

MadisonPhotoPlus the Photo Summit e-Photo Newsletter

SEPTEMBER, 2007

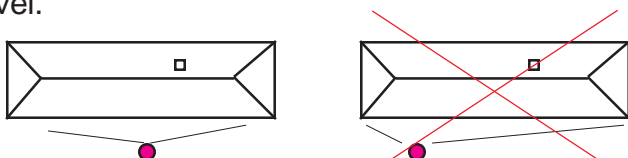
Learning From Others Misfortunes

There has been quite a lot in the news lately about the survivors of hurricane Katrina. Many TV and radio interviews were with people who lost everything including their memories. Time and time again folks cried through saying that all their photos and albums were lost. Irreplaceable is the word which comes to mind.

Even with a warning, there was nothing that could have been done to save these photos, but a catastrophe can happen anywhere without warning. This newsletter issue will focus on using your cameras to photograph your belongings and copy your existing photos.

By now, most (if not all) of you own a compact digital camera. A more sophisticated camera is certainly usable, but not necessary. A 35mm camera is usable, but it will be much more difficult to use for these tutorials.

Let's start with where you live. If you own a house, start by taking pictures of the structure in daylight. A somewhat overcast day would be best because there will be no deep shadows in which details would be lost. Remember that you are chronicling what the building looks like, not making an ad to make your home look its best (to a prospective buyer, for instance). Take a photo of each side of the building including the roof, but with as little of your property as possible. For a ranch style house, shoot a horizontal photo, for a multistory structure you may be better off with a vertical shot. Stand half way between one edge of the wall and keep the camera level.



After taking these few photos, get up closer, perhaps only 2-3 feet from the building, and start recording details located on one facade of the building, then move on to the next facade. Pictures of lighting fixtures, water faucets, doorbells, window frames, storm gutters, etc. may seem unimportant now, but these details may become very important later. If nothing else, these photos may jar your memories later that these items existed at all. (If you had to file an insurance claim, how many things do you think you'd forget to list?)

Now, while it is still daylight, go indoors and take 8 pictures in each room. These should all be horizontals. Stand midway between two corners of



the room and shoot the wall opposite you. Do not use flash. These photos require that the camera be steady, or there will be no detail visible. If you have a tripod or monopod, USE IT! Try to keep

the camera at the same height for all of this series of photos. After you've taken these 4 pictures, now stand in each corner of the room and shoot the opposite corner in the middle of the photo. Some of your furnishing will look distorted in these corner shots, but that's OK. Using the LCD panel on the camera back, review that you've taken all the pictures you've needed to. When you've finished with the final room (remembering to do your basement and garage), return control of the flash to the way it was before you turned it off.

Next on the agenda is to take a picture of each individual piece of furniture. It's OK to use the flash for this unless there are reflective glass doors or windows. If it is a tall piece of furniture, turn the camera - shoot a vertical. If it is a sofa, for example, shoot horizontally. Try to hold the camera at half the height of the item, don't tilt the camera up or down. The actual color of the furniture may not

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come out the way you expect (different fabrics, stains, paints, etc. often photograph differently than the way our eyes and brains render the colors), but you'll have to live with this. If you do this from say, the northeast corner of each room in a clockwise fashion, you won't forget to capture a subject and will be finished in very little time.

Next, begin photographing what you previously could not see. Open each drawer and take a picture of what's inside it. You'll probably want to use your flash for these photos, and shadows are okay. You needn't remove anything from the drawers, this is just a record of what kind of stuff is in each drawer. Do the same thing for each cabinet door, even in the basement and garage. Using the LCD panel again, review that you've covered each area.

The most difficult places to photographically document will be your closets. Most people have no concept of the expense of replacing a wardrobe, even if you only wear jeans, sweats and sneakers (it was said that the average businessman owns neckties valued at well over \$1000). Take several photos in your closets from as many angles as possible using flash for each shot. Although the exact garments can never be replaced, the quality and quantity must be proven to any insurer.

If you've been paying attention, the session started with the largest item, and subjects have gotten progressively smaller. Next in line are individual items, many of which can be difficult to photograph. For these, a "studio setting" must be either made or purchased. The off the shelf portable studios will be the easiest to work with, fastest to set up and take down and store in the least amount of room. These items cost less than \$100 and are available at both our stores as well as other photo specialty shops. These portable studios are of varying qualities, especially the lights. It's not worth saving \$5-\$10 to take a chance on shoddy wiring. The follow-

ing picture shows one ready for use, but it collapses and fits into a much smaller box. If you have a bridge table sized work area, you have more than enough room.



