



## Challenging, Profitable and Fun

Event photographer Tom Killoran shares his experience with high-speed, on-site printing

“The photo business is tougher than ever, but if you give people what they really want in a product that they can’t create on their own, you will do well.”

That’s Tom Killoran talking about the business he loves. Killoran and his team of seven professional photographers spend most of their time photographing special events, including graduations, dances, reunions, gala fundraisers, church events, music and sports competitions.

The firm’s specialty is instant photography, offering high quality 5x7" or 6x8" prints for sale before participants and guests go home from the day’s event. Although his biggest competitor is the camera built into every cell phone, Killoran offers a better vantage point, better composition, better color, and almost as quick a result. “No one has to wait with a cell phone, and they won’t wait for us,” he explains. “If I took two weeks for delivery, as many photographers do, that would be two weeks too long.”

Tom Killoran

Owner / Photographer  
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*"Our customers call on us to take great pictures, brand them, and have them printed and ready right there in the field."*



“Our photography is all about rites of passage – the milestones of life that we all go through,” he explains. For example, at a Catholic First Communion ceremony, the child is seven years old, the ‘age of reason’ where he or she begins to understand the basics of the faith. “There’s a wonderful picture there, where the priest holds up the Host and the child looks up at it – a spiritual awakening in this young life.”

A graduation is a different kind of passage, but certainly significant whether from eighth grade or a university.

“Now a graduation can be a madhouse,” Killoran says. “We’ll have a team of photographers at work. The first one shoots 40 graduates as they come across the stage, then our next guy steps up, so they can each catch a break and download their images to the Mitsubishi printers.”

For a large event like this, there’s no time for post-production. His photographers have to set their equipment up perfectly in advance, then concentrate on composition

and expression. The art of the final image depends on experience, judgment, and speed.

For some other events, however, there’s more time. Very often, the team will shoot formal portraits, using multiple lights and a special background to match the theme of a dance, reunion or party. “Right now we’re going into the father-daughter dance season, and here enchanted forests and fairies are the thing.” If it’s a difficult theme, he’ll use a green screen and add the background via software.

Most times for speed, a physical backdrop is best, whether a painted backdrop or one printed by a specialty manufacturer. “We shot a dance last year where the theme was neon,” he recalls. “We had four backdrops made with squiggly neon lights. Sometimes it’s hard to turn a theme into a concept, but you can’t stump us. We always find the right thing.”

For church events, the team shoots using available light, working from a distance to be as unobtrusive as possible.

“Our success is supported by our Mitsubishi D707 printers,” he adds. “The beauty is they’re so darn fast. We can have 300 prints displayed on our tables, ready to take home in less than half an hour.”

### **Rites of passage**

Killoran says he has done a wide range of portrait and wedding work over his 40-year career, but he has settled on events because it’s challenging, profitable and fun.



The firm shoots tournaments as well – in sports, dance, band, choir and orchestra. Oftentimes, Killoran and his photographers will shoot formal portraits before the event and may do action shots as well. A recent twist – an underwater camera to shoot swim club members in the water. “They loved those photos and can’t stop showing them off,” he says.

### **Making instant possible**

Killoran says he’s been offering on-site printing for almost 20 years, starting with an early dye-sublimation printer model from another manufacturer. “That was a great printer, but it was heavy and needed a lot of maintenance. It was specially scary when that company announced they were going to stop making the paper, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise and a very good change in direction for us.”

At that point, Killoran switched to the Mitsubishi CP-D707DW High Capacity Dual-Deck Digital Printer, one of a kind in the market even today, and eventually purchased 23. The ‘D707’ is small enough to carry to an event, yet it prints 5x7” color

photos in under 10seconds. Since each printer has two print engines and two paper feeds, its effective speed is actually double, making it probably the fastest professional photo printer available. “The D707 opened up an entirely new set of opportunities for us,” Killoran says. For the first time, the firm made the majority of its print sales on-site, and organizations began calling Killoran based on his ability to provide instant prints. “Our business really lit up since we found these printing machines.”

“We use the D707 in conjunction with Darkroom Core software,” he adds. “We can batch all of our images, so we handle them just once, and they print automatically. We can also apply graphics to the photos, adding a background, border, titles or other text, and it’s still incredibly fast.”

For a graduation, Killoran will print two copies for each graduate. His staff will assemble them into folders, and display them on tables before participants go home. That’s quite an achievement, by the way—typically Killoran will have just 10



## **CP-D707DW**



### **High Capacity Event Photo Printer Designed for Versatility**

- ▶ Multiple Print Sizes
- ▶ Fast – 4"x6" photo in just 5.9 seconds!
- ▶ High-resolution photo quality prints
- ▶ Matte or Glossy Finish
- ▶ Lightweight, space saving single-deck design

#### **Flexibility to print sizes from:**

2" x 6", 3.5" x 5", 4" x 6", 5" x 7", and 6" x 8"



minutes from the time the last graduate accepts his diploma until print sales begin. “Luckily, they march across the stage in alphabetical order, so we can take the photos right from our printers without sorting.”

For religious events, dances, galas and golf outings, he’ll offer 5 x 7’s already in frames, which he says participants love. To speed the process further, he brings portable credit card terminals to each site. “People want mementos of milestone events, but it has to be quick and easy for them to obtain them.”

Killoran says between the recession and the proliferation of digital cameras and cell phones, his portrait and wedding photography dropped dramatically. “Our Mitsubishi printers literally kept us in business through the hard times. Now that the economy has eased, they still give us a huge competitive advantage—as well as a great service for our clients.”



### Tom Killoran Photography

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