

Lawrence Schiller

Biography

Though a childhood accident left him with impaired vision in one eye, Lawrence Schiller became an obsessive photographer; even while attending Pepperdine College, his pictures had already appeared in *Life*, *Sport*, *Playboy*, *Glamour*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Schiller's interests and ambitions soon developed into a profession in print journalism, documenting major stories for glossy magazines all over the world, including *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Paris Match*, *Stern*, and the *London Sunday Times*. His iconic images of Robert F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Bette Davis, Barbra Streisand, Marilyn Monroe, Muhammad Ali, and Madame Nhu, among others are tributes to his doggedness, ingenuity, and charm as well as to his technical proficiency.

In November 1963, while on assignment for the *Saturday Evening Post*, he reached Dallas in time to photograph Lee Harvey Oswald. Later, he landed Jack Ruby's final interview. After extensive interviews with the widow of Lenny Bruce in 1968, Schiller and the writer Albert Goldman published *Ladies and Gentlemen, Lenny Bruce* (1974); and, with the photographer W. Eugene Smith, he produced *Minamata* (1975), the epic pictorial chronicle of mercury poisoning in Japan.

Schiller moved into motion pictures by directing a portion of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) with Paul Newman and Robert Redford, and *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972) with Diana Ross. In 1971, he produced and co-directed with L.M. Kit Carson the acclaimed documentary, *The American Dreamer* on Dennis Hopper. His editorial direction of *The Man Who Skied Down Everest* (1972) won an *Oscar* for Best Feature Documentary for its producer. After obtaining extraordinary cooperation from the Kremlin, in 1986, he executive produced and co-directed *Peter the Great*, the Emmy Award-winning television mini-series starring Maximilian Schell, Vanessa Redgrave, and Laurence Olivier.

Perhaps nothing in Schiller's career proved more remarkable, though, than his collaboration with Norman Mailer—a friendship unique in American literary history. For nearly thirty-five years the two worked closely together on books including *Marilyn* (1973), *The Faith of Graffiti* (1974), *Oswald's Tale* (1995), *Into the Mirror* (2002), and *The Executioner's Song* (1979), for which Mailer won the Pulitzer Prize. Schiller, who conceived of the project, did much of the legwork, interviews, and research for the book, while outmaneuvering numerous other reporters to gain exclusive access to the book's subject, Gary Gilmore, and went on to produce and direct the award-winning television miniseries based upon it, starring Tommy Lee Jones.

Schiller embedded himself into the so-called “Dream Team” defending O.J. Simpson, and with his unique insider’s perspective on the case, co-wrote (with James Willwerth) the *New York Times* number one best-selling *American Tragedy* (1996). His reporting on antisocial behavior soon became the basis for many books and motion pictures and documentaries for television, many of which he produced and directed.

Schiller has been a consultant to NBC News, the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, and the Annie Leibovitz Studios, among many other photographic archives; and has written for *The New Yorker*, *The Daily Beast*, and other publications. Upon the death of Norman Mailer, in 2008, Schiller was named the President and Co-Funder of the Norman Mailer Center and Writer’s Colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He currently is a consultant and advisor to various estates and trusts on monetizing and preserving the legacy of noted figures in America.

Chronological Timeline

- 1936 Born on December 28, 1936, in Brooklyn, New York.
- 1943 Family moves to San Diego, California.
- 1947 During the summer, Larry mans a booth selling film at the San Diego County Fair.
- 1949 Attends La Jolla High School and starts to work for a local newspaper, *The La Jolla Light*, photographing high school activities and sports events.
- 1951-1953 In High School Larry wins five Graflex Photographic Awards and that summer, he works with photographer Andy Lopez for the *Acme NewsPix*, in New York City, as his photographic assistant. *The New York Times* writer Jacob Deschin labels Schiller “A Pro at Sixteen” in a *US Camera* magazine feature story. Soon after, Larry wins a Socialistic Sports Association scholarship to Pepperdine College, Los Angeles.
- 1954 Schiller’s photograph of Governor Goodwin J. Knight is selected as one of the Governor’s official portraits. Larry begins publishing in *Sport* magazine and he wins several Scholastic Magazine Photographic Awards and the next year publishes his first photos in *The Saturday Evening Post*.
- 1956 Publishes first photograph in *Life* magazine; titled “Head Over Heels in Work”.
- 1958 Photographs first playmate, Joan Staley, for *Playboy* magazine and thereafter publishes his first color photographs in *Life* magazine, of dancer Julie Newmar. Shortly thereafter publishes a series of photographs on river running up the Colorado River for *Life*.

