

Girton Studio

The History of Girton Studio as told by Alan Girton

Interviewed by Tory Girton and Sandy Anceravage in the spring of 2005

Girton Studio is a family tradition business, it was first owned by the late John Girton, who passed it down to his son Alan Girton.

Girton Studio has changed immensely since it first started business. It used to do only family shots, but now has changed to family, pets, sports, and much more. When Girton Studio first opened it was located on 4th Street, it is now on 12th.

PATCHWORK: When was Girton Studio established?

GIRTON: Girton Studio was established in 1951, in Bloomsburg on East Street.

PATCHWORK: Who started the business?

GIRTON: My father, my father started it after he came back from the service.

PATCHWORK: How was it started?

GIRTON: He bought the business from two existing photographers that wanted to get out of the business, so he bought the business and the equipment.

PATCHWORK: How long have you worked at Girton Studio?

GIRTON: For 20, let me think here, 22 years.

PATCHWORK: Did you have a fascination in photography as a child?

GIRTON: Well being that my father was a photographer I came from a background to start with, but around age thirteen I started taking an interest in it and then as I worked

further along with it I got more involved and of course I made the decision around tenth grade in high school that that's what I was going to pursue.

PATCHWORK: What were the most common photos taken during your father's time?

GIRTON: Mostly dad did a lot of; well he had a baby club, so there were a lot of children's portraits and he did a lot of families and some things for churches and things like that; so a lot of kids and a lot of high school seniors as well, so mostly people photographs.

PATCHWORK: In what ways has photography and the types of photos changed since your father's time?

GIRTON: Wow, they've gone from, they've gone quite a ways, of course up to today's introduction of digital photography there's been a wide range of change in the field, you know to paper prints not to prints that are pushed now on an inkjet printer, so quite a wide range.

PATCHWORK: What did the original studio look like?

GIRTON: The original studio was on the second floor above a, at the time it was, I'm trying to think of the store that was down below it. I can't recall off hand. At any rate the studio was on the second floor and it consisted of three rooms, there's a dark room, a camera room and a reception area. That was all that as involved in it at that point. So this is our third location, down here on 12th Street.

PATCHWORK: What are the differences between three rooms? What is the way the photos were taken?

GIRTON: Well, each has its own purpose of course, you know your major part of your shooting is going on in the camera room, and of course back when we were first established, the dark room was a big time running facility, and of course your other area was where you did your selling or where you did your customers' orders.

PATCHWORK: How have costs changed since your father's time?

GIRTON: Dramatically, of course everything is expensive these days, but I guess in relation to the cost of living back then and how people were making money, I'm pretty sure it's around the same. Photography is luxury business. There's no doubt about it,

there's needs for it on a professional level, but there's also a lot of just because you'd like to have it.

PATCHWORK: If I was to get a photo taken of me for graduation or casually, approximately how much would that cost?

GIRTON: Well, probably if you want to state it as an average order, an average high school senior portrait order is roughly around \$175, about an average, with sitting fee, some are a lot more, and some are, you know, slightly less. However there are different purposes too. If you're talking for advertising and you know you just want to a head shot and shoulder photograph for publicity, that's a lot less.

PATCHWORK: What makes a photo a great one to you?

GIRTON: Composition lighting and of course the quality of the print has to be of good quality.

PATCHWORK: How has that changed since your father's time?

GIRTON: Mostly technique, lighting is always a part of it and it still is today part of the final product; it's a very important part. Composition, you know your posing has changed, it's come to be more relaxed, that's more sellable these days for as far as family portraits and things like that are concerned, and certainly the clothing and all that other stuff has come along way.

PATCHWORK: Since your father was a photographer, did that have a really big impact on what you wanted to choose?

GIRTON: Pretty much, yeah it was a big head start. Yeah he had a lot of influence.

PATCHWORK: How long did your father work in this business?

GIRTON: 30 years.

PATCHWORK: Did your father go to photography school, if so where, if no, where did he learn his skill he needed to possess to be a photographer?

GIRTON: Well again my father was in the service and after he did his tour of duty, he first started out at architectural drafting and he did that for a few months and then he changed what he had left of his G.I. Bill, he took to use for photography college. He went to Leroy School of Photography in Philadelphia.

PATCHWORK: What college did you go to?

GIRTON: I went to Antonelle Institute in Philadelphia.

PATCHWORK: Around what time of the year is your busiest time?

GIRTON: Ok, that's a great question, the absolute busiest time of year I think is right before Christmas. That's a pushed rush to get things out before the holiday. Probably, September and October are the busiest months I would say overall, and May comes in a close second.

PATCHWORK: Is that because of the scenery?

GIRTON: No actually it's just the way things are. You've got your senior portrait deadline time, and there you're already starting to do early stuff for Christmas gifts, and you still have usually a full flight of weddings, and you can't discount the occasional fall class reunion too, so you toss that all in one basket and you're pretty busy those two months, September, October, and November still yet fairly heavy. So these three months are probably the absolute busiest months of the year, I would say.

PATCHWORK: Right now, do you mainly take family photos or just different kinds?

GIRTON: All different kinds, but mainly we do families, seniors, children things like that.

PATCHWORK: Did your father through his childhood have an interest in photography or was it just an option to do?

GIRTON: Yea that's pretty much it. He did his time in the service so I'm sure through there he had some exposure for it and then found out that he wanted to try this drafting and that's what he didn't like, so he scrapped that and went onto photography.

PATCHWORK: Thank you for doing this interview.

GIRTON: You are welcome, I'm glad I could help you out.