

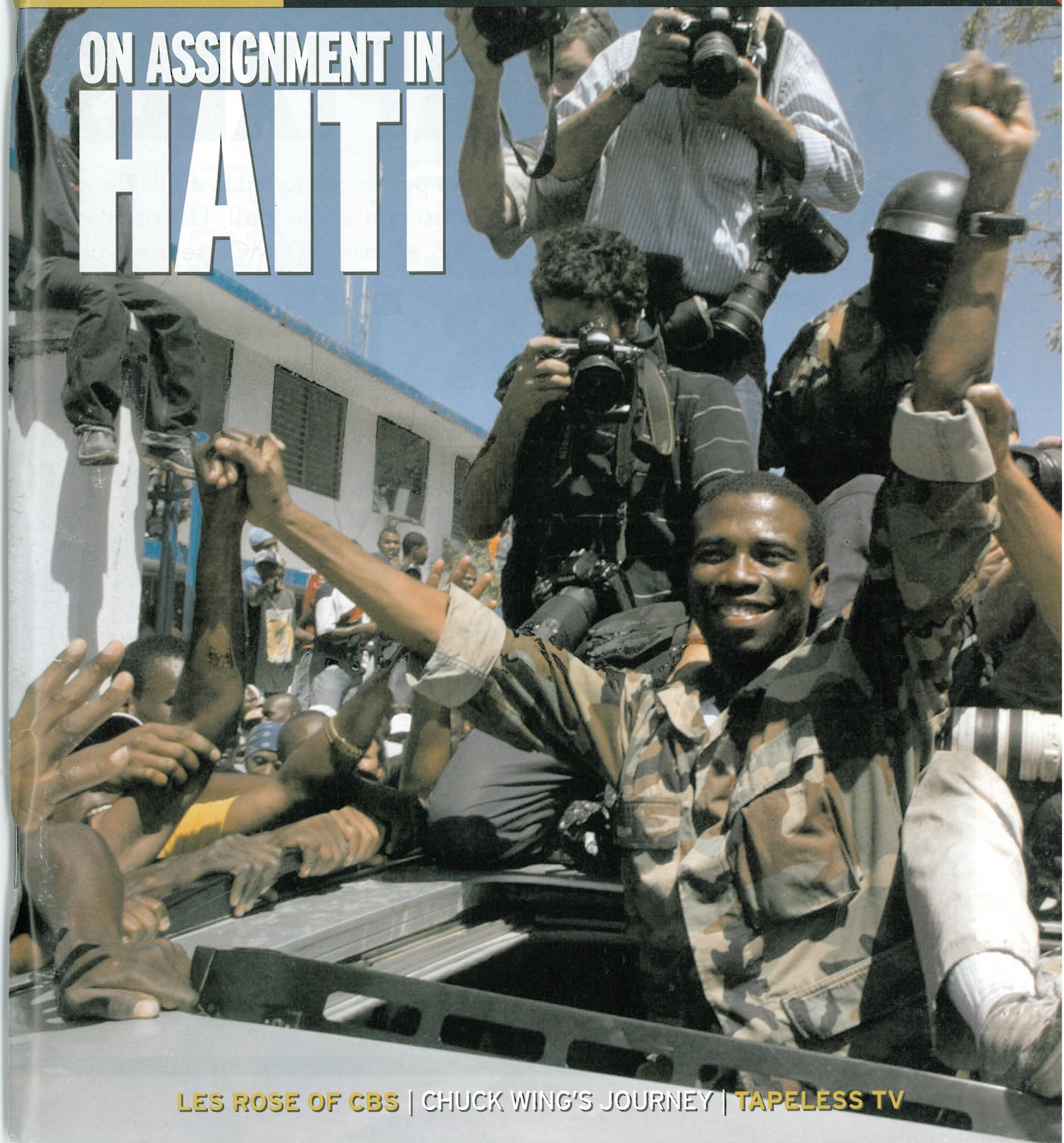
NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER

APRIL 2004

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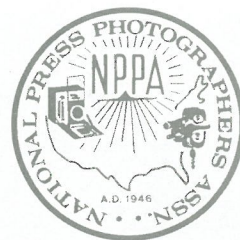
10TH ANNIVERSARY: VISUAL
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ON ASSIGNMENT IN HAITI



