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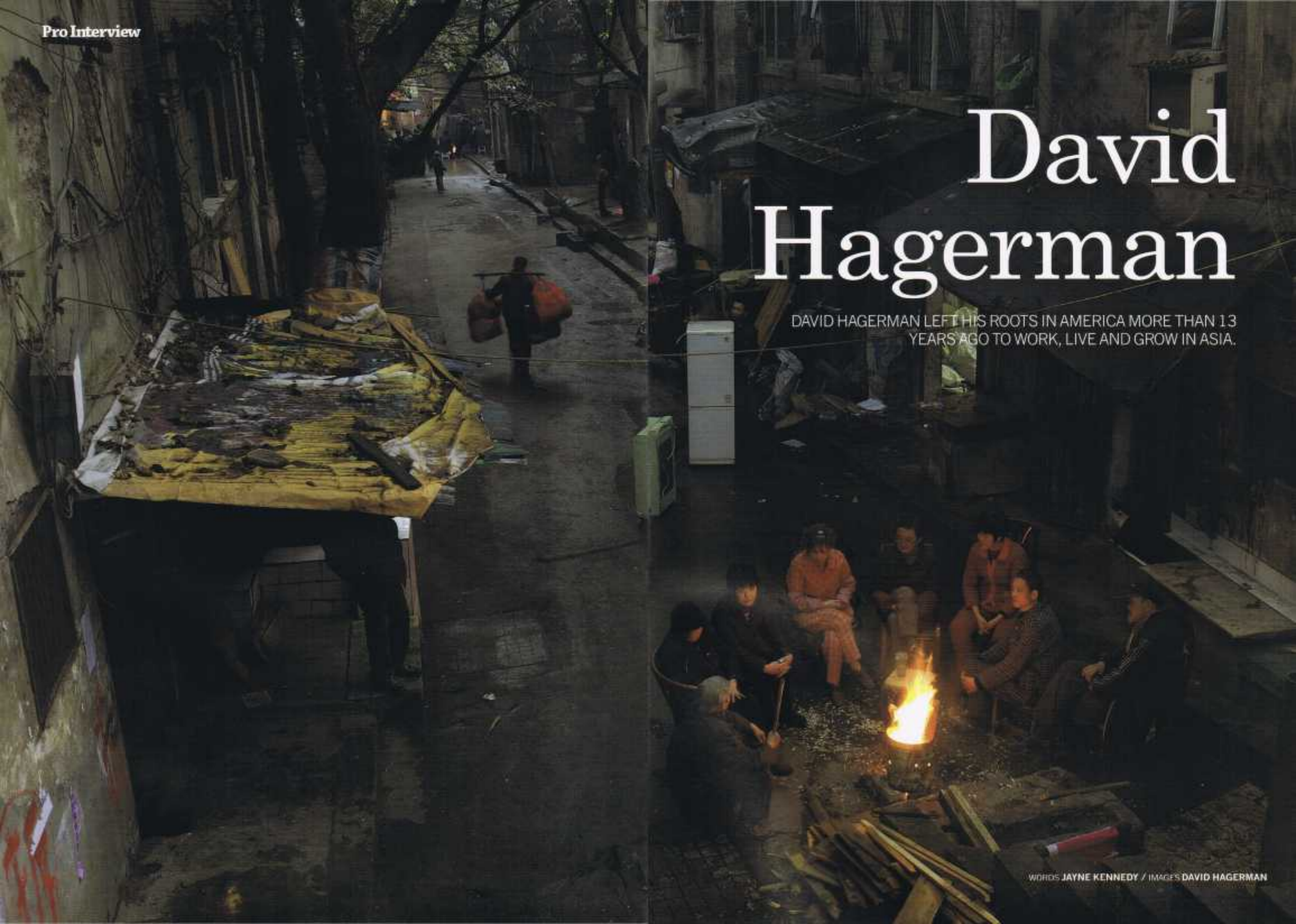


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David Hagerman

DAVID HAGERMAN LEFT HIS ROOTS IN AMERICA MORE THAN 13 YEARS AGO TO WORK, LIVE AND GROW IN ASIA.



