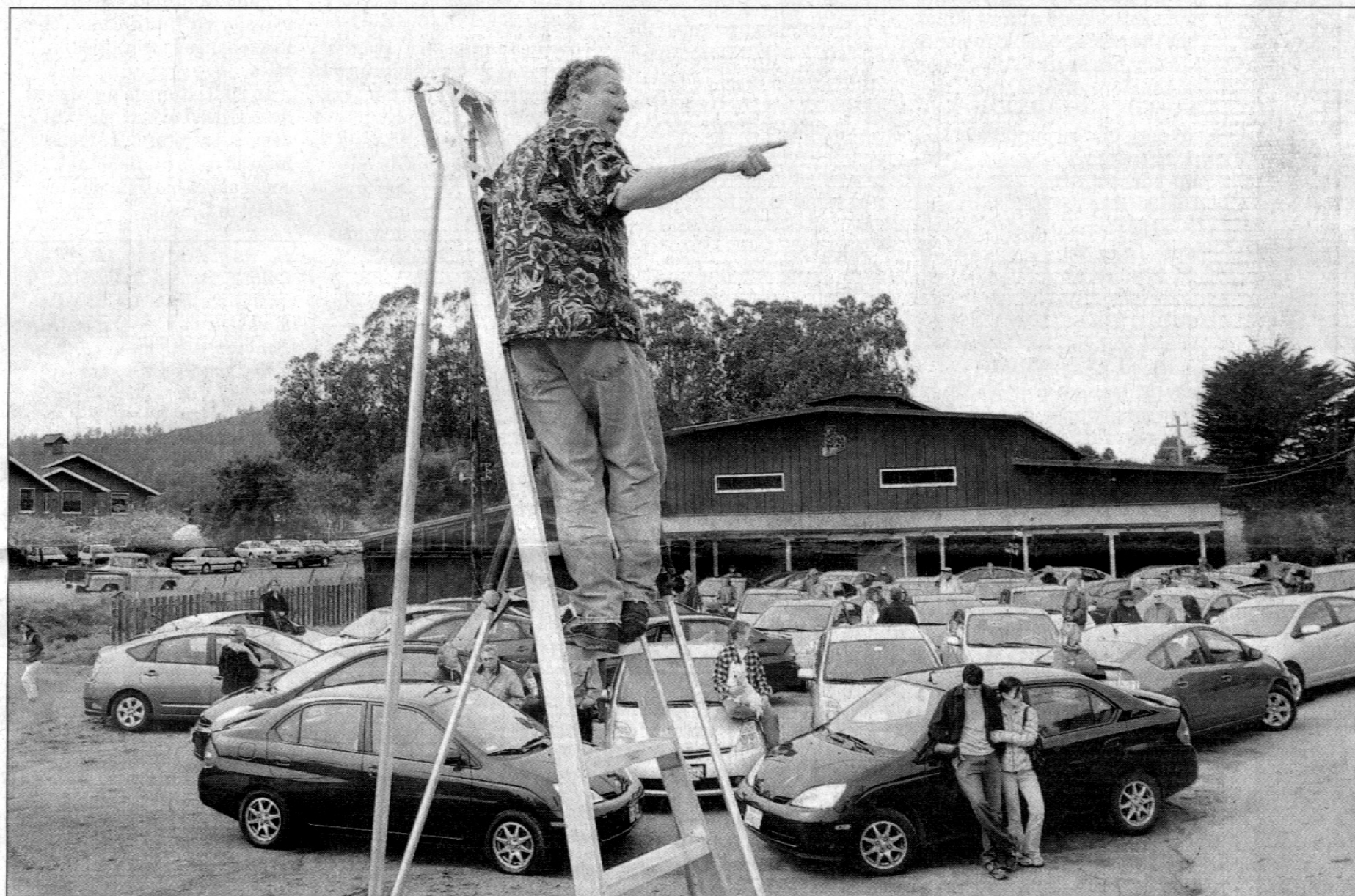


West Marin's family photographer



Special to the IJ/Zachary Kaufman

SMILE: Art Rogers gets ready to take a portrait of dozens of local Toyota Prius owners with their cars in Point Reyes Station on Saturday. The photo will be a part of his 'Point Reyes Family Album,' a series that has run in the Point Reyes Light for 30 years. A collection of his portraits, 'Yesterday and Today,' opens at the Bay Model in Sausalito today.

LIBERATORE AT LARGE



**Paul
Liberatore**

IF YOU GO

The Art Rogers photo exhibit "Yesterday and Today" opens today and runs through April 8 at the Bay Model in Sausalito, 2100 Bridgeway. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, call the Bay Model at 332-3870.

Show paints portrait of Art Rogers' world

PHOTOGRAPHER Art Rogers was having trouble with "The Baby of the Month."

