CONTENTS

Introduction

It was a scratchy line, one of those connections that required actual human telephone operators in half a dozen countries to stitch together the wires that would enable my voice to travel to a rotary handset in a dingy hotel in Pakistan. It was sometime in the late eighties, and by that time my brother Steve had been traveling the globe for almost two decades, making a habit of losing himself in the most remote and disconnected places he could find—often, the most violent. These were the last days before hyper-connectivity, before globalization and technology made national borders little more than formalities, when French people still bought baguettes with Francs, and Germans paid for their pastries with Deutschmarks. A time before vast distances that were once exclusively crossed by ships, train, camel, dugout canoe, or by foot, were suddenly reduced to a few hours in a jet with hot meal service and a cup of tea before landing. Before western culture proliferated so thoroughly that there's hardly a village in the world where you can't find a sign written in English, or someone who will greet you with, "Hello! How are you?"

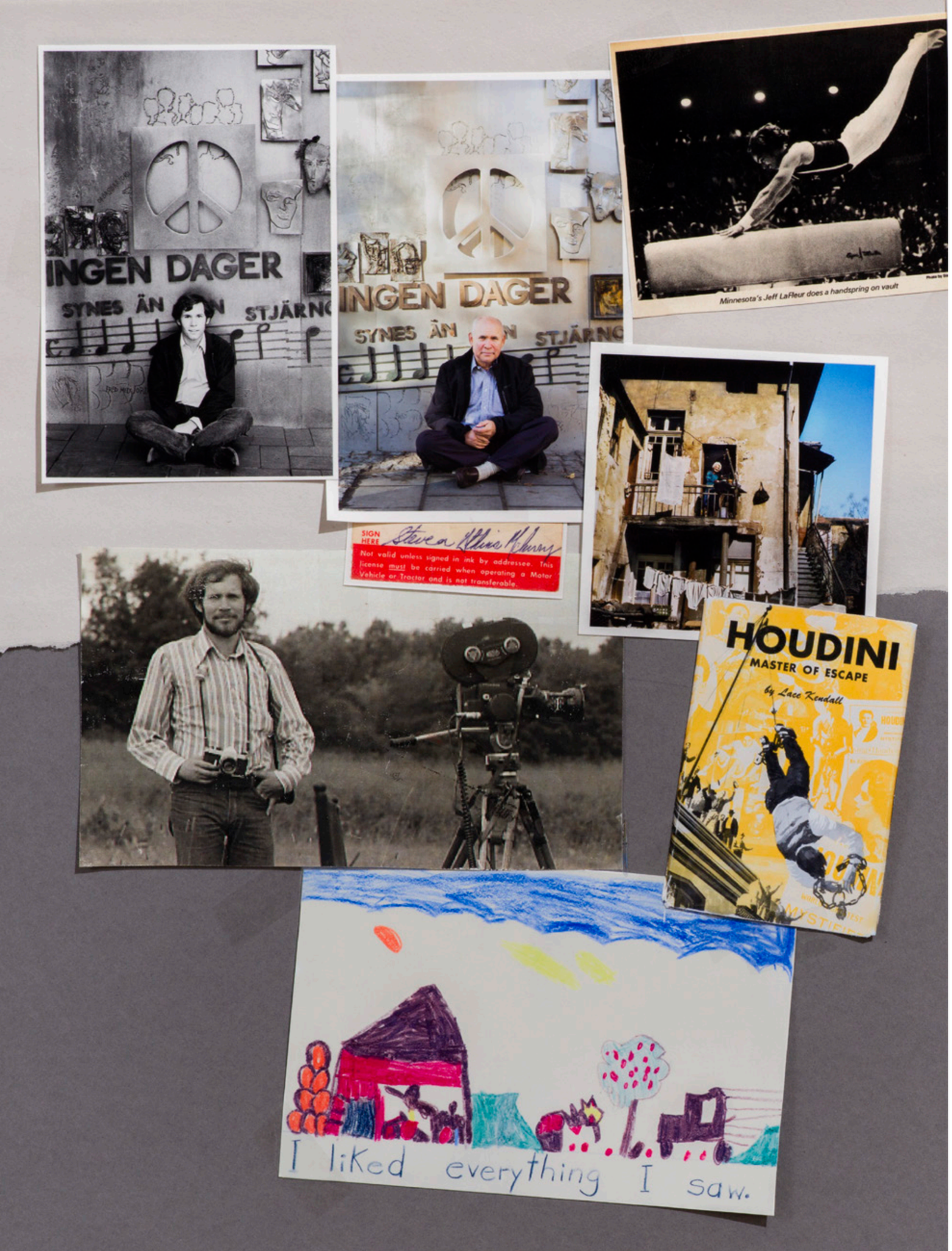
When Steve's career took off, it was still possible to travel to places that were worlds unto themselves, to immerse yourself in cultures that bore no resemblance to the West, nor wanted little to do with it.

