

RANGEFINDER

The Missouri Photo Workshop | September 21, 2015 | Volume 67, Issue 2



CLIFF EDMO, WHO ALONG WITH HIS BELOVED WIFE VI CREATED MPW AND DIRECTED IT THROUGH THE FIRST 38.



Aubrey Johnson, age 2, dances with Jennifer Fritsche after a chicken-fry fundraiser at the VFW Sunday evening. Twins Carson and Cameron Johnson choose the music in the background.

PHOTO BY DANIEL BRENNER

MPW Monday: A day of pitches, stories to be and, some, not yet to be

By **JESSI DODGE**

Photographers, towns and years change, what every Monday afternoon shares, however, is an anxious air filled with bustling excitement. Today's presentations proved once again the rise and fall of emotion as the idea pitching process progressed. Every pitch heightens emotion and every critique pushes the comfort zone past its predetermined boundaries. No two workshops are the same with constantly evolving stories and a variety of subjects.

Faculty member Mary Vignoles said it best when describing

the atmosphere as "an emotional rollercoaster," taking the photographers from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows over the course of only a week's time. Anxiety and nerves filled the Colonnade during today's meetings as our photographers continue to open new doors into the town.

For workshoper Alisha Jucevic, today's presentations provided her both with nervousness and excitement. Alisha noted that "one of my main goals personally and for the workshop is to work on clearly articulating my goals of my projects." The meeting today, therefore, is quiet nerve wracking for Alisha as she presses to strongly and accurately present her ideas.

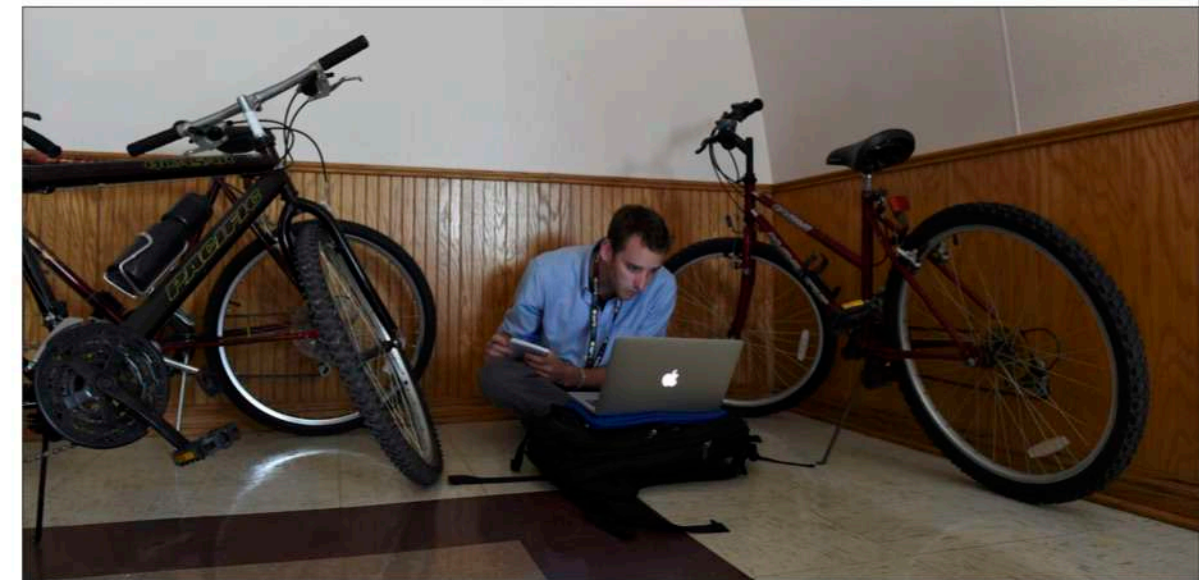
Fellow photographer Andrew Nelles waited enthusiastically, passing the time by checking the weather. He commented "My top pick, I am really excited for and I am hoping they are as excited about it as I am."

