an important and satisfying role in my life. I have seen many beautiful things, and met many wonderful people (like you) along the way. This document is a record of my photographic wanderings. If you recognize some place or something pictured here, you know you were there to help me understand what it means to be a photographer.

Consider this Disc the invitation to the opening of my mid career retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. (Like most photographers, I will not have any show at MOMA, because I am in that awkward state of my career; alive, but not this year’s media darling.) Finish reading the forward, get yourself a glass of inexpensive white wine, a few blocks of cheddar cheese (fancy toothpicks are optional) and some crackers. Come back, read the introduction and have your own little opening party right in front of the computer. Oh, yes, and please try to keep the crumbs out of the keyboard.

August, 2001













































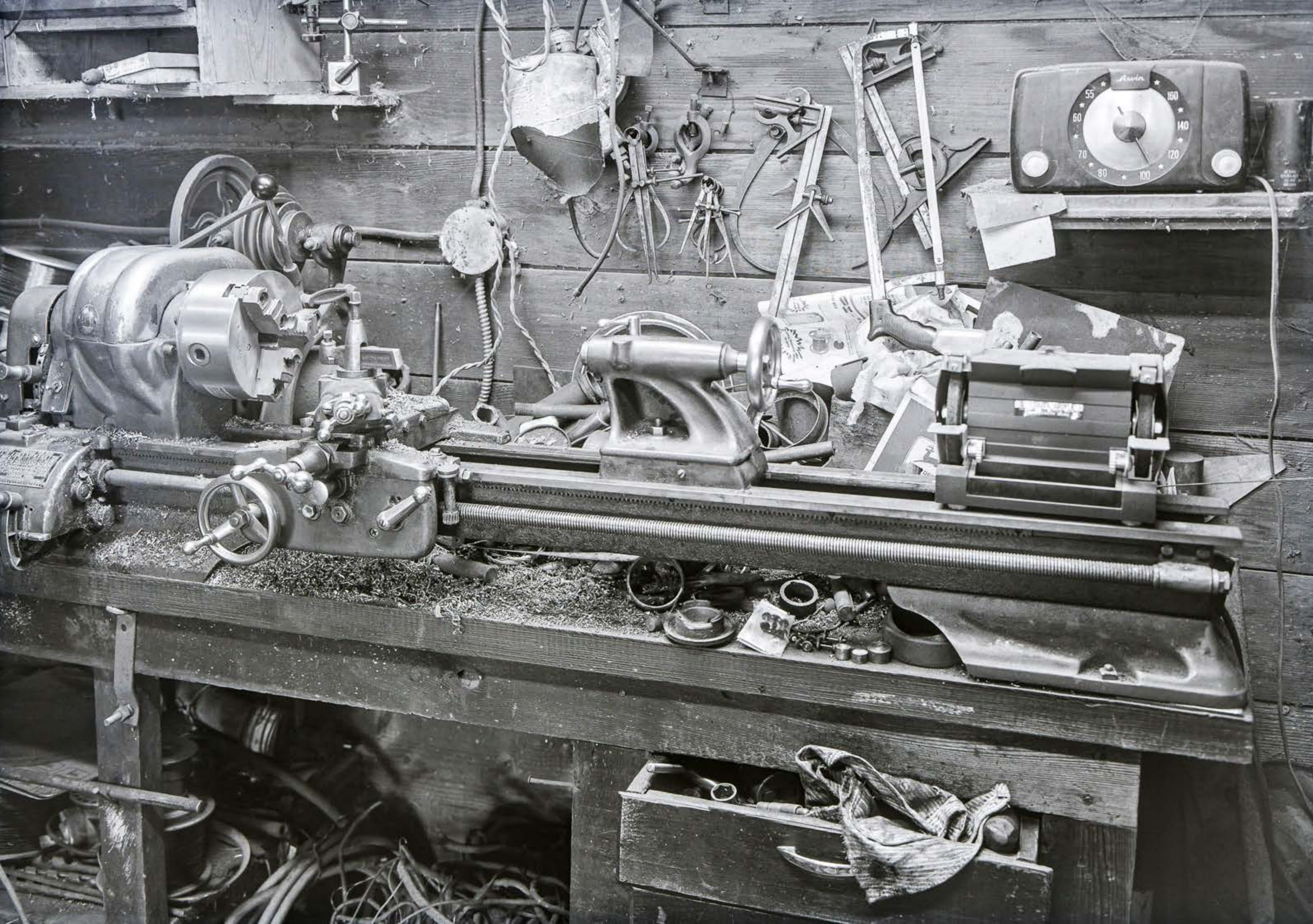








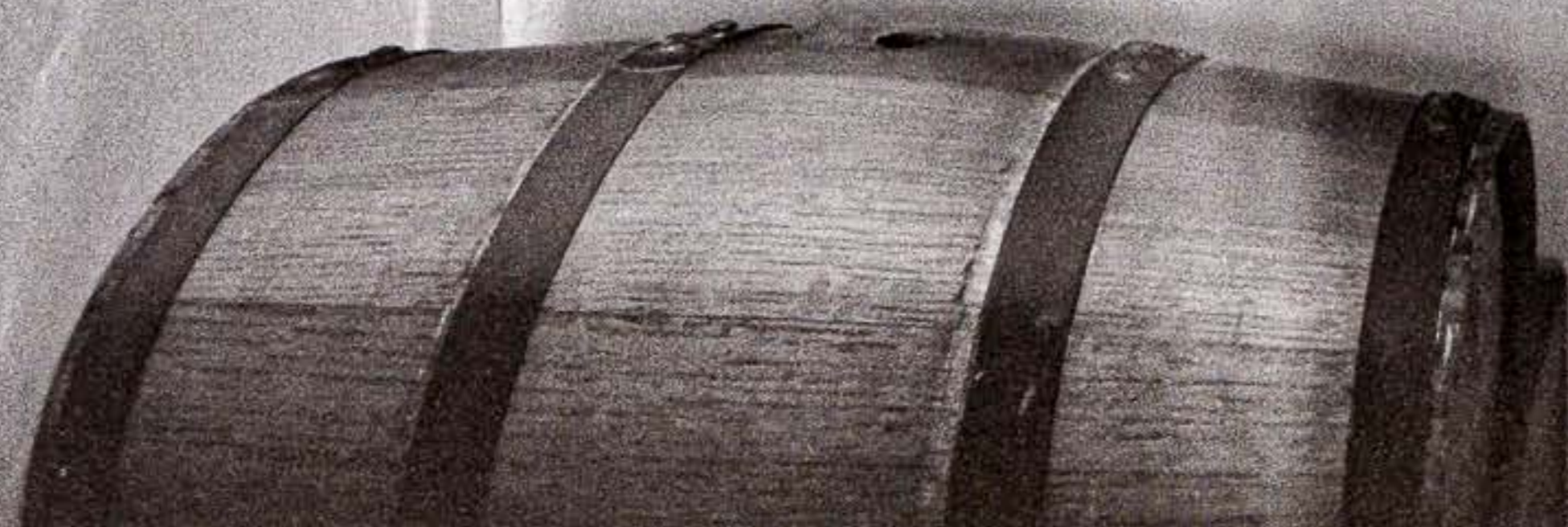








Wellington
The Cable Company
Chicago





by the hill. The frog leaped a
under the water. But his tail
the witch's arm across the pool
and looked out before a young
with him for him. "I have
feels. Then he gave a loud
cool dropped from his mouth
With a cry of joy the
pale soul in dry leaves and
he ran the leaves began to
drop them until he reached
Then above the burning leaves
twigs of the tree, and soon
were dancing before the eyes of
they sang. they shouted
pleased were they with the
Nor did the Indians forget them
The little Indian boys were
how the wolf and the deer and
get fire, and how, at the same
his red breast and the frog lost



A BOY'S SONG
Where the pools are bright and deep,
Where the gray trout lies asleep,
Up the river, and o'er the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me,
Where the blackbird sings the latest,
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest,
Where the nestlings chirp and flee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

































On Selecting the Best

How rare is a great photograph? With the almost limitless number of factors that influence the outcome of a photograph, it is a wonder that good photographs exist. Consider the variables involved in making any photograph. Timing is everything: remember f/8 and be there? Photographers must make the correct exposure at a precise instant, or the image is lost forever. In the real world, everything happens only once (often too quickly). There is no instant replay in life. This is even true in photographing the landscape. Despite protestations from the uninitiated, the decisive moment also exists in landscape photography. Once you place yourself in the right place at the right time (the real secret of photography – now you know) then we must run the gauntlet of the mechanical demons. Precise focusing, and a steady hand at exposure are necessary for a good negative. The gods of chemistry must likewise be appeased so that the negative can be processed without calamity. We must beseech a separate set of gods for the safe production of a print. Thank heavens that a mis-cut window mat can be thrown away without destroying the photograph. With all the processes and handling errors possible in going from the field to the finished photograph, it is little wonder that any good photographs exist at all.