In 1977, after a few years working as a photographer at a local paper, Steve made a bold decision: he bought a one-way ticket to India. Determined to follow in the footsteps of the documentary photographers he most admired—Henri Cartier-Bresson, Elliott Erwitt, Dorothea Lange, Andre Kertesz, Walker Evans, Robert Frank and Brian Blake—Steve plunged head-first into one of the most dynamic and complex political and cultural environments imaginable, and one of the most photogenic. He never looked back. I rarely saw Steve in those years, but we always managed to keep in touch. He sent letters and postcards stamped in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Australia, the Philippines, and dozens of places in between. My refrigerator door bore the colorful evidence of his dizzying travel schedule.

Steve's travel didn't leave much time for face-to-face visits, so we made the best of the technology available to make sure we remained central in each other's lives. It is hard to imagine now—in this era of satellite-powered communications that allow us to video conference with people who are aboard Arctic research vessels and camped in the foothills of Mount Everest—but there was a time, not so long ago, when long distance phone calls from one state to another were expensive, and even a successful call to a hotel in Paris was a triumph of technology. Which brings me back to that scratchy phone line on that winter day in Pennsylvania, one of those cherished moments when I got to chat with my brother halfway across the world.

As so often happened, we were suddenly disconnected. I remember calling the phone company, demanding, "I have to be reconnected with my brother. I don't know how you can do it, but you have to help me." I was literally begging them, and somehow, they made it work. I heard a faint voice on the other end say, "Hello?" I said, "It's me, Bon." Why does this particular moment hold such a prominent

CLOCKWISE: Steve and Bonnie McCurry, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1968; Letter from Steve to Bonnie, Sri Lanka, 1995; Letter from Steve to Bonnie, Puerto Rico, 1981 Postcard from Steve to Bonnie; Steve McCurry and Bonnie V'Soske, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, 1975; Postcard from Steve in Serbia to Bonnie in Somerville, New Jersey, USA, 1971



Becoming Steve McCurry

From the time he was a kid, Steve was never still, and he's never been one to wait for things to happen to him. I've heard it said that only amateurs wait for inspiration; professionals just get up every day and get to work. From his earliest trips to Europe when he was just out of high school, Steve got to work by hunting for fascinating and intriguing imagery—mostly from the world around him, but also in the work of other photographers, filmmakers and writers he respected.

My dad had always loved taking pictures. He had an old Argus C3, and I remember we also had a Kodak Brownie when we were small. The first camera Steve ever owned was a Kodak Instamatic, which he bought to take with him on his first long trip to Europe the summer after he graduated from high school, in 1969. It was a simple point-and-shoot camera, but I remember him and our father trying it out before he left, making sure he knew how to use it.

On that first trip to Europe, he lived for a while with a family in Sweden who had teenage children, including a boy who was an amateur photographer. They had met on a train, and he invited Steve to stay with his family when he learned that Steve had no place to stay.

He and Steve would go on long walks around Stockholm, taking pictures. It was my brother's first experience of wandering the streets of a city with no purpose except to look, to observe people and life, and to photograph whatever caught his eye. It would turn out to be a habit, and eventually a career.

