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A woman wearing a fake fur dalmation coat walks her dalmation in a Boston suburb. The photo was published in National Geographic as part of a story on Boston in July, 1994.



Photo by Joel Sartore

A mother and daughter share the fun of a carnival ride at the Lemhi County Fair near Salmon, Idaho, in February 1994.

*"You have to like what you do. If you don't like what you do, you won't be successful at it. It doesn't seem like work most of the time."*

**JOEL SARTORE**

Contract photographer for National Geographic



Joel Sartore/Copyright National Geographic

Bent over from years of work, 77-year-old Hartley Bowmar carries a sack of oranges in Northern California, July 1993.

**Sartore**

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for a hardware store or a bank," he said. "But if you don't mind working on Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Mother's Day, your birthday, your wife's birthday, then go into journalism."

Sartore had a chance to be close to his wife, Kathy, as he documented the last week of her pregnancy, the birth of their son, Cole, and the week after the birth.

In a way, he said, he wished he hadn't. "When the baby was being born — actually coming out into the world — I'm making sure he's in focus," Sartore said, "instead of being overjoyed and cheerful and happy that he's crying loudly."

Sartore previously worked for the Wichita Eagle in Wichita, Kan., and the Daily Nebraskan. He got his start as a photographer when a photo he shot for his hometown newspaper, the Ralston Recorder, captured his photographic eye.

He taught himself how to use a camera, he said, and he learned how to improve his techniques at UNL.

"I learned how to meet deadlines," he said. The Daily Nebraskan also helped Sartore hone his skills by allowing him freedom to come up with his own pictures, he said.

He saw a small announcement for an arm wrestling competition at the Nebraska Union, he said, and the photographs he shot at that event remained in his portfolio for several years.

Sartore also credits George Tuck, a UNL

news-editorial professor, with teaching him how to learn from other people's work.

"They say that no one ever has a truly original thought," he said. "All thoughts of mankind or humankind is based on work of other people before."

Tuck said Sartore was unique in his ability to visualize and depict emotion.

"He sees pictures where other people don't see pictures," he said. "He reminds me that funny pictures are possible."

Sartore said one-third of his work was researching his assignment so he knew when the ideal condition would take shape.

For example, Sartore said, he was as-

signed to photograph sea lions off the coast of Alaska. He called biologists with the Alaskan Department of Fish and Game and found out that the sea lions appeared on the coast for two weeks in March. Biologists collect tissue and blood samples from the sea lions at that time.

"These sea lions are worked once a year for a week," he said. "What were my chances of just going up there and finding them out there working with sea lions?"

Sartore's ability to be in the right place at the right time materialized years before he signed on at National Geographic. As a pho-

tographer at the Daily Nebraskan, he asked his editor if he could photograph a llama sale in Palmyra.

"I said 'Can I go? Can I go? Please, please,' and he said, 'No, it's not on campus,'" Sartore said. Sartore talked him into it by saying there might be a university student there.

Still, Sartore said a lot of his situations came about by luck.

"Photography is a lot like fishing," he said. "Some days you get skunked, some days you do very well."

From the beginning, Sartore said he learned to make sure he enjoyed what he did. Photojournalism, he said, is not a job, it's a series of experiences.

"You have to like what you do. If you don't like what you do, you won't be successful at it," he said. "It doesn't seem like work most of the time."

Sartore has received numerous awards for his work, including several Photographer of the Year awards.

While working at the Wichita Eagle, Sartore met James Stanfield, a National Geographic staff photographer. Sartore started sending his work to the magazine every few months until they gave him his first assignment.

"It's all downhill from here," he said, because National Geographic is the peak of his career.

"I've wanted to do this ever since I was a little kid," he said. "Every day's not a joyous thing — terrible food, weather and the travel is grueling ... But it's the greatest job ever."

"I shudder to think what I'll do after it."

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