These units are designed for point and shoot digital cameras, but any camera can be used. Plug in the lamps (shown above) and aim them to light up the side panels of the setup shown (commonly referred to as a "tent") There will also be some room light coming in through the top. The camera attaches to a small stand or tabletop tripod or flexipod and points in to the tent. The illustration shows an optional blue background; most kits come with a selection of colors.

To get accurate (or close to accurate) color, turn off the camera's flash as you previously did. You must now also touch the menu button on your camera and scroll through the options until you get to *white balance*. It should be already set to daylight or an icon representing the sun. You will need to change this to incandescent, or an icon representing a screw in light bulb. Press "set" and put the camera on its stand.

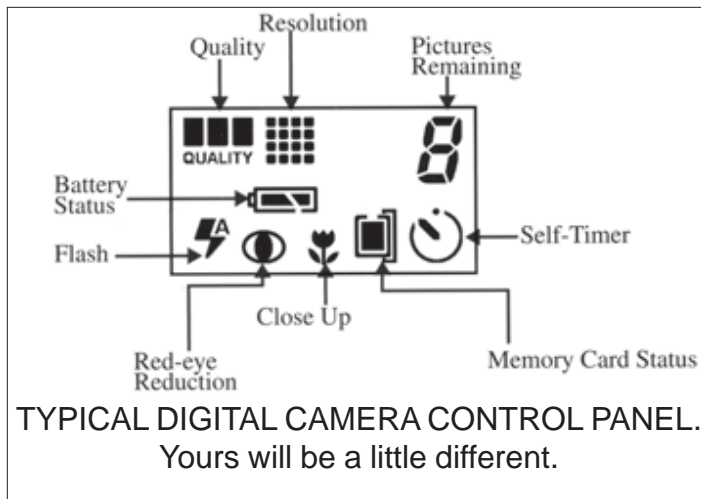
As an example, here's how to photograph a wine glass: stand the glass, right side up, near the center of the tent. Using the camera's zoom lens, compose the photo so that the glass almost fills the height of the LCD panel on the back of your camera. Turn on the lamps outside both sides of the tent. Press the button on the back or top of your camera which has the icon for its *self timer*. (You use the timer to

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use the timer to prevent any camera movement from blurring your photo.) Gently depress the shutter button on your camera and then remove your

This has been enough technical material for one month. Next month's newsletter will discuss copying many of the photos and albums you already have at home.



hand(s) from the camera. A few seconds later the camera will take the picture. You should get a perfectly exposed, very clear picture of the glass without any reflections. The color should be natural. You've done it! Remove the glass and insert your next item.

When shooting much smaller items such as jewelry, you may need to push the macro or close-up



button on your camera so that you can move the camera very close to the subject and have the picture be in focus.

You'll never photograph all the items you want in a single session. Take some notes to remind yourself what you've shot and where to begin the next session.

When you're done, all your images must be downloaded from your memory card and burned to either a CD or DVD. **Make a copy of the disk and keep one copy anywhere but in your home.** Be sure to label the disk with the date using a soft, permanent ink felt tip pen.

Photo Field Trips with Nikon



At the heart of the image™

On Sunday, October 7, 2007, Nikon is joining Madison PhotoPlus and the Photo Summit for a day of picture taking and photo education. We are sponsoring two groups, one in Summit, one in Madison, and Nikon is lending cameras, lenses, flashes, etc. for participants' exclusive use during the walking tours of each community's historic districts. The event will be held rain or shine and there is no rain date.

Instruction will be available from novice to expert levels in both towns. Space is limited. An announcement with more details is attached. Please call the store in the community you'd like to photograph. Space will not be held without prepayment in full.

Autumn B.I.P.S. syllabus

Also attached is the fall schedule for B.I.P.S., the Better Imaging Photo School. Please note there will be a special class dealing with the field trips for those who wish to get even more out of them.



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We would like to decorate the pages of the newsletter with some of your photos. Pick any subject matter you'd like, and we'll credit you as the photographer. (We will not sell or give any rights to your pictures, this is strictly for non commercial enjoyment.)

Also, as the foliage begins to turn, remember to use your Enhancement Filter. If you don't already have one, come ask us why you'd want one.

Happy shooting! Be back next month for more photo tips, hints & news. See you soon!

Lynne & Jerry

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