

A Song for the Asking
The Electronic Newsletter of
EarthSong Photography
and
EarthSong Photography Workshops: Walking in Beauty

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Hello to All:

Hope for the Flowers

Redemption and grace are often found in little things: the passion and laughter of a child, the free openness with which children approach life, their sheer hopefulness in the face of challenge and adversity, their steadfast willingness to endure.

Beyond concerns for their safety, their capacity to effectively relate, their consideration for the feelings of others, and their stewardship of the planet, we would be wise to be mindful of how much we seek to remove in our efforts to socialize them and insist that they fit into our preconceived notions of who they ought to be, even in the general sense of that term. We would be even wiser to be thoughtful of how we seek to regulate their curiosity and their desire to explore their world and the boundaries that world will surely establish, whether we, or they, wish it or not.

As I watch him bound up the trail ahead of me, I am mindful of these thoughts and so



The Feeling of Being Everywhere

many others. I have been watching him for a decade now, the span of his life thus far, the past four each containing one weekend for a family camping trip to some different location in the awesomeness of Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Cataloochee, Cosby, Elkmont, and now Smokemont. He has seen his first elk, his first waterfall; he



Taking a Long View of Cataloochee Valley

has slipped off a moss-covered boulder and into the chilly waters of Little River with his father standing by to

extricate him. He has slept in a rain-drenched tent, and discovered the joys of campfires and marshmallows, he has hiked to beautiful places in the backcountry of the back of Kephart's beyond, and he has seen the Tsalagi museum and experienced the pathos of Nunahi-Duna-Dlo-Hilu-I, the Trail Where They Cried, in the dramatic unfolding scenes of *Unto These Hills*.

Today, he has leapt forward like **Tsistu**, Rabbit, and is up the trail that ascends with Kephart Prong to its high birthplace underneath the flanks of the great crest ridge at Ice Water Springs. As long as he is on the trail, my concerns are minimal; but when we reach the upstream-most footlog that crosses the creek about .3 miles below the backcountry shelter, I become wary. Just above the old wagon crossing, where the log

bridge has been placed, the bed is strewn with boulders of all sizes and shapes. Kephart Prong has washed them for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. They are smooth and yet cusped, not treacherous and yet slippery: just the sort of boulders to bruise a shin or crack a skull; and he is just familiar enough with the current crop of super heroes to consider that he might have the chutzpah to become one of them: **Richard Paul Padgett IV, Archaeologist/Anthropologist/Biologist Man.**



In the Footsteps of Mitchell

His parents are perhaps even more watchful than I. My vigil is far from solitary; still, with a palpable intake of breath I watch him hop from boulder to boulder, climbing up this one, jumping over that one, over the water, up the bank, round and round in

a pattern that forms and reforms in his mind alone in response to rhythms and syncopations only he can imagine, testing the limits of his physical prowess, pushing those limits away wherever he sees the opportunity arise, becoming a body in creative motion, searching for joy in the expenditure of energy.



...and the Pattern Remains

a host of glaring ills that continue to drag us deeper and deeper into collective inertia and despair, in the sad and sorry state of public discourse which seems to increasingly flow from an anti-intellectualism – a mistrust and even downright loathing of the life of the mind – that has reached epidemic proportions; but here’s the really sad truth: in an unwillingness to follow our individual creative journeys with the passion and dedication shown by a ten-year-old boy leaping over boulders in a pristine mountain stream. I could regale you about each of these ad nauseam, but it is primarily the last-mentioned about which I want to speak: the creative journey.

I have been told regularly that I should not write about unpleasant things: no one cares about hearing of them, no one wants to know. I am told that I must somehow present all of this unpleasantness, if at all, in words that make us feel good, otherwise they will not be received, will, in fact, be totally ignored. I have to admit that to hear this is to make me even more certain of the societal malaise I sense around me; not that I want to intentionally make

Did I mention that he is in the top five academically in his rising 5th grade class? Did I mention that I cannot look at this child without a lump rising in my throat that is equal parts pride and concern? Did I mention that I can’t help but see in him the faces of the children of the world, this world, the only world we have and are likely to have? Did I mention that when I reach this point in my mental journey I can look ahead and glimpse the opening of a dark tunnel of frustration and anger staring back into my smiling face and that it is with substantial difficulty that I look away from it, back at the boy on the rocks?

