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The cover photograph of Bern Schwartz portraits is by Bill Snead.
Parting Shots
The Many Faces of Bern Schwartz

Rudolph Nureyev was fidgeting in his chair. For more than an hour, a white-haired photographer had been trying, unsuccessfully, to engage the famous dancer in conversation in an effort to get an informal, relaxed portrait.

By Larry Kramer

Finally, exhausted, the photographer fell to his knees.
“What are you doing?” Nureyev asked.
“Praying for a good picture,” the photographer snapped back.

A momentary smirk on Nureyev’s face, a twinkle in his eye, and before anyone could say “f-stop,” the photographer, with a remote-control shutter release in his hand, had clicked off several frames on a

Continued on page 14
And Elsewhere

Arthur Rubinstein, pianist

La Révérende Mère Bérnès, headmistress of a school for the hopelessly retarded in Israel

Sheikh Hilmi al Mukhtarsib, head of the Supreme Moslem Council in Jerusalem, with Sheikh Rajab Tamimi and Sheikh Sufyan Khalidy, members of the Council
Schwartz, from page 10

motorized Hasselblad.

The last click became photograph No. 67 in Bern Schwartz's book of portrait photography, *Contemporaries*.

At the time of his death last New Year's Eve, the 64-year-old Schwartz had become an accomplished portrait photographer with an impressive list of subjects, including Pope Paul VI, Golda Meir and Prince Charles of Great Britain. Almost accidentally, like many things in life, Schwartz had achieved his fame not in his native United States, but in England. A showing of his work in London's prestigious Colnaghi & Co. gallery in October 1977 led to the publication of his first book as well as a cover story about him in London's Sunday Times Magazine.

As a result of his growing acceptance in England, Schwartz made portrait photos for the dust jackets on books by such luminaries as Abba Eban, Henry Kissinger, Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, Malcolm Muggeridge; magazine covers of C. P. Snow and sculptor Henry Moore (among others) and record jacket photos for Zubin Mehta, Yehudi Menuhin, Arthur Rubinstein, Sir John Gielgud and Andrés Segovia.

In reviewing his book late last year, the Edinburgh Evening News called Schwartz "one of the greatest photographers in the world," and England's World Times said his "uncanny ability to capture the essence of a life makes him one of the most significant photographers alive."

Schwartz's talent is perhaps more remarkable because he did not start taking portrait photographs until he was 60 years old, and only after a very successful business career.

In only four years, Schwartz rose to greatness in portrait photography, gaining respect from some of the world's best photographers.

Then late last fall, at the very moment he began piloting with renown, he learned that he was afflicted with a cancer that would give him only weeks to live. Although his business success had been in America, his fame as a photographer had been limited for the most part to England, and he would not live to see the realization of one of his greatest dreams: a show of his work in the United States.

That show—scheduled before Schwartz became ill, will open to the public Tuesday at the British Embassy.

The odyssey of Bern Schwartz, portrait photographer, began in 1974. After a series of business successes—including his most recent stint as president of Sherman Clay, a chain of piano and organ stores—had ensured the financial security of his family many times over, he chose to devote his life to his favorite hobby, photography.

Eager to learn as much as he could as soon as he could, Schwartz sought out two famous portrait photographers. He learned the basics from Anthony Di Gesu of New York. Then he went to the man who would become his mentor, magazine photographer Philippe Halsman, who has shot more covers for Life magazine—101—than anyone else.

Schwartz first met Halsman in December 1975, when Halsman was giving a talk at New York's International Center of Photography. Center director Cornell Capa—another fine photographer who befriended Schwartz—introduced the tall, stately looking neophyte to the man who influenced much of Schwartz's style.

"He invited Cornell and me and our wives to supper at his apartment at the Hotel Pierre," Halsman remembers. "A few days later he phoned me. He had tickets for a ballet performance: Nureyev was to dance, and we were invited to dinner and then to the theatre. Well, Nureyev was indisposed, but Mr. Schwartz was in great form. Before we parted, he rather timidly asked me whether I would consider giving him a lesson in photography."

Halsman had taught many photographic seminars to large groups of students, but "by principle," he says, "I never had a single private student."

Until Schwartz, that is. "How," Halsman asked himself at the time, "could I say no to this friendly and kind person?"

After some lessons, Schwartz and his wife Ronny—who also served as his assistant—went to England and Israel, where he began to make portraits of as many famous and interesting people as he could find to sit for him.

After returning to his home in La Jolla, a coastal suburb of San Diego, Schwartz wrote Halsman and invited him and his wife to visit their home, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean. A thorough man, Schwartz had enclosed two first-class tickets for what would be one of many trips the Halsmans would make to La Jolla.

"I never had a more enthusiastic or dedicated student," Halsman said at a recent memorial service for Schwartz at the International Center in New York. "He wanted to get my explanations and then repeat them, in his own words, into a tape recorder. I remember how often Bern would exclaim, 'I cannot wait till I try out what I have just learned!'"

