

Rangefinder

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RIGHT: Richard Ishmael comforts his son Isaiah, 4, one morning after a stomach ache and fever put the little guy down. Later they traced it to some neighborhood red berries that Isaiah probably shouldn't have eaten.

(Photo by Codi Miller)

BELOW: Lynnsey and Daniel Betz embrace on a late summer day as her daughter Harley, 4, amuses herself. They all live with Daniel's father, Mike, who sits on his favorite bench in the yard.

(Photo by Ryan Dorgan)



BELOW: DeAn Ferguson-Witt, who works at the Children's Advocacy Center, gets a quick hug from her boyfriend, Grundy County Sheriff Rodney J. Herring, when he stopped by one day for lunch.

(Photo by Carlos Gonzalez)



BELOW: Jay and Mary Ratliff dance at the local senior center Tuesday night. Jay and Mary go to the senior center every week.

(Photo by Bryce Watansoponwong)



TRENTON, MO., SEPTEMBER 2013 A TOWN'S INTIMACY



ABOVE: Pastor Del teaches his son Austin how to shoot Tuesday.

(Photo by Tomaso Clavarino)

RIGHT: Monica Vestal, 19, comforts her son, Kayden Knapp, 3, at their home Monday.

(Photo by Jordan Stead)



TO DOCUMENT LIVES, GET CLOSE AND CONNECT

By Duane Dailey
Co-Director Emeritus

My oh my! What we learned this week. Close-up photography took on a new meaning for 44 photographers. It's not reaching for the telephone lens, or the macro. It's not about zooming in.

It means getting close, intimate and personal.

That's more than taking three steps forward needed when you switch from 35 mm lens to a 28 mm. At MPW, close means near enough for an emotional connection.

The photos show the results. Caring and love doesn't come from having the right lens. It's about having the capacity to be a person who subjects like to spend time with.

That is a giant step for photographers. But, it is what photography can do well. Every workshopper takes home a bit of that lesson. Living in the bubble for a week, they were exposed. It may take some time for the concept to incubate. But they will get the fever.

I can almost assure that on some assignment next month, or in six months, you'll flashback to a moment at this workshop. Aha! That's what I learned.

Workshoppers learn from their own work, but also from that of fellow photographers.

Photos can move viewers, with eye openers to new ways of seeing and thinking. On Tuesday night, the first showing of student slides, three pictures brought gasps – and applause.

Photographers appreciate good pictures. And, they know when they see one.

This is being written before the Big Show in the commons at Trenton High. I predict many eye-opening moments amongst viewers. Many will see their town in a new way.

That's because workshopppers gained access, got close and spent time to overcome posing

and posturing.

As photographers, we think how stressful it becomes to be this intimate in the lives of others. It is equally stressful for subjects. Few people give this much time to a stranger. The photographer must overcome being that stranger.

The key lesson: Be a nice person that people like to be with. They are giving their privacy to you the photographer. Think about that: What a treasure! But, that makes powerful photos. It offers people new insights into the common things in life here. Trenton became a rich place to practice emotional connections.

That's why we keep coming back to small towns. Opening night, we saw the intimate moments of personalities in Cuba, Kansas. Recall what you learned from those images.

I've seen Jim Richardson's show many times. My heart reacts, every time. Those words and pictures put a tear in my eye. It always happens when I learn that Doc dies. That is the power of the close-up. We connect with our feelings.

Accept your new knowledge. Use it. Hone that skill of getting inside the door. Street photography and 30-minute assignments will never be the same.

Apply the process to all your work. Get close. Stay close. Squeeze feelings into your work.

Your job is to clarify, simplify and to touch hearts. Make people gasp when they see the truth in your photographs.

It's a powerful challenge and a high calling. You know it can be done. Just do it.

Honor Cliff and Vi Edom and photographers from FSA who pioneered documentary photography. And, thank the faculty that brought the message this week. Honor them by applying what you learned.

That ability to gain access and make appealing, story-telling photos can serve you well. It can earn you jobs.

Go forth. Tell truth with a camera.

