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In the Presence of Heroes



In honor of Memorial Day, this week we remember the veterans of our past wars and those serving around the globe today.

I will take the liberty of making this personal by beginning this week with a tribute to my father, Louis Scheinbaum, who served in the 79th Infantry Division and landed in Normandy on Utah Beach, D-Day plus six, after the initial invasion. He was the recipient of both the Bronze Star and Purple Heart among other medals.

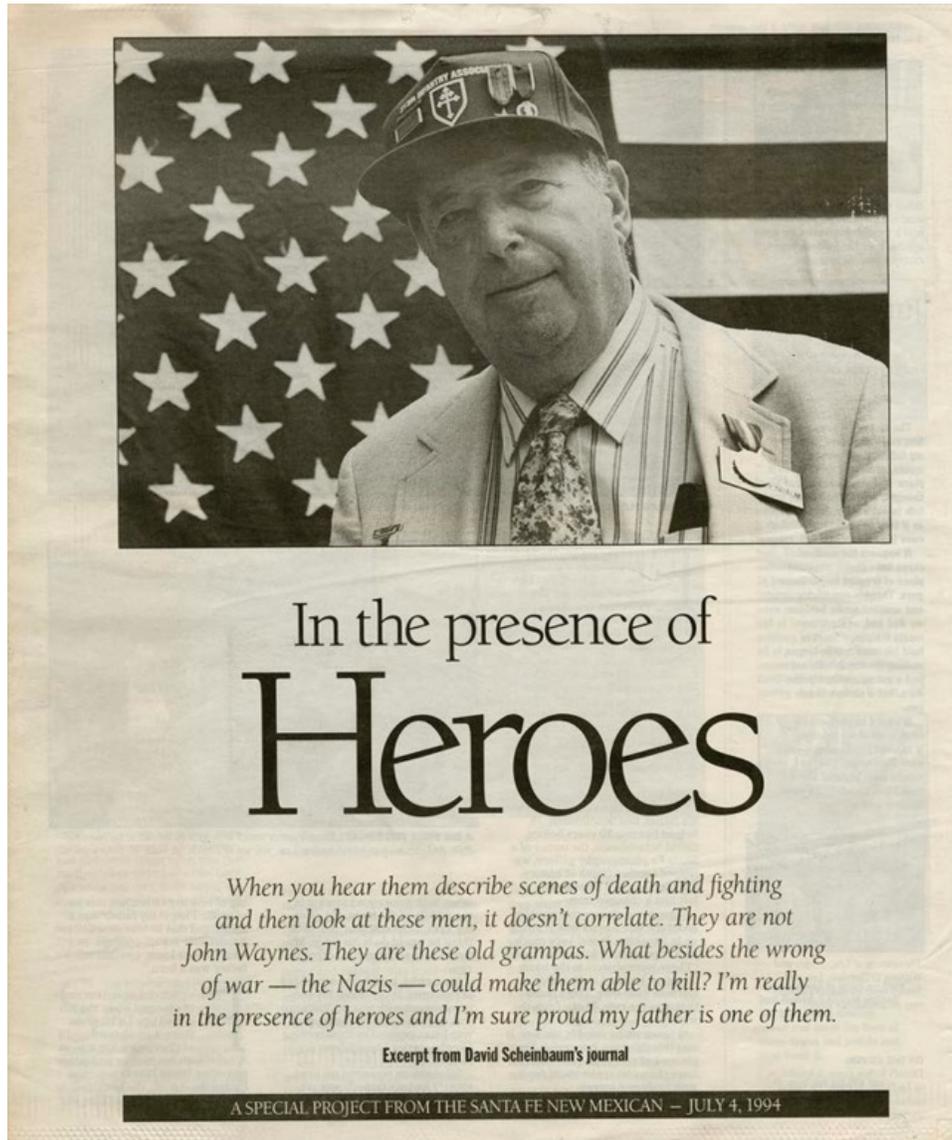
In 1994 for the 50th Anniversary of D-Day I accompanied my parents and about 10 other men from his division to La Haye du Puits, a village his unit liberated. He and my mother were welcomed into the homes of the local townspeople with great admiration. He was honored and we all participated in the Anniversary Festivities.

The trip began in England. It was an amazing journey. We crossed by ferry to Cherbourg. This overnight crossing was long and arduous for these men, mostly in their late 70's and early 80's. I remember my father and the other guys commenting, "this is as bad as the last time we crossed".

Because of the many dignitaries involved, Besides President Clinton, the Queen of England, and the heads of state of other allied countries, the security was intense. I could not have been permitted to photograph without the help of Denise Kusel, Rob Dean, and Kevin Dolan from the Santa Fe New Mexican. My actual credentials arrived in what seemed like a scene from the war itself. While I was on a tour bus in

Normandy the French Military stopped us at a checkpoint. Upon entering the bus they asked if David Scheinbaum was present. I was somewhat intimidated until they handed me the envelope with my security clearance credentials permitting me to photograph.

This trip was a long time dream for my parents. It was my mother's first time in Europe and the first time back for my father. These few days changed my relationship with my parents for the rest of all of our lives. With both of them gone now, I have the memory and pictures which I'm honored to share with you. I had never really kept a journal in a formal way and thanks to Denise Kusel, I promised to write each day. I did, and I'm glad. This supplement to the New Mexican, July 4, 1994, is the result of the trip.