LES ROSE OF CBS | CHUCK WING'S JOURNEY | TAPELESS TV

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April 2004 ~ volume 59 no. 4 ~ Established 1946

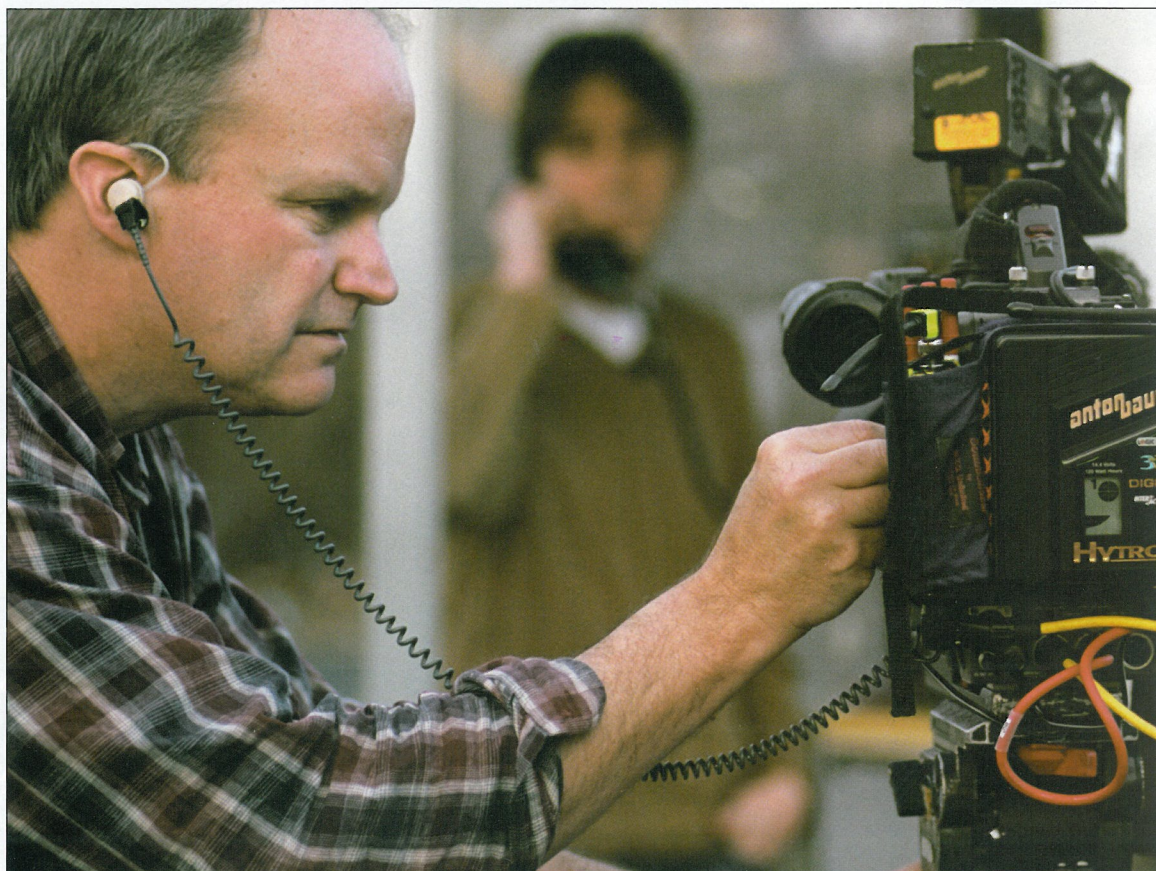
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FEATURE

The Road Les Traveled

CBS News photojournalist Les Rose and correspondent Steve Hartman have taken to America's quiet back roads and packed city streets to find the people whose real life tales are told on their popular network feature, "Everybody Has A Story."

