

Online News Digest

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Bill Eptridge photographed Bobby Kennedy's campaign, including this image of Kennedy riding with family and friends in Indiana, May 1968.

Renowned LIFE Photographer Bill Eptridge Dies at Age 75

Eptridge, who photographed Robert Kennedy's campaign and assassination, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, Woodstock, and countless other major stories for *LIFE*, *Sports Illustrated* and other publications, died October 3 of complications from an infection. <http://bit.ly/GBuRWO>

Photographer Detained After Russians Board Greenpeace Ship

Moscow-based freelancer Denis Sinyakov is among 22 people who Russian authorities are investigating for "piracy charges" after they seized the Greenpeace ship *Arctic Sunrise* with 30 people aboard. Greenpeace described the charges as "unjustified." <http://ow.ly/phkmx>

New Haven Police Sued for Arresting Photographer, Erasing iPhone Video

A New Haven man jailed for recording local police arresting three people filed a \$500,000 lawsuit September 18 against the city and several individual officers for violation of his civil rights. An internal police investigation earlier concluded that an officer erred in ordering the photographer's arrest and erasing his video. <http://bit.ly/1gDV8pE>

Jen Kinney Wins 2013 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize

The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University awarded the prize for Kinney's project about Whittier, Alaska, a remote, difficult-to-access town of 200 people on Prince William Sound. Nearly all residents live in a single apartment building. Kinney is exploring how that shapes their lives, and the stories they tell about themselves. <http://bit.ly/1bnmvqd>

CAREER MAKEOVER

TRADING A STAFF JOB AT DISNEY FOR A FREELANCE ADVERTISING CAREER

Diana Zalucky relied on her resourcefulness and tireless work ethic to make a portfolio from scratch, build her name recognition and land big advertising assignments. By David Walker

IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS, DIANA ZALUCKY HAS transformed her career from a staff shooter for Disney's in-house marketing department to a freelance advertising photographer landing big campaigns, most recently for REI and Western Digital's WD channel.

"I was starting from scratch," she says of her transition. She had left Disney with no gear, no name recognition and an incomplete portfolio. How she managed to remake her career so quickly is a story about her relentless drive and her charisma, says Cynthia Held, the Los Angeles-based rep who signed Zalucky only a month after she left Disney.

"She has that fire in her," Held says. "She is constantly [test shooting], and challenging herself. She's not shy about reaching out to art directors and creative directors directly. They sense immediately that she has a tremendous energy and spirit."

Zalucky studied photography at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in Florida and interviewed with Disney soon after she graduated. At the interview, she was asked whether she photographed children. "I shot a bunch of kids that weekend, sent my book



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in and within a month I was hired," she recalls.

She worked for Disney's Yellow Shoes Creative Group, the in-house agency that handles advertising and PR for the company's cruise lines, theme parks and resorts. Within a few years Zalucky was traveling all over the world to shoot lifestyle, travel and food images for big Disney ad campaigns.

"I had made a list of the things I wanted to accomplish while I was there, from [shoot for] a billboard to direct a TV spot," she says. Within six years she had accomplished everything on her list, and began thinking about leaving Disney.

"I always had a fire in my belly to have my own business," she explains.

She had also noticed that Disney creative directors were asking her to re-shoot jobs they had hired outside photographers to do, because they didn't get what they needed. "I thought: Hmm, I could do



© DIANA ZALUCKY

For an assignment to shoot an image library for REI, Diana Zalucky captured candid moments at a campsite where talent and crew slept overnight.

PDNEWS

this," Zalucky says.

After eight years on the job, she finally quit, but it wasn't easy. Disney, she says, gave her "the experience of a lifetime. I could have been there the rest of my career. People did think I was crazy for leaving." It meant giving up not only the security, but all the fun she was having traveling the world and working regularly with celebrities.

But she had set a new goal for herself: to become a top advertising photographer. "I think big, dream big and want to do big," she says. The challenge was that nobody outside of Disney knew her name or her work.

