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Social Media Reflection

Contemplating on how social media has impacted my life, I looked back to the years when I was just discovering email. The year was 1994 and I just started working full-time at Miami-Dade Community College as a campus photographer for the Kendall Campus in Miami, Florida. Six years prior to that time I was working part-time as a Photographic Darkroom Technician at the North Campus and had a full-time position as a Security Agent at Fisher Island, a resort community in Miami. The only exposure I had to the world of computing was signing in and signing out of my security job on a dedicated computer for the Security Department. While working at the Kendall Campus I learned about electronic mail through a co-worker who had an email address and was using this technology to communicate with other employees. I eventually received an email address from the Internal Communications Department and started using this new form of sending and receiving messages to communicate with colleagues within the Miami-Dade Community College system.

Email had been around for a few years when I heard about My Space, a social media platform that my kids were getting involved with. I wanted no part of this since it took so much time away from the normal things that I was already doing. I had a full-time job, working photography jobs as a second income, and trying to find other way to bring more income, etc. By the time Facebook came into play around 2006, most of the people I knew were starting to use it as a means of keeping in contact with friends and family and reconnecting with lost friends and family. I still could not find myself to fall into this monster way of communicating which I thought was a trap to keep tabs on your whereabouts by everyone. Finally in September of 2009 I started using Facebook because a lot of my friends and family were using it to stay in touch and

communicate what was going on, I barely used it and preferred to use the phone instead. After a few years of using Facebook I sort of got the hang of it and started using it to promote my photography work.

Over the past several years I have found that social media is the way the world communicates, stays informed and is influenced to make decisions. Since moving here to North Carolina in 2011 social media has been part of my daily life, just like listening to the radio and watching TV. Social media has so many avenues of communication and it was trial and error for me to select a few and stick with them to help me make sense of all this. I start my day and end my day with social media now while still learning how to use it and see where it is taking me. As a photographer it is essential for me to use social media to get my professional name, "Photo Phil" out there in the virtual world. I have come to find that the three most important social media platforms to use for me are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. I also have a LinkedIn account, which I use every now and then. I have the basic LinkedIn account and I keep getting the message, "Try 30 days free of Professional version", I trash those messages as I am not ready for it. On the personal side I use mainly Facebook and have reconnected with friends from the U.S. Navy, Miami Dade College and Southwest Miami High School.

Social media is here to stay and the impact it has on my life is two-fold, I either like it or at times I wish it had never been created. Personally, I am glad to reconnect with old friends and talk about the "good old days". Since most of the old friends are now just really acquaintances in the virtual world, none of it seems real until you have a chance to reconnect in person. I've had one opportunity to reconnect with a Navy buddy over this past summer, it was kind of surreal. I don't like it when I get sidetracked trying to keep up with all the notifications I get after posting or responding to posts. Professionally, I feel that I have no choice but to get on the bandwagon to use social media to promote my photography. I feel that it will be a few more years before I actually

start making money with my art photography through social media. I'll know that things are going good when I start having more followers than those I follow. With social media dominating so many aspects of everyday life, I wonder if there will ever be something else to top the effect it has on me.