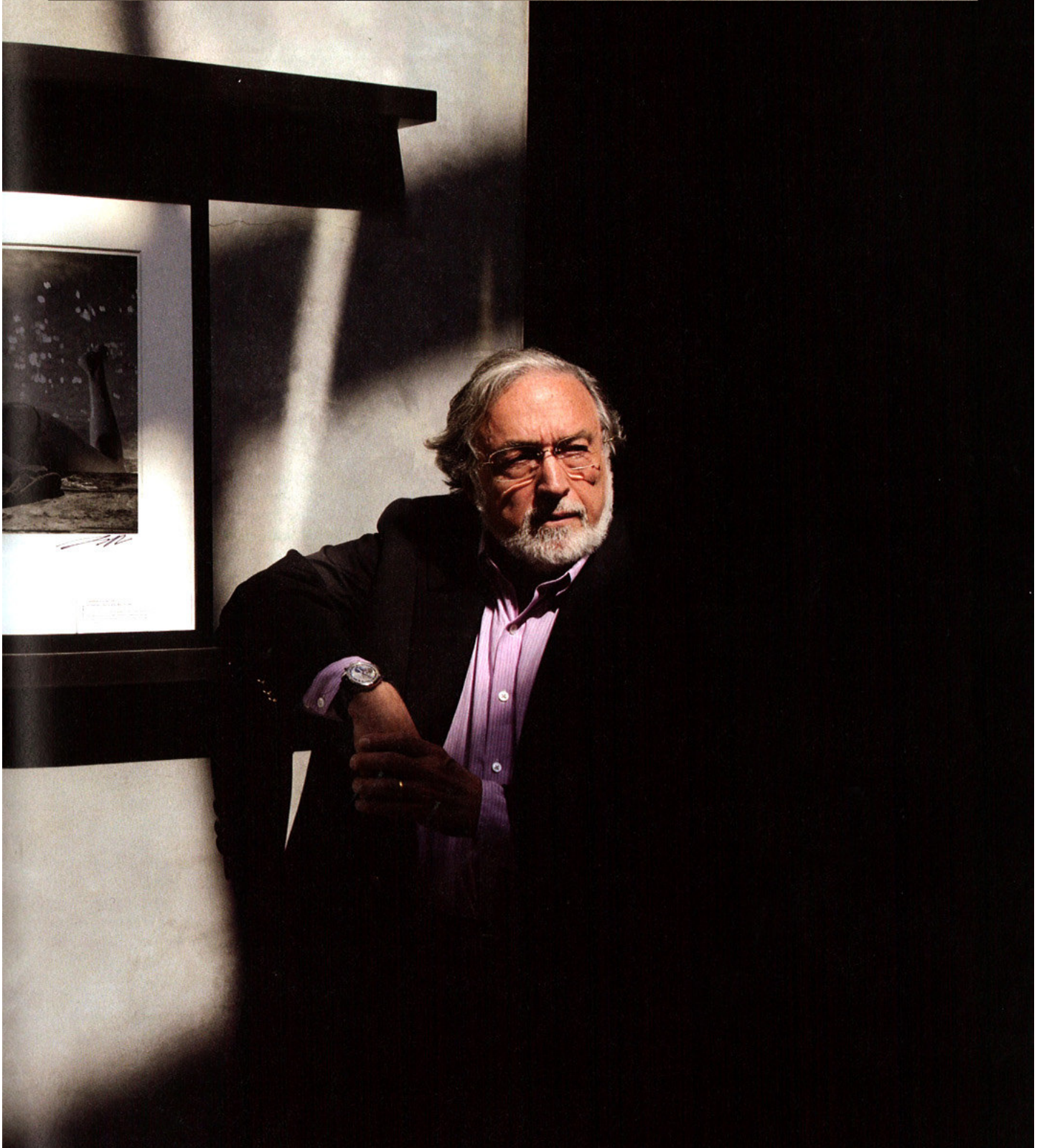


Lawrence Schiller

BENTLEY OWNER

PHOTOGRAPHER, WRITER AND DIRECTOR LAWRENCE SCHILLER HAS PACKED THREE CAREERS INTO ONE LIFETIME. NO WONDER HE SAVOURS THE RELAXING HAVEN OF HIS BENTLEY, REFLECTS *MATTHEW DE PAULA*





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Lawrence Schiller's first words to Marilyn Monroe caught her off guard.