Similar to Alisha with both excitement and nervousness, photographer Christine Pearl prepared three separate ideas. "One bombed out today; one I haven't been able to spend much time with yet, and one will have some logistical issues but I am very excited for. At this point, all of my eggs are in one basket, which makes me nervous."

On the other side of the table, faculty members spend the

afternoon working to best critique and challenge bold new stories. The initial pitch presentation made by Mansura Khanam focused on infant loss, a topic about which Kim Komenich said "This is about death. This is about really human things. This is about using all sense." Mary Vignoles also recognized the extreme difficulty in the project, but continued on to argue that the challenge could be very educational.

A variety of similar challenges arose across the room ranging everywhere between "not making a cliché story" and "using the little details" to successfully "hearing back from sources."



FAR LEFT • Mansura Khanam pitches her story to Cliff and Vi Edom team faculty Mary Vignoles and Kim Komenich.

ABOVE • Daniel Brenner continues to work on his story pitch surrounded by the workshop's favorite means of transportation.

PHOTOS BY TANZI PROPST

AT LEFT • Jessica Chen calls her potential subject outside workshop headquarters at The Colonnade.

PHOTO BY RAY WONG

The workshop's newest faculty offer sage advice from years of experience

By LOUISE HEMMERLÉ

Mary Vignoles's life took a drastic shift when her boss told her that he did not see himself as someone who failed, but as someone who tried. Breaking the failure / success dichotomy opened for her an infinite array of possibilities: two weeks after this conversation, she quit her job and went back to school to study photography.

The same exact logic could be applied to this workshop: it is not about failing or succeeding, but about learning in the process of trying. This is true for all participants, for the photographers just as for the faculty.

Beth Nakamura and Mary Vignoles are both first-time members of the faculty team. For them too, this new experience implies trying to help young photographers. As in any attempt at doing something new, some difficulties arise, and have to be constantly overcome. Not feeling entitled to be somewhere or to belong somewhere is a difficulty that has accompanied Beth Nakamura throughout much of her career: "I have always struggled with claiming myself as a gifted person in the world," she says. Beth Nakamura entered photojournalism through its back door, as she never went to journalism school. Without the opportunities and connections that it provides, "I just felt like an outsider," she says.

Even today, coming for the first time to MPW challenges her sense of entitlement and belonging. Mary Vignoles says that "it is weird not to know

anyone here. Everybody seems to know everybody". "I have never even attended a workshop", Beth Nakamura says laughing, "and yet, maybe I have something to offer". It is this feeling of lack of entitlement that Beth Nakamura wants the workshopers to overcome. If there is one advice that she wants to give them, it is: "you deserve to be here, your voice deserves to be heard". Lacking confidence, after all, is a paralyzing impediment to learning.

Mary Vignoles, a freelance picture editor, has built her career around this crucial notion of learning. First of all, she has decided to

guide her professional trajectory away from staff photography and towards picture editing because she says she has learned from good pictures editors, and has managed to expand on that. As a picture editor, she does aspire to make photographers better, but also to be herself challenged by their vision: "it's not just me pushing them," she says, "they push me too".

Among the most important things that photographers need to learn, both Mary and Beth mention the importance of knowing who you are. For Beth, it is crucial "to have self-awareness and self-reflection". In order to

sustain this self-awareness, a photographer needs to periodically find a way to reboot in order to always keep a fresh and amazed outlook on the world. Beth, for instance, will take one year off of her work next year and hopes being able to travel thanks to a \$5,000 grant provided by the crowd funding firm Viewfind.

This workshop, too, is the opportunity to revitalize your enthusiasm, to gain a new perspective, to try and to learn. As Beth Nakamura says, "a place like this can accelerate growth," so let us allow this unique opportunity to work at its full speed.

