Baltimore Camera Club, Inc. 1884

F o c a l P o i n t

May 2010

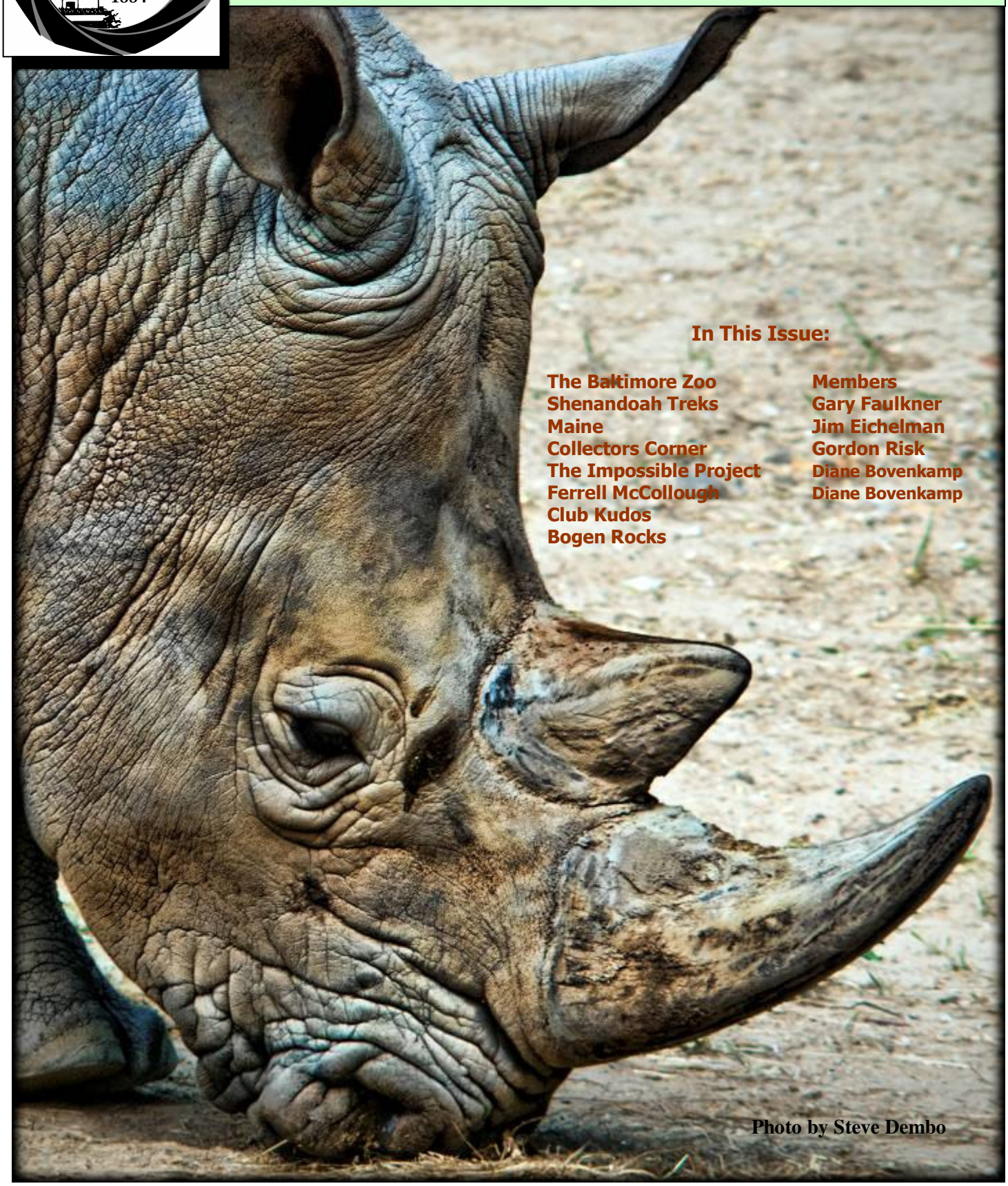

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Photo by Steve Dembo

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FROM YOUR EDITOR: Well, Spring is certainly here. Camera School was a success, the club's had several great outings and the Annual Spring Trip and the End of Year Awards Banquet are just around the corner. And the May *Focal Point* is on line for your viewing pleasure.

In this month's issue we'll learn about the WERRA, see giraffes, rhinos and elephants … oh my!

We'll visit Maine and the Shenandoah. We'll discover *Approaches to Better Photography* – A Tutorial by Ferrell McCollough and learn about the *Impossible Project.*

An article in praise of Bogen customer service, member kudos and, of course, lots of member photos round out this issue of your newsletter. Enjoy!