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ON THE FRONTLINE

On Assignment In Haiti Covering the latest political uprising in Haiti turned deadly for photojournalists at the end of a large protest march near the National Palace. 20

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COVER Haitian rebel leader Guy Philippe greets supporters as he arrives at the main police station in Port-au-Prince. Photograph by Mike Stocker-South Florida Sun-Sentinel

ABOVE Les Rose adjusts audio levels while working with Steve Hartman on "Everybody Has A Story" while on assignment in Virginia. Photograph by Thomas Graves

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PHOTOJOURNALIST LES ROSE AND STEVE HARTMAN HAVE WORKED TOGETHER FOR ALMOST SIX YEARS NOW ON EVERYBODY HAS A STORY FOR CBS NEWS. SOMEONE THROWS A DART OVER HIS SHOULDER AT A MAP OF AMERICA – THEN THEY GO OFF TO WHEREVER THE DART SENDS THEM.

BY NOW MORE THAN 120 STORIES FROM 42 STATES HAVE AIRED FROM OUT ON

THE ROAD LES TRAVELED

I AM 47 YEARS OLD, married to a beautiful sweet saint named Michele, a proud daddy of two boys, and I have a terrific career at the Los Angeles bureau of CBS News. Really, the bureau has the greatest correspondents, photojournalists, editors, producers, finance folks, and the bureau manager, Jennifer Siebens, is highly regarded as one of the very best. Honest, you should be so lucky. I look forward to work every day there. That alone would make any bald baby boomer happy.

But since 1998, about ten days out of every month I leave that bureau to follow a dart's resting spot on a map of the USA. Somewhere in the home of the very brave. And we get the darnedest stories, right out of the phone book. Might be your phone book. The stories are there.

Some folks in our line of work think it's not journalism at all. After all, what can you learn from stay-at-home moms, from a child still in Huggies Overnights, or from the waitress serving chicken tacos on Taco Tuesday? Isn't our job telling people about the events of the day — politics, war, crime, and tornadoes?

Others think it's pure journalism. If journalism means going out into the world and finding a story, this qualifies. We want and need hard news, political coverage,

**STORY BY LES ROSE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS GRAVES**



HUNGRY? *Suzanne Lee in South Carolina, a former school cafeteria worker, has a few friends over for Sunday dinner each week, usually around 70 people for macaroni and cheese.*

spot news, and investigative pieces. They are the very foundation of journalism, of informing our fellow citizens. It's why we all do what we do.

I happen to believe there is room for Iraqi war coverage just as there is room for a story on the Iraqi Symphony and their struggles. To paraphrase a *CBS Sunday Morning* producer, we can learn a lot about the day's big story from a little story.

Feature stories — whether in print or broadcast — have always fought for space and time. Many news directors feel that they have no time for features. Then again, they're usually thinking a feature story involves something from a PR fax — you know, coverage of the new roller coaster in town. The water skiing squirrel. The pig races at the fair. Waste of time? Absolutely.

Been there, done that. But can we learn something about ourselves by covering our neighbors? The family next door? Those same folks we label by various means and mindsets: hardhat conservative, middle-aged soccer mom,

Duo Started In Local News

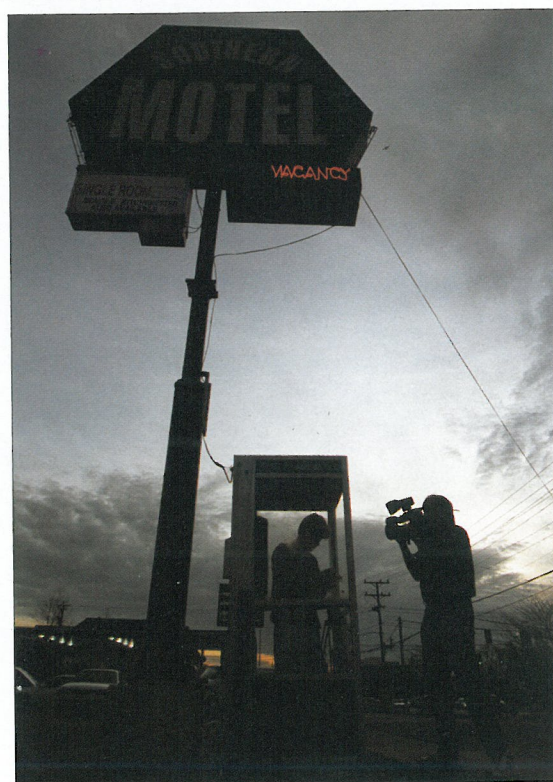
LES ROSE AND STEVE HARTMAN HAVE worked together almost ten years now, the last six years on "Everybody Has A Story." Rose is the NPPA Television Critique Chair, a TV News Video Workshop faculty regular, and a frequent Poynter Institute visiting faculty member. He and correspondent Steve Hartman have crisscrossed America for CBS News, covering more than 110,000 miles so far shooting "Everybody," which airs every other week on CBS' *The Early Show*.

