



Poly Speaks

Edited by Jim Mildice

**Poly Photo
Camera Club**
San Diego, California

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**In this Issue – Do we really want the clock
to control our competitions?**

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News and Views of Poly Photo Camera Club Members

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Poly Speaks is published by the Poly Photo Camera Club, in San Diego, California.

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From the Editor

A very important issue has come up for consideration by the Poly membership this month. Should we make changes to our monthly competition procedures to shorten the time those meetings take?

There certainly has been a lot of discussion and controversy about the high number of images in our monthly competitions, how long the meetings take, and how long it takes for the judge's critique and feedback before he/she assigns a final score.

Monthly competitions (in their present form) are our most popular and best-attended meetings; so we'd better be very careful if we want to change the procedures by which they are conducted. I have always been an advocate of the principle that says, "If it's not broke, don't fix it."

We all join a camera club for many different reasons. As photographers, we seek an association with like-minded others to exchange ideas, share, learn, compete, and stimulate our enthusiasm for this method of artistic expression and/or documentation.

With those (and perhaps other) goals in mind, I have long thought that one of the best things about Poly is its lack of restrictions. There are no limits on the kind of images we bring to the group or the equipment and processes we use. Correspondingly, there have been very few rules and regulations about how we get these things done. The day-to-day management of the Club is usually a reflection of the personality and attitudes of the current President. Not being an avid rule follower, I love the way we usually operate.

Over the last couple of years, Poly has been growing! Last year, we were approaching 100 members. I personally

believe that this is a good indicator that we are doing things right.

But this kind of growth often creates some organizational problems. I think we have handled them pretty well, and I am wary of adding new controls, rules, and limits that can inhibit some of the very things that have made us great.

But solutions to shorten meeting time have been proposed. Clark has summarized them very well in his column this month. Poly Speaks has also tried to propose a way to view and analyze them.

We've also tried to discuss these issues objectively (without recommending solutions) in the feature sections of Poly Speaks. But as in other publications, the Editorial page is often about opinion.

That said, I want to add that I really hate the idea that we might take a judge (like Steve Cirone or Larry Vogel), who is cogent, expert, and entertaining, and (in effect) say, "Stop that, we want you to say less about these images." That includes both vocal reminders and "pleasant" alarms that beep or chime away the minutes.

Michele McCain has provided us with really good judges this year, and I personally want to hear all that they have to say.

And finally, even when we get a judge who is not good at budgeting his time, I don't think we should jump to change our whole procedure because of it. Governments and big corporations are fond of solving problems caused by a few by restricting everyone. I don't think Poly should solve an occasional problem by changing everything.

I believe that the regimentation of "letting the clock rule" is the antithesis of the spirit of Poly.



Competition Changes – The First Questions

When I worked at General Dynamics, I designed avionics equipment and supervised other people who were also designers. There were often projects with problems to solve. One of the most valuable lessons I learned was to ask two questions before starting any new project.

In looking at the discussion surrounding our competition meetings, it occurred to me to wonder if we have solutions looking for a real problem. So I want to ask my two questions about this issue:

1. Do we really have a problem that needs fixing?

Is there a City-required condition in our lease that demands we conclude our meeting by noon? There is a requirement (for the summer months only) that the PAB be open to the public from noon to 5:00 PM on Saturday. It is not reasonable to interpret that requirement to say that we cannot be in the building while it is open. In fact, it would make the PAB more interesting for others to visit if there are people involved in photo activities already in the building.

So the next step would be to conclude that **the meetings are too long if a majority of the participants think that they are too long**. My reading of the recent emails (which are probably not an adequate participant sample) indicated that most people don't mind if the meeting runs past noon. If the response of a more complete sample has the same results there may not be a problem.

One final issue is **whether or not the judges feel the meeting is too long** and the images at the end get poorer treatment. A few recent judges said they were OK with our current length of time. But this still remains an open issue that needs more study.

2. If there is a problem, what are we willing to give up to get a different result? (Nothing is ever free!)

Are we willing to stifle critique and feedback so we can finish a little earlier?

