**Remarks by former photography students of
Skip Schiel, 2013**

**Sy Friedland**

“I’ve been a serious amateur photographer for eight or nine years,” says Sy Friedland, who has been taking photography classes at the Cambridge Center since 2009. “I like Skip Schiel’s classes because they have are focused around a good theme, usually light at different times of the year.

“Although I enjoy taking photographs on my own, Skip’s classes give structure and direction, which adds another dimension to the experience,” says Friedland, who retired a few years ago. “Skip is very passionate about photography, and communicates that passion to his students. He also does these wonderful awareness exercises that help me look at things differently. It’s an experience I take into other areas of my life.

“I also find that part of the experience is the social aspect of taking a class with other people. Skip sends us out on field trips to shoot at different times of the day and the students develop camaraderie as we explore an area together. Because of Skip, I’ve joined a photo club, with many of my former classmates, and we meet monthly or so to shoot photos together.” Friedland, who lives 45 minutes from Cambridge, says he enjoys coming in to Harvard Square once a week, and gets a bite to eat and soaks up the energy and activity before heading into class.

While the range of experience and technical ability varies among students in every class, Friedland says Schiel is always encouraging, and his individual attention always finds opportunities for positive criticism. “His expectation is that you will take it seriously, no matter what your skill level,” Friedman says. “It’s easy to get caught up in the technical aspects of photography, and Skip reminds us to enjoy the experience of where and what we’re shooting.

“We do group critiques, too, and it’s great to see the different ways each student has photographed the same area. Also, the group discussions help refresh my memory about what choices I made, and provide a fresh perspective on the scene.”

**Bruce Magnuson**

I took an introduction to photography class do try something different from my day job. I didn’t know anybody in the class, but Skip Schiel was so encouraging, and the atmosphere so non-threatening, the group developed a bond and stayed in touch afterward.

In Skip’s first class, I didn’t have a lot of experience or expectations, but Skip inspired me to commit do doing the work. I didn’t want to disappoint him.

I’ve taken on-line classes, and classes at other educational centers, but I felt the communal experience at the Cambridge Center was outstanding. When I take online courses I found I was easily distracted, but in the classroom at the Cambridge Center it’s about more than just content: the student body has very diverse backgrounds; the teachers have extensive backgrounds and experiences, and all of that enhances the classroom experience.

The breadth of what the Cambridge Center offers is amazing. After taking the photography class I used my photos in a collage class, which created a kind of interdisciplinary experience and offered a different way of seeing the images I’d taken.

**Tom Blakely**

“I’ve taken about a dozen classes at the Cambridge Center since the early ‘90s. I took about four photography classes, two Photoshop classes, a class in drafting, and several music classes.

I’ve had a long career as a scientist, and that’s very dry and precise. I wanted to do something that was creative and allowed for self-expression. I found the Cambridge Center for Adult Education addressed all of those aspects of the arts with a wealth of self-expression possibilities.

What I found, with every class, were teachers who had a passion for their topic and were very devoted to teaching. Because of that personal interest in the topic, the material was presented in a very interactive way, and felt more like sharing than imparting knowledge.

I have the most experience with Skip Schiel’s photography classes. I was a beginner, but Skip helped me move up to a much more advanced level and introduced me to different areas of photography, including street photography and outdoor photography. One of the things that I enjoyed was that Skip took us on field trips: for street photography we went to South Station, and for light we went to Great Meadows Wildlife Refuge.

Skip’s approach to teaching is very personal. He shares a lot of himself as well as his love for photography. Within the space of the classroom, he always makes room for each student’s individual expression of photography.

The people who attend classes at CCAE are well educated and come from a variety of backgrounds and are all enthusiastic about learning. That makes for a very interesting mix. I also think the location in Harvard Square is a very exciting element because there’s energy there, and that draws a variety of people – different ages, different points in their careers. It’s a very stimulating mix.

When I first took a class at CCAE I didn’t know what to expect, but my experience led me to believe that this is adult education at its finest. I continue to use the skills I learned at the Cambridge Center and they became long-term pursuits.

**Bronwen Heuer**

I’ve been taking classes at the Cambridge Center ever since I arrived in Massachusetts in 1995. I’m a lifelong learner, a trainer and teacher and there are lots of things I wanted to learn about. As time moved on, I found that I would take a class every winter. It’s a nice reward and a cure for cabin fever.

I’ve taken conversational Spanish, Shibori (Japanese version of tie-dye), photography classes and writing classes.

I love just jumping on the T and emerging in Harvard Square. All of the classes I’ve taken had a waiting list, and I’ve appreciated the focus on the small class number. It’s created lots of opportunities for conversations that go beyond the coursework. I’ve made great friends among a broad and diverse group; the students are talented people with eclectic backgrounds.

I have liked every single teacher that I’ve taken because they put together engrossing classes. In my photography classes I felt intimidated by the level of expertise among my classmates, but I got a lot of encouragement from the teacher, Skip Schiel, who acknowledged the various skill levels and encouraged us to work according to our own speed and capabilities. In the beginning, I was shy about showing my photographs because we got group criticism, but that was something that made me work harder. Even today, if one of the people who was in that class likes a photo I post on Facebook, it makes my day.

At the end of the class, there’s a lot of learning [about] what you did, what you tried to do, what you’d like to accomplish. Skip gave us exercises that taught us how to look, how to see, and  how to reflect upon the impact photos have had upon our lives.

I feel as if the classes that I’ve taken have had a very positive impact on my inner life. There’s a sense of nurturing the artist within, which is really helpful.