

## Through My Electronic Viewfinder

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This issue of *In Focus* contains several Letters to the Editor commenting on the nature of judging competitions for camera clubs. A good opportunity to throw in my often radical opinions on the subject.

To me, photography is a form of artistic expression. In my photography, I'm trying to tell a story; to share with the viewer a sense of what it was like to be there; to capture the essence of my subject. For me it's not about winning a contest for the sake of winning. It's not about the glory of receiving a plaque at the awards dinner. It's not even about marketing or selling my work. I just want to share with others my personal viewpoint of how I see this world.

I competed for the sake of competition when I first joined the club. Then I took a break for several years before competing again when I started printing Cibachromes from my slides. I quickly lost interest and dropped out until I bought a film scanner and started making digital prints. While my heart wasn't in it, I continued competing to help get the digital projector categories established as a few of us worked to dragged the rest of the club into the age of digital photography. Now I find my interest waning again.

For me club competition had some good points and bad points. I've learned a lot about photography by seeing other's work and hearing the judges' critique but I've always thought that the concept of scoring art is absurd. In my slide days, it forced me to go out shooting. However, using Photoshop I now have enough images to never have to shoot again. I always shot for myself and hoped to use a few of the images for competition. I find I prefer the images shot for myself much over most of my competition images. It's hard to tell a meaningful story with another bold graphic of a butterfly or a flower.

So why am I still involved in competitions? I took over as scorekeeper from Harvey about twenty years ago. He had done it for years and wanted a break. At the time Elinor and I were the only other club member with a computer and printer and Elinor was already doing the newsletter. As scorekeeper I know who's picture is being judged when it appears on the screen. Most of the audience only hear the names of the winners. I get to see how people's style and their techniques are changing over time. This is valuable learning experience for me.

What's my alternative to competitions? I'm trying to get club programs that encourage our members to share their vision of the world with us in a format that gives them feedback on the effectiveness of their storytelling.

Dick Budnik