

Photography in the Valley

A periodical for and about members of the
Shenandoah Photographic Society



Photo by Chellie Hyre

Magic with toys & cameras

By Chellie Hyre

In the COVID-induced shutdown in the spring of 2020, many people took up bread baking or other new hobbies. While looking for a way to keep my photography skills in tune, I stumbled upon the crazy world of toy photography. I was instantly hooked from the moment I first saw photos bringing action figures, LEGO minifigures, and other toys to life. Why photograph toys? It can be done with minimal equipment, nearly anywhere, and any time of day. And it's just super fun!

How can you get started with toy photography?

Choose a lens that focuses close – the smaller the toy, the closer you'll want to be to fill the frame. Phone cameras actually work great for photographing toys. I use mostly macro and Lensbaby lenses. As for the toys, if you have kids or grandkids, raid their toybox. Or go shopping and see what grabs your attention in the toy aisle. The photography skills are those you already know – find a compelling subject, pay attention to the technical stuff (composition, (See *Magic*, Page 3)

SPS launches newsletter

*Emphasis on learning,
sharing, showing*

Editor's Note:

With this edition, we launch a newsletter by and for the members of the Shenandoah Photographic Society. Our premise is a familiar one: our members have great amounts of skill and knowledge about gear, venues, techniques and the enjoyment of photography that they are willing to share. Here is another medium for that rich content. We see a great example to the left where accomplished photographer and SPS member Chellie Hyre reports on her toy photography. Those of you familiar with her work via Instagram know it is witty, visually arresting and smile-inducing. Here she tells all.

Elsewhere, SPS President Norm Reid recounts a personal story many of us share, his undying affair with Nikon. Unlike most of us, he has carried his Nikons on such dashing assignments as the 24-hour race at Le Mans.

The newsletter will be monthly without being obsessive about it. Good content comes before a rigid schedule. SPS already has an excellent monthly competition process and informative live programs via Zoom. As the letter develops, we see it as an expanding source of information about contests, photo opportunities, information from other clubs and reviews/commentary on gear, techniques and things generally that affect photography. For that, we must enlist your participation as sources of content and tips. Send us your words as well as pictures.

Please share your thoughts on how we can make the letter better for you.

--Vernon Guidry

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So what problem does this solve?

The Shenandoah Photographic Society has an excellent website, an efficient, effective monthly on-line competition and good communication via email. How's a newsletter fit in there? We hope by providing a space for information that has depth, expands members' interests and abilities, and makes SPS a richer experience for its member photographers.

The newsletter will be distributed via a downloadable PDF, the (approximately) monthly publication of which being signaled by an all-member email that will have the download link on board.

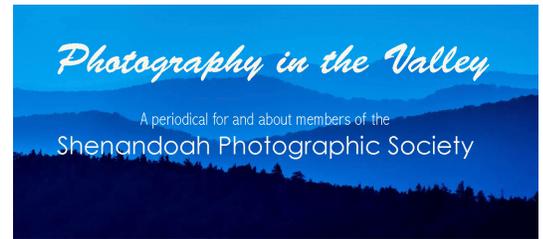
This inaugural issue carries an account with pictures by member Chellie Hyre of her leap into the genre of toy photography. More such member accounts are lined up for coming editions. We have a wealth of experience, knowledge and talent right here, and writers as well as photographers.

Our avocation supplies us with an endless supply of stuff to get smart about, techniques to learn and controversies to chime in on. In coming editions, I'd like to see topics like these:

- ISO Invariance. What cameras have it (if that's how to put it), how useful is it and is it something else complicated that I should take on board?
- What's your view on the best approach to noise reduction with what software?
- So does Adobe Super Resolution really work and for what? Anybody do it better?
- Got anything nifty to share about Lightroom's new super suite of tools?
- Recently bought an accessory that was a boon or a bust?

You get the idea and you also have ideas. What are they? Let's hear it. What do you want to see here? There's a wealth of material out there if we can package it and share it with each other.

--Vernon Guidry vernon.a.guidry@gmail.com



Editor's note: the more metadata the merrier

What metadata to include with submissions is the choice of the contributor, but the preference of the newsletter would be maximum data for benefit of readers, including camera make and model, lens make and focal length if prime, focal range with chosen length if zoom (e.g. 24-120mm f/4 at 35mm), shutter speed, aperture, and ISO.

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<https://shenandoahphotographicsociety.com>

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Officers 2022
Norm Reid--President
Jeff Fleisher--1st VP, Programs
Bryan Williams--2nd VP, Score Keeper
Tanya Barton--Treasurer
Mike Head--Web Person

Coming in future issues...