Thanks to Gary Faulkner, Jim Eichelman, Gordon Risk, Diane Bovenkamp, James McKee & Steve Shannon for their contributions this month.

BCC Gets Out

Photo by Jim McKee

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BCC Gets Out (cont.)

Nine members attended the May 8th Mentor Event at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore. The animal photos in this issue are the results of that fun day.

Photos by

Jim McKee

BCC Gets Out (cont.)

Photos by Steve Shannon

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Shenandoah Treks

Shenandoah Treks

By **Gary Faulkner**

Have you heard that I like Shenandoah National Park, if you haven't you must not be from around here! Well the Scotsman and I made our spring pilgrimage on April 20th – 23rd and were treated to some interesting events. Our first encounter was on our arrival at Big Meadows with smoke and fire. Just before the entrance at mile marker 50 we smelled burning forest and before we could finish a sentence about what the heck is going on the sign in the road said it all, "prescribed burn today". Turning into the visitor parking area we went to ask the Park Service folks about this burn in the "meadow". Well they do this to provide a better place for the wild flowers to grow.

After setting up our camp we ventured down to the meadow for a closer look. The fires were almost out and the smell stilled filled the air. The National Forest Service rangers were gathering after a hot day of fire control.

Shenandoah Treks (cont.)

Here's a look back to the Byrd Visitors Center.

It was strange to see that the green path was not burned and the roots of the plants were not affected either.

Shenandoah Treks (cont.)

After a fine dinner of camp made hamburgers with onions we went up to the Lodge to the Blackrock over look to see the sunset, there not all the same.

Day 2 started out wet, wouldn't be a trip to Shenandoah for us if it didn't rain. So rather than stand out making breakfast we drove to Elkton to check out the local diner. We went in to the C&S Diner and knew right away that this is where the men of the town gathered for morning coffee and chit chat. After a good country breakfast we drove around the area until the rain stopped and headed back to the park. We than planned to hike up to Black Rocks for lunch and photos. Our hopes of doing some night sky photography at this place were dashed as the clouds did not look to want to clear, well there's the fall trip for that.

Back at camp we dried out the bottom of the tent and while setting on the tailgate of my truck, having a cool beverage, Gordon spotted a chipmunk running about. He entrained us for quite awhile. We even got him to pose for a few shots, a little piece of cracker helped.

Shenandoah Treks (cont.)

During the night we were awakened by the sound of the plastic tarp being scratched at, bolting up and looking out of the tent our flashlights illuminated a big old raccoon trying to get at the cooler. Well we must protect the beverage so we shouted at him until he sulked away. He returned minutes later and again we shouted for him to get lost. Now we had to move the cooler into the truck, he did not return.

Day 3 for 2 men who are "outstanding" in their field!

Another Shenandoah trip has come to its end and our trekkers head back to home and ready to return in the fall to the "best" National Park on the east coast!

Gary Faulkner

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Maine

Maine

by **Jim Eichelman**

In October, my wife and I took an anniversary trip to Maine. One thing that was made clear to me was that this was NOT a photography trip. In planning the trip we wanted to try and catch foliage at its peak. We reviewed the Maine Foliage website and picked a week in the middle of October, knowing it could be a little chilly, but not be as crowded as the summer. Once we chose the week, we needed to determine where to go since Maine is a huge state. We decided to stay close to the coast. We flew into Manchester, NH and within 90 minutes were at one of Maine's many lighthouses (Cape Neddick "Nubble" Light) near York, Maine

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Maine (cont.)

We decided to visit Mount Desert Island home of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park and were extremely lucky and hit foliage at just about peak. Acadia is about 47,000 acres and was the first National Park east of the Mississippi river. Since we did not have our entire vacation to spend in Acadia, and the fact that it was cold and windy, we stuck to the Park's main road (27 mile Loop Road). If you have never experienced fall in New England, you should. Every twist and turn of the Loop Road brought breathtaking scenery. Beautiful colorful forests gave way to pines and the rocky coast. Miles of pink granite and rocky overlooks along the ocean and surrounding bays make this one of the most picturesque areas in Maine.

Our first morning in Bar Harbor we set out fairly early and took the road to the top of Cadillac Mountain. At 1,532 feet, Cadillac Mountain is the highest point on the Eastern seaboard and receives the first rays of sunlight in the U.S. It had rained most of the prior day and as we drove up the mountain could see ice on some of the trees and vegetation. At the summit there was a coating of ice on just about everything except the road. With the temperature around freezing and winds blowing a constant 20 miles an hour, it was hard to spend much time out of the car. However, the views were amazing and we could see a cruise ship moored not far from our Bar Harbor hotel in the distance.