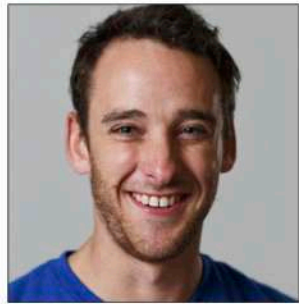


ABOVE • Beth Nakamura is a staff photographer at The Oregonian.
BELOW • Mary Vignoles is a freelance picture editor.

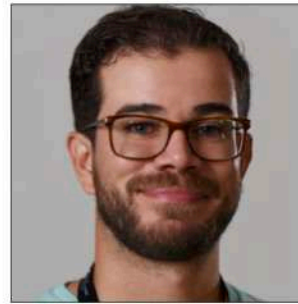
PHOTO BY TANZI PROPST AND MICHAEL CALI

**HOWARD
CHAPNICK
TEAM**

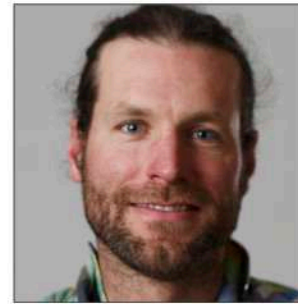
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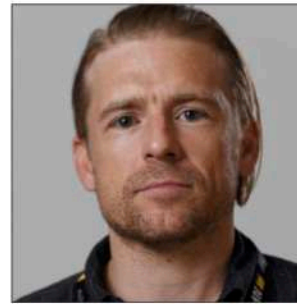
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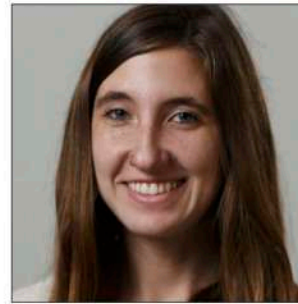
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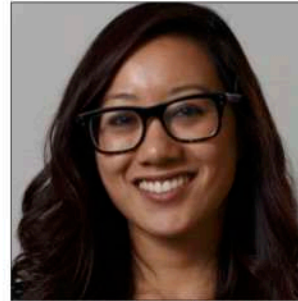
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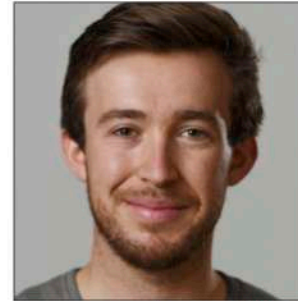
Kim Komenich
Mary Vignoles



