

# FOCUS

<http://www.nwhpc.com>

Newsletter of the Northwest Houston Photo Club Volume 24 Number 3

**March 2008**

**President's Message by Larry Belt**



## A FEW WORDS FROM THE TOP

Greetings Fellow Photographers!

We have just put the second month of the quarter behind us and already things are taking shape. The field trips we've had and the upcoming ones have been stellar to say the least. Competition has brought us many outstanding images. It is great to see the participation we're getting in this area of club.

Wow! Club membership is really booming. I would like to welcome Joan Peck, Debbie Henderson, Cal Lenderman, Jerry Pierson, Mark Uffindell and Judith Williams. Let's give these new members a hand. It was great to see Diana Montoya back in the fold the last meeting.

Lastly I would like to thank our Program Chair and his able Assistant on the very energizing and information packed program from Ross Benton, Kudos y'all!

In parting I would like to remind you that you are the backbone of our membership. Individuals like you make this club what it is. Please contribute in some way. Attend a meeting or an outing. You just might like it. Now, get out there and burn up some pixels!

Remember we are actually a Gourmet Food Club with a photography habit!

## Year Winners - 2007

**Photographer of the Year Award** ..... **Terry Connors**

**Best Color Print for 2007** ..... **Mefeora Montessori by Alan Wilson**

**Best B&W Print for 2007** ..... **Sockets by John Edinburgh**

**Best Overall 2007**..... **Sprint for the Finish by Terry Connors**

## NWHPC Executive for 2008

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### **Bylaws**

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## Assigned Categories for 2008 (Next Category is Bold Italics) – Aaraj Thyagaraj

Note: OSB categories means Outside the Box. We titled it Out of the Box last year which caused some confusion.

Outside the Box should indicate creativity or a different way of looking at the subject. Good Luck!

### ***Categories for 2008 Competition***

#### ***Mar: Harmony***

April: **Curves**

April (OSB): **Pattern**

May: **Lone Star Flowers** (Inspired by the scheduled activity on wild flowers blue bonnet trip)

June: **Horizon** (Inspired by the scheduled activity trip to Big bend)

June (OSB): **Glitter**

July: **Junkyard** (Inspired by the scheduled activity trip to Brenham Old Car Salvage)

Aug: **Texas History** (Inspired by the scheduled activity trip to Battle of San Jacinto)

Sep: **Sam Houston Statue** (Objective: to inspire members to shoot same object, to see how differently each of us sees it. There might also be an activity being planned for the inspiration)

Sep (OSB): **Blur**

Oct: **Wild Life**

Nov: **Water fall**

## Competition Results for 2008 – Aaraj Thyagaraj

Results from February's club contest.

### ***Open***

1<sup>st</sup> - John Edinburgh – High Rise #2

2<sup>nd</sup> – Jim Fife – Future Chief  
3<sup>rd</sup> – Cindy Rogers – Rudy the Oragutan  
3<sup>rd</sup> – Jackie Richardson – An Old Mill and Swimming Hole

#### ***Assigned - Rocks***

1<sup>st</sup> – Jan Ward – Box Canyon  
2<sup>nd</sup> – Larry Belt – Hot Rocks  
3<sup>rd</sup> – Jim Fife – Rocks to Riches

#### ***Participants***

John Edinburgh, Jim Fife, Cindy Rogers, Jackie Richardson, Jan Ward, Larry Belt, Alan Wilson, Betty Lieu, David Bahn, Debbie Henderson, Gary Woodard, Jerry Klumpp, Leslie Stessel, Mark Uffindell, Michael Gelardi, Sherry Aubin, Terry Connors, Graden Harger,

### **Portfolio Challenge – 2008 by Jan Ward and Sherry Aubin**

## **What Do I Photograph for My Portfolio?**

This is a question I hear frequently. The following is an approach and direction that will help you if you're willing to try it. Over the past four years, a number of our members have participated in the Portfolio Challenge and their comments have verified to me the success and value of the program. Such comments as:

*"I have done 4 of these portfolio challenges so far, and while I started off before the first one as a non-believer, I quickly realized the value in this procedure and have become a big supporter of this process. I think I told Cindi Rogers before this one started that after doing this, she would realize that this is probably the best thing we do as a club to help our members grow." - Terry Connors*

*"It's just tremendous that you could get a half a dozen skilled photographers to come and spend an evening showing us how it's done. I'm still trying to digest the suggestions. We'll see if they gave me enough to give you leaders for "photographer of the year" a run for your money next year...." - Alan Wilson*

*"This is my first year of participation in the Portfolio Challenge and I have to say that I was highly impressed by the exhibit. It was amazing and the photos were terrific. All participants really put their all into it. Thank you Jim for such a wonderful job of putting this together! It was a fantastic learning experience."*

*"Portfolio Challenge is definitely a part of our program that all members should take advantage of and hopefully next year, we'll have over 20 participants." - Betty Lieu*

*"I joined this club less than a year ago. The biggest favor I did to myself in photography. I can't begin to tell how much grateful I am, having gotten the opportunity I got just the last two days. Such a great event." - Aaraj*

There are a number of existing and new members who have yet to experience the exhilaration of growth, the satisfaction of accomplishment and the learning opportunities that this program affords. This discussion is for you.

When you make the decision (I hope all of you do.) to commit yourself to this program, do so but not half heartedly as; "OK I'll do it because most of the other members in the club are doing it and I don't want to be odd man out." Do it with a firm and complete commitment to glean the maximum possible benefit from the program. I can "guarantee" that you will be very pleased, not only with what you learn, but with the dramatic improvement in all your future photographic endeavors and the feeling of time well spent.

I have heard some of our club members say, “I don’t have a creative bone in my body.” “I don’t know or have a topic or theme on which to do a portfolio.” Whoa... I don’t want to hear this from any one in this club. You joined this club because you are a photographer and a photography enthusiast. This says you have a visual acuity and the desire to create visually. See... now I have you – by your own admission you are visually creative – by joining this club you have admitted that you have the desire to create. Now exercise your gray matter, get creative and turn that desire into images. The club gives you an opportunity to practice your creativity every month in the club’s print competition and particularly in the assigned category.

Still stuck as to what to do or where to start? Take a pen and pad and write down those subjects that interest you – in broad general terms. You can become more specific later once you make a selection as to the area of interest you would like to address in your portfolio. Examples would be, land or seascapes, people, still lifes, abstracts, etc.

Once you have taken this first step and made your selection, the rest will become easier. It is very important to remember that you are doing this and participating in this program for you and you alone. You are not trying to impress others, be they club members, family and friends or a reviewer. You are in it for you, your growth and edification. Consequently, select and photograph subject matter that interests you the most. This is not a competition. The more you are interested in your subject matter, the more you will understand it and delve into it. Your portfolio will reflect this interest in its excellence of execution.

Liking and understanding your selected topic is critical. You as a photographer understand the camera and how to use it, as a writer understands how to use a pencil, pen or keyboard. That being said, would a writer write a paper or book on brain surgery or quantum mechanics if he did not understand and know the subject or have an interest in the subject? Of course not! Then why would you take your camera and attempt to photograph subject matter that you know little to nothing about, have little interest in and expect it to impress others. You shouldn’t! It’s a formula for certain failure. The results will be unsatisfactory, you will learn little that satisfies you and you will have a feeling that you have labored in futility.

This is the result you can expect if the subject you select for your portfolio is one that you feel will impress others but not you. This is Your hobby, Your interest, so photograph that which interests You. By doing so you will receive a satisfaction that will sustain you not only in this endeavor but also in future efforts.

Once you have selected your general topic, you need to narrow it down and be more specific. Example: If you selected landscapes or seascapes, you might narrow it down to pastoral or mountains for landscapes or the gulf coast for seascapes. From here you should narrow the scope of your portfolio some more to the Grand Tetons or the Maroon Bells or Galveston Bay or Padre Island, etc. Select that which interests you the most. With a subject like people you could narrow it down to rodeo cowboys, street people, entertainers such as singers and the list goes on. Again whatever interests you. Usually the more specific you can be on your theme selection, the more impact your images will have to the viewer.

