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INTERVIEW with
the WOLFMAN:
Jim Brandenburg talks to Gray Levett

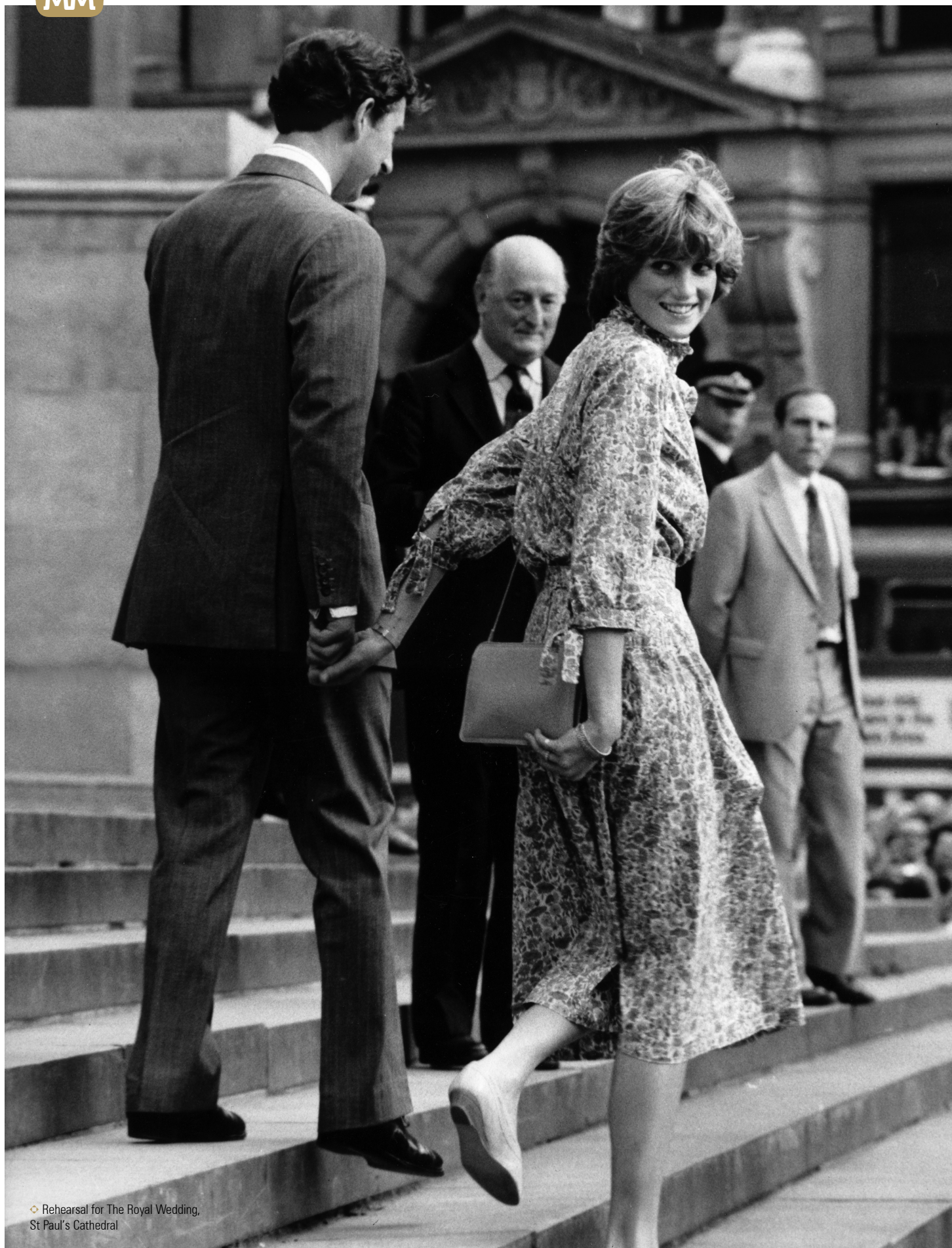
LOOK BACK IN WONDER:
Mike Maloney OBE in conversation

