Monte Nagler took this picture at Bangkok's Grand Palace. It's an awesome place to photograph.

Asia is exotic feast for the camera

Focus on Photography

Monte Nagler

Looking for an unusual, exotic place to go...full of photographic opportunities and relatively inexpensive to travel through? Well, I recently visited Thailand and it has my strongest endorsement.

Asia has always fascinated me and having enjoyed photographic trips to China and Korea, Thailand was a natural choice.

We started in the North at Chiang Rai, near the "Golden Triangle" where Burma, Laos and Thailand touch at a common point. Photo ops are plentiful here with choices ranging from picturesque long-tail boats to most interesting people living in hilltop tribal villages. This is where the "longneck" women, as well as other interesting people, make their homes. By the way, the people in Thailand are very friendly and cooperative especially when it comes to having their pictures taken. Here you'll want a telephoto lens so you can move in tight and capture all the character in faces. An 85mm to 200mm lens will do fine.

Moving south, we stopped at Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city. Here great scenery abounds and we began to see rice paddy workers and some amazing Wats (temples).

Further south, we spent some time photographing Sukhothai, a grouping of temples from ancient times. Here you'll want a wide-angle lens to get more in the viewfinder and take advantage of the increased depth-of-field afforded by wide-angles.

Next on the itinerary was Phuket and surroundings, Thailand's southern islands. Coastal scenes including palm trees and other tropical subjects await your camera.

We concluded the trip in Bangkok, Thailand's capitol. It's a big city...lots of noise and traffic but the Grand Palace alone is worth the chaos of Bangkok.

By the way, a side trip to Angkorwat in neighboring Cambodia is truly amazing and loaded with photographic potential.

As in all travel photography, pack camera equipment lightly, but wisely. You'll want lenses from 28mm to 200mm which can easily be accommodated in one good zoom lens. 200 ASA film should get you by and remember, NEVER place film in checked luggage...it will be ruined! Use lead bags, or better still, ask for visual inspections at security stations. The new TSA inspectors are very cooperative.

Don't leave that tripod home. A light-weight, yet sturdy one is easy to pack and you'll be glad you took it.

So next time you're deciding where to go overseas, consider Thailand. It's a feast for your camera!

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave a message for him at (734) 953-2047.

WHERE CAN I FIND?

Through reader feedback, this interactive feature is dedicated to helping readers locate retail merchandise that's difficult to find. If where a product is sold or service is available, call (248) 901-2555 and leave a message with your name and phone number. Please be patient about your requests and feedback; we receive an overwhelming number of phone calls. Also, please spell any uncommon items. If you don't see information about your request, we couldn't find it. Requests are published twice.

WHAT WE FOUND

– Blazo's lemon meringue pie can be purchased at the Lunch Time Deli on Wayne & Cherry Hills roads in Westland.

– Sander's Bumpy cake can be found in the freezer (at different times) at the Value Center Market at 6 Mile and Inkster roads in Livonia.

– Beef ribs can be found at Tony Roma's restaurant in the Laurel Park Mall in Livonia, (6 Mile Road).

–Old greeting cards can be mailed to St. Jude's Children's Ranch Box 501100 Boulder City, NV. 89006.

– Adolph's no sodium unseasoned can be purchased at Value Center market in Redford at 6 Mile & Inkster roads in Livonia.

– The Cinch 2-1 cleaner is sold in the Kroger shopping center at Chicago & Telegraph roads in Livonia.

FIND AND SEARCH

– A reader has a Singer sewing machine and supplies to donate to a charity or organization.

– An organization or company who can donate poly-fill to make Sojourn Bears. Made to distribute to cancer survivors or cancer patients. Contact jcweigel@ameritech.net, (248) 473-1398 or www.jmjgifts.com/SojournBears.html

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

– A store that sells Sennet Sweet Shop chocolate covered rum cherries for Mike.

– A Vietnamese restaurant in the metro Detroit area for Jocelyn.

– A store that sells 100 percent whole wheat hamburger and/or hot dog buns for Jerry.

– A company who does design work to change the outside of a house for Kevin.

– A company that can restore an old trunk for Tina of Bloomfield Hills.