Don’t be concerned if you start on a theme and it doesn’t work out. Go ahead and change it – don’t force it. On several portfolios I have changed my theme two or three times until I was able to settle on some topic with which I felt comfortable and could really sink my teeth into.

You need to understand that this whole program is a learning process that is tailored for each individual who elects to participate. It is not a competition; it is not an assignment that you must comply with a predetermined end product or set of parameters. It doesn’t even have to result in an end product that you initially set out to accomplish. The objective is in the doing - what you have learned and how you have grown in the process. Believe me, it isn’t going to come out perfect and exactly as you initially perceived it.

I have attempted several portfolios that I really wanted to work through to fruition and found them to be much more difficult and time consuming than I had anticipated. I did not give up on them; I just had to put

them aside for the moment so I could work on a theme that fit the existing time constraints. Don't become discouraged and don't give up. Be willing to shift gears if necessary, but "Stick With It!"

Think of the whole Portfolio Challenge like a supersaturated solution you may have worked on in chemistry lab. A supersaturated solution is one in which the saturation point, a point where no more material will dissolve, has been exceeded. This can occur because the saturation point becomes higher as the temperature of the solution is increased. When you dissolve the material at a higher temperature and then cool the solution, the material doesn't crystallize out because the molecules don't know how. They require something to get them started, a seed crystal or a grain of dust or even a sudden scratch or tap on the surrounding glass. Whatever the catalyst, a star of crystalline material appears in the solution and then grows suddenly and radiantly until it fills the entire vessel. Where before there was only clear liquid, there is now a mass so solid that the vessel can be turned upside down and nothing would come out.

This is how your portfolio should work. I can attest to this because it has happened to me on more than one occasion. It's virtually like magic. What catalyst in your portfolio causes this to happen – what components have to come together to cause this solidification of images and thought, you ask? It is nothing earth shaking or exotic. You already know and have the answer. The question is - are you prepared to do what it takes to work through your theme, assemble your images and write your artist statement in concert with your images? If you do the above, you will end up with a supersaturated solution (your images) but your images don't know how to crystallize out into your portfolio because they, like the molecules, don't know how. Your artist statement is the catalyst, that causes the star of crystalline material that appears in the solution (your images) and then the magic happens.

You will very likely find that you will have to adjust your images as you put your thoughts and portfolio direction (artist statement) together. It will become more obvious what images do or do not belong as you develop your artist statement.

As I mentioned earlier, the objective is in the doing - what you have learned and how you have grown in the process. Are you motivated enough to enter the arena, try, fall down, get bloody, get back up and try again until you succeed? If you are so motivated, you will only be cheating yourself if you don't participate in this program. One of the best parts is – It's Free! Falling down and getting back up again is where you learn and expand your abilities. To paraphrase Thomas Edison; "It took me 2000 attempts to develop the light bulb. I didn't fail 2000 times – I learned 2000 ways not to make a light bulb." - humorous and poignant.

**WARNING:** Do not wait until the last month to six weeks to try and put together your portfolio in a crash program effort. You are defeating the overall scope, intent and purpose of the portfolio challenge program. The time to start is now – February / March. Go for it. This is a wonderful opportunity. Isn't this why you joined a photography organization – to have this kind of opportunity? It's your hobby – your gain or loss. We are available for any questions or help:

Jim Fife - 281-493-1944 or e-mail: fifejim@aol.com,  
Jan Ward – 281-537-5050 or e-mail: jangrauward@yahoo.com and  
Sherry Aubin – 281-374-7296 or e-mail: sasunshinelady@comcast.net.  
Several of you have availed yourself of this offer in past years.

Good luck, good shooting and see the light,

Jim Fife  
02-12-08

## Program by David Bahn – March 4, 7:00 pm

The program this month will be by Colin Zeldt of the Houston Photographic Society. He has found a service online that will take your images uploaded and produce a bound hardcover book for either sale or gift...all this at a reasonable price.

Join us to hear all the details and what Colin has learned and is willing to pass along.