Clive Carpenter's DIGITAL WORKFLOW Part III

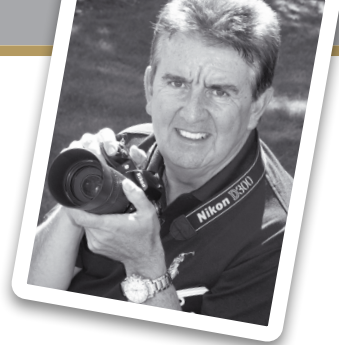
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◊ Rehearsal for The Royal Wedding,
St Paul's Cathedral



LOOK BACK IN WONDER

MIKE MALONEY OBE

INTERVIEWED BY GRAY LEVETT

Britain's most highly decorated press-photographer, Mike Maloney sits down with Editor Gray Levett and recalls the pivotal moment which led him to take the road south to London from his humble beginnings at a provincial newspaper in Lincoln.

He narrates some of the singular stories from the glittering career that followed, resulting in dozens of awards and an OBE from The Queen.

GL: What started you on the road that would eventually lead you to becoming Britain's most decorated press photographer? Where did it all begin?

MM: I received my first camera from my father when I was 10 years old, in 1833 I think! (laughs), and it was a Kodak Brownie 127 roll-film camera which I still have. They were lovely little things. My family and I used to go to church on a Sunday – and after the service we always went to a local park in Lincoln. I brought the Kodak Brownie with me and I took some pictures and my father took some pictures too. Afterwards, I went to Boots the Chemist to have the film processed with some pocket money from my mother; when I collected the pictures later, they were actually quite good, but my father had chopped the heads off everybody in his! It really started from there.

After I left school, I became a trainee industrial chemist, and worked in a place in Hykeham – a laboratory, a metal foundry – I was responsible for testing silicon and manganese in metals. But in those days you didn't have Health and Safety regulations and I had two horrendous

accidents when I was there. You were meant to suck up acid, whether it was hydrochloric HCL or nitric – absolutely evil acids – with a glass pipette just to the meniscus but there was no rubber suction on the top. I overshot it twice. I was rushed to hospital and it was pretty ghastly so I decided after all my future was not in the laboratory.

But it's very good for anyone who's losing weight; it immediately obliterates the taste-bud hairs off the tongue and they take three weeks to grow back, so you can't taste a single thing!

I left on the Friday and started at the local paper the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* on the Monday; you could do that in those days.

I started at the *Chronicle* as a tea-boy and of course that gave me a fantastic entrée into the world of newspapers, albeit provincial, in Lincoln, as well as the opportunity to show my 'happy snaps' to the editor, with a view that he might put me right, then one day he told me that he liked a picture I'd taken of the swans on the Brayford pool, and that he was going to use it in the newspaper. I was of course thrilled; then he asked if I would like to be commissioned to take a photograph for the paper so I replied, "God, it would be like winning the football pools!"

He asked me to cover the Boy Scouts Parade at Lincoln Cathedral on the 27th Sept 1967 and I was paid the princely sum of ten shillings and sixpence. But the thrill of having your picture in the paper with a byline, that first thrill!

Absolutely fantastic!

GL: What was the transition point for you coming to London? I imagine it must have been a big step?

MM: It was a massive step, because to be quite honest I loved Lincoln and I still love Lincoln. It's my hometown and I was born there, educated there and socialised there for the first sixteen years of my life. The managing director, a guy called Tony Robinson, didn't think I was good enough to have a staff job on the paper, which was all I wanted, even though I'd been doing commissioned work. For whatever reason he wouldn't give me the job that I so desired.

I had no alternative but to move from Lincoln because there was nothing there for me. I wanted to work in photography so I moved to London to work at the London News Service at 68B, Exmouth Market, EC1, and I worked there for ten or eleven months. It was a fantastic grounding as it gave me an opening to all the national newspaper editors; in those days you'd take your film, you'd shoot it down to the paper and they'd process it while you were there and you got to meet all the picture editors. On the strength of working for the London News Service (they worked you like a Trojan and didn't pay you very much; it was a very poor salary – I would do five or six jobs a day and be working in the morning, afternoon and evening), the *Evening News* came to me and said, 'We like your photography; we can't offer you a staff job but do you fancy working for us as

a full-time freelance?' It was the first time in my life that I had ever been on my own without a regular salary coming in, with only two nights off a week but I opted for it. I did it for quite a while, but it was hard and after a time the long hours began to tell.

