



## Peter Robert Thompson

July 1, 1949 - May 7, 2024

### Dateline - Mineral Point

Peter Robert Thompson died peacefully of natural causes on May 7, 2024 in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. He is survived by cousins Molly Kantner Reed and John Kantner who live in Pennsylvania. Born in New York City on July 1, 1949, Peter was raised by his mother, Jean Bartelme Thompson, his beloved Uncle John Bartelme, and his grandparents, Clarence and Jean Bartelme, all of whom instilled in him an endless curiosity and wonder for our world.

Photography was, for Peter, the perfect path to explore and (in his own words): “celebrate the majesty of what is common, simple and ordinary. These are the places, people and things we share time with on our planet that exist quietly.” His photographs of the western United States celebrate the poetry and simplicity of the vast, stark landscapes he discovered in his travels.

Along the way, Peter studied and apprenticed with Al Weber, Jim Ginney, Oliver Gagliani, Richard Burton, Walter Chappell and Ansel Adams. In 1985, Peter founded LightFALL Photographic Works, offering small group workshops throughout the West and Southwest United States, often with other master instructors. He regularly taught photography workshops at colleges and art centers across the country, including the Victor School in Victor, Colorado, the Evanston Art Center and the Adler Cultural Center in Illinois, and was an artist in residence at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin. Peter’s work has been exhibited both individually as well as with many group shows in Illinois, Wyoming, Washington, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska,

Pennsylvania, Sweden, and Israel. Major exhibitions include Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin; Webster University, St. Louis, Missouri; and Dubuque Museum of Art, Dubuque, Iowa. His images are part of the permanent collection of the Polaroid Corporation and the George Eastman House.

Peter chose an unscripted life. He grew up in Northbrook, Illinois and lived in the family home, except when he was on the road, for about fifty years. From home bases in Mineral Point, WI, Carrizozo, NM and Northbrook, IL, he traveled the back roads to explore, learn, and photograph, particularly the West. During these sojourns over the years, he witnessed impacts on the natural landscape caused by humans and climate change, and he concluded, "What used to be wild, free, and healthy is not quite so today." Overwhelmed at times, Peter attempted to highlight these concerns and raise awareness in others through his photographs and his writing.

Friends also gave him hope and helped buoy him through difficult times. He loved meeting people and stayed in touch with many, as evidenced by very thick address books. A prolific letter writer and gift giver to myriad friends and colleagues, Peter was always open to learning more about the world, whether through his "big adventures," watching and listening to movies, music and public radio, or by reading (and sharing) the latest books, magazines and poetry. Peter enjoyed long conversations with the interesting people he had the uncanny fortune to meet. He also cherished the camaraderie and inspiration found at the annual Photographers Rendezvous in California and New Mexico. The titles of his exhibitions: In Search of Wonder, In Praise of Simple Places, Into the Big Wide Open, and We are a Part of Something Larger, all reflect Peter's reverence and awe for the earth's wonders and creatures:

"Those of you who've known me well know that I've devoted a significant portion of my life to making high quality black and white photographs that speak to the beauty of the natural world. These pictures are only a glimpse into the vast Big Wide Open as I see it. It's awesome out there. You really

should go, get yourself lost on purpose, spend a night or two in the desert, howl at the moon along with the coyotes into a night sky so filled with stars that it challenges your imagination. Listen to the quiet, allow your mind to wander, consider the rock, the air, the sun and wind on your face, the smells of the land after a storm, watch the colors and the other living things. And then ask yourself again what it all means. It's not called 'Mother Earth' for nothing. There's always more to the picture than meets the eye!"

No memorials or services set at this time.

# Tribute Wall

TE

“ I have several of his pictures hanging on my wall as well - his love for people and beauty shows in every photograph he took. We loosely kept in touch throughout the year. Realizing I hadn't hear from him in a while, and I, too, decided to look him up landing on this page. I'm happy to read that he was a positive light in so many people's lives. He is missed and definitely shared his love with so many.

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**Tessa** - July 09, 2025 at 02:51 PM

MH

“ Hello everyone, I met Peter when I was in high school, and I was one of the intrepid adventurers on the backpacking trip he led in Wyoming in the summer of 1973. He taught me so much about nature and wilderness that has shaped my relationship with the natural world for more than half a century, and we remained friends. Several of us in the Midwest are planning a gathering where we will be remembering Peter and giving away some of his photographs on Sunday, June 22 in Winnetka. Please email me at [melanie.a.herzog@gmail.com](mailto:melanie.a.herzog@gmail.com) or call/text (608)335-9738 for more information.

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**Melanie Herzog** - May 23, 2025 at 12:41 PM

DE

“ Peter, I miss you so much. You were such a bright light in this world — a true and compassionate friend. You were always there for others and always true to yourself. I wish I had the chance to say goodbye, my dear friend. Please watch over us and keep sending your love, which was so precious to us all. The world was truly a better place with you in it.

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**Debra** - April 29, 2025 at 01:43 PM

MM

“ Several of Peter’s photographs are hanging on the walls in my home. We hadn’t seen each other in years, but for some reason I decided to look him up and then unexpectedly discovered the sad news of his passing.