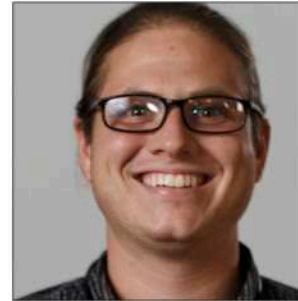
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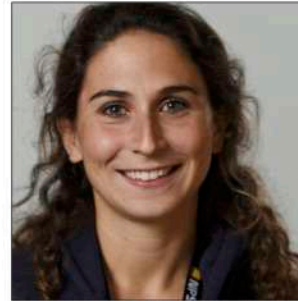
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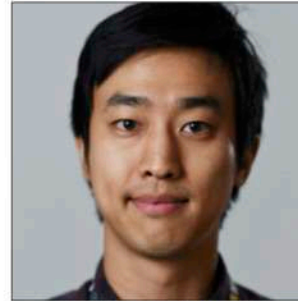
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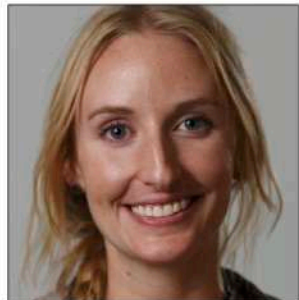
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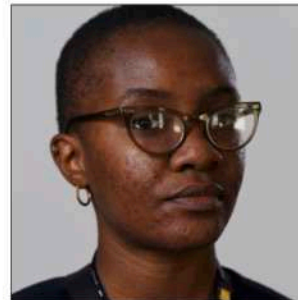
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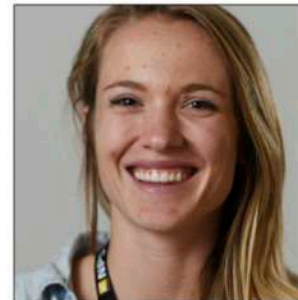
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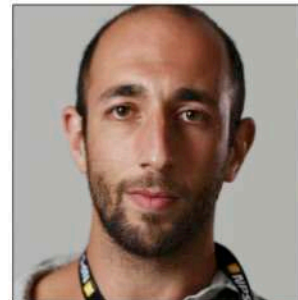
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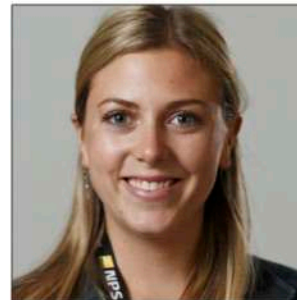
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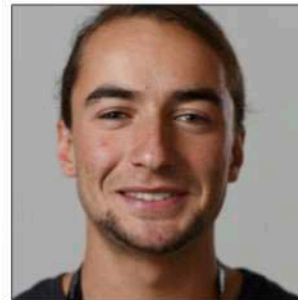
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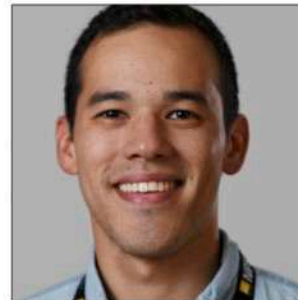
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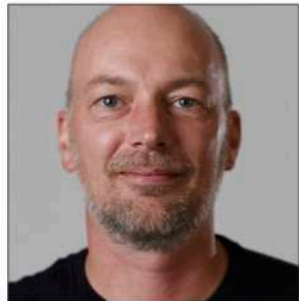
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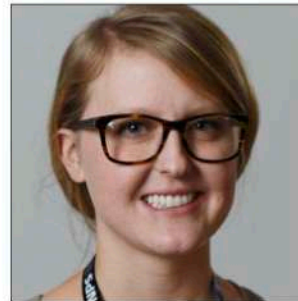
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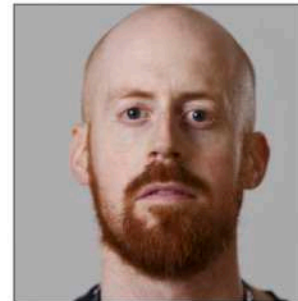