A dart thrown over someone's shoulder at a map of America determines where the duo goes next. When they get there, they pick someone at random out of the local phone book. That person is their next story. "Assuming they are willing, of course," Rose says. "If not, we keep trying until somebody agrees. They can turn us down, and many do. But we refuse nobody. Every story airs, whatever it's about or how good it is. After all, it's not called 'Almost Everybody Has a Story.'"

More than 120 stories from 42 states have aired so far. They report spinning out on black ice only once, and they've totaled only one rental car (that one "thanks to a Farmer John in Nebraska," Rose says). Their segment has been featured on a *48 Hours* special, on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and twice on *Oprah*, as well as in *TV Guide* and the *Motley County Tribune*.

Steve writes, edits (on Avid), and produces, while Les shoots, does sound, and field produces as well. Les is also the "alumni coordinator" and keeps in touch with as many of the interviewees as he can. "Many have become friends," he says. Rose has been invited to weddings, funerals, and baby showers of their subjects, often years after meeting them.

"Because the folks portrayed were minding their own business until they got a call from CBS News, the feeling for this particular series is that fewer TV people in a living room might make people more comfortable," Rose



says. "So there's no sound tech to help me, and no producer to help Steve."

They both claim to enjoy lighting (Rose says that Hartman "is a frustrated lighting director" and strives with him to make their roughly seven lights — "more than most local TV folks, far less than the network freelance crews" — look as great as possible). "That is, without actually noticing the lighting," said Rose. Rose and Hartman taught a basic lighting session at the NPPA TV News Video Workshop in Norman, OK, in March, along with a session about how some of the techniques they use in "Everybody" can be used in local news. Of the ten years Hartman and Rose have worked together as a team, five of them were spent doing local news.

Beatles fan cameraman. Sometimes, it goes further: white right-wing Southern Baptist, black liberal gay San Franciscan. Now we really know who they are, right? Not even close.

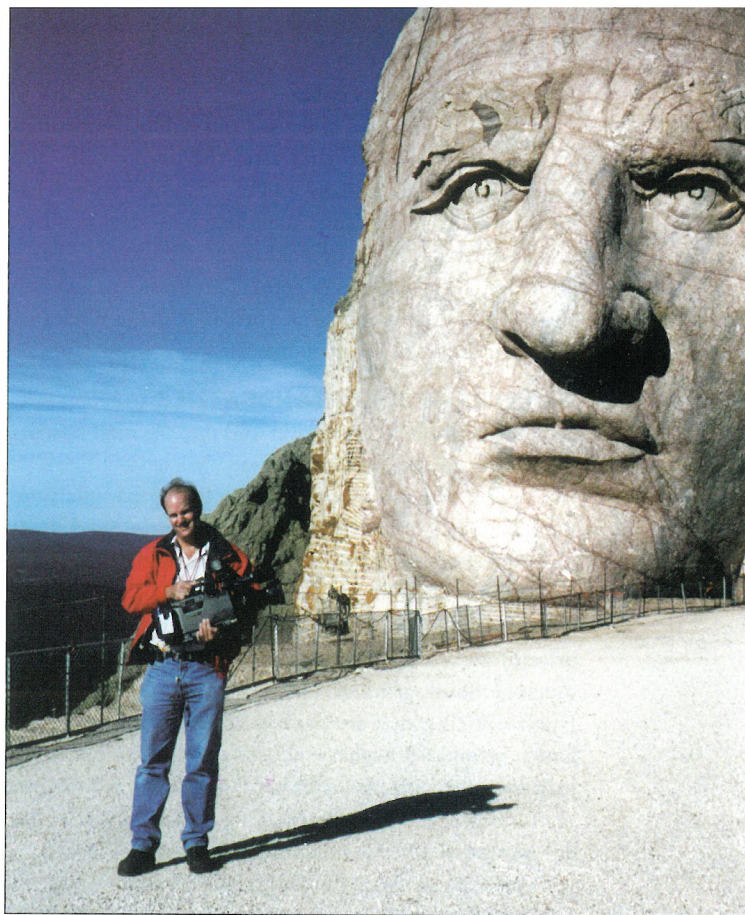
STEVE AND I get to know these strangers very well, very fast. One of the basic ways we hit the ground running is something just short of revolutionary: we leave the gear in the car and have a conversation. Talking. In the living room, just chatting. You can do that with a lot of your stories, if only for a few minutes. And make the conversations two-way. Wouldn't you be more likely to want to have a conversation with someone you know, even just a bit, than with a total stranger with a giant camera? We take the process of TV journalism for granted, but the truth is, it's intimidating as hell to almost all of our subjects. Spend a little time without the gear, and your interview will be better. Besides, when you walk back in the living room with the equipment, you are now a person with a camera, and not a cameraperson. Big difference.