. . . Members Ryan and Kristin Wilson tell the amazing story of how they sold their house, bought an RV and headed west for a life of photography, exploration, art and creativity.

. . . Member Ellen Zimmerman charts another bold journey, a creative one, as she uses intentional camera movement and multiple exposures to reveal the extraordinary images of her artistic vision.

Magic from Page 1

exposure, focus), use good lighting, and be creative. One easy way to start is to recreate your favorite movie, TV, book, or other pop culture scenes.

How do you create and light setups for toy photos? Start by keeping it simple. Outside I use natural light, and then if needed a bounce card (white matboard) or a small cube light for additional lighting, and a small diffusion panel (a plastic stencil blank) to reduce glare. Indoors I use either window light or flashlights and small, inexpensive color-changing video lights. For backgrounds, I use a printed photograph or an image



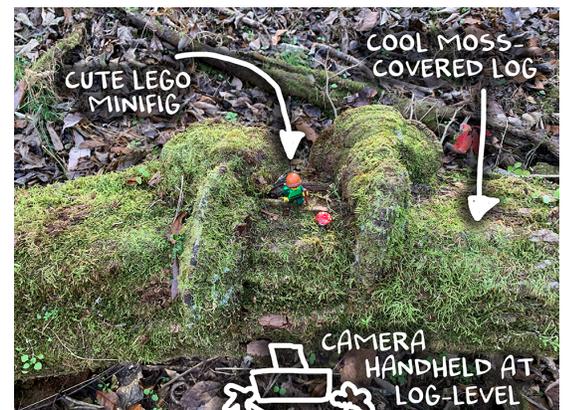
which are less than 2 inches tall, and it took me awhile to be able to “see” in toy scale when looking for outdoor locations that work well for setups. Also, I’ve found that those little toys are quite addictive! I haven’t counted, but I have at least several hundred minifigs now, and a few LEGO sets, and some other toys.

I encourage you to step out of your photography comfort zone and try something new ... you really never know where it might lead! If you are interested in learning more about photographing toys, I’d love to meet up or I can point you to some of the online resources the fabulous and very supportive toy photography community has put together. Have fun!!



projected on a display monitor. The foreground depends on the scene – if you look through my toy photos on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/littleplanetchell/>) you’ll see rocks, leaves, potting mix, sand, brown craft paper, bubble wrap, baking pans filled with ice or water, and other odd stuff. There really is no limit on what you can create – I’ve seen really extensive setups with buildings or custom-made dioramas, jaw-dropping in-camera effects such as fog, dust storms, or pyrotechnics, masterful composites, and many other incredibly creative toy images.

What have been my biggest challenges? Most of my toys are LEGO minifigures,



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Photos by Chellie Hyre



By Norm Reid

My great love for all things Nikon is certainly no secret. We're not talking about a casual fling. It's been a long term and evolving relationship. While it was slow to develop, over the years it has lasted the partnership has deepened, and Nikon and I are now inseparable.

A bit of background will explain. My photographic career began with a Kodak Brownie box camera. As I aged, my photographic interests grew with me. For a cross-country trek to the New Mexico Philmont Boy Scout Ranch, my father lent me his Argus, a post-World War II relic. Borrowing Dad's camera boosted my interest in photography, and I soon bought one of my own, an Argus A-1. Later, in high school and college I was the school's photographer and, Speed Graphic in tow, made photos for the newspaper and yearbook.

After graduate school I bought my first SLR, a Pentax K1000 with a 50mm lens. I used that camera semi-professionally, producing calendar photos and, later, after adding a Pentax MX body, I covered sports car races in a variety of venues, including the 24-hour race at Le Mans, France. But I my flirtation with Pentax was unfulfilling, and in 1986 I began courting Nikon. Since trading partners, I have remained faithful. Nikon's chief allure was its extensive array of lenses and reputation for quality. I started out with an FM body and a 50mm lens. A second FM body quickly followed, one for color, the other for B&W. Those were the days when fixed focal length prime lenses were the best glass, and I acquired enough to overfill my Domke camera bag. My favorites, and the best of them, were the

My affair with Nikon

venerable 105mm f/2.5 and its equally sound sister, the 180mm lens.

The FMs soon gave way to FM2 bodies, and when the FE was released, I upgraded again to take advantage of through-the-lens metering. Those FEs were yet again exchanged for a pair of FE2s, each equipped with a motor drive, and they became my principal squeeze for years. I adored those cameras, especially for their match needle metering system. For years I used the FE2s to record the trackside action of Corvettes, Jaguars, and



In my days of covering sports car races, slow motor drives and the high cost of film ruled out the possibility for "spray and pray." Each shot had to be carefully planned to capture the sharpest images. Fortunately, as in this 1990 Daytona 24-hour sports car race, the cars rounded the track again and again, providing many opportunities to get that one in-focus shot. But what I wouldn't have given for a Z9 in those days!

