

Capture the fleeting moments of childhood



Michael Nagler (left) and pal Chris Porter don't appear to be posing for Michael's dad. The camera angle is low, and back-lighting gives the halo effect around the boys' heads.

Did you know that children are the most photographed of all subjects? Only a photograph can provide an enduring record of the growth and activities of a child.

Because these pictures will grow more meaningful and priceless as time goes by, the photographer must use the utmost care and attention to portray the precious times of childhood.

Most important in photographing children is capturing the spirit of childhood. Infants, of course, are unaware of the camera and their "spirit" is easily obtained.

But as children reach the age of four or five, they become very aware of the presence of a camera and do not respond well to posing directions. Stiff poses and artificial expressions will tend to replace a natural look, and it is only after the camera is put away that the child's naturalness returns.

But if a child is enjoying a toy or an activity of his own choosing, he becomes unaware of the camera and capturing the child's "spirit" will be easy.

So the first and most important thing to remember in successful child photography is to concentrate on candid pictures.

The unplanned and the unexpected provide the opportunity for that exceptional photograph of your child. The objective is to capture the fleeting expression and momentary action rather than to attempt to pose the situation.

Here are some related tips to help you get better shots of your children:

- Use a telephoto lens. By using a medium telephoto lens (about 100-200 mm), you can keep your distance and not intrude on your child's activity. He may not even know you are there.

- Use an assistant. A helper will be a source of distraction and can coax a happy, natural expression from the child.



- Get on the child's level. Lower the level of the camera - even get down on the floor! Children live in a world of giant adults and huge surroundings. By getting low, you can capture a child's perspective and greatly improve your pictures.

- Use outdoor lighting. Overcast days provide the best lighting for "people" pictures. The lighting is soft, and harsh shadows are eliminated. On sunny days position yourself so that the sun is behind your subject and use a flash to fill in the shadows.

- Use indoor lighting. Natural light from a window can be very pleasing. Or, use a bounce flash to get softer, more even illumination.

- Use fast film. For outdoor candids, use a fast film. This will enable you to preset the camera at a small lens opening to increase depth of field. Also, set the camera at a fast shutter speed to be ready to catch a fleeting expression or freeze a child's leap in air.

By photographing children naturally you'll be able to capture the spirit of youth that your family and friends will enjoy for many years to come.

Got a photo question? Write to Monte Nagler, 6916 Alderley Way, West Bloomfield 48303. His one-man exhibit is at Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn until April 6.

3 little girls 3 - down the church aisle

Three little girls. Three. Every schoolday morning just as the clock's hands marked 8:15, the bouncing 6-year-old identical triplets would prance down the church aisle for mass.

The last individual thing they did in life was their moment of birth. Once they joined hands, they never let go.

My father would watch them from his vantage point in the organ loft. With impeccable timing, Daddy would shape his bubble gum to blow a gigantic bubble the instant they turned to look up, much to the consternation of the sisters who instructed the children in proper etiquette.

Daddy was the Peter Pan among church organists, as much of a kid as those seated downstairs in the church.

The morning the bubble burst, veiling Daddy's face in gum, the triplets collapsed in each other's arms, their laughter ringing throughout the church



Jocelyn Krieger

and sending the nuns scurrying to chastise both Daddy and the giggling children.

OCCASIONALLY, the triplets would skip up the stairs to the organ loft to chuckle over a knock-knock joke Daddy would whisper or watch wide-

eyed as his fingers would glide over the organ keyboard.

After school, the trio could be seen, hands glued, jumping over sidewalk cracks on their way home.

Whenever they chose to lolligag, sharing deep, dark secrets, the two girls walking on the outside would always incline their head to rest on the center sister's shoulders. Together. Always together.

THEN CAME the summer when polio still stalked the streets searching for unprotected victims; the summer when iron lungs no longer appeared in the newspapers as current events, yet people hesitated to obtain the new vaccine.

Somewhere that summer, polio found three little girls. As always, together.

I stood beside Daddy in the organ loft the morning two tiny white caskets were gradually moved down the aisle. His voice broke continuously as

Daddy attempted to sing the Mass of the Angels. He couldn't bear to look downstairs, so Daddy sat behind the organ during the service, his face buried in his hands.

"Why?" Daddy questioned. "What's going to happen to the little one left all alone? How will she ever live without the others?"

Daddy wasn't in church the morning his question was answered. A severe heart attack had kept him bed-ridden for several months, and I was sitting at the organ in his place.

It was 8:15 on a schoolday morning when I saw her. Slowly, painfully she moved down the aisle, her crippled legs encased in steel braces. Her small body lifting itself laboriously on the crutches.

One little girl. One.

Jocelyn Krieger is a freelance writer, music teacher and actress in broadcast commercials.

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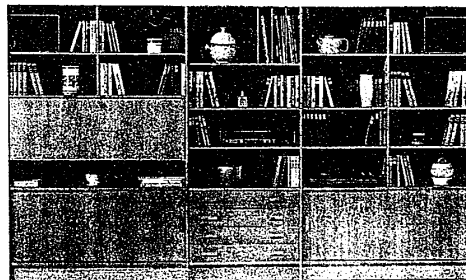
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