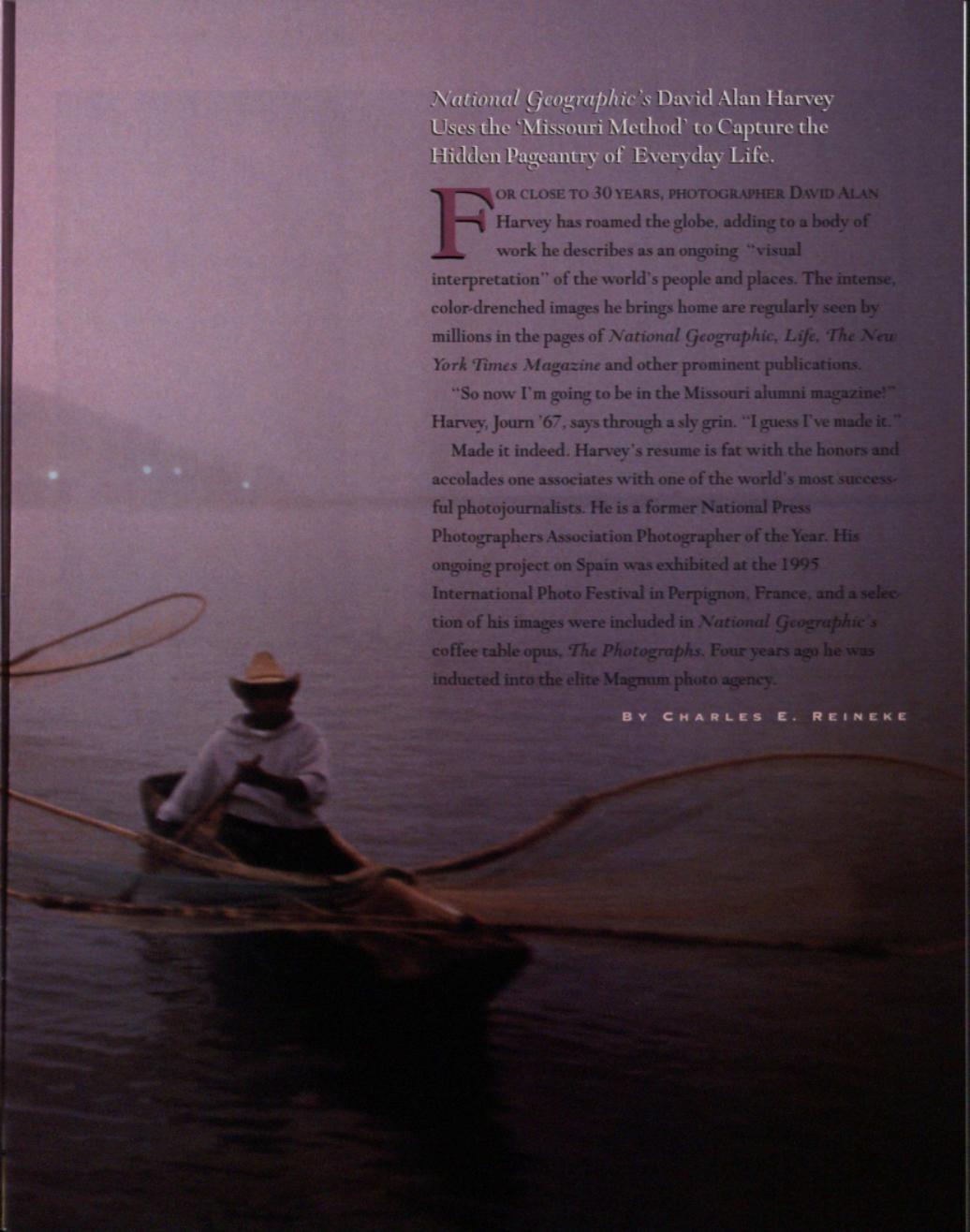


With
Lyricism
and.
Luminosity



National Geographic's David Alan Harvey
Uses the 'Missouri Method' to Capture the
Hidden Pageantry of Everyday Life.

FOR CLOSE TO 30 YEARS, PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID ALAN Harvey has roamed the globe, adding to a body of work he describes as an ongoing "visual interpretation" of the world's people and places. The intense, color-drenched images he brings home are regularly seen by millions in the pages of *National Geographic*, *Life*, *The New York Times Magazine* and other prominent publications.

"So now I'm going to be in the Missouri alumni magazine!" Harvey, Journ '67, says through a sly grin. "I guess I've made it."