- 1960 In April, photographs Marilyn Monroe on assignment for Look magazine and, in October-November, photographs Richard Nixon's unsuccessful campaign for President of the United States for *Paris Match* magazine.
- With wife Judi Schiller, has first of three children, Suzanne, followed by Marc and Howard.
- 1961 Wins National Press Photographers Association and Encyclopedia Britannica Awards "Best Storytelling Photo" for his photo of Nixon conceding the election to John F. Kennedy.
- 1962 Photographs Marilyn Monroe on the set of *Something's Got to Give* for *Paris Match* magazine and publishes his first *Life* magazine cover of Marilyn Monroe. Upon the death of Marilyn, the same year, he publishes his second *Life* magazine cover of Monroe.
- 1963-1964 Photographs Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, and the events surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas for *The Saturday Evening Post*.
- 1965 Photographs Muhammad Ali-Floyd Patterson fight in Las Vegas for Sport magazine, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Watts riots for *Paris Match*.
- 1966 Publishes his first major photographic essay on the indiscriminate use of LSD for *Life* magazine and publishes his first book on the same subject. The article leads to the federal criminalization of LSD.
- 1968 Photographs Robert Kennedy during his presidential campaign, just prior to the candidate's assassination.
- Directs the still montage in the motion picture *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) for Paul Newman and 20th Century Fox.
- 1969 Photographs Paula Kelly for *Playboy*, breaking the "pubic hair" barrier and opening the door for Bob Guccione and others to distribute publications that included full frontal nudity via the U.S. Postal Service.
- His exclusive interview of Susan Atkins's confession about her role in the Charles Manson killings appears front page in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers.
- Collaborates with author Albert Goldman on *Ladies and Gentlemen, Lenny Bruce!!*, a book about the controversial satirist, which became the basis of a motion picture starring Dustin Hoffman.

Produces some of the most iconic photographs of Barbra Streisand during the filming of *On a Clear Day, You Can See Forever*.

- 1971 Directs the film *American Dreamer*, a cult classic about director/actor Dennis Hopper, with L. M. Kit Carson.
- Conceives and produces the title sequence and still montages for Barry Gordy's film *Lady Sings the Blues*, starring Diana Ross.
- 1972 Begins to work with W. Eugene Smith on his epic photographic essay *Minamata* the first major photographic book on industrial pollution.
- First collaboration with Norman Mailer, on the book *Marilyn*, with photographs by twenty-four leading photographers. The book becomes a *New York Times* best seller.
- 1975 His editorial direction of *The Man Who Skied Down Everest* wins the documentary feature Oscar for the film's producers.
- 1976 Covers the Patty Hearst trial for *Time* magazine, gaining inside access to F. Lee Bailey and the defense team.
- Directs his first dramatic motion picture, *Hey, I'm Alive*, for ABC Television network.
- 1977 Schiller concludes a series of interviews with convicted murderer Gary Gilmore and is the sole journalist to witness his execution in Utah. At the time, his death row interview with Gilmore is the longest published in *Playboy* magazine.
- 1979 With Norman Mailer as author, publishes *The Executioner's Song*, based upon Schiller's extensive interviews and research surrounding Gary Gilmore. The book wins the Pulitzer Prize in 1980 and becomes a *New York Times* best seller.
- With his second wife Stephanie Schiller, has first of two children, Anthony, and Cameron.
- 1982 Directs and produces the Emmy-award winning television miniseries *The Executioner's Song*; its star, Tommy Lee Jones, wins an Emmy for Best Actor in 1983. The movie wins numerous awards and is shown at the Berlin Film Festival.
- 1984-1988 Executive produces and co-directs the three-time Emmy award-winning television miniseries *Peter the Great*. The film stars Maximilian Schell and wins Schiller the Emmy for Outstanding Miniseries.

In 1987, Schiller is a delegate to the Moscow Peace Forum at which Mikhail Gorbachev announces the beginning of perestroika.

- 1994 *The New Yorker* publishes an extensive excerpt from *Oswald's Tale*, Schiller's fourth collaboration with Norman Mailer. The book becomes a *New York Times* best seller.
- 1995-1996 Interviews O.J. Simpson in jail while he awaits trial, which becomes the basis for Schiller's book, *American Tragedy*, with James Willwerth. It becomes a *New York Times* number-one best seller and reveals the inside story of the Simpson defense team.
- 1998 Publishes *Perfect Murder, Perfect Town*, a *New York Times* best seller about the JonBenet Ramsey murder case.
- 1999-2002 Directs and produces three major miniseries for CBS Television from books he has authored: *Perfect Murder, Perfect Town*; *American Tragedy*, and *Master Spy: The Robert Hanssen Story*.
- 2003-2004 Directs and produces *Trace Evidence* television series with forensic scientist Henry Lee, exploring thirty-four different murder cases that Dr. Lee was primarily responsible for solving.
- 2006-2008 Schiller, begins to document China's contemporary art world as told by its leading artists.

He opens an exhibition of his photographs at the Millennium Art Museum in China. (Portrait by Zeng Fanzhi)
- 2008 After the death of Norman Mailer, with Mailer's wife, Norris Church Mailer, he establishes the Norman Mailer Center and Writers Colony, a not-for-profit educational institution. Gay Talese, Joan Didion, and Tina Brown, among other literary luminaries join the board of directors.
- 2009 Becomes a consultant to photographer Annie Leibovitz in the reorganization of her company.
- 2011 With Benedikt Taschen, Schiller publishes Norman Mailer's *MoonFire*, the first in a series of eight books that combine the words of noted writers with images by the world's foremost photographers.
- 2014 With fellow photographer, Steve Shapiro, Schiller publishes *Barbra* with Taschen, which includes more than 200 photographs.

Schiller's photographic exhibition, *American Moments* opens in Moscow, Berlin, and Los Angeles.

- 2015 With writer Tom Wolfe, Schiller publishes a new edition of *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which combines Wolfe's text and Schiller's photographs from the 1960s.
- 2016-2017 Schiller becomes a consultant to the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation for JFK's centennial celebration.
- Curates the photographic exhibition, *American Visionary: John F. Kennedy's Life and Times* for the Smithsonian American Art Museum; produces the official Centennial book for HarperCollins, and the Smithsonian opening night event, featuring Stephen Kennedy Smith and Caroline Kennedy in Washington, D.C.
- 2018 Publishes *the Promise and the Dream* by David Margolick and curates *Rebel Spirits*, an exhibition for the New York Historical Society on the life of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.
- 2020 Schiller consults for the Ray Bradbury Estate to originate and manage events for the Centennial of Ray Bradbury in 2020.
- 2021 Schiller publishes a coffee table edition *Marilyn & Me* with Taschen based on his photographs and relationship with Marilyn Monroe.

Curated Exhibitions

- 2017 *American Visionary: John F. Kennedy's Life and Times.*
- Curated by Lawrence Schiller with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the exhibition opened on the centennial of John F. Kennedy's birth and toured throughout the U.S.
- 2018 *Rebel Spirits: Robert F. Kennedy & Martin Luther King Jr.*
- Curated by Lawrence Schiller and Presented by the New York Historical Society, *Rebel Spirits* explored the lives of two figures in the struggle for civil rights during the 1960s, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Selected Exhibitions

Marilyn Monroe and America in the 1960s

- 2008 Millennium Museum, Beijing
- 2008 National Museum of Foreign Art, Sofia
- 2008 Beck Eggeling Art Gallery, Dusseldorf

- 2009 Galerie F 5.6, Munich
- 2009 Heather James Fine Art, Palm Desert
- 2009 POP International Gallery, New York
- 2010 Rudolf Budja Galleries, Salzburg
- 2010 San Lorenzo Gallery, London

Marilyn & Me

- 2012 Clic Gallery, Cannes
- 2012 Walton Fine Art, London
- 2012 Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

American Moments

- 2012 Fahey Klein Gallery, Los Angeles
- 2013 Mondo Galeria, Madrid
- 2013 Academia De Las Artes, Barcelona
- 2014 USC Annenberg School of Journalism, Los Angeles
- 2014 Galerie Hiltawasky, Berlin
- 2014 The Lumiere Gallery, Moscow

Barbra Streisand

- 2014 Heather James Fine Art, Palm Desert

Poetry and Power, the Life of JFK

- 2017 The Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.
- 2018 The New York Historical Society

“Remembering the Sixties Through Lawrence Schiller’s Eyes” (an excerpt by Lawrence Grobel)

Larry Schiller only remembers the Sixties this way: Fast. As in: Blur. Which is, for those who lived through it, as accurate a description as one is likely to find about the decade that began with optimism and ended in chaos. It was ten years of turmoil and exploration. Had Tolstoy not titled his great 19th Century novel War and Peace, Norman Mailer, James Jones, or Joseph Heller might have used it to tag the decade that found Americans fighting the Vietcong in Vietnam, Mao's Red Guard fighting those who opposed his Cultural Revolution, Protestants and Catholics killing each other in Northern Ireland, and Soviet troops crushing the rise of liberalism in Czechoslovakia. On the Peace side, you had the Anti-War movement that spread among the youth around the world. The Sexual Revolution, which had a slogan: Make Love Not War. A guru that advocated the young to Tune In, Turn Out, Drop Out. And the Beatles and John Lennon who advocated everyone to "Come Together" and "Give Peace a Chance."

Fast? The Sixties were a lightning bolt that crisscrossed all circuits. Marilyn Monroe sang "Happy Birthday" to President Kennedy in Madison Square Garden, and then died of an overdose two months later. Kennedy stared down the Russians over missiles in Cuba, and then was struck down by a lone gun man in Dallas the following year. Cassius Clay captured the heavyweight crown from Sonny Liston, changed his name to Muhammad Ali and declared himself a Black Muslim. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream where all God's children came together, but Stokely Carmichael had a vision of "Black Power." King was assassinated in Memphis, Malcolm X in New York. Riots occurred in Detroit, in Watts, in Newark and Miami. The Anti-War protestors saw a ray of hope in the guise of Eugene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy; but that hope was extinguished when a young Palestinian named Sirhan Sirhan shot and killed Kennedy in Los Angeles. Where the decade began with the election of John F. Kennedy, it ended with Richard Nixon, the man Kennedy had defeated, resigning in disgrace, telling the world "I am not a crook." The Sixties came to a close in November of '69, when a U.S. infantry unit was charged with massacre at My Lai 4, a village in South Vietnam. More than 450 villagers, including women and children, were slain.