Europe in the 1960s, a mere generation away from the destruction of the Second World War, was a different world from the United States, and Steve noticed things he'd been completely unaware of back in Pennsylvania, living the comparatively sheltered life of a middle-class American teenager. The family who hosted him in Stockholm had no piped-in hot water, and heat was supplied by only a wood-burning stove. In London, he was surprised the first time he ordered a soft drink in a restaurant and was brought one from off the shelf—room temperature, no glass filled with ice, no refrigeration. As he travelled more widely he would start to see beyond merely a lack of hot water and warm drinks, to the raw poverty that existed in parts of Europe and beyond. He learned at an impressionable age that the comforts of air conditioning, cars and restaurants full of food were a luxury, a privilege most people could only dream of. His travels would change forever the attitudes of what had been a provincial young man from the American suburbs.

After a stay in Amsterdam which included working at the Hilton and playing on a soccer team with other employees, he decided that he should go to college after hanging out with university students who had long bull sessions—discussions about philosophy, history and world events. He was starting to realize that he needed to drastically expand his horizons after his lackluster high school education.

Steve majored in Film and Cinematography at Pennsylvania State University, and during his third year he took a class in fine art photography. At the time he didn't even own a camera, but the film department

CLOCKWISE: Stockholm, Sweden, 1969; Stockholm, Sweden, 2013; Clipping from *the Daily Collegian*, State College, Pennsylvania, 1974; Junior Operators License, Pennsylvania, 1967; Pennsylvania,USA, 1973; Bulgaria, 1972; Houdini: Master of Escape, Lane Kendall, 1960; Drawing after an Elementary school field trip, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, USA, 1956

he was a toddler. Those were the only two years that I have ever taken off from work since I graduated from Temple in 1967. That meant I had a flexible schedule that allowed me to run errands for Steve back home, mostly making the trek to and from the airport with loads of film. In those pre-digital and pre-DHL and FedEx days, the only really secure way to send things from the United States to someone in a place like Tamil Nadu, India, was to send it as cargo on commercial airliners. We still confronted all the headaches of lost baggage, theft, and extortion by baggage handlers and customs agents. Sometimes, if he was in one part of the country and they were shipped to another part of the country, the suitcases would sit for weeks or even months in the heat, which was always a concern. But more often than not, the suitcases I sent to Steve with fresh film and camera equipment got to him wherever he was, and I received the majority of his film rolls from India, too. I smile to remember those trips to the airport, pushing a stroller with a small baby inside. Even then I knew that what I was doing to help him was critical. He would send me letters on that blue tissue-paper folding stationary, requesting things from the post office and giving me my marching orders with regard to what he wanted done with the film and the pictures. In those days, everyone needed that person back home to handle all of the administrative tasks that were impossible overseas. Otherwise, he would've had to fly back and forth and do it all himself, which would have cost him money and time that he simply didn't have.

This was the beginning period of what would be a long education for me in the background workings of the photo industry. In the days before the infinite knowledge base of the Internet, which is now accessible to journalists and photographers in the most far-flung places, you had to actually do research in libraries and archives in order to learn about a region and what might be of interest there for the traveling freelancer. I used to go to the Springfield Public Library or Ludington Memorial Library in Bryn Mawr, which were very small community libraries that I usually had all to myself. I would pull geography books and encyclopedias down off the shelves, scouring the pages for anything that might be worthy of further investigation by Steve and Lauren. The learning curve was steep, but I became adept at researching "pitch material" quickly, and I learned to love uncovering story ideas in unexpected places. Of course, I always had to sell Steve on the ideas, and because he's a very assertive and stubborn person, that wasn't always easy. I remember once suggesting that he pitch a story about a trade route in the mountains of southwest China. I got really excited about it, because this was in the early years of Steve's work with a major magazine and it seemed like a perfect fit for him. Before we knew it, another photographer pitched it to the magazine and landed the assignment. It was always a race to find ideas before we got scooped by other photographers. But even more important, it was crucial to sell them to Steve, because if he didn't think it was a good idea, it wasn't going to happen no matter how good it might be.

