

## **ALUMNI OF THE MONTH**

**Name:** Gary P. Foster

**Year of Graduation:** 1968

### **What have you done since graduating from Port Allegany High School?**

My love of the outdoors and a desire to capture and share what I saw, led me to photography. I remember asking my sister Joni if I could borrow her Kodak Instamatic camera, and if she would show me how to put the film in and take pictures with it. She did but the pictures I took did not capture what I had hoped for. So I began reading about how to take better pictures. A little while later, I purchased a used 35mm camera and took a course in photography that gave me a good understanding of the basics along with a foundation to build on. Through practice and learning I became more confident and found myself getting hooked on photography. I knew that this was a career I wanted to pursue. In 1971 it was time to test the waters. In those early days I did mostly black and white outdoor portraits. I also began photographing weddings. In 1974 I opened my first studio on North Brooklynside Road in Port Allegany. That same year, I met my wife Linda. Our first date was a portrait session of her.

Not long after opening the studio, I became a member of several professional photography organizations including the Professional Photographers of America (PPA). I soon began attending seminars and conventions. I had the privilege of studying with numerous Masters of Photography whose work I had long admired. This, along with entering print competitions, elevated my work to a new level. Since then I have won many Regional, State and National Awards including : Highest Scoring Print, two "Court of Honors" from the Professional Photographers of New York, and have had work chosen to be included in the PPA traveling loan collection, a collection of images representing the best professional photography on a national and international level. Most of my award winning images have been from high school senior and family portrait sessions.

In the early 90's after about 500 weddings over a 23 year period, I decided to phase out weddings and concentrate more on what I enjoyed most. That was portraits, especially high school senior portraits.

In 1996 I received my "Master of Photography" degree from the Professional Photographers of America at the National Convention held in Orlando Florida. Linda and our two daughters, Cassie and Lindsay, were there with me for the presentation.

After having photographed several thousand area seniors over the years, I continue to enjoy working with this age group. May 2021 will mark 50 years of full-time professional photography for me. I am scheduling fewer sessions now, but have no plans for retiring any time soon. I feel very fortunate that I have been able to follow my passion and do what I love doing throughout my career. I am grateful for my family who have all been supportive and encouraging along the way. I am also grateful for my clients, many who have become friends, that made it all possible.

" Work is only work when you would rather be doing something else". (Dr. Wayne Dyer)

### **Where do you currently live?**

Port Allegany, PA

### **Who was your favorite teacher in high school? Why were they your favorite?**

Mr. Sturga, my art teacher. He had a good sense of humor and was warm, friendly and caring. It was a good class. Also Mr. Dann who was my gym teacher. I was not fond of gym class but I liked Mr. Dann anyways. He had a nice personality and was very kind and caring especially one-on-one. He had known my dad who had gone to the gym to work out on open gym nights.

### **What is your fondest memory of Port Allegany High School?**

Playing guitar with "The Changing Tymes" , a rock band that Kim Klein and I had formed. We played for some of the school dances in the gym. We did our best trying to sound like my heroes, "The Rolling Stones". For some reason we never got a call from "The Stones" asking us to come and join them (haha). I am envious of fellow alumni Bobby Taylor who had the opportunity to work with the Stones doing their audio.