

MY FATHER



My father, Edward Kostiner, passed away in Montreal, on May 20, 2013, at the age of eighty-six. For most of my life we were not very close, but, towards the end of his life, we became good friends. As a young boy growing up in Montreal I would go with him to most of the Saturday night Montreal Canadiens hockey games, in their golden era, during the late 1950s. I would sit atop

the old Montreal Forum in the press box, next to Danny Gallivan, the Canadiens' English-language announcer, while my father would film the hockey games, with his old Cine Kodak 16mm cameras, for the team and Imperial Oil of Canada, Esso.

In his younger years, after he left McGill University and married my mother, my father started what would become the largest independent film production company in Canada, Edward Productions, on Western Avenue. I would spend many a weekend day either as an unpaid star in a Kool Aid or Simmons mattress commercial or just wondering around the film stages or recording studios, touching buttons and switches I should not have. Those were the days of quarter-inch magnetic tape and 16mm film cameras. I was amazed when the loud film and sound motors would whirl and wind the tapes onto their oversized reels. As time progressed, things changed, and video came into existence. My father was one of the first in Canada to use mobile video to film his commercials and TV productions. He was part and parcel of the success of Editel, one of the first portable, in a trailer, come-to-your-shoot video recording facilities. My father was known worldwide.

Most everyone in Montreal knew that Ed was very influential in his field. He also founded one of Montreal's best-known art galleries in the Place Bonaventure. While selling art was not his forte, he was good at making the frames for the works of art after they were sold. He knew of my interest in photography, so, one day, after I told him that a company in Iowa that made archival photo-print washers had gone bankrupt, his ears perked up. He asked me what the washers looked like, so he could learn how they were made. Once he saw mine, he knew he could design and make one, too. So, in short order, he made a demo prototype of the East Street washer. His air-infusion system was much more sophisticated than the one I was using, and I encouraged him to make a few more.

Within no time at all, the Kostiner Archival Washer became the industry standard. He sold many to schools and to photographers such as Ansel Adams, Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and many other legends of photography. He augmented the print washers with film washers as well as wonderful print easels and film tongs. Ed's biggest problem was that, as soon as he developed and implemented a new product, he lost interest in it and moved on to the next one. He was truly an artist in the way he creatively brought new ideas to the photographic marketplace.

After his stroke last November, much of his short-term memory was lost, but what happened long ago still stayed with him. He remembered, during our many talks over the last six months, most of the early years of my life and what he had done to survive. He remembered standing by the boards in twenty-below weather while watching me play hockey in Montreal at Ponsard Park. He remembered the day I was in the darkroom with him at his old studio when, as I asked him what this light switch did, I simultaneously turned it on and exposed all the film he had shot the previous day. He remembered the photo trade shows in New York City, where it cost a few hundred dollars to have a union guy plug his electrical extension cord into a wall socket. And, most of all, he remembered that he had forgotten so much. But, in the end, he actually told me that not remembering things took a great deal of pressure off his mind.

The other day I looked again at Ansel Adams's book, *The Print* that Ansel gave my father. In the inscription, Ansel thanked my father for all that he had done for photography. Yep, that was my father, Ed, who was not there for me for most of life but, in the end, was there to share and rekindle all those great memories that he still had.