

*An Interview with Rick Jackson  
By Mark Hamilton  
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*Mark: Tell us a bit about who you are?*

Rick: I would say that I am a son to my 88 year old mother, a brother to a sister and two brothers, a husband to Connie (my best friend, we have been married 35 years), a father of two: a daughter (who is the only girl of the entire generation) and son who both have college degrees of which I am very proud plus they are self supporting! I am a grandfather of four, two granddaughters and two grandsons, which I love very much. I am facing the dreaded "double nickel" birthday in October. All the above having happened in that order, and after reading the above I believe I have officially gone to seed.

*Mark: How long have you been a photographer & can you recall what got you interested?*

Rick: Connie has been an amateur photographer for over thirty years. She bought me a digital camera for a birthday in 2005 and it was officially on. I immediately recognized the ability to improve your own photography with the quick link between the act of taking the picture and seeing the result. We took a couple of photography classes together and I believe in the fall of that year the OVCC was reincarnated and we joined. I was very intimidated at that first competition of the talent of those present, but Larry Rees encouraged me. I stayed and after awhile began to win some competitions.



"Live to Skate"

*Mark: Did you have any early experiences or mentors at the OVCC that helped shape your style of art?*

Rick: Larry Rees provided a great deal of encouragement with both Connie and myself. He made us feel at home at the old Huntington Photo Lab where the first competitions were held. We became friends with many of the old club members that helped things along well. The atmosphere there was a little more adult than it is now and I seemed to blend in to that well. We had a lot of laughs during that period, but everyone still produced a lot of good images. I have seen many of the prints of the older club members and have a great deal of respect for their work.

Some of my [non-OVCC] influences would have to be Galen Rowell, of Mountain Light Photography, who tragically died with his wife in an airplane crash. I enjoyed his work tremendously. He once wrote "My interest in photography did not begin with a burning desire to see the world through a camera, it evolved through the intense devotion to the wilderness that eventually shaped all parts of my life and brought them together."

Through my prints I would like to take my friends to places that are hard to navigate to, through my efforts that they might enjoy them as well. Unspoiled places are a delight to Connie and I. These places seem to be of great value to our humanity, they inspire all areas of our lives. We would spend the rest of our lives enjoying these places if given the opportunity. If you take the time to enjoy just a small amount of the beauty of these great places your world is truly enriched.

*Mark: That's a great philosophical statement that explains your photography well. Where are some of your favorite areas to photograph? Do you have any one memorable trip or area that seems special?*

Rick: As I said before, Connie purchased a digital camera(for me) for a birthday , I think a Vivitar point and shoot. Something clicked inside me when I began to get decent photographs. In everything people do, I believe most strive to improve. When the results are better on a specific shot I think the scientist in you seeks to discover the little distinctions that make that difference. Which most times can be small differences in f stops or exposures. Since I shoot nearly everything in manual mode (set your own f stops and shutter times) you can quickly learn how to achieve better results. I tend to revisit areas that I have taken shots that I believe can be improved to the point of being a little OCD. Sometimes this requires a night out of town which Connie and I enjoy.

Connie and I have taken countless trips all over the territory to photograph. Sometimes business requires travel and we turn that into a photo junket- though it tends to add a lot of travel time. As we are old, we have to take this into account. Florida is a fantastic place to take avian photos. The Gulf of Mexico is absolutely beautiful. Hocking Hills near Logan, Ohio is a great way to spend a day or a weekend, and could be compared to a mini Smokey Mountain trip, travel there only after rain storms to see the falls in all their glory. I have hiked and photographed both and they are very similar. Now we are revisiting the New River Valley in West Virginia nearly all the time especially after hard rains in the region. Though I fully expect a terrible fall during strenuous hikes-good photos are mostly in very rugged places. This spring and

summer I have been growled at by a bear and rattled at by a rattlesnake, sometimes you really need to watch your feet as well as that great photograph that awaits. On weekends we visit old towns around the region that are a bit past prime but still have a lot to give photographically. We do macro photography around our home or farm, anywhere can be a photographic adventure. All and all photography has greatly enriched our lives.



"Columbine"

*Mark: Can you touch on the use of your equipment, your methods, etc.*

As you know I shoot in manual, meaning I set the aperture and exposure. I find that with this method I am able to define the detail and saturate the colors to my taste- instead of the cameras. It can be a little taxing in situations where you have to shoot quickly such as moving subjects, but in that case I quickly switch to the program mode and let the camera make the selections. It is not always a terrible thing to turn your camera off the program mode into the manual mode- sometimes with a little practice your shots will improve. Some shoot aperture priority, program, or other modes. Find what is best for you personally and do it. I am fascinated with the use of prime (fast fixed focal lens, 1.2, 1.4, 2.8) with the quality of the shot and with beautiful definition and detail even in low light situations. The resulting lens bokeh- the distortion that occurs when you use these lenses with these apertures (shallow dof) adds a definite aesthetic quality. This works great in portrait and macro photography. I think anyone could quickly improve their photography just by buying the best fixed focal lens they can afford and using them whenever possible.



"Spring Promise"

*Mark: Any words of advice to other OVCC members?*

If you are truly interested in photography, read all you can. The internet is a great source of photography know how. Connie and I subscribe to several photo magazines and have a good selection of photography books. Ask polite questions of people with more experience- most are more than happy to share their knowledge. When you see shots of a particular interest to you, ask the photographer how he was able to capture that shot, sometimes it is just that easy. Don't be shy or intimidated , everyone in this club started just like you and me- shy and intimidated. Get over it. Have the courage to ask folks to take their pictures in public situations. Many people will eagerly act as subjects if you offer to email them some of your photos. Sometimes just at this offer they will grant you special access to the situation- a photographers dream.

Our experience with photography is that it opens doors both socially and intellectually. Connie and I just this week drove to Pomeroy, Ohio to photograph the new cable suspension bridge built there and on the way stopped at a state wetland to check it out. A few minutes into the photography we met the man who had donated the property to the state(he was very reclusive at first) but when he saw we were photographers we talked for nearly an hour about his donation to the state. The wetland is named after him.

I may be biased but I believe that our club represents some of the best talent in the area. This is further proven by the wins that are experienced by our members when they enter in art shows. Our competitions represent a wide variety of talent and styles but are not an end in themselves. Read, learn, ask, practice your love of photography, and get ready for some degree of public speaking because at some point it will be required of you. We need folks to do programs and outreach for our club so we can continue to learn and grow. Some of the best ways to learn and fellowship with our members is to attend photo walks and outings. Some of the best times Connie and I have had with the club has been attending walks and outings. Be nice -be helpful to those who want to learn. It is our club's future.

Best wishes to all our members and good shooting. Rick