## Activities by Jerry Klumpp

First I would like to mention the proposed trip to Big Bend Park in May, probably the week-end of the 17th and 18th. I forgot to say anything about it at our last meeting, but if we want to have such a trip then we need to start planning it soon and making reservations. As I mentioned at the Jan 2 meeting, it will most likely take a total of 4 days. Leave on a Friday morning and return on Monday evening. That will give us 2 full days of shooting. You need to be thinking about this because at the next meeting I will check and see if we have enough interested in going.

### *March*

We will be shooting the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Parade which is on Saturday March 1st. It usually starts around 10am on Memorial Dr. We will gather for breakfast at a time and place to named at a later date.

### *April*

This is our month to shoot wildflowers in the Chapel Hill area. I will probably wait to post the exact date depending on the availability of flowers, but it will most likely be the second or third week-end of the month. Also this month on the 26th, we will go to the San Jacinto Monument to shoot a re-enactment of the Battle of San Jacinto. I don't have the time yet, but I will post it as soon I find out.

### *May*

The Art Car Parade is on Saturday the 10th, which is interesting to say the least, and if we have enough members interested in the Big Bend trip then we will go there on the week-end of the 17th and 18th for 2 days shooting.

### *June*

This month's activity will be shooting at an auto salvage yard, possibly the one outside Brenham. I'll know the exact location later.

### *July-December*

Pending

## *Other Events by Houston Camera Exchange*

### [Houston Hands On with John Woodward](#)

Mar. 15, 2008

### [Houston Skyline Studio - Producing Quality Images](#)

Mar. 29 & 30

Houston Hands On with Jim DiVitale - *Details TBA*

Apr. 19, 2008

### [Houston Skyline Studio - Creating the Glamour Image](#)

May 10 & 11, 2008  
Houston Hands On with Hanson Fong - *Details TBA*

May 17, 2008

[Houston Skyline Studio - Portrait Lighting](#)

Jun. 21, 2008

[Houston Skyline Studio - Location Shooting](#)

Jun. 21 & 22, 2008

Houston Hands On with Janice Wendt - *Detail TBA*

Jul. 19, 2008

[Houston Skyline Studio - Lighting the Nude Figure](#)

Aug. 16, 2008

[Houston Skyline Studio - Basic Studio Lighting](#)

Aug. 30 or 31, 2008

Houston Hands On with Doug Box - *Details TBA*

Sep. 25 & 26, 2008

Houston Hands On with Jim DiVitale - *Details TBA*

Oct. 25 & 26, 2008

Houston Hands On with Doug Box - *Details TBA*

Dec. 13 & 14, 2008

Houston Hands On with Tony Corbell - *Details TBA*

## Membership – Graden Harger

### *WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!*

We were glad to welcome Joan Peck as a new member in January. Since she had visited with us several times before joining, she apparently decided membership in Comity Central (Our competition commentaries) is worth the annual dues. We also want to welcome new members joining during February: Debbie Henderson, Cal Lenderman, Jerry Pierson, previous visitor Mark Uffindell, Robert Wall, and Judith Williams.

Also during January and February, we had visitors Ed Howze and Paul Foulger. We hope they'll accept our invitation for a follow-up visit.

**ARRAJ THYAGARAJ**, member since 2007 (H) 281-807-9813  
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**PREFERRED MEDIA:** Digital / "35 mm."

**EQUIPMENT:** Nikon N80, Nikon D70S, Nikon 80-400 mm, Nikon 28-105 mm, Sigma 70-300 mm, Nikon 50 mm., 28-200 mm. Nikon 50 mm.

**SUBJECT INTERESTS:** Scenics, nature.

**PHOTO ACTIVITY INTERESTS:** Shooting, printing.

**EXPERIENCE:** Aaraj has been enjoying photography as a serious hobby for only a few years. His forté is outdoor photography at photogenic locations – near and far ("Have camera; will travel").

Aaraj is serving the club as Competition Chair in 2008.

**BIO:** Originally from Kerala state (“God’s own country”) on the West coast of the southern tip of India, Aaraj moved to Houston in 2001 and in 2005. He is primarily a computer engineer at Compaq Computer Corporation, later Hewell-Packard. He and wife Smitha have twin daughters, born in 2007, Kasia and Ansa.