Schwartz's commercial success began in England, where he had photographed personal friend and Parliament member Maurice Edelman. When Edelman died, his widow treasured the portrait because she felt it captured the very essence of her beloved husband. Her recommendation led several other members of Parlia-

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ment to request sittings with the American photographer. Schwartz’s reputation grew, and he was photographing the likes of Prince Charles, the duke of Marlborough, the exiled King Constantine of Greece, the pope, and scores of famous English actors, dancers, political figures, artists and writers.

Schwartz’s popularity snowballed: there was the British gallery showing, his first book and an invitation to have a one-man show of his work at the British Embassy in Washington. Schwartz never charged for a sitting, but if a subject wanted additional copies (the former king of Greece, for example, ordered 5,000 copies) or reprint rights, Schwartz charged a high fee—which was donated to the Queen’s Silver Jubilee Fund, raising more than $20,000.

Halsman says he was “immensely happy with Bern’s success. I was proud of my talented disciple and vicariously enjoyed his achievements.”

After a string of high points last fall—Conservative party leader Margaret Thatcher selected one of Schwartz’ photos as her official campaign picture, and Henry Kissinger decided to use a Schwartz photo on his book jacket—the budding photographer was asked by the Vatican to photograph Pope John Paul II. Schwartz’s earlier photos of Pope Paul VI had never been seen by the subject, who died before the proofs reached Rome, but the photos had apparently been admired by his successors and several religious leaders in England.

And about the same time, Schwartz was invited to Buckingham Palace.

Before he could follow through on either invitation, Schwartz became ill.

Although he had passed a physical examination only a short time before and was the picture of good health, Schwartz was told by British doctors that he had cancer of the liver and only a few weeks to live.

“I cannot describe the impression that this news made on me,” Halsman says, remembering the phone call from Ronny Schwartz about the illness. “I remember Bern’s belief that all problems in life had a solution. But there was no solution for someone who was dying of cancer.”

A few days after the first phone call, Ronny Schwartz called Halsman again.

“Don’t take it too hard,” Halsman says she told him. “Bern and I have discussed the situation, and we have come to the conclusion that Bern got out of life everything that he was after. He is at peace with himself. We have decided to be as stoic and cheerful as possible.”

The Schwartz’s children—sons Michael and Eric and daughter Tilde, who moved her scheduled March wedding up to November so her father could give her away—gathered in La Jolla for their father’s final weeks. When he died on New Year’s Eve, the New York Times obituary column reported that portrait photographer Bern Schwartz died at the age of 64.

But the Times was wrong, Halsman says. “As a portrait photographer, Bern was only 4 years old.”

Famed medical researcher Dr. Jonas Salk, speaking at a memorial service for Schwartz in California, said, “Of all the portraits he ever created, the one of himself in his life is the most remarkable. He sensed an
impulse, clicked a shutter on the past and revealed the dreamer of the future."

Schwartz had a deliberate technique. He once said that before photographing his subjects, "I did all research possible, read their biographies and autobiographies; read newspaper files concerning them which appeared over the past few years; studied pictures of them; read any, if possible all, books they had written. I soon learned of likes and dislikes, interests, and both past and present activities."

Whenever possible, Schwartz would visit the location for the portrait in advance of the sitting day. "If possible," he said, "I arrange to meet my subject before as well. I watch for his posture, gestures, habitual expressions. In any event, I try to sit and talk with him before starting to take pictures."

Schwartz said this "need to relate" is something he learned a long time ago in the world of business. He once said there was no subject he failed to relate to, or like. "Look," he told a Times of London writer last year, "salesmanship was a major part of my business career. I started selling in the Depression. I've never allowed myself the luxury of disagreeing people."

The result, according to Alistair Cooke, one of Schwartz's subjects, was, "He even made some extremely human pictures of some of the most inhuman people."

Cooke said Schwartz's magic was in how he put his subjects at ease. After setting up lights, Schwartz would place the shutter trigger, at the end of a 12-foot cord, into his pocket or at his side. "And he began talking. He caught us when we weren't posing, which is how he captured so much life and animation. It was as if we weren't even having our picture taken, just talking with a friend."

"My goal," Schwartz once wrote, "is to create pictures that are true to the personality of each subject, and will stand the test of time, both for what the subjects have accomplished and because of the manner in which I have been able to present them by means of my camera."

Speaking at one of the many memorial services in her husband's honor, Ronny Schwartz asked the gathering to look at the recognition her husband had earned, and the upcoming display of his work at the British Embassy, "as a celebration, for us, that we knew Bern Schwartz, and for Bern because he accomplished everything he set out to do."

Larry Kramer is a financial writer for The Washington Post.

**Last Week's Answers**

**QUOTE-ACROSTIC**
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