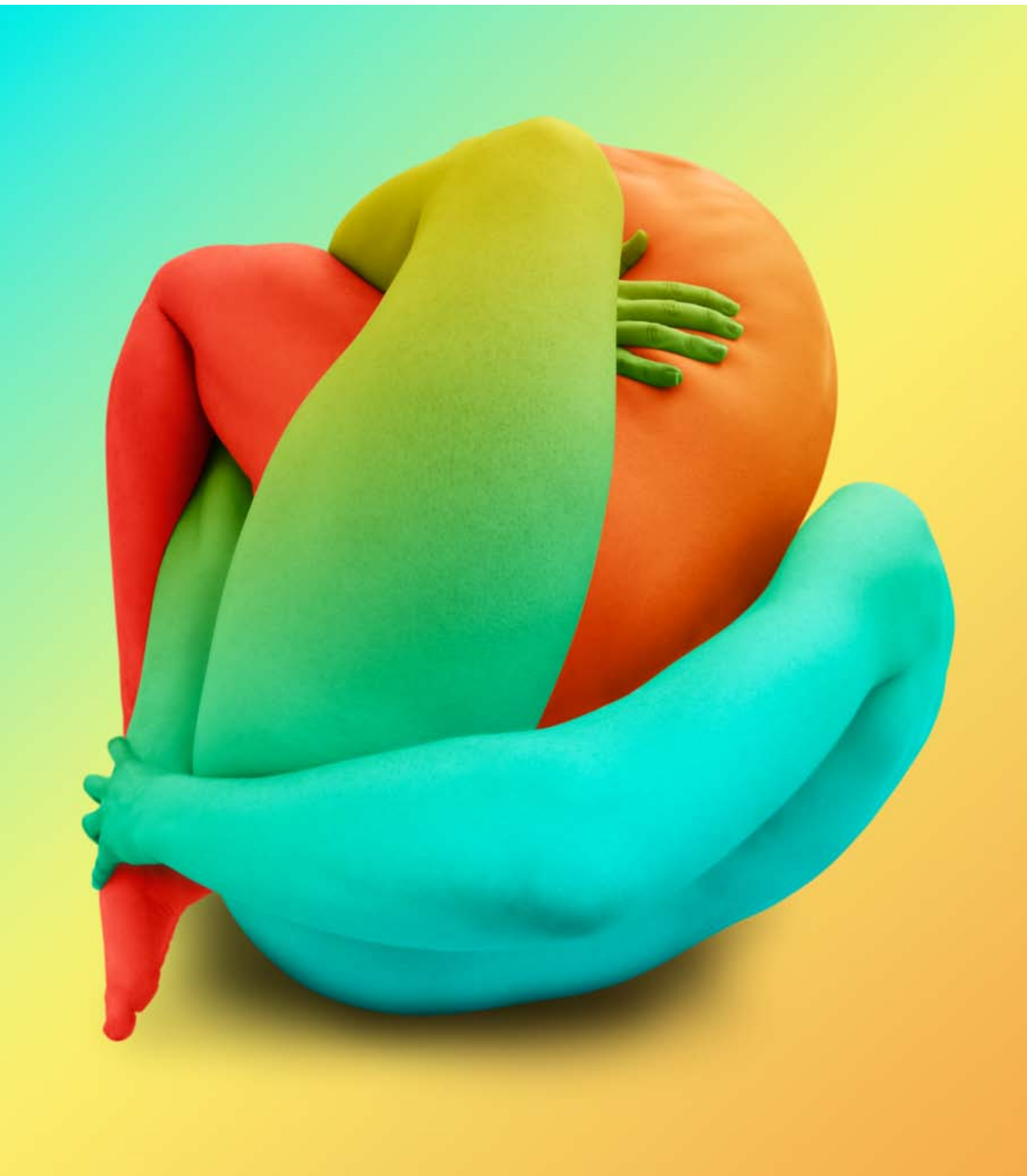




LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS WITH HOWARD SCHATZ

by CINDY CLARKE

How do you put a stunning visual journey twenty-five years in the making and more than four million amazing images strong into a two-volume anthology of just one thousand photographs? Thoughtfully, painstakingly and with the unanimous consensus of the photographer, his editor and his astute business partner and wife who together spent no less than eight months sifting, sorting and selecting a representative portfolio from some 32 personal and published works, winners all. Daunting by anyone's standards, but to Howard Schatz, medicine man, visionary and the visual voice for a cast of thousands, it was a labor of love.



“I don’t have any favorites,” he told me as I interrupted his California dreaming on a springtime Sunday afternoon to ask him about his latest book. “Each one is special and uniquely surprising.”

Different chapters represent distinct projects, distinctive people and poses he expressively portrayed as he documented his creative take on their lives over the last twenty-five years. Howard Schatz, who at age 54 reinvented his own life’s work of saving eyes to opening them through the camera lens, believes as much in the magic of the moment as the people who make the most of every moment presented.

“Every picture and every person in it has meaning to me. I photograph to surprise and delight myself,” he admitted. He doesn’t take pictures, I learned, he makes them.

Camera in hand, he met, interviewed and photographed countless people – athletes, dancers, prisoners, actors, gifted women, and red heads among them – who willingly bared body and soul to him as he reimagined them into works of art. Bodies knot, dancers bloom, actors act, mermaids surface, boxers bleed, couples caress and mother and child bond in intimate portraits of unconditional love. The poses that make us pause are the ones he originally imagined. >



