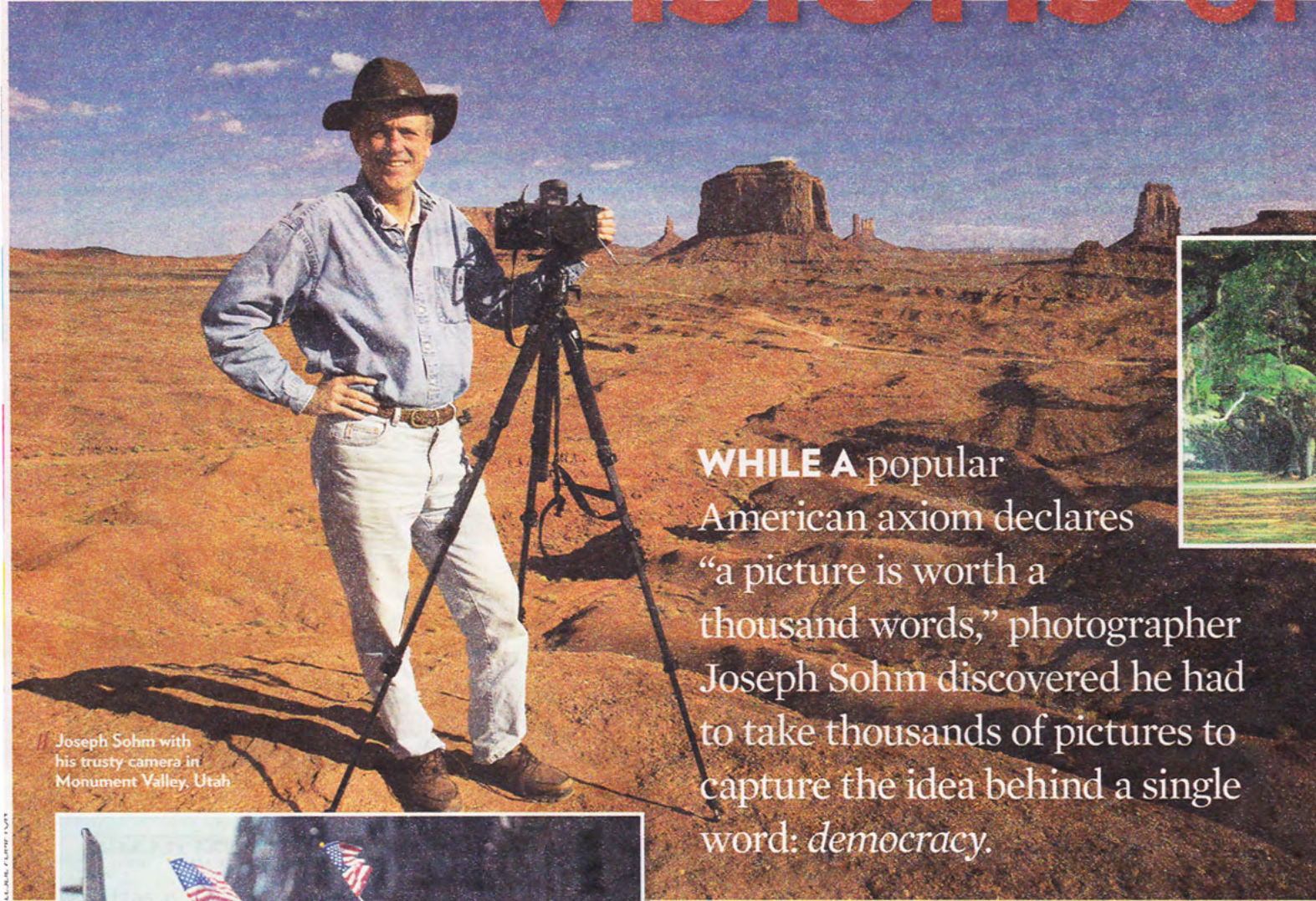


Visions of Democracy

Photographing an American ideal



Joseph Sohm with his trusty camera in Monument Valley, Utah

WHILE A popular American axiom declares “a picture is worth a thousand words,” photographer Joseph Sohm discovered he had to take thousands of pictures to capture the idea behind a single word: *democracy*.



A former American history teacher and musician who grew up in Webster Groves, Mo. (pop. 22,995), Sohm began his photographic odyssey during the early 1980s as America approached the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. Inspired by the Founding Fathers’ foresight to establish a republican form of government that derives its power democratically from the people, Sohm began snapping images that reflect that idea. “I became more than just a guy carrying cameras around,” says Sohm, 63, of Ojai, Calif. (pop. 7,461). “I began to attempt to capture a nation founded on what I believe is the greatest idea of the second millennium—democracy—and a portrait of ‘we the people’ at the turn of the millennium.” Three decades and 50 states later, Sohm had taken tens of thousands of photographs—some 1,300 of which he compiled in his 2009 book, *Visions* (Continued on page 6)



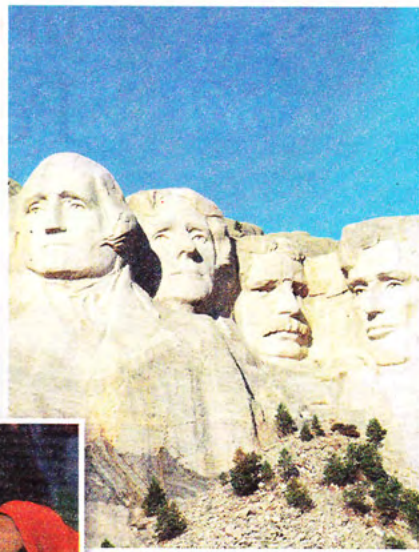
To see more of Sohm's photographs and an interview with the photographer, visit americanprofile.com/sohm



(Continued from page 4)

You can't capture democracy in a single image.

—Joseph Sohm



of America: Photographing Democracy.

“Democracy can be messy at times, so it’s important for each generation to retell these stories to keep the dream alive,” Sohm says. “The political process must constantly be refreshed by our citizens. This is one man’s attempt to retell America’s story of democracy with a camera.” ★



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