However it actually turned out to be a really good thing because I had only been there for about nine months when the *Daily Mirror* came along and offered me a staff job, perhaps because I had been working seven days a week and five nights for the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard* and *Evening News*.

GL: Was that when you became the youngest photographer on the staff in Fleet Street?

MM: Yes, the youngest in Fleet Street. It was Alex Winberg the Picture Editor of the *Mirror* who offered me the staff job, but the salary that the *Mirror* was offering at the time wasn't enough to cover my mortgage, as I'd been earning a good sum freelance. So I turned the first offer down and told Alex that I desperately wanted the job, but showed him my personal outgoings. He came back with an improved offer, but said, 'I will tell you that if you don't accept this offer we will think that we're not good enough for you.' In other words, you won't be offered a second chance; we'll get someone else. I wanted to travel as well so I accepted the job and never looked back.

GL: When did you become a PA and personal photographer for Robert Maxwell?

MM: That wasn't until 1988. A lot later. First of all I went from Lincoln to London, then from the London News Service to the *Evening News* and on to the *Daily Mirror*. Within three years of leaving Lincoln I'd won the 'British Press Photographer of the Year Award' for the first time, so I was able to ring the managing director at *The Chronicle* and tell him.

GL: Isn't it great when you flourish and prosper – it's almost like poetic justice!

MM: Absolutely. But in fairness to Tony Robinson, he's a lovely guy and he still dines out and tells that story at dinner parties, "I was the guy that wouldn't give Mike Maloney a job!"

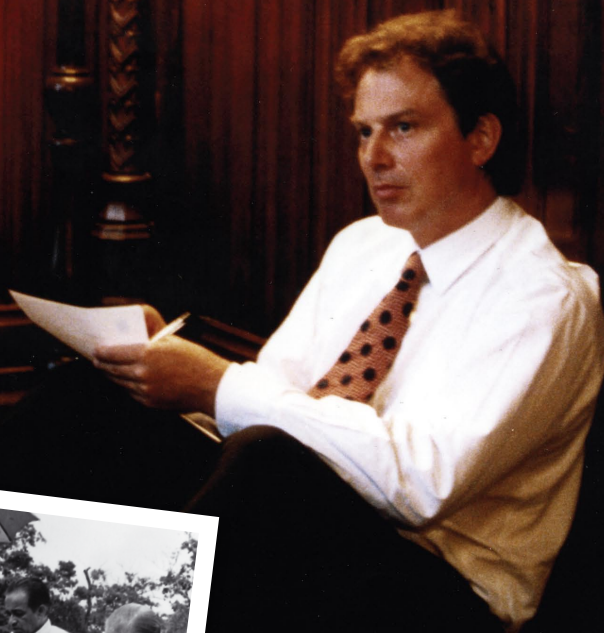
GL: So what were your major influences photographically?

MM: In my career? That's a good question. I think probably meeting the big stars you've seen on the silver screen. But of course at the *Evening News* I was meeting a lot of the TV celebrities and the occasional film star from America. When you move to a national paper it opens many more doors. I was finding myself in Hollywood regularly and Australia and South America, travelling the world in fact, quite frequently.

♦ The Queen jumping in the air. The Derby 1980



I was invited into the homes of so many people from the actress Lucille Ball to Christopher Lee; I played tennis with Charlton Heston, was invited round to Tatum O'Neal's house by her father Ryan.



