

# Portrait photographer returns to roots in Sisters

By Jim Cornelius  
Editor in Chief

There is a certain magic involved in truly beautiful portrait photography. Not every photographer has it — even some who are otherwise gifted in capturing landscapes or action. It has to do with connection, with an ineffable ability to allow the subject to be calm, open up and reveal their true nature.

Loma Smith-Weber of Loma Smith Photography has the magic. She has built a thriving practice in portrait photography over decades — and now she is headquartered in Sisters.

“My tagline is: ‘touching hearts and dancing with souls,’” Smith-Weber explained. “My art is very personal and I would say self-esteem-enhancing for my clients.”

Smith-Weber loves to shoot in natural locations, and she spends a lot of time finding the right ones for her subjects. She truly enjoys engaging with people, which tends to put them at ease. Then, venturing out into nature for a shoot, they get to know each other.

“I make it like an adventure,” she said.

With the groundwork laid in, backed by years of training and experience, sessions go smoothly.

“I let the universe and the

magic kind of take over,” the photographer said. “I don’t really have an ego in it.”

The result is exceptional photography that captures people in their essence.

“Portraits show up that I never really planned,” she said.

Smith-Weber didn’t simply pick up a camera and start taking people’s pictures. The technical and artistic aspects of her work are built on a rigorously developed foundation. She studied at the University of Oregon under Milton Halberstadt, a renowned fine art and commercial photographer, a close friend of the legendary Ansel Adams.

From Halberstadt she learned how to work with light and nature.

“We would go out and sit in the woods and we’d watch the light go through the whole scene,” she recalled.

Photography was not, however, an automatic career course for the young artist. Life’s adventures took her to the New England coast in the 1980s, where she worked on boats off Nantucket and Cape Cod. That life led her to pursue a different path.

“I really wanted to be an interior architect in the boating world,” she said.

She went to school to chase that dream — but found that photography kept calling to her, especially portraiture. For a time, she operated a studio

in Cherry Creek, Colorado.

Married and with a couple of children in Los Angeles, she put career aside for a time, but kept her hand in with headshots for actors and the like. When she and her husband moved to Bend, she started her photography business up again.

Her husband died, and she and her children moved to West Linn, where she opened a portrait studio. Business really took off, as people discovered her exceptional ability to capture personalities in photographs.

Loma would meet her current husband John Weber in the most serendipitous manner: They shared a table at a busy Seasons restaurant in Sisters. John has roots in Sisters, and, as it turns out, so does Loma.

“I was born in Sisters,” she said. “My dad was a logger with Barclay [Logging].”

She learned to ski at Hoodoo on wooden skis made by her brothers, and developed a love for hiking and other outdoor adventures that drives her to this day.

The couple took some time to travel, and then decided to return to those roots, moving to Sisters a year or so ago. The time out on the road in an Airstream reaffirmed Loma’s commitment to portrait photography.

She is interested in putting her work on unique materials



PHOTO PROVIDED

Loma Smith-Weber has established her renowned portrait photography practice in Sisters, the town of her birth.

and in continuing to use her work to enhance people’s lives.

She has seen that beautiful portraits have a big impact on how people feel about themselves.

“It’s getting them to let go and their hearts open up,

and they feel beautiful,” she said. “And if you feel beautiful, you *are* beautiful. That’s my trick. I help people to feel beautiful.”

To view a portfolio, visit [www.lomasmith.com](http://www.lomasmith.com). She can be reached at 503-475-0988 or [loma@lomasmith.com](mailto:loma@lomasmith.com).

## Sisters wine bar to close doors

After battling through a tough year of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, followed by staffing shortages, Cork Cellars is closing its doors.

Jeannie Gilgenberg-Buck and Tom Buck made the announcement last week on social media.

“It makes us very sad to announce that after six (mostly) wonderful years, we will be closing our doors. We’ve been honored to have had the opportunity to be a part of this community for the last six years, and will be

forever grateful for all of the support that we’ve received. We’ve enjoyed the wonderful people we’ve met, and will miss you all very much. As of now, our last day being open for business will be July 24, but that may change due to changes in staffing availability.”

Jeannie told *The Nugget* that COVID-19 restrictions on capacity, which the small restaurant couldn’t really adapt to overcome, key staff moving away, and an acute shortage of work staff that has hit

virtually every Sisters restaurant made it not viable to carry on. She said the decision was unrelated to a fine imposed by OSHA after the restaurant opened during a time when indoor dining was banned. That fine is under appeal.

The couple took ownership of Cork Cellars in 2015, moving north from Los Angeles.

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