In the two and a half days that follow the initial "yes" over the phone, we quite often come to know more about these strangers than their parents do. More than their best friends or their coworkers know. Once in a while, things they didn't even know themselves. What have we learned about these folks — and more important — what did they teach our viewers and us?

Well, we've learned time and again that children are the most insightful, honest, and misjudged folks around. Ironically, in most local news, their issues are the most under-reported. Really. Even when stories involve them directly, like school and education stories, are their opinions ever sought?

Our best teachers on this topic included five-year-old Trey Pyles from Fentress County, TN. He's one of those kids who can't sit still in the back of the church, wants the preacher to be done. His Grandma died a few years back, and he misses her. So he sends her a gift of balloons. Doesn't tie it to her tombstone, because he knows she's not there — he goes to a park and sends them, straight up to heaven, so she can catch them. Sounds to me like he didn't have to pay attention to the man in the pulpit after all.

Or four-year-old Kassie Catoor from Utah, who can ride a horse better than any cowboy I've seen. Her tech-

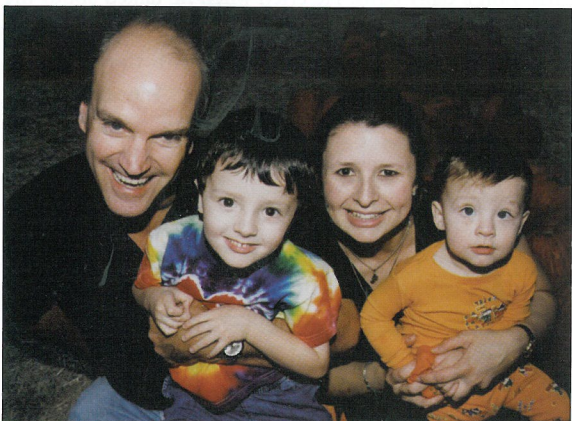


A HIGHER ROAD. *Rose at the Crazy Horse memorial atop the Black Hills of South Dakota.*

nique? "Just whip 'em in the butt and just turn 'em," she says with a megawatt smile. Makes sense to me. She was raised on an open range, while her parents gathered wild horses. But now instead of learning on the range, she will be learning with other children. In a classroom, making for a tough transition.

Then there was Amy Mendoza, a charming fifth grader whose favorite colors are "Blue. And white and red." Her favorite subject is English, and she wants to be a doctor, to help people. But she is one of roughly 800,000 kids living here illegally. I think of her when I see those "other" stories on illegal immigrants. Her father Cezar was brave to trust us and let her story be told. Before the story aired, we found out that the INS was looking for the Mendozas — to give Cezar his green card. Truthfully, if we hadn't lucked out with that, one of our favorite stories never would have aired. This is not investigative stuff, but we do learn a lot of things that are of value to our viewers. At least, we hope so.

This series, above all, has taught me never to prejudge people. I always did my best in the past to avoid that, but this experience brought it home. Like Suzi Izatt, who says she is a "boring...nobody...housewife." Had a hysterectomy at 25. We tell her she's a lousy foster mom — she's adopted five boys so far. I guess she never heard you are supposed to give them back! I am convinced Suzi's going to heaven. Or Miss Katie Miller, 17-year-old grocery bagger. Yeah, the typical kid you see weekly at the A&P. You've never heard "Paper or plastic?" with a sunnier smile. Sweet to the core, and her mom is in an epic battle with breast cancer. Never knew I could learn bravery from



THE FAMILY. *Les and Michele Rose with Robert, 3, and Christopher, 1, at home in California.*

Photograph by Patina Rodgers

a bagger. Bet you didn't either.

