

ABOUT KEITH WILSON

Writer. Photo Editor. Journalist. Three different yet interlocking skills and disciplines that I have developed and honed since I began my journalism on *The Herald* newspaper in Melbourne, Australia. It could have been a very different story if I hadn't received the offer from the daily evening paper to join its four-year cadetship training scheme. Aged 18, I had just completed high school and was looking forward to a long lazy summer on the beach before commencing degree studies in Arts and Law. Instead, my summer in the sun was spent under the glare of eagle-eyed editors quick to knock down my hoped-for front page scoops to single paragraph fillers on page 21. It was a noisy newsroom of blunt speaking hacks and shrilling telephones, with a constant background chorus of furiously tapping metal keys from those deskbound heavyweights of the type-written word: Imperial, Remington and Olivetti.

This had been my schoolboy dream, to write for a living, so when the chance came up to train on a great daily newspaper – and to be paid at the same time – it was not a difficult decision to make. However, my formative impressions that led to a career in journalism were not the words of modern newspaper journalists or great literary authors, but rather the photo essays of real world events as reported in *Life* and *National Geographic* in the 1960s and 70s. My late father's subscriptions to these iconic magazines opened my eyes to a world beyond my cosseted suburban existence in Australia and provided the spur to travel, witness and report. Little did I know at the time that the photographers whose work I pored over on those glossy pages – Tim Page under fire in Vietnam, Jim Stanfield shadowing the Pope, or Baron Wolman shooting Nikons on stage with Jimi Hendrix – would become the subjects of my interviews many years later.

Cadetship completed, and with a far from ringing endorsement from my editor filling me with self-doubt ('I didn't think you'd make it Wilson'), I left Melbourne in early 1983, travelling alone on a one-way ticket to Hong Kong, before making my way overland through Asia and Europe to London. This was still the era of newsprint and linotype, ink and film, when all ambitions led to Fleet Street. I only made it as far as Earls Court, joining two other Antipodean journalists and a French Canadian to launch a free weekly travel magazine backed by an Iraqi exile. *TNT International* magazine wasn't dynamite (that explosive acronym spelt out to nothing more alarming than *The News & Travel*), but more than 30 years later it continues to prosper, freely distributed all over London, an essential read for newly arrived backpackers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

In the summer of 1984, I joined the staff of the illustrious weekly photography magazine *Amateur Photographer* (AP) as its first ever news editor – an extraordinary fact given the title was then celebrating its 100th anniversary. One hundred years without a news editor? This was anathema to a young reporter trained on a daily newspaper! Rising quickly up the ranks, I was appointed to my first editorship in 1988, launching the monthly *What Camera?*, then called back the following year to become the youngest ever editor of AP, two weeks after my 29th birthday. There I remained for the next nine years, finishing my time at IPC Media as the Group Editor of three photography magazines.

Looking back on those 473 issues, if I can single out one aspect of my tenure that proved most lasting to the future AP, it was radically changing the magazine's cover policy away from the gratuitous glamour models (aka cheesecake) week in, week out. The impact on copy sales was immediate – they plummeted! But rather than being asked to clear my desk, the formidable, stiletto-heeled publishing director at the time kept faith with my strategy to steer the magazine away from its reputation as an alternative to the top shelf titillaters, and to install an editorial agenda led by variety and topicality. I suppose validation of the new cover policy became evident when rival titles eventually followed suit, but the greatest recognition came in 1993 when AP won Cover of the Year for a black & white portrait by the great *Daily Express* duo of photographer John Downing and printer Larry Bartlett. It was during the 1990s that Bartlett and other high profile 'stars', notably David Bailey, Mike Maloney, Bob Carlos Clarke and Eamonn McCabe, were hired as regular columnists to add gravitas to the title with their expert advice and sometimes controversial views. Bob was always good for a memorable if questionable quote: one I will never forget was his description of a sultry dark-haired model as "a pulchritudinous prick teaser." My finger hovered over the backspace key for some time before I decided to save the quote, although I wasn't sure that it would save the reputation of the model. Her name was Rachel Weisz. She's done rather well since.

