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Workshopping Your Way to Better Photography

By Becki Hagberg-Cohen



Photo Credit: Ralph Earlandson

A little over three years ago I attended my first photography workshop. I had an entry level DSLR that had never been out of the “auto” mode, a kit lens, a used 18-200mm lens, a couple of filters, and an eagerness to learn. That first workshop opened a new world of knowledge for me, one that complemented my passion for photography and set me on a journey that has been filled with fun, new friends, and better images. Since that time, I’ve attended a number of workshops and classes in an effort to learn more about photography and to experience places I had not visited before.

I’ve discovered that the **benefits of workshops** are many.

- Most instructors lead workshops in areas they know well. They can put you in place to make images of iconic scenes

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or out-of-the-way places, and they have alternative plans for unexpected events such as a government shutdown (which closes all National Parks) or road closures or mudslides or volcanic eruptions. They scout these familiar areas ahead of time to make sure everything is in place prior to the workshop.

•Traveling in a group provides security. Single travelers may enjoy safety in numbers and feel more comfortable in a group. If accidents happen, you have people with you who can help. Last May a member of my Utah workshop fell and broke her leg. Our workshop leaders used their wilderness first aid training to



make her comfortable while awaiting first responders, and one of the leaders accompanied her to the hospital, spending the day with her. (They even took her home with them for a week after her release from the hospital and nursed her until she was cleared to fly home...but that's another story!)

•Small group workshops lend themselves to great camaraderie. Because you spend hours together over the course of a

workshop, your shared experiences foster new friendships. It's fun to run into people at future workshops or conferences.

•I've also discovered that most photographers are generous in terms of sharing their knowledge and time. Workshop participants have offered suggestions for items ranging from equipment to composition to instructors to processing.

If you find yourself **interested in attending a photography workshop**, here are a few suggestions for making your experience a good one.

Find out whether the instructor offers workshops or tours or both.

- A workshop provides instruction, which often guides you to learning a new technique or type of photography.
- A tour gets you to certain locations where you are more or less on your own to photograph. This option is a good one for experienced photographers who want access to good spots but don't need much help. Tours are sometimes less expensive than workshops.

Find out whether your instructor takes his or her own photographs while on location.

•I have attended workshops where this is the case, and you have to ask for help as you need it. I've also attended workshops where the instructor only shoots a few images upon arrival at a location and then uses those images to give participants an idea of possible compositions they may wish to try. Some instructors are more attentive than

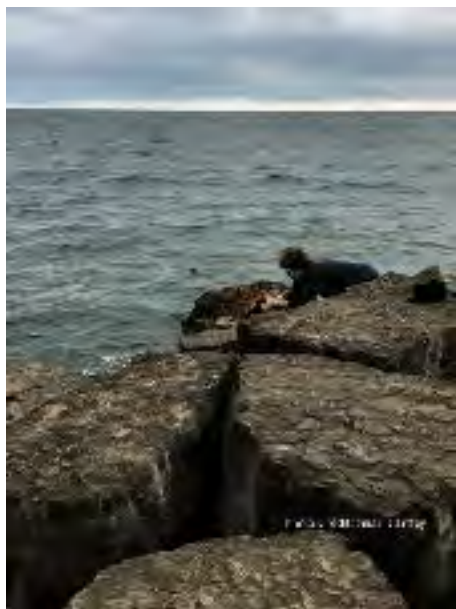
others and make the rounds, so to speak, to check on everyone throughout the course of the day.

Find out the teacher-student ratio.

•Most workshops are limited to 12 or fewer participants, and the instructor employs a qualified assistant.

Find out what the workshop fee includes.

•Some are all-inclusive with the exception of travel to and from the workshop, while others exclude lodging and meals. Know what is included before signing up. (I always add the cost of airfare, rental car, lodging, etc., prior to registration so my wallet isn't surprised later!)



Become familiar with the itinerary prior to committing to a certain trip.

•The majority of workshops seem to shoot at the edges of the day, at sunrise and sunset, then have class sessions and/or image reviews during the middle of the day. This option may be attractive to those who are interested in learning post-

production techniques and seeing how others have interpreted the same scene.

