

# Telling a Story with Pictures

By Blair Evan Ball

With Memorial Day just passing, it congers up images of summer, water, vacations and fun. Can't you hear the song playing now...Schools out for summer; ah those were the days, to have the whole summer off, the freedom of time. Perfect time to tell your story with pictures. So what do you want to tell?

While technical aspects of taking a photo are important such as composition, lighting, rule of thirds, dodging, burning, printing...nothing brings about an emotional response more than a photo that tells a story. Let it move you either positively or negatively. While many of it is subjective and as they say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. A picture is truly sometimes worth a thousand words.

What does it say to you? Some people are just fascinated with capturing the moment. Take time to slow down, and enjoy what's around you. Next time...listen to the enthusiasm of a child as they tell you a personal story. What theme did it convey?

## Themes

When you purchased your new car, didn't you start to see all those same vehicles on the road? Why? A well know psychiatrist has coined the part of the brain that explains this...it is called the reticular activating system. *It would work the same way when you focus in on a particular theme to photograph.* Suddenly... out of nowhere appears the theme you were concentrating on. Start with a particular theme and see where it leads, then you can add other themes. Avoid the clutter, make it simple without a lot of distracting background elements that can confuse the viewer of what the story is trying to convey. So let's venture into what some themes might be.

- **Visual themes** - perhaps colors or shapes that come up again and again on a trip - for example a friend showed me his photos from a recent trip to the West that featured quite a few shots with red stone, blue sky, and stone patterns - very compelling.
- **Stylistic themes** - repetition of photographic techniques and styles. For example when members of the club went to Memphis Botanical Gardens to do macro. It included a series of macro shots of the different flora that was present in the springtime.
- **Locational themes** – re occurring photos from similar types of places. For example going on a trip to several cities you can decide to make 'markets' a theme in your shots on the trip. You can seek out and photograph markets in every city and town you visit. You will find it fascinating to see the similarities and differences between them.
- **Relational themes** - shots that focus upon a person or people over time. On a travel story this might document the moods of a person as they go

through the highs and lows of travel or could document the development of a relationship between friends, lovers, siblings etc over time.

What moves you, what are your passions', what moves your viewer and stirs their imagination? Take yourself to places in your past, or posit yourself into the future of what might be.

Get out there and create pictures that tell a story. Strive to create a body of work related to your theme by having 20-30 photos. Inspire yourself, move yourself to be, do and can. Let your imagination run. Remember when you were younger and you believed that you could do anything and created your own world sometimes, without thought of criticism or ridicule. Time has a tendency to dampen our spirits and stifle our creativity. Make a decision today to throw caution to the wind and step out. Put your own personal brand to what you do and how you do it. As the old saying goes, if you believe you can... you can.