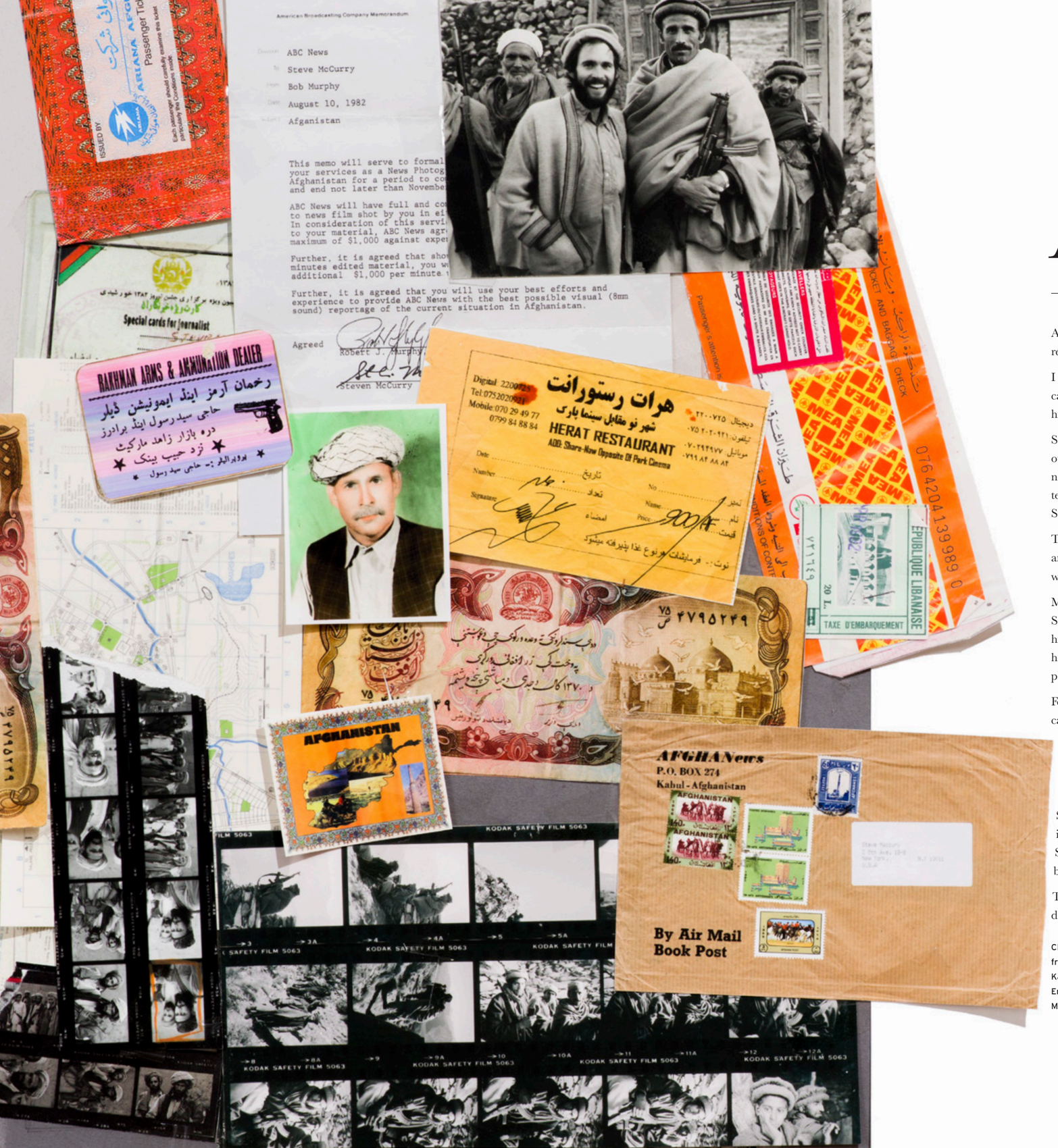
Naturally, it was a thrilling time in Steve's career, and I was excited to help, especially because based on what he was sending home in the earliest days of his first big India sojourn, I was pretty sure that Steve had all the ingredients that it would take to become a photographer - a really good photographer.

Of course, I was seeing the pictures before Steve did—he had only seen them in his mind's eye, and through the viewfinder—and I remember being blown away by many of those early pictures. One of them, a picture of a woman in a beautiful pink sari flowing behind her, walking through a garden, stands out in my memory. It was a long shot, but you could see that she was in an enchanting environment, a garden that had been meticulously planned and manicured. It was one in a series of images, which allowed me to see how he worked the scene and the angle until he found the perfect frame. I remember another picture of a basket of small, silvery fish that he photographed in Goa. A seemingly inconsequential thing,

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Kathmandu, Nepal, 1979; OPPOSITE: Afghanistan, 1979

Like Homer's verse, or Stephen Crane's prose, or Paolo Ucello's courtly murals of knights in battle, McCurry's compelling studies of men girding for war convey elemental information about the ironic virtues and atavistic dangers of manhood itself from a place where ancient inescapable absolutes still prevail."

—Owen Edwards



Afghanistan

Afghanistan helped establish Steve's reputation as a photographer, but as far I was concerned, it was responsible for one of the most terrifying moments of my life.

I was getting ready to go to church with my sister and son on New Year's Eve, 1980, when I got the phone call we had been dreading. It was a man from the state department in Washington, DC who gave only his first name.

Steve, my risk-taking and fearless younger brother, was missing and presumed dead. The person on the other end of the line told me that I should not speak to anyone about it. If the press called, I was to say nothing. He gave me a number in Washington to call if I had any questions. I told him that if they could tell me what kind of camera the person had and what he looked like, I could at least have an idea if it was Steve or not. I was hoping a couple of facts might make it possible to rule him out.

The man went on to say that a body of a westerner had been found in the mountains of Afghanistan, and since he was in the area and since no one at the NGM magazine had heard from Steve for over three weeks. Logic said that it may be him. Fortunately, in this case, it wasn't what it seemed.

My first reaction was disbelief, and next a growing grief at the needless waste of such a young talent. Steve was just thirty, approaching the height of his skills, and just beginning to make a real name for himself. Only a few months earlier, I had been saying a few words on his behalf at the ceremony where he was awarded the Robert Capa Gold Medal. Now it seemed that Steve had become another brave photographer whose determination to tell a story had cost him his life.

For two weeks we were overwhelmed by private grief, before the nightmare was ended by another phone call, this time from the photo editor, Bob Gilka.

The holidays were over and I was back in my classroom starting a brand new year, when the principal of my school came to me room and told me urgently to take a call in her office.

The message was that Steve was alive!

Steve had emerged from Afghanistan, crossed back over into Pakistan, and contacted the US Embassy in Pakistan. The whole scare had been the result of a breakdown in communications. Weeks earlier, Steve had sent a telex to say that he had gotten safely out of Afghanistan and was heading into Pakistan, but the telex had never been delivered.

The sheer relief was overwhelming, but the episode was a stark reminder, had we needed one, of the dangerous path Steve had chosen. We had always known it was risky, but this was a sobering reminder of

CLOCKWISE: Ariana Afghan Airlines Ticket, Afghanistan; Rakhman Arms & Ammunation Dealer, Afghanistan; Letter from Bob Murphy at ABC News, Afghanistan, 1982; Steve with Mujihideen, Afghanistan, 1980; Airline Ticket, Afghanistan; Kabul, Afghanistan, 2003; Receipt from Herat Restaurant, Afghanistan; 1000 Afghanis, Afganistan; AFGHANews Envelope, Kabul, Afghanistan; Contact Sheet, Afghanistan, 1980; Contact Sheet, Afghanistan, 1980; Postcard, Afghanistan; Map of Kabul, Afghanistan; Press Badge, Afghanistan

"In 1988, LIFE Magazine sent me and Steve on assignment to Taliban Afghanistan. It was my first time, and it was a long production getting in. Leaving Pakistan, we were forced to get rid of our driver and carry our own gear across the border. Finally, after an hour of inquires, Steve hired a frightened looking driver who ushered us to broken down car with a bald tires and a smashed windshield.

Steve took the front passenger seat, facing the fractured glass—torture for a man who is all about seeing. In the sun, as the broken-down car heaved, the broken glass burned, almost dizzying, like some kind of kaleidoscope. Up we went into the mountains, through blind passes and areas of recent fighting.

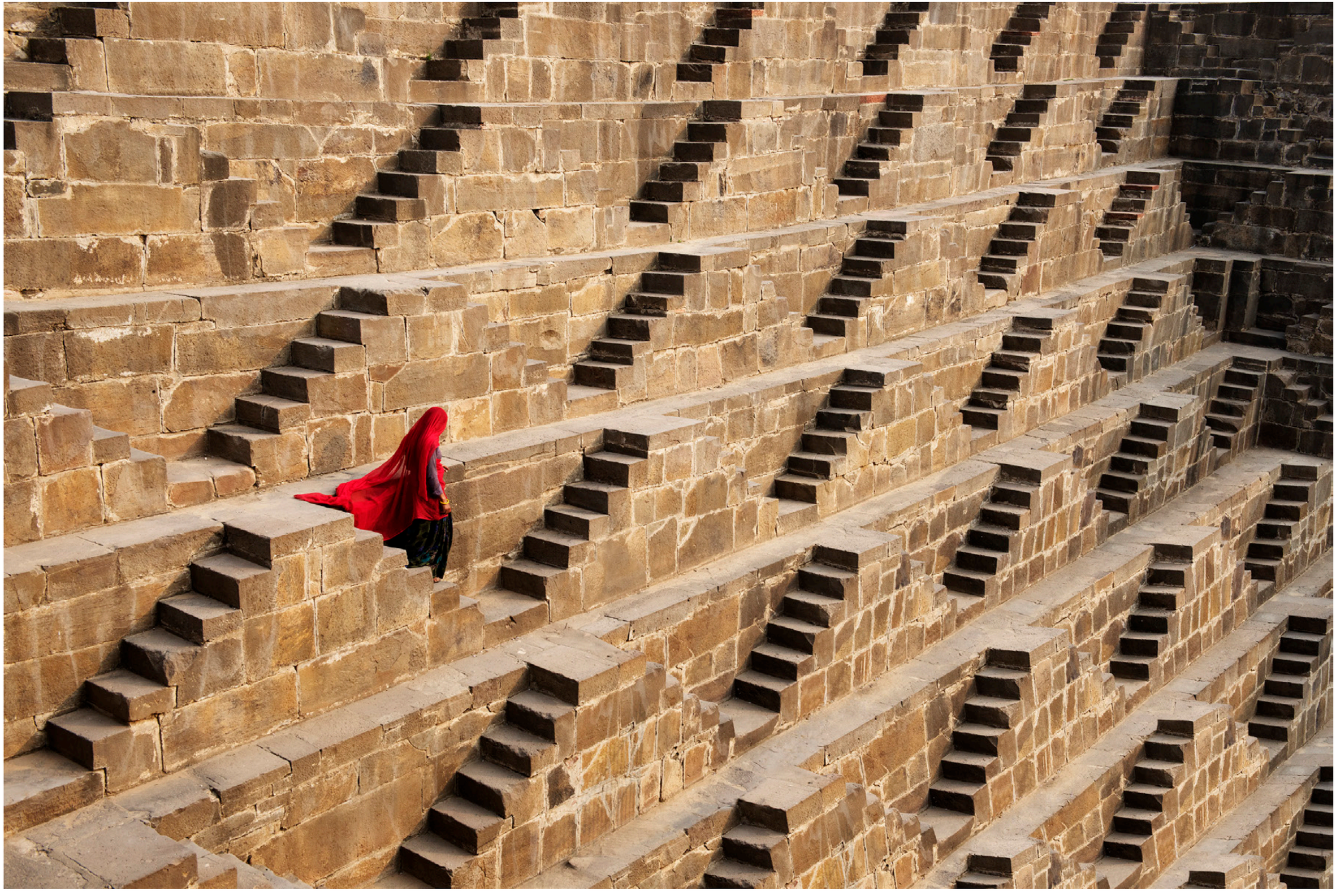
Gaping ruts and shell-holes. Hairpin turns. Burned out tanks and armored personnel carriers. All in one of the most beautiful valleys I'd ever seen—shocking to me amid all the destruction.

Steve had made this trip dozens of times, so many I could see him nodding, bored with the preliminaries. But just when I would think he was conked out, suddenly he would cry out, "Stop!"

Like a hunter, Steve climbed out, his camera with the pistol grip already to his eye. And easing up behind him, in almost disbelief, I realized, There's the picture. The same I easily would have overlooked. Watching Steve, I learned many things that trip, but above all I learned, in my amateur way, not just to look but to see."

—Jere Van Dyk

LEFT: Afghanistan, 1980; RIGHT: Afghanistan, 1979;
OPPOSITE: Logar Province, Afghanistan, 1984



of the old Cold War era. Sadly, the fateful repercussions of the events there continued to play out across the world after the fall of the Soviet empire, not least in the events of September 11, 2001, as they still do today.

The story of Steve's travelling with the Mujahedeen has been told many times—how he sewed rolls of film into his Afghan-style clothing to smuggle it out of the country, and how his photographs in the New York Times and Time magazine were some of the first images of the war which would define the conflict for the Western world. At the age of only thirty he was awarded the Robert Capa Gold Medal for his work there. An Australian photographer, Jim Sheldon, when hearing about Steve's award described Steve's ability to adapt to any circumstance by saying, "Steve could live off the scent of a greasy rag."

It's less well known how often he has returned to the country. He was in and out numerous times in the 1980s and 90s, and in 1984 he was just across the border in Pakistan when he came across a makeshift girls' school in a refugee camp where he took the portrait of the green-eyed 'Afghan Girl'.

In 1989, he was there, photographing the Soviet troops leaving the country in retreat. In 1992 he was there on assignment to document the shifting power struggles in Kabul and elsewhere after the fall of the Soviet-backed Communist government. He was back in 1995, when the Taliban was brutally attacking Kabul. Since the fall of the Taliban in December 2001, and their rise again in recent years, he keeps going back, partly because of our charity ImagineAsia, but also just because the place means so much to him. He was there in 2016 to revisit some of the people and places he photographed in the past.

Sometimes he's a pessimistic about the situation, but he's a realist. He sees the Western military involvement in the country as folly, hubris—a massive waste of money that could have been used for health or education, and an unforgivable waste of human life. We've both come to know the Afghans well, and ultimately, Steve believes that they have to be allowed to sort things out for themselves. They've never accepted a foreign occupier in all their long history, and they're not going to start now. 'Afghanistan might be tamed one day', he has said, 'but it won't be by outsiders. Any outside pressure will only be interpreted as an attempt to change their way of life. And they've shown again and again that this tactic will never work.'

LEBANON, 1982

In the summer of 1979, while Steve was in Afghanistan travelling with the Mujahedeen, Saddam Hussein became President of Iraq. Barely a year later, Iraq invaded Iran, and the eight-year Iran-Iraq war began. Lebanon was already four years into an interminable civil war that wouldn't end until 1990. It seems to me now that throughout the 1980s these countries were wrapped together in coils like some furious serpent, unable to disentangle itself and striking out at anyone that came too close— and Steve was in the thick of it. He seemed to thrive on getting out of his comfort zone and telling a story that only he could tell because only he was there.

Steve was commissioned to make an urban portrait of Beirut in 1982, in the middle of the civil war, and he approached it as he did all his assignments, looking for the decisive images which would define the human aspect of the conflict.

Once known as the Paris of the East, Beirut had been divided and defined by fear. The Green Line split the city into Christians and Muslim neighborhoods.

Civil War. Beirut, Lebanon, 1982

we will need to
remake this collage

ITINERARY

DATE	FLT. NO.	TIME	CITY
JUN	PAN AM	7:00PM	NEW YORK
Fri.	#2	6:40AM	LONDON
JUN	AIR FRANCE	11:30AM	LONDON
Mon.	#811	1:30PM	PARIS
JUN	AIR FRANCE	2:20PM	PARIS
Mon.	#146	11:25PM	BAGHDAD
OPEN	KLM	OPEN	BAGHDAD
			AMSTERDAM
JUN 15	KLM	10:00AM	AMSTERDAM
Fri.	#117	10:00AM	LONDON
JUN 15	PAN AM	11:00AM	LONDON
Fri.	#101	1:30PM	NEW YORK


KISSES TO