

Series Number Eleven
In Between Water & Sky - 1990

Nine Photographs
Essay - February, 2024
Michael Nye

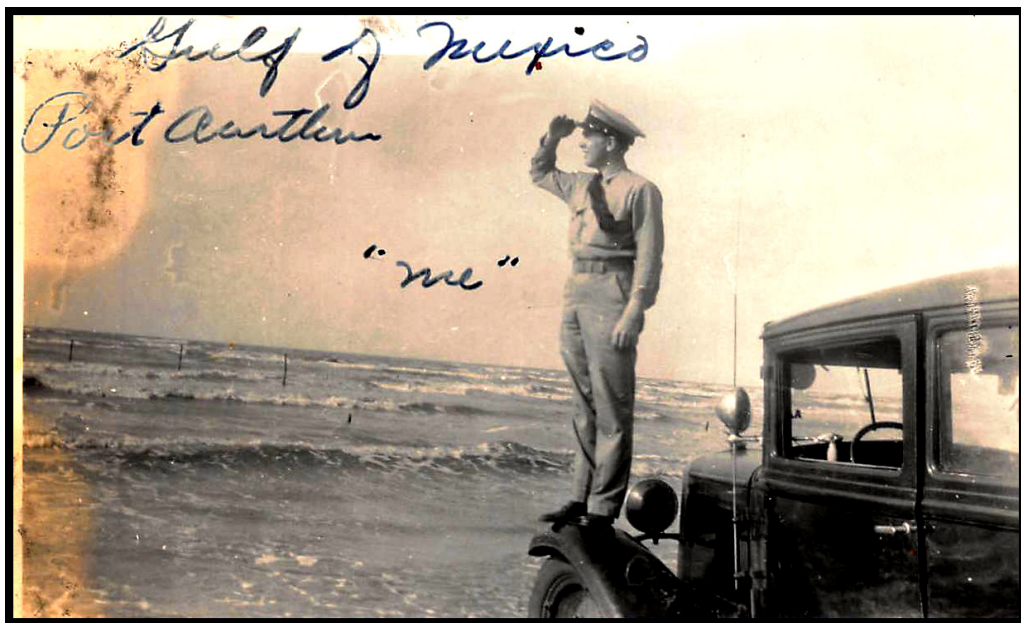
In Between Water & Sky - 1990

Thales was one of the early Pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. He cared and thought about *Water & Sky*. He was born 150 years before Socrates. (625-546 BC) He was known for solving difficult engineering problems. He diverted a river for an army. He predicted the height of the pyramids by measuring shadows of different objects. A story was told that once he fell in a well because he was always looking at what was above him, not in front of him. He asked, *"What is everything made of?"* Thales understood the fragile balance between water, sky, fire and earth. He concluded that all things originated from water. No one knows how he arrived at his answer.



I grew up on Ocean Drive, across the street from Water and Sky. When I was six, my father read a story to me from the Corpus Christi, Texas newspaper. The headline read, *"Family sees ocean for first time."* The story was about a father and mother and their five children who lived on a farm near Robstown located just 40 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. They decided to drive and see the ocean for the first time in their lives. The photograph in the newspaper showed the family lined up in front of their long black car staring. The parents were smiling but the children each had serious faces. I could see that the wind was blowing and could imagine the warm wild breath of the Gulf of Mexico holding them. What I saw in their faces were surprise and wonderment. I kept the picture on my bedroom wall for a long time. Why did it take the family so long to visit the ocean? Why did this photograph seize my imagination so powerfully? What were they thinking about? Maybe everyone is like the family from Robstown, we are all very far and very close - at the same time to the things that matter most.

My father had dementia during the last few years of his life. Our ritual was an imperative. We would drive to Padre Island beach on the Gulf of Mexico, then to dinner with a beer and back home just before the sky turned dark. I read poetry and stories from the newspaper before bed. At the beach we would park and stare outside into the wildness of waves and wind-blown sky. My father changed when we were at the beach. A force and clarity of mind took over – something, somewhere shifted. His stories were fresh – nuanced – far-reaching and sad. Mostly he would talk about his parents Grace and Sidney, names of grade school teachers, and various Navy airplanes he flew in 1940s. It was the Water & Sky that untied his imagination - opened up pockets of memory that have been waiting to be set free.



*My father, standing on his car looking
out into the Gulf of Mexico 1941
Water-& Sky # 1*

Photographs - In Between Water & Sky

Black and white photographs are mostly about colors. Photographs are neither questions nor problems. They reside somewhere In-Between. The word “Between” is a tale of unending implications. It can connect us to the world of experience or it can amplify separation. In-Between childhood and adulthood is only a moment. The ways we think about imaginary lines and borders is significant. The tiny space In-Between water and sky is both transitory and timeless.

