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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #65 – May 2018

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This newsletter goes out to many photographers in New Zealand and overseas - and to anybody who asks to go onto the mailing list. If you know anybody who would like to be on the mailing list, please get them to email me. It's free and they can unsubscribe at any time, of course.



Anne and Tamrah

1. MISSED PHOTOS

It's easy to miss photos. I miss many. You miss many. Not so much landscapes or flowers or still life or other subjects that don't move, but special moments between people or the moment an animal does something unusual or is in just the perfect position.

I try to miss as few as possible, of course, and I'm sure you do too. What made me think about missing photo opportunities was looking at the photo that opens this newsletter. It's of my daughter Anne and her good friend Tamrah. They were modelling at a People Photography workshop I ran last year.

I was busy making sure it was going well for everybody, that Anne and Tamrah were OK, that each photographer was getting good results, when it suddenly struck me: Anne and Tamrah look great, their bond is obvious, the background is good, the light is great - and I'm not getting any photos of my daughter! I already have thousands of photos of Anne but these moments were special and I'd already missed many of them. I rushed for my camera and grabbed some photos before the modelling session was over.

In case you're interested: Canon 5D Mark 2, 24-105mm f4L lens at 75mm, 1/50 second, image stabilizer on, f7.1, ISO 800, RAW capture, Aperture Priority, evaluative metering. Is there any magic technique in those settings, any secret sauce, any secret settings? No, not at all, The magic is in the moment, in noticing and capturing the moment. And yes, I tilted the photo both to change the vertical lines of the hanging curtains into more pleasing diagonals and also to lessen the height difference between Anne and Tamrah. Or, to put it more simply, it just looked better that way.

Missing good shots? Missing great moments? It's something I often wonder about. I know what I did get, and I often know if I missed obvious special moments, but what else did I miss? Mostly I'll never know, but being a keen photographer, I try to be as aware as possible of special moments, in particular, special moments that may happen soon - that I might be able to capture if I'm ready.

Accompanying these thoughts - some good moments I did catch.

And so ... what special moments have you caught with your camera? And what have you missed? Will you be more ready next time?





2. TOP TECHNIQUE - CRITIQUING & SELF-CRITIQUING

Do you want to be a better photographer? Of course you do. I do too. As will have become obvious to you by now, there's no single magic bullet for doing this. And there's not, as a workshop attendee once wondered, any "secret settings" in my camera for getting great photos.

Becoming a better photographer is a journey. There are many things we can do to quicken our progress, and in the first newsletter of each year, I summarize the main ones. Here's a link to this year's first newsletter: http://kimwesterskov.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Newsletter-62-30-January-2018_v5-.pdf

Having some clear ideas about how to better approach a photo opportunity next time is invaluable, and that's the main point of critiquing. "Likes" on Facebook, or your family or friends telling you "that's nice" don't help much at all, apart from keeping your egos unbruised.

But how to get good feedback on your photographs? It's not always easy. Here are the plaintive cries from two photographers:

- "It's just so hard to find honest critique about my photographs!"

- "Can you suggest some way to get feedback on my images? It seems like online people just want to cut me down or the best reaction they can give me to my photos is happy faces and clappy hands emojis."

I've been critiquing other people's photos for many years now and found that the hardest thing is simply getting the balance of positive and negative comments somewhere about right. All negative is just plain disheartening, and all positive [when there are things that could be better - which is most of the time] isn't very helpful either. A Goldilocks' "just right" mix somewhere in between is usually the best.

If you can find people whose opinions you respect who will give you "real" feedback, that's great. Coming to one of the Tuesday "Photos & Coffee" evenings I run will give you real but also friendly feedback.

And if you can't find anybody else to critique your photos - do it yourself.

3. CHECKLIST FOR CRITIQUING PHOTOS

- **SHARPNESS.** Is the sharpness [or lack of it in deliberately blurred photos] right? Not sharp enough? Too sharp [usually because of over-sharpening in Photoshop]? Sharp in the wrong places? [Faces and especially eyes usually have to be sharp, even if rest of photo is not]. Is the depth of field appropriate – is everything that should be sharp, sharp, and everything that should be unsharp, unsharp e.g. is the background sharp when it should be blurred?
- **EXPOSURE.** Overall exposure? Exposure in highlights – is there any detail there? Exposure in shadows – is there any detail in the shadows, or is it just a dark mess? Are the blacks really black?
- **LIGHT** [sunlight, flash, streetlights, houselights, fireworks, moonlight...]. Good use of light? Is the light on the bits that matter?
- **COMPOSITION.** Does it work? If anything is moving [or looking] is there room for it to move [look] into? Anything cut off that shouldn't be?
- **COLOUR BALANCE,** also called White Balance [too green, too blue, too yellow....?]
- **CONTRAST and CRISPNESS.** Does it need more "zap" or is it about right?
- **SATURATION.** Too saturated/vivid? Too dull [blah!]? About right?
- **HORIZON.** If there's a horizon, is it straight? [Deliberately sloping horizons occasionally work, especially when they result in better overall compositions]. Does it cut the photo in half or is the composition OK?
- **UNWANTED STUFF AROUND EDGE** including dark corners?
- **ANYTHING ELSE UNWANTED?** Is there a branch sticking into the photo that's not wanted, or a foreground that is out of focus and adds nothing to the photo, etc?

