

I first met Bob Koropp in his lower downtown studio, before it was called LoDo. Back in the mid-seventies that was the low rent district. After an appointment with an architect across the street, I was drawn into Bob's studio by the huge abstract photograph in his front window. Bob greeted me like an old friend, and we have been friends ever since.

I was amazed how anyone could make a living at photography while displaying the creativity I saw on the walls of Bob's studio. I was eking out a living making and selling fine art prints during the week and slinging meat in a warehouse on weekends. Whenever I dropped in, there would be something new and exciting. Even though we were sort of competitors, we openly compared notes and I remember hearing "That's neat!" quite often.

I left fine arts photography behind in the early 80's in pursuit of a regular paycheck. For twelve long years, I wanted to return to photography someday...and one lucky day my employer made that decision for me. April 1, that's right, April Fool's Day and also my employer's birthday. I'm convinced that I got more out the gift than she did!

What a day to contemplate the "first day of my new career". With two middle school age kids at home, a wife with a new job, self-pay medical insurance, and a final paycheck that barely covered the house payment, things weren't looking too good for our hero. Most of us have been there at least once, right?

Things were pretty bleak when I sought Bob's advice. I think his first comment was, "That's neat!" Bob also suggested I join ASMP so I could learn more about the business aspects of photography. Being the savvy businessman (ie. enticed by the \$75 photo lab gift certificate), I scraped together the initiation fee, joined ASMP and began meeting other photographers who gladly shared their experience with me. Photography can be a damned lonely business and ASMP helped replace that camaraderie I lost when I left behind that office full of people. Gradually, my photography and business skills increased, followed by enough money to make ends meet and then profits! Whew! I had made it!

Life is good now. Every year I seem to get more referrals through ASMP. I continue to learn a great deal from other members and I try to give something back. Serving as the chapter president isn't easy and it takes up lots of time, but I'm not just in this business for the money. Even though a guy with a well-managed lawn mowing business probably makes as much money as I do, this job beats the hell out of working for someone who takes 85% of what I produce.

By the way, if you never met Bob Koropp, you should. He's a Life member of ASMP. Forty years. The last time Bob and I discussed business, he was enjoying the fruits of his long career as a photographer and working with a few long-time clients. He has a little more snow on top than the seventies, but he still wears those vests. I think Bob's vest collection rivals the late Imelda Marcos' infamous shoe collection. He's still willing to listen and make that "What if....?" suggestion. That's the part of Bob I have always liked the most.

Thanks, Bob. That's neat.