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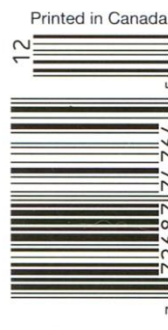
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# The Passion within

This photographer says she stumbled on her passion (and now profession) quite by accident. Others would say it's in her blood.

Interview by Kristin Kent  
Photography by Kas Stone

You had an early start to photography. Can you tell me about that?

I grew up with a photographer; my father is really my prime influence. He came over to Canada from England and has had a camera since the 1930s. He was never a professional photographer, but I can't call him a hobby photographer as it's much more serious than that. As I was growing up we moved several times, and one of the reasons to buy a house was whether it would accommodate a dark room in the basement. All the walls were hung with his photographs and holidays punctuated by stops in the car while my dad got out and took pictures. So that's how I grew up; I guess by osmosis I must have learned something.

Who, besides your dad, are your mentors?

It's a lot of people you wouldn't have heard of like my father's photographic friends. They have a print group called the Toronto Focal Forum and I'm sometimes invited to join them. They're extremely intelligent and articulate people; their ability to put into words their feelings and criticisms about a particular photograph is just mind boggling.

## Wasaga Beach

This was March, a very warm, sunny day, and the snow drifts were melting behind me. Water was rushing across the sand, creating these incredible patterns, while there was still ice along the horizon. There were also these amazing sweeping clouds. But I must say this is one of the images that is a composite of two images: a cloud and a beach. I couldn't get it in the frame at the same time, mostly because of my lens, but in the end it all came from the same place.

**Location:** Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, Southern Georgian Bay, ON  
**Gear:** Nikon D80, Tokina 12-24mm lens, f20@1/200 sec., ISO 320 B&W 77mm circular polarizer, digital composite of sky and sand

It was only in 2000 that you took up photography seriously. How did that come about?

Photography is only part of what I do, but it has now become the dominant part of what I do. It started because I was a writer. Well, even before that I was an outdoor enthusiast you might say. I love to paddle and hike, and love the wild landscape. I was really looking to express my enthusiasm for what I was seeing, and so I started to write. Soon, I realized a picture is worth a thousand words.

When I started to market my writing, it became clear that if I could present a publisher a package of writing, photography and maps, my work became more marketable from a business point of view.

You seem to love open spaces. Where did that come from?

That harkens back to a childhood spent mostly on the Atlantic coast. This was the '60s, '70s, early '80s; I've spent a lot of my life on the Atlantic coast. So sky, dramatic clouds, crazy weather, big vistas, huge seas... those have all been part of that early background. Moving to Ontario,

hardly surprising I guess, I tend to gravitate to the Great Lakes.

But you live in Toronto?

Work and family keep me here. I have the luxury of a fair amount of time to escape, and that's my way of coping with city life here. I've often said this to people, and probably people won't want to hear me say this in print, but I refuse to die in Toronto. I refuse. I just haven't quite figured out where I'm going to go and what I'm going to do next.

I don't think you're alone in that.

Well, I look out my window and there's a huge disconnect. I should be looking at waves crashing in Nova Scotia or a calm evening on the water in Lake Superior. Instead I see garbage pails and a fire hydrant.

Speaking for Torontonians here, where do you go that's relatively close to take such photographs?

I go places in the off-season. I will, for instance, make a day trip up to Wasaga Beach on the south end of Georgian Bay. But I don't go in July when there are only bikinis and beach balls. I'll go to a place like that

in late March when there's nobody there. When you look at the photographs, you'd never recognize the place because it's absolutely gorgeous in March, and excruciat-

even when I'm out there having fun. When you're doing a magazine cover, you want to shoot vertical. For a big spread or a slide show, you want horizontal. So



ingly touristy in July — which I probably shouldn't say, either.

There are a huge number of parks and ravines within the city, too. And you do find remarkable places, especially in nasty weather when nobody's there.

So where does your inspiration for a photograph come from?

When I'm doing photography I particularly love, I'll often go out with my camera and just see what happens. Sometimes I don't feel the least bit inspired. But once I put the tripod on the ground, get the camera out and start looking at a scene, I find two, three hours have passed and you can't turn me away.

Very often, though, I'm on some sort of assignment, and I have a good idea of what it is that I need to capture. It's a bit of a conflict for me, trying to balance the business of photography. You don't want somebody going across the picture in a bright red jacket — which is often what you do want when you're taking pictures for others.

How do you balance that? If you're doing it for both work and play, does that take away from the passion?

I still have the passion, but it is a delicate balance. The practical side of things looms

with things like that, you find yourself switching back and forth between being practical and being artistic. It's not always easy to balance the two.

Some photographers say it's not about the gear, but you seem to disagree.

I do disagree. I have had a lot of crappy gear in my life and have gone through about a dozen useless tripods. You pay 50 bucks for a tripod, use it for six months and it's done. I have one that's on top of Blue Mountain right now because the legs just fell off and rolled down the hill. I've spent more money on cheap tripods, and now that I've bought a good one, I've had it for six years and it's wonderful.

Same goes for lenses. If you can afford to buy an expensive lens, you should. You'll get that extra sharpness you'll never get with a cheap one. You can say that it's all about the artistry, and that's true too. You have to have a photographic eye, but if you don't have some good equipment you're really hampered in what you're trying to do.

What about photo manipulation? What's your take?

I'm going to get nailed for this, but I don't have a problem with it. I start shooting

## Tranquil evening on the rocks

As the sun was going down, it just lit up the sky with this pink; this is reflected in the water. But it's the geology that fascinates me here, the rocks which go back a billion, two billion, three billion years. I find that quite overwhelming and beautiful. It's possible that I took out a mosquito; otherwise this photo is exactly as it appeared to me at that moment. I just got out my wide-angle lens and there it was.

**Location:** Rosspoint Provincial Park, Lake Superior, ON  
**Gear:** Nikon D300, Tokina 12-24mm lens, f6.3@2/3 sec., ISO 166

RAW, so everything that comes out of my camera needs something. It can be as simple as tone and colour or cropping. Most people don't have a problem with those basic things, where they do have a problem is getting rid of distracting objects or taking two photographs and combining them. I do that fairly regularly and think it's all about what the final image looks like.

You hold photography workshops and talks; what's your one most important message for your students?

You should have your head wrapped around a few basic rules, although I hesitate to call them that. They are there for a reason and they do help you realize what you should put in your image and what you should leave out. But beyond that, you should get out there and have fun with the landscape. You can see this gorgeous 180 (degree) view, but then you have to ask what it is that turns you on about it. 🍁

To read more about Kas Stone or to see more of her photographs, please visit her website at [www.kasstone.ca](http://www.kasstone.ca). For photo information on the gallery images, visit the *OPC* website and go to profiles.

gallery



kas stone



