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Michael Peres
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School of Photographic Arts and Science
70 Lomb Memorial Drive
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Dear Mr. Peres,

I'm writing as a graduate of RIT with a rather unconventional story – it concerns my relationship with an instructor who died this week at the age of 98; his beautifully written obituary is attached. Professor Douglas Lyttle was one in a million and I thought you might want to honor him by including his passing in an upcoming publication.

As a student at SUNY at Buffalo in 1970, I took up photography as a hobby. But I had a lucky accident, sold an image to American Greetings and I was off to the races. A fellow student saw my work in the darkroom and said: "*You know, there's a school an hour east of here called RIT where you can get a 4-year degree and learn photography*". Our instructor overheard this and told me not to waste my time. So I jumped on a bus and walked into the Office of Administration at RIT and promptly asked how I could do that. A confused receptionist greeted me and called the School of Photography. That's when Professor Lyttle walked in. He introduced himself and asked how he could help. I answered in a matter-of-fact way, "*I heard this was a great school to study photography and would like to become a student here*". Puzzled, he asked if I had a portfolio. "*No, I just have these 2 prints*", I said. How about alumni – know anyone here? "*Nope*". And money – this isn't a state school. "*No money*", I said – "*just heard it was a great place to study photography*". That was the interview – probably less than 10 minutes.

A couple of weeks later, I opened a letter from RIT inviting me to come as a "special student" for 10 weeks. I packed my bags, thanked the photo instructor for his support and left for Brick City.

I might have been on drugs for the entire time I spent at RIT – I was just plain high on learning. Doug was one of my first instructors, as was John Pfahl, who taught Color II. And it wasn't easy to get into Doug's classes – he was wildly popular. I was enrolled soon after in what was called the School of Illustration (as opposed to the Pro Photo program). I studied portraiture and loved it! I didn't mind if it was 20 degrees below outside or if I had classes that began at 8 AM on Saturday – I was living the dream and was being groomed to express my ideas and to create images that could move others. I got good grades, but more importantly, got considerable encouragement from all my instructors, but none more enthusiastic and engaging than Doug. There seemed to be no limit to what he could offer as support and I drank it in like Kool-aid.

Back at my parents' home on a school break, I brought a pile of school projects with "A+" and "keep it up" notes on the back of the prints. My family was appalled at my decision to pursue a career in photography; you see, my parents had grown up in the Depression and my father hadn't finished high school. They knew nothing about art and were wary of my following a career that wasn't mainstream – so *photography*? Well, that was just plain *crazy* – in fact, it was a terrible idea! On my way back to school, my father drove to the airport, where he would typically give me a check for expenses. My dad told me that he and my mother, active gamblers, had recently been on a trip and had gambled away my college tuition! No check this time. "*But Dad, I have to register this afternoon!*", I said. "*We'll have to mail to you*", he said. When I got off the plane, I went directly to the Office of Financial Aid, where I borrowed about \$20,000 to finish my education. I didn't talk to my parents for about 3 years.

A few years later, I had a photo studio in NYC. I remember standing on the corner of the West Village late one Saturday night, when the New York Times was typically delivered with the magazine section already printed. I'd shot my first national ad for Bloomingdales, and I couldn't wait to get my hands on it to show my parents how wrong they were – over the next 15 years, I had become skilled at photographing food for ad agencies and often hung out with others from RIT in the Photo District. I was still high on it.

In the meantime, I kept in touch with Doug Lyttle – he sent out Christmas letters to some students and I was on the list. We spoke occasionally over the years, and somehow, after a period of burnout, I decided to take a break from photography. I studied graphic design and visited him. Doug was engrossed with his magnum opus, "Miracle on the Monastery Mountain", an impressive compendium of 400 images he had culled from more than 15 years trips to a monastic

community in Greece. He needed someone to do the layout for the book and we decided to work on it together. It was a joy to spend time with him and we became good friends. After the book was finished, he asked me why I wasn't shooting people, what he knew I loved. Shooting food and still life was a practical decision in NY, but I missed the connection with people. I decided to go back to it and he was, as usual, *wildly enthusiastic*.


That one quality – enthusiasm – is probably what I will miss most about Doug; he was enthusiastic about almost everything. On subsequent visits to Rochester, we would drive around and just look at light – crazy for most people, but not for us. Over the years, we would go to the symphony, visit the school, have lunch on the canal in Pittsford and take photos, discover new places to eat, argue about politics, discuss philosophy, religion and relationships, visit his church – the one he had converted to after all his monastic visits – attend their events, search out the perfect apple orchard and set up lighting in his home and later, we did this in his nursing home. Once, he took me to his tennis club and I watched him play when he was in his 90s. When I remarried in 2009, he flew to Virginia, and I was honored when he walked me down the aisle. Not perfect, but for me, he was a model of how to live life and how to age: people thought he was the Energizer bunny! Until just a few years ago, he would ask me to send photos of recent portrait jobs, which he would heartily critique via email. I joked with him often, telling him that it would be hard to find any other student at RIT who got more for her tuition dollars than I. He was absolutely amazing to know and that was only *my* experience of him.

When I attended his funeral service this past week, everyone who spoke had a similar story of how much he loved to teach and help others along with how he lived his life with so much exuberance. Doug was a rare bird – and I was lucky enough to know him and be invited into his family as an honorary “adopted” daughter. And although he seemed to be a stand-in father for me, he always treated me more like a colleague than a sycophant.

