

Fairfield Citizen News (CT)

November 3, 2006

Section: Local

Shooting for Many More Years

By Cassandra Heller

Capitol Photo Interactive, a full-service professional photography and digital studio, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year because of the dedication of **Regina Madwed**, who took over the business after her husband, Steven Madwed, died three years ago. Regina began working at the company 15 years ago as a studio manager for the two companies that he owned at that time: Capitol Photo and Capitol Interactive. After they were married, Capitol Interactive was held in Regina's name, and Steven owned and was the principle photographer for Capitol Photo, which was exclusively a photography studio at that time. When Steven died, Regina became owner of both companies and merged them.

Before the two companies merged, Regina said, she had focused most of her energies on raising her twin sons and had not thought of stepping out of her role as office manager for the publishing company until the day Steven's condition worsened to the point where he was no longer able to attend an important photo shoot. Her sons, Jacob and Daniel, were 10 years old at the time and encouraged her to keep the company going. "My kids are proud of what the company is and they really wanted me to keep the company, so it became not a matter of 'you can't,' you just do." Regina said she could not let the company fail that day, so she asked a friend how to take photographs with Steven's digital camera.

Ever since, Regina has been the principle photographer for Capital Photo Interactive. Among her recent photo assignments have been ad campaigns and events for Gov. M. Jodi Rell, former First Lady Barbara Bush, First Selectman Ken Flatto, Tony Snow and U.S. Sen. John McCain.

"Steven always said that I had it in me, and he said that if anyone could do it, I'd be the person," said Regina.

"Survivorship" is what Regina calls her continuing the business after Steven's death. "How many 30-year businesses have made it in Fairfield?" she asked.

After the merging of the two businesses, Capitol Photo Interactive has become known as one of the best go-to companies for industrial photography, portrait photography, digital media creation, Web design, print and multimedia development in Fairfield. The company prides itself on a unique customer service, which caters to the clients' needs, according to Ellen Rothwax, who works as a Web designer at Regina's studio. "She has built the business on customer service," said Rothwax, "she remembers every client that comes in here."

Being friendly and open to its customers is one of the company's biggest attributes, Regina said, and she has no fear of talking to people and being friendly with them.

Regina uses this friendliness not only as a way to capture her clients, but also as a way to capture people in her photographs because the more the photographer talks with the customer getting his or her photograph taken, the more relaxed the photographer makes them, she said. "If you try to do the best you can for everybody, then everyone becomes a friend," said Regina. Capitol Photo Interactive was one of the first photo studios in Fairfield to use digital photography. At first, Regina admitted to not welcoming digital into the studio, even though Steven wanted to use it. After Steven died, Regina changed to digital and never looked back. "There was a little flack from customers at first," said Regina, "but people like digital because it doesn't waste their time." Also, the digital process allows customers to review their photographs immediately after the portrait is taken, and Regina works with the customer to retouch the photograph and help them look the way they want to. Laughing, Regina said, "We're the plastic surgeons that don't hurt."

Since the merger, the business continues to grow steadily, according to Rothwax.

"I'm not going to fail," said Regina. "My kids wanted the studio, so I'm not going to fail." Indeed, Regina said that the company is moving forward and working toward becoming more corporate. "Everything that we do, whether it's photography, the Web site or the brochure, we do it from our hearts."

As part of the celebration of its 30th-year anniversary, Capitol Photo Interactive has been hosting a Steven Madwed Lecture Series that is open to the public and is expected to continue into the next year. So far, the series has hosted Bill Schley, author and national speaker, who spoke at Capitol Photo Interactive on Oct. 1.

On Nov. 16 at 6 p.m., Sean Kilbride, financial consultant and associate vice president of A.G. Edwards & Sons Inc., will deliver a lecture at Capitol Photo Interactive, 1300 Post Road. The Web site for the company is www.capitolphotointeractive.com and seats may be reserved by calling the studio at 255-4002 or by sending an e-mail to info@capitolphotointeractive.com.

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