

The Eastman Kodak Company has recently made some business decisions that will affect all of our picture taking. The brightest star in photography is cooling at the expense of its customers.

For decades, Kodak believed that every customer was their best customer, that every photographer should be catered to, and that every product they handled should be of the best possible quality. Sorry to say, but those days have passed. The following report is as objective as possible, but it is difficult to avoid the passion felt as an avid picture maker.

During April, 2004, Kodak management in Atlanta (formerly Rochester) unveiled their new photo finishing (film processing) program which takes effect this May.

The individuals who worked on this project were not representatives of Qualex Corp., Kodak's photo finishing subsidiary. These people were not long term Kodak employees, and were attempting to quantify customers' memories and emotions for the benefit of Wall Street analysts and the short term advantages to the company's shareholders. Middle management within Kodak was not consulted, customers were not consulted, local differences were not considered.

Decisions were made high up in the Ivory Tower.

Many Kodak processing services have been discontinued, notably the following:

- Bordered prints
- 8x10 inch prints (now 8x12" only)
- All cropping provisions
- Kodak Picture Disk (floppy)
- Copy negatives from color or b/w prints
- Internegatives from color slides
- ½ frame film processing
- Sepia toned prints
- Matte surface black and white prints
- Optically printed prints from slides
- Contact sheets
- Prints from individually cut negatives
- Black and white posters
- Photo Restorations
- Other infrequently ordered services and products

Overnight processing is no longer available (as of when this was written), but is now 2nd day processing. Same day processing is still available at selected dealers (including us). Kodak is also expecting that same day processing will be at a premium price when compared to 2 day service. Kodak Picture CDs will only be available with Perfect Touch processing (Kodak's highest priced). Kodak had wanted to discontinued Saturday pickup and delivery service, but has relented and the weekend service will continue.

We, and thousands of photo dealers nationwide, are making arrangements to continue serving our customers with the best quality, fastest turnaround and lowest prices possible. We will not let our customers (nor their dependents) down. Your pictures and memories are of primary importance to us. We realize that they must stand the tests of time; that they are your legacy. Some service times may suffer during May, but should be back on time by Memorial Day.

Apparently this is but a step in Kodak's overall plans. It must be difficult to forsake one's customer base in order to have profits flourish, but Kodak is rising (lowering?) to the task. We have been told that additional changes will be announced regarding your pictures approximately August of this summer. We are told to expect to like those announcements even less. You probably won't like

them either. It is apparent to this writer that Kodak wants to completely divorce itself from directly processing film or making prints from film. The overall effect of this will be a very apparent drop in quality of all processing and printing. Kodak Labs have been the yardstick against which all processing on a worldwide basis has been judged. The photographic community has seen Kodak's standards lowered on picture quality for over a decade; these new moves will only speed up the deterioration. This will negatively (no pun intended) affect every picture you take with any type of camera you will use. These changes will affect us all.

Kodak and some of their largest customers are going to spin the way ads are worded to make it seem as though prices are decreasing, even though they are going up. Under yesterday's pricing schedule, a 4x6" print when the film is initially developed is \$0.41; the new price will be \$0.12! Sounds great, doesn't it. What you're not being told, however, is that the price of developing the raw film into negatives is going from \$2.84 including index print to approximately \$13.51 without the index print! *Assuming everything on the roll comes out*, the new prices will be about \$1.00 higher than you've been paying. If few prints come out, the consumer loses BIG TIME. For example, if you shot a 36 exposure roll and only 1 negative is printable, the total price will be \$13.63! No wonder why Kodak management wants this pricing change.

If high quality prints will become hard to find, people will not be able to what their images should look like. As standards lower, consumers will get less and less quality without the opportunity to find higher without making their prints themselves (Epson, HP and HiTouch printer manufacturers are banking heavily on this). Not everyone has the time or inclination to do it yourself. Do you? You, the consumer, must continue to demand the highest quality products and services. We intend to continue offering them to you.

Thank you for reading this article. It was difficult to write.

It is no secret that camera manufacturing companies have been losing money making digital cameras. The research costs, constant retooling and other costs take a lot of sales to justify. Regardless of the spin the government is hand out on the economy, the quantities being sold significantly below expectations. Manufacturers have been cutting prices by up to hundreds of dollars on most camera models to hasten their sales. Vast expected profits have not been realized. Apparently some fiscal bottoms have been hit. Little by little, price decreases are slowing. Some prices are beginning to actually increase. If you are planning to get a new digital camera for any of the spring gifting occasions or for your vacations, consider this warning a call to action.

Our B.I.P.S. (Better Imaging Photo School) class on basic photography was well attended on February 28. The next event will be Tuesday evening, June 8th and will be about Single Lens Reflex photography (film and digital). This session is for those of you who have some experience with such cameras, and want to improve your understanding of how photography works, with SLR applications. A separate e-mailing will supply greater details shortly.

Certified Photographic Counselor Lynne will be teach photography at the Summit Community School evenings this fall. Her course will be aimed at amateurs wanting to improve their photography beyond just snapshots.

Have a fantastic May!. Enjoy the flowers and the warmer weather. Think nice thoughts about Mom and remember the veterans who helped make this nation great. Here are a few more pictures Lynne took during our recent Oceania trip. We hope you enjoy them.