He had been sent to the set of her latest movie, *Let's Make Love*, to photograph her for *Look* magazine. A studio publicist introduced them as she was heading to her dressing room.

"Hi, Larry from *Look*. I'm Marilyn," she said, switching from unapproachable to cheerful almost instantly.

"And I'm the Big Bad Wolf," Schiller replied.

Much like many of his ideas that eventually lead to great things, this particular greeting seemed to come out of nowhere. He was mortified – until she laughed and said, "You look a bit young to be so bad."

The year was 1960. He was only 23 and had just broken the ice with one of the biggest stars in Hollywood.

The two got along well during his three days on set, partly because she was so affable and partly because she was an ideal subject to be photographed. Monroe was eminently aware of

just what the cameras needed from her, recounts Schiller in his newly published memoir *Marilyn & Me*, a special edition of which, published by Taschen, includes photos of the actress that have never been published before.

He was already a successful photojournalist before he even met Monroe. While attending classes at Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, he was getting pictures published in *Glamour*, *Life*, *Paris Match*, *Playboy*, *Sport* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, among others.

"I started at the age of 15 as a photographer and by 16 I was a working photojournalist," says Schiller, who was born in Brooklyn and raised in San Diego. "You know what the word *chutzpah* means? Well, I had lots of *chutzpah*. I would even drive my bicycle to automobile accidents to photograph the skid marks and then sell the pictures of the skid marks to insurance companies. That's how I made enough money to buy my first car by the time I was 16."

By the time he was dispatched, this time by *Paris Match* magazine, to photograph Monroe a second time in 1962 on the set of *Something's Got to Give*, he had earned enough to trade up from the Mercury station wagon he'd previously been driving to a Mercedes-Benz 220.

The cars Schiller has owned through the years trace the upward trajectory of his fascinating career, culminating in the Bentley Continental Flying Spur he bought at the end of 2007.

"When I turned 70, I decided I wanted one more car in my life, so I decided to buy a Bentley," says Schiller. The seed for this purchase, this reward for a life well lived, filled with hard work and accomplishments, was planted decades prior, in London. "It started in a very strange way," he says.

Fellow photographer, business partner and friend Anthony Charles Robert Armstrong-Jones, 1st Earl of Snowdon, then married to Princess Margaret, introduced him to the Bentley brand in the 1970s. The two photographers had met through Tom Blau, founder of photographic agency Camera Press.

"I used to go to visit Tony Snowdon a lot," Schiller says. "And we'd always drive by a Bentley place. He would look at the cars and he would joke with me: 'They won't let me drive one. We're not supposed to look that rich.' So Snowdon was the first one who showed me a Bentley. I didn't know what a Bentley was before that."

A decade or more would pass before he ever sat in one. But when he finally did, the seed germinated. "It had a wonderful tactile feeling to it. There was just something about the Bentley," Schiller says.

He would own a string of Mercedes, followed by Jaguars before finally walking into Bentley Beverly Hills in late 2007 and buying a dark green over saddle brown Flying Spur, "right off the lot". One of the car's virtues that won him over immediately was the comfortable driver's seat, which he says is essential, given how much driving he does.

"It is nothing for me to get in the car and drive for five or eight hours," says Schiller, 76. "So to me, what was interesting is I sat into the seat and it kind of shaped around me. It was just very,



HE HAD PHOTOGRAPHED *LEE HARVEY OSWALD, RICHARD NIXON, ROBERT KENNEDY, PAUL NEWMAN, JAMES EARL JONES, CLINT EASTWOOD, BARBARA STREISAND, MOHAMMED ALI* AND COUNTLESS OTHER FAMOUS OR IMPORTANT FIGURES. AND JUST LIKE THAT, HE GOT OUT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

very comfortable. And it wasn't too low, and it wasn't too high. You had this feeling that you were getting in a semi-sports car, without having to get down in it."

