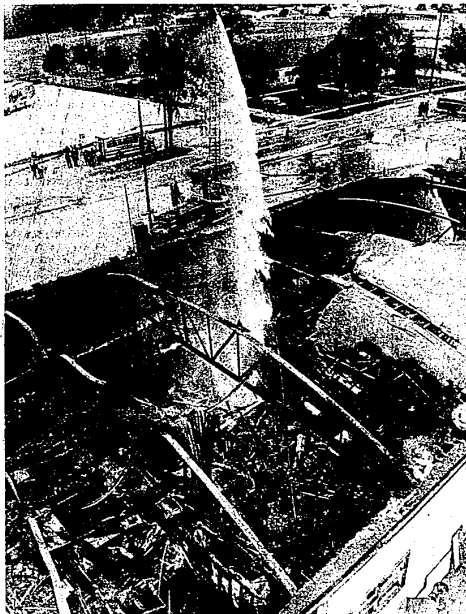




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"I'M AFRAID of heights"—Observer chief photographer Bob Woodring.

Our Photographers Explore World Of Picture Taking

By JUDITH BERNE

Holiday time generally brings out the cameras, one way or another.

If there is no new camera or piece of photographic equipment under the Christmas tree, then Mom, Dad or Grandpop is sure to be ready with the trusty Instamatic, Polaroid or movie camera to capture Christmas morning for posterity.

To give Observers a background for photographic shopping and for the best use of their existing equipment, Observer chief photographer Bob Woodring, photographer Harry Mauthe and sports editor and photographer Tom Donoghue agreed to discuss their ideas on photography for Observer readers.

Like any other art, no one photographer goes about his work the same way as another. But from the quick succession of ideas developed by the photographers three, perhaps an overall image will emerge designed to improve your picture taking.

And, incidentally, you may find out a little about the men behind the pictures.

Why did you become a photographer?

WOODRING: "I knew in high school I wanted to be a photographer, but my family was against it. They said it didn't pay well, that I'd have to leave the small town I grew up in. I persisted. I'm happy to be doing something I like and being paid for it."

What do you like most about your work?

WOODRING: "I like to photograph the fast breaking news story; for a suburban newspaper photographer used to ground breaking, that's a break in the routine."

"I enjoy being involved in a crisis situation, although sometimes I have a awful gut feeling afterward. In a case of human tragedy, I find I become very mechanical. I do my job. The terrible human feelings come later."

What kind of picture taking is most difficult for you?

WOODRING: "I'm afraid of heights. For one job I had to take aerial photographs strapped to the outside of a helicopter. There I was standing on the helicopter runner, 500 feet in the air."

"I was able to do the job: changing the camera angle, putting new film in, the whole thing. The only sensation I had was, what if I drop the camera?"

"Once again on the ground, I began shaking like a leaf."

Do you have a degree in photography?

WOODRING: "I learned as much as I could from other photographers, reading photography magazines and just taking pictures. After I was working for the Observer Newspapers, I decided to take a correspondence course from the School of Modern Photography. I finished in four months with an award of commendation."

How do you handle your varied photographic assignments?

WOODRING: "I try not to have a preconceived notion of the picture I'm going to take. When I'm in a hurry I may have to settle for the set shot. If I have some time, I'm thinking all the way to the assignment about whether I can do something weird or different."

What do you think of today's photographic equipment?

WOODRING: "The equipment today doesn't involve any thinking on the part of the user. Almost any camera will do a family job. A pocket Instamatic and a flash cube—that's really all the amateur needs."

"For the more sophisticated camera user, I would recommend a 35 mm camera with electronic flash unit. This should cost about \$100 for a range finder type camera and from \$150 to \$300 for a single-lens reflex type. At the Observer, we use the latter because it can be fitted with a variety of lenses."

What about buying film?

WOODRING: "When you buy off brands of film, you can get good results, but you may be taking a chance. The quality control standards, where the film was stored before you bought it and where you store it while it is in your possession all can affect its quality."