It is clear from recent observations, that if the judge is interrupted and reminded that he is going too slowly, the succeeding images are not as well treated.

If we try to force a judge's pace through the use of a timer/chime/alarm, will it result in an overall less-valuable analysis? Probably, since the time pressure can often limit any thoughtful interpretation of the image. He will also not have the option to make a secondary point that could be important to the photographer. His commentary will likely be incomplete in some way, and his flow of thought will likely be interrupted by the alarm.

Since the feedback and criticism are important parts of the competitions for most members, we should consider this issue very carefully before making any changes that make that feedback less effective and valuable.

If we don't want to compromise the benefits of feedback and criticism, what other solutions can we try?

We could reduce the number of images entered. At various times, there have been proposals to reduce the number of entries that each member is allowed to enter from three to two.

Entering two images per person in the open category will reduce the present average total entries to between 65 and 70, based on our prior averages. That will shorten the total time significantly and relieve the pressure on the judges to shorten their commentary. It's a solution that guarantees better feedback, but (of course) each entrant will only get information on two instead of three images.

We need a better representative sample of members to decide if this is a worthwhile trade for the majority. We have time to find that out, since this level of rule change impacts our high-points accounting and is best implemented at the start of a new year.

This and That

By Clark Winsor

I want to share is a statistical survey on the number of images entered and the number of members entering our competitions. This survey was compiled by Bob Howe. Bob, we thank you for taking the time to compile this information.

I examined score data from January, 2010 through April, 2014. That revealed some interesting facts as summarized below. We'll assume that (on average) there are 100 images to judge.

1. On the average, about Fifty submittals (HALF) are from the top 13-18 photographers on the list. This is the true "competition" group (that is, those who are competing for high-points). The list of individual photographers in this group remains pretty much the same from year to year. Some come, some go.

2. On the average, about 10-12 images are from those who do not want to have their names on the high-points score sheet. They want their images evaluated and eligible for the "best of the year" awards.

3. On the average, between 6 and 15 other members submit 30- 40 images in a given month but that number varies widely. They are not always the same members. They do not always submit three images: sometimes two, sometimes one.

4. Another group of members attend meetings without submitting any images. They are there for the love of photography and lessons about what makes "good" images. Nothing wrong with that. Once in a while they will throw in one or two images. A lot of people from this group drop out of the club after the first year.

I'm writing this on April 24, and to date there has been 124 messages posted on our Yahoo site. For the most part, the member comments address ideas to shorten our competition process. Analyzing the comments, I found there are three main ideas, and most of the comments support one of the three.

1. Keep the number of entries at three.
Instruct the judge about the overall time, but let him/her do the job. Do not interrupt the judging. Time is not a factor.
2. Keep the number of entries at three.
Encourage the judge to keep his or her comments short. Keep reminding the judge of the time issue.
3. Reduce the number of entries from three to two and thereby solve the time issues.

That's it for this month. I'll see you at the May competition.

Clark

Quote of the Month –

"I always thought I was good. That's why it was so frustrating when other people didn't agree."

– Robert Mapplethorpe

San Diego County Fair – Division of Photography

Just because the deadline for entries in the juried Exhibition of Photography at the Fair has passed, that doesn't mean that you don't still have opportunities for participation in its photography activities. Aside from going to see the exhibition, here are some of the things you can do.

Workshops – Check the Fairground's website for a list of workshops, dates and time.

Clinics – on mounting, matting, photo papers and Clinics on Mounting, Matting, Photo Papers and printing: Tuesday, May 13, 2:00pm-7:00pm – ArtWare will show how to mount and mat photos that pass Tier 1 judging for the competition. Mount and mat boards will be available at reasonable prices. Only cash is accepted. Please RSVP with full name by email to: entry@sdfair.com so we can plan for space and supplies. The Printmaker.net will discuss photo papers and printing. Please bring digital files of photos on USB flash drives, CDs or DVDs to be evaluated. Check Fair website and watch for emails for updated information.