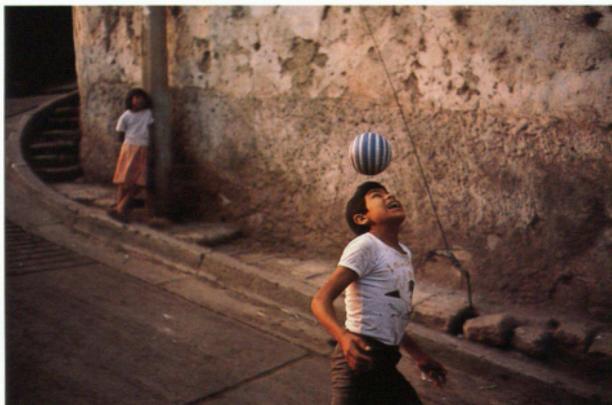
Made it indeed. Harvey's resume is fat with the honors and accolades one associates with one of the world's most successful photojournalists. He is a former National Press Photographers Association Photographer of the Year. His ongoing project on Spain was exhibited at the 1995 International Photo Festival in Perpignon, France, and a selection of his images were included in *National Geographic's* coffee table opus, *The Photographs*. Four years ago he was inducted into the elite Magnum photo agency.

BY CHARLES E. REINEKE

OPENING SPREAD: PHOTOGRAPHING MEXICO'S LAKE PATZCUARO FROM THESE TARASCAN FISHING DORIES PROVIDED THE RANGY HARVEY WITH A LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE. "LEARNING HOW TO MOVE AROUND SOMEBODY'S LIFE IS SO IMPORTANT," HARVEY SAYS. "IF YOU GET IN THE WAY OF THIS GUY OR THAT GUY, THEY'RE GOING TO THROW YOU OFF THE BOAT."

Harvey also has won acclaim for his photographs of Latin America, a region that for the past decade has become something of a professional preoccupation. These images are representative of what might best be described as the "Dave Harvey style"—sweeping character studies that hearken back to the luminosity and lyricism of photography's early masters.

Here, as elsewhere, Harvey's photos typically portray simple vignettes of daily life: children at play, laborers at work, city streets illuminated by the rising sun. Yet somehow these mundane moments, frozen in time by Harvey's road-worn Leica camera, gather a clarity and intensity that even he has a difficult time explaining.



"I WAS WANDERING THE STREETS OF TEGUCIGALPA [HONDURAS], JUST BEING A STREET PHOTOGRAPHER," HARVEY SAYS. "I SAW HIM PLAYING IN THE ROAD: ONE FRAME WAS IT."

"I don't know what it is, really. When I was 6 years old I had polio, and the doctor said, 'You may never walk again,'" Harvey recalls. "So early on, like a lot of kids who have some potential restriction in their lives, I grew to pay attention to the little, tiny, everyday moments. I was never interested in war photography or sports photography or fashion photography or any of those other things. I was

always interested in just being a street photographer, in capturing the little moments of everyday life."

It's no small trick making these moments meaningful for, say, the 40 million readers of *National Geographic*. It requires "a delicate balancing of aesthetic and journalistic views of the world," Harvey says. "A balance, in large part, I learned at Mizzou."



At the moment, Harvey is balancing a tray of color slides and a telephone receiver as he paces the fifth-floor workspace in *National Geographic*'s sprawling Washington, D.C., headquarters. The slides will illustrate a June 1999 cover story on Cuba. The phone call is from a member of

IN THE MERCADO HIDALGO IN GUANAJUATO: "THE PEOPLE WHO WORKED IN THIS MARKET WERE HAVING A CHRISTENING FOR THEIR KIDS. THE PRIEST CAME AND CHRISTENED THE KIDS RIGHT THERE IN THE MARKET. THIS LITTLE GUY WAS JUST WAITING TO GO DO HER THING."



Geographic's editorial staff—Harvey is eagerly awaiting final approval of the photos he and an illustrations editor have selected for the magazine.

In the meantime, he continues to speak of Mizzou in the rapid-fire diction of a man accustomed to working on deadline. At MU, Harvey says, he learned to tell stories with pictures, to connect photographs with words, and to recognize and uphold the integrity of photojournalism. He also paid his dues as a student photographer for *Missouri Alumus*, MIZZOU's distinguished predecessor.

"As a matter of fact, what I'm getting ready to do right now—working on the Cuba layout—is just like what I used to do at Missouri," Harvey says. "I'd sit around with two or three people and we'd bat around ideas. Let's try this picture ... no, that's no good, how about this one ... et cetera. I've used that stuff to this very day. When I'm in New York

HOW DO YOU MAKE GREAT PICTURES DURING CARNIVAL IN PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD? "YOU'VE REALLY GOT TO FAKE HAVING A GOOD TIME," HARVEY SAYS. "THEY WOULD SAY, 'COME ON! PUT DOWN THE CAMERA.' AND I'D SAY, 'NO, I GOTTA TAKE A PICTURE.' "

dealing with a client, or in Paris working for other magazines ... I use those, I draw back on those experiences."

Despite its influence, however, Mizzou did not make Harvey a photographer. That happened much earlier. Born in San Francisco in 1944, he received his first Leica at age 12. Over the years his parents built him three different darkrooms. "I didn't have any live instruction, any person to teach me; it was all learned from books," he says, "But I was totally into pictures."