◆ Tony Blair - a late night at the House 1997

◆ **Left:** Mike Maloney (far left) with The Queen, 1981 in Sri Lanka



◆ Prince Charles and Diana on the balcony at Buckingham Palace 1981



◆ "All the Queen's men" The Queen returning from Trooping the Colour 1990



◆ Crowds outside Buckingham Palace 1981 (Royal Wedding)

Some of the doors that were open for me will never be opened again. I went to stay with Robert Stack who played Eliot Ness in the television series *The Untouchables*; in fact, I was invited into the homes of so many people from the actress Lucille Ball¹ to Christopher Lee; I played tennis with Charlton Heston, was invited round to Tatum O'Neal's house by her father Ryan.

GL: It could probably be said that it is a completely unique career that you have created and that you have made up your own rules?

MM: Absolutely. I have been fortunate that, rather like yourself, a lot of doors have opened up for me. For example, I could go to Lucille Ball's house and she was very comfortable with me. In the early days when I was on tour with the Royal Family (you're vetted before you go on tour), I was warned that if you put one foot wrong, you wouldn't be invited again. When I was touring with Paul McCartney and Linda I was invited to dine with them. That was quite unique. I became very close to Paul and Linda during that period in the mid-1970s culminating in dinner at Madison Square Garden with a very special guest – Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

GL: I understand that you got on particularly well with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Why was that?

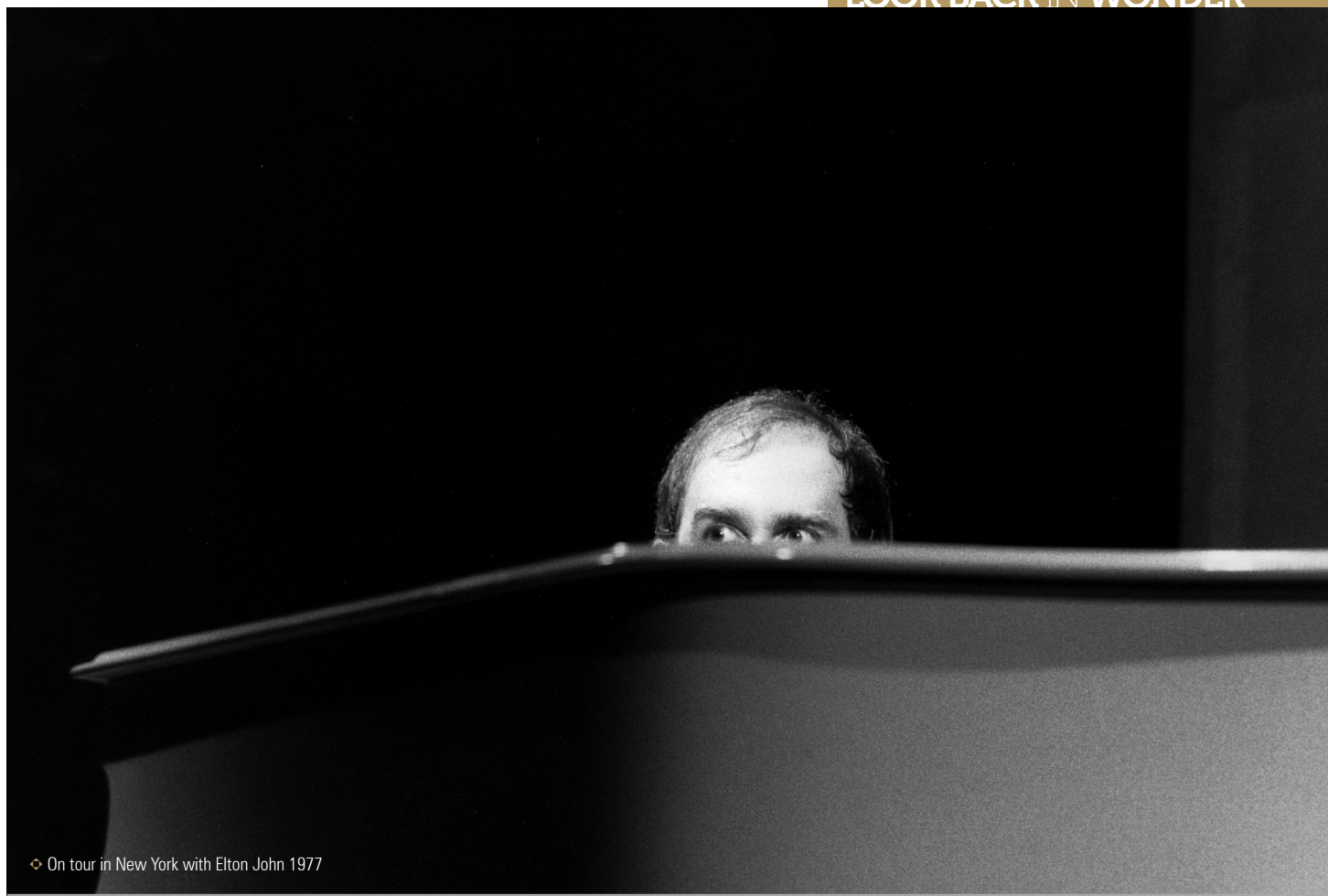
MM: She was incredibly knowledgeable about photography and I couldn't understand why. She talked comprehensively and comfortably about lenses, focal lengths, apertures, reciprocity and depth-of-field and I wondered how on earth she could possibly know so much about all those aspects of photography that only professional photographers know.