Maine (cont.)

Later that afternoon we returned to Cadillac Mountain for sunset (we were on vacation and decided sunrise was just too early). The parking lot was full an hour before sunset. Like everyone else, we scampered in and out of the car since the temperature had not risen and the wind was still howling. It was worth the wait and mother nature put on a great show. On the way down the mountain after the show I saw a familiar figure loading his photo gear into his car. I knew Don Vetter was visiting Acadia during the same time period, but the fact that we actually saw each other was pretty incredible. There were a number of photography workshops in Acadia, including one by Tony Sweet.

In addition to the miles of coastline, there are numerous lakes in the Park. One of the largest is Jordan Pond that is accessible directly off the Loop Road. The view from Jordan Pond provided some spectacular views of the foliage and is very indicative of Acadia's interior. This particular day, the lake provided more whitecaps than reflections.

Maine (cont.)

Some of the most photographed areas in Maine are lighthouses. Acadia has one - Bass Harbor Light. We were there during the morning hours with somewhat harsh light but the lighthouse perched above the pink granite was still a great site.

In all, we had a fantastic first trip to Maine and experienced New England's foliage at its peak. We even captured a few nice images in the process.

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Collector's Corner

WERRA

by Gordon Risk

The simplicity of the styling is what attracted me to this camera. I found it hard to believe it was a real camera until I found out more about it.
This model WERRA, pictured, is the first model of many that WERRA produced by Carl Zeiss. Starting in 1954, as the picture from the pages of McKeown's camera guide shows, there were many models produced but it was the first one that was the plainest and most attractive in my view.

Carl Zeiss Jena (Jena Germany), founded in 1846, was one of the most respected manufacturers of optics. At the end of World War II, as the American troops moved out of Jena and Dresden, and the

Russians moved in which created the East German Zone, many of the Zeiss-Ikon personnel moved west and set up a second Zeiss-Ikon operation in a former Contessa Factory in Stuttgart.

Zeiss, in the east zone, continued to produce cameras under the name "Zeiss Ikon Jena" including the WERRA, Contax, Pentagon, Praktica, and others.

This first WERRA model (1954) is made of milled aluminum and the film advance and shutter cocking ring is around the lens barrel (see picture). The lens shade reverses to encase shutter and lens. Shutter speed setting and aperture are set around the lens. Shutter release is the one button on top. Film rewind is done from the bottom panel. An accessory/flash shoe is optional. This early model had the olive green vulcanite covering. Vulcanite was used on many vintage cameras. It is not leather or fabric but a hard rubber product that becomes brittle and cracks off with age.

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Collector's Corner (cont.)

Anyone interested in recovering a vintage camera can go to www.cameraleather.com and find some interesting types of materials and colors to use that are precut.

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The Impossible Project

Polaroid Instant Film Makes a Comeback: The Impossible Project

by Diane Bovenkamp

In 1948, Polaroid completely changed people's relationship with cameras and photography by providing portable, instant viewing and sharing of the final product. However, to the chagrin of millions around the world, Polaroid announced in 2008 that it would no longer manufacture instant film. Happily, a group of Polaroid fans and ex-employees, helped by Austrian Florian Kaps (creator of Polanoid.net, an online Polaroid photo collection and community of photographers), tackled the daunting task of resurrecting this photographic medium. They called their endeavor, The Impossible Project.

The group, composed of film specialists, chemists and engineers, acquired the abandoned Polaroid machinery, as well as a ten-year lease on the Netherlands factory. They then began the daunting task of backwards-engineering instant film through a new process (since many chemicals used in the original film were no longer readily available).

On March 25th, 2010, The Impossible Project began online sales of the new monochrome instant film (www.the-impossible-project.com). They will be selling both the SX-70 film, for the 1970s bellows-type Polaroids, as well as the newer 600-series film, for most general-purpose Polaroid cameras. Each $21 pack will produce eight black-and-white photos. Andre Bosman, who heads The Impossible Project, says the new film is clearer and crisper than the original film. They are planning to launch a color film pack this summer.

This is great news for the owners of the approximately 300 million Polaroid cameras that are still functional and traded on websites like eBay. And for those of you who might think that Polaroid is only nostalgia, Lady Gaga, singer, artistic performer and fashion maven, announced in January 2010 that she will have a long-term partnership with Polaroid as a "creative director." In fact, a Polaroid instant camera has the honor of a strategically-placed cameo in Lady Gaga's latest music video for the song "Telephone" (featuring Beyoncé). Polaroid is apparently still "cool," sixty–two years after its birth.