I have become very familiar, over the course of a lifetime, with the actual name of the tunnel. I have conversed with it at length and in depth. The word carved in the stone above its entrance is a sickness I have seen in many places: in the failure of our society to solve



A Rock and a Wet Place

anyone feel badly, but when it becomes necessary to speak indirectly and with subterfuge in order to convey one's truth, we have reached a very low point, indeed, in our worldly affairs.



Rosebay Among the Ferns

What was it that happened along the way that seems to have resulted in our being unwilling, or unable, to listen to anything negative or unpleasant?

Of course there is much – very much – for which to be grateful, and I am; and I agree completely with **DeWitt Jones** that we are beholden to “celebrate what’s right with the world,” but we cannot do this successfully at the same time we are unwilling to even talk about all that is not right and needs to be changed, even as we have great difficulty in agreeing on what it is that isn’t right. Ignoring it and refusing to look will not make it go away, cannot change what is not working. The buried-in-the-sand-ostrich-head approach just simply is not available to us, and the more we believe that it is, the more options for positive change we foreclose to ourselves. To be honest with you, I would rather feel whole than good most any day.

Sadly, this angst is not of sudden origin. One of my favorite songs, written forty-five years ago, is an ode to the idea that folks don’t really care about

what’s going on, nor do they wish to be involved.

Kris Kristopherson, whose lyrics often helped me make it through the night, expressed in *To Beat the Devil* that “if you waste your time a-talkin’ to the people who don’t listen to the things that you are saying, who do you think’s gonna hear? And if you should die explaining how the things that they complain about are things they could be changin’, who do you think’s gonna care?”

In the interval things seem to have gotten somewhat worse, but Kris’ conclusion seems just as valid: “I was born a lonely singer and I’m bound to die the same, but I’ve got to feed the hunger in my soul, and if I never have a nickel I won’t ever die ashamed, ‘cause I don’t believe that no one wants to know.” The message now, however, if given straightforwardly and honestly, is likely to be met with even more fierce rejection and scorn; but since I am neither singer nor comedian I deliver it with the only voice I possess, hopefully an authentic and genuine one.

I’m beginning to be more comfortable with the



Everything’s Coming Up Fungi

antics of Archaeology/Anthropology/Biologist Man, and for his part, he's still figuring out all of the innumerable ways to circle the water-



AAB-Man on the Move

flown boulder field and managing to do so with shins and skull intact. Only once has the slipperiness reached out and threatened his equanimity, and he managed to right himself before damage could be done. And all of this is being accomplished with a huge grin on his face which could not be any more communicative if it shouted, "I am having a great time; I'm being creative; I'm using my mind and my body: you see, I am alive."

If it were just me, I might be persuaded to look at it differently; but not only do I experience it on a daily basis in my own work – I see it written of in so many places by so many otherwise positive and creative people – that I can't slough it off simply as my own negativity. Above the entrance to the gate of Hell of **Dante's** conflagrated realm were inscribed these words, "Abandon hope all who enter here." It looks very much like the tunnel of my waking nightmare except that there is but a single word: "Cynicism."

Cynicism is pain, a dulling, apathetic pain. In our rush to quell its throb, truth is commonly a victim: our own truth, the free-setting truth of how we see the world, how we experience it, understand ourselves within it and feel emotionally toward it.

To the cynic, the world is a place ruled by selfishness and self-serving motives, a place where selfless actions are either non-existent, or so far from the norm, that they are more likely statistical errors rather than actual quanta.

To the cynic, we are a world absorbed within ourselves, a world whose only driving force is the exaltation of the desires of the self for personal fulfillment and gain.

For the cynic, the world is a chilly, numb, black-and-white realm, without heart, without laughter, without joy and passion; or at least without deep, genuinely felt expressions of those feelings – where the heart is only hollow, where laughter sounds of tin, where joy and passion, if they are found at all, are found in darker shades of experience that do not uplift, but remain flat and without vitality.

There aren't many cynics who are children, even fewer children who are cynics; but sadly, it is all too easy to become one even though the pain we would extinguish to allow



Rare Moment of Stillness

ourselves the illusion of believing we know where we are in our lives is really the flip-side of the joy found, not in seeing the world through Pollyanna eyes, but in simply seeing the world as it is; not always accepting that world, but at least visualizing it



Something Good Might Come from This

There are observable shifts and changes in our social fabric that have occurred since the end of the Second World War, and even more sharply so since the Viet Nam era and the decade of the 60s. I can speak of them; I have watched as they occurred, and I can't say that many of them have made us better as a society.