Nikon FE2, Kodak EPD-320 film, lens and shooting data not recorded.

Porsches at sports car races from Daytona to Montreal and points in between.

But as much as I loved the FE2s, when autofocus capability came on the scene, I abandoned them for a pair of F100s. Those Nikons accompanied me on an African safari where I



This large fellow made an excellent cover photo for my children's book, *Being Elephant*. Shaba National Reserve, Kenya. Nikon F100, Fuji RDP-100 film, lens and shooting data not recorded.

shot over 100 rolls of film, and more than 5000 images. I published photos of elephant behavior in my children's picture book, *Being Elephant* (Amazon), and I've sold many other photos for stock. But processing all that film cost me a shocking \$1000, as much as I'd paid for one of the F100s. So when I transitioned to digital bodies, film and development were expenses I gladly shed.

My Nikon digital affair began with

the D100. Though primitive by today's standards, the digital format was a technological advance that stimulated

new ways of thinking about photography. The digital darkroom posed additional fresh challenges. I had kept many of the F-mount lenses I'd accumulated over the years, enhancing them as the need arose. For wildlife, I added a 300mm f/4 that served me well for many years. In the end, the D100 pleased me so much that I sold my F100s and left the need for a two-camera system in the digital dust.



This alligator was lurking near the shore in an Everglades National Park, Florida, inlet. The D100's digital format enabled me to easily convert the color original to B&W.

Nikon D100, 1/800 sec., f/6.3, at 200mm, ISO 200, lens not recorded.

Over the years, my choices of Nikon gear progressed as the

capabilities of the equipment grew. I could not resist the allure of the then new D2X, which served me well, despite its smaller DX format. I relied on it for several years.

Still, when the D7100 was announced, with its higher resolution sensor and more advanced features, I jumped at the chance to get one for myself. This, too, was a very capable camera, and with it I created many wonderful images.



A line of boats in Kennebunkport, Maine, harbor. The D810, with its larger sensor and FX format, was a major step up from the D7100 and it yielded sharper images with less grain.

Nikon D810, Nikon 28-300mm lens at 300mm, 1/400 sec., f/8.0, ISO 200, handheld.

But I was eager to get back to the FX format, I suppose because I had grown up in the days of 35mm film. So, when the D810 was released, I made the jump. That D810 was a great camera, and it accompanied me on numerous cross-country trips.

I've had a growing obsession with fine detail in my images, and for a few years I consorted with a Hasselblad and a couple of 4X5 cameras. But when Nikon released the D850, with its 45.7-megapixel sensor, I saw the chance to get medium format resolution in a DSLR, and I parted ways with the Hasselblad and 4X5 cameras. The D850 is very possibly the best DSLR ever made by anybody and was a dream to use.

