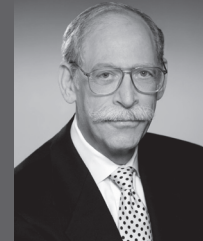


Tips on Technology

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By Richard K. Herrmann, Esquire

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Getting Serious About Photography

We have spent several years talking about which camera to purchase. Digital cameras have been available for a number of years and the prices for good cameras are reasonably low. It is interesting to note that the cost of the digital camera is more than twice the price of a comparable film camera from years ago. A good consumer single lens reflex with lens used to cost from \$300 to \$400. As you will discover, an entry level Canon or Nikon SLR will run about \$800. Similarly, a 35 mm film point and shoot could be purchased for less than \$100. Today, you should expect to pay between \$200 and \$300. Digital cameras become obsolete more quickly as the technology advances. The newer cameras have more pixels and options. The savings, of course, is in the film and processing. An avid photographer can save hundreds of dollars over the life of the camera in costs no longer necessary, all with the convenience of instant (polaroid like) gratification. With at-home printing and new ways of storing and sharing your photographs, the lines are graying between the family picture-taker and the more serious hobbyist. Here are some useful hints on how to make your experience more rewarding.

Gear to Have

We don't need to talk about what kind of film to buy anymore. But, you have a choice in disks. There is a tendency to believe that bigger is better. This is a trap for the novice photographer or worldwide traveler. Keep in mind disks fail. You do not want to take a long awaited trip to the Far East and return with 500 photographs on one disk that won't open. In the film

days, the maximum exposures on a roll were 36. At the time, the current technology protected the user. Today, you must protect yourself. Purchase enough disks to limit your shots to 50 or 100 per disk. If one disk fails it will not ruin your trip or event. Of course, whenever possible, back-up your disk to a computer or other device. You should always have an original and one (whether it is a paper print or electronic) other.

Most consumer cameras come with a built in flash. These have their obvious limitations such as "red eye" and limited range (10 to 20 feet). The most significant disadvantage of the built-in flash is the shadow it casts on the subject. Pictures tend to look flat, less interesting, and obviously "flash-like." If you have a point and shoot, and if the lighting conditions permit picture taking without a flash, try it. You may have to learn to increase the ISO or speed of the camera, requiring you to look at the manual. If you have an SLR, consider purchasing a supplemental or external flash with tilting capability. In most indoor settings, a flash "bounced" against the ceiling will cast a much more natural light and raise you to the next level of photo taking. The external unit will also be a more powerful flash and increase your distance. As you are "bouncing" the light, keep in mind the camera must be handled horizontally. Vertical shots will send the bounce into an unwanted wall.

The more serious photographer will want to add a tripod to the gear. This will make landscape and photos of buildings more enjoyable. Obviously, composition is an important part of the picture. The tripod permits you to think about composition. The more carefully the picture is

taken, the less time you will need to spend correcting mistakes, such as lines which are not parallel. And, for those wanting to experiment with panoramas, a tripod is a necessity. Certain tripod heads are better than others for panoramas. Research the subject before you purchase one. A level is also very valuable for both panoramas and buildings. The more level the camera, the more perfect the picture. Certain tripods have levels built into them. I find the best level is a "hot shoe" level. It is a little gizmo that fits in the flash shoe of the SLR.

And, don't forget to have an extra battery charged and waiting for your camera and your external flash.

What Pictures to Take

You will find photography more rewarding when you select a few categories of subjects and stick to them. The subject is not important; it is important that you are interested in the subject matter and become familiar with the best approach to photographing it. The more you stick to a subject, the more acquainted you will become with its idiosyncrasies (I love that word) and its perspective. Moving targets are more challenging, but a still life is just as rewarding. Years ago, I decided to collect kaleidoscopes. I wanted to take pictures of the images inside each scope and display them together. I had a very good film camera, tripod, lights, close-up lenses—the works. As hard as I tried, I could simply not get my camera positioned correctly to see clearly inside that little hole. I had seen a number of books on kaleidoscopes and some beautiful pictures. I finally sent an e-mail to the president of the national kaleidoscope society and made the inquiry. She introduced me to a professional photographer who also

made and photographed kaleidoscopes. I bought an hour lesson on the phone and learned everything I needed to know to take wonderful photographs of the inside of my scopes.

Composition

There are books written about composition; but there is a simple tip which will make you a better photographer. It is called the Rule of Thirds. People tend to place the subject in the middle of the photograph. People are centered; horizons are in the center of the image. There seems to be a lack of style. When you take the picture or crop it, think of a tic-tac-toe grid. Stay away from the middle. Try to place the subject on one of the intersections a third into the picture, generally having the subject lead into the center. This will add a sense of motion or thoughtfulness and make the photograph more pleasing to the eye and interesting. Of course, rules are meant to be broken (but not court rules); this is only a guide.

Processing Your Photographs

Everyone has a favorite way of processing their digital images. Some use the local camera shop or drug store. Others prefer the internet with opportunities to set up web sites for sharing with friends and family. Try them all and see which is best for you. Just make sure you have a way of backing up everything. Web vendors go out of business and hard drives crash. The question is not whether you will lose your pictures; the question is when will it happen.

In the event you intend to process your own images, you will need a method for storing them so you can find a photograph when you want it. This is called asset management. Your image software program may have the capability of keeping things organized for you. If not, there are a number of alternatives such as keeping folders and sub-folders by subject or date. There are also very sophisticated software programs available. I use Portfolio by Extensis (www.extensis.com).

Printing Your Photos

The trick to good prints is more in the paper than the printer. Start by using the paper offered by the same company that

manufactured your printer. After you are satisfied, you can experiment with others. You will also find that the resolution used to look at an image on the screen is not as high a resolution as required for printing. Take a look at your printer manual if you are not satisfied with the quality of your pictures. The problem may be too low a resolution.

Displaying Your Pictures

There is more to photography than taking the picture and printing it. The best images need to be displayed. If you do not share your work, you will soon lose interest and will not enjoy the best part of the art. How you display or share your images is a matter of personal preference. Share with family or friends. Join the Delaware Photographic Society (www.delawarephotographicsociety.org); it is a great organization with all different levels of talent. And, of course, the DSBA has the Arts Committee. We will begin seeing photographs from members of the Bar on the walls of the conference rooms. One of them could be yours.

Most important, ENJOY. 📷

New 12 Step Support Meetings for Judges and Attorneys:

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