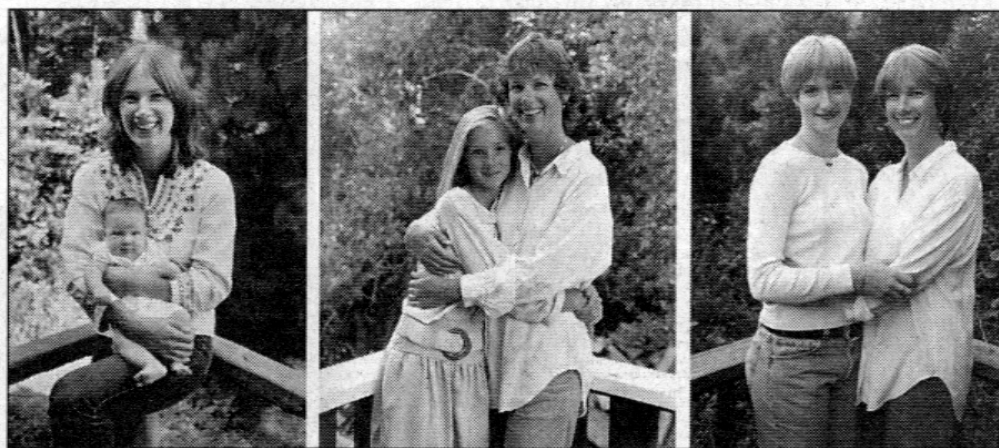
One morning last week in his Point Reyes Station studio, he waited patiently behind his camera as a baby boy squirmed on a white, fake fur rug, his pouty infant face about to explode in tears at any moment.

"He's afraid of the flash," Rogers explained, sending the little guy and his mother home with instructions to return in the afternoon for another try. "It happens."

Such are the travails of a small-town photographer.

But, in Rogers' case, small town doesn't translate into small time.

Photographs by the 57-year-old former Guggenheim Fellow and National Endowment of the Arts recipient are in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the deYoung Museum in San Francisco, the Center for Creative Photography Archive in Tucson and the International Center of Photography in New York.



TIME LAPSE: 'Connie and Amy 1976, 1988, and 1999' from 'Yesterday and Today' by West Marin photographer Art Rogers.

With his corona of curly hair and salt-and-pepper mustache, Rogers is a familiar figure around Point Reyes Station, a jovial, outgoing sort who favors colorful, short-sleeved Hawaiian shirts, even on chilly winter days.

For 30-plus years, his "The Point Reyes Family Album," of which "The Baby of the Month" is a delightful fea-

ture, has appeared in the Point Reyes Light, West Marin's Putlizer Prize-winning weekly.

Over those three decades, he has documented life in Point Reyes Station and West Marin, focusing his sharp lens on everything from babies to bovines.

One of his first photos was of the

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ROGERS: Celebrating the passing of time

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last keeper of the Point Reyes Lighthouse. In 1980, he photographed 500 locals attending the premiere of the movie "The Fog," shot in Point Reyes. Just last Saturday, taking note of the latest trend in environmental consciousness, he rounded up all the Prius owners in West Marin and herded them together for a group shot in front of the Red Barn in Point Reyes Station.

"What is so important about Art's work is that it's documentary, but done in the form of fine art portraiture," said Dave Mitchell, the Light's recently retired editor and publisher.

Mitchell took over the paper in the summer of 1975, a month after it began publishing Rogers' photos under the banner "Point Reyes Nation."

Rogers settled in Point Reyes Station in 1971 after coming to the Bay Area from his native North Carolina as a photographer for a rock 'n' roll band.

At the end of the 1960s, he was part of the hippie Diaspora that went back to the land in rural communities throughout Northern California.

The wave of free-wheeling young people sought a new sense of community, embracing the country life, even as the ranchers and the conservative, established citizens of West Marin were slow to embrace them.

With his kindly camera and disarming personality, Rogers calmed suspicions and fears in both camps, bridging the generational and cultural gap between the newcomers and the old-timers.

"I recognized that Art was able to work both sides of the street," Mitchell recalled. "He had friends in the long-hair community and in the ranching community, and that made us feel that we were all part of the same thing. Through Art's photographs, we knew what rancher George Nunes looked like, and we knew what the naked blond on the horse looked like. He's done a unique job in creating West Marin's sense of community."

Rogers has been chronicling the rural life around him for so long now that he has almost inadvertently compiled a visual record of the passing of time, the inevitability of change, the nature of impermanence.



SHOWTIME: Photographer Art Rogers hangs his work at the Bay Model on Monday for a month-long exhibit of his work that opens today. The show celebrates 30 years of his 'Point Reyes Family Album.'

LJ photo/Robert Tong

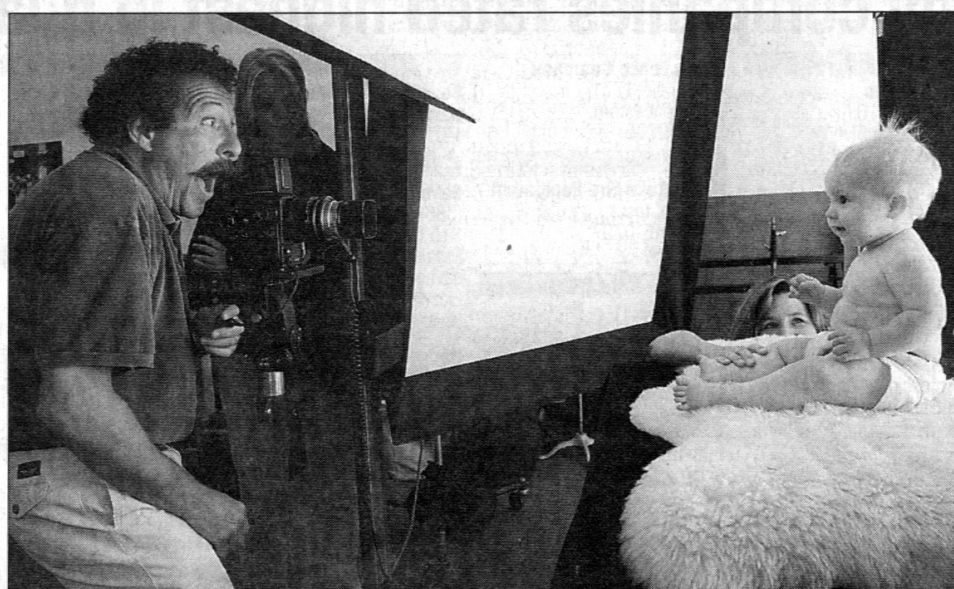
"Through Art's photographs, we knew what rancher George Nunes looked like, and we knew what the naked blond on the horse looked like. He's done a unique job in creating West Marin's sense of community."

— Dave Mitchell, former publisher of the Point Reyes Light

The babies he photographed in the early years have grown into adulthood with families of their own; their parents are now deep into middle age and many of the elders are gone, represented in one memorable photograph by empty chairs. In a sense, his work gives new meaning to time-lapse photography.

Nowhere is this more striking than in his series "Yesterday and Today," in which he returns to many of his original subjects, photographing them years later in the same place and pose.

In one remarkable triptych, a young mother is pictured on her deck with her baby daughter in



LJ archive/Marian Little Utley

TURNING ON THE CHARM: Art Rogers photographs a 'Baby of the Week' in 1995.

her arms. In the next shot, taken more than a decade later, the daughter has blossomed into a young girl, her head resting on her mother's shoulder. And in a third photo, the little girl has become a full-grown woman, taller even than her mom.

"It's difficult for a visual person like me to put into words the poignancy that's visible in my work," Rogers said. "But I'm trying to celebrate the passing of time. What else can you do?" he added, chuckling. "You can't fight it."

Like his subjects, Rogers has made a life for himself in Point Reyes Station. He and his wife,

Laura, a teacher at Nicasio School, have two daughters, Julia, a 19-year-old sophomore at the University of Puget Sound, and Hannah, 16, a student at San Domenico School in San Anselmo.

For 13 years, he worked out of a studio above the Old Western Saloon, but has since built a cheery, skylighted studio and office beside his home on the Point Reyes Station mesa.

It seems ordained that he would have become a photographer. His mother took pictures for as long as he can remember, and a brother was a photogra-

pher for National Geographic.

In a digital era, he's something of an anachronism, shooting mostly black and white film, using large negatives and slow shutter speeds that give his gelatin silver prints an Ansel-Adams'-like detail and sharpness, an archival quality that can last for a hundred years.

His early influences were Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, but he feels a special kinship with a little-known early 20th century photographer named Darius Kinsey, who took crystalline photos of the rugged railroad and logging industries in

the Pacific Northwest at the turn of the century.

Like Kinsey did with his loggers and railroad workers, Rogers poses his West Marin subjects in their natural environment, around the tools of their trade, in their homes and workplaces.

He has them look straight into the camera lens, giving his photos a distinctive formality that somehow manages not to appear stiff. He calls it "making an honest photograph."

Early in his career, he worked as a news photographer, but didn't have the stomach for tragedy.

The kind-heartedness of his images, the sweetness, is easily apparent. He always shoots his subjects at their best, never at their worst. "I want people to look good," he said.

His photographs have appeared in Life magazine, Sports Illustrated and other prominent publications, and he has been hired for high-profile commercial work and major ad campaigns.

But his heart and soul are in the family album that has been at the center of his life.

"My dream was to become a small-town photographer as a lifestyle, to be part of the community," he said. "And it happened. It just happened."

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