Two years after she died, I had my answer, which she had never let slip during the dinner – she used to be a press photographer for *The Washington Times-Herald*, before she married JFK.

It is important to bear in mind that during a dinner party like that, with just eight guests, the conversation is going to move around the table. I would have assumed that she would want to spend more time with Linda or Paul than me, but she was fascinated and totally absorbed with photography; it was obviously a passion for her.

GL: If you could now travel back to any time with your camera where would you go back to and who would you choose to photograph?

MM: Two people spring to mind. One would be Lord Nelson. I would love to have been on Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar (without of course being killed!). Another would be Napoleon, who was such a fantastic character. But I think I can say that in any part of history something or someone always stands out. Even to go back to



✧ On tour in New York with Elton John 1977

the period of the Russian Revolution and photograph Lenin would be extraordinary, because Russia really fascinates me. I was one of the few westerners at the time to be invited to the Kremlin.

GL: How did you become one of the few westerners to be invited to the Kremlin?

MM: That was through my job with Robert Maxwell the media mogul. Before Maxwell I'd been invited along to many wonderful occasions at Buckingham Palace, on The Royal Yacht Britannia, to the Oscars. But when I worked for Maxwell, other doors opened allowing me to go inside The White House, The Kremlin, the home of Carlos Menem, the President of Argentina in Buenos Aires, the home of Juan Carlos I of Spain, to name but a few. You would not usually get such opportunities.

There were also other exciting aspects to the work – for example, flying into the crater of Mount Kilimanjaro, normally not possible. I pointed to it and said it would be fascinating to fly over the crater, remarking that of course one wouldn't be allowed to do that, so Maxwell said, *"What do you mean we're not allowed to do it? Get me the pilot."* *"Mr. Snapper wants a shot of the crater, let's fly over it."* and the pilot said, *"Well, Mr. Maxwell we can't do that; it would be against aviation rules,"* *"Just do*

it, just don't spend too long," and of course we did. Amazing. Things like that happened which were just incredible.

GL: The pictures that got away, were there any that you regret?

MM: I've been really lucky and there's not much that I have missed that has been of any importance. My biggest photographic regret was Elvis Presley. I was given a choice of two opportunities – to shoot Elvis in Memphis or Donny Osmond and his family in Hawaii. I chose Hawaii. I remember vividly the scent of orchids and the beautiful sunsets, and from the plane, I witnessed a 360° rainbow! My reasoning for heading to the assignment in Hawaii instead of Memphis was that I would be able to see Elvis the following year but of course very sadly he died. That, professionally, is my biggest regret.

GL: I believe there was an incident with the IRA and a bombing attempt in Oxford Street that you shot?