•Others may prefer a more active workshop that involves hiking to remote areas and shooting throughout the day, with more on-site instruction rather than in classroom settings.

•Some workshops are more strenuous than others. You may be shooting just a short distance from the road, or you may be hiking a couple of miles to a location. You may be spending all day in a botanic garden or all day walking through an urban setting.

•Some workshops offer one or more night photography opportunities.

Check the reviews on your instructors.

•This may be a little tricky considering that most instructors post reviews on their websites and are not listed on sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp.

•Some professionals write blogs on their websites, which can give you an idea of their knowledge and philosophies.

•Ask your photographer friends for recommendations.

Look for local workshops as well as destination workshops.

•Local workshops are considerably cheaper, especially if you don't need lodging. They are often shorter as well, spanning a day or two rather than 5+ days, so you can try one out to see how you like it.

•You may discover new favorite places close by and meet others who are interested in photo meet-ups in the future.

•These encounters can also lead to networking with other photographers and might provide great opportunities down the road. For example, after

attending a number of Out of Chicago events, I was asked to volunteer as a helper at their Chicago Botanic Garden conference last summer. I was assigned a photographer to assist during the 5-day conference, and in return I was able to attend all the events of the conference cost-free.

Consider following photographers who post workshop information and blogs to see whether this might be an activity that interests you. You can get a feel for a photographer's passion and commitment to his or her work by reading their blogs and the "About" information on their websites. I have enjoyed my workshop experiences and already have several on tap for 2019-20, including a couple of international trips.



The following resources may also be helpful. The list of highly qualified workshop leaders is long, and you can have wonderful experiences with many of them. I have attended workshops or classes with all of these photographers and organizations and recommend them all.

James Kay Photography

<https://www.jameskay.com/>

Workshops focusing on landscape photography and designed for those who desire active workshop experiences. One of the most highly organized workshops I've attended. Locations include National Parks in the American West, the Canadian Rockies, and New Zealand's South Island.



Don Smith Photography

<https://www.donsmithphotography.com>

California-based landscape photographer, workshops located primarily in California, Hawaii, Arizona, and Utah, but is expanding to international locations. Activity level is mild, most locations are an easy walk from the car.

Gary Hart Photography

<http://www.garyhartphotography.com/>

Another California landscape photographer who often works together

with Don Smith. Workshops located primarily in California, Hawaii, Arizona, and Utah, but is expanding to international locations. Again, activity level is mild, most locations are an easy walk from the car.

Mike Moats, Photographer

<https://tinylanscapes.wordpress.com>
Primary focus is on macro photography. Runs macro “boot camps” as well as workshops on location.

Lou Nettelhorst Photography

<https://nettelhorstimages.com/>
Locally-based photographer, emphasis on teaching others. He and his son Todd run local macro and urban (street photography) workshops as well as landscape workshops in Oregon and Colorado. He is an excellent teacher and offers online “assignments” and critique sessions.

Out of Chicago

<https://www.outofchicago.com/>
Chicago-based company run by Chris Smith that offers local conferences several times a year as well as workshops from coast to coast (literally: Acadia NP in Maine to the Oregon Coast) and expanding to include Costa Rica. Conferences offer professional photographers from many genres and are well-organized events.

Both the **Morton Arboretum** and the **Chicago Botanic Garden** offer photography classes.
<http://www.mortonarb.org/learn-experience/adult-programs/interest/Nature-Art-and-Photography>
https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult_education/photography



Failure as a Friend

By Lance Lagoni

Kind of a somewhat farcical long route to saying what Thomas Edison put so succinctly. “This is not failure. Rather it is a reduction of the universe of possible solutions by one”. Many have suggested that we learn more by the failures which we tend to remember than by the successes which fall by the wayside and from memory. I want to make failure a long forgotten cousin rather than my friend. One should certainly not fall victim to being discouraged by failure for often little is really accomplished without the struggle to succeed.