We've had our share of the sad and serious. Sometimes we meet for dinner to chat after the phone call. One woman, over pizza, casually told us, "I think I know what my story is. My grandfather molested me several hundred times as a teenager." "Is he still living?" Steve asked. "Yeah, just a few blocks away from here." Turns out, she had him arrested and convicted. She also helped to get him released early to take care of her grandma.

WE INTERVIEWED GRANDFATHER to get his side. He basically thought it was over and that the man upstairs forgave him. So everything is okay.

Now, I know my manners. My loving parents were Kentuckians, kind and gentle. My three year old doesn't eat or get a toy until he says "please." But this once, after his interview, I didn't thank him for his time. May sound trivial, but that's major in my world. I even debated the price of the microphone because I didn't want to have to touch his shirt again. His last words to us still haunt me. Upon noticing that we parked illegally in front of his home, he said, "See what you boys did there? Now that is just as bad as what I did to her." I couldn't work again until I took a very long shower. I am still convinced to this day I pray to a different God than his. At least, I hope so.

People give so much of their time and hearts — and terrific stories — just because we asked them out of the blue. Two women discussed their suicide attempts and their lives afterwards. When was the last time you saw a story involving suicide on TV? Yet, according the National Institutes of Mental Health, suicide kills twice as many people every year as AIDS; it's the eleventh leading cause of death. Still think that feature stories only involve toy tractor collections?

Ann Coburn suffers from macular degeneration and is losing her sight. She spends her days roaming the Carolina coast, her favorite place, so she can always remember it. Sort of like storing photographs in your mind.

Suzanne Lee is a sweet South Carolinian who has a need to feed. She's a former school cafeteria worker. Ms. Lee has a few friends over every Sunday. Usually 70 come by for the best macaroni and cheese ever. She has three refrigerators and a heart bigger than her house. My elliptical trainer at home is called "The Ms. Lee."

A TINY TOWN in Nevada gave us a 63-year-old Alzheimer's victim who lost his son in a car wreck, the same year his wife got pregnant. He's now the oldest guy in the PTA. Then there was the Michigan lady who felt her baby kick for the first time, on the day of her husband's funeral. She now cherishes her grandchildren like gold. Or a guy who was hell to his teachers in Montana, stole a briefcase with a test's answer sheet from a teacher. He's now teaching in the same school. Or the most standup guy you could ever meet: he proposed to his girlfriend the day she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She died a year after the wedding. Or the quiet man on the Oregon Trail, with the biggest American flag you ever saw in his backyard. When he spoke softly of helping the victims in the first Gulf War, his words resonated louder than any mortar fire.



STAYING CENTERED. In the town of Lebanon, Kansas, "The Center Of The United States."

The greatest responsibility we have as journalists is to get it right. Tell a compelling and truthful story and tell it powerfully. Steve is the finest writer, producer, and editor I have ever worked with. We both realize that the Golden Rule rules. If the shoe were on the other foot, would you want the story of your life — your struggles and passions — told by somebody who was just there to "phone it in"? To "spray it"? Didn't think so. Work just as hard or harder on a feature as you would the lead.

"The Mississippi Delta was shining like a National Guitar..." — Graceland, Paul Simon

THEN THERE WAS the bizarre. In Biloxi, MS, a woman who teaches Random Acts of Kindness, in a dinosaur costume. It works. Or the crazy high school English teacher in Vermont who cheers the basketball team on, in a bird suit. Answered the phone, "Birdman." Encourages his students to eat in class. Yet his kids read twice as many books as those in any other class. They look forward to seeing him. I hope my kids will have teachers that crazy.

