



40 Years Photographing the Arctic



Forty years ago this year, Bryan Alexander, a young British photographer used a Royal Society of Arts travel bursary to visit North West Greenland where he lived in an Inuit community for four months. This was the beginning of a lifetime documenting the Arctic and its people. In total Bryan has spent ten of the past 40 years living in isolated native camps and villages in the Arctic.

Today, Arcticphoto, run by husband and wife team, Bryan and Cherry Alexander, is the world's most comprehensive specialist photo archive on Polar regions. Their work is an expanding record of these vast areas and the changes that have happened over the past 40 years.

The Alexanders have had their photographs published in 43 different countries. Their very personable and knowledgeable perspective and their continual additions to this unique archive ensures they continue to thrive.

Commenting, Sara Evans, picture editor for the Sunday Times Travel Section said, *"One of the specialist libraries I often return to is Arcticphoto.co.uk...Just a few minutes speaking to him (Bryan Alexander) is an education in the varied indigenous people of the North, their belief systems, way of life and geography of the region."*

Their knowledge is an invaluable resource to many publishers, museums and TV companies. They have worked as consultants on such programmes as Bruce Parry's - *Arctic* and *The BBC's Human Planet* series.

Cherry, won the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year in 1995 with a picture of a blue iceberg. Having based most of her work in the Antarctic she comments on why the couple, who met at photographic college, chose to work poles apart, *"Although we sometimes travelled together, it's easier to be accepted in native communities if you work alone."*



Commenting on what he considers to have caused the most significant change to the traditional Inuit communities over the years, Bryan says, *“The anti-sealing campaigns that started in the early 1980’s resulted in Western governments banning all seal products. Almost overnight, Inuit communities lost their main source of income, forcing hunting communities onto welfare payments. Hunting for a living, although culturally vital, was no longer an option for many.”*

Bryan and Cherry continue to travel to these challenging and dangerous environments to add extraordinary pictures to their collection and despite working for months on end in temperatures sometimes as low as minus 50 C, they can’t get the central heating on fast enough back home!

In the works for this year are a book and an exhibition celebrating 40 years of photographing the Arctic.

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