ON ANY GIVEN DAY, you'll find David Hagerman gliding through the streets with his trusty camera glued to his hands, ready for action. He'll turn to you with a sophisticated smile, willing you to open your arms in a welcoming gesture, charmed by his openness and transparency. If you'll let him (he's made it a point to always ask first), he'll snap up a few portrait shots and strike up a conversation over food. Eventually, he'll be off again and you'll be left with a budding friendship and a pleasant memory. A few months later, you may get a familiar tap on the shoulder and be faced with David once more. This time, he's got a print for you to keep, the very same image he took of you earlier in the year.

Let me tell you, very little of my own friends have ever done that for me, let alone a stranger!
 "Have you heard of the saying 'getting closer with photographs?' Well, I believe photography is a platform to get to know others better. I'm interested in subjects that draw us closer to each other, bring together different cultures and various types of people. Every few years, I make it a point to come back to the places I've visited - not only does it allow me to view things in a different perspective but I get the chance to find the same people I met previously and really develop a relationship with them. I love seeing their reaction when I hand them a print of themselves. This journey, this story, this feeling is what drives me to photograph," shared David.

David has lived in Asia for a long time, and grew fond of the bustling street life that seemed to be lacking in America and Europe. His father, a professor, often travelled overseas and brought back images that fascinated David from a young age. Knowing that there was a whole world waiting to be discovered, David's passion for people manifested through photography and eventually let him travel across continents - a dream come true.

After college he bought his first SLR, and back then thought ten rolls of film per year was a massive amount of photography. In 2006, digital SLRs boomed and David immediately understood that a dynamic change was about to go underway. Slightly reluctant to move from analogue to digital, he bought his first DSLR. Now, without the aid of technology, David wouldn't be able to count how many images he takes per year.

When he landed in Asia, he saw how much action happened just outside his doorstep. From markets, festivals to 'mamaks' and more, David wanted to capture it all. He takes these real, raw impressions of human interaction that we see every day on the streets we walk past and live on, in our favorite coffee shops, and on the roof of that abandoned condominium next door and captures it in one monumental image.

Through his eyes he shows everyone how the mundane and the normal can be beautiful and inspiring. He gives us the privilege of seeing a piece of our life, that one moment we can never take back or repeat again, captured so perfectly, kept alive in the form of a photograph.

This is what David Hagerman does. He is a visual storyteller with the power to make you see from angles you never knew existed.

Inspired by the simplicity and honesty of Naomi Duguid's photography, David fell in love with her approach, particularly the way she shot food. "Her work depicted real people eating real food. It was one of the greatest



DAVID HAGERMAN

David Hagerman left his roots in America more than 15 years ago to work, live and grow in Asia. After working all over this bustling continent, David left the corporate world to work for himself as a travel, leisure and food photographer. Mesmerized by the power of photography, he has dedicated his life to telling stories through pictures, forging relationships with the subjects of his work worldwide. This marks the 5th year he has lived as a full time photographer, and rest assured, there will be many more to come.

OPENING PAGE:

Here, residents of a historic neighborhood in Chongqing, China warm themselves around a fire days before they are relocated to make way for redevelopment.

TOP:

A scene from a typically bustling morning market in Chiang Mai.

LEFT:

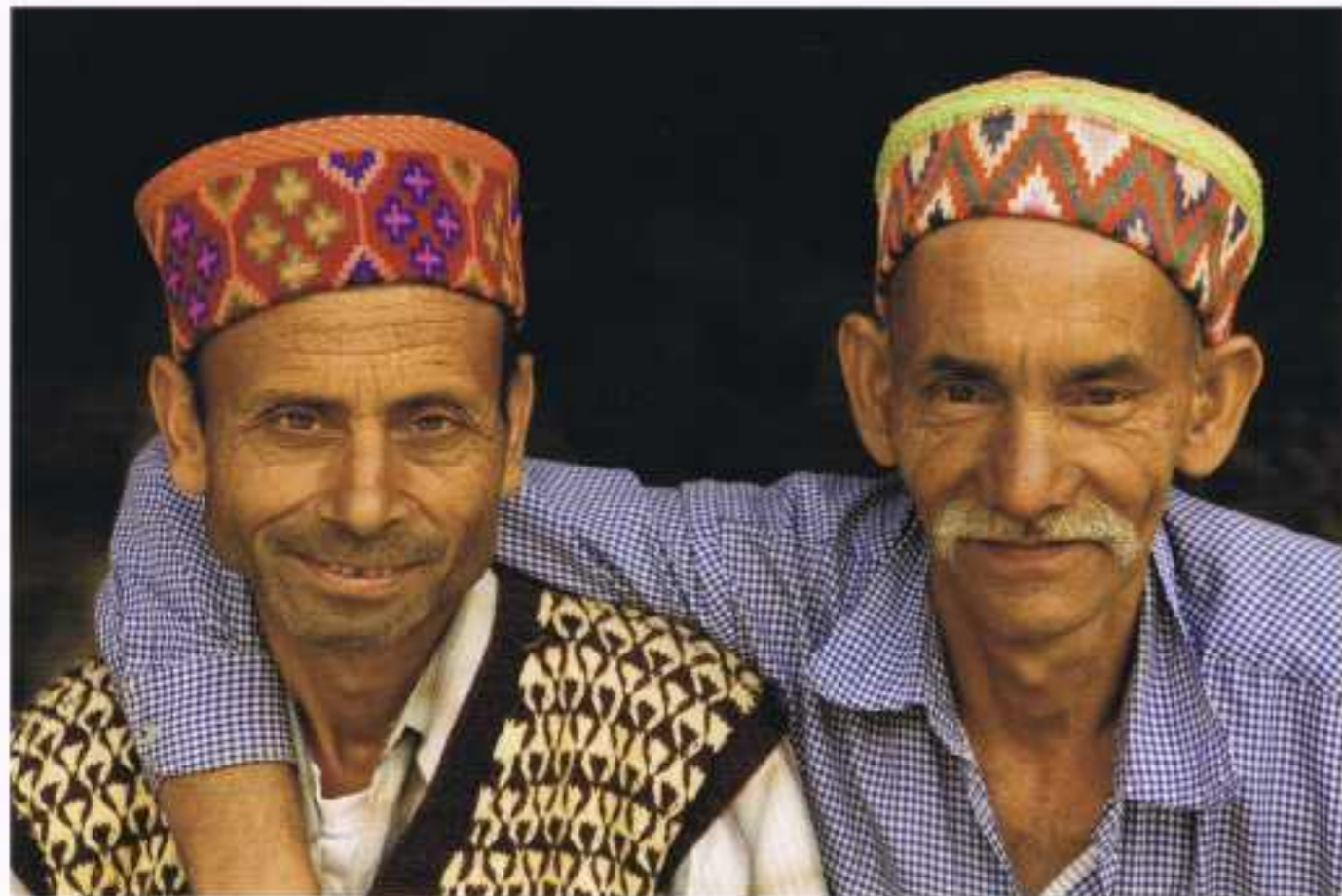
A nocturnal photo seller and her customers in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

RIGHT:

A dog hopes for scraps as three men share a meal in a Buddhist temple in Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Color in everyday life: strings of sundried vegetables hang above a stall in an ancient market in Gaziantep, southeastern Turkey.



"Even if communication is a barrier, everyone understands body language."

influences in my personal style. It's almost photojournalistic. However, I believe that you can get inspiration from everyone and learn something new from anyone, regardless of how much experience or awards they have," shared David.

"I'm a travel, leisure and food photographer by profession, and people are always my subject matter. It is all about capturing the connection. This is why I travel: to meet and interact with other people in other countries. Even when it comes to food, I shoot in a way that is raw, unaltered and natural. I want the food to look as real as possible, as if it were sitting right in your hands. Not like shellac and plastic," said David.