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On Selecting the Best

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Two well-known observations on photography attributed to Ansel Adams are “Any photographer worth his salt should have ten thousand bad negatives” and “A good photographer can produce one good image per year”. Ignoring both dictums, I waded through eight thousand or so negatives, proofs and prints to select my best photographs. I recognize my deficiency in the quantity of bad negatives, and the (overstated?) optimism in the number of good photographs I have made. Recklessly disregarding the dictates of St. Ansel, I boldly selected about one hundred images that were important to me. Proudly displaying my efforts at a family gathering, my wife and daughters “suggested” they were better suited than I to make the final selection. After an evening’s review of wall-to-wall photographs, the final selection was complete. We had very few disagreements on the selection of images included in this publication.

After assembling this selection of photographs, the answer to the question “How rare is a good photograph?” finally came to me. I look back on the work included for this collection of images, and cumulatively, they account for no more than ten seconds exposed film over the thirty years. Good photographs are that rare.

August, 2001



Technical Notes

“For Technical Data – the camera was faithfully used.”

- Minor White

The cameras were a Canon F-1, a Wista Field 45, or a Conley 5 x 7 (a camera of indeterminate age and uncertain pedigree). When the Conley was finally retired, I purchased an increasing back for the Wista to allow it to accomodate 5 x 7 film. Lenses were Canon (for the 35 mm) or Fuji Large Format. Except for the Conley. I think the best description for the Conley lens is “old.”

Digitizing the images was originally done from silver gelatin prints on a flatbed scanner. Images in this publication were created by photographing the original negatives with a digital camera and then perfecting the files in Adobe Lightroom CC2020. Adobe InDesign was used to create the document.

Joe Lipka has shared his vision since he began photographing.



In the last thirty years, his photographs have appeared in over one hundred juried exhibitions, more than twenty solo exhibitions and have been printed in both *LensWork* and *Black & White Photography* (UK) Magazines.

His website www.joelipkaphoto.com has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog *Postcards from the Creative Journey*, published weekly since 2010, feature a photograph and a little bit of writing.

His newest blog, *The Daily Photograph*, is simply that. A new and interesting image posted every morning at 8:00 AM.

COLOPHON

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Joe Lipka

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Web site: www.joelipkaphoto.com

Blog: <http://blog.joelipkaphoto.com/>

Blog: https://joelipkaphoto.typepad.com/the_daily_photograph/

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