

Daryl Hawk thrives on the challenge of managing the business and creative aspects of his multiple specialties—weddings, portraits, corporate, editorial, travel. “I don’t get burned out doing any one thing,” he says.

## WEDDINGS

By Jeff Kent



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For some photographers, professional photography isn't about specialization, it's about diversifying, about making a bid to address every artistic inspiration. That's certainly been the case for Daryl Hawk of Connecticut, who photographs weddings, portraits, commercial, editorial and travel assignments.

As Hawk grew up, he was fascinated by the stories of explorers in *National Geographic*, amazed by the images of far-flung places, diverse cultures and unfamiliar creatures. He dreamed of making explorations of his own, and documenting his travels in the style of that iconic publication.

No surprise then when Hawk gravitated to photography. Since age 10, he's kept scrapbooks of his journeys, ever-increasing the scope of his travels as he matured. At Connecticut College, Hawk majored in English, thinking he'd be a travel writer, but as he sought to express himself in words, he kept returning to the medium he truly loved: photography.

In his early 20s, Hawk became a photojournalist. He did some documentary jobs, got his work into a few publications, and started making a name for himself. Whenever he scraped together some cash, he'd set off on personal trips throughout North America.

By his mid-20s, Hawk was thinking more about the long term and a sustainable career in photography. Documentary work was fun, but it was sparse and it didn't pay well. Hawk began doing portraits. His skills transferred nicely, and he was able to produce poignant, appealing portraits that found an immediate market in Connecticut and suburban New York.

# Two worlds

Daryl Hawk finds his groove between wedding and PJ work



Hawk expanded into weddings. As an early practitioner of the photojournalistic approach, he found weddings were a natural fit. "It stays true to my prevailing theme and my great love: telling stories and doing documentaries," explains Hawk. "The most enjoyable thing about photographing a wedding is being able to tell the story of the greatest day of two people's lives. I enjoy that in the same way that I enjoy telling the story of a remote kingdom hidden away in the Himalayas."

Hawk's business grew, and it wasn't long before he was managing a busy studio with a jammed appointment book. With the help of his wife and partner, Heidi, Hawk developed the business steadily over the years, eventually taking on a couple of associate photographers and booking 100 weddings a year.

Portraits and weddings paid the bills, and Hawk continued to do documentary travel photography. His expanding travel portfolio prompted interest from corporate clients who wanted his dramatic images for a variety of commercial applications. Hawk also began to show his work in fine art exhibitions and sell it as wall décor. As his reputation



spread, his travel images went from loss leader to profitable revenue source.

These days, in addition to his portrait and wedding work, Hawk maintains a healthy corporate client base and publishes work regularly in a selection of magazines. He conducts slideshow presentations for

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organizations and gives seminars on shooting techniques. He even hosts a cable television show, *The Unconventional Traveler*, featuring interviews with other travel photographers and explorers.

The challenge for many photographers with multiple specialties is managing the business—and the creative focus—so that one area doesn't detract from another. Hawk gladly takes on the challenge. "I'm able to manage my creative focus *because* I do so many different things," he says. "I don't get burned out doing any one thing. I am able to bring in income from all these separate areas. If all my eggs were in one basket, I'd be much too stressed out. Spreading things

out has been a key to my success, both as a businessman and as a creative person."

Hawk relies on segmenting his business organization and marketing efforts. When he talks to a bride, he limits his conversation to wedding photography. When he discusses a travel project with a client, he doesn't mention weddings or portraits. To support his two-fold marketing approach, he has two distinct Web sites. For wedding and portrait business, he steers clients to [www.hawkphotography.com](http://www.hawkphotography.com). For travel, commercial and fine art assignments, he directs clients to [www.darylhawk.com](http://www.darylhawk.com).

Some photographers might be hesitant to mix personal and professional passions,

but for Daryl Hawk it's the only way to work. "I've always worn a lot of different hats, but I think that's what makes my life so interesting and so enjoyable," he says. "I can say that 25 years after I started in this business, my love for photography is just as strong as it was the day I did my first professional assignment. I do something different every day, and people are always amazed at the variety of work I take on. I have learned to hone in on what's important, and that has made all the difference." ■

*See more from Daryl Hawk at [www.hawkphotography.com](http://www.hawkphotography.com) and [www.darylhawk.com](http://www.darylhawk.com).*