To view the article click [here](#)

Oskar Barnack (1879 – 1936)

Oskar Barnack was an engineer at the Leitz Company. Tasked with producing an instrument that can expose short lengths of 35mm movie film for exposure tests he designed what we now know as the Leica Camera. This camera, once put in the hands of photographers, transformed the medium. It liberated photographers from a large “view” camera saddled to a tripod to one that was now light, portable, and could be used at eye-level. Concurrent with his invention we see many new horizons for photography, including the beginnings of what we refer to as reportage,

photojournalism, and documentary. The agility and speed which one could now take pictures attracted many artists working in other mediums as well.



In keeping with this week's theme, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the role that the Leitz Company played in the rescue of hundreds of Jews that they smuggled out of Nazi Germany before the Holocaust. Ernst Leitz's optic company, founded in Wetzlar, Germany, in 1869, had a tradition of enlightened behavior toward its workers. Pensions, sick leave and health insurance were offered to their employees. When Hitler came to power and was named Chancellor in 1933, the company quickly began assigning their Jewish employees to other overseas facilities thus helping hundreds of families flee Nazi Germany.

Much has been written about the "Leica Freedom Train" and the Leitz family and Oskar Barnack's invention. Please read more about this amazing company and the Leica, which still holds a coveted position as the "Rolls Royce" of cameras.

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 - 2004)



Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)

Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1946

Beaumont Newhall made this photograph of Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1946, at the time of Bresson's exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Beaumont relayed to me that Henri was in the French underground, was captured a few times, and escaped each time. Nearing the opening of the exhibition at MOMA, Beaumont was unable to contact Bresson to make arrangements for him to attend the opening. Beaumont was in constant contact with Chim, (David Seymour), who ran the Paris office of Magnum. Everyone was looking for Bresson. Finally, he was found and on his way to New York. There was a problem with US Customs letting him enter the country. Newhall explained that he was coming for his exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. That didn't satisfy US Customs. They would not permit him to enter without a job. Newhall was able to get him a magazine assignment at Harper's Bazaar at the last minute. That satisfied the US Customs.

Beaumont was asked by *Popular Photography Magazine* to write an article on Bresson. He was then asked to photograph him. It is well known that Henri Cartier-Bresson did not like to be photographed. He felt if people knew what he looked like, he wouldn't be able to work as discreetly as he did. In the New York apartment he was staying at, Henri not only permitted Beaumont to make his portrait, but also offered him his own newly acquired 85mm f1.5 lens for Beaumont to use on his own Leica! In this portrait we don't see just "a likeness" of Bresson, we see his eyes containing the ravages of the war he had experienced for so many years. This 1946 meeting was the beginning of their life long friendship. Often, throughout the years, when Henri was asked to supply a portrait for reproduction, he would call and ask Beaumont to send a print of this photograph.

If we were to select a single person who was responsible for elevating small format, 35mm photography, to an art form, we would have to credit Henri Cartier-Bresson. This moniker was well earned. His work displays perfection in composition paired with riveting subject matter. His technique termed "*The Decisive Moment*" is now legendary.

Today's presentation was originally what some of you will remember as a "sound and slide" classroom tool. This was a filmstrip that came with a cassette tape. We would sit in the back of the classroom switching the filmstrip projector frame bit by frame as the tape played. Each time we heard a "beep" we would switch the picture. *Scholastic Magazine* along with *The International Center of Photography* produced a series of presentations on photography in 1973. This one is particularly special because the commentary is by Bresson himself. Once you adjust to the rhythm of his accent, you will find this presentation one of the most helpful and illuminating 20 minutes in photography. I promise!



Roman Vishniac (1897-1990)

Roman Vishniac was best known for his photographs made of the Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust. His acclaimed book *The Vanished World*, published in 1983, is considered one of the best documentations of Jewish culture from that period. In his introduction to the book, Elie Wiesel writes...

Not to forget, not to allow oblivion to defeat memory: that is his obsession. Defying all dangers, surmounting all obstacles, he travels from province to province, from village to village, capturing slums and markets, a gesture here, a movement there, reflections of hope and despair, so that the victims will not wholly vanish into the abyss – so that they will live on, past torture and past massacre. And he has won the wager: they live still.

Posing as a traveling salesman Vishniac made over 16,000 photographs using his Leica camera. Arrested eleven times for photographing and sometimes for spying, he was not dissuaded from his mission; to preserve the memories of the Jews and to increase the awareness in the West of the worsening situation in Eastern Europe. Of the over 16,000 negatives only about 2000 reached the United States. Some were smuggled by Vishniac himself by sewing them into his clothing and others by a close friend through Cuba.

This photograph, *Granddaughter and Grandfather*, was made in Warsaw, in 1938.



Roman Vishniac (1897 - 1990)
Grandfather and Granddaughter, 1938

In the early 70's I worked on the upper West Side in New York on 86th and Broadway. I worked at G.A.M.E. (Growth Through Art and Museum Experience). We served as liaisons between the Public Schools and the Museums in the area. I was a curriculum developer working with elementary school teachers integrating the arts into their curricula, and then modeling the lessons for them in the classroom. I would frequent a local camera store near 87th Street and would often see a somewhat stooped over older gentleman with the kindest smile and most loving manner. I soon learned he was Roman Vishniac. One would never know the life he experienced from those chance meetings. You never know. Be Kind!

FYI- Vishniac's book, *A Vanished World*, has been printed in numerous editions. It is our go-to gift for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

We look forward to seeing you soon. Please stay safe and healthy.
With all best regards, Janet, David and Andra

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