On the outside chance that you have been out of pocket for the past, say, forty years or so, you may not have noticed that, among those changes, cynicism seems to have become haut couture as the new millennium has dawned over us. Indeed as **Peter Michaelson**, author of *Why We Suffer: A Western Way to Understand and Let Go of*

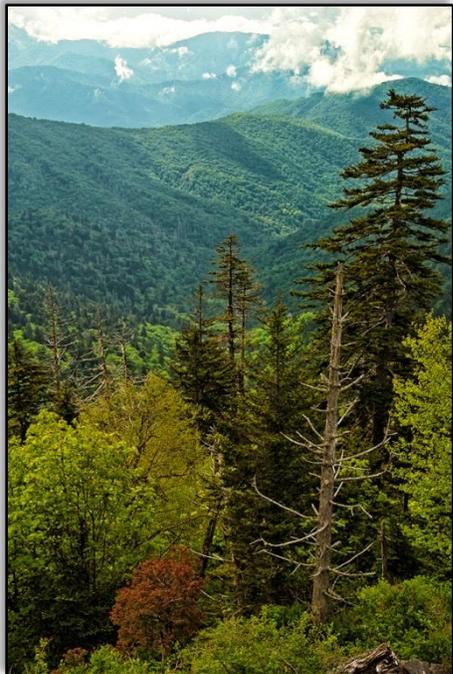


At the End of the Storm...

Unhappiness, has written, "A cynical view of the world has become a form of conviviality, like social drinking, that's perceived as cool by many students, professionals, and sophisticates when they get together to talk or party." But here's the thing, instead of being expressed as anger, this cynicism comes wrapped up in a package of hopelessness and indifference. Cynicism has become an art form that presents itself as disgust in the face of hypocrisy and corruption, but which is loath to act to express that disgust save verbally; better to be disgusted and do nothing. What good is that?

Cynicism, we know, comes from very humble beginnings: We have been hurt, or angered, by something; but rather than deal with those feelings directly, we ignore

them, or suppress them, and they become like thorns under the skin which suppurate.



This infected outlook on one thing slowly morphs us, if we are not alert to it, into having a general view of our lives that reflects this way of looking. This simmering hostility toward things in general may turn us toward overt negativity, or into a passive denial of what we know to be factual.

Other attitudes often accompany this. We have expectations, often unrealistic and exaggerated, of how people should be and what they should do; and when they are not and do not, we see it as vindication of what we believe and feel. Our cynicism becomes a negative filter through which we measure existence. Of course, cynicism is a condition that exists by degrees; and it is not necessary that we be deeply cynical about everything in order to feel quite cynically toward some things.

Stephen Colbert, whose dry wit often touches me deeply, and who may well be speaking from self-knowledge, has said, “Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the farthest thing from it. Because cynics don’t

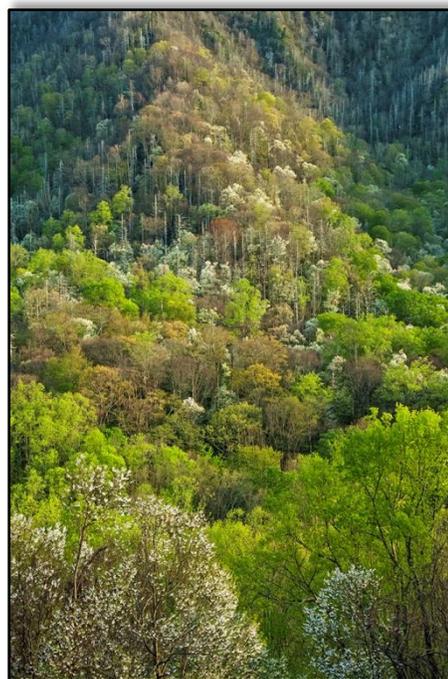
And Then There Was Kuwahi

learn anything. Because cynicism is a self-imposed blindness, a rejection of the world because we are afraid it will hurt us or disappoint us. Cynics always say no. But saying ‘yes’ begins things. Saying ‘yes’ is how things grow. Saying ‘yes’ leads to knowledge.”

There is much we need to think about, to learn, and to do, and we are not blessed with infinite time.

