

Apogee Photo Magazine

# FIRST CLASS PHOTOGRAPHY: LESSON 36 - "Ideas"

by Willis T Bird

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I've often been asked where I get my ideas for the photos I take. Since I've been shooting for over forty years, I have quite a collection of images of varied subjects. I've taken photos of nearly everything under the sun—and finding a subject may be just that simple. Why do so many people take photos of sunsets and sunrises? If you think about it, the answer is obvious. If the day isn't cloudy and you don't live somewhere

exotic like the very northern or southern parts of our planet, you're going to have two of these opportunities every day. You may not be nearly as lucky with other subjects.

Where you are and when you're there make a lot of difference in the opportunities you have. For example, a person living in the area around the Rocky Mountains will have more outdoor subject matter to work with than someone settled in the farming belt (the farming belt is where I currently reside). However, I'm happy to tell you that location doesn't have to limit your work. Do you enjoy sports? Then, look in your local newspaper for football, basketball, or baseball games. Hockey, soccer, tennis, table tennis or other unique sports may happen in your area. Even less active sports such as chess matches can provide very good shots of people concentrating as they do nowhere else. For the more active among you, you can search for track-and-field events or motor-cross...or bike races. For the big kids, there are automobile races. In fact, although they aren't classified as sports, you might find great subject matter at fashion shows, beauty contests, or dog shows. You could explore the colors that brighten local fairs on Ferris-wheels and roller coasters. You could check out swimming contests. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.



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Photographers who prefer fewer people as well as less motion and noise may gravitate toward the beauty of flowers in the spring and summer. Colorful, shapely plants can be found around your house, in nurseries, cemeteries, botanical gardens, and decorating the homes of friends and neighbors who have a green thumb. If you don't want to fight the bugs outside, you can bring clippings inside to permit you to take shots near a window in air-conditioned comfort.



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Nature always offers a wide selection of subjects. Fascinating images can be found in the wilds of parks, wildlife reserves, woods, or even zoos near you. (To see past articles on this subject, browse the Archives section of Apogeephoto.com.) Take your camera to a local park and see what you can discover. You may be surprised. People are always interesting and, when they have their pets with them, your possibilities double. Children playing on swings or other play structures also present good opportunities.

If you're observant, you can find small wildlife subjects in your own yard. Lizards, butterflies, and mosquito hawks are a few of the subjects that may be awaiting your discovery. If you have bird feeders or a bird bath, you may attract some beautiful flying subjects to fill the frame of your camera. If you have a macro setting, move close to see the world from another perspective. Ants become

subjects. Toadstools become great temples.



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If you're interested in public service within your community, you may be interested in the following ideas:

**First:** For a school project, take a look around your community and surrounding area to see what historical structures may exist. These could be anything from buildings to homes to old barns. More of their kind disappears daily; at least the images should be saved. You might be able to talk a local bank, library, or government agency into showing your work when it's finished. Do your homework and get as much information as you can on each structure. Your final product will be a service and of interest to many succeeding generations. The local newspaper may even be interested in doing a piece on your project.

**Second:** Contact any local nursing home about your giving a slide show (35mm on screen or digital on big screen TV). The elderly often love seeing beautiful images they can no longer seek out for themselves. They're usually very appreciative of anyone bringing these scenes to them. Make yourself a little script you can use to introduce the show. If you can include music, that would be a plus. You can easily add music using a slide show program or a portable recorder. The facility may even have a pianist who would be willing to accompany your photos. Popular subjects are flowers and animals. Use your imagination. If you can produce your own show, you can brighten many folks' day--including your own.

As you can see, there are many opportunities for photos in your very own home town. You merely need to decide what you're most interested in shooting. Once you've decided, do your homework and prepare a plan. You'll want your final products to have a point such as conservation or the beauty of nature. Once you think about the problem, you'll come up with ideas of your own. Write them down in a little booklet, so you don't forget. You'll be planning for more photographic fun now and in the future.

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