Exhibitor events and discussions –

- **Artists Reception:** Invitation will be issued on take-in days.
- **Judges Roundtable:** Wednesday, June 11, 7:00pm. Judges will discuss overall criteria and procedures.
- **Judges Critique:** Wednesday, June 18, 7:00pm. Judges will answer photographers' questions one on one, and entrants may bring in images for their comments.

One-day Contests – Photo Shootouts: Saturday, June 14; Friday, June 20; and Sunday, June 29. Check the Fair website for times and other details. Limited to 30 participants per shootout. Must register online. Sponsored by George's Camera. *Awards sponsored by Oceanside Photo & Telescope.*

Instructions for Hanging Prints on the Gallery Wall

By Steff Stracken

We published these instructions from Steff last month, but since we will be hanging more prints on the PAB walls in the next few months, we thought it would be useful to publish them again as a reminder for those of you who didn't read them carefully last month.

Your images may be any subject, any size, matted or not, but must be mounted on board (for example, cardboard or foamcore). We will have Velcro if you need it. For the middle room display, you will hang your images and take them down yourself. We will have labels to write your Title and Name if you wish. You may hang your images anytime the building is open. Note, the building is only open to the public on Saturdays from June to September, it is always open on Sundays. Poly will also have the wall in June and August so keep that in mind and be ready to hang more of your images then. Thanks. For further inquiries e-mail me at Steff@sbcglobal.net.

Field Etiquette (or Lack Thereof) in Landscape Photography

Carol Murdock (From a Blog by Sarah Marino)

Considering that landscape photographers should be ambassadors for and respectful of the wild and natural places we visit and photograph, it is surprising to find that an important topic like this receives almost no attention from the typical sources of photography information. This also helps explain why the behavior we have observed occurs so frequently. With some landscape photography locations only becoming more crowded and more people taking up this pursuit, this topic is only becoming more important.

If you would like to read more about this topic, go to Sarah Marino's blog at: <http://sarahmarinophoto.com/landscape-photography-etiquette/>

A List of Principles to Consider

I strongly believe that landscape photographers have a responsibility to be good ambassadors for and stewards of the places and subjects we photograph and part of that responsibility comes in the form of behaving in a civil, respectful manner to the people we encounter when we are out practicing our art and craft. With this responsibility in mind, I hope you will consider practicing the following principles for field etiquette in landscape photography:

- **Be kind and courteous** to other photographers and non-photographers. They have as much right to be visiting a place as you do, and a little

courtesy will go a long way to helping make the experience pleasant for everyone.

- By definition, landscape photographers typically photograph natural places. **Behave like you are in a natural place and treat the location with the respect it deserves.** Having fun and making quiet conversation with friends and other photographers is one thing. However, being loud and disruptive in natural places is almost always inappropriate.
- **Give other photographers some space!** Refrain from setting up right next to someone who is already set-up and never follow another photographer around, repeatedly setting up next to them.
- If you are traveling with another

photographer, remember that **photographing together will require some give and take.** If you find yourself always setting up first or staying planted in one spot, you might not be giving your companion fair opportunities to get the photos they want to take.

- **Avoid yelling and being loud** to help maintain solitude in both wild and not-so wild natural places.

- **Remember that many landscape photographers are motivated to photograph in part by the ability to get out and experience**

solitude and peace. Incessantly talking or disrupting another photographer could be



negatively affecting their creative process and ruining their experience in a special place.