With internationally recognizable clients such as Time Out KL, Wall Street Journal Asia, Lonely Planet and New York Times, I expected him to be difficult to talk to and hard to crack. Luckily for me, David was humble and soft spoken and makes conversation effortlessly. It's easy to imagine him cruising through crowded wet markets, stopping to chat with a vegetable seller while taking a consensual shot of him laughing at David's attempt at communicating in a foreign language.

"Even if communication is a barrier, everyone understands body language. I do make it a point to always have my camera out so they know I have the intention to photograph them. I usually approach a person and move a little closer, reading their body for positive responses. What I find is that you only have a minute to take



OPPOSITE PAGE

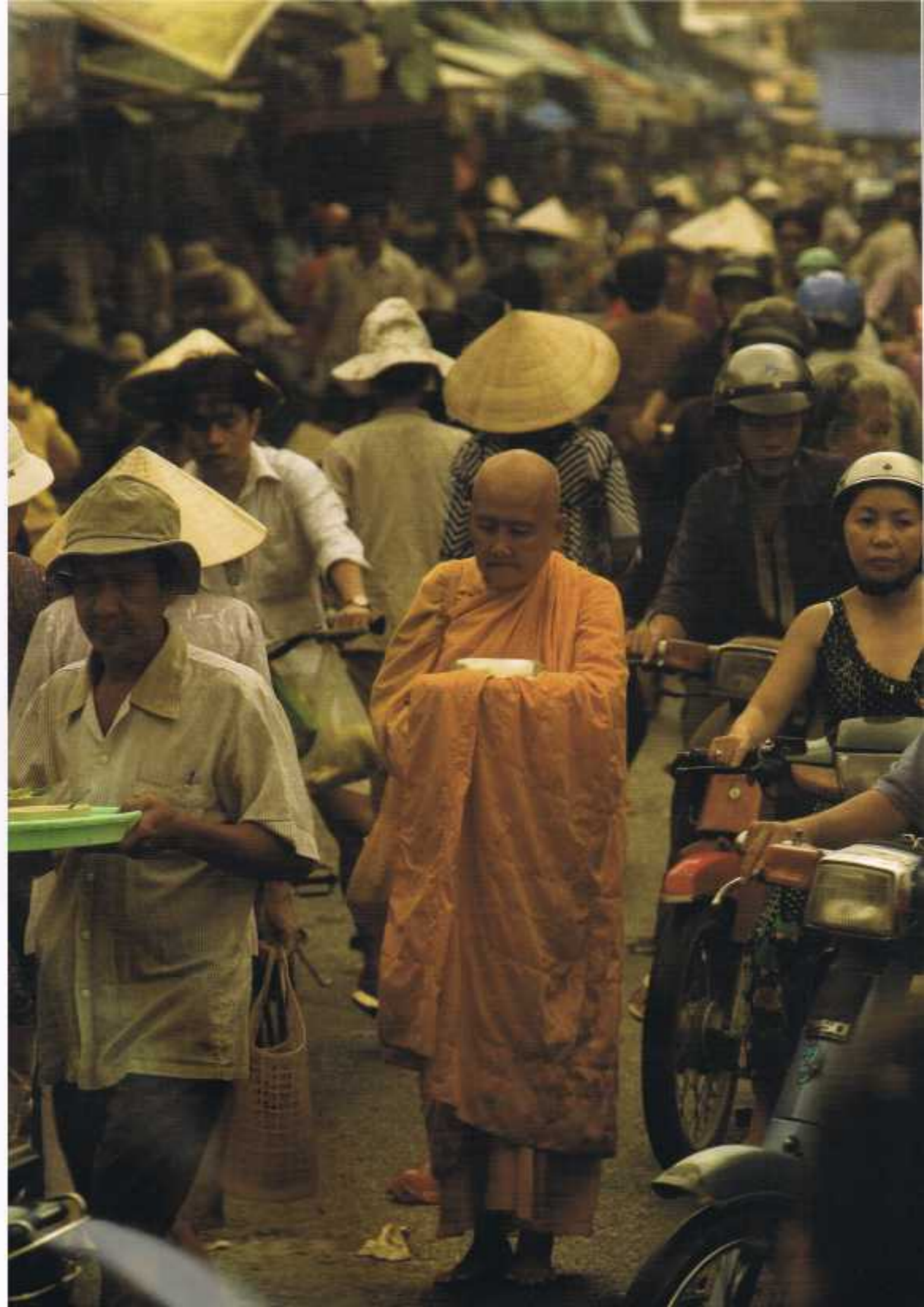
A monk begs for alms at a busy morning market in Cholón, Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown.