**JOHN EDINBURGH**, member since 2007 (H) 281-370-9398  
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**PREFERRED MEDIA:** Digital, prints

**EQUIPMENT:** Nikon D200, 18-200 DX VR, SB800, Minolta A1, X-700, Epson R1800.  
Gitso and RRS accessories.

**SUBJECT INTERESTS:** Nature, “things,” out of the ordinary.

**ACTIVITY INTERESTS:** Shooting, processing, final product.

**EXPERIENCE:** John Edinburgh exemplifies the “thinking man’s” photographer, i.e., his images show unhurried pre-capture deliberation, and precise execution. As noted in his subject interest, “things,” he has the ability to capture “the essence of objects.” His photographic interest started in 1984 with a Minolta X-700. He switched to digital in 1998 and presently uses a Nikon D200. Having adequately met his current equipment needs, his emphasis has shifted, recently, toward philosophical considerations, for which he partly credits his activities and associations in NWHPC. As would be expected, interacting with John elicits quotable comments related to his photography: “I find it a challenge to see things overlooked by the casual observer . . . I’m convinced printing and matting images forces me to improve my skills . . . I have much to learn about the art of seeing . . . It’s a fun trip with no end in sight.”

John currently assists Jerry Klumpp on the club Activities Committee.

**BIO:** Although well-traveled, John is Texan through and through (His great-great-grandfather participated in the battle of San Jacinto!). Though born in Corpus Christi, he has lived in Houston since age five. After graduating from U of H, he taught computer science and electronics there for none years. He then did programming, hardware development, and data acquisition for machinery monitoring and process control in the petrochemical industry. John is an avid backpacker, having hiked on 4 and 5 day trips throughout the Western U.S., Canada, and Alaska. He also toured the U.S. and Canada extensively (250,000 miles!) by motorcycle for 25 years but has declared “no more.”

## Articles of Interest

### [Make the Best of Bad Weather - 6 Challenges for Photographers](#)

*The following post on bad weather photography is by San Francisco based photographer [Jim M. Goldstein](#). Learn more about him at the end of this post.*

The biggest secret in photography, that isn't really so secret when you think about it, is the art of [photography is all about light](#). The more artistic photographers often like to say photography is about painting with light. Strangely many people when they first start out in photography consider good light mid-day sun with clear blue skies. When I was first bit by the photography bug I suffered from this misconception, but quickly saw the light. Sorry I couldn't resist the pun :) No matter what genre of photography piques your interest bad weather has a transforming effect on most subjects. To take advantage of this transforming effect photographers have to overcome a few challenges first.



### Challenges facing photographers

#### **Challenge #1: Over coming our comfort zone of staying at home/indoors when the weather looks menacing.**

One of the more counter-intuitive things for a photographer to do is leave their warm home or car in pursuit of a dramatic scene with bad weather in route or in place. If you think about it though counter-intuitive actions are what make some of the most compelling images. Case in point is photojournalism. Photojournalists make their living going into the face of conflict and/or disaster. I would argue that all photographers could learn from this tactic... with in reason. You shouldn't take unnecessary risks or put others in harms way in the pursuit of a photo.

#### **Challenge #2: Not looking ahead to track weather conditions for photo opportunities**

For a few lucky folks great photos fall out of the sky. For most everyone else getting a great photo requires planning. When it comes to using weather to add impact to your photographs a little research will go a long way. Pre-planning/monitoring is great, but it



doesn't end there. As you're out and about you should be monitoring the weather conditions to improve the odds of getting your shot and also to ensure your own safety.

**Challenge #3: Failing to recognize how weather can set mood to a scene**

This initially can be tricky as it takes some time to train your eye to consciously see "mood". My recommendation is look at a lot of photos on Flickr and take note of the weather. Ask yourself what mood it brought to the scene. Think about your image observations and apply it to the way you view your subjects while on a shoot.



