

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! Remember 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.

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 holiday season.

Speaking for our entire staff, we wish you a healthy and happy holiday season, and that all your plans turn out as expected. We look forward to serving you in 2001 and beyond. Enjoy!

Jerry & Lynne