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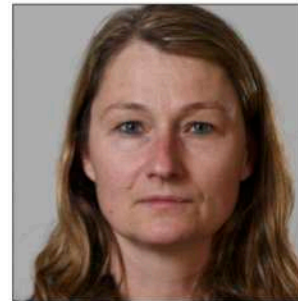
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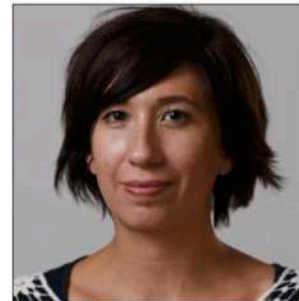
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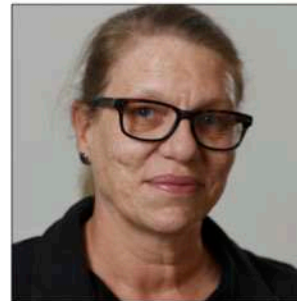
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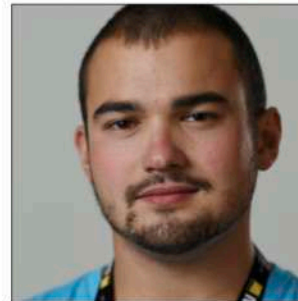
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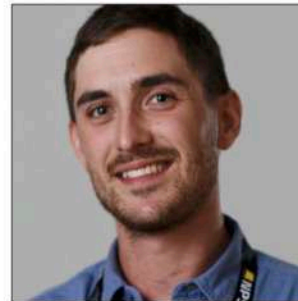
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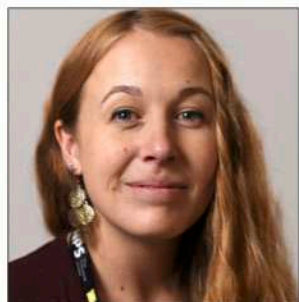
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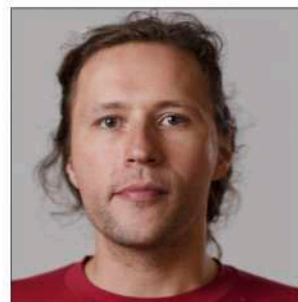
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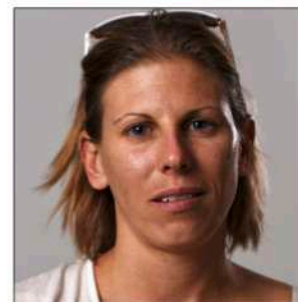
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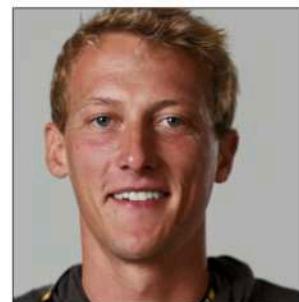
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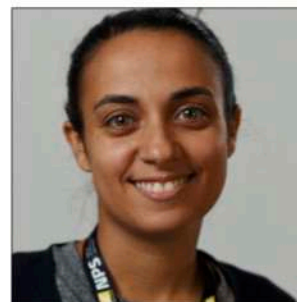
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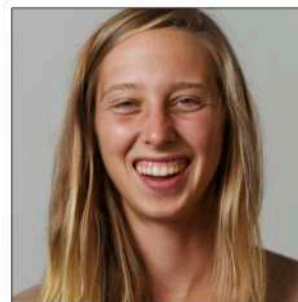
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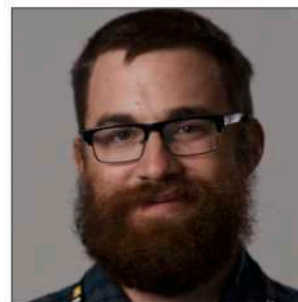
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MPW.67