So she turned to consultant Amanda Sosa Stone for help. "I told her what I wanted to do, and asked her what I needed to do to make it happen. She helped me write the map for what I wanted to do next." Zalucky also started calling reps in New York City and Los Angeles "to pick their brains and show them my book."

On her to-do list were all the usual self-promotion tasks: updating her website, updating her portfolio, sending e-mail blasts to prospective clients every six weeks and mailers every two months, "and cold calling people I wanted to work with to get meetings."

Zalucky was targeting travel, lifestyle, food and pharmaceutical clients, as well as ad agencies whose work and client roster appealed to her. "I knew that I should expect and plan to get [no assignments] my first year," she says, adding, "That didn't happen, which was awesome."

Held was one of the reps Zalucky met with. "We knew when we saw her that she had it" and could succeed as



From a self-assigned shoot about windsurfers in the Dominican Republic, Zalucky often uses over-the-shoulder perspectives for a more natural feel, and to pull viewers into the scene.

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Featured photo by Chris Garrison,
renowned extreme sports photographer.



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An older couple that Zalucky shot as a self-assignment to increase the diversity of models in her portfolio.

an advertising photographer, Held says. “That doesn’t mean she didn’t have a tremendous amount of work to do.”

Her portfolio was the first priority. Zalucky says she didn’t want to promote herself using her Disney work. “I’m proud of [the Disney work],” she explains, but the style was “happy and bubbly.” She felt she had to grow as a photographer to get to the next level.

Before leaving Disney, she began doing test shoots to build a new portfolio. Zalucky says she did a self-assigned test shoot at least once a month, relying on friends and professional connections for places to stay and for favors to keep the costs down.

“I would shoot what I wanted in tests, but I would also [ask myself]: What would a client want if he or she were standing next to me?” One self-assignment, she says, was a trip to Tijuana, Mexico, with a friend to photograph *taquerias*. Another was the time she traveled to the Dominican Republic to photograph women windsurfers.

Her new portfolio was about half complete by the time she left Disney, then she “shot like a maniac to fill up the other half,” she says. Her new work was more intimate, with a more “grown-up” color palette, she explains.

Held says that when she first saw Zalucky’s work, the constraints of Disney’s creative style were evident. “She has pushed to make [her work] more natural, more flowing, more personable,” Held says. “She excels at making viewers feel that they are looking at the scene from over someone’s shoulder—not set up, just capturing that moment, which is why viewers can relate to it.”

Held says that Zalucky’s ability to accept criticism and suggestions, then do more test shooting to try to improve, has accelerated her transition. “So many photographers say yes when you tell them to do

something, and then they don’t follow through.”

But nobody pushes Zalucky harder than she pushes herself. She asks art buyers what they want to see in her portfolio, then she shoots it. When she loses a bid for a job, she shoots the brief as a test shoot, so she’s prepared if the clients ever gives her a second chance.

She also keeps close track of ad campaigns, and the agencies, creatives and photographers behind them. “I’m trying to see how things are connected,” she says, and then she uses the information to target her self-promotion.

For instance, she sends promos and tries to arrange meetings with the creatives behind the campaigns that are most similar stylistically to her own work. “What’s worked best for me is meeting people in person and making them comfortable,” she says.

Because creative directors and art directors change jobs so frequently, Zalucky uses LinkedIn to keep up to date on their whereabouts. She also keeps a work diary so she can see what she has accomplished each month, and to keep track of “all the people who showed any kind of interest in me whatsoever.” She also records what she’s shooting, who she met with, what kinds of images were requested and by whom, and what jobs she bids for.

It has been an expensive transition. Zalucky estimates she invested \$30,000 to \$40,000 in equipment; \$50,000 to \$60,000 in marketing and self-promotion; and thousands more in all the test shooting she’s done to build her portfolio.

Now that her name recognition is starting to build and she’s won a few big jobs, she says, “My responsibility is to keep the momentum going.” The effort may be expensive, exhausting and at times discouraging. But even if she’s having a bad day, Zalucky says, “There’s nothing else I’d rather be doing.”