

We've had many new subscribers to our newsletter during 2001, so please allow me to send an edited version of last year's December news, updated for 2001.

What to take pictures of in December ... hmmm ...that's a toughie.

Avoid the most common photographic pitfalls: THINK!

Does your camera work? Not did it work last summer, or last month. Does it work **now**? Are you sure? When you finishing reading this newsletter, go pick it up and check. Does it have a fresh battery? If you use a separate flash, does it have fresh batteries? If you ever had batteries leak, are the contacts clean? If they are not, clean them with a pencil eraser or fiberglass pencil. Do NOT use sandpaper, emery boards, nail files, etc. If there is film in your camera, waste a picture by making sure it works. Wasting that one picture is inexpensive compared with a broken camera come holiday morning.

If your camera uses button batteries, change them once they are 1 year old. These batteries rarely wear out, but die because of chemical half-life. As the battery ages, its chemicals become unstable, and can leak even while putting out energy. People all too often have opened a battery door to find corroded batteries and wiring with a working battery. Don't become one of those people. Change the battery (batteries) yearly.

If your camera uses lithium batteries, as most have for the past several years, these batteries rarely leak. Up until November 17, 2000, we had only seen leaking lithiums made by Duracell (Mallory). Now we must also include Maxell, as 1 of them was found to be a leaker. Most modern cameras have a built in display telling when the battery should be changed. It is akin to an idiot light on a car dashboard - it tells you that your battery is basically dead, and considers that message to be ample warning. It's not ample during holiday times. Keep a spare set of batteries on hand. It's cheap insurance.

AA and AAA alkaline batteries are batteries whose performance is hard to predict. These batteries tend to taper in output, so you can tell when they are weakening. Recent "improvements" in battery technology have created a situation where these batteries have been found leaking while working. In fact, we are noticing that some of the Varta AA alkalines we sold with 1998 dating are leaking in some cameras and flashes. These are way beyond dating, and should have been replaced some years ago, but were overlooked by the owners. Varta will still cover the damage under their leakage warranty, but December is not the time to get rush service. Play safe by checking & replacing your batteries.

If you do have a leakage problem, DO NOT THROW THE BATTERIES AWAY!

Bring in your damaged apparatus with the bad batteries, so we can prove to the battery manufacturer that it was **their** batteries that did the damage. Without the bad batteries, neither of us has a chance.

Buy more film than you think you'll need. Everyone runs sales on multipacks this time of the year. Stock up! In 2001, all the film companies are putting more emphasis on multipacks than on individual rolls. They have also discontinued many films, and are discontinuing short and long exposure rolls. Kodak discontinued all 12 and 15 exposure rolls, almost all 36 exposure rolls (in color print film) and ISO 100 films. Fuji is also about out of 100 speed films, and is getting out of the 12-exposure business. Agfa is also phasing out 100 speed print film. If there's a film you especially like, buy big now, remembering that film doesn't age when frozen, so pack up your freezer after the holidays. Leftover film keeps better than leftover turkey.

For better-looking holiday snapshots, take pictures of the young ones **before** the candies and cookies are eaten. Sugar makes the eyes dilate and red eye becomes more apparent.

When shooting the Christmas tree, menorahs, etc., determine whether you want to capture the item producing the light, or another subject illuminated by those lights. The meter in your cameras can handle the latter, but not the former. If your camera is automatic only, it can't shoot the tree, menorah, etc. correctly. You must turn the automation off and meter the item with the lights or candles off, and then use that exposure with the light sources active.

When shooting outdoor illuminated displays at night, remember to turn your flash off. The exposure is too long to hand hold, so be sure to use a tripod with a remote release or self timer. The colder the weather, the shakier we all are; you can't compensate for that. Use a tripod, no matter how small it is.

When taking pictures indoors without flash, remember that your exposure system will be fooled when you shoot towards a window or a lamp. Take your exposure reading up close to negate the effects of the backlighting from these sources. Automatic cameras will not work well in this situation. If you force your camera to use the flash, you'll get better results.

2001 seems to be the year of the rebate. Almost every day a new rebate is introduced on very desirable equipment. Some rebates are for up to 50% of the price of an item. The products range from film to cameras, lenses to flashes, and digital cameras to camcorders to printers. What a year.

I have been asked to include a few suggestions for a gift list, so here goes:  
(I apologize for the commercial)

under \$20 -

inova lights, microfiber lens cleaning cloths, film, spare batteries, photo album, video tape, comfortable neoprene camera strap

under \$50 –

instructional video tapes, a framed enlargement, Cokin or Promaster filters, leather camera case, lead lined bag (to keep film safe when going through airport security), film, memory cards, photo or astronomy books, table top tripod

under \$100 – Polaroid digital izeone camera (for children), a good camera case or gadget bag, photographer's vest, polarizing filter, camcorder battery, monopod, photo inkjet printer, Meade telescope

under \$200 – Epson 785EPX printer (a fantastic value), ScanAce P1800U film scanner, Fuji "Tiara" camera, Konica Revio Z2 camera, binoculars, Canon Elph cameras, various other compact 35mm and Advanced Photo System cameras, photo backpack, Epson 1650 flatbed scanner, better Meade telescope

We are always asked, "How much is a good digital camera?". They are almost all good, but they basically differ in how large a picture you can make from the resolution of the camera's chip. Here's a rough idea from print size.

e-mail only	under \$100
4x6	\$200
5x7	\$299
8x10	\$499

Above this price, you get more zoom, better glass, more features, larger print sizes, faster digital processing, the ability to crop, and more.

We had hired an "expert" to maintain our e-mailing list for this newsletter. He is gone, and we think we have finally found all of you whom he had deleted from our database. There were a lot of you. Please accept our apologies for your temporary omissions.

Thank you all for your patronage this past year. Not only do we appreciate your business, but also we appreciate you as people. Even though from time to time we may all experience awkward situations, we are all aware that one another has a bad moment or day, and the overall experiences between us all is excellent. We don't always consider the other persons' perspectives when we are rushed or upset. In this season of brotherly love, let us all overlook each other's faults, and enjoy all those positive attributes we each share. The old saw about counting our blessings is never more apropos than this 2001 holiday season.

Speaking for our entire staff, we wish you and your families a healthy and happy holiday season, and that all your plans turn out as expected. We look forward to serving you in 2002 and beyond. Enjoy life!

Jerry & Lynne