

RANGEFINDER

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Laurie Baer, the owner of HIS Haven Ranch, faces a difficult decision regarding her horse Katie's future. Katie, has been the heart of the ranch for nine years, but she is waning as she approaches her 25th birthday. HIS is a non-profit faith-based therapeutic riding operation in Lexington, MN.

Photo by Pamela Sherlock

SNACK TIME

amy schaffer

Photographers fuel up at home and on the go

Gone are the days of surviving on gas station snacks in small town Missouri. Photographers at this week's Missouri Photo Workshop/Hometown Edition are enjoying the tastes and comforts of home, we know, because we talked to MPW.73 participants across the globe to see what they typically eat when heading into the field.



Jimena Rodriguez Romani - Cusco, Peru

Chicha morada, a sweet purple corn and lemon juice mixture is Jimena Rodriguez Romani's go-to liquid, in addition to water. She prefers drinking chicha morada rather than eating because of the warm climate.

"In general, [Peruvian food is] really important," Rodriguez Romani said. "I know it can sound silly, but when you go to a house and they don't serve food, it seems kind of bad. I am doing a project here and I am going to rural houses. There are a lot of poor families, but they kill you an animal to make a plate even if they don't have enough."

Right, a glass of chicha morada, along with choclo con queso, a dish Rodriguez Romani made with corn, queso andina cheese, egg and Peruvian potatoes.

Maryam Lerit Turaki - Abuja, Nigeria

"Oh my god, so unhealthy," Turaki says about Puff-Puff, the West African street food. "But if you're lucky enough to find someone frying it fresh, then you quickly stop and buy."

Maryam Lerit Turaki's taste gravitates towards the sweet side. Unlike the common Nigerian palette that heavily spices everything with pepper, Puff-Puffs are deep-fried dough balls. Other staples in Turaki's pantry include Kuli-Kuli, a fried peanut paste with pepper and ginger, chin-chin, a deep-fried cube cookie, cinnamon-covered plantain chips and Yalo, a Nigerian eggplant colloquially called the "garden egg."

"Honestly, with Nigeria, the list can go on and on and on."



Paige Southwood - Bozeman, Mont., United States

"You probably want something cute and fun... but you know those belVita [crackers]?" she said.

Paige Southwood drops her kids off at school before starting the day's work for the Missouri Photo Workshop. In between tasks, she stops at her home to grab the essential that keep her fueled through the day.

Southwood says she often keeps the dry, cinnamon-flavored breakfast biscuits in her pocket.

In what she describes as "totally cliché Montana," Southwood also keeps a bulk supply of dried mango, pineapple and kiwi at home at all times.

Lessons with Becky Lebowitz Hanger

DIGGING INTO AUTHENTICITY

amy schaffer



Becky Lebowitz Hanger at MPW.71 in Boonville, Mo. in 2019.

Photo by Maddie Davis

Generating an authentic story starts from the very beginnings of a pitch.

guns. I appreciate that. It goes with trusting your gut."

In Hanger's two previous years as MPW faculty, she has found that her favorite participants' stories all have one thing in common: empathy.

"It was very clear to me that they didn't go in thinking, 'I need to create a photo story to put in my portfolio,'" Hanger said. "They were trying to build a connection with [their subjects]. That came through in their photos, that human connection, and as a result they ended up with wonderful work which they probably did put in their portfolios, but that wasn't the end goal."

For students who get caught up in the wrong mindset, or those preemptively "making a to-do list for the next day in [their] head," Hanger notices their photos feel less compelling.

"They need to be present and open in the situation so they can feel something, so they can have a human response," Hanger says. "We, as viewers, as readers, as consumers of photos, we won't feel anything. We won't have a human response if the photographer didn't have a human response. That's how you get to a deeper feeling."

"I think we all know what human nature is, what real life looks like," Hanger says. "I don't think you need to be an expert to spot it when it feels inauthentic. There's just something there."

With more than 17 years of experience on staff at The New York Times and multiple international awards for photo

editing, Becky Lebowitz Hanger says while her extensive experience benefits her, it isn't always the only tool to gauge authenticity in photo stories.