We are engaged in the creation of Artistic expression (what ever that means) through the use of technical processes. And I believe that word process is quite important. Focus, Frame, Shoot; ISO, Aperture, Shutter Speed; these are all snippets of process. They must become muscle memories that are always used. In the long run, they must not become the labored effort or focal point of the total process. They would then be impediments that must be removed from the path of progress.

Just as the pilot has a preflight check list, so must we: Film, Check; Camera, Check; Tripod, Check; Lens (or lenses), Check and on and on. This is all part of the process to be prepared and to achieve. The more we anticipate the more we can be prepared. The bottom line is to

Think—Think what we need to do to accomplish the desired end. Then, execute the various process to complete it.

Process should not and must not become a production line through which we create drivel. We should not be focused upon the manufacturing process as an end result. We are engaged in the creation of Artistic expression not manufacturing nirvana. Our Artistic expression can be small in scope or expansive in scope but it is more of a laboratory or handmade effort rather than a production line. In my experience, far too many in the photographic world seem to determine success to mean technical (mechanical) perfection.

Being in the comfort zone all the time can mean that the content of what we do is missing. I am not one who believes that all change or change for change’s sake is a good thing. Too much of what is wrong with life today, is the result of assuming that the hypothesis is the truth. Clearly it is not. I do not want to go through life feeling uncomfortable or unfulfilled. I aspire to be in the comfort zone that results from successful expression.

Mastering the process (mechanical efforts) allows us to focus upon the Artistic portion of what we do. Some may say, the most important part of what we do. The subject, the composition, the nature and nuance of the light falling on the composition, the reflectance of our subjects, and how all this relates to what we are trying to express. This important aspect of what we do cannot normally

succeed if the technical aspects are missing or flawed.

Any resultant effort flawed or not, must be considered as effort was expended and should not be discarded out of hand. Our time is our most scarce resource.

Examining new things (even disasters) is a part of an enlightened approach. It does happen that accidents or failures often lead to discovery; sometimes even to the desired result. This knowledge should become another tool in the arsenal of expression to achieve an effect or result.



ACC Prize Raffle & Post-Holiday Party

Friday, January 25, 2019
6:30 PM

Little Villa Restaurant
660 Wolf Road
Des Plaines

\$30/ person
sign up in advance



2019 Program Schedule

Bob Reynolds, VP Programs and Workshops

1/2/2019	Creative images
1/16/2019	Owls in the wild - Emma England
2/6/2019	Competition
2/20/2019	Critique session
3/6/2019	"Behind the Scenes with Joanne Barsanti"
3/20/2019	Bob Benson - Luminar software
4/3/2019	Competition
4/17/2019	Workshop
5/1/2019	Jim Klepac - Photographing animals at the zoo
5/15/2019	Park Challenge
6/5/2019	End of year fun competition

2019 ACC Exhibit Schedule

Pat Coleman, Photographic Displays

Month(s)	Venue	Theme
January-February	AH Village Hall	Architecture
	Wall & cases	
March	Arlington Hts. Library	Spring Gardens & Flowers
	Display case	
April	Mt. Prospect Public Library	Flowers (macro)
	3 Display cases	
May	Prospect Hts Library	Water (anything that is or includes water)
	Lg. Wall & cases	

December, 2018 Competition Results

Small Monochrome

Rich Hassman, "3 Flowers", AW-25,
Small Monochrome Print of the Month
Mort Lerman, "Cow Skeleton & Wheel", AW-22
Paula Matzek, "Reading Room, Seymour Library",
HM-23
Bob Reynolds, "The Take Off", HM-24
Fred Gold, "Russian Child" HM-23

Small Color

Bob Reynolds, "The Underware Fence",
AW-25, Small Color Print of the Month
Ken Olsen, "Ephraim Sunset", AW-25
Nancy St. Clair, "Mom & Babies", AW-23
Ken Olsen, "Blending In", HM-25
Nancy St. Clair, "Train on the Move", HM-23
Rich Hassman, "Sailing Club", HM-25
Bill Heider, "Maribou Stork", HM-24
Bert Schmitt, "Fashion Sense", HM-23

