



Pierre Toutain-Dorbec.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

'The decisive moment'

Photography, like life, is often measured in seconds

By JOSHUA BESSEX
The Daily Astorian

Pierre Toutain-Dorbec is a French photographer who has traveled the world doing photojournalism and publishing more than 40 books.

He worked as a war correspondent during the Vietnam War and, in the 1980s, collaborated with the Dalai Lama on two books about Tibet.

Toutain-Dorbec lives in Cannon Beach where he and his wife, Claudia, own the Cannon Beach Hotel.

The Daily Astorian spoke with him earlier this month about his thoughts on photography.

Q: What got you into photography?

A: It's very simple. I studied in the (Atelier de la Grande Chaumière) and I like to travel. And photography was the only medium I could use to be able to do it and travel at the same time. It was at the very end of the '60s and the beginning of the '70s when I started, which was a good time for photojournalism.

The magazines were quite beautiful at the time and they were the only source of information when something was happening in the world. TV was not a competition at all yet. Digital was nonexistent. The world was going at kind of a slow pace and we had a budget where we got to work. So it was a good business at that time and a good way to travel. That's the only reason.

Otherwise I would have gone into painting or sculpting like some of my other

colleagues at school. But it did not happen.

Q: What drove you to do war correspondence?

A: I was born just after (World War II), so I saw the consequences when I was going to school and the city of Normandy was totally destroyed. I was going through the middle of the huge amounts of breaks in stones from the houses and the old country was in reconstruction everywhere. Of course the consequences were a big subject in the family because we lost a lot of people in the family — which was a big blow. In the family over 20 people passed. My father lost most of his brothers and sisters. My grandfather fought World War I, World War II, and he was a photographer. My uncle, my father, I grew up listening to their stories. And there in the time after the war their feeling was 'this should not happen ever again.' They were thinking after World War I it was the end. It was so awful. My grandfather has told me he was totally blown away when just 20 years later, they started another war. So I have been raised in this anti-war, not movement, but feelings that was going on in the family and everywhere else in the area.



Cambodia Refugee Camp.

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