Happy New Year!

While we were very busy helping many of you during December, we heard several questions being repeated over and over again across the counter over the phone or via e-mail. Here are some answers to some all too frequent questions:

Why are my pictures of snow so dark?
After understanding that the real issue was that the subject was too dark with properly exposed snow, the answer is that automatic cameras are fooled by the highly reflective snow. The cameras expose for the overall scene, and the subject is typically darker than the snow. The easiest solution to the problem is to use flash, so long as the subject is within flash range (which can be as close as only 5-6 feet with some long zoom cameras). If you are beyond flash range, many cameras have a setting "+1.5". Use this control which will force the camera to add exposure to the scene, thus lightening the subject. With a manual metering camera, take a reading of the subject, not the overall scene. When you shoot the picture, the camera will probably tell you that you are overexposing. Ignore the message – the camera doesn't know that you are smarter than it is.

Why don't my computer color prints from home look like regular photos?
(Most of the people who asked this question have digital cameras.)
Not all computer printers, inks and papers are designed to be equal. Most color printers use only 4 ink colors (6 are required for photorealism). Many people use copier paper for photos and are doomed to failure. Just like in conventional photography, special photographic paper is needed, and must be matched to the ink type the printer uses. Any weak link in this printer, ink paper chain will yield less than satisfactory quality. A photo quality inkjet printer can also do the work of an office inkjet, but might be a little slower.

What's the difference between a photo inkjet printer and a dye-sub (limation) photo printer?
An inkjet printer operates as its name implies – it shoots ink through a small orifice at the paper, creating a small dot of color on the paper. Some of these jets of ink are so fine that several thousand of them can fit in a one inch area! Combinations of different colored inks can make up the color space of the printed image.
A dye-sublimation printer uses a special tri-colored ribbon (donor) and a special photo quality paper (receiver). The receiver is heated and put into contact with each colored area of the donor individually, and the colored dye is transferred (via sublimation) to the receiver in various amounts. Most printers then put a clear, UV inhibiting layer on top to keep the picture's photographic quality constant over a long life span.

My new digital camera is defective. It keeps draining the batteries so I can only take a few pictures.
Although this wasn't phrased as a question, it is being treated like one. As mentioned in previous newsletters, digital cameras require a lot of current in order to work. The single biggest drain on the battery is the LCD panel on the cameras' back sides. Turning the LCD off during shooting mode will greatly extend your battery life. Most cameras have a regular viewfinder – use it.

I have a blank spot on my camera's LCD panel. What is it?
If there is a small black spot on your digital camera's LCD panel that never changes location, it is probably something called a "dropped pixel". This is a pixel which has burned out and will not affect the actual picture the camera takes. It will annoy you, however, just like dust in the viewfinder of a camera would. If your camera is still under warranty, have it serviced. If your camera is beyond the warranty period, let it annoy you. The price of the repair is so high that it rivals the price of replacing the camera.

Is anyone buying film cameras anymore?
Yes, but the majority is buying digital cameras. In most respects, the film camera is still the superior picture taker. Many of the improvements found in film cameras are not yet found in point and shoot digital cameras.

I want to copy some of my old pictures, but I can't get them out of my album. What is wrong?
In each instance of this problem, the photos were in "magnetic" or static cling pages. Photographic prints need air to circulate over their surfaces. The pages prohibit this circulation to keep the pictures from shifting position and eventually the clear sheet adheres to the page. Sometimes the prints are permanently ruined; sometimes they can safely be removed with "undo". The solution is to use archival albums with pockets.

Do I need a computer to get pictures from my digital camera?
No. You can bring the camera or its memory card to us and we will make you beautiful, long lasting prints just like you've been getting before. We can also make you an index print and put your images on CD for permanence. You can also print beautiful 4x6 (and larger) prints at home with printers from Epson, HiTouch or HP.

We have secured several hundred of Kodak's "Photo University" CD-ROM. This excellent educational tool about picture taking is available free in our stores. We don't have enough for all our customers, so stop in either Madison PhotoPlus or the Photo Summit and ask for your free copy before supplies are gone. We cannot re-order these, so don't miss out. It is a superior publication.

One of our favorite websites, www.takegreatpictures.com has a very good photo tour of many U.S. sites "Greetings from the Road", by Kristine Bosworth. Although she works for Nikon, only amateur cameras were used. What do you think?

http://www.takegreatpictures.com/articles/default.asp?aid=1168

Now is a great time to start planning for next year's holiday greeting cards. Trees and homes are still decorated, more snow will probably come, and wintry scenes will remain abundant. In this digital era, combining some of this season's images

with next autumn’s people pictures will make outstanding greetings that will be truly unique.

Have a wonderful January; we’ll be back with more news next month.

Lynne & Jerry