Large Monochrome

Bob Reynolds, "In the Statehouse", AW-25,
Large Monochrome Print of the Month
Judy King, "Locomotive #11", AW-22
Patrick Grady, "Dana Fork & Tuolumne River
HM-24
Bill Foulks, "Put Me In Coach", HM-22

Large Color

Kathy Grady, "Lower Tahquamenon",
AW-24, Large Color Print of the Month
Paula Matzek, "Laundry Day, Tasiilaq",
AW-24
Mort Lerman, "Sisters", AW-24
Kathy Grady, "Fall Colors & Cascades",
HM-24
Bill Heider, "Sunset Canyon", HM-24
Bill Foulks, "Tokyo Tower At Dusk",
HM-23

DPI Monochrome

Joanne Barsanti, "Nautilus,", AW-25,
Mono DPI Image of the Month
Bill Heider, "Oak Tree", HM-23
Bob Reynolds, "Going Up", HM-24

DPI Color

Ken Olsen, "Old World Winter", AW-24, Color DPI
Image of the Month
Bob Reynolds, "Dunking for Acorns", AW-24
Joanne Barsanti, "Point Loma Lighthouse", HM-24
Ken Olsen, "Fzzzzzz", HM-24

Some of the Winners and HMs from the December Competition

Prints



Rich Hassman, "3 Flowers", AW-25,
Small Monochrome Print of the Month



Paula Matzek, "Reading Room, Seymour Library",
HM-23



Bob Reynolds, "The Take Off", HM-24



Fred Gold, "Russian Child" HM-23



Bob Reynolds, "In the Statehouse", AW-25,
Large Monochrome Print of the Month



Judy King, "Locomotive #11", AW-22



Patrick Grady, "Dana Fork & Tuolumne River"
HM-24



Bill Foulks, "Put Me In Coach", HM-22



Bob Reynolds, "The Underwear Fence", AW-25,
Small Color Print of the Month



Ken Olsen, "Ephraim Sunset", AW-25



Ken Olsen, "Blending In", HM-25



Rich Hassman, "Sailing Club",