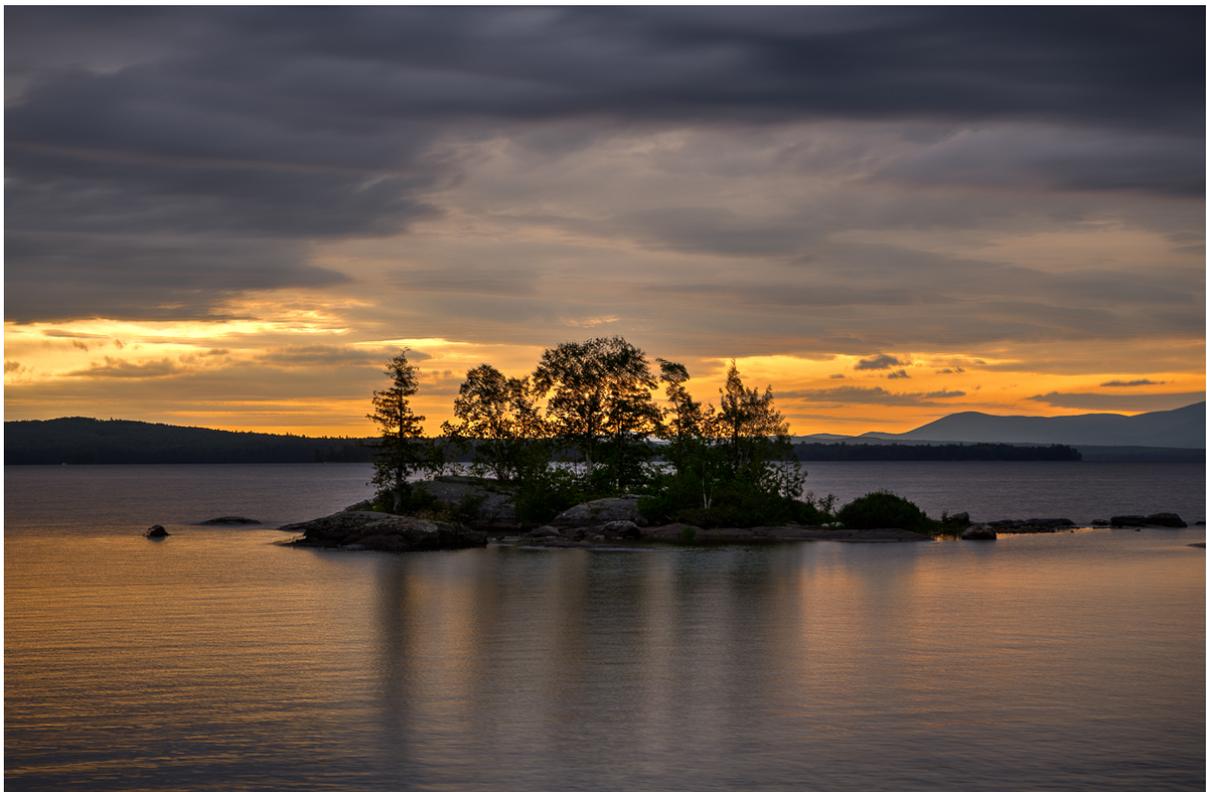
But when Nikon announced its first mirrorless bodies, I knew the technology was mature enough to change partners, and I dallied with a Z6 body. The ability to see in the optical viewfinder a live representation of the exposure I was setting delighted me. This feature, plus Live View and focus stacking, led me to abandon and replace my D850 with a Z7. I've happily relied on the Z7 and Z6 as my constant companions for both travels throughout the US



Above. Portrait of a wire fence in soft light. This image is a candidate for inclusion in my forthcoming book, *The Fences of Fauquier County*, and benefits from the Z7II's large sensor and high dynamic range. Nikon Z7II, Nikon Z 24-70 f/2.8 S lens at 49mm, 1/160 sec., f/8.0, ISO 400, handheld.

Left. The beautiful and famous Sidney Lanier Bridge in Brunswick, Georgia. A D7100 converted to infrared is my current choice for infrared photography. Nikon D7100 converted to infrared, Nikon 18-200mm lens at 55mm, 1/160 sec., f/4.8, ISO 100, tripod mounted.

Below. A small island in Moosehead Lake, Maine, at dawn, rendered in sharp detail by the D850's large sensor. Nikon D850, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8 lens at 70mm, 1/80 sec., f/7.1, ISO 400, tripod mounted.



and making images of local subjects.

Recently, I added a Z7II body to the marriage, and it's now my principal partner for landscape work. The other bodies in this ménage à trois are now devoted to macrophotography in my home studio and walk-about duty when I just need to have a camera with me, which of course is nearly always.

The excitement is now all about Nikon's new Z9. It promises to be exceptionally capable, a game-changer in many respects. After hearing all the ecstatic praise, I've been lusting to sweep up one of these beauties, and I have one coming soon.

My 35-year love affair with Nikon has been a rich and rewarding marriage. Holding my Nikons in my hands brings me immense joy; applying their capacity to create beautiful and satisfying images is an even greater source of satisfaction. In my heart I know this is a lasting relationship from which I need never stray. ###



A bumblebee collects pollen on a plant at the Bellevue Botanical Garden, Bellevue, Washington. This highly cropped image took full advantage of the Z7's large sensor and the new 105mm Z lens's amazing resolving capacity.

Nikon Z7, Nikon Z 105mm f/2.8 S lens, 1/640 sec., f/4.5, ISO 200, tripod mounted.

It is impossible to explain or comprehend the miracle of the eye and mind in such feats as anticipating a "decisive moment." We are concerned not only with a single aspect of the image, but with the complexity of the entire experience, a matter of the moment but also involving the realities of light, environment, and the fluid progress of perception from the first glance to release of the shutter.

Ansel Adams Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs, p. 156

--Courtesy of Norm Reid's Library of Quotations

On white space...

We're likely to have some like this from time to time because we do not suffer under the tyranny page limitations the way hard-copy publications do. We're going to let our words and pictures take the space they demand. So we're likely to come up with the odd half page or so from time to time. What should we do with this resource? Perhaps members could send us some of their work to be run on space-available basis. Maybe we should just leave it alone. What do you think?

The Editor