I have been a professional photographer for over two decades. When I left my life as an attorney, I was staring directly into that cavern I mentioned; I had seen the opening of that tunnel many times and I was very familiar with the inscription above its opening. In an instant I traded that vision for the vision of a life of creativity, and I have never looked behind me nor regretted the decision that was made. In that moment life took on a brightness and a glow that shine for me to this very moment. In that moment everything else became real and present.

The pursuit of photographic creativity has been all of that and so much more, and in the years I have spent teaching the art of photography, I have been blessed to see much



Silverbell City

of what has taken place as many thousands of us have picked up cameras and sought to express ourselves, our deepest perceptions and most ardent feelings with a technology that has changed more in the past 15 years than in the previous hundred and eighty years of its existence.

In fact, it has been the changes in the technology that have precipitated the desire on the part of many to pick up a camera in the first place; and this has much to do with the success of the marketing departments of Canon and Nikon and Fuji and Sony in convincing us that photographic creativity is no longer the exclusive realm of nerds who understand how chemistry and fractional changes in the intensity of a given amount of light are related to each other; that in fact it is actually the camera itself – especially the one they have just created – and the computer to which it has become tethered, that are the real sources of creativity; that we barely even have to show up any longer as long as we have the right tools.

It is a tribute to their understanding of human nature. We all want to be creative, and indeed being creative is a birthright of the human species.

We are, truly, creative creatures until the



Hangin' in Barnard



...and Where It Stops...

machinations of society conspire to remove from us through the forces of acculturation and conformity that state to which we are born, convincing most of us that the creative realm is the abode for the privileged few. Now the conundrum: I am not creative, but with the right equipment I can be; and so the search begins.

Don't misunderstand: I am not cynical about the technology. The tools we have been blessed to own in this modern era of photography are amazing aids; but I am deeply skeptical that they are the source of my creative nature.

There is still the matter of the boy on the rocks, turning and moving, spinning and dancing as he seeks to find the center of himself, the core of his being, the still point from which his energy arises and flows. What he will learn, and what I will strive to teach him at every opportunity, is that the source of his genius lies not in the bottoms of his shoes, as helpful to his efforts as they may be, but in the light that shines from his eyes in each moment of the dance; the sparkle that is the evidence of the

imagination deep within him that will continuously furl and unfurl the patterns of existence, working to comprehend what is now and working always to understand what might be.

What's Now...?

How Early Is My Warm

In the loss of skill, we lose stewardship; in losing stewardship we lose fellowship; we become outcasts from the great neighborhood of Creation. It is possible – as our experience of this good land shows – to exile ourselves from Creation, and to ally ourselves with the principle of destruction – which is, ultimately, the principle of nonentity. It is to be willing in general for being to not-be. And once we have allied ourselves with that principle, we are foolish to think that we can control the results.

Wendell Berry

from “*The Gift of Good Land*”

The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays

It has been an interesting summer in these old mountains. “Schizophrenic” is a word that comes to mind. In April, the late cold snap took everyone’s attention momentarily, but then the warm arrived and has never left.

I say this not to continuously berate you with what is, but in the vein of that old adage, “Don’t give until it hurts; give until it feels good.” It’s sort of like the Golden Rule on steroids: not a sacrifice, but rather an investment. My hope is that by often reminding you of something you just as likely would wish not to know, I can gently urge you to become involved in attempted solutions. After all, if you have reached the position of believing nothing can be done or just plain not caring, have you not become the cynic of whom we have been speaking?

Once the warm arrived the out-of-kilter began closely behind, so that by June the season was out in front of itself enough that we might as well have thought of it as normal. And this seems to be an evolving pattern: that we have some late-season cold followed by an abnormal warming that pushes spring and summer ahead to the point that the blooming season has taken on a new set of dynamics that we come to consider as usual – welcome to climate change. And all the king’s horses and all the king’s men...yeah, you know the rest.

It is difficult to overcome the feeling of powerlessness in these times. For me there are two helpful thoughts. First, there is beauty. Even in the most uncertain of seasons there



To Bee or Not...

is always beauty to behold. It is everywhere and in forms too numerous to list. And the second is hope. As long as there are enough people of good will and determination, there is the steadfast hope that the human species will find creative ways to maneuver itself away from the abyss into which, like a moth drawn to a flame, it seems determined to stare.