Bill Heider, "Maribou Stork", HM-24



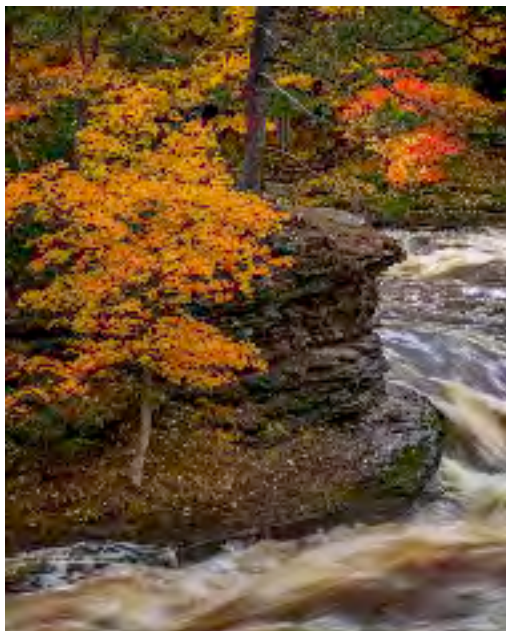
Bert Schmitt, "Fashion Sense", HM-23



Kathy Grady, "Lower Tahquamenon", AW-24,
Large Color Print of the Month



Paula Matzek, "Laundry Day, Tasiilaq", AW-24



Kathy Grady, "Fall Colors & Cascades", HM-2



Bill Heider, "Sunset Canyon", HM-24



Fred Gold, "Artists at Work", HM-23



Bill Foulks, "Tokyo Tower At Dusk", HM-23

DPI Images



Ken Olsen, "Old World Winter", AW-24,
Color DPI Image of the Month



Bob Reynolds, "Dunking for Acorns", AW-24



Joanne Barsanti, "Point Loma Lighthouse", HM-24



Ken Olsen, "Fzzzzzz", HM-24



Joanne Barsanti, "Nautilus," AW-25,
Mono DPI Image of the Month



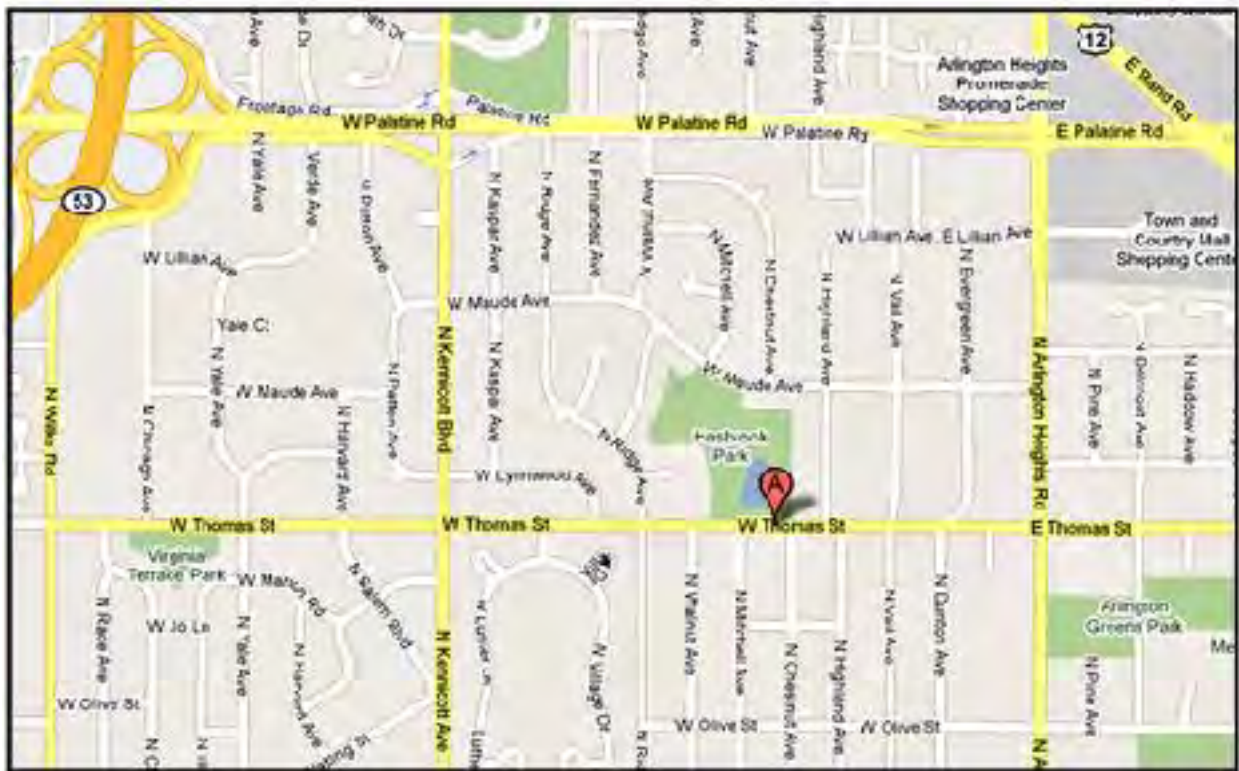
Bill Heider, "Oak Tree", HM-23



Bob Reynolds, "Going Up", HM-24

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2018-2019

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Susan Paasch	Hospitality	



ACC meets at the Christian Church of Arlington Heights, 333 W. Thomas Avenue, three blocks west of Arlington Heights Road, across from Hasbrook Park on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.



**Chicago
Area
Camera
Clubs
Association**

The Happy Birthday Corner

Happy Birthday to our
December, January and
February Members!!



December

**Paula Matzek
Carol Arnolde
Randy Vlcek**

January

**Nancy Vanderah
Cindy Kuffel**

February

**Bob Reynolds
Vesela Zlateva**

Thank you to this month's contributing writers:
Becki Hagberg-Cohen and Lance Lioni