Generating an authentic story starts from the very beginnings of a pitch. If an editor pushes back on a photographer's idea, that photographer must care enough

about their subject to explain the layers to their story. Hanger enjoys watching her students believe themselves enough to do so.

"They listened to reason, they were open to conversation and they were open to the idea that they were wrong," Hanger said. "But when they felt strongly about something, they stuck to their



Life unfolds in multiples in the Anders family. With four-year-old triplets and one-year-old twins, Nikkia Anders has her hands full every minute of the day. "You don't have time to sit and eat," Nikkia said. "Somebody's always asking for something."

Photo by Marlena Sloss



Marlena Sloss is a visual storyteller based in Northern California. Previously, Marlena was a staff photographer at The Herald in Jasper, Indiana. She has interned at The Washington Post, The Herald, The Evansville Courier and Press, and The Post and Courier. She holds a master's degree in Visual Communication from Ohio University. Marlena was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska, where she developed a love of the outdoors.

WISE WORDS

marlena sloss

At MPW72, I was able to continue working on a story I had already started working on through my staff job at the time: a profile of the Anders family, with 4-year-old triplets, 1-year-old twins and six other children. Though I had been photographing the family for months, balancing their story with my daily assignments for the newspaper always left me feeling spread thin whenever I was with them. The Missouri Photo Workshop really allowed me to find my flow with the family -- to be truly present. As a result, the best photos from the story and my best photos yet as a photographer came from that week at MPW. With a clear focus for the week thanks to the guidance of my faculty leaders Bill Marr and Sarah Leen, I was able to make pictures that combined moment, light, composition, were cohesive and felt like my vision as a photographer.

I hadn't quite put those elements all together yet in a story, and the feedback from my faculty really helped guide me and strengthen my storytelling.

Now as a freelancer, I think back on that experience often while I navigate the stories I work on. I know that my best work comes from clearing my head and being fully present with the story, so I have continued to practice that whenever I can, drawing from my experience with the Anders family. Furthermore, as I figure out what I want to prioritize as a photographer, I know that project work that I can truly spend time on is at the top of my list. Stories, and the people we photograph, deserve our complete attention and as much time as we can give them. MPW really cemented that idea for me, and I am so grateful for the experience.

"Now as a freelancer, I think back on that experience often while I navigate the stories I work on," Sloss said.



From top: While preparing dinner, Nikkia keeps her eyes on Jerrad, left, and Kristoffer. Nikkia said her biggest challenge day-to-day is having time to cook. Nikkia shows Nikkole a ripe persimmon while Jerrad wanders and Jaimi and Charity examine freshly-picked flowers in their yard. Having grown up on the same property, Nikkia knows the land well, including the fruit trees, flowers, animals and insects. She loves living out in the country and having room for herself and her children to explore and connect with nature.

BUTTONS: AN MPW TRADITION

cianna morales

“In order to make buttons,” David Rees, co-director emeritus, mused, “one must first have a button machine.

“But before you have a button machine,” he added, “you must first have the motivation to make buttons.”

While reflecting on the philosophical nature of buttons and their history at the Missouri Photo Workshop, one could trace their origin back even further: to Randy Cox, a former MPW faculty member.

Cox, a talented photographer, editor and designer was, as Rees put it, “a funster.” He was instrumental in bringing a

sense of levity to the breakneck pace of the workshop. Cox wanted to get people going, producing excellent work in a highly professional environment, but he also wanted to maintain an awareness of what the workshop was about. He did this through having fun.

And so Cox introduced a button machine. He knew how to operate it. Others soon learned.

Although missing from this year’s Hometown Edition, the workshop buttons said everything. From the MPW logo, words and phrases, to pictures of famous photographers and workshop crew and participants. There would be a new issue of buttons every day at the in-person

workshops, and participants would wrack up quite the collection.

What was Rees’s favorite button?

“I always liked the one that said, ‘Go ask Jim,’” Rees said.

Jim Curley, co-director emeritus, liked its counterpart, “Go ask Dave.”

Just as some people like collecting a lot of money in banks because it makes them feel important and powerful, others like a lot of buttons on a jean jacket.

“Because that feels even better,” Rees said.



Nervous to pitch tonight?
Here’s how MPW.71
participants crafted their
definitive statements.