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Approaches to Better Photography

Approaches to Better Photography – A Tutorial by Ferrell McCollough

by Diane Bovenkamp

In December 2009, the Baltimore Camera Club hosted Ferrell McCollough, a professional photographer and author of the book, the "Complete Guide to High Dynamic Range Digital Photography." Ferrell shared with us a wealth of information on how to improve and continually rejuvenate our photographic techniques. His presentation was split into four (Top 10 Approaches, Textures, Composites, and HDR), but he first began with a short skit (co-starring with his wife) that introduced concepts addressed in the rest of his talk. As an aside, this might be the first time in recent memory that a skit was used to teach photography at the Club!

In his first section, "**10 Approaches to Better Photography**," he extensively discussed and gave personal examples for:

1. Have a Creative Plan and Try To Stick With It
   Examples: Color Schemes; Bring Props; Shoot in the Opposite Direction; Reflections as an intentional creative plan; Shoot through to the subject; Decisive Moment (prepare, anticipate, see, shoot); Plan your Camera Setup ahead of time; Avoid distracting Triangles in the corners
2. You're Responsible for Every Fraction of the Photo
3. First Identify the Subject and Then Pay Attention to Secondary Objects
4. Work Your Subject, Walk Away, Then Come Back Later – Something Could Pop Out
5. Look Analytically, Then Let Your Feelings Carry You Deeper Into the Scene
6. Don't Make Excuses - Either the Image Is a Winner or Not
7. Bracket for HDR or Blending Options
8. Don't Delete Images From Your Card While On Location
9. Better Pre-Visualization - Don't Have a "Sharp Picture of a Fuzzy Concept" (Ansel Adams)
10. Have Fun!

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Approaches to Better Photography (cont.)

His next topic was on adding **textures** to improve an "average" image. In this situation, image processing software is used to create a new texture layer on top of the original image (adjusting with brushes, filters, and adding noise) and then blended with the opacity bar to create a great shot. Ferrell suggests that we continually look for images to use as future texture layers, and he gave examples to collect for your archive: crumpled paper, rocks, lichen, cloudy sky, cracked mud, old maps, old newspaper clippings, old TVs, peeling paint, concrete, fiberglass, fabric, etc.

He then showed us his process for creating **composites**, taking us through a few commissions of album covers for a number of local bands. Composites consist of three or more images of different elements that are put together to create your alternate universe. There are a number of technical issues to keep in mind when you create your own composites. In particular, the background colors of each image need to match the final blended image. An example is to put a brown cloth behind a man's head because he'll be sitting in front of a brown wooden grandfather clock. Shadow is critical to the scene since all of the shadows in the final image need to be leaning in the same direction. Finally, he suggested making sure that all of the photos are taken with the camera at the right height for the final composite (i.e. looking up or down).

Ferrell began his last topic by answering the question, "Why use **HDR**?" In particular, this is due to the digital camera sensors not being able to pick-up the dynamic range of light in a scene. He uses Photomatix because he believes that it is good for offset and ghosting. The following are some tips given in the presentation. If you have an HDR series and a bird is moving in the shot – after you process all of the images, you need to choose only one exposure with the bird in the preferred position and touch-up the birds in the remainder of the images. Remember that you can tone map a single image, to give it a different feel. To adjust a tone-mapped image that might not seem real, you can blend it with a "regular" image to make the final product look more contemporary. For a more complete description of his advice, you can read his book on HDR.

Visit Ferrell's blog at www.beforethecoffee.com for more inspirational guidance, current photographic projects, information about his book and a 15% reduction code towards the purchase of Photomatix.