Even in the abnormal warm, these ancient hills are filled with a beauty that touches the soul and soothes the spirit; and beauty that encourages connection and engagement. And from this beauty springs an eternal hope that the good will endure and will prevail



As I scouted the Park in preparation to write this, I was keenly aware that changes are in the air. In many places, both higher and lower elevations, in fact throughout the Smokies generally, the directive has gone out: stop producing chlorophyll. And the trees have listened. Of course, the quintessential question on everyone's mind is "when will the foliage season be in full swing?" At the moment my answer is that we have the makings of an awesome color season, but whether it materializes will depend on the rainfall between now and the latter part of the month and how seasonal the temperatures remain during that time: adequate precipitation and cool, but not freezing, thermometer readings are the keys to the color.

Already the walnuts (*Juglans nigra*) are turning yellow, and they could be very beautiful if the trend continues. The same is true for the black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). The dogwoods (*Cornus florida* and *C. alternifolia*) are up to their usual tricks: beginning an aggressive color shift very early and looking like they will be at peak with a week. They always then slow down their change and line up with the other species, although perhaps ahead by 2-3 days. The black gums (*Nyssa sylvatica*), the persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*), and the sourwoods (*Oxydendrum arboretum*) are all showing noticeable color changes. The yellow buckeyes (*Aesculus flava*) are rapidly turning brown and falling from the trees, but this is their more usual pattern around these parts. Many of the cherries (*Prunus*) are showing color changes, as are the birches (*Betula*) and the beeches (*Fagus*). A few of the tuliptrees (*Liriodendron*) are beginning their changes, as are several others. The maples (*Acer*) and oaks (*Quercus*) of course are putting off things until the last minute.

Here is my thought: if we have favorable conditions, the season may well arrive a few (3-4?) days ahead of schedule; if conditions do not bode well, it's too early to hazard a guess.

Within the next three weeks, or so, the elks (*Cervus elaphus*) will have begun their annual ritual of the rut, and in Cataloochee Valley and around the Oconaluftee Visitor Center the activity will be in high gear. During September Cades Cove is the best place for miles around to catch a glimpse of that Smokies mascot, the black bear (*Ursus americanus*). The Smokies poster children will be doing all they can to fatten themselves

for the lean months ahead, and the fields, woodlines, and stream bottoms of the cove are the equivalent of nature's Trader Joe's. By mid-October the whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) will be doing their own imitation of the elks' antics, and, again, Cades Cove is ringside. There are, of course, many other critters to consider photographically, but I could write an entire newsletter devoted to them. Remember with all critters to be considerate and cautious. Respect their feelings – which they always share non-verbally – and you will enjoy working with them.

The water levels in the Park are always low during this period (except in 2012 when we had record rainfall) and this year they seem a little lower than customary, but not at the level of drought yet. There are rocky outcrops and rock strata showing in many streambeds and pools of water where flow would be normal. In late-September under normal conditions, precipitation patterns will change and increased rain will begin to re-fill the channels. We'll have to wait to see what happens.

	<u>Sunrise</u>	<u>Sunset</u>
September 1:	7:05 a.m.	8:02 p.m.
September 21	7:20 a.m.	7:33 p.m.
September 27	7:24 a.m.	7:25 p.m.
September 30	7:27 a.m.	7:20 p.m.
October 31	7:53 a.m.	6:40 p.m.
November 30	7:22 a.m.	5:21 p.m.

All times are for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Times at your locations will vary by several minutes. Consult the Photographer's Ephemeris for actual sunrise/sunset times at your specific location.

Daylight Savings/Summer time is in effect for the entire months of September and October. DSST ends on October 31. Standard/Winter (SWT) time begins on November 1 and is in effect for the entire month of November.

For the next few days, three or four at best, Morton Overlook can still be used as an excellent sunset location; however, the ball is already setting to the left of the Chimneys and will soon be setting behind the long ridge of Sugarland Mountain. As I always remind, even when Morton is no longer the quintessential sunset location in the Southern Appalachians, it can still be wonderful in the late afternoon, during fall foliage season, and anytime a clearing storm sows drama over the landscape.

By mid-September the place to be for sunset will be Clingman's Dome. From the west end of the parking lot you can catch the ball as it disappears behind the Crest of the Smokies ridge, and from the central part of the lot and the more eastern end you can find lots of wonderful opportunities for the late light as it illuminates the ridges and valleys below the Dome.

Sunrise is also a great opportunity from the parking lot of Clingman's Dome, primarily, as you would imagine, the eastern (southeastern) end of the area. As the

season progresses the ball will move further around to the south and can be put more and more into play.

