

THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

CHAPTER REVIEW

“During the years at Rolling Stone, I had a camera with me all the time. You can’t underestimate what it means to be young, to have all that energy, to be obsessed. It was my life.”
—Annie Leibovitz

Family photographs were an important element of Annie’s childhood. She still remembers the dozens of framed pictures on her grandmother’s piano. The picture that is most indelibly printed on her memory is of her mother’s family—eight children and their parents, lined up together on the Atlantic City boardwalk. It was the style of photography that she adopted naturally when she bought her first camera, in 1968. She was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute and was visiting her family in the summer after her freshman year. Her father was in the Air Force, stationed in the Philippines. One of the very first photographs she took (and later published in a book) was of four people—three American soldiers and a tiny local woman—lined up, as in a family portrait.

Annie was studying painting, but she was drawn to photography. She says that her camera gave her a sense of purpose. She could go out into the world, look around, take pictures, come back to the darkroom, and then discuss her work with other students. The immediacy was appealing. She learned how to see and how to frame what she saw in a 35mm rectangle.

Annie learned by doing. The style of photography that was admired at the art institute was personal reportage. Students were encouraged to photograph life around them. In the case of San Francisco in the late 1960s, that meant photographing demonstrations against the Vietnam War, civil rights rallies, and Black Panther meetings. *Rolling Stone*, a brash and funky new magazine started by people not much older than Annie, published some of her pictures and began sending her on assignment. So her career started even before she was out of school.

The grounding in personal reportage colored Annie’s approach to assignment work. She was trained to photograph what interested her, and on assignment she looked for a way to tell a story that meant something. She remained in search of the compelling image.

2.

THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

LEARN MORE

- Learn more about the history of photography, from the daguerreotype to the camera phone, [here](#).
- Annie was gripped by the power of photojournalism as a young woman. Read [this article](#), which contains a brief history of photojournalism. If you'd like to explore the work of history's most prominent photojournalists, use [this list](#) as a base to begin researching.
- Take a look at *Rolling Stone*'s archive of covers [here](#).

ASSIGNMENTS

- Annie's family photograph on the Atlantic City boardwalk affected her deeply. Think back and select a personal photograph that influenced you. What made this photograph so impactful?
- If you don't already do so, consider taking your camera with you every time you leave your house. Keep it around your neck or in a bag that's readily accessible. Remember Annie's advice: trust what you see and find the best way to tell the story. Never let your brain talk you out of taking a picture. If you see a photo, take it! And don't analyze while you're shooting. Let your intuition guide you, and evaluate later.

PHOTO INDEX

2. THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER



Annie's mother's family, Atlantic City boardwalk
New Jersey, 1938



American Soldiers and Mary, Queen of the Negritos
Clark Air Base, The Philippines, 1968

San Francisco Art Institute, 1969-1971



PHOTO INDEX

2. THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

San Francisco Art Institute, 1969-1971



PHOTO INDEX

2. THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

San Francisco Art Institute, 1969-1971



Rolling Stone, early 1970s



Annie Leibovitz

Jann Wenner and Annie Leibovitz