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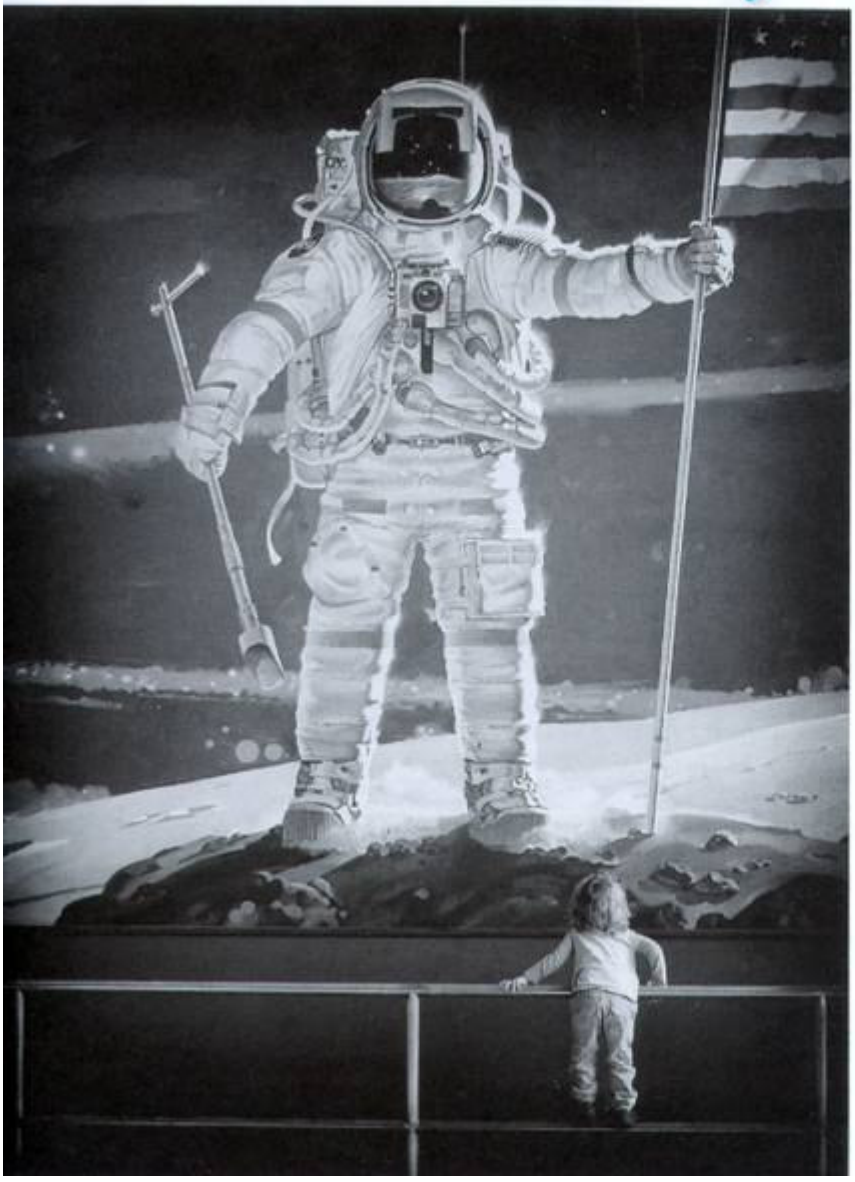
Kudos

Pictorial Print of the Month



The winner for December is *American Dream* by **Arthur Ransome** of Baltimore. It won first place in Star Monochrome. The judge, **Kenna Mawk**, was enthusiastic about it: "Amazing impact in this image. The child on the railing gazing at the giant astronaut figure makes the story. This would work well in photojournalism—I could see this image on the cover of *Time* or *Life*. The lighting, though likely out of your control, is spot on, highlighting the child just right."

To participate in future ***Pictorial Print of the Month*** contests, contact Director **Joe Hearst, APSA, PPSA**, 685 Glen Road, Danville, CA 94526 or e-mail at joe@jhearst.com

To view the POM gallery, go to ***http://www.psaphoto.org/pom-gallery***

Congrats Arthur!

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Kudos

Bogen Rep Rocks

My Manfrotto Grip Ball Head broke! I know, I know, it's a very rare occurrence. But, it did. It was less than a year old so, I took it back to the dealer who forwarded it to Manfrotto for repair.

The rant: After almost two months (part of which time may have possibly been due to the dealer repair department), I was told that Manfrotto would not cover the repair under warranty. There was no adequate explanation and the implication was that the damage was caused by wear & tear (!). It was obvious that this was not the case. To say the least I was a bit upset – it's an expensive and necessary item.

The Rave: I decided to get in touch with the Bogen representative, Lydia Thomson. (You may recall she gave an informative presentation of some very cool tripods, heads, etc. - products marketed by Bogen.) Via email I explained my concerns and even sent a photo of the damaged grip. Within a very short time she had contacted the Manfrotto repair department's Jhon Salazar, explaining the situation to him. He confirmed that the damage to my grip was covered under warranty and Lydia suggested I send it to him directly. I explained my concern with turn-around time and she assured me that would not be an issue. She continued to cc me on all correspondence with Jhon.

And, as promised, the turn-around time was spectacular – I'm sure the grip was repaired and sent on its way to me on the same day! I got it back four days after I sent it to them!!

I believe that the original problem was a function of miss communication and not of poor service by Manfrotto. And I want to personally and sincerely thank **Lydia Thomas** and **Jhon Salazar** for their amazing customer service and professionalism. As my kids would say – "You guys ROCK!"

Steve Dembo