

# The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 105 No. 33

On the Internet: [www.carmelpinecone.com](http://www.carmelpinecone.com)

August 16-22, 2019

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## Creativity requires work — and other lessons learned along the way

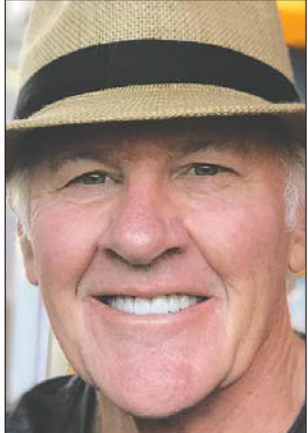
“ONE WORD: Commitment.” That’s how photographer Marc Silber describes the key to creative success. “If you don’t commit, it doesn’t matter how many classes or workshops you take. It’s like tennis — you can take lessons, but you have to play during the week to get good. If you commit yourself to an art form and work on it, you will get better at it,” he promised.

His most recent book, “Create: Tools from Seriously Talented People to Unleash Your Creative Life,” is built around that theme. He wrote it so that anyone could tap into their creativity, given the willingness to put in the effort, the right tools and the proper mindset.

Interviews with successful people from all walks of life back up his premise. That may sound like anathema if your vision of the artist’s life involves a lot

and Silber became intrigued by the process of developing and printing photographs.

His first camera was a Kodak Brownie, but by junior high school, he graduated to a Minolta. By age 12, he said, he’d become a “serious photographer.” In eighth grade, on a school trip to Morro Bay, Silber had his trusty camera as his classmates climbed along a sand dune. He visualized the photo he wanted to take and directed them to run and then jump into the air on his cue. The resulting photo, “Sand Dune Jumping,” is still a popular work that captures the essence of youthful exuberance.



Marc Silber

John Muir’s writings called to Silber at about that same time. He took his first solo backpacking trip at 13, and went for an eight-day trip on his own in Yosemite when he was 15. By 16, he was involved in Outward Bound, an organization that promotes intensive outdoor experiences to build character and leadership skills. “I saw that photography and outdoor stuff went hand in hand,” said Silber.

In high school, he had a “hippie experience” in San Francisco. “At the height of the 1960s, high school was sort of free-form,” he noted. He also had an ac-

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ademically excellent education for a year at a private prep school in northern Vermont, where several family friends took their kids to escape the drug scene.

In his senior year, back in California, Silber wanted to have what he called the “Jack Kerouac experience” — drop out and hit the road. “My parents said, ‘no,’” he recalled.

He was deterred, but only briefly. Soon, he determined what classes he needed to graduate — just one, in social studies — and convinced the high school to let him take a trip to Mexico with one of the teachers to earn credit for it. He and a small group of students went there to build a medical dispensary in the Sierra Madre mountains.

As he recounted in “Create,” “I learned that I had to work much, much harder for this taste of freedom. In high school, I was loafing along, 90 percent asleep. In Mexico, it was raw

manual labor from dawn to dusk . . .” It was a lesson that stuck with him. “It was a lot of hard work,” he said, but he was also able to take some really intimate portraits because people grew to trust him while he was there.

Although he attended the San Francisco Art Institute (Annie Liebovitz was a classmate), as an adult he went to work for years in the business world, ultimately building a management consulting firm. But his art kept calling to him, and he sold his interest in his consulting firm to his partners and went back to it — learning about creating pictures in the digital age in the process.

His highly successful business includes not just taking pictures, but teaching others the art and craft of doing it themselves. He loves to help people reach their goals, starting with a job teaching mountaineering for the National Outdoor Leadership School when he was 19.

Silber also has a popular YouTube show called “Advancing Your Photography,” which shares a title with one of his books. He also authored “The Secrets to Creating Amazing Photos.”

### Unexpected creativity

His wife, Janice, is his “art director.” “I take the photos and she finds the right frame and the right spot on the wall,” Silber said. And his lifelong love affair with the outdoors has become part of their love affair, as well. “We do a lot of hiking. She’s a trooper,” he said. They share a home in town, near the Mission.

With “Create,” Silber said, he wants people who know they’re creative to find renewed energy, and people who think they don’t have an artistic bone in their bodies to re-ignite the spark that he believes everyone is born with. “Creativity isn’t just in art or music. It can be part of life as a whole. It comes up in unexpected places, like being an entrepreneur or using social media to get your name out,” he said.

Silber will give a talk on his book at Harrison Memorial Library on Wednesday, Aug. 21, starting at 6:30 p.m. Visit the library’s website at [ci.carmel.ca.us/library-event/creativity-marc-silber](http://ci.carmel.ca.us/library-event/creativity-marc-silber) for additional information. “Create” is available at River House Books.

## Great Lives

By ELAINE HESSER

of espresso sipping on sunny patios or hard drinking and staring off into space, waiting for inspiration to strike.

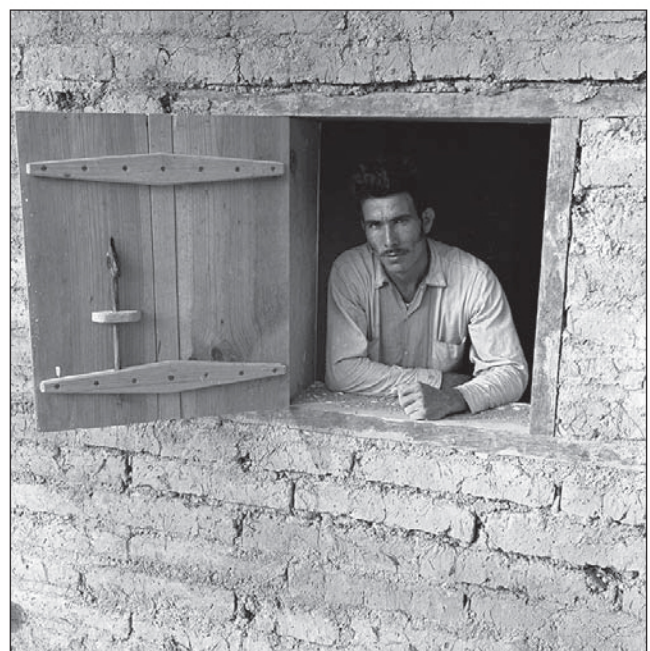
Instead, as Silber pointed out, no less a luminary than Jack London churned out 1,500 words every morning. And Stephen King reportedly produces 2,000 words daily.

Silber discovered hard work as a means to an end while growing up in the San Francisco Bay area. His father was a physician and his mom was active in the community, and both were diligent in all they did. They sent him off to an elementary school that he said fostered his creativity. “It was rather bohemian. My parents took a big risk,” he said.

### Exuberance

He was also surrounded by creative types, including a pottery teacher who traded plates for health care with Silber’s dad.

A passion for photography bloomed early, when a teacher asked if he’d like to learn how things worked in a darkroom,



While in high school, photographer Marc Silber went to Mexico to help build a medical dispensary. He befriended the people who lived there, resulting in photos like this one, called, simply, “Fausto.”