

Ansel Adams' Yosemite Workshop in 1973

Steve Soult has photographed Yosemite since he was a young boy. Until now, his 40-year image collection of Yosemite has not been exhibited. The prints on display are from two different periods in his photographic career. The first set of photographs was done during 1973 and 1976. The second set of photographs was done in 2002. Viewers will find it very interesting to contrast and compare the photographs from these two periods in his career.

Attending Ansel Adams' workshop in Yosemite in 1973 was a turning point for Steve. The workshop was held from Saturday, June 9th 1973, through Sunday, June 24th 1973. After the workshop, he transitioned from documentary photography in a photojournalist style to landscape photography.

Print #1 – Al Weber & Students (Late Sunday Afternoon, June 10th 1973)

Virginia Adams invited everyone, including family and children, to a very informal cocktail party at the Adams' house, which was located directly behind the Ansel Adams Gallery. This was an excellent way for the students and staff to meet one another on an informal basis during the first full day of the workshop.

Al Weber who is standing on the right hand side of this photograph was a member of the staff of the Ansel Adams Yosemite Workshop in Photography. At the time of the workshop Al worked on the West Coast doing architectural and aerial photography for architects, shelter magazines, trade journals, reports, book publishers, and general magazine illustrations. His teaching experience at that time included seven years of developing and teaching evening division classes at the Monterey Peninsula College and private workshops.

Print #2 – Dave Bohn & Pupil (Early Tuesday Morning, June 12th 1973)

Steve's workshop group met at Mirror Lake on Tuesday morning for a field session with Henry Gilpin, Ted Orland, Morley Baer, and Dave Bohn. During the workshop, the light at Mirror Lake was best at dawn. Soon after direct sunlight began to fall on the lake a breeze would normally come up and break up the smooth reflective surface of the water.

Dave Bohn, who is standing on the right side in this photograph, was known as a photographer of the large landscape with a small format camera. His serious work in landscape photography began when he began snow and ice climbing in the Cascades, Alaska, the Yukon, and Karakoram Himalayas. He was an author, publisher, book designer, editor, and producer for Scrimshaw Press.

Print #3 – Ansel Adams Making a Minor Adjustment (Wednesday Morning, June 13th 1973)

Ansel Adams had a hands-on style of instruction during the workshop. He would set up his camera (in this case his Hasselblad 500C with an 80 mm Zeiss Planar Lens and Polaroid Back) and encouraged students to look through the camera to see the composition of the photograph. He then would take a Polaroid photograph and pass it around to the students so that they could see the end result.

Ansel Adams had had many one-man shows and had won awards and honorary degrees by 1973. He was an ardent conservationist and was the Director of the Sierra Club from 1934 through 1971. He was the recipient of the first John Muir Award in 1963.

Print #4 – Morley Baer and His Camera (Wednesday Morning, June 13th 1973)

Morley Baer's camera was an old Agfa Ansco 8x10" Field Camera. Many of these cameras were manufactured during World War II for use by the United States Army Air Force as field cameras. After the war, civilian photographers bought many of these cameras for professional use.

Morley Baer was born in 1916 and received a Master of Art from the University of Michigan in 1938. He began his work as a professional photographer in 1938. He mainly concentrated on architectural photography, especially on historical and contemporary architecture of the San Francisco Bay Area. He was the head of the Department of Photography at the San Francisco Art Institute from 1962 through 1965. His photography was widely published in books and journals dealing with architectural design and history.

Print #5 – Cascading Falls, Hetch-Hetchy Valley and Print #6 – Torrent, Hetch-Hetchy Valley (Thursday, June 14th 1973)

Both of these photographs were taken on Thursday, June 14th 1973, which was a free day on the workshop schedule. John Muir described his first visit to the valley as follows:

After my first visit to it in the autumn of 1871, I have always called it the "Tuolumne Yosemite," for it is a wonderfully exact counterpart of the Merced Yosemite, not only in its sublime rocks and waterfalls but in the gardens, groves and meadows of its flowery park-like floor. The floor of Yosemite is about 4000 feet above the sea; the Hetch Hetchy floor about 3700 feet. And as the Merced River flows through Yosemite, so does the Tuolumne through Hetch Hetchy. The walls of both are of gray granite, rise abruptly from the floor, are sculptured in the same style and in both every rock is a glacier monument.