

# Eating, sleeping and breathing it...

I was on my annual Thanksgiving week of vacation, but I really don't think I'm so important many would take note.

But during the week, which was filled with little jobs and duties, I managed to find time to do something for myself.

I attended a convention of the Eastern Canadian News Photographers Association (ECNPA) of which I'm a member, and was one of 110 photographers, photo editors and students from Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes who gathered at Loyalist College in Belleville for a weekend of eating, sleeping and breathing news photography, photojournalism and any other related fields.

It's been nine years since I attended one of these seminars, when the group was called Ontario News Photographers Association (ONPA). Back then, the seminars were held at the University of Western Ontario in London.

Arriving in Belleville, I spent the weekend rubbing shoulders with others in the industry, ranging from shooters from the national dailies and the wire services, from weeklies like myself, freelancers, right down to Loyalist students completing their final year in hopes of landing a position to practise the skills they've learned in the college's photojournalism course.

Keynote speaker was Douglas Kirkland, a Toronto native who grew up in Fort Erie and found fame in his early 20s as he left for New York City and was hired as a staff photographer by the now defunct Look magazine. He was later hired by Life after Look ceased publication.

Kirkland is somewhat of an icon in the industry as he is the photographer of choice for many celebrities, including the likes of Liz Taylor, Peter Falk, Anthony Hopkins and Barbra Streisand just to name a few.

I heard Kirkland speak years ago, when he was in Toronto for the kick-off of the Day in the Life of Canada shoot, of which he was one of the head honchos. So I knew his presentation would

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be well worth the drive to Belleville.

Although he breezed through the early years of his career, including his photos of Marilyn Monroe (that last images taken before her death) the main focus of his presentation was his latest project, a coffee table book entitled James Cameron's Titanic.

Kirkland, who has worked on more than 100 movies, was contracted to shoot behind the scenes and production stills for the mega-movie. The images and commentary of his presentation demonstrated the immensity of the project. It was nothing short of a spectacular slide show.

I doubt there isn't a photographer on the face of the earth who hasn't dreamt of enjoying even a fraction of success that Kirkland has.

And in spite of the fact the majority of photographers at the convention are veterans of their craft, so very few actually make it.

But it was interesting— not one of his images were beyond the capabilities of any experienced photographer in the room. In fact, Kirkland tends to lean toward simplicity in his work.

Yet he's successful where so many aren't.

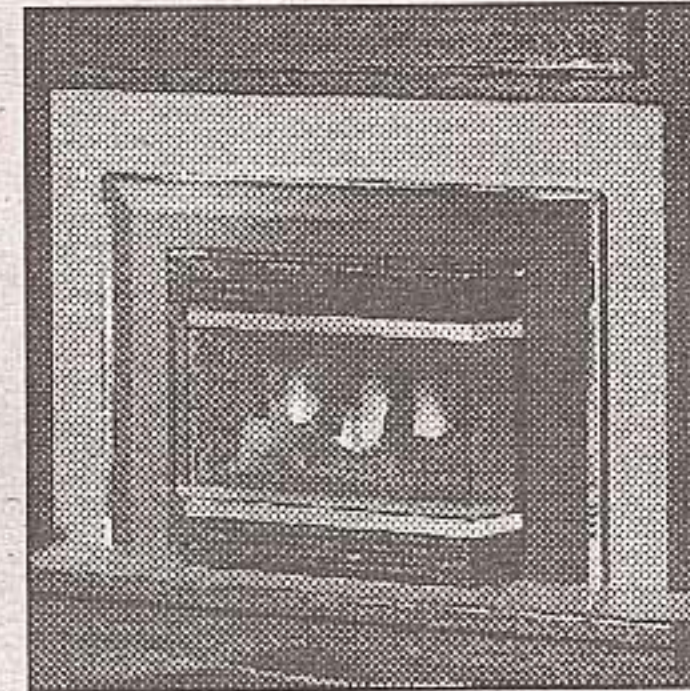
His subtle ego and affable personality are certainly in his favor, with a talent to make the most difficult subject relax or comply.

But once he gets by the location, the composition, and the lighting, Kirkland tends to have that one final talent we all aspire to:

He knows when to push that button.



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