Harvey eventually studied art at the College of William and Mary. On the eve of graduation he, by chance, read about MU's graduate program in photojournalism. "I thought, 'This is it,' just based on

this article in a photography magazine," he says. The following fall he was living in Columbia.

"I clashed a little bit with Missouri," says Harvey, a self-described rebellious student. He laughs as he recounts going head-to-head with his photojournalism instructors: "But that clash turned out to be great. Because I took my art school aesthetic sense and combined it with the practical, events-on-the-ground type of reporting that they did at Missouri."

Harvey's work at MU landed him a job at the *Topeka* (Kan.) *Capital-Journal*. That position, in turn, helped him gain a job with Richmond Newspapers Inc. He moved to *National Geographic* in 1974, joining a staff already heavy with Mizzou



"FOR ME, THE BACKGROUND IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE FOREGROUND," HARVEY SAYS OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH FROM CHIAPAS, MEXICO. "I SAW THE INTERESTING JUXTAPosition OF HER AND THE FENCE AND THE LIGHT AND THE SHADOW. BUT I KNEW I NEEDED ANOTHER THING IN THERE. AND THEN I SAW THE GUY COMING."

graduates, among them the magazine's former editor in chief, Bill Garrett, BJ '54.

"Missouri grads were practically running the whole show," says Harvey, now a senior staff photographer with the magazine. "I actually applied for a job here right out of school, but they said, 'No, we really can't take on another Mizzou grad.' That's how I ended up in Topeka."

Now that he has illustrated nearly 40 *Geographic* stories, Harvey's editors are thankful that their predecessors eventually agreed to hire one more Mizzou grad.

"The way David works with a camera is very much like I would imagine a virtuoso playing a musical instrument," says

John Echave, a *Geographic* illustrations editor who traveled with Harvey to Cuba. "David's photographs are like a dance with life and with his subjects."

Kent Koberstein, *Geographic's* director of photography, gives an even more straightforward assessment: "I think Dave is certainly one of the best in the world at what he does. What he does is use light and color and moment to construct images that are universally recognized as being outstanding."

Constructing images, of course, is only part of the photographer's job. Gaining the trust of the people to be photographed is also crucial.

"For journalists who write, it is difficult to [be able to] go into a situation with a subject and to put that person at ease—so the subject tells his or her story in a truthful and candid way," says Koberstein. "I think it's even more difficult for visual journalists. They've got to go into someone's life with a camera, put the person at ease and get them to resume his or her life as if you weren't there."

Koberstein's comments recall the poet Wallace Stevens' famous indictment of visual media: "Most modern reproducers of life, even including the camera, really repudiate it." Photojournalists, in fact, have long struggled to alter photography's reputation as an invasive, predatory medium. Even its most sensitive practitioners can't help but talk ceaselessly in terms of "taking" or "shooting" pictures.

The subjects of these photographic

assaults—particularly people living in the remote areas frequented by the *Geographic* staff—are often uncomfortable with, if not downright hostile toward, the idea of a stranger carrying away their image. Helping subjects move beyond these fears is the key to making great pictures.

"Dave's a very personable guy; he puts people at ease and pretty soon they reveal themselves," Kobersteen says. "So many people think, 'Gee, I can make great pictures, I can work for the *National Geographic*.' Well, the tough part is getting to where you can make the pictures."

Harvey gets there by blending into the daily lives of those he photographs. He shuns the use of cumbersome cameras and lenses. Too intimidating, he says. He sits

for hours in foreign parks and plazas, "hanging out," as he puts it, waiting for curious locals to begin conversations. If he's lucky, an invitation follows. Like many photographers, Harvey roams the teeming boulevards of Third World cities taking photographs of picturesque people working in shops and stalls. Unlike most photographers, he shoots extra color prints, processes them at a one-hour photo counter and then returns to present his astonished subjects with beautiful pictures. The result is instant bonding. And memorable photos.

"People are always saying to me, 'How do you get this stuff? Is it the film? Is it the lens?'" Harvey says. "No, there is no trick." Just a dedication to the people and places you photograph, and a love for the

type of hard work that only makes it look as if you're having the time of your life.

"If you're not having a good time and relaxed and looking like you're not working, then they're going to think you *are* working and everybody's either uptight or they're going to go away. So you've really got to fake having a good time," Harvey says without cracking a smile.

Fake having a good time?

"No, seriously. You're working. If you saw me you'd think, 'God, Harvey's sure having a good time.' Let me tell you, I'm looking at the light, I'm looking at the camera, I'm constantly checking levels. I am working. It may not look like it, but I am really thinking it over. Because I know I'm in a good situation and I can't mess it up."

Harvey finishes the thought, pauses, and glances up from the slide viewer. Now he's smiling. ☺

ON A CAMERA STORE BULLETIN BOARD IN IBEZA, SPAIN, HARVEY NOTICED AN ODD PICTURE. THE SHOPKEEPER EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS A LOCAL DISCO WHERE PATRONS DANCE IN SOAP SUDS. AFTER TWO TRIPS, A SQUEAKY CLEAN HARVEY HAD HIS PHOTO.