- **HOW COULD IT BE BETTER NEXT TIME?** Something technical? Something else?
- **WHAT IDEAS DOES THIS PHOTO GIVE ME?** What ideas for new photos do I get from this photo?

- **DOES IT WORK?** Does it achieve what the photographer is trying to achieve?
- **EMOTIONAL REACTION TO IT?** Are you moved by it in any way, or does it leave you cold?
- **"WOW!" FACTOR – is it there?** Photos with a high "Wow!" factor are rare, but "Wow!" is what we are aiming at.

4. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES - DIVING IN ANTARCTICA - part 2

Another fine day. A diving day, but it will be just Andrew diving today. An RNZAF helicopter is taking us to the ice edge so that Andrew [Penniket] can film the edge of the fast ice as seen from underwater.

Fast ice is the unbroken sheet of frozen sea anchored to the land that forms a belt around Antarctica, anywhere from just a few metres across to many hundreds of kilometres wide. Fast ice is hard, stable, unmoving, and mostly safe to stand on, travel over and even land helicopters or planes on. "Mostly" because if a piece of the fast ice breaks off then all of a sudden all bets are off. And if the weather turns to custard then the helicopter may not be able to get back to rescue us, at least for the time being. There are stories of Kiwis [and others] drifting off into the never never on ice floes, though these are mostly from earlier years.

So we take with us everything we need in case the worst happens, including a polar tent, food, cooking equipment and whatever else is in the survival kit that every field party carries with them - just in case.

Today's team consists of the dive team [Andrew plus a dive safety officer and backup diver], Jo Straker [survival expert], Peter Thompson and a few others including me. Peter is one of those clever people who love technical challenges and design systems to get around them. Diving under Antarctica's sea ice can be hazardous, takes considerable resources, and in some places simply can't be done. So Peter built a system for getting a camera down under the sea ice without the need of a diver - everything was controlled by Peter up on the sea ice [warmish and dry].

Then it's Andrew's turn, gearing up and diving down through the hole we've hacked in the thin new ice next to the fast ice edge.

And me? I'm not diving, but it was a far-from-uneventful day at the fast ice edge. As well as photographing Peter with his equipment and Andrew's dive, there were emperor penguins hanging around. Excellent! Some were just loafing about in that nonchalant way that emperor penguins have perfected, but some were also swimming in a nearby lead [leads are where the where the fast ice



has cracked, resulting in long narrow areas of open water] and - in what seemed like milliseconds - leaping up onto the fast ice.

And there were two emperors greeting each other, bowing gracefully. The bowing photo has become one of my favourite photos ever, ending up in many places including the cover of my book "Emperors of the Ice", the image on my email signature - and on page 3 of this newsletter.

Another great day in paradise? Afraid so.



5. 'PHOTO ESSENTIALS' WORKSHOP – Sunday 20th May

- Just starting out?
- Still on “Auto”?
- Just got a new camera?
- Not getting photos you’re happy with?
- Been photographing for a while, but still not “on top of it”?
- Not very confident with your current camera?



If you're answering “Yes” to any of these questions, then the “Photo Essentials” workshop is probably exactly what you need. Aimed at beginner and intermediate photographers, you'll come away much more confident about your photography. For those of you who have been photographing for quite some time but never really felt you were “on top of it”, we'll cover all the basics that you probably should have learned when starting out but didn't [or have since forgotten] - and then move on to making you a much more competent and confident photographer. You'll finish the workshop a much better photographer. And a more relaxed, smiling one.



