

The Grand Tetons with Fire Sky

A month after my mom had died there was a need to heal from the stress of her loss and I decided to seek out a place in nature to help me mend. Going to Yellowstone and the surrounding area was the choice to get away and commune with the natural world. Low and behold upon arrival smoke was in the air. A forest fire had broken out north of Grand Teton National Park. It was creating some dramatic skies as the sun tried to shine through. Within a day or so the smoke had become thick, there was the smell of burning timber in the air and one could see fine ash floating out of the sky. Driving back down to Jackson Hole just off the road is the famous promontory that over looks the Snake River and out to the valley below with the backdrop of the Grand Teton Mountains. There are usually many tourists who stop to look out from this landmark and take pictures. I pulled over and walked up to the top of the giant rocks and peered through the opening in the trees. There were no tourists or photographers there, I had it all to myself. The scene was a theatrical light show. Hazy and smoky air mixed with a fiery yet soft light that went streaming through the soot filled sky and across the valley. I began to focus my camera and hoped I could meter this unusual luminosity. The sun peered through the darkened sky and within my lens it became star shaped.

Back home in the Santa Fe studio I edited the images. The camera had inhaled tiny particles of grit, which covered the digital sensor. It appeared impossible to make a print with all the dust spots and I chalked it up to a good try and no success. The files were put away for 6 ½ years. Recently, my Mom has been strongly on my mind. Remembering this trip and its purpose to heal and reflect, I pulled up the digital files and began to look again. In recollection there was one shot that stood out and there it was. Still covered with dust spots from the falling ash. The decision was made to give it a go. Working on this has been a labor of love. The spotting of the tiny particles that had entered the camera and onto the digital film was a task that turned into a meditation.

Before writing this today, I awoke this morning after having a vivid dream of talking with my mom. It's all such a beautiful mystery.

E. McD May 26th, 2019