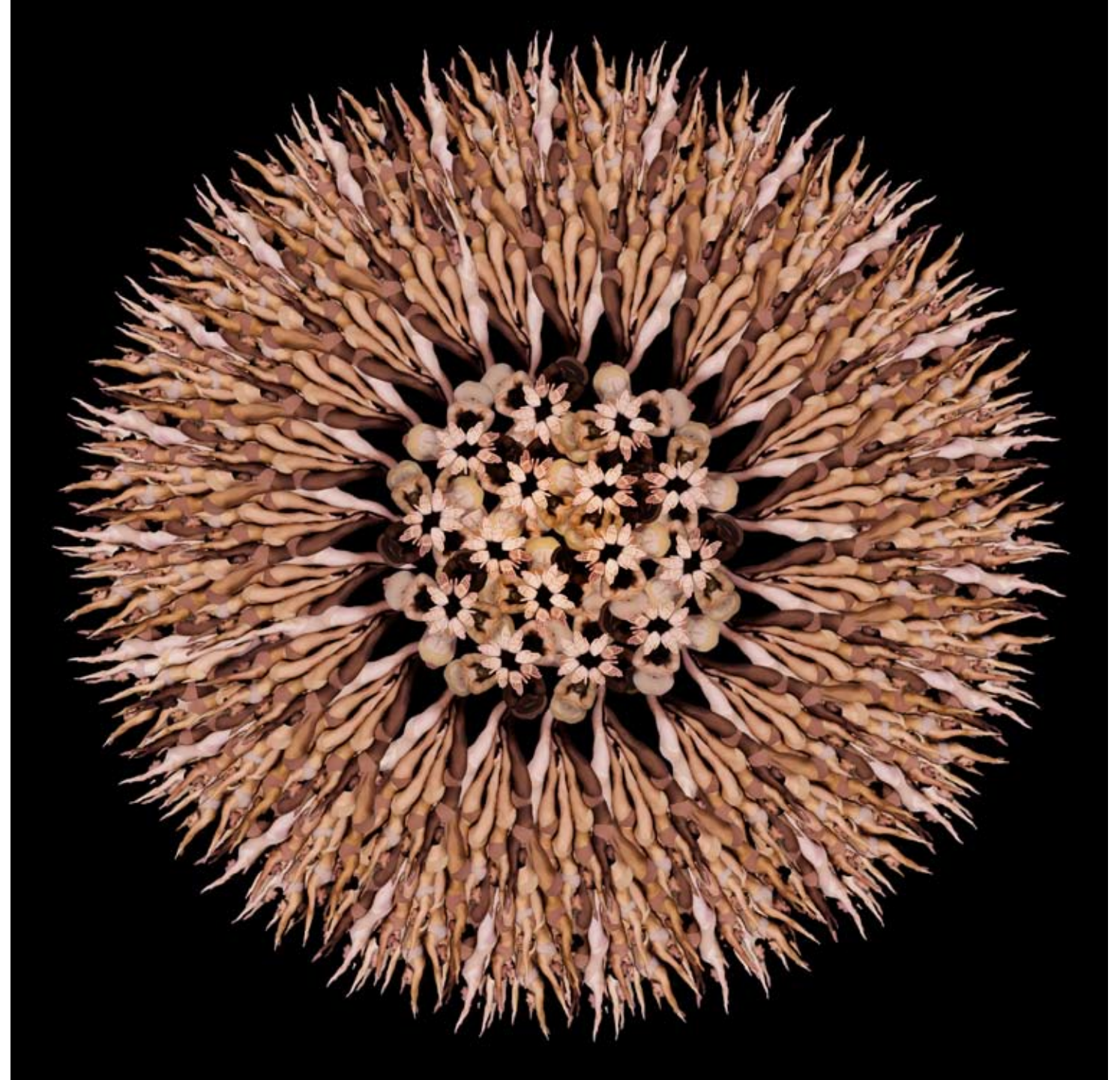


"With each shoot, I challenge my models to try something different and have fun with it," Howard told me, no doubt relaxing them with his indefatigable bedside manner, a gift he carries with him from his days as one of the preeminent retinal surgeons of our time. Then he goes to work, shooting hundreds of digital photos, erasing some, enhancing others, turning them into life-altering portraits that tell stories, poignant and personal.

A 1965 graduate of the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Howard Schatz hails from a highly technical medical background as a retina specialist, a calling that requires exacting skill and a delicate touch. Simply stated, the retina is the light sensitive part of the eye that gives us our ability to have sharp, detailed vision. When you think of the art of medicine and the art of photography, at first glance they seem to be two very different disciplines. One calls for in-depth study, precise planning and calculated actions. The other is characterized by spontaneity, the ability to capture a moment that comes that way only once. Howard Schatz's work is a marriage of both, one that puts to good use his practiced, visually perceptive eye and ever-creative mind. In his role as surgeon, Howard kept abreast of all the latest research, technologies and treatments to ensure a successful outcome. All points of fact that are now playing out, not surprisingly, in the doctor's celebratory photographs of human possibilities.

He changed his career focus from doctor to documentarian gradually, fine tuning his photography techniques as carefully as he did his surgical skills when he was in the operating room of the some of the nation's most critically acclaimed hospitals. He was a weekend pho-





tographer at first, dabbling and delighting in his visual expressions for just one day a week until the magic took a firm and lasting hold.

With encouragement from his wife and business partner, Beverly Ornstein, a former executive news producer for PBS, he took a leave of absence from his medical practice to practice photography, then another and another, "reupping 5 or 6 times" before he embarked on his new career in earnest. He recalled enjoying his filmed creations so much that he and Beverly were giddy with joy, giggling with excitement over the happiness they found in his work as a camera man. Working with intricate lenses and light came naturally to him, using digital film technologies to color, morph and manipulate his images was equally familiar. His challenge was to keep raising the bar with his creativity, to master not just one style, but to reinvent many, to astonish and surprise himself, and to honor his subjects with revelations of truth and beauty, even under water.

