

From the Editor

Beauty Is a Snap for This Psychology Major

HOW DOES A KID FROM BROOKLYN, NY, with a degree in psychology from Long Island University, end up as the official wildlife photographer of Florida? Do you believe in messages from above? “At my college graduation,” explains Alan Maltz, “a speaker was droning on when a voice in my psyche instructed me to pick up a camera. I bought my first one that day, took it with me when I departed for Europe the following day and started shooting right away. The rest is history. The first image I got back in 1970—which I called *Meeting in Marseille*—is still a popular item in my Key West gallery today.”



STEFAN ANDREEV

- “My favorite of all time, *Guiding Light*, became the cover of my *Visions of Beauty* book,” Maltz says. “I feel it was some spiritual pull that guided me to the right spot at the right time. I got to Fort Myers Beach just before sunrise and began trudging across the mud flats. My rubber boots got stuck in the muck and I just left them there. Before me were all the elements I dream of: a breathtaking sunrise and seven or eight birds, including a scarlet ibis and several roseate spoonbills. Birds are my passion. It was all so dramatic, so satisfying.”

The mystery and magic that got Maltz into the business come stunningly off the pages of his newest book, *Journey Through Paradise*. In this fifth book of his career, he captures the majesty of Collier County’s natural beauty (see “Paradise Found” on p. 94). Maltz has won many awards over the years and has his works displayed in private, public and corporate art collections all over the world. Sixty images from his fourth book, *Visions of Beauty: The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel*, are now on permanent exhibition at Southwest Florida International Airport. From his gallery in Key West, he recently shared with us memorable moments of his 43-year career and let us in on the creative process behind *Journey Through Paradise*.

The Unforgettables

- The assignment from the Miami Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, Maltz says, “was to get the be-all-end-all shot of the city.” He arranged for a helicopter and wanted to get a sunset image: “I had to postpone it three or four times because of the weather, but, even so, there was plenty of lightning when we finally went up. I got the sunset, but after that a huge mushrooming cloud with lots of lightning in it quickly formed. I asked the pilot to keep hovering while I shot as fast as possible. Very edgy. It looked more like Hiroshima than Miami Beach. I called it *City in Charge*.”

Capturing Collier County

The idea for *Journey Through Paradise* was to shoot the Everglades, the gulf, the beach and the city of Naples. Who would have thought that the payoff shot in Naples would be the most dangerous? He aimed to get Fifth Avenue South, the beach and a sunset into one defining photograph (see p. 97). “I first tried climbing 127 feet straight up on a construction crane, but it was no good,” Maltz says. “I was carrying too much equipment. The next day, I got an assistant to carry my gear and this time it was a success, except for the angle. I had to maneuver 100 feet across to the bridge part of the crane to be directly over the yellow line in the street.” The result was high—and mighty—photography. As ever, Maltz didn’t show the least bit of fear. (He says he’s never afraid: “I once enticed a large water moccasin into the striking position for a more compelling shot. I was close enough to see its tonsils, if it had any.”)

So the young man who fell in love with Florida years ago while visiting a friend has returned the favor. His images just make the Sunshine State glow for us. Did that college degree in psychology bring special dimension to his work? “Only in doing business with my clients,” he says, smiling. Good for him, but, in the meantime, with a few clicks along the way, he’s brought lots of feel-good moments to a world of admirers. ♣

—David Sandler