"Heat prematurely ages film, so don't keep it in a car glove compartment, near a radiator or in any over-heated place."

What's your advice to amateur photographers?

WOODRING: "Think pictures and always have your camera ready to use. Compose tightly—get as close as your camera will allow you to focus and as your flash equipment will allow you to take a properly lighted picture."

At this point Harry Mauthe entered the discussion.

How do you take a candid shot?

MAUTHE: "The most important thing is to get up very close. At Christmas season, people usually try to include the tree in the picture. If a child is unwrapping a present, forget about the tree. It will be very obvious that it is Christmas."

"Inexperienced people back off; they miss the most interesting shot. Don't stop and tell the child to look up and smile. Shoot a candid, then take a second more posed shot if you want."

Do you try and build up a rapport with your subjects?

MAUTHE: "It's impossible for me to have rapport with a little kid. I can sort of sense when they're going to do something which will make a good photograph. The more practice you get, the more you can anticipate. That's the difference between a professional and an amateur."

"Even if you only hit one in 10—that's the shot that makes it all worth while."

How do you obtain special effects?

MAUTHE: "You have to differentiate special effects from artistic photography. Trick filters, multiple images, cross star filters all can be used to create special effects and are best used by the experienced photographer."

"Artistic photography"—expressing yourself through the camera—is open to everyone, although the more proficient you become with the right equipment, the better the results will be."

Could you make a case for color versus black and white?

MAUTHE: "Everyone's used to seeing color; it is more visually arresting. Certain things can never be accurately shown without color."

"The black and white print may seem more artistic to artier types. It has to make both the photographer and viewer use his or her mind a little more."

"Whichever you use, black and white or color, don't go light on the film. Film and processing are relatively cheap when you think that you are making a record for the future."

Sports editor Tom Donoghue takes the majority of sports pictures for the Observer, and is the official photographer for the Detroit Tigers. He continued the dialogue.

How do action shots differ from posed?

DONOGHUE: "You get the candid look, no artifacts, natural lighting and natural expressions."

What kind of thinking characterizes a sports photographer?

DONOGHUE: "After you've shot enough sports, you don't always just follow the action, you're always thinking of the next play. I shoot about 100 pictures per high school game. Out of these, I might run one or two in the paper."

"Something going on on the field usually precipitates something happening off the field. Sometimes the best picture is taken of something happening on the sidelines."

"I like to create a mood—it's not easy to do in action photography."

What makes the best action shot?

DONOGHUE: "I try to catch the peak of the action; I'm not always right but often enough."

"A guy running with the football is not necessarily a good shot...they come a dime a dozen. A lot of sports editors want a picture of the play that meant the game and in picking that miss what is really the best action shot."

What's your advice to parents taking pictures of their child at a sports event?

DONOGHUE: "They shouldn't be afraid to get right where the action is. The typical parent photographers are too far away. They don't have long enough lenses to zoom in on their child."

"A normal lens is 55 mm. I use a 300 mm lens for the sports shots I take."

Do you need training to take good action shots?

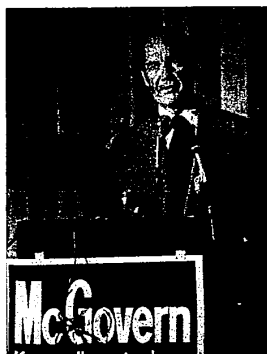
DONOGHUE: "I've never taken a course in photography, but I'll match my pictures against anyone's. You learn by experience—that's the No. 1 course, 'The more you do yourself, the more you'll learn.'"

"Film is cheap, for what you can get out of it. There is a high demand for good action shots."

"A picture is not really worth a thousand words. It's worth what you put into it and what you give the viewer."



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McGOVERN near the end of a long campaign. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring.)



NIXON making a point. (Observer photo by Harry Mauthe.)