

Published May 27th, 2009

Big Lenses, Big Friendship

By Dean Okamura



First place mustard flower closeup Photo Robert Johnson

Bob Johnson and Doug Kohen were awarded First and Second Place at the Sixteenth Annual Napa Valley Mustard Festival Photography Contest - Digital Category on March 28, 2009. The long time friends and frequent Lamorinda Weekly photographers credit their willingness to travel the road less taken for their success. They both acknowledge each other in helping their skills grow.

▬ The two met when their kids joined swim team. "I remember thinking, that this guy has a big lens too," Johnson recalls. They struck up a conversation and their friendship and talents grew. The kids are now college age, but many vacations together have been captured forever.

▬ Johnson's winning photo shows a macro view of mustard flowers in full bloom. Its precision speaks to his skill in lighting, exposure, focus, and depth of field. All traits his patients no doubt appreciate when they visit him in his ophthalmology

practice. "I hang a lot of my photos in my office, so it's sort of my own personal gallery," Johnson says with a smile.

□ Kohen's photo captures a weather beaten hand preparing to clip a vine. The photo was an idea that came to him when the two approached workers in a field at a winery. "They invited us in, let us taste wine straight out of the cask, and introduced us to the owner," Kohen recalls.

□ The festival is designed to celebrate the culture of the Napa area. In an attempt to boost tourism from January to March, special events involving food, wine, and art are held. The grand finale of this year's event was held at the Mumm Napa winery in Rutherford. Known as the Photo Finish, it awards the prizes to the winning photographers.

□ Along with their highest awards, two additional photos claimed honorable mentions from the 310 entries placed this year. "I thought Doug's photo would win," Johnson ponders. Kohen gratefully returns a compliment then both agree that even without accolades they would continue to shoot. "(Winning) gives affirmation to our fragile egos," Johnson adds with a chuckle.

□ After some prodding, Kohen recounts his meeting with the woman who purchased his photo. "She was weepy," he recalls, "she said when she first saw the photo; it reminded her of her father working so hard in the field." She hugged him and thanked him for taking this photo. "That's better than any award I could ever win," Kohen says with a smile.

□ When asked where the future of their photography will take them, Johnson says, "possibly a book of fine photos." The two have already self-published a book of photos from a trip to the Galapagos Islands. Kohen agrees, "Photography gives you a reason to explore...that's where I see it taking (us)."

□



Second place "Timeless" Photo Doug Kohen



Robert Johnson
www.rnjphotography.com



Doug Kohen
www.dckimages.com

www.rnjphotography.com www.dckimages.com

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA