

The dramatic art of photography

BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Amber Richmond believes that you need to be a bit of a ham to be a good portrait photographer. In fact, she says there isn't a day that goes by where she isn't drawing on her dramatic abilities to elicit a response from people that she photographs.

The 29-year-old Georgetown resident is a theatre graduate who completed her degree at Laurentian University in Sudbury in 1998, but since then she has drifted away from the stage. She sees little difference between acting and photographing people – both, she says, require a strong, outgoing personality. But inevitably she hears the comment, "Oh, but you aren't doing what you went to university for."

Amber says she isn't bothered by any suggestion that she might be wasting her talents. For her, she can see the benefits of being a photographer with dramatic training. When she photographs a baby, takes pictures at a wedding or portraits of the family pet she uses her dramatic abilities to make her subjects relax. And she says that's essential in the kind of work she does. "To be a good portrait photographer it's 75 per cent personality and 25 per cent technical skill."

Growing up in Huntsville, Ontario, she had aspirations to become a professional ski instructor, but her chosen career path veered off in another direction toward acting. Then, after graduation, Amber says she was watching a television show featuring talk show host Dini Petty. The subject was doing what you love to do and the importance of enjoying your chosen career. Amber says she started thinking about the topic and she didn't have trouble figuring out that she wanted to become a photographer. "It was really neat. I just fell into it. I love what I do. I'm the luckiest person in the world."

In Huntsville, she joined a local photo club, took darkroom lessons from one of her old high school teachers, and then in the summer of 2001 she became

an assistant to Heather Douglas, a well-known wedding photographer. "I carried bags, changed lens, watched her." She says Heather was a good teacher to learn from simply because she could establish a connection with people that allowed them to be comfortable in front of the camera.

"It's 75 PER CENT PERSONALITY AND 25 PER CENT TECHNICAL SKILL"

In the summer of 2002, she launched her own career as a portrait photographer based in Huntsville and in that first season she did 18 weddings. Later, when she and her husband Josh moved to Toronto, she did more portraiture, taking photographs of celebrities such as Bea Arthur and Ronnie Hawkins. Ronnie Hawkins was at the Toronto Marriott Eaton Centre receiving an award and his friend George Chuvalo was there as well. Amber didn't get a photograph of the Canadian fighter, but she did manage to get something else. She asked him to sign her shoulder, and she still has a photograph of his autograph attached to a board in her kitchen.

Amber enjoyed her time in Toronto, but she and Josh weren't prepared to stay in the big city. They wanted to live in a smaller community. Amber had come from a small town and Josh had grown up in the Brookville area. His parents, Mary Lynn and Jim Williams, still reside in Brookville, and like Amber and Josh they also purchased their first home in Georgetown.

Amber says the support she's received from her own family as well as Josh's has made all the difference. Her parents, Barb Richmond and Wayne Boughen of Huntsville, kept encouraging her and she remembers them always telling her to "jump off the

diving board because you know how to swim."

With the support of her family, Amber established her own business a few years ago, and she has no regrets. She says she enjoys establishing a relationship with her clients and photographing the special moments in their lives. And she always tries to offer a variety of shots. She'll shoot photographs indoors or outdoors and alternate between black and white and colour film. She also strives to get to the heart of those special relationships that exist between people that know each other intimately. "I like to capture the shots of the in-between moments."

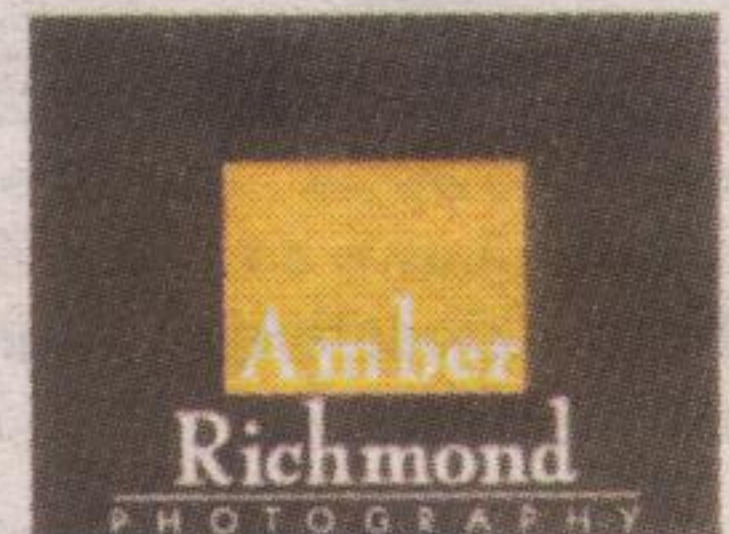
Amber can be reached at 905-873-9507. Her website is www.amberrichmond.com.



Amber Richmond's husband, Josh, built this picture collage board for her that rests in their kitchen in Georgetown. It's covered with portraits of friends and family. Amber, who works as a portrait photographer, says an interest in photography runs in her family. At a family reunion recently, she discovered that her mother's Dad and his brothers all loved taking photographs. When she goes on an assignment, she brings a camera strap with her that belonged first to her grandfather and then to her mother. "It's my Mom and my Grandpa with me all the time."



Real Images!



Cell: 647-227-9078
 Georgetown: 905-873-9507
 Huntsville: 705-789-6260

70 Greystone Cres.
 Georgetown, ON L7G 1G9