– A store that sells Imagine Love Peace & Happiness formerly sold at Bath & Body Works for Cornelia.

– Someone to complete a crocheted bedspread for Mary.

– A store that sells Bonnie Bell bronzing gel for Lillian.

- Compiled by Sandi Jarackas

Wall Street colors tale of loss, living

ALL I COULD GET
By Scott Lasser, Vintage Contemporaries, $12

BY VICTORIA DIAZ
CORRESPONDENT

There has to be something more to life than a pre-fab house in the Colorado mountains, a wife, a family, an old truck that's held together with duct tape, and constant, ever-growing debt.

Victoria Diaz

At least, that's how 30-year-old Barry Schwartz feels about it. And because of these feelings, he makes up his mind one day to turn his life around.

He will uproot his family, take the bull by the horns, and head for a career on Wall Street.

Five years later, sure enough, he's trading U.S. Treasury bonds, and starting to make a showing.

As it happens, his climb has just begun.

But so, too, has his downfall.

If you're looking to get acquainted with Wall Street and its ways in the closing days of the twentieth century, you could do worse than this fast-moving, well-observed novel by former Michigan author, Scott Lasser ("Battle Creek"). By book's end, you can see the place, hear the place, even smell the trading floor itself: "It's a faint but musty odor, one heated by all the electronics; it smells as if an electric oven has been turned on that hasn't been used in years. Later in the trading day, it will take on the stench of a locker room."

But it's certainly not just the exciting, hard-driving backdrop that brings *All I Could Get* alive. Lasser's characters – and most especially, his protagonist – are what really vivify this thought-provoking tale of love, lust, loss, and living.

Though it's a little murky as to why Barry acquires such hard-driving ambition suddenly (we're only told that he has "had enough" of his old life), we soon find ourselves caught up with him and his family in his new career.

And even if some of us may not understand much about equity markets, long bonds, or debt issuance, we quickly identify with this well-meaning guy who drives shoeless, still loves Led Zep, and yearns for the days when his favorite team from childhood – the Detroit Tigers – were world champions.

After all, this young man is only trying to "get ahead," only attempting to up the standard of living for himself and his family. (He's even promised them that, once he's stashed some cash, they'll all head back home, and life will be as it always was – only better.)

Because of our close identification with Barry, we may squirm a bit when one of the players in this drama says, "success creates an ever-deepening need."

Slowly, we watch Barry's ambition turn to greed. And then this greed becomes a kind of disease – an insidious malady that eats away at the edges of human decency, a chronic failure of the heart manifested by spiritual blindness and deafness to the needs of those we love the most. Barry Schwartz – this guy we liked, this guy we were cheering for – in the course of "getting ahead," manages to turn his back, in one way or another, on every single person he cares about, until it may be much too late.

My only quibble with this book is a certain built-in difficulty with the lingo of Wall Street. Because of this, I'm a little lost at certain points, and Lasser doesn't make any elaborate efforts to fill me in. Overall, this doesn't actually make a lot of difference in the novel's impact, however. When I finished *All I Could Get*, I felt much like I'd visited Wall Street, and, in the process, perhaps glimpsed a little corner of hell itself.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia resident and writes about books for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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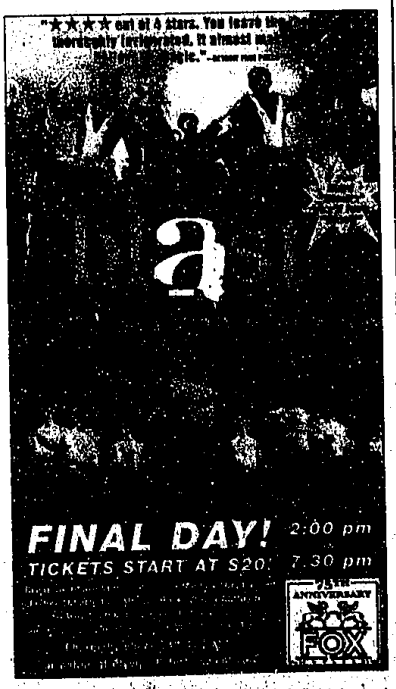

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