TOP

Friends in old Manali, a popular tourist destination in Himachal Pradesh, India.

RIGHT

A groom adorned in bank notes before his wedding in old Manali, Himachal Pradesh, India.





"The first step to taking a great photograph is asking if your subject wants to be photographed."

someone's photograph. You have to work fairly quickly because before you know it, the moment is gone," shared David on his specialty: street portraiture.

There is a key moment in every greeting, smile and nod where one knows he has the other person's approval to snap away. However, David stressed on the importance of taking a step back and making sure you don't rush in and overwhelm the subject, or yourself. As a photographer, one should always take their time building rapport with



TOP LEFT:

A vendor of Sichuan peppercorns in Chengdu, the Chinese province's capital city, leans in for a closer look while smoking a cheroot in a traditional pipe.

BOTTOM LEFT:

Roving street musicians at a market in Jogjakarta, Indonesia.

TOP:

An elderly woman in Lampang, Thailand enjoys the afternoon sun with a favorite companion.

their subjects, rather than just pounce on the opportunity and take a zillion photos then walk away, leaving your subject feeling used and often jaded with photographers in the future.

It's not lighting that will be your greatest obstacle while outside, it's really the people you encounter on the way. "The first step to taking a great photograph is asking if your subject wants to be photographed. It's simple really, but no one thinks of it. You need to treat people with respect. If someone doesn't want their picture taken, you're not going to get a pleasant picture. You've just wasted your time and everyone else's," explained David. Battling weather can be difficult, but David acknowledges that bad weather can make interesting photographs. Overcast skies can bring out unique skin tones and dramatic lighting but just in case, you'd better bring a strobe for extra support.

It is said that when you get lost, you find yourself. And David is not new to that saying: "Every day is learning experience. Once, during my travels, I knew of a market in a building that would provide incredible shots. The first few days I went there they refused to let me in, possibly because of a bad encounter they had with another photographer. Day after day they said no to my face and

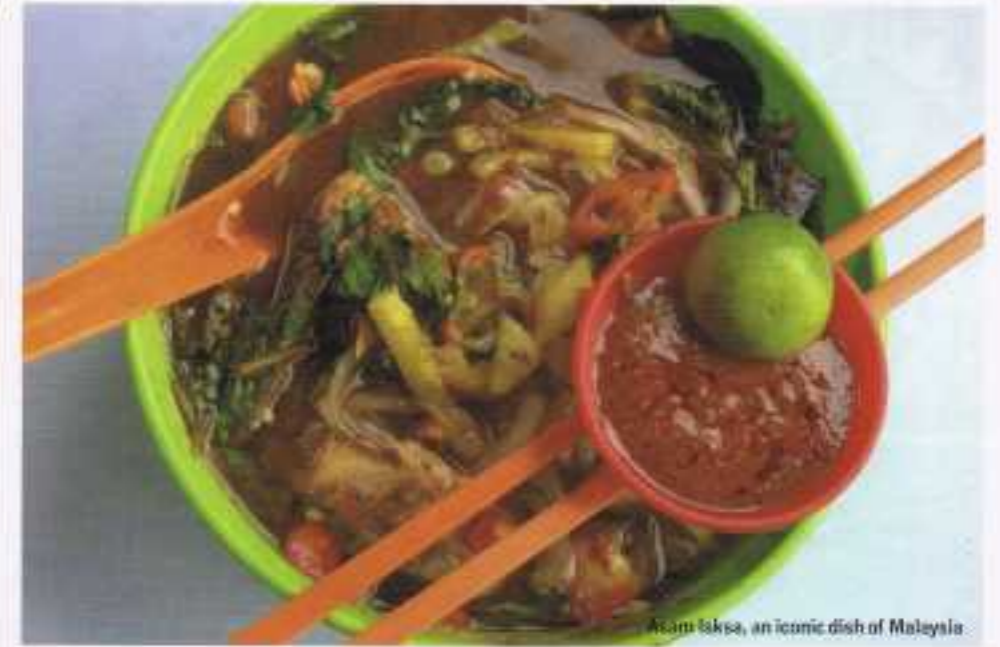
turned me around. Finally, after showing up many days in a row, they let me in because of my sheer persistence. I realised how powerful persistence is and learnt that you need to hang in there and follow your vision. In Northern Jakarta, I met an organisation that took in street children and taught them how to be organic farmers. These moments remind you of how lucky you are, and how powerful human relationships can be."

