

WITH LOVE, GRANDPA APPLE



Brooks Jensen

A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication

Dear Ryan, Noah, and Lauren — my beloved grandchildren,

Today, you are 8, 6, and 2 years old. Your full lives are ahead of you!

I, on the other hand, am dead — or expect to be pretty soon. Oh, not that I have any plans or foreknowledge, but I see no evidence for presuming immortality. In fact, there may even be some pointing in the other direction. I feel fine, today, but my time is coming — as it did for my grandfather, and his grandfather before him.

I knew my Grandfather — that is, my *maternal* Grandfather. I loved him dearly. He is your great-great Grandfather. That's him, posed for a formal portrait, so *adult*, not as I knew him at all. I remember him well — but only as a child knows and remembers a grandfather — larger than life, that special patriarch. That is how you know me today — a family patriarch destined to become a precious childhood memory. I am that, but that is not all of me.

I wish I knew more of my grandfather. I wish I could meet him today, now that I am a grandfather, and

compare lives and experiences. I would like to know the man behind the grandfatherly role, who he was as a man, as a person. But, alas.

Unfortunately, I never knew my paternal Grandfather at all. Nor did I ever know *any* of my great-Grandfathers, nor do I know anything at all about *their* fathers, or *their* fathers, in that unbroken chain extending to the horizon of history. Time has erased them all from everywhere except my imagination. There, I find a silent, impenetrable void, as though they never existed. But of course, they did. Of course, they did ...



I wonder about those silent lives. Not dry dates and statistics, but what did they *think*? What did they *feel*? What did they *understand*? What did they *question*? What would they choose to say to me, if they could have imagined me in their distant futures? Who were they and what of them survives in me?

What I wouldn't give to have an evening with each of them, just to listen and ask them about their lives!

Such two-sided conversations are not possible through the span of time, but we *can* speak to our descendants — be it near or in the distant, distant future. In fact, ours is the first generation to be able to do so with such ease and in so many media. I feel an obligation to do so lest I, in my time, extend the silent void. Sure, it may be a one-sided conversation, but why should that mute us?



I am a grandfather now — *your* grandfather — “Grandpa Apple,” because I always bring you apples. Today you are three wonderfully young bundles of energy. You know me and I know you. It's a privilege to be in your young lives. But, I know that my time is limited and I may not know you — or you, me — as adults, as I would have liked to know my grandfather. It is to those future adults I wish to speak in this project. It is as adults that I see you in my mind's eye as I share my thoughts, feelings, understanding, and questions as I wish I could with my grandfathers.

So, here I am — or at least some bits of me — that might provide a sketch of your Grandpa Apple. I speak also to your descendants for whom I am great-Grandpa Apple, or great-great, or great-great-great, or great-great-great-great Grandpa Apple — whom even your parents don't remember. Photography has been a way of life for me. Perhaps through my photographs, I can share a bit of my life, a bit of myself. Perhaps that's a worthy pursuit for all of us photographers. Perhaps it's a *reason* to be a photographer, an artist. Art is connection, and that is why I write and share these thoughts with all of you.

With Love,
Grandpa Apple



Brooks Jensen is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, hand-made artist's books, and digital media publications.

He and his wife (Maureen Gallagher) are the owners, co-founders, editors, and publishers of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in 73 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly world-wide. His long-running podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 900+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork membership website. LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with *LensWork Extended* — a PDF based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of seven best-selling books about photography and creativity: *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Single Exposures* (4 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); and *Looking at Images* (2014); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). His next book will be *Those Who Inspire Me (And Why)*. A free monthly compilation of of this image journal, [Kokoro](#), is available for download.

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Anacortes, WA, U.S.A.

Email brooks@brooksjensenarts.com

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