Weather permitting, Clingman's Dome Road is scheduled to remain open until November 30th, so there is a three-month window during which the Dome is an excellent location for both sunset and sunrise imagery.



Down Yon Oconaluftee River Valley

Even now, however, the prime location for sunrise in the Smokies is Luftee Overlook, where Thomas Divide attaches to the Crest of the Smokies ridge along US 441. However, as the season turns, Luftee becomes one of the most wonderful early morning opportunities anywhere. The fall color and the early light often conspire to create magic; and it is a magic not to be missed.

There are a couple of fall foliage locations that I want to specifically

point out. Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail can be a wonderful location for intimate landscape work in the fall in addition to being a prime location for historic architecture images. Like Clingman's Dome Road, Roaring Fork MNT will remain open through November 30th, weather permitting.

Little River Road between the Sinks and the Townsend "Y" is, in my estimation, one of the most wonderful locations for stream reflections on the planet. Greenbrier Cove is also a stream and intimate landscape heaven, as is Big Creek on the North Carolina-Tennessee border in the northeastern part of the Park. Of course, primary fall work can always be found along US 441 between Chimneys Picnic Area on the Tennessee side and Kephart Prong Trailhead on the North Carolina side. And just for good measure throw in the historic structures in Cades Cove and Cataloochee and you've got enough beauty for a lifetime.

Yeah, it's been pretty darn warm around here, warmer than we're accustomed to, on average a good bit warmer than usual; and we ought to think about that and consider how we might get involved in reversing that trend, if it's not too late. But while we're about it, it would be good to remember how blessed we are with the beauty around us. Maybe, just maybe, there's a connection between our stewardship and that beauty.

A Tip is Worth...?

In the Right Time and Place

To live means to experience – through doing, feeling, thinking. Experience takes place in time, so time is the ultimate scarce resource we have. Over the years the content of experience will determine the quality of life.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life

There is a phrase from an old **Bob Dylan** tune, *Frankie Lee and Judas Priest* that goes, "...The moral of this story, the moral of this song is simply that one should never be where one does not belong." Perhaps a corollary would be that one should always try to



Morning Mist Rising

be where one does belong, especially when it comes to creativity. Now just where is it that we belong and when? Only you can decide that for yourself, but I can share what I have learned to be true for me over the years. Many years ago one of my primary mentors, **Pat O'Hara**, told a group of participants in a workshop of his ideas about finding the "quintessential image" as a part of his creative process. He spoke about following the threads of emotional response inherent in our visual experience as we navigate to world personally and photographically; of deconstructing the visual field into perspectives and focal lengths and angles of view with their attendant subject size and information content, and from following that process until a small voice within us says, "Aha, that's it; that's what I was really attracted to when I began looking at all of this other stuff around me. That's what was speaking to me." In the process there may have been many other worthy images visualized, but the voice identified the quintessential one for me in that search, in that place and time.

In time we learn that the process just described, if entered into with our entire being, with all of our energies and concentrated focus can lead to a flow in which we, here, now, sense a simple "rightness" to use **David Ulrich's** term.

The creative process cannot be coerced, either photographically or in any other way; but it can be engaged, and when we can coordinate our own schedule and our own surroundings to coincide with the process, then we can enter that creative realm with fair ease.

We discover that what we are looking for is our own intimate relationship with the creative impulse, and the key ingredient is, as **Socrates** postulated, "Know thyself." What is it that works for you? Certain aspects of your lifestyle make more likely the



I Will Lift Up My Eyes Unto These Hills

awakening of your artistic energies and the stirring within you of creative endeavor. What are those conditions? What are the sources of support and sustenance that abet the process? Who are your allies and where are the places in which you are more clearly aware of your connection with that flow?



Desiccation

demands of us the making of intelligent choices – in constructing a life that aids rather than diminishes our artistic development, in accumulating sufficient free time, in acquiring sufficient energy, and in fostering the appropriate inner attitudes and outer habitats: these will always be more significant to us as artists; and our tools, as wonderful and important as they will always be, will always be secondary.

As creative people, we often find a wide difference in how others we know, friends and family, respond to our artistic sensibilities: from very supportive to amazingly hostile to indifferent. Their responses are their burden, not ours, and there are any numbers of responses you can formulate in return: you can model what being a “good” artist is about; you can share with them your creative efforts that reveal your abilities; you can educate them as to the value to society of the efforts of artists. Of course, you can also seek to surround yourself with others who think as you do about art and the creative process. In the end, it is the dignity, passion, and committed effort that you bring to the process that will determine your outcome and instruct you as to how best to structure your relationships with those closest to you.

