

HIDDEN LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Interview Q&A

Why a photobook and why now?

I love photography and story telling and like many others, have not been able to travel this past year. So, I put my energies into creating a photo collection that I could share with others who are craving adventure, but, are limited due to the pandemic. I began researching the stories behind some of my favorite photos and hit gold. I couldn't believe the rich history I rediscovered in the book. When I began to share what I found with family and friends, I realized the stories were compelling to a wide group of people and the book was born.

How did a career in IT prepare you as a storyteller and author?

I come from a long line of gifted story tellers and was captivated by their stories as a child. I learned the craft along the way and found story telling was critical in business. The tech world is very abstract, especially when you are trying to explain a complex process or function to a non-tech audience. Empathy is a key component to story telling and I found it helped me make my message more relatable in the boardroom and on the written page.

Where did you get the inspiration for this book?

Inspiration came little by little over 15 years. When I visiting famous and not so famous places, I collected historical tidbit and observations here and there. These tidbits left me curious. While visiting a shipyard in Southern Ireland I came across hull of the last Irish wooden hull trading ship, the Illen that was being restored. It spent decades in service in the Faulklands. I wondered; how did this Irish boat end up in the Faulklands? The truth behind these questions is always more interesting I could imagine. In this case, the ship was built by Connor O'Brien who was one of the most fascinating men of his time. The book is filled with dozens of stories like that. I found lots of heroes and villains in my research and shared them in the book.

What other stories are in the book?

There are tons of stories. There is the story of Montbars the Exterminator, one of the most fearsome pirates of his day. He was said to have buried his treasure along one of the most beautiful beaches in the world which made for a great arial photo. One of my favorites, I did a helicopter photoshoot over Jerusalem and

HIDDEN LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Interview Q&A

walked away with a couple of incredible stories about the sacking of Herod's Temple and the origin of the city. I was on an old banana plantation in Puerto Rico and came across this abandoned airfield. After I did a little research, I found it was built by one of the world's first female aviators, Clara Livingston. She was smart, daring and way ahead of her time. The book is filled with beautiful pictures and stories like that.

How do you prepare for a photoshoot?

Preparation isn't everything and the world is unpredictable. You never know if the weather will cooperate during your scheduled photoshoot and you need to be flexible. I got some great shots at dawn of the Matterhorn and was able to capture the Rothorn, the spectacular orange-tinted mountain side view that is only available with clear skies and the right atmospheric conditions. I was in Bruges during spring and captured this beautiful field of white and yellow daffodils in front of this old monastery with an incredible backstory. Sometimes, it doesn't work out. I planned a shoot at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, and it was so foggy you could barely see in front of your face. After two days, we ran out of time and had to move on.

What is your process when you visit a new place? How do you find these stories?

No matter how much you research and prepare, sometimes the best stories come from the locals. We were shooting in Rome and had a chance to take a special tour of the Vatican. Our guide told us about how the Church raised the money for St. Peter's Basilica, and I remember standing in the naïve in complete wonder. It was so beautiful, but was it worth the price?

Why are these stories important?

History is important. The truth is important. The history I was taught growing up in school left out some important truths. I re-discovered many of these truths along the way and it has altered my perception of the world. I think many of the stories in this book help remind us of the good and not-so-good history that we all share. While we can't change the past, knowing the truth can help us live in the present with empathy.

HIDDEN LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Interview Q&A

What was the most shocking story you found researching the book?

Both my parent's families came from Greece. My dad emigrated as a teenager. My mom's family has been in the US for 3 generations. Both their families were from Sparta. Spartan soldiers were known for their valor, a trait that still resonates today. My parents were proud of their Spartan ancestry. They were both tough in their own way – some of which came from the value they placed in their ancestry. When I researched the truth behind Spartan valor, I was totally shocked.

What are the key traits needed to bring stories to life?

It is tough to be an author today. The market is crowded. Thousands of new books are released each week and people have less and less time to read. Being a good storyteller is probably not enough. I really try hard to be an empathetic writer, not just telling stories that connect, but, doing so as efficiently as possible.