Topics we'll cover include:

1. The myths about photography
2. The 4 things that hold most photographers back
3. Digital workflow
4. Composition
5. The different kinds of light
6. KIM'S TRIANGLE: Head, Heart & Technical
7. EXPOSURE TRIANGLE: Aperture, Shutter Speed, ISO
8. DEPTH OF FIELD TRIANGLE: Aperture, Distance, Focal Length
9. Lenses. Which is best for any particular subject/situation.
- 10 “Spot the shot”
11. Camera modes [Auto, Program, Manual, Aperture Priority etc]
12. Introduction to travel, landscape and people photography



Handouts:

1. “Before Taking the Photo – Checklist”
2. “Checklist for Critiquing Photos”
3. “Elements of a Good Photo”
4. Depth of field - the three amigos



Cost: The full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-outs, Vivienne's yummy catering, assignment and follow-up] is usually \$295, reducing to \$245

for those who book early. As this newsletter is out later than planned, let me offer you the EarlyBird price of **\$245**. Fair enough? Fulltime students with ID **\$150**



6. 2018 PROGRAMME

MAY

- **Sunday 20th May. "Photo Essentials" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JUNE

- Tuesday 5th June. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 9th June. "People" workshop.** Portraits, kids, families, street/travel, weddings. Full day plus follow-up.

JULY

- Tuesday 3rd July. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 8th July. "Landscapes" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

AUGUST

- **Saturday 4th August. "Composition & Light" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.
- Tuesday 7th August. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 25th August. "Getting started in Lightroom".** Half day.

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 4th September. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 23rd September. “Good photos, great photos – anytime, anywhere”** workshop. Full day plus follow-up.

OCTOBER

- Tuesday 2nd October. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday-Sunday 13-14 October. “Great Photography Weekend”** workshop. Weekend + follow-up.

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday 6th November. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 17 November. “New worlds with your camera”** workshop. Full day plus follow-up.

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 4th December. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

Half-day workshops 9.00am – 1.00pm

Full day & two-day workshops 9.00am – 5.00pm

COST: Course fees include tuition, detailed hand-outs, yummy catering, assignment and follow-up evenings for full and two-day workshops.

- **Half day workshops:** \$135 – or \$115 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$70.
- **One day workshops:** \$295 – or \$245 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$150.
- **Weekend workshops:** \$475 [\$425 Early Bird]. Fulltime students with ID \$235.

7. INVITATION TO ALL CAMERA CLUBS & GROUPS

If your club or group might be interested in hosting one of my presentations - or workshops - or “Field Trip + Photo Critique” days, please get in touch.

8. PRIVATE TUITION

Yes, like you I’m usually busy doing “other stuff” too, but I can nearly always fit private tuition in, and am very happy to do so. First 2 hours: \$80 per hour, after that \$70 per hour. If you come again, it’s \$70 per hour right from the first hour. Think not just about cost, but “value” – it’s one-on-one with an experienced photographer and teacher and we cover a lot each hour.

Or – for just the cost of a full-day workshop [with Early Bird discount] - \$245 – you get my full attention - one-on-one - for 4 hours. This can be out in the field or at my studio, looking at your photos on my computer, going over your camera functions, looking into specific techniques, or all of the above and more – whatever you want to do. I’m here for you. For only \$475 you have me for the whole day.

9. MENTORING

“Mentoring” is the ongoing process of inspiring, advising, guiding, teaching, critiquing ... whatever is needed for the ongoing development of a photographer. It’s one-on-one, so it’s different for each person. One month it may be about equipment or Photoshop, next month it may be “I just want my photos to have more ‘Wow’ in them”, the following month it may be about exhibitions or “Should I go pro?”. **Who is mentoring for? Anybody. I mentor both established professional photographers and amateurs.** Minimum of 6 months. Talk to Kim about what would work best for you.



Photos of Kim by Malcolm Macfarlane & Tony Whitehead

10. PHOTOGRAPHING ARTWORKS, PHOTOSHOPPING, PHOTO RESTORATION

As well as teaching photography and mentoring a number of photographers, I also offer photo restoration, Photoshopping, and “Photographing your Artworks” services. \$50 per hour [we usually get a lot done each hour].

11. KIM’S PHOTOS & COFFEE EVENINGS

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month [every month of the year except January], chat informally about photography, and view some of the recent photos we’ve taken. It’s **free [no charge], supper is served**, and there’s no obligation of any kind. **Please email me if you’d like to come** [it’s not a big room so I need to keep an eye on numbers]. These evenings are always fun and friendly - there’s usually many smiles and laughs. It’s a great way of meeting up with like-minded people, **being inspired by the creativity of our group of photographers, and coming away with new ideas and tips.** There’s a wide range of interests and abilities – so for those of you who have not been before, you’re very unlikely to feel out of your depth. There’s also a small “library” of photo magazines you are welcome to borrow from. Bring photos if you wish, but there’s no obligation to bring any. Some people do, some don’t.

The next one will be on Tuesday **5th June**, starting 7.00pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga. Free, but please book by email.

ABOUT KIM

- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**
- Over 30 years as a professional photographer
- Five First Prizes in the BBC “Wildlife Photographer of the Year” competition, the Oscars/Olympics of nature photography worldwide.
- 18 books published – written and photographed by me. Five are currently “in print”.
- Teaching photography for over 10 years now