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TURNING TIDE JIM M. GOLDSTEIN - JMG-GALLERIES.COM

**Challenge #4: Being in the right place at the right time**

Being in the right place at the right time is seldom about luck. To do this you'll need to look at past photo shoots as scouting missions. A particular location photographed with good weather conditions will look completely different when the weather is bad. Familiarity with an area before photographing in bad weather will allow you to get into position quicker and with a little luck allow you to minimize your exposure to the elements.



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YOSEMITE SUNSET BREAKING LIGHT JIM M. GOLDSTEIN - JMG-GALLERIES.COM

**Challenge #5: Always being prepared**

[The art of being prepared](#) is critical and goes beyond tracking weather or being familiar with a particular location. Being prepared entails having the right gear, having your gear ready to go, having non-photographic gear such as GPS, umbrella or a cell phone and taking precautionary steps to buddy up with a friend or tell people where you're going. Being prepared is as much about getting the shot you want as it is about returning home safely.



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## So what is it about bad weather that gives it its transforming power?

Light and shadow are the first qualities that come to mind. Various weather conditions can rapidly change how a scene is lit. Clouds can diffuse the sun for even lighting, the sun can poke through the clouds for spotlight effects, rain can create reflections, etc. Shadows on the other hand can enable the isolation of a subject, create visually interesting layers to a scene, form leading lines, frame your subject, etc.

Contrast, the play of light and dark against each other, can add another level of complexity to a scene. Scenes that contain a good degree of contrast, say for example from bands of clouds in the sky, can be used to highlight or isolate your subject. Conversely foggy conditions can reduce contrast creating completely different atmosphere to a scene.

Brightness of a scene will impact the length of time needed to expose your subject. Brightness will also influence your choice in using artificial lighting to illuminate your subject or not. For longer exposures bad weather provides an opportunity too highlight motion, while the use of artificial lighting will enable you to create dramatic highlights to accentuate your subject

Dimension is part of our everyday visual experience. Photography being a 2-dimensional medium requires a creative approach to composition to trick our viewer's brain. To do this including compositional elements that are familiar and provide both perspective and scale are critical. Clouds, fog banks, sunbeams, etc. in conjunction with subjects in your image can easily lay the groundwork to create dimension in your photographs.

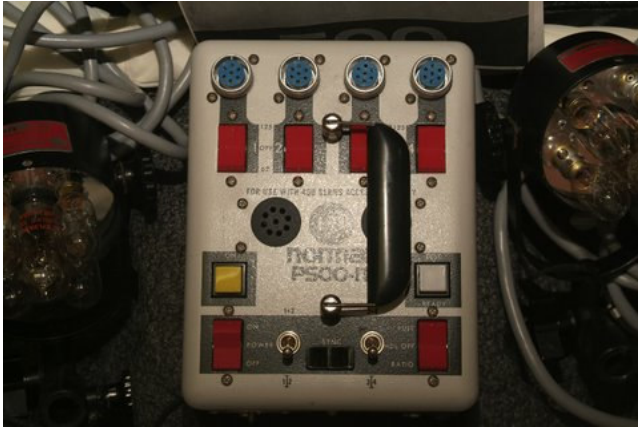
If you play your cards right managing these challenges correctly and looking to leverage the transforming qualities of bad weather in your work you'll find the photographic world is your oyster. Scenes that you otherwise would have ignored become great photographic opportunities. Most importantly your images will gain impact to wow your viewing audience.

*This post was written by Jim M. Goldstein. Jim's landscape, nature, travel and photojournalism photography is featured on his web site [JMG-Galleries.com](http://JMG-Galleries.com), and [blog](#). In addition Jim's podcast "[EXIF and Beyond](#)" features photographer interviews and chronicles the creation of some of his images.*



## For Sale!!

Hi, anyone interested in a 2 light system by Norman? It has a 500 watt battery pack, 2 lights, 2 umbrellas, 2 stands and the carrying case. I am asking \$400.00 for it. I also have the instruction book. It is a Norman P500-M. Thanks ,Leslie



Next Meeting  
March 4, 2008  
**Colin Zeldt - Easy Book Publishing**  
(Old Building)  
Start: 7:00 PM Sharp.