



Selfie with Chicken the cat, 1979

**Black-and-White Film Photos  
by Glenn Trudel, taken 1978-98**

**At first, Glenn Trudel couldn't remember**

which of his photos I meant when I called about "The Kiss." There were so many – hundreds, maybe thousands – of similar candid shots that the former newspaper street photographer captured on black-and-white film throughout Madison in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. He thought I might have meant the one of a couple emerging from a State Street photo store, their heads thrown back in laughter – but no, that wasn't a kiss. "Then I was thinking it might be these two people kissing upside down at James Madison Park, lying on their backs, with their dog nearby," he said – but no, not that one, either. I sent him a link from the Wisconsin Historical Society's Glenn Trudel Collection, which contains more than 100 of his images, and his memory was finally jogged. "I'm 93% sure that it was at the Orton Park Festival somewhere between '78 and 1980," he said, using the camera slung around the stranger's neck to help date the photo. He figured he had used his 105 mm lens to take the photo, but he couldn't tell me the identities of the people engaged in this admirable display of public affection. "I never asked anybody who they were. I just took pictures and then left, street-photographer style."

By "just" taking pictures of everyday moments like this one, Trudel managed to document the zeitgeist of Madison in a tender era. A self-taught photographer whose first image was published in *The Daily Cardinal*, Trudel himself became an example of the tumultuous times when he was hired by the late Bob Rashid to work with the late Ron McCrea and others at the Madison Press Connection, a cooperative newspaper created in 1977 by journalists on strike from *The Capital Times* and the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Protests helped define downtown Madison back then, just as they do now. In that first *Daily Cardinal* photo, taken at a Library Mall protest, Trudel focused his lens not on the picketers but on a disinterested guy leaning against a bus stop pole reading a newspaper. You can almost hear both the photographer and his subject muttering, *Here we go again*.

Trudel's photos stand in jarring contrast to the staged, Instagram-ready poses of today. He captured spontaneous moments only – anything else was cheating. "The trick to getting a really good image was to anticipate the collision of events," he says.

Isthmus published Trudel's photos for almost a decade. But after they stopped in the late '90s, Trudel felt he'd lost his audience. He continued with some weddings and other hired work, but then endured a cancer diagnosis in 2009, followed by a two-year recovery process. His health came back strong, but his camera equipment was suddenly too outdated. It seemed too costly to upgrade. He stopped taking pictures altogether.

Glenn Trudel (pictured left in 1979) took all of the photos on the following pages between 1978 and 1998, including this mother and child at BB Clarke Beach (opposite page).

But he'll never stop seeing Madison through the same lens. Earlier this year, he spotted a mom pedaling a bicycle along the lake, towing a child behind her. The child was reading a book that was nearly as big as she was. "That would have been a good one," he thought.