The Flying Spur's smooth, quiet ride impressed him as well. "When I took it out on the freeway, what got my attention is that it seemed like the faster you went, the quieter the car was. You got less of a sense of speed and it really hugged the road very well," Schiller says.

Schiller had the Bentley shipped cross-country several years ago when he and his wife, Nina Weiner, moved to New York. They now split their time between Southern California and their Upper West Side apartment in Manhattan and keep a Range Rover on the West Coast because it fits their two Rottweilers.

With five children and five grandchildren to keep occupied, having a spacious back seat was an important consideration for Schiller when he bought his Bentley. "Cars have to be for the family as much as for you," he says. "And the Bentley also is that way, it's a big car inside."

When in New York, Schiller and his wife take road trips just about every weekend. "It's the only way we keep our sanity," he says. Sometimes they will go to Philadelphia, pick up the grandkids and bring them back to New York for the weekend, then return them to Philadelphia on Sunday night. That back-and-forth trip racks up about 400 miles. So far, his Flying Spur has about 48,000 on the mileometer.

In winter, Schiller will take the grandkids skiing in the Poconos. "For me, it's easier to go in a car like that and drive for three or four hours, because by the time you go to the airport, by the time you're passed security, finally check in, it's the same amount of time. And you're not out in the fresh air. My wife loves to open the sunroof and it's just really enjoyable," he says.

Despite being well past retirement age, Schiller also travels quite a bit on business. In 2008, he cofounded The Norman Mailer Center to honour the memory and continue the work of his longtime friend and colleague Norman Mailer, with whom he collaborated on numerous book and film projects for more than 30 years. They worked together on *The Executioner's Song*, a book for which Mailer won a Pulitzer. Schiller produced and directed a television mini-series by the same

name that was based on the book. It starred Tommy Lee Jones and won two Emmy Awards.

The Norman Mailer Center helps foster writing talent through seminars, workshops and writers' retreats. In early October, it held its fourth annual benefit gala in Manhattan with Tina Brown, Alec Baldwin and Mohammed Ali anchoring the event.

Besides a modest office that is a short walk from Schiller's Upper West Side apartment, the real hub for much of the foundation's activity is Mailer's former home in Provincetown, Massachusetts. It is about a five-hour drive from Manhattan. "For me to leave here at six in the morning in the car and drive all the way up to Provincetown, I just love it," Schiller says.

The foundation is just one example of how Schiller has reinvented himself many times throughout his career. He is also a consultant to political campaigns and corporations on crisis management, branding and social imaging, which periodically takes him to Washington D.C.



"I WOULD DREAM, AND THEN I WOULD HAVE TO PROVE THAT I COULD
MAKE THE DREAM COME TRUE"

His metamorphosis has been constant. In the late '60s, when television started to kill the strength and popularity of the very magazines he had based his entire photography career upon, Schiller decided to pack it in. "I wasn't an artsy photographer, I was a hard news photographer. I call it parachuting inside of people's lives," he says.

He had photographed Lee Harvey Oswald, Richard Nixon, Robert Kennedy, Paul Newman, James Earl Jones, Clint Eastwood, Barbara Streisand, Muhammed Ali and countless other famous or important figures. And just like that, he got out of photography.

Schiller jumped into writing and publishing books, and producing and directing films. "I only do projects that everybody says are impossible. Make an eight-hour film in the Soviet Union under the Brezhnev regime. Crazy, insanity. American's never made a film there," he says. "I'm going to make the first independent American film in the Soviet Union, and I did."

The film he's referring to is the 1986 TV mini-series *Peter the Great*, which won three Emmy awards.

He wrote five New York Times bestsellers, including *American Tragedy*, about the trial of O.J. Simpson for the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson. The list of accomplishments goes on and on.

It's not easy to pinpoint what motivates Schiller to make such bold and brash moves, to charge headlong into the unknown. "I would dream, and then I would have to prove that I could make the dream come true," he says.

And that's perhaps where the Bentley is an antidote for his incessant striving – a solid constant that can be counted upon, like the Missoni sweaters and Charvet suits he wears.

"Some people enjoy rowing down the rapids," he says, "I enjoy driving a car." **B**

Matthew de Paula is a New York-based writer and editor whose work appears in Forbes, Nylon and Complex, among other publications.