

Photographer captured history at state Capitol

Lansing State Journal - Lansing, Mich.

Thumb through the pages of a Michigan history book, and there's a chance you'll spot a photo by David Trumpie.

It may be a shot of then-President Bill Clinton stealing the stage from then-Gov. John Engler in 1997 when speaking to a joint session of the Legislature.

Or state House leaders Curtis Hertel and Paul Hillegonds laughingly holding a gavel together to reflect the Democratic- Republican tie and shared power in the House in the early 1990s.

It could even be Suzanne Somers relaxing in the ceremonial House Speaker chair during a visit to speak on childhood abuse.

For 12 years, mostly in the 1990s, Trumpie documented a big chunk of the state's history as the staff photographer for the Democratic House caucus. Sure, he snapped hundreds of school field trips to the Capitol and took hundreds of representative portraits. But he also was clicking away as state leaders wrestled with budget and taxing issues and completed a restoration of the Capitol in 1992.

"That building is a fascinating place," said Trumpie, 45. "I felt I was documenting history and was part of something important."

'David has a knack'

Since leaving the job in 2001, Trumpie has run his own business, Trumpie Photography, out of his rural Grand Ledge home. But he still crosses paths with such famous people as James Earl Jones and President George W. Bush as he shoots speaking events and corporate profile photos.



"David is the guy to go to for capturing candid moments for clients and clients in Michigan and across the country," said Stephen Serkaian, owner and president of Serkaian Communications, who hired Trumpie in 1989 when Serkaian was director of communications for House Democrats. "David has a knack for capturing the candid moment to his lens like no other photographer I know. He is a master of his art."

So how did Trumpie end up squinting into a camera? Chalk it up to a nurturing mother and Jacques Cousteau.

A 7-year-old boy growing up in Grand Rapids, Trumpie found his mother putting a camera in his hands, encouraging him to be creative with the lens. He would take shots of the family cat or dog or something curious in the yard, and his love of photos grew.

Years later as a teen, watching the TV show "The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau," Trumpie got the itch to snap aquatic life and pursue a career in photography.

Trumpie built up his photo portfolio, taking shots as a freelancer for a teen section of the Grand Rapids Press, and then studying photography at Lansing Community College. For a college assignment, Trumpie shadowed then-state Rep. David Hollister and was lucky enough to capture him as he took the controls of a twin engine plane for the first time; Hollister was learning how to fly on a Lansing-area airfield.

"David is a great guy," Trumpie said. "He'd understand why I was nervous."

Access to the president

After newspaper internships, Trumpie landed a job as a staff photographer for the House Democrats in 1989, where he crossed paths with many visiting dignitaries, including Clinton in 1997. That day, Trumpie had rare access to the president as he walked the Capitol halls with him and a small entourage. Trumpie marveled that even Secret Service agents knew to stay out of the picture frame.

"That was one of the most exciting days of my life," Trumpie said.

Working as a House photographer, Trumpie developed a side business shooting events for companies and organizations. After the exhilaration of photographing open heart surgery for Sparrow Hospital, Trumpie decided to pursue his business full time and opened Trumpie Photography in 2001.

Trumpie, who also works as the photography manager for the online Lansing magazine, Capital Gains, said his goal with corporate clients is to showcase what makes them stand out.

"I think every company has things that make it unique from their competitors and I think I am good at finding that and showing it in a favorable light," Trumpie said.

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