

Joint Assignment

Five photography studios maintain independence but band together.

Bill Carroll

Special to the Jewish News

A bar mitzvah party guest once came up to photographer Murray Goldenberg and said: “I have the same type of camera you’re using. So, I should be able to get the same high-quality pictures as you, right?”

“Not necessarily,” Goldenberg answered. “Remember, it’s all in the finger.”

“Another way to explain it,” chimed in photographer Ron Lieberman, “is to think that anyone who used the same oils, brushes and canvasses as Rembrandt could have painted the same art masterpieces as he did!”

Goldenberg and Lieberman were describing the difference between amateur photographers — “part-time camera people who just record images,” explained Goldenberg — and the skilled professionals schooled in the art of capturing images through proper lighting, posing and the latest technology. It’s a combination that enables the pros to produce a finished album that will last for generations to enjoy.

Goldenberg, of Classic Photography on Northwestern Highway in Southfield, and Lieberman, of Lieberman Photography on Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield, are two of five Jewish-owned photography studios in the community who have banded together to form The Five Studios.com.

Other members of the unique organization are Michael Jonas of Michael Jonas Photography on Old Stage Road in Bingham Farms; Les Gorbach of Gorbach Studio of Photography on Franklin Road in Franklin, and David Deutsch of David M. Deutsch Master of Photography on Mariah Lane in Commerce.

Goldenberg, who lives in Farmington Hills and has been a photographer in the Jewish community for 42 years, conceived the idea of The Five Studios.com and got the group together. “We’ve all known and respected each other

for a long time and we share the same photography philosophies, so it was a good business decision to join together and share our knowledge,” he said. His partner at Classic Photography is Marty Abrin of Oak Park.

The five studios still operate independently and arrange their own appointments to photograph weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, graduations, anniversary parties and other events. But they share their title Web site, work to “enhance their customers’ photo knowledge,” advertise together and pinch hit for each other in cases of illness or business overload.

“Mainly, we try to educate people on the importance of knowing the difference between professional and amateur photographers,” Goldenberg added.

Clicking on The Five Studios.com leads to the Web sites of all five individually to learn more about their backgrounds and expertise. Anyone who books an actual event with one of them through the Web site will receive 10 additional images for their eventual event album.

“The sophisticated digital photography we all now use has really changed the industry,” observed Jonas, a 31-year photographer who lives in Bingham Farms. “We use creative lighting and other techniques to come up with spectacular images.”

“And we can flatter people by slimming them down in the final image; a chubbier person becomes a thinner person. We have many ways of outdoing the amateur photographer.”

“Film cameras are rare; photography is now a digital world,” added Gorbach, who has been “shooting” for 46 years, succeeding his father, the late Jack Gorbach, who was a popular photographer in the Jewish community going back to 1952. “We stun our customers with gangbuster photos and great album layouts.”

Mikah McCall of Southfield, who has been assisting Jonas for three years, says the photographers in the five studios



Top row: Matt Amster, Lieberman Photography; Les Gorbach, Gorbach Studio of Photography; Marty Abrin, Classic Photography, Mikah McCall, Michael A. Jonas Photography. Middle: Ron Lieberman, Lieberman Photography; Murray Goldenberg, Classic Photography; David Deutsch, David M. Deutsch Master of Photography. Front: Michael Jonas, Michael A. Jonas Photography.

“really should be referred to as artists because of the way we light up the faces of people and use creative backgrounds.”

How do the five cope with the burgeoning use of small cameras today and the fact that almost everyone suddenly pops up to take a picture with a cell phone?

“About 75 percent of the photos taken by amateurs with cell phones never go any further than that phone,” Jonas points out. “They never get printed. People may show them to others; but cell phones usually last only a few years, so the images are lost.”

Deutsch, of Commerce, who is assisted by his wife, Tammi, said: “Our job is to preserve personal memories for people and you can’t do that with a quick cell-

phone shot. The father of one of my customers died suddenly a week after the wedding, and his images in the album became priceless to the family. The customer was very grateful afterward.

“Remember, we spend many hours with a family at a wedding or a bar or bat mitzvah; we’re with them every step of the way, making sure we get the perfect images of their event. A bride has to ask herself: Does she want to spend one of the most important days of her life, her wedding day, with a certain photographer, then meet with him or her on the image selection afterward, then make sure she gets a high-quality album?”

The only thing missing in the collaborative effort by the photographers is a significant increase in business since