**Perryville,
MO
September
19-25, 2015**

Today,
forty-one
photographers
from around
the world
are shown
at left.

Tomorrow,
Rangefinder
features this
year's
workshop
faculty
members.

Duane Dailey's daily discourse: First lessons, first day, first stories

Getting started isn't easy. It requires getting a foot in the door. That takes moving your feet, looking for the place for your photo story.

Workshopper Gabe Souza found as a news photographer in Portland, ME, "I've never found a good picture in the newsroom."

The same applies at the Missouri Photo Shop. Photo stories are waiting in the greater Perryville metro area.

You must flee the Quonset to find stories of Perryvillians. Do come back. Make card drops. Give updates to your faculty. Hope for words of encouragement.

Then go back to the scene of your search.

Long-term photographer-subject relationships are tricky to maintain. You want to be close; but don't push that interpersonal barrier too long, too often. Be subtle, but let the subject know that they don't have to entertain you. Be close, but give your subject a break. Go away physically -- walk away. Or, go away mentally.

You must share yourself to gain access. But, productive work comes when you become part of the furniture. You become accepted, comfortably. Move in and out. But let the subject know that you are there for the long haul.

Have patience to let things happen. You never become a fly on the wall, no matter how much you think that happens.

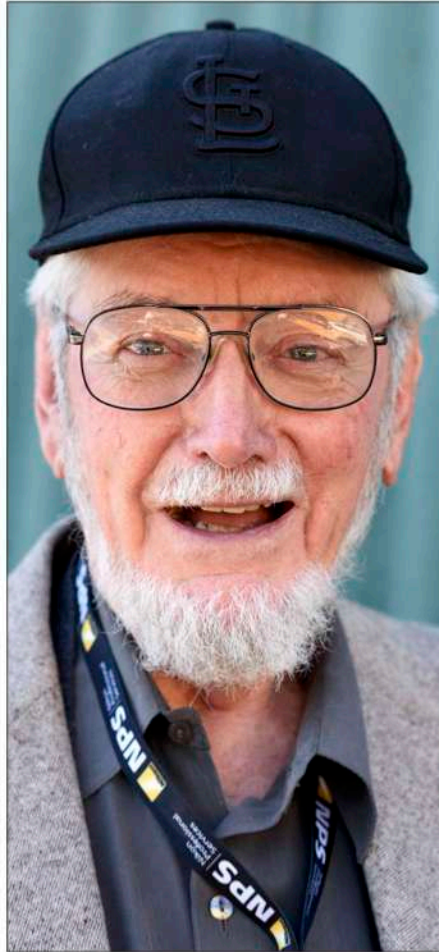


PHOTO BY TANZI PROPST

Long ago, a popular MU professor, a perennial subject for student photojournalists, said he learned to pretend they were not there. He knew they were there.

"I've never found a good picture in the newsroom."

• GABE SOUZA
MPW67 PHOTOGRAPHER

As a perceptive photographer you must see when your subject is "acting" for you. They play the role they want to be seen in.

Access requires boring in: Get closer and deeper into the action of an interesting person.

The faculty asks that you find a story that represents Perryville — and larger social issues.

Mayor Ken Baer did a great job opening night describing his town. He started with broad principles. Then, he gave examples.

One was the thrift shop of Society of St. Vincent de Paul. This morning, photographers were there. They found a place. It will require research to find a story there. What is the visual story? The manager tells of their giving. They shipped 1,000 barrels of clothing a year to Afghanistan. That is a story, a word story. It is not now. No doubt, there is a photo story there, today. But, I await a digging photographer to show me.

Your job is to convert words of abstract truths into interesting action photos. You have lots of time, days, to do that. This isn't a shoot-and-scoot daily assignment.

We don't recommend it, but terrific photo stories have been made with that "last roll of film" on the final morning.

An early start requires intense early research. That's not done on the cell phone. Go forth and become a shoe-leather beat reporter. Go look for words AND photos that build a truthful story of Perryville. Show truth.

