



## EDITOR'S NOTES

# YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD FOR PHOTOGRAPHY



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The Kiss of Liberation, Saint-Briac-sur-Mer, Brittany, August 15, 1944.

I'D LIKE TO DEDICATE this Photojournalism and Documentary Photography issue to one of the greatest war photographers of all time: Tony Vaccaro. Never heard of Tony Vaccaro? Well, that's a shame because it's only now at age 93 that he's getting the long-overdue recognition he deserves. Vaccaro was a 21-year-old combat infantryman with the 83rd Infantry Division during World War II who brought along a small, 35mm Argus C3 camera and became a firsthand eyewitness and chronicler of the power and tragedy of war.

This was before the terms photojournalist and war photographer had become romanticized in Hollywood and on TV, and even before Robert Capa's famous images of Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasion of Normandy were printed in *Life* magazine. At the time he gave himself this self-assignment to cover WWII, it was just Vaccaro, his Argus

C3, and his fellow soldiers around him. (Vaccaro, notably, had been turned down by the Army's Signal Corps for being too young, which is just as well because he would've had to lug around a large Speed Graphic camera and capture more static and stagy scenes of war.)

Needless to say, when you have a rifle in one hand and a camera in the other, it's not easy work and resources were limited. "I processed my films in four army helmets and hung the wet negatives from tree branches to dry," Vaccaro said. He went on to capture nearly 8,000 photos of WWII and while some have appeared in print over the years, including Vaccaro's book *Entering Germany: Photographs 1944-1949* from Taschen Verlag, many have not. And similarly, Vaccaro's own story had not fully been told until recently. An excellent HBO documentary on Vaccaro titled "Underfire: The Untold Story of Pfc. Tony Vaccaro" aired in early November 2016 and is, likely, still available now on HBO on demand and online. (Visit <http://tonyvaccarofilm.com> to learn more. See more of Vaccaro's work at <http://tonyvaccaro.studio>.)

After the war, Vaccaro went on to become a successful fashion and magazine photographer and never shot another image of armed conflict. A retrospective of his work was on display in New York City in November in a show titled "Tony Vaccaro: War, Peace, and Beauty." I have known Vaccaro for some time; he was a neighbor of mine in Queens, New York, and I would often visit his studio where he would show me his work, tell me the fascinating stories behind the images, and pick my brain about the latest digital gear. While Vaccaro has tried his hand at digital, he has firmly and fittingly remained an analog guy. When I saw him at his show opening he flashed me his Leica M3 dangling at the ready near his waist. "I always have a camera with me. You always have to be ready to take pictures," he said with a grin. "And I'm at the ninth picture of a new roll."

Be well, Tony. The world needs more photographers like you.

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