I know my experience was atypical, and probably not a great model for admission to RIT, or to any college, but unlikely as it may seem, it worked for me. I know that my life was irreversibly shaped and enriched beyond measure by this wonderful teacher; others have mentors, but I have never met anyone who has ever had this breath of experience and I know how fortunate I am to have known him.

Once, a few years out of college, I was living in New Jersey and had amassed several hundred images of hot air balloons – just fun to shoot at the time. My boyfriend wondered why I didn't try to sell them. So I went to a local publisher; he told me he would publish my photographs if I wrote a story and got an authority on ballooning to interview for the article. So I wrote to Malcolm Forbes, whose office was an hour away. I got my interview, had my story and photos published and even got a hot air balloon ride across Forbes' NJ estate, *just by asking*. I want other students to know what they could miss if the question that matters most to them is left unasked. I would never have had these experiences because I believed they would never be possible. They weren't... until I asked.

Sincerely,



Karen Long Krugler

Rochester Obituary for Douglas Lyttle

Douglas Alfred Demetrios Lyttle, age 98, entered his eternal rest on Friday, November 3, 2017 with family and friends at his bedside.

Lyttle was Professor Emeritus in the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences at Rochester Institute of Technology, having been a beloved teacher of photography from 1969 to 1984. Lyttle's acceptance of the call to RIT was a deliberate change in his career path from renowned, successful commercial and free-lance photographer based at his Kalamazoo, Michigan studio, "Douglas Lyttle, Photographer." A sweet, gentle and very sociable soul, he loved interacting with people, and he especially enjoyed teaching technique and fostering artistic insight with students. Many of them became close friends and extended family members, still referred to as his "adopted" daughters and sons.

Lyttle was born July 7, 1919 in Three Rivers Michigan to Stephen and Ruth (Marshall) Lyttle. The family eventually moved to Saginaw, Michigan where his father was a teacher and served as principal of Saginaw High. Lyttle attended University of Michigan, graduating cum laude in 1941 with honors in chemistry and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. It's not known if truth or parenting parable, but he told his youngest daughter that he chose to study chemistry because his parents insisted he needed a course of study that would provide "a more reliable career path than photography." He was good at chemistry and said he opted for it knowing it would be excellent preparation to pursue his passion and goal for becoming a professional photographer.

During visits home from college, Lyttle met and single-mindedly pursued a relationship with a neighborhood beauty, Margaret Ann Geyer. They were married in Saginaw on April 11, 1942 and he began his career as pharmaceutical research chemist, first at Merck in New Jersey followed by the Upjohn Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Lyttle launched his full-time venture into professional photography in the early 1950's, resigning from Upjohn Company to open a studio in Kalamazoo in partnership with his wife Margaret who took on the business management. In addition to customary photography work, it wasn't long before he was designated the exclusive photographer for portraits of Upjohn Company executives, followed by a wide variety of commercial photography assignments that included nationally recognized architectural firms as well as a growing list of contracts for advertising illustration with firms such as Selmer Instruments, Archway Cookies, Aid Association for Lutherans, and more.

Lyttle was a life-long learner and always dedicated time to studying and perfecting his craft. Among numerous awards and professional accomplishments, he was very proud of achieving, through extensive study and juried evaluation, the "Master of Photography" degree from the Professional Photographers of America. While extremely accomplished in all types of photography with an extraordinary eye for light, shadow and composition, Lyttle had a gift for people images, both candid and posed. He had an innate ability to engage and connect with people in a way that "charmed and disarmed" them, allowing him to capture the authentic essence of each person.

His proudest achievement and most notable legacy work is displayed in the book he authored, Miracle on the Monastery Mountain, published in 2002. The book is a result of 22 extended visits to the Holy

Mountain of Athos between 1972 and 1998. It is a documentary in words and stunning photographs of the monastic culture of Mt. Athos. It began with photo journalistic curiosity but rapidly evolved into Lyttle's spiritual pilgrimages and a conversion to Greek Orthodoxy. The book chronicles the sweeping change in monastic life from a period of decline through 20 years of physical and spiritual rebirth on Mt. Athos. The life-long relationships he built with the monks gave him acceptance and welcome even as a non-Greek. The unique access and permission he was given to photograph and participate in aspects of monastic life resulted in a respectful and remarkable literary and visual record of the people, places, and meaning of monastic life.

While a Professor at RIT, Lyttle and his wife resided in Pittsford. After being widowed, he moved first to Briarwood at St. John's Meadows, and more recently Hawthorne for assisted living. Lyttle was a member of Reformation Lutheran Church prior to his conversion when he joined the Greek Orthodox Church of The Holy Spirit where he was an enthusiastic member of the choir, singing as recently as 2 weeks prior to his passing.

Known for his infectious smile, engaging personality, and love for people, Lyttle leaves behind many friends and family who speak freely about how their lives have been enriched by his love and friendship. He was predeceased by his wife Margaret Ann in 1990; his second wife Vivian in 2013; brothers Marshall and Robert; and considering his long, full life, also numerous other relatives and close friends.

He is survived by three daughters: Judith Nelson (James) of Tucson Arizona; Janet Chobanian (Michael) of Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Marsha Lyttle (Michael Pidek) of Owosso, Michigan. He enjoyed many family vacations surrounded by his children and an assortment of his 9 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren.

The funeral service is scheduled for 11:00am on Wednesday, November 8 at the Greek Orthodox Church of The Holy Spirit, 835 South Avenue, Rochester. Visitation will be held on Tuesday, November 7 at Anthony Funeral Chapel, 2305 Monroe Avenue, 7:00-9:00pm. Burial will take place later this month in Bellevue, Michigan.