- Wide angle lenses are called that for a reason – they take in a wide angle of view! **Don't assume that you will not be in someone's frame.** Ask! And if you are in their frame and the person was set up before you, move!
- If you are at a location and a photography workshop arrives, **remember that you have as much right to be there as they do.** Although you might not want to be around a large group of photographers, never let a workshop instructor intimidate you into leaving.
- Generally, you should respect another photographer who has arrived before you **by staying out of their way and not walking into their composition.** If you had something else in mind, striking up a friendly conversation can sometimes lead to a compromise. If not and you didn't get there first, you either have to accept their presence in your composition, move, or get to the location earlier on another day.
- **If you are photographing from the roadside, park your car in an appropriate spot.** Do not block the road for others driving through. Also, parking your car in a spot to prevent other photographers from setting up in that same spot is rude.
- **Refrain from making insulting or demeaning comments about other photographers,** their gear, or their technique or bragging about your own gear or photographic prowess (how sharp your lenses are, how much your camera cost,

how you can't possibly understand how someone could be using that other brand, what magazine just featured your work, how popular you are on 500px, etc).

Striking up a friendly conversation with other photographers helps built rapport and possibly even lasting friendships. Dissing other people or bragging about how important you are just makes you look like a jerk.

- **If other people are also photographing a scene, do not do things like moving elements in or out** (like the ice I described above or a large boulder like someone else described to me). Asking if you can do a bit of clean-up is one thing, but messing with the natural elements of a scene that another photographer has chosen to photograph is just bad behavior.

And a Few Final Observations for

Workshop Leaders: Unless you have a specific permit allowing you exclusive access to a place, you do not have some special right to public places just because people are paying you to show them around. Instead, you have the responsibility to model good behavior for your students. If your group arrives after other photographers are set up, can you please kill the self-important attitude and show a little respect to the photographers who arrived to the location first? Please never say, "I'm a Really Important Photographer" in an effort to intimidate others to leave a public place. And if you are on a workshop with this kind of leader, do not use their abhorrent behavior as permission to model the same kind of rudeness during the workshop or after when you are on your own.



Coming Events

Darlene Elwin

May 3 – Competition

The subject for the Project Competition for this month is “*Creative Out-of-focus.*”

Our Judge for this month is Susan

Coppock. Here’s a little about her, in her own words.

“I like making photographs, not just taking them, so playing with Photoshop has been a thrill! Now, I get to take parts from photographs I have been shooting all these years, and adding new ones to create completely different and unique images. With digital imaging and Photoshop, I feel my creativity has been broadened exponentially. The future is very bright and only limited to imagination.

My business is called Night Owl Photography because I have always been a night owl when it comes to shooting photographs. I have been enthralled by the magic and beauty of the nocturnal world for most of my life. I enjoy the serendipity in being unable to visualize completely how my final images will look before I press the shutter button—the heavens seem to be in control and I love seeing what ‘develops.’

I have been involved in all aspects of photography since I was a teenager. I have worked in photo labs, camera stores, owned a photo studio, taught at Palomar College, owned a camera store and custom frame shop, and currently teach photography at San Dieguito Academy high school.”

May 17 – Photoshop Selections, Masks & Channels with Theresa Jackson at the Photo Arts Building.

The power of Photoshop lies in its ability to selectively edit and composite multiple images. With mastery of selection techniques,

there is no limit to your Photoshop editing possibilities.

Theresa will begin with a review of Photoshop selection tools, and the relationship between Selections, Layer Masks, Quick Masks, and Alpha Channels. She will then challenge us with advanced channel selection techniques, demystifying them by showing us simple real world solutions for their use.

Topics covered in this presentation include:

- What is a selection and why is it so powerful
- Ways and reasons to modify a selection
- Selections and Layer Masks
- What to do when the Magic Wand or Quick Select doesn’t work
- Luminosity selections for color correction
- The easy way to replace a sky using channel selections

May 31 – Basic Matting with Beverly Brock & Jim Mildice at the Photo Arts Building

In the next few months, Poly will be displaying prints on the front wall and in the center room of the Photo Arts Building, and making prints for the SD Fair Exhibition of Photography. So we need to think about making those display prints look better. While framed pictures are possible to hang, the walls are designed to accept light-weight mounted prints, attached with Velcro. Usually, a mat around the image also adds a lot.

While mounting and matting services are commercially available, Beverly and Jim do their own, and will share their techniques and secrets with you, and demonstrate how easy it is to get a great looking print display exactly the way you want it, and save a lot of money at the same time.