

Through Their Lens

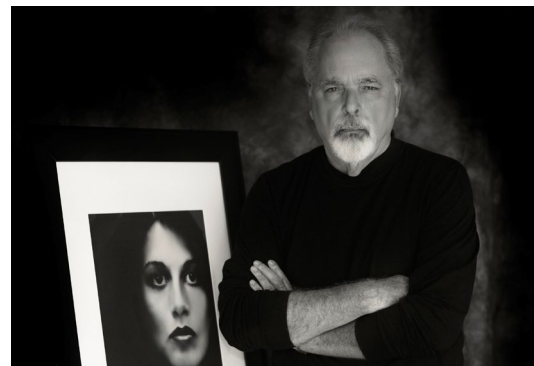
A Series of Interviews with Active Grand Photos Volunteers

Mike Smith

Mike Smith only recently joined Grand Photos but has already presented a very well received showcase galley and is instructing in the education program.

When did your interest in photography begin? I was six- or seven-years old, back in Illinois, my grandfather was an electrician but his hobby was photography. He would develop contact prints in his basement darkroom which fascinated me. He had a 620 camera and he taught me how to develop the negatives. My parents bought me a camera when I graduated high school. I went to college and took fine arts and ended up taking a photography class when a class I wanted was full.

After college, I loaded the wire photo machine at the Arizona Republic. Later I enlisted in the Army, but did no photography there. Eventually, I ended up at the Arizona Republic as a photojournalist.



How did you arrive at Grand? We had lived in the historic district of Phoenix for about 30 years. After retirement we were looking around out here. My brother lives out here so we were familiar with the area. We had a look at a house in Grand which we put an offer on the next day.

What do you most enjoy about Grand Photos? I'm not really much of a 'club' person so I didn't visit the Studio for several years. It's the people, the members, they all have an interest in photography. I went in to trim some prints one day and they were very helpful. Members got looking at these prints, they were very complementary which was a welcoming feeling.

How did you find yourself as an education instructor? I was showing members black and white prints one day and the education director, Margaret Anne Coles, invited me to consider instructing a class. I really don't think of myself as a teacher but I thought it might be helpful to others to learn how I look at images. I'm now instructing a class on Seeing in Black and White. The first class was full and there are a couple of dozen on the waiting list so I'll have another class, or maybe two, after this one. I just want to have fun with this.

What is it about photography that has maintained your interest over so many years? I guess it's just what is coming next. In journalism you have to tell a story in a photograph or two, particularly on the news side. I started out in black and white and though I shoot in color I see best in black and white.

What are your favorite things to photograph? People, missions, landscapes but not a typical landscape but more a series of cactus or a building. Particularly, the specific details of landscapes, like lying on your back and photographing straight up at a Saguaro cactus. I like to photograph horses too.