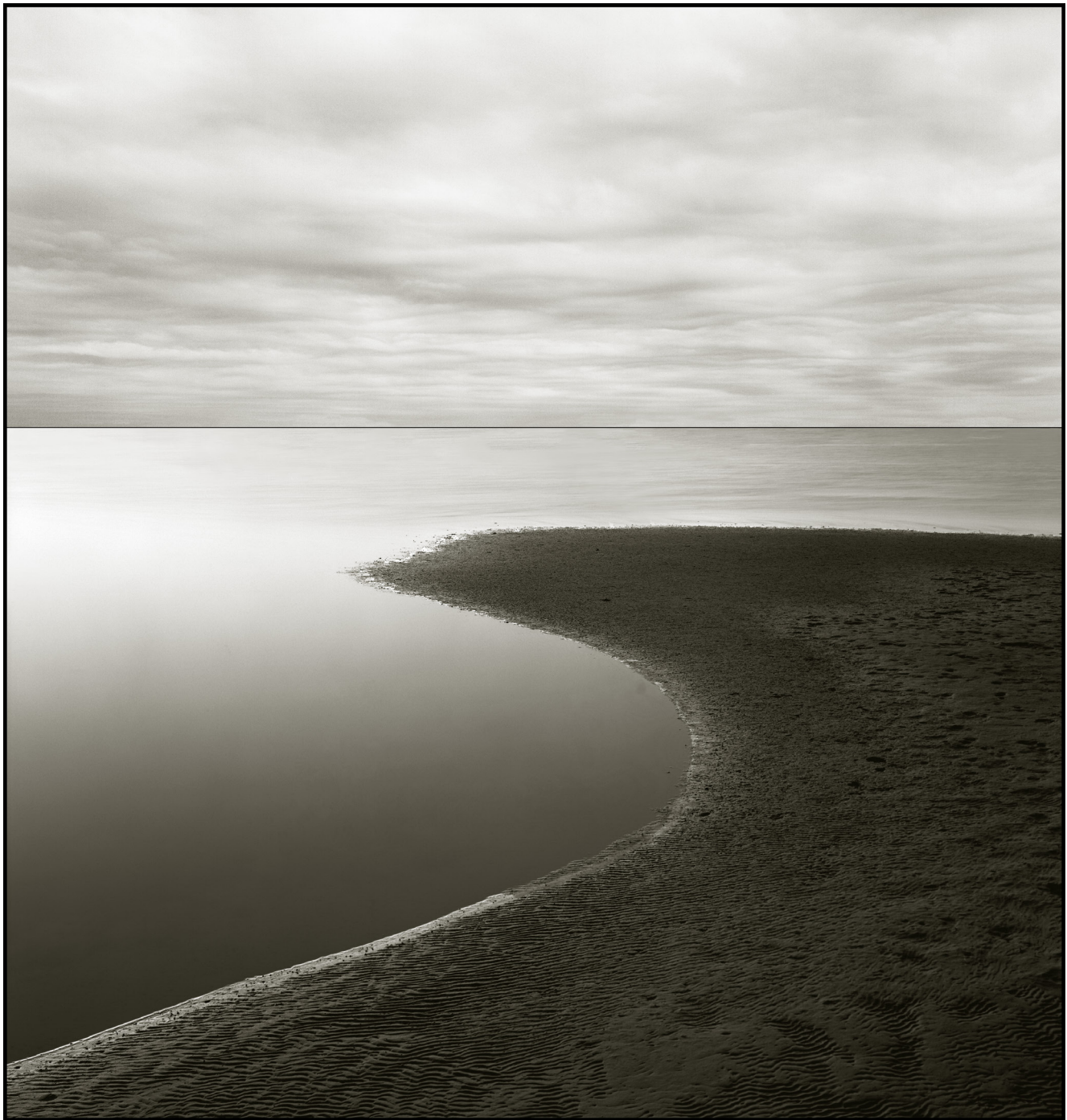
Besides family portraits, the most photographed subjects are water and sky. Who doesn't have a story about a storm or the colors of water and sky at last light? They both live in the world of perpetual motion and changing faces. Water & Sky are always in the state of becoming something else depending on wind, temperature, humidity and the ethereal moody molecules of liquids and gases. Sky borrows color and evaporation from water. Water is bathed and cleaned by cool rain showers from the sky. Their unsettled desires and partnership never suffer fatigue.

Some of the photographs in Series Number Ten are actually two separate photographs. The first photograph is a sky and the second photograph is water. They fit together as companions or sometimes as uncooperative cousins. I merged and connected the two photographs into one single image. In my chemical darkroom – the sky is printed slightly on top of the water thereby creating a thin line “In-Between-ness”.

IN-BETWEEN-NESS shares a border, owns dual citizenship and accepts contrasting conditions. Who among us does not understand this state of becoming something else? It is the nature of the world to change. Outside Pinedale, Wyoming I followed a narrow dirt road that finally ended at Half Moon Lake. The lake appeared as an ocean. There in front of me I watched a silver ring of sunlight dissolving along the creases of water and sky. The space in between water and sky is only a thin fine line separating and connecting the two. Like our skin, it is the borderline between us and everything else.

Essay - February, 2024

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Water & Sky #2



Water & Sky #3



Water & Sky #4



Water & Sky #5



Water & Sky #6



Water & Sky #7



Water & Sky #8



Water & Sky #9