

# RCC 365/52 Photo Challenge for 2021

Things are looking very virtual at least for the first half of 2021. It's anybody's guess when we'll be able to physically meetup to share ideas and show the photos that we've taken or made. And yes, there is a difference as Ansel Adams once opined: "The camera takes the photo, the photographer makes the photo." But to quote Hamlet: "... therein lies the rub." What is there in our new reality that forces or inspires us to take the time to keep up our skills — and to learn new ones?

What with social distancing, wearing masks in public, and staying away from crowds it may be that the inspiration to get out and shoot may be a bit stifled. Bad habits can be as easily formed as good ones and when we don't meet with like-minded friends once a month to share ideas and recharge our technical and creative skills it may be the beginning of a bad habit, eg, "It's too (you fill in the excuse) to shoot today," or "I can't think of anything worth shooting," and et cetera. Remember that "excuses are the nails that build a house of failure." You only get better at something when you do it often, learn from your failures, and continue to practice diligently, and by that I mean shooting with a purpose, not just clicking the shutter.

With that in mind, and with the objective to make sure you continue to get out and shoot, here's my proposal:

- ***Take at least one photo every day.*** JUST DO IT! No excuses!
  - It doesn't have to be a photo outing, just find a subject in or around your house, garden, or neighborhood. Maybe even the family pet. How does morning or evening light differ?
  - Practice with still life subjects, maybe the items in a cupboard, the books on a shelf, house plants or flowers, etc.
  - Pick one room and look for a subject. It doesn't have to be "art worthy," the objective should be for you to get a technically good image in the camera and then try to improve it in post-processing. Get creative, have fun, don't burn out but do it everyday. Some days you might spend an hour, some days just a few minutes.

- ***Here are a few personal challenges that I use.***

- **Lens Type:** Pick one lens to work with. If it's a zoom lens, work with the extreme focal lengths, ie, shoot one day at wide angle and another day at telephoto, ideally at the same location. This will force you to see things differently especially as it relates to context and composition. Need a lens primer? Click here > > >



- **Aperture Setting:** Next day work with aperture variables: shoot only wide open on one day and stopped down the next. This will help yo appreciate depth of field, and when shooting with a small aperture you'll learn how shutter speeds are affected. Here's a YouTube video explaining Aperture settings and how they affect the final image.



- **Shutter Speed:** On another day (or night!) practice with very short or very long shutter speeds. This will help you appreciate the show-motion and stop-motion capabilities of shutter speed. Remember that you'll need a moving subject to get the best results. You'll see the effects of shutter speeds in showing or stopping motion of the subject and also the effects of camera motion when hand-holding during long exposures.