*I met Peter in 1982 when he was an instructor in a photography class at the Evanston Art Center. He was charismatic, funny, and creative. Peter had expertise of the zone system and made us aware of other B/W photographers such as Minor White, Ruth Bernhard and of course Ansel Adams. He told the class how nervous he was when at his Yosemite workshop Ansel Adams tossed a roll of film to him to develop. Peter’s passion for and WONDER of photography was contagious..*

*Peter encouraged his students or as he would say, silverchasers, to attend the workshops out West. I jumped at the chance to explore my artistic skills in the field and in the next few years went on photo trips to Driggs, Idaho, Colorado, the Kanab, Bryce and Zion area in Utah and Chaco Canyon, New Mexico learning from such master instructors as Jim Ginney, Kevin Fuller and Richard Burten. We photographed in the most exquisitely beautiful country I’d ever seen.*

*PRT and I became friends and some of his friends became my good friends. There were many memories over the years:*

*Small get togethers with dinner and conversations, drinking wine, hearing regularly the Crosby, Stills & Nash’s Daylight Again LP on his stereo in Northbrook, camping in the mountains and having it snow, and getting stranded in Iowa and while we waited for his VW van to be repaired, photographing the locals and a retro gas station. Peter often sent me interesting Polaroids from his ventures out West.*

*Peter was a seeker, adventurer and a romantic, a one of a kind individual always experiencing the world to its fullest. I am grateful to have known him.*

*Peter's photographs are spiritual and reveal his reverence for the truth and beauty of Mother Earth. He was a gift and leaves behind an amazing body of work for the ages to ponder.*

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**Marla (Peifer) Mazzenga** - March 24, 2025 at 05:07 PM

SS

“ *I knew Peter briefly at the Winnetka Community house in the summer of '71. His birthday was July 1, mine was July 2, and we celebrated together with sub sandwiches and beer. That fall we went our separate ways, though I have often thought of him in the ensuing 50+ years. He was one of the most interesting people I have known; I brought my new wife home to meet him and others the following summer and regret our paths never crossing again. RIP Pete. - Steve Standefer Feb 13, 2025 at 7:23 a.m.*

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**Steven R Standefer** - February 13, 2025 at 08:24 AM

JN

“ *I had the great good fortune of meeting Peter at Victor School in Colorado in the summer of 1984, and remember him as someone who exuded love and kindness and joy. He was effervescent! He gifted me a photograph that summer that has hung on my wall for the past 40 years and, even after 4 decades, still fills me with wonder. We stayed in touch through letters and phone calls for several years but eventually lost track of each other. This morning I was spending a few moments with that photograph he gave me and thought to see if I could find him, which brought me to this page and this sad news. I am saddened to read this but deeply moved by these testaments to his generosity of spirit. He was a fine human being.*

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**J Naslund** - December 09, 2024 at 02:14 PM

JP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Jennifer Page** - July 01, 2024 at 04:11 PM

JH

“ *I met Peter in Death Valley over 20 years ago, and we shared many good times during his California visits. His photographs have graced our walls all these years. We kept in touch, but haven't seen him for years. He was fond of sending us boxes of Harry and David pears. I talked with him on the phone not more than two weeks before he died, he invited me to spend a night in his New Mexico house, where I'd be soon visiting, I had no clue his end was near. I feel a huge loss, and wish I knew more about his Wisconsin life and friends. Anyone who would care to exchange a few memories please call me, 510-845-6900. Farewell to a very special man and artist. Thank you Peter, from Jon Harris*

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**Jon Harris** - June 29, 2024 at 01:18 AM

JP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Jennifer Page** - June 10, 2024 at 02:59 PM

JP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Jennifer Page** - June 10, 2024 at 02:58 PM

JP

“ I met Peter 50 years ago at the Winnetka Community House where he started Cornflakes, an outdoor program for preschoolers. A morning of adventure in nature-- climbing hills, turning over a rock to find ants, watching them, wondering about them..., sharing a snack at the beach, learning how to be a good friend. That was Peter. As each child left for home, Peter would call out with a Big smile, "Happy Day!"

*In 1979 Peter organized a trip to Alaska with 4 of his close friends. We lived out of his VW bus, camped, cooked, and hiked together, took a float plane above the Arctic Circle where we camped on snow at Walker Lake. All a grand adventure in beauty and personally transformative. On a recent call I thanked Peter for Alaska and he replied, "I think about that trip all the time..."*

*Peter, rag wool socks, hiking boots, and shorts--even in winter. Peter carried the wilderness within him. Peter loved people and the natural world so very much.*

*Peter was great fun, a gifted photographer, and a devoted friend, calling often during hard times. He came to the hospital when our Dad was in the ICU, and he travelled to visit dear friends who were ill. Peter had a large capacity for caring and being fully present with the people he loved.*

*I can hear Peter in my head now, "Tell everyone I love them. "*

*In gratitude,  
Jennifer Page*

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**Jennifer Page** - June 10, 2024 at 02:39 PM

JR

“ I met Peter at the Southwest Rendezvous for photographers. He had an affection for NM and would stay and visit for parts of the year. We exchanged photographs many times. I have the only copy of one of his books. I cried when I read it, as I cry now knowing he is gone.

Peter was a very generous man to many. I really appreciated that about him.

We shared many meals together. Often we had different opinions, that ultimately brought us closer. I will miss him dearly.

When I had my back surgery, he would call and check on me often, just to see how I was doing. I am grateful for that kind of support.

Thank you for being a friend Peter.



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**Jim Rodgers** - May 18, 2024 at 09:00 PM