You're right — he's not that bizarre. There was the low-level CIA employee in Florida who reprogrammed the Bible. The Texas rancher who sings to his cattle ("the girls") on a daily basis. He cried when he talked about the worst day of the year: payday, when he takes them to slaughter. The flower-eating masseur in the Yukon of Alaska. He didn't make a lot of money. Wonder why. A sweetheart of a funeral director who had a mummy standing straight up in his garage for 61 years. They never got the money to bury the guy in more than 61 years. Makes pre-need funeral planning look pretty attractive!

There were some strange coincidences. The dart landed twice in the same county. Two times, it did, in two different states. One of them was Motley County, TX, population 1,426, where we got next-door neighbors. They shared a tree line!

We also heard, four years apart, the same story about a one-armed chain saw teacher. Turned out, we got college roommates. At random. In different states!

"...and the road goes on forever..." — Midnight Rider,
Greg Allman

THE LOCATIONS DON'T matter. The people do. OK, Hawaii and New Orleans were nice. But it's almost always a skyline of silos I shoot to show our location. It really did sound glamorous at first. We are lucky in some places to get fewer than five different colors of rust coming out of the showerhead. Too much information from walls too thin. Chicken-fried steak on almost every menu.

But we always came back for more. Who wouldn't? These are incredible stories, just waiting for us in the phone book. Sometimes, it just might have been a good thing they got picked. A few families were profoundly affected. One guy loves his wife even more after her story aired. Never knew what he really had, he tells us. Another guy was ostracized by his community because he didn't work and his wife did instead. That doesn't fly in Iowa. We did a story on his condition, and now he is embraced and understood.

I AM TRULY not a great photographer, photojournalist, or cameraman, whatever you want to call me. Any of ya'll, on any day, may practically walk on water while I am still stuck in the mud. But I just might be one of the more patient ones you'll meet. I love to find moments that help to contribute to a story's flow, that help propel the story and give it some nuance and heart. One example was in the story of an estranged father and daughter. She was 17 and he hadn't

told her that he loved her in years due to an old fight. She never told him either since the fight. The moment was this simple, and this hard to get: One morning at breakfast, they were seated side by side, at the breakfast bar. He said, "A little salt?" She said, "No, thank you." I was inches away, perfectly ignored. They never looked at each other. Or me.

It's truly all about that. If you get a great moment, nobody will notice the lack of backlight or your perfect foreground. But they will remember the moment of a couple of folks, ignoring the camera, and just being themselves. You always want folks to say, "Great story," not "Great lighting," or "Pretty pictures." You certainly strive for those, but it's not what matters in stories about people. And for goodness' sake, unless the story is about drag racing or MTV, knock off the karate-chop quick edits.

I learned a long time ago to shoot with your heart. If you don't like people, find something else to do. You shouldn't be doing this. Be real. Be a human being. The Poynter Institute's Al Tompkins has a book called *Aim for the Heart*, a book for journalists with a soul.

There are about 60 other stories that were equally worthwhile — and a couple that weren't, but still prove the point. Everybody Has a Story.

Here's a final thought. We asked Amy Mendoza, that illegal immigrant fifth grader, how she got so good at English. She said, "I don't know. I just listened."

Good advice, Amy. Good advice. ■

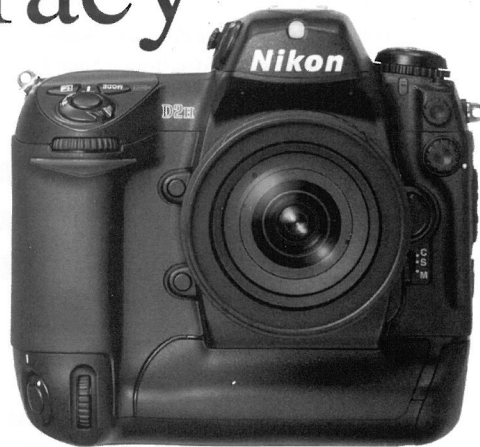
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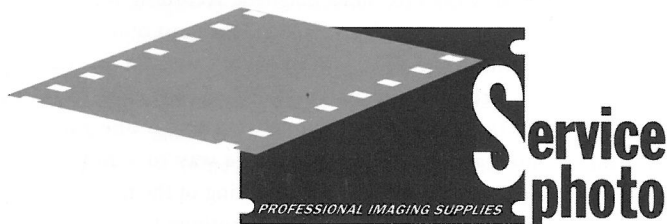
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