

Close Encounters in Photojournalism History

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David Seymour-Chim (1911-1956) and Robert Capa (1913-1954) remain as legends in photojournalism for their remarkable work and their creation of Magnum Photos in 1947 (www.magnumphotos.com) with Henri-Cartier Bresson and George Rodger. Magnum is celebrating its 75th year as one of the leading photographic agencies that has grown to about 100 photographers and 80 staff.

Chim was my uncle, who was killed during the Suez Crisis in 1956 when I was nine years old, but he remains a vivid personality, whose photographic legacy has been my privilege and responsibility to preserve and promote.

One of my pleasures is the unexpected contacts I get from time to time from people who tell me fascinating stories or provoke me with surprising revelations. One such contact took place on November 11, 2021, which was the 65th anniversary of the day Chim was killed. Robert Silverman from New York wrote to tell me that he was interested to know more about Chim since he was related to Robert Capa. His grandmother's sister (his great aunt) Edie was married to Cornell Capa, Robert Capa's younger brother. Robert Silverman's intensity and passion was because he was named after Robert Capa, but his fascination extended to seeking to learn what he could about Chim and the relationship between these two men. I described Edie and Cornell as wonderful people who played an important role in my life. As a high school student, I spent time at their Fifth Avenue apartment, working on Bob's archives. As ICP Director, Cornell did much for Chim's legacy and he discouraged me from becoming a professional photographer – he said it was too hard and dangerous. I warmly and fondly remember them both and appreciated all that Cornell did for Chim.



Silverman sent me the classic photo of Chim and Capa in Paris in the 1950s. Moreover, Silverman was coming to Washington, DC and wanted to recreate the photo with the two of us standing in for our famed relatives.

After some negotiations, we arranged to make this happen on Saturday afternoon January 8, 2022 in Bethesda, MD. Covid meant we couldn't be as close together, but we both put on white shirts, ties and the best matches we could find for this happy encounter. After some conversations, we removed our masks and my wife Jenny Preece clicked.



The Chim-Capa history is told by Cornell Capa in his Foreword for Inge Bondi's book

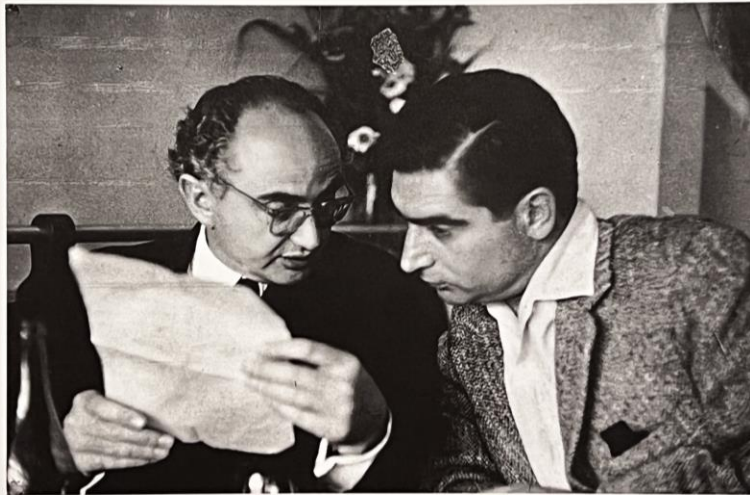
CHIM: The Photographs of David Seymour (Bullfinch, 1996)

This is a cherished "family photograph" of Chim and my brother, Bob. When I think of my brother, I immediately think of Chim. They were inseparable in their lives and deaths, and in my head.

As persons they could not have been more different--my brother, an extroverted emotional person; Chim, an introverted intellectual. My brother, a gambler; Chim, a chess player.

They covered many similar subjects during the same quarter century from 1931 to 1956, and their photographs, as expected, reflect their personalities. They both lost their lives on battlefields, Bob in Indochina in 1954, Chim at the Suez in 1956.

Most important, they both loved life and left behind a tradition in photography: their shared respect for humankind.



Chim and Robert Capa, photographed by Henri Cartier-Bresson, discussing Magnum business. Paris, 1952.

