

Jeff Booth: 2006 Spirit of Adventure Award Recipient

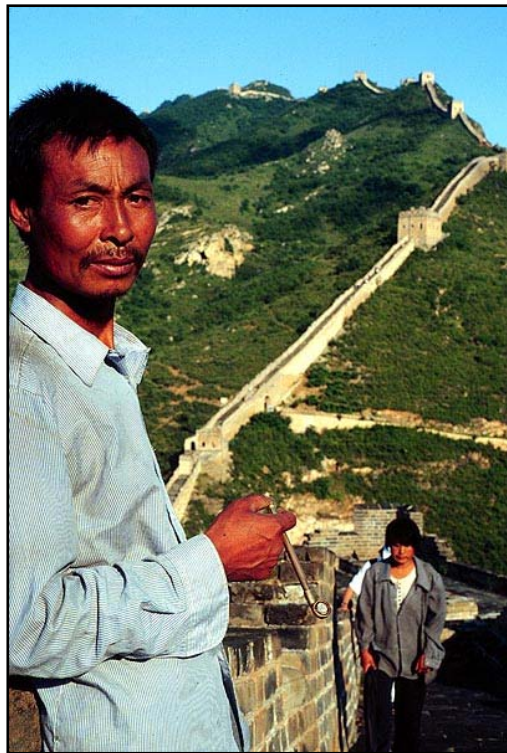


Jeff Booth, the man behind the lens

The life that Jeff Booth leads has always been in motion. The sensitivity, observation and reflection that guide and influence his traveling experiences make this remarkable person a worthy recipient of the 2006 Spirit of Adventure Award. Today, Jeff and his family are readjusting to the pace of life in California after just last week packing up their possessions and moving back to Los Angeles from Venice, Italy.

At 32, Jeff Booth has traveled extensively for the past ten years, making his way through Asia, Central and South America, and Europe. He is also a new and proud parent of a 22 month little girl named Elisa. For Jeff, his occupation is a very complicated thing to explain because he has so many skills to squeeze under one job title. Jeff is a Physicist, a Systems Engineer, a Photographer and a Travel Writer, and when he has free time he also pursues the outdoors, and is a great lover of white water kayaking and hiking. It is for these reasons and Jeff's adept ability to weave each of his interests throughout his life that he is an exemplary model of someone with a definite *spirit of adventure*.

Jeff traces the idea of going abroad back to 1996 when he was 22 years old, pursuing his Bachelor's Degree. A physics teacher suggested teaching English abroad as a way to try something different. For a trial run to see if he would enjoy the experience, he decided to go to Europe for a month. Soon thereafter, he was on his way to Chongqing, China to teach English for six months, which was followed by five months of travel in Southeast Asia. It was from these trips that Jeff began to take photos and his interest in photography escalated into a natural ability and love.



The Great Wall at Simatai, China

In 1998 as Jeff was exploring his options to take another trip to China—this time to Beijing. He decided to apply for, and was awarded the HI Travel Grant to further his pursuit of photography. Jeff explains that the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, a 20th century French photographer with a notable book *The Decisive Moment*, greatly influences his work when he is behind the lens of a camera. The aim is to be able to convey an entire story, or “picture-story,” within a solitary photograph. This candid approach is apparent and truly breathtaking in Jeff’s photographs.

In addition to photography, Jeff has a knack for telling stories. His charm, good humor and wit have helped make him an excellent travel writer. For the past 10 years Jeff has been an active writer, photographer and editor for the popular student magazine *Student Traveler*, which is available both in print and online at www.studenttraveler.com (Search: Jeff Booth). Jeff’s lust for adventure, eagerness to travel and ability to recount his stories easily cleared the path for him to not only do what he loved— to travel— but also gave him the chance to share not only his stories, but his excitement with others. It

was through this opportunity that he has had the chance to visit Central and South America, Asia and Europe.



Along the Inca trail, Peru

When asked what one of his favorite moments were when on the road (or off the beaten path), Jeff said it has to be either the time when he spent the night in an abandoned tower at the Great Wall in China where he had dinner by campfire with some locals that were also walking along the wall on their way home; or when he was on a rowing team in Venice, and while rowing a gondola up the Grand Canal with his Moroccan friend in their bright red team uniforms, they were the photo-op for all the visitors and tourists. Finally he was mistaken for a “local” and became a part of someone’s “This one time to Venice...” memory.

For an active man that is moving and shaking his way around the globe, each trip etches an invaluable life lesson. It’s not too surprising to hear that Jeff Booth readily accepts change as a part of his daily life and that he is able to cope well when plans turn awry, as most experienced travelers learn to do. When asked how traveling has changed him as a person, Jeff feels that he has gained two things: humility in the way that he lives his life, in thanks to witnessing the many ways that others live their lives; and the ability to inspire others to travel through his photography and writing. Being abroad has also encouraged him to be more culturally sensitive, enlarging his global perspective and enabling him to critique and appreciate his own country. Consequently, Jeff’s stories, in words or images, are rich with appreciation for the differences that make up the world and are complemented by his unique perspective acquired from years of travel.



Carnival face painter, Venice, Italy

Jeff and his wife, who also loves to travel, were married in 2003. That same year they decided to move to Venice, Italy so that Jeff could take a physics research position just outside the city in Padova. This was a perfect opportunity for Jeff because he was able to tie each of his passions together into one career. He was there working on physics in the same tower where, in the 16th century, Galileo taught, and living in one of the most romantic and picturesque cities in the world with the two loves of his life. As for future plans, when his daughter is able to walk on her own, they would like to revisit China and see how it has changed. Jeff is currently interested in traveling to the Middle East, because of its historical and contemporary significance.

Jeff Booth's stories are alluring and his humor is infectious; to read more about his travels visit his website: www.travelphotographer.net.