Since AP I have developed a reputation as an expert on cover design and in launching new titles in the crazily competitive world of magazine publishing: more than 12 at last count, either as Editor or Editorial Director. They haven't all been photo magazines, but photography and design have probably meant more to me than any of the other editorial components that constitute a successful title. Among them, *Photo Technique* (1993), *Outdoor Photography* (2000), *Black + White Photography* (2001), *Organic Life* (2005), *Making* (2010) and *Wild Planet* (2013) have all been launched into their respective markets with significant points of difference. Some have failed, others continue to prosper, but such is the way when taking a calculated risk. For each magazine, great passion and a clear vision are needed, but one of the most satisfying outcomes of any launch is watching how many of the talented staff become outstanding editors in their own right in the years that follow.

And so we come to the present, where collaboration and interview with the great names of documentary and nature photography are my quest. It has been a real privilege to speak with modern masters such as Jim Brandenburg, Steve McCurry, Alex Webb, Stephen Shore, Jillian Edelstein, Joe McNally, Audun Rikardsen, Brian Griffin, Frans Lanting, Jasper Doest and the incomparable Britta Jaschinski. But it has been a somewhat convoluted route to get to a point where I can stop briefly and contemplate the distance covered, before continuing forward with the same level of curiosity and yearning that led me here in the first place.

In recent years I have been entrusted by Charlie Waite, Jonathan Chritchley, David Lloyd and Leeming + Paterson, with the vital task of editing their fine art photography books, working with them from concept to print, turning dream to reality. And then there was the extraordinary challenge of *Remembering Elephants*, creating a beautiful visual narrative of the life cycle of Africa's giants, using photographs donated by 65 different wildlife photographers.

So, what next? As well as working with Margot Raggett and Born Free again on the *Remembering Rhinos* project, there are more interviews commissioned and scheduled, speaking engagements to fulfil, columns to write and other books under development, each representing a unique challenge and an even more exciting result. But when I bashed away at that old Remington type writer in *The Herald* newsroom in the early 1980s, never once did I dream that one day I might be a record producer too... you'll just have to wait a little bit longer to find out more about that one!

Keith Wilson

WHERE IT BEGAN

The Herald January 1979 – February 1983. Melbourne, Australia

Reporter. General news reporting. Covering local politics, crime, courts, health, sport; sub-editing and picture editing; feature writing

EDITORSHIPS & LAUNCHES

What Camera? June 1988 – July 1989. Cheam, England

Editor (Launch)

Amateur Photographer July 1989 - September 1998. London, England

Editor

Photo Technique November 1993 – October 1995. London, England

Group Editor (Launch)

Outdoor Photography June 2000 – October 2007. Lewes, England

Founder & Editor (Launch)

Black + White Photography April 2001. Lewes, England

Founder & Group Editor (Launch)

Travel Photography September 2002 – October 2003. Lewes, England
Founder & Group Editor (Launch)

Organic Life November 2005. Lewes, England
Editorial Director (Launch)

Making Jewellery May 2009. Lewes, England
Editorial Director (Launch)

Making November 2010. Lewes, England
Editorial Director (Launch)

Wild Planet October 2013 – March 2016. London, England
Founder & Editor (Launch)

BOOKS by Keith Wilson

The AVA Guide to Travel Photography (2004)

Viewfinder: 100 Top Locations for Great Travel Photography (2005).

BOOKS edited by Keith Wilson

In My Mind's Eye, by Charlie Waite (2002)

Silver, by Jonathan Chritchley (2013)

As Long As There Are Animals, by David Lloyd (2014)

Zero Footprint, by Leeming + Paterson (2014)

Remembering Elephants, by Wildlife Photographers United (2016)

Remembering Rhinos, by Wildlife Photographers United (2017)

PRESENTATIONS

Most recent speaking engagements include the Wildscreen Festival, England (2016), Society of German Nature Photographers (GDT) International Nature Photography Festival (2015 & 2016) and Nature Talks International Photo Festival, The Netherlands (2016)

PHOTOGRAPHY COLUMNIST

Landscape Photography Magazine October 2012 – December 2015

Geographical August 2006 - Present

OTHER

I have been a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society since 2011 and my photographs published in numerous print and on line publications including, *Wanderlust*, *Geographical*, *ES Magazine*, *BBC Focus*, *Organic Life*, *Making*, *Black + White Photography* and *Landscape Photography Magazine*.