How did MPW get here? 67 workshops, 47 different towns

By MICHAEL CALI

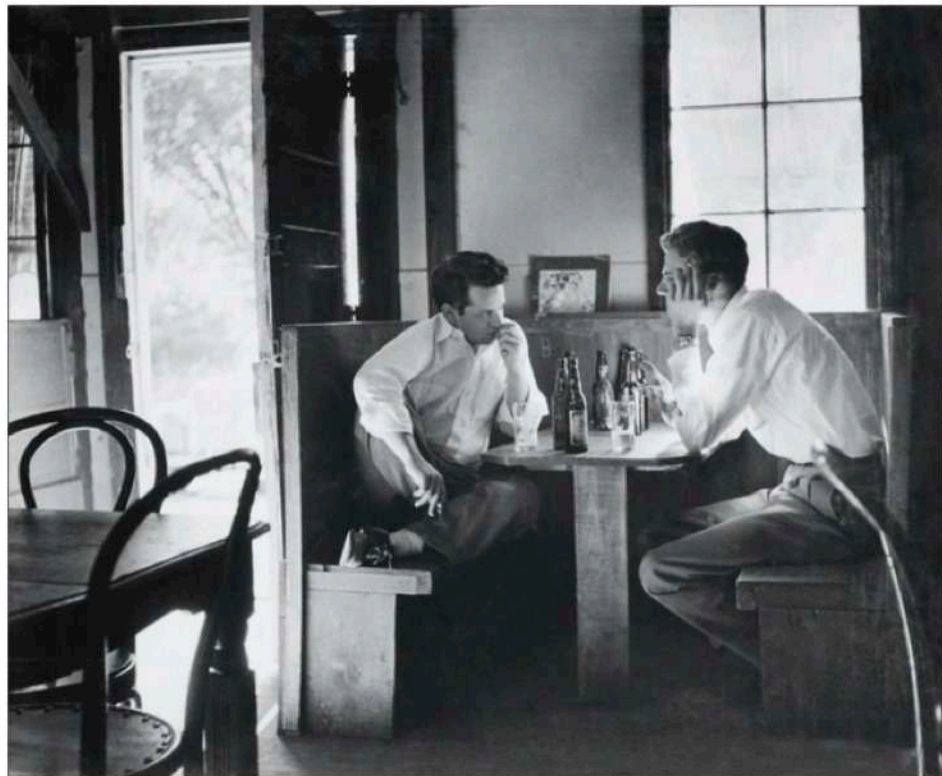
Today kicks off the 67th installment of the Missouri Photo Workshop in Perryville, Missouri. For over half a century, MPW has been documenting small towns throughout the state and the methods for choosing which town to visit are formulaic. They need to have motels, a building for headquarters, many interesting stories and, most importantly, the town has to want it.

The hunt for next year's location begins almost as soon as the workshop ends. It falls in the hands of Co-Directors David Rees and Jim Curley. They begin by looking at a Missouri map filled with dots, each representing a town where MPW has been before. "We look for gaps between those dots," said Jim Curley in a 2013 essay, "We think about where we've been the last several years and try to think about possibilities in a different quadrant of the state."

Physical location is just one of the factors that go into the decision. A prospective town has to have an infrastructure able to handle the 75 to 80 people and all the gear that travels with the workshop. "Some towns have grown and are now possible to take the workshop to and others have gone the other way; they used to be big enough and have a great motel but it disappeared for some reason," said Rees. He also said that the town has to be willing to provide a space to be used at the HQ, rent free.

Being in Missouri and having space for the MPW crew is not enough to lock down a workshop. The town also has to be interesting. Former Co-Director Duane Dailey is quoted in Curley's essay saying that county seats are very attractive options. "There's just something wonderful about those county courthouses. Throw in a town square and it can be magical," he said.

Sometimes the best argument for choosing a specific town is the fact that MPW has been there before and they are able to display a gallery of photos from the past along side photos from the current workshop. Other times, Dailey said, what



MPW #1 was during the last week of May 1949 in Columbia, Missouri. Run by Cliff and Vi Edom, it launched a long, unending line of yearly trips to small Missouri towns. This year, #67, Perryville.
PHOTO BY GERRY MOSES

makes a town attractive is that they have never been there.

Once a town has been chosen as a perspective location, the task of getting the community informed and excited begins. Dailey said in Curley's essay that the key is to contact the newspaper publisher in the town. His thinking is that if the newspaper is on your side, then that opens the door to city officials, school superintendents, and community leaders.

The road to MPW 67 being in Perryville actually began in a different town, Jackson,

Missouri. Rees and Curley traveled there to check it out and after their visit concluded that it was not the right fit. Perryville had been suggested a couple of times so they decided to make a cold call and check it out. "The folks didn't know we coming," Rees said, "but we gave our pitch and they were interested so we scheduled a time to come back." Upon their return, they dug into the town and decided it had everything they wanted and needed.

The Missouri Photo Workshop has been moving into Missouri's towns since 1949 and telling the stories of those who lived there. Over the last 67 years, every town that is chosen and every photo that is taken adds a chapter to a greater story. The story of Missouri as it evolves through time. That is why such care is taken when selecting where to hold each year's workshop.

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