He shared with me his techniques of photographing costumed models who appeared as comfortably at home at the bottom of a swimming pool as on dry land. "It required perfect casting and a great deal of training," he admitted, saying that these particular mermaids (my word, not his) were able to stay submerged for up to a minute at a time, posing perfectly, make up and smiles intact. It also took the set building skills and artistic and dramatic coaching of a film director who visualized the script while guiding his aquatically gifted models in the fulfillment of that vision. To achieve the look he wanted for his underwater photos, Howard had special windows and lighting built into the swimming pool at his Connecticut home. The results are





Meet Howard Schatz and see an exhibition of his photographs at the Fairfield Museum's IMAGES 2015 Exhibition on view May 14 through July 19, 2015. IMAGES 2015 is a two-part exhibition consisting of a Juried Photography Show celebrating the talents of regional photographers from New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island and a solo exhibit by Howard Schatz. The opening is at the Fairfield Museum Spring Gala on Thursday, May 14, from 6-9 PM. An artist reception and Museum After Dark will be held at the Fairfield Museum on Thursday July 19 from 6-8 PM, celebrating the winners of IMAGES 2015 Juried Photography Show. Howard Schatz will be on hand personally signing his two book boxed set, *SCHATZ Images: 25 Years*, with 830 pages and 1083 images.

For more information about Howard Schatz, please visit www.howardschatz.com

The magnificent and luxurious two-book boxed set that is the collectible 25 year retrospective can be viewed and purchased at the publisher's web site: schatzimages25years-glitterati.com

The limited edition retrospective is available exclusively for purchase at: schatzimages25years-glitterati.com



stunningly reflective of his ability to transform the human form into an unexpected aesthetic that astounds with breathtaking grace.

Look closely as his botanicals and bodies emerge as people-powered petals, some requiring a thoughtful bloom of hundreds of dancers who pirouetted into stems and blossoms that mimic perfectly their flowering garden counterparts. Pretend you are watching your favorite actor create a signature character with unaltered emotion –think luminaries like Lawrence Fishbone, John Malkovich, Ricky Gervais, Whoopy Goldberg and Amy Poehler hamming it up, their way – and you'll get a sense of the playfully candid improvisation each star in his two published Actor books performed for Schatz's camera. Peer into the pregnancies of women who helped Schatz give birth to a real-life 20-year chronicle of babies newly born through their transition to young adulthood and you'll feel like you watched them grow. His nudes, lithe and lovely, or living large and comfortably in their own 200+ lb. skin, speak volumes about Schatz's appreciation of the human form in all its shapes and sizes. And of the human condition conveyed by his pictures of the homeless and the imprisoned, Schatz also portrayed them with the compassion and dignity he affords everyone who crosses his path. Meticulously researched, seamlessly orchestrated, and often years in the making, his works are testament to his passion for living and life.

"I am blessed, every day with every thing," says Schatz. "I feel lucky and fortunate to learn something and see things in ways I hadn't seen before." "The joy," he said, "is in the journey, in looking for the magic and occasionally finding it."

From his first career success with his Gifted Women exhibition to the each new series of works he commits to print, photography for Howard Schatz has evolved into a specialty that has garnered him as much acclaim and professional respect as he achieved as a surgeon. To date, some 25 years into his new role, he has won virtually every award in the industry. His work has been published in 20 books and exhibited in galleries and private collections across the globe. His client list reads like a who's who of captains of advertising and industry, including Ralph Lauren, Mercedes Benz, Vogue, and Sports Illustrated among them. His accolades from critics and contemporaries alike describe him as one of the world's finest contemporary photographers whose work is "joyous," "remarkably rich," and "stunningly original."

After speaking with him about his newly published anthology, I would like to add an accolade of my own.

"Howard Schatz has the unique ability to find beauty wherever he looks, to make us believe in the potential of the human spirit and to help us appreciate that no matter how rich or famous, beautiful or athletic, smart or talented a person may become in life, being a genuinely nice person, like he is, trumps it all." □