

JIM GOLDBERG

Before I even took pictures I knew that I wanted to have them as hard copy memories. Once I was walking by my sister's room (she was just back from college and the door was open and I peered in and saw her naked, changing the sheets on her bed ... I wasn't snooping but she looked up from her chore and saw me looking. To this day, I wish I had a picture of my mind's eye to prove that her brother wasn't a pervert. I wish I had taken a picture of my end-of-high-school girlfriend M.S., because she was really cute and rich and was from Montreal, but I didn't have a camera then or know how to take photos. Now she is on Facebook, but won't show her face. I wish I'd taken a picture of the unidentified object flying toward me from the sky as I was driving on the Wilbur Cross Parkway. It came right through my windshield and engulfed my shoulder in pain.

I really wish I had taken a picture of me with my first love R.H. when we were in bed together in an old abandoned hotel in the Catskills. I was so happy- I knew what love was then. If I had that photo, I could use it as a gauge of how to recognize what love looks like. I wish I hadn't seen or taken photos of two kids from Raised by Wolves having sex and hitting each other in a drunken, stupid stupor.

My wife's labor was long and painful. The without-drugs, natural approach soon gave way to morphine and an epidural. Immediately when that long-ass needle went into her spine is when I reached for a camera to shield myself from fear. Thirty-six hours later, when Ruby's head crowned, there was no way in hell I would use a camera and miss those incredible moments.

Years ago when it became obvious that my wife and my problems were not going to go away, we took a trip to Italy with the faint hope that our vacation would heal our wounds. I remember us eating a delicious gnocchi with pesto lunch and having a huge fight right in front of our daughter. S.M. was crying and I was crying and it was so sad and we were both so upset that I didn't know what to do, so I picked up my camera and took photos of tears flowing down S.M.'s eyes and Ruby hanging off of her, sucking her thumb and wanting to comfort her crying mom. I have never shown this image, the saddest picture I have ever made.

A few years later, while designing a book about my life (called Coming and Going), I realized that there were literally hundreds of moments in my family's lives which I could have documented but didn't ... mostly because I knew then that that proof would be too intimate for anyone else to see. So I created a fiction instead.

There are many images which I miss on purpose. I've done too many of them before and photographing them again doesn't change the world, or me. However, to be honest, there is a pang of regret when a moment is missed on camera ... but usually now, there is an acceptance, that not everything should be imaged, or that actually getting the picture is not any better than not getting it at all, or maybe I am basically lazy and don't feel like getting my camera out and working. And usually the feeling of loss is lost into a memory and all is A-OK.