When scouting locations, David has a few rules he lives by. One of them is to bring a small compact camera to capture interesting areas, a photographic sketch book of sorts. While looking for great lighting, bustling spots and places where "action may happen", he moves with purpose and direction, looking at several places intensely rather than spreading himself all over the city. Research always comes into play when visiting a new city, but he doesn't let himself neglect the ground work. "You've got to walk around and see the place for yourself. The most important piece of equipment you have is your eyes. Then, your lens," he continued. "And this works for the viewer too. So when I take pictures of food, I always remind myself that we 'eat with our eyes'."

People generally choose food based on their presentation; for example, the delicious strawberry swirls



Raj kachori, a north Indian specialty served at Bangla Sweets on Baird Road, New Delhi.



Asam laksa, an iconic dish of Malaysia.



A colorful dish served in Hu Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



Getting a tea delivery in New Delhi, India

in your cupcake, or the tantalising golden skin of roast chicken. When he shoots food, he has no preservatives, and this forces him to move quickly and act fast (no one wants to eat something that looks like it's been left out in the cold all day). "Identify what it is that you find most attractive, then focus on it. It could be the garnishing, the flakes of salt on baked fish, it could be anything - but it has to be real," said David. "Shooting the background is just as important as the food itself. The tables have to be perfectly suited, plates have to support the character of the cuisine. There is a lot of planning that needs to be done before dishes are served."

David normally spends half the year travelling, but is trying to cut back on the amount and focus on events happening within Malaysia. During his free time, he organises one-on-one photography walks with shutterbugs. Again, his most valuable teaching lies on the belief that the relationship between the

"I realised how powerful persistence is and learnt that you need to hang in there and follow your vision."

photographer and subject will affect the quality of your final image. When the 3-hour walk is over, critiquing begins. "Some people want to know how to use different aspects of their camera. Others want to play with lighting. And many want to improve their portrait skills. I always felt it was difficult to get real feedback so once we've finished the walk and the moments are still fresh in our minds, we review as critiquing is vital in terms of learning."

Although David says he feels his reasons for pursuing photography are purely selfish, no one in their right mind

would view David in this way. Opting for a volatile life as a photographer instead of having a high paying, stable job in an international agency with headquarters in San Francisco supports this statement more than anything. In fact, David plans on joining forces with United Nations this year, with the intention to teach English to refugees in Malaysia while also capturing their stories in print.

Expect to see David, with camera in hand of course, strolling through the streets for many more years to come, coaxing you into a broad smile during one of those rare moments where you know you've made a friend for life. And then he'll come back to look for you, presenting you with an image of yourself in a way you've never seen before, and may not ever see again.

If you'd like to follow David on his journey, you can visit <http://davidhagerman.typepad.com/> or <http://davidhagermanphotography.com>

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