MM: I was dispatched from the *Evening News* and we'd had a tip-off that the IRA were bombing in Oxford Street and I got myself down there pretty sharply. I was walking towards Selfridges when there was a panic; somebody shouted that there was a bomb in Selfridges and I suppose in my

rash youth (it was a very stupid thing to do), I somehow nipped inside and hid myself in the Ladies Dresses Department, behind some clothes that were on racks. When they slammed all the doors shut, I was in there on my own with the threat of a bomb going off!

Then I peeped out and saw a man on his hands and knees. He'd found an incendiary device and was crawling along on all fours, holding the bomb in his right hand. He placed it into a sand bucket. It was a small device – it looked like an alarm clock with a battery. That man was a very brave bomb-disposal specialist, and I got some great pictures of him putting the device into the sand bucket.

The plaudits from the newspaper were unreal. They did say it was a stupid thing to do, but a cracking set of photos came from it. They used broadsheet at the time and the whole of Page 1 was covered with those photos and the byline was *"World Exclusive by Evening News photographer, Mike Maloney"*. I wasn't on their staff, but they said it all the same.

I've had some near misses too. I was in Belfast with a Novoflex 400mm on the end of my Nikon. The Novoflex was a manual push/pull lens which looked somewhat like a gun and I was stopped in Belfast from going

out with it because they said, “*You don’t want to be shot do you, Sonny Jim?*” But of course when you look back it could have been mistaken for a grenade launcher!

GL: You had another memorable moment during the Balcombe Street Siege² in 1975, I believe?

MM: It was brilliant. That was the best story you could have in photography, and also professionally the saddest for one of my colleagues. Four men were in a flat at 22b Balcombe Street in Marylebone, taking its two residents, John and Sheila Matthews, hostage. The men declared that they were members of the IRA and demanded a plane to fly both them and their hostages to Ireland. Scotland Yard refused, creating a six-day standoff between the men and the police. We got a tip-off at the *Mirror* that they had released the wife on compassionate grounds because she wasn’t well and were informed she was going to Queen Charlotte’s hospital in Paddington. So I rushed down there with my Nikon F and a 35mm Nikkor lens and a flash, which was all I had because I was really racing, only to find that the information was wrong! I rang the editorial office from a phone box and I was asked to come back to the office. But I decided I would go back to Balcombe Street to see what was happening there. Bear in mind I’ve previously spent days there already, all of us positioned at the bottom of the road,

together with the outside broadcast units (in those days the TV cameras were on the roof) and three or four days had gone by with nothing happening.

So I went down to Balcombe Street and I asked a guy called Frank Tewkesbury, who was the staff photographer on the *Evening Standard*, if anything was happening. He replied, “*No, no, boring as hell. Do me a favour – look after my equipment while I go to the loo.*” He had an 800mm Nikkor lens and I asked him whether he minded if I put it onto my body so that I could have a look at the balcony while he was away. It was raining and dark, with very low light. My Nikon was loaded with Kodak Tri-X film (400 ISO), and the furthest you could push it was 3200 ISO which gave you grain like golf balls! Frank was happy to let me borrow his lens. Less than a minute after he had gone (which shows you how lucky I was), an armed policeman suddenly appeared on the balcony with his revolver aimed at the gunmen who were emerging with their hands on their heads. I said, “*Good God they’re coming out!*,” and with peripheral vision I saw the panic around me and a BBC man vainly trying to climb the metal ladder to the TV cameras, but slipping and falling down; it was very wet which made conditions even worse. Using my Nikon body and the 800mm Nikkor lens, I rattled off picture after picture. It made the most amazing shots and was all over in a few minutes.

When Frank came back he asked me what had happened and I told him, “*They’re out! It’s all over, and I’ve got some pictures, do you want them? I’m prepared to share them with you because I used your equipment.*” But he replied, “*No, it’s 5 o’clock, our edition has already gone out – you take them and I’ll just ring in and tell everyone it’s finished.*” Of course what he should have done was to hand them over to the *Daily Mail* and he got a terrible roasting for that.

