

Grand Canyon from Susan's Point

On a recent photo journey to the Great Southwest, the Grand Canyon was on my list. My travel companion was beautiful Susan McDowell, who happens to be my strictest, most demanding art critic, and loving wife. If you have never been to the Grand Canyon my suggestion is to go. Yes, it is crawling with tourists from all over the world, especially around the old historic El Tovar Lodge, whose location seems to be a magnet for one's first view of the Canyon. Today El Tovar must be viewed with a filter in our perception that returns us to its heyday in the early part of the 20th century. She is still a Grand Dame of period architecture, but her days of elegance are now displayed through glass window cases showing old photos and beautiful china of the era. Nonetheless, as Americans the Grand Canyon is one of our national treasures and a chance to see Mother Nature in Her finest grandeur which has not changed and sits timeless.

The Grand Canyon is not an easy thing to photograph. The Canyon has delivered me many frustrations over the years. It is so all engulfing, we become just like little ants moving about and that awareness is very present while one is on the edge looking out. I have seen images of the Grand Canyon that have touched me deeply. This time the quest was to finally capture one for myself. It was the extreme shadows and the rich colors that happen at different times of day that were to become my hunt. When evening of working day one arrived I was tired from a lot of hiking, scouting, and shooting while carrying my camera and tripod. This first day yielded some decent results, but not quite what was in my mind's eye. Our stay would be short as we are only stopping over on our way to Monument Valley. The next light would be the last opportunity, which meant only early morning for photography and then departure. The alarm goes off at 4:45 a.m. and I hear Susan's voice, "Mackie, get your tired bones up! We are going out there for sunrise"! She has two names for me. One is Elliott and the other Mackie. They both have great depth in their connotations. Mackie being my childhood nickname, and when spoken by Susan means business! Mackie was up quickly and threw back the caffeine, grabbed the gear, and off we went. Driving to different panoramas, hiking along the edge. We did this for miles. The light was becoming magnificent. Suddenly there it was, what had been in my imagination. I remember looking out upon the vista and then down to my right, there was Susan sitting admiring the same scene. This moment of communion with Nature became our joint meditation. There are so many incredible places to stop and view from, but for my photographic intent this was the spot. When back in the studio working on this image I thought of giving this place and photograph my childhood nickname: Mackie Point, with thanks in my heart to Susan for getting Mackie up and out the door. But the Truth is, Susan's Point is a much more fitting name as she was the driving force to make this happen.

E. McD - January 2018