Part of what I have just written implies the possibility of community as a valuable support to you as an artist. In that community there may be artists and non-artists alike. The support you receive from non-artists is always an opportunity for you to reciprocate supportively in some way of your own; and from the artists around you there is the chance to stimulate and be stimulated; to criticize, be criticized, and otherwise respond to each other’s works. This is true even inasmuch as art is by and large a solitary process in many respects and the paradox in this is both inescapable and instructive as to where

it is best for you to be and when within that company.

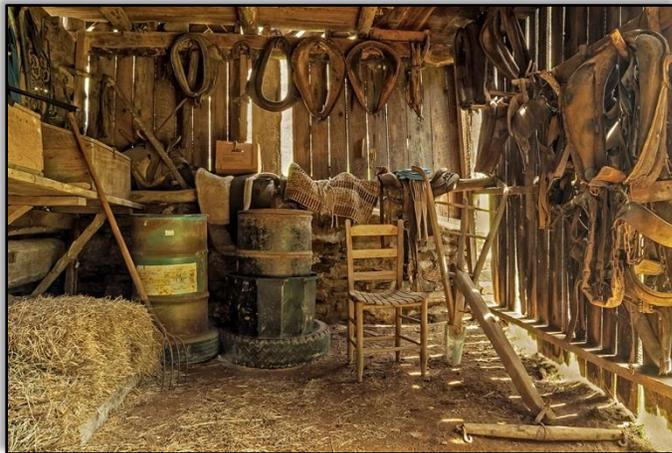
Perhaps the biggest aspect of “right place, right time” is what you do to provide yourself with the necessary – as you determine it – amount of space and time for your creative work, whether you are an avocational artist or a working professional. For this, a dependable and stable rhythm in your schedule – daily, weekly, or annually is essential.

Fragmentation of time is the bane of creativity, and even if the time you can allot to your work is small in comparison to what you might wish, the importance of carving out that time with as much regularity as possible goes without saying.

Like anything else in which we would seek to acquire proficiency or even mastery, practice is more than indispensable, it is an absolute necessity, and it happens most productively when there is a sound approach to the management of time in your life. One of the most important considerations here is that you understand that whenever you show up for practice you bring with you all of who you are in that moment: all of the



As Falls Estatoe, So Falls Estatoe Falls



What Tack Should We Make?

skills and wants, the assuredness and the fear, the confidence and the timidity. In a TED talk seen now by more than eight million views, Spoken-Word Poet **Sara Kay** said it perfectly, “It’s about gathering up all of the knowledge and experience you’ve collected up to now to help you dive into the things you don’t know. I use poetry to help me work through what I don’t understand, but I show up to each new poem with a backpack of everywhere else that I’ve been.” We all bring our own backpack. It’s what we’ve put in it that counts.

We are reaching a point in our technological evolution where we are beginning to understand the effects of our computer-and-internet-driven world on the workings of the mind; and we are seeing that, as **Nicholas Carr** expressed it in *The Shallows*, “we are becoming ever more adept at scanning and skimming, but what we are losing is our capacity for concentration, contemplation, and reflection.” Along with this goes an increased impatience with activities that require concentration, contemplation and reflection;

and the creative process is one of those activities.

As David Ulrich says, “The products of all artistic work grow out of the nature of the experience itself – of each moment in their making – and out of the quality of attention that we bring to our activities.” They are shaped by the effort that we make to be present within ourselves; and through this recurring inward turn an incremental growth is forged that brings with it ever increasing assuredness, confidence, and skill.



Tier Poles Comin’ at Ya’

Perhaps one final observation is in order. Call it what you will, “vibrations embedded in the environment” seems like a descriptive term, so I’ll borrow it from Ulrich. The energy of specific

places has been noted by mystics and artists, as well as entire cultures, for as long as human beings have been conscious of their environments. “On a conscious or unconscious level, we often find solace in external environments that correspond to the unique shape of our inner landscape. Every region we encounter feels different to our sensibilities, and we seek locales that energetically suit our temperaments and needs,” as David Ulrich says.