But blue-eyed-boy here went back to the *Mirror* where Alex Winberg was sitting at his desk and I said, “*The siege is all over and I’ve got some pictures, if they come out,*” He nearly had a heart attack and reminded me that he hadn’t sent me down to Balcombe Street, so I explained the situation to him and he said, “*You’re a genius! Come on!*” He grabbed my arm, took me into the darkroom where we processed them, blew them up to 20 x16 inches and we had seven good shots that were acceptable!

GL: Have you found the move to digital a useful technological advance?

MM: Yes and no. The advent of digital photography has killed travel for national newspaper photographers. To give you an example, in the past if I went on tour with the Royal Family to South Africa, I’d travel there, and be able to stay for a few weeks (when I worked on the Australian shoot I

♦ HM The Queen on the beach at Holkham, North Norfolk 1979



was out there for 2 or 3 months) because I'd be shooting film, sending it back every week or so.

But it could also be quite stressful. Let me give you an example – my late colleague Peter Stone was sent to Burma to shoot a big bank robber who'd escaped. He got a picture and in those days in the early 1970s getting a phone call out of Burma was something.

He sat in his hotel room ringing and ringing the *Daily Mirror* and finally got through to the wire room on a very crackly phone and he said, "Hello," and the voice in the distance said, "Hello?" and he said, "It's Peter Stone here." The guy said, "You want Peter Stone? I'll just see if I can get him for you," and with that the wire room guy went off, spoke to the picture desk and came back and said, "Sorry, he's in Burma and won't be back till next week."

What occurs now is an editor calls a contact in Cape Town for example and says "The Queen is visiting your country – can you cover it for us and transmit some pictures over?" The transmission is pretty instantaneous.

In my national newspaper days we had twenty-two photographers in London and the editor tried to give the right job to the right person. Now, all they're interested in is a shot from the assignment taken on a digital camera. The name of the game is to get the picture into the paper as early as is possible before the competition.

GL: Tell us about the Princess Diana connection.

MM: It all started at Coleherne Court, in London. Lady Diana was working as a children's nanny at the Young England School in Pimlico just down the road from *Grays of Westminster*. I was regularly sent down to take pictures of her as she was leaving the school.

The newspaper would pay retainers to some of the Palace staff, and on this particular day I came back from a shoot in the morning with Diana and the editor told me that he had just been tipped off that she was going to marry Prince Charles, and he wanted to splash it over the front page. He told me that he needed a panoramic shot of where she lived. So I was dispatched down to Coleherne Court, and set up my camera to do a panoramic shot when a voice behind me said, "Are you still here?" and I said, "Hello, Lady Diana, this is what's going to happen," and she invited me in for tea so I could tell her the whole story.

The information was absolutely spot-on. On the day of the wedding I was sent to Clarence House and I got some amazing pictures. I actually got to see Diana in her wedding dress before Prince

On the day of the wedding I was sent to Clarence House and I got some amazing pictures. I actually got to see Diana in her wedding dress before Prince Charles!



◆ Prince Charles and Princess Diana arriving back at the Palace

Charles! Patrick Lichfield was the official photographer, but I was doing the royal rota for all the papers in Fleet Street and I got some wonderful shots of the two of them. It was a significant moment in my life as a Fleet Street photographer.

GL: One of the things I have always noticed about you over the years is that your enthusiasm for photography has never waned.

MM: You are right. I was the only person on the staff of the *Mirror* for whom photography was a hobby as well as a profession; none of my colleagues would go home and take out their camera and go out and photograph poppies in a field or butterflies for example – as I did. It was a passion and still is.

If I'm not taking pictures professionally, I'm doing it for pleasure. ■

Mike Maloney will be starting a special series unique to Nikon Owner in the next issue, entitled Mike Maloney's World.

¹*Lucille Ball* (August 6, 1911 – April 26, 1989) was an American comedienne, film, television, stage and radio actress, model, film and television executive, as well as star of the sitcoms *I Love Lucy*, *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*, *The Lucy Show* and *Here's Lucy*.

²*The Balcombe Street Siege* was an incident involving members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Metropolitan Police Service of London, lasting from 6 December to 12 December 1975. The siege ended with the surrender of the four IRA volunteers and the release of their two hostages. The events were televised and watched by millions.