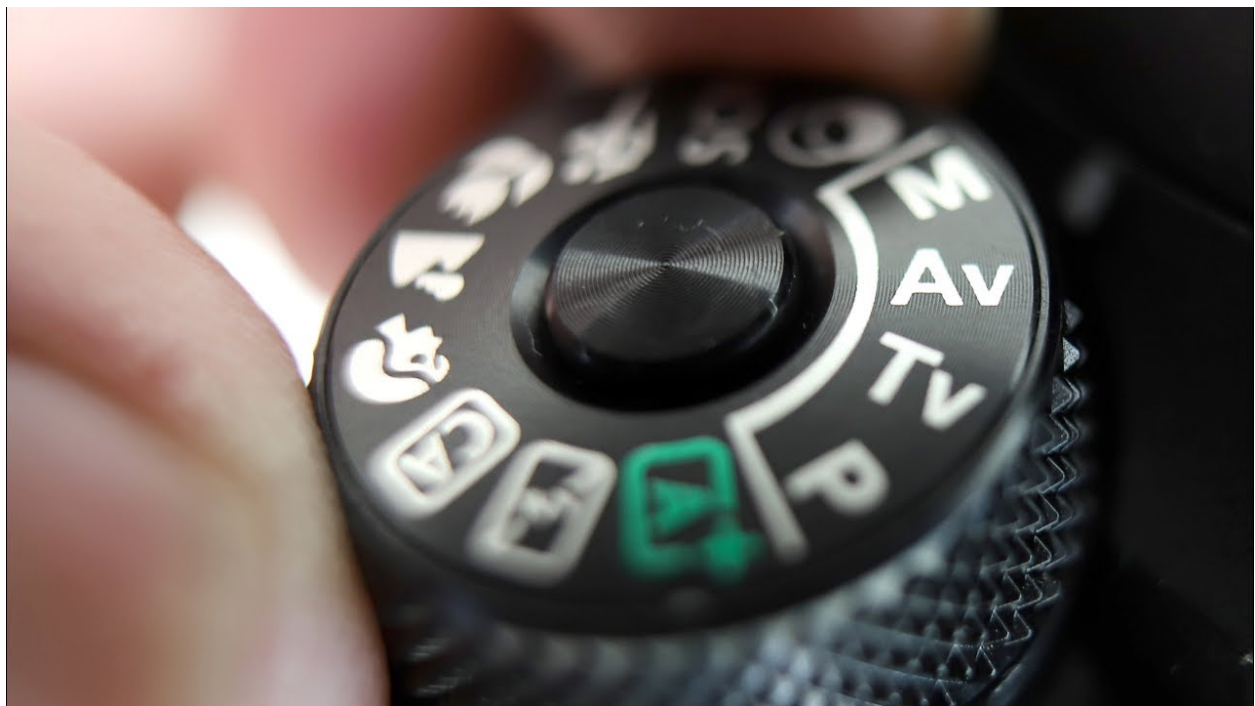
- **Light Painting:** Shoot a long exposure scene that you've painted with light. This could be an outdoors scene shot at night, or (in this weather) a still life scene shot indoors with no light except what you add. This will help you appreciate how single flashlight can add light to a scene if the exposure is long enough. Practice this by exposing the scene first without the light, then again by adding light. Here's a short video showing a very simple light painting setup indoors.



- **Panning:** Select a moving subject (traffic, sports, etc) and pan the camera with the subject during the exposure. When done properly, the moving subject will appear still, sharp, and in focus while the background will show motion blur. (Google "panning photo ideas" to see examples and search You Tube for videos on "how to" tips on panning. Here's a link:



- **Experiment With Exposure Modes:** While a serious photographer should learn to be comfortable with shooting in Manual Mode, you should also understand how the other modes work and when to use them. There are occasions to use the preset modes of Shutter Priority or Aperture Priority, and other (more desperate times!) where Program Mode or Auto Mode might be the solution. But you need to understand how they work and how they affect the final image. Here's a link that will help you decide which exposure mode to use . . .



- **Finally:** While it's great to get you out there and shooting, displaying your photos and getting some feedback will also help you learn and prevent you from working in a vacuum. So, having talked all along about the 365 day challenge of shooting, let's now talk about the 52 -week challenge of displaying your photos . . .
- ***Post a photo once a week.***
  - Select a favorite photo from each week's shooting and Email your weekly submission along with a comment that might include technical data and maybe what inspired you to take the shot no later than Saturday of each week to the club's email (rockcameraclub@gmail.com). Your submission should be in JPEG sized on the long side at 1200 pixels. Bob Kovach will place the submittals on the club website for all members to view.

Since we want to see your best Photo of the Week, using this naming convention will provide a bit of context to what we're seeing:

**Week-1\_(Your Name)\_(Subject)**

**Here's the rationale for the naming . . .**

- **Week-1** will identify the weekly category that you're posting your photo
- **\_John Doe** (I know it seems obvious, but just in case . . .)
- **Macro** (for example, to identify what you were trying to practice, the "why" of your shot. The "why" of your shot can refer to whatever technique, mode, or subject you are practicing so don't be tied down to this short list of examples:
  - Macro
  - Portrait
  - Landscape
  - Depth of Field/Aperture
  - Fast Shutter
  - Slow Shutter
  - Low Light
  - Direct Light
  - Shadows
  - Exposure Mode
  - Etc.

As an example, here is a label for a light painting experiment I took after the RCC night shoot in early November:

Week-1\_ChuckAlvarez\_Light Painting



So let this be your starting point for 2021. Join other RCC members in maintaining and improving your photo skills by shooting daily and posting your favorite shot weekly.

Week 1 begins on Monday, Jan 4!

Let's continue this journey together!!!

*Chuck Alvarez, President, RCC*

And special thanks to Ellen Martin (an RCC founding member) for suggesting a 365 project.