As an eight-year-old child I understood that the Great Smoky Mountains were my spiritual home. In 1994, as a forty-six-year-old man, it was these mountains in conjunction with my own inner landscape that set me on the path as a professional photographer that I have followed to this day. That inner landscape had been hammered out over years of seeing the natural world as part and parcel of who I am. Somehow I was led to be in the right place at the right time. Over the past twenty-one years it has been my connection to these mountains that has opened my eyes to the connections that are possible wherever I go, so that the right place and the right time are with me wherever I am.

EarthSong Workshops: How You See the Land Really Matters **Walking in Beauty**

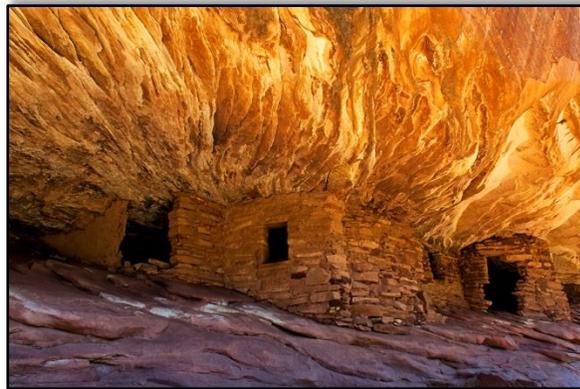
I just wanted to tell you how much our brief time together influenced me...I literally carried your tip sheet folded up in the pocket of my pants and I would try to absorb what was around me a bit before shooting...I really appreciate and respect your whole approach to finding the rhythms in nature and being a part of it.”

Ray F
Washington D.C.

As I walk with Beauty
As I walk, as I walk
The universe is walking with me
In beauty it walks before me
In beauty it walks behind me
In beauty it walks below me
In beauty it walks above me
Beauty is on every side
As I walk I walk with beauty

Traditional Diné Prayer

There are many reasons to give yourself (or someone else) the experience of a photography workshop. Think for a moment about your own photographic experiences, especially the ones that took you away from home for two days or even longer, a week, say. Think of all of the planning and preparation it took to get you out of the house and on your way. Think of the research you did: the conversations you had with knowledgeable people familiar with where you wanted to go; the books you read and the maps you studied and the sunrise/sunset charts you examined and the routes you structured to maximize your opportunities; the clothing details and weather details you became familiar with; the lodging and meal considerations you had to make. Think of the time you spent trying to familiarize yourself with the place itself, the land – the geology and geography, the flora and fauna, what makes it interesting and notable, what makes it memorable and special, what makes it imminently photographable, what it means to create connection with this place....



Far from Being a Liar

With the above words I introduced the final section of last May's newsletter. In the meanwhile we have enjoyed wonderful experiences with the Wildflowers, Waterfalls, and Western North Carolina Workshop; and the Appalachian Barns, Cusp of Autumn Workshop, which begins this Thursday (September 10th) is completely full. We are grateful to everyone who has spent time with us in 2015.

There remain two adventures in the current year and I am very excited about both.

My weeklong class at **Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, September 20-26**, still has openings. I am looking forward to being in this wonderful place once again. **Bill May** and the entire staff of the school always go way out of their way to make every class and every participant and each instructor feel special and enjoy an outstanding experience in the shadow of the Great Smoky

Mountains. My class will come to know the Park more intimately that it can imagine and there is still time to join me.

Contact: info@arrowmont.org or **(865) 436-5860, Ext. 33**
Cynthia Bellacome.

We will catch the Smokies at the beginning of fall and there will be beauty all around us from the ridges to the valleys and from the rocks to the stream beds. We'll also get to know the pioneer culture that settled and farmed these hills, as well as the Tsalagi heritage that remains so vibrant and present, even today



Looking Down from Kuwahi



Reflections on a Little River

The final adventure opportunity for 2015 will be the **Awesome Canyon Country of Southeastern Utah Tour, October 17-23, Moab, Utah.** Tuition: \$1500; Participants: 7. This is an amazing opportunity to see the best that canyon country has to offer: Arches, Canyonlands, Dead Horse Point, Castle Valley and the La Sal Mountains, and Cedar Mesa, just to name some names. There is a very special surprise that I've saving, but it will be an amazing adventure.

Contact me at **(828) 788-0687**, or don@earthsonphotography.com.



The Story of the Dead Horses

Until next time, may the Spirit of Light guide your shutter release.

This newsletter is being sent only to those people who have expressed an interest in receiving it. If you no longer wish to receive it, you can be removed from the mailing list by sending an email requesting removal to don@EarthSongPhotography.com.



Sunset, Lickstone Ridge Overlook, Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina