

Mike Strong - Imaging and Reporting

Getting it across and working harder than ever

<http://www.MikeStrongPhoto.com>

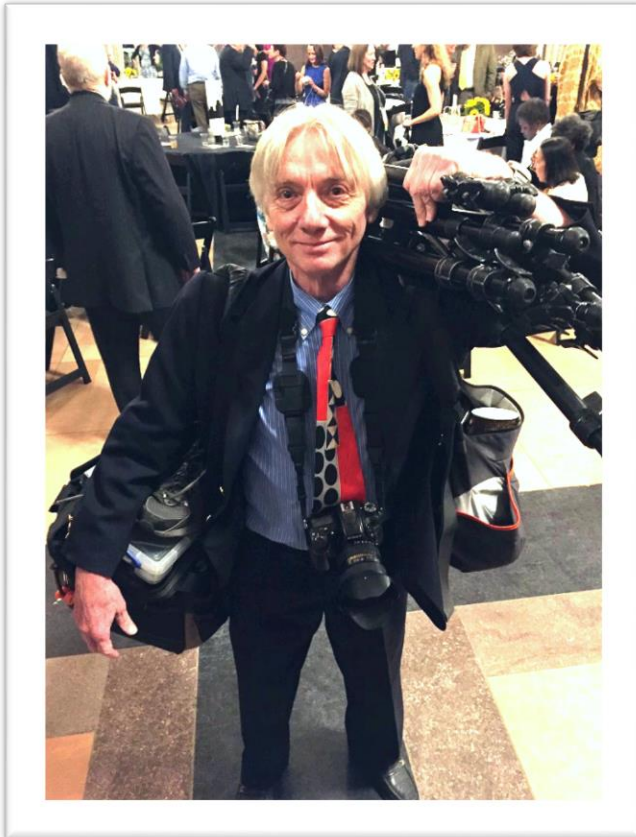
http://www.mikestrongphoto.com/CV_Galleries/Video_Links_online.htm

<http://www.kcdance.com>

my resume and portfolio site

video samples (*see more at the bottom*)

my site for dance in the KCMO area



LEFT: Me (photo by Kevin McKinney), packing out after covering Dance/USA in June 2017. Tripods over my left shoulder, video cameras in the big bag (my right) and still camera and lens in the small bag on my left.

Most of my life, at least since 1967, I've spent with a camera in my hand or slung over my neck and shoulders. As a child I did the usual drawings. My mother also drew and she painted. Somewhere around third grade my mother bought me a Jon Gnagy drawing kit. She had just re-married and moved to Columbus, Nebraska. It was the first time we actually owned a television. Before I had only watched television at the neighbors or at my grandparents' house. It was 1955. I was 8 going on 9.

A television station in Lincoln, Nebraska broadcast Jon Gnagy's "Learn to Draw" show. We watched religiously. Later, my mother signed me up for drawing and painting lessons from a local painter, Mrs. Mary Dodendorf, in Columbus. She would drive me to Mrs. Dodendorf's where I would work on oil paintings in the lady's basement where she had arranged cubicles for her students and drying racks to hold our paintings between lessons.



We had a Brownie 127 Twin Lens Reflex camera I could use, my mothers' Brownie. Later I was given a Kodak Brownie Starflash camera and later still a Polaroid swinger. But at that point all developing and printing was still at either the drugstore or the local photo studio / camera store, Landgren's Studio, except for the Polaroid, of course.

I no longer have the picture but I can still remember a photo I took on that twin lens reflex from a canoe on a local lake, a developed sand pit with trees planted and houses around. I held the camera from mid canoe pointed forward. The bow triangle bisected the lake and the trees beyond. That was probably my first real photograph. One whose image stuck with me, even today.

1967



Frank O'Neill in the journalism photo room 1967-8. Left reading the campus newspaper, right working with a student.

Those are foundational imaging memories for me but I mark my real start in photography to the summer of 1967, a change in majors, at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, to broadcast journalism and a photography course with Frank O'Neill, my only teacher in my only photo course. I was so engaged that I spent all my spare hours in the journalism photo lab. I was invited to be a lab assistant and worked there for the 1967-68 school year.

That is where I first learned to write for broadcast. I had been on my high school newspaper but don't remember what I wrote. That is where I first heard the already very old "Tell them what you are going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you just told them." In other words a preview (or "scaffolding" in academic speak), an accounting and a review. Avoid pronouns and use full nouns. Your audience will be lucky to retain 5%.

Our teachers were working broadcasters at the local television stations and retired broadcasters, one of whom had been a CBS Reports producer.

That repetitive set of story points to aid retention also fit in with what my uncle told me about his area of work, programmed learning. He was very good in the early days of programmed learning at looping information, reinforcing right answers and repeating points that were missed. The "machine" combined the reader, the printed-text arrangement and a sheet of red acetate which would cover the red-ink answer keys printed on the pages.

"Programmed Learning" turned into a buzzword and before long cheap imitations were being marketed, essentially reverting to little more than text and questions, eventually discrediting almost anything using that term. But I never forgot the effective work done earlier. It was not easy, was time consuming and highly skilled.

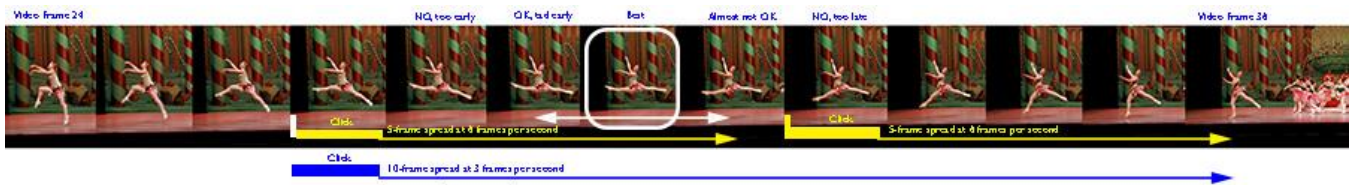
In that photography class the cameras were 4x5 Speed Graphics and Crown Graphics. Those are the types of "press cameras" you see in old movies. In 1967 most were being retired from regular use. Medium format and 35mm (called miniature at the time) had taken over. The terms medium and miniature were relative to 4x5-inch film as the standard size.

We were using the 4x5's because they had large and simple controls, because they forced you to think before shooting and because they were built like tanks. A film holder had two sheets of film. A pack might carry 8 to 10 film holders and changing them to take another shot took 20-30 seconds or longer. The acronym FAST stood for Focus, Aperture, Shutter, Take.

The time required to shoot a frame also required more care in selecting shots.

Frank O'Neill told us a story about being a young news photographer with twin-lens reflexes using roll film which allowed them to shoot 12 frames per roll. They could shoot much faster than an "old guy" news photographer who, using Speed Graphics and film holders, still managed to get that above the fold picture again and again while their own pictures were in the back pages.

The lesson was that the "old guy" (probably younger at the time than Frank O'Neill was when telling us) knew where to place himself, what to look for and when to shoot. The "young guys" shot too much. That's a lesson carried forward with digital cameras. The ease of shooting more frames per unit of time can give you more choices but it can also make you careless, leaving you with fewer choices.



In the picture above, I've put together a strip of video frames at 30 frames per second. The thick underlines represent still-camera clicks shot in "continuous" mode. The underlines show how many frames go by at each rate. The blue line represents 3 frames per second and the yellow lines represent 6 frames per second. The outlined frame is the ideal selection. Even at 6 frames per second the outlined frame, the best one, stands only a 1 in 5 chance of being clicked in continuous mode on a still camera and here it gets missed.

With digital, I can shoot many frames per second - wasting shots and opportunities. The best reason to use a camera which can shoot multiple frames in a second is not for those frames, but for the ability to have an instant response when you press the shutter as well as the ability to press the shutter again, rapidly and repeatedly, but always picking and choosing the shots.

I never use "continuous drive" (what used to be motor drive). I've often been asked by dancers why the newspapers never seem to get the exact top moment in a move. Usually off to the side of the right time.

The photographers shoot a lot, the dancers say. That's the problem, I return. There is a rhythm to all movement and that goes specifically to the point with dance. Everything happens "in" the music structure and continuous drive is anything but musical.

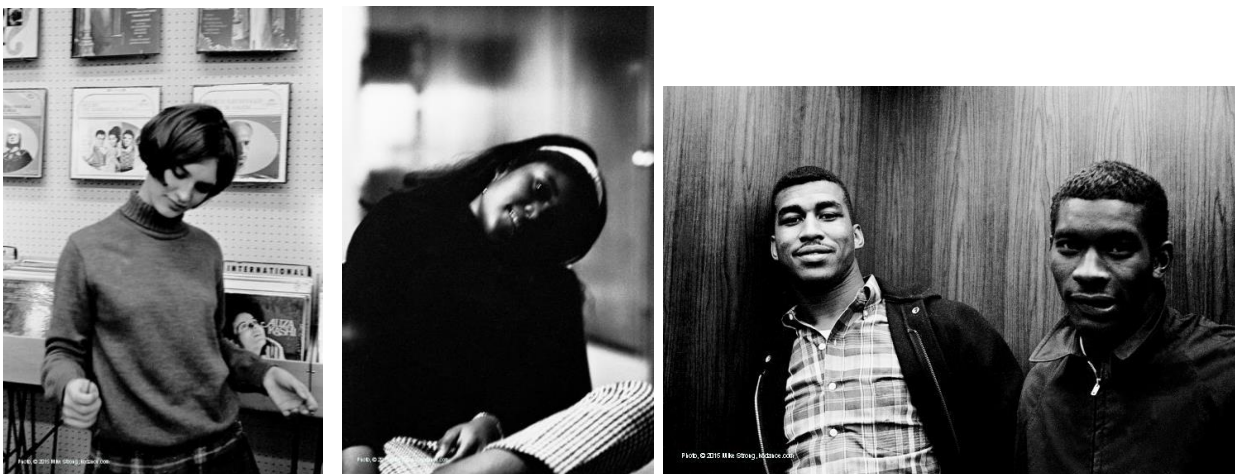
We'll come around to that later. It wasn't until 1994 that I took up dance and brought the camera with me and it wasn't until the early 2000's that tap dance gave me a different sensory awareness when shooting. Until 1994 I was as clueless as any other non-dancing photographer regarding dance. But dance or not, I've never used motor drive as a means to get photographs.



Two studio projects from the class and a "candid" of a couple in a window of the dorm cafeteria (35mm, 4x5, 35mm Canon) summer 1967

I had a good picture eye from the start of that only photo lesson in the summer of 1967. I didn't have the technical skill or the print eye to make the most of what I shot when making prints. My prints were still flat and I was overworking the burn and dodge by using condenser enlargers rather than a diffused light source. I learned as I kept working in the darkroom. It was also when I began carrying a camera with me almost everywhere almost everytime I went somewhere.

I started with my uncle's 6x6cm twin lens Yashica. I loved it but dropped it and broke a corner off. I had to pay him for his camera. So I purchased a Leica knock-off Canon, a rangefinder camera like what my dad brought back from Korea. It was absolutely superb with a great lens. It also had a shutter-bounce problem the camera store couldn't fix. Eventually they gave up and traded me for an Afga rangefinder (did I tell you how much I loved rangefinders and how much I miss them?).



1967: Left: One of my pictures with the Agfa. Defective rangefinder or not, it was nice to work with. Right side: Canon 35mm RF

The Agfa seemed to work fine until I realized the focusing mechanism wasn't working right for near objects. This time I traded them for a set of Nikon extension tubes in late 1967 then saved up for the Nikon SLR I would finally buy mail order from 47th Street Camera store in New York City in August 1968. By then I had a season in working radio news and was about to enter the Air Force.



After I traded the Agfa for the Nikon extension tubes I was without a camera of my own so I borrowed cameras. As a lab assistant I could check out cameras from the lab. My favorite was a Contax rangefinder with a Nikon bayonet lens mount so could fit Nikon lenses. It also had a thin, corrugated metal shutter rather than the standard (at the time) cloth shutter.

I had it with me when Robert Kennedy came through on his primary campaign tour in early 1968. I'd mounted a Nikon 105mm f/2.5 lens on the rangefinder and had an auxiliary viewfinder in the shoe mount on top of the camera. I moved back and forth with the subject to keep it in focus and in frame (zooms were neither common nor sharp then).

Here Kennedy is standing in the back of a Cadillac convertible talking to the crowd outside before heading inside for a speech. The focus is at 4 feet with the 105mm lens. Keeping him in focus meant developing a sense of distance then keeping your camera at the focused distance, both for focus and to maintain the same information in the frame.

In those days you often set focus on manual scales based on your own estimate of distance. Autofocusing was non-existent. Focusing aids were either rangefinders (in the camera or as an attachment), ground glass and tape measures. So you worked at recognizing distances the same way you worked at knowing light levels. I would borrow a light meter and memorize readings from various situations and I would borrow a rangefinder attachment, memorizing the look of an assortment of distances. There are a lot of times I miss that, especially when autofocus either doesn't lock or locks on something behind my subject. It was clean, simple and direct.

There were other accommodations, such as the method of winding film. Many cameras had winding levers but many cameras simply had winding knobs on top. The Contax had a knob so I developed a technique of dragging my finger across the knob to wind the film in one operation, similar to a lever.

By the end of that school year I was out of school and back in Columbus working for KTTT as a news reporter. In addition my duties included engineering for a polka program (Big Joe Polka Show with Joseph Siedlik, who died of cancer in 2015 – pronounced SHED-lick) and spinning records for another polka program. I was also the only radio employee to bring a camera along on the job.

The Air Force: By mid-summer my draft number was coming up but I had been in Civil Air Patrol (an Air Force auxiliary) since 1960 which primed me for the Air Force. I enlisted and my Civil Air Patrol service got me one stripe, just going in. I tried to sign up for photography but I am color blind, "partial red/green deficiency" was the diagnosis, a surprise to me and my family because of my painting as a kid. Suddenly my grandmother was asking me about the colors around me. A bit silly as I see most colors well and only have problems with certain delicate shades of red or green. But then my grandfather was also color blind, more so than me.

Color blindness meant no photo career in the Air Force. Instead they sent me to a field which, in part, serviced photo mapping, geodetic computer, and sent me to the Army Engineer School in Ft. Belvoir for training where the job title was topographic computer. Same job, different words. In that class we had 18 Air Force, 3 Marines, 2 Army and 1 Navy. All of us learning to do computations with higher math than what had prompted my leaving an engineering program at the university to go to journalism. Fate determined I would have math in my life.

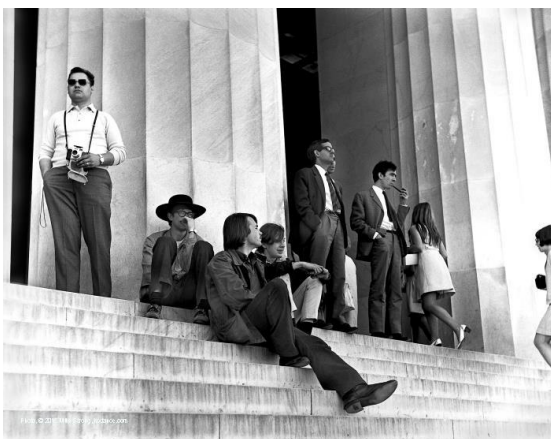
Ft. Belvoir is just outside Washington D.C. and on a trip into the district I purchased a Yashica Mat 2 ¼ (6x6 cm) Twin Lens Reflex to use. It shot 120 roll film and that camera went with me everywhere.



The National Archives – Yashica Mat Twin Lens Reflex



Above I am on a weekend pass from Ft. Belvoir, in New York City being quite serious and photographic. On the left in my room at the NYC “Y” and on the right a double exposure combining my room at the “Y” and one of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Both on that Yashica Twin Lens.



In my zeal to be artistic, on a weekend trip to Mt. Vernon, I avoided all touristy shots and took pictures into the ground of stairs and into the air of willow branches. I should have taken those touristy shots.

The shots of sidewalks and willow branches were pretty silly which I realized as soon as I developed the film. The price of art.

Those “touristy” shots probably would have been artistic or at least interesting, like this one (left) of visitors to the Lincoln Memorial in early 1969, with “real” hippies, a novelty to me at the time. Yashica Mat 6x6 twin lens.



At left is a shot of myself (on timer) visiting the capitol. Check out those pants. The style is back in fashion, only 50-60 years later. Again, that Yashica Mat 6x6 twin lens.

After I got to my duty station, F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, my first visit was to the local camera store, Great Western Camera Exchange. I eventually worked there part time.

I started in the office checking field computations and transferring them to our main computer, at the time a Burroughs, which took up a full room and had 64 kb of memory, the same memory which the Commodore 64 would have in the early 1980's. Then came my first TDY (temporary duty) job traveling with our surveyors as the computer.

Once I got a taste of TDY (traveling) and working in the field (and in mountains and desert) I cross trained as a surveyor and spent the rest of my 4-year hitch as a geodetic/astronomic surveyor.

On each job I traveled somewhere taking my cameras, with me, developing film on the road and trading cameras along the way which is how I wound up working part time at Great Western Camera in Cheyenne.

If I couldn't be an official photographer because of my color blindness I was still going to shoot pictures, develop film and print the pictures. We would be on the home base for a few days or weeks and then out again on TDY, traveling for another job.



In my barracks room I had my enlarger and developing tanks. I blacked out the windows to print pictures. Then I might dry mount them, such as this picture on my barracks-room desk (left, above) "Willie, from Strasburg" which was one of the ones I shot of our class members at the Army Engineer school with the Yashica Mat twin lens reflex. Willie had been assigned out of tech school to a "Skyspot" operation in SE Asia.

Above, on the right is a shot with one of my Leica's of the interior of a National Guard DC-3 as our team flew to a job in Greenbank, West Virginia, to put position (latitude, longitude, elevation) and azimuth on a 180-foot diameter equatorially mounted radio telescope.

I was in London from June 1971 through October 1971, with a short break to finish a job in Utah. A squadron member was getting out of the service but currently working in Utah on a job which went longer than expected. I flew from London to Utah for the job, took my exam for Staff Sergeant then flew back to London on Pan Am.

The London job was to find locations for NATO microwave communication towers from the UK to Belgium, replacing the link to Paris after Charles de Gaulle withdrew French troops from NATO (1966) and kicking NATO headquarters out of France (1967). We were looking for just the right elevations to knock the bottom half off the microwave to avoid ground-reflection echoes. The new link was across Britain, headed to Ipswich and from there to Belgium.



At left, Al Billups, civilian tech in charge, walking through a London park carrying a meter board (for leveling, to carry elevations from one point to another) while kids play soccer behind. Getting on Al's teams meant you were good at the work. Al got assigned some of the most sought after TDY jobs.



At left is one of many shots I took on the 1971 London trip. The man with the sign had a campaign against "8 lustful proteins" ... "and sitting." I don't know what he ate because he seemed to have most foods in his forbidden zone. This was on a Twin Lens Mamiya C33, an all-time favorite camera for me. Heading into the tube station was a hippie couple who turned to look at his sign, with some astonishment.

He was always there on Saturdays and he told me that he had been doing this for 14 years without a miss except for one Christmas when he was too sick. Years later, as a massage therapist at the Kansas City Club I shared this picture and story with a client who was headed to London with her husband. On return she left me a note, writing "Your little man with the sign is still there." That was in 1989 so he had been working his campaign against "lustful proteins" for 32 years



Above: Bengali demonstration in London to release Mujib from prison. Notice the bobby escorting the demonstrators, not opposing them.



Left: Missile site in South Dakota, computing in the field after turning angles. Right: Levels near the Salton Sea.



Left-Right:
1969 Cheyenne Frontier Days – 300mm Novoflex follow focus from camera pit in middle of arena
Wild T-4 Astronomic Theodolite – used this last year in, as an astronomical surveyor, to measure latitude and longitude.
Right: March 1973, after getting out, with Air Force Jacket with Staff Sergeant stripes, a start on a painting, beard and growing hair

After the Air Force

I left the Air Force on 7 November 1972. That was my four years of active duty.

I spent a semester at Platte County Community College back in Columbus Nebraska, reporting for their paper and acting in their theater department. I was the "Evil Magician From Morocco" (no name) in Aladdin and the Magic Lamp. We gave performances to grade school children in their auditoriums and gyms. The lamp was made of lumber and electrical conduit and painted gold, but the little kids believed in that "lamp."



On the left, Charlotte Rike, theater teacher and director of "The Crucible" (center), on the right at the right as the Evil Magician From Morrocco (1974) Some of these pictures were taken for the CC student paper.

Auburn, NY

By spring of 1973 I was ready to move to upstate New York, Auburn, with a buddy of mine from the Air Force. Robert Tripiciano (Trip) was a trumpet player and photographer. We set up in an apartment on Genesee St and each of us had darkrooms. Below was another photographer. Bob worked for the newspaper and I worked news for WMBO/WRLX (call sign is slightly different now), or more exactly news for WMBO AM and Saturday night DJ for WRLX FM.



Me in Auburn: L-R, 1) Before "Loot" 2) make-up for roll having cut my hair and beard 3) out of make up. My hippie days. I loved my bell bottoms.

That lasted through the academic year as I enrolled on the GI bill at Auburn (now Cayuga County) Community College where in 1974 I got my associate's degree in liberal arts. In the meantime I had appeared in the college production of Joe Orton's "Loot," I painted and I shot pictures.



At left a shot on a wonderful old Contax 6x6 rangefinder with an f/2.8 lens. This is the from bandstand in an Auburn park. Each Sunday a “The Cayugans” would play in that park while people brought their lawn chairs. My roommate Trip played trumpet as did his father.



At right, this flag-over-mansion picture I shot in late summer 1972, the year I left the Air Force, in Skaneateles, New York, just east of Auburn, on my 4x5 Crown Graphic with a Polaroid 545 back on PN-55 which gave me an “instant” print and a 4x5 negative. I was visiting Trip in Auburn, NY after a TDY in Utica, NY, heading back to base in Cheyenne. I had a little time coming before I had to get back. A year later I was living in Auburn.

WGVA and The Geneva Times

As I finished the AA degree at Auburn CC, I picked up a news reporter job with WGVA in Geneva, NY, about 20 miles west of Auburn, located at the north end of Seneca Lake on the west shore instead of the photo job I was looking for. Three months later the Geneva Times needed a reporter to replace one in the south half of Seneca County. I snapped it up. They had hired their one full time photographer about the same time I got the WGVA job but I could write and I took my own photos, as well as developing them. I was there for about two years.

They paid my mileage for my car and provided me with a Royal manual typewriter, stacks of newsprint cut down to 8.5x11 inches, a big can of rubber cement, shears and packages of reporter’s notebooks, like shorthand notebooks but slim enough to fit into pockets.



L-R: 1) Nurses capping at Williard Psychiatric, 2) Chris Meyer in her Trumansburg, NY store, 3) fixing leaking gasoline tanks in Waterloo, NY.
1) Leica with 35mm Summicron, 2) Mamiya C33 (6x6) Twin Lens Reflex, 3) Leica with 35mm Summicron



L-R: 1) "The Conversation" at HS basketball game in Waterloo (Mamiya 6x6 C33), 2) Sky diver death in Fayette township (Leica 35mm Summicron)

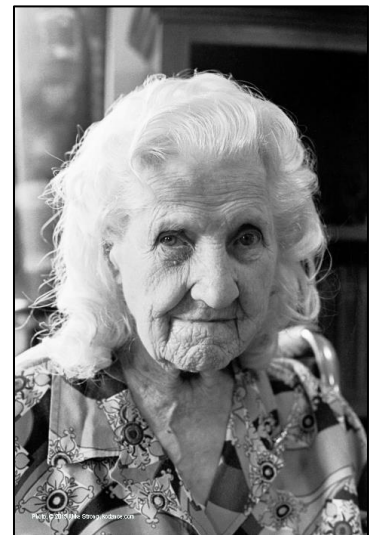
My first dance picture, I was clueless and was to remain clueless for more than 20 years. Roxanne Poorman

Gupta studied Indian Classical dance, Bharatanatyam style, in Hyderabad, then returned to upstate New York and her studies at Syracuse University.



I took pictures I thought were fine. She picked through them and went for some more before she was satisfied we had gotten what she wanted. I had no idea what she was looking for.

At that time, I could look at dance but I didn't see dance.



Left: Homicide suspects in the murder of a retired Cop on Seneca Lake. Here in the police barracks
 Right: Tilly Gugenberg, at 108, locked away for 90 years in NY asylums at age 19. Never crazy. Was an indentured servant from Germany, put into the system by her employer in Brooklyn who must had decided she was "inconvenient."

Calf shot; Ovid farmer angry, disgusted

By MIKE STRONG
 "Now our land is going to be polluted, that's all!" James Varvick was visibly angry and disgusted. He had just had to kill and butcher one of his calves after finding it shot through the mouth and leg.

It was a rainy Thursday morning about 10 a.m. when he stood in his butcher shop on the Williams Road farm southwest of Ovid.

The calf, he said, had been found with a bullet wound in the leg and had to be slaughtered. A second bullet wound in the left eye could not be seen until the calf was skinned.

Varvick pointed out both of the wounds. He estimated the bullet which penetrated the left lung, containing it, had been fired the first day of hunting season.

When infection which had set in under the backbone he felt the calf had been working around for three or four days. He said the side wound wasn't noticed because it mother had licked the injury with her tongue.

He also noted that the entire front left quarter of the calf was rotted for meat.

Varvick said, "The way the left leg is shot is don't see how the shell fired this long. I don't see how anyone could mistake it for a deer." He added the calf was in a clear field with some 75 head of cattle. The Varvick farm is on the east side of the Williams Road.

Varvick figured the law would not do justice. He said he would like to see the hunter arrested and charged with the killing of a calf.

Both men say they hunt. Skilley was wearing a NY State game license.

In addition, said James, "Now I've got a year that may have resulted because she doesn't have a calf to milk."

An identity card from the state game department should have an identity card for this too. The state licenses hunters," he added. "We need to be licensed to hunt in our own fields."

"We've always had open land for hunting, but not after this," he said.

Both of the men emphasized that it is necessary for so many lands to be "closed," said James. "How do you close a field?"



Sad task

James Varvick hangs up the veal he hadn't wanted. He had to kill and butcher one of his better calves after it was found shot. As a result, his land is now polluted to hunters.

Report indicates suspect's prior violence

By MIKE STRONG
 INTERLAKEN, N.Y. (UPI)—Police reports indicate that a suspect in the slaying of a woman in Interlaken, N.Y., had a history of violence.

The report says James had been arrested in 1957 for the slaying of a woman in Interlaken. It also says that James had been arrested in 1958 for the slaying of a woman in Interlaken.

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Willard authorities describe murder suspect's treatment

By MIKE STRONG
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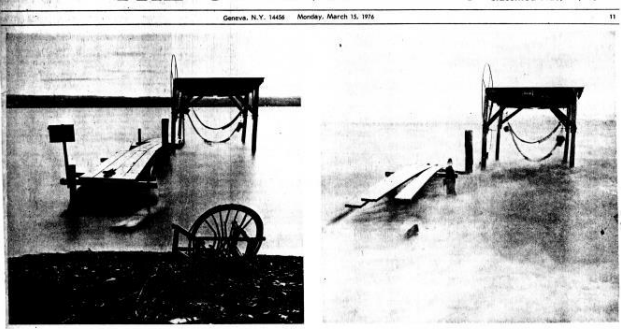
THE GENEVA TIMES



Replating tractor

Clearing track work of art
 The Geneva Times reports on the progress of clearing track work in the area. The article describes the challenges faced by the workers and the progress they have made.

THE GENEVA TIMES



Battered dock

The Geneva Times reports on the state of a dock in the area. The article describes the damage to the dock and the efforts to repair it.

Fire light



Fire light

Fire guts 3 adjacent Covert barns
 The Geneva Times reports on a fire that destroyed three adjacent Covert barns. The article describes the extent of the damage and the cause of the fire.

Fire and ice



Fire and ice

Spectacular fire consumes barns of Varick supervisor
 The Geneva Times reports on a spectacular fire that consumed the barns of a Varick supervisor. The article describes the fire and the impact on the supervisor.

Interlaken man held



Interlaken man held

Interlaken man held
 The Geneva Times reports on the arrest of a man in Interlaken. The article describes the circumstances of the arrest and the charges against the man.

Fire guts 3 adjacent Covert barns

The Geneva Times reports on a fire that destroyed three adjacent Covert barns. The article describes the extent of the damage and the cause of the fire.

Spectacular fire consumes barns of Varick supervisor

The Geneva Times reports on a spectacular fire that consumed the barns of a Varick supervisor. The article describes the fire and the impact on the supervisor.

Interlaken man held

The Geneva Times reports on the arrest of a man in Interlaken. The article describes the circumstances of the arrest and the charges against the man.

I stayed with The Geneva Times for two years when I decided to head back to school to go for a four-year degree, in Lawrence, Kansas, University of Kansas, journalism. While there I also did part time work as photographer for the Lawrence Journal World.



Restaurants

In mid year I took a course in tending bar. Extra money to pay for school. It was also the school which took me out of school for a life detour. I was offered a job with American Bartenders Schools as a school superintendent. I headed for Culver City, California, then San Diego, then Kansas City to shut down the school and ship the furnishings to the school in Detroit, following them to take over that school. This was all in a few short months and each time to take over for someone who quit. Finally, in Detroit, I quit and headed back to Kansas City. I took a job tending bar at the Muehlbach Hotel in the fancy rooms, the Carrousel and the Lobby Bar.



(L) Pete Robinson, piano player, winter 1978, Mamiya C33 (6x6) in the Carrousel Restaurant and (R) Janelle and Cindy, wait staff in the Carrousel

I worked here for a year and a half looking for a photo job. In the meantime I took my pictures.

After the Muehlbach I went to work at The American Restaurant as bartender and waiter. At the same time I located a job with a color photo lab.

Photo Labs

I was checking Zoom photography for employment. They were two partners and were not hiring but downstairs in the basement below them was a photo lab, they might need someone. The owner had died in a plane crash and the tech in charge, Ray Cockrell was opening it up in his name.

With my color blindness I could never print color to the standards needed for a lab but the lab was interested in a black and white section. I had the equipment and was a good printer as well as a fast printer. So, with my own equipment, I teamed up with Cockrell Photo Lab to be the B&W section. I received a percentage of the B&W billing.



Tom Chapman's Arthur Murray second-floor studio in downtown Kansas City. Chapman later left the Arthur Murray chain after a scandal involving sales of memberships, and formed TCI which lasted for many years until his death and eventually collapsed. Right, Perry Gingrich who later formed his own studio.

It was while working at Cockrell's lab that I had my first set of ballroom lessons, at Tom Chapman's Arthur Murray in downtown Kansas City. They didn't go far and the cost was a lot for me (\$1,200 in 1979). That stung just a bit, so I didn't repeat them until 1994 when I had a programming job.



My Interneg and print (simulated) from a 4x5 color transparency provided by Macy's following a color catalog shoot.

My mainstay was Macy's advertising. At that time and until late 1983, Macy's had an advertising office in Kansas City which served ads to seven states. They would shoot a color catalog, then send the transparencies to me. I would make B&W inter-negatives and from those negatives to B&W prints for newspapers in those seven states.

Later, when Ray wanted his girlfriend to take over the B&W we parted and I took my part of the lab into my apartment and kept going with customers, such as Macy's and United Telecom (Later Sprint). It was only a one-person lab but it was also commercial / custom quality.

Later still (about 1988/89), while working with a firm taking school and sports photographs I worked as a photographer on the playing fields and also in the lab as their B&W section using their equipment.

Freelance Photo, Database Programming and Meeting Coordinator

I remained working as a one-person photo lab until mid-1983 taking freelance photo jobs along the way. Also a few programming jobs on the new Commodore-64. I had started in the late 1970's with a Sinclair and with a pocket computer moving to a VIC-20 and from there to a Commodore-64. It was the size of a keyboard with 64 kilobytes of memory, a stretch for the time at the price. It was the same amount of memory as the room-sized Burroughs at the 1st Geodetic Survey Squadron in 1969 when I was first assigned to them. They upgraded the next year.

In July 1983 a friend, Sequoyah Trueblood, called to say he knew of a job for me, with Clinic Masters. They were looking for a meeting coordinator for the 20th anniversary and were planning on 1,000 people at the Hyatt-Regency in Kansas City for the first weekend in October. Their coordinator had decided to return to school to study law. Sequoyah was a friend of Gordon Heuser, a partner in a chiropractic management firm and Sequoyah recommended me to Gordon.



October 1983, I take a three pictures from the catwalk over our 20th anniversary meeting with my 4x5 then combine the shots for this picture. This is from the back of the hall. The podium and speakers table is at back with awards and certificates to give out arrayed across the top of the table.

While with Clinic Masters a small amount of my photography was taken on the job such as above. I continued photographing as a freelancer when off the job.



Jazz at McDonalds - 11000 Quivira Road in Overland Park, Kansas. Jazz band (right above) included (front) Claude "Fiddler" Williams on violin, Pianist: Frank Smith, Bassist: Bob Branstetter, Drummer: Todd Strait(?). Leica M2 rangefinder, 35mm f/2 lens. 1989 for "The Squire" (article) when McDonald's was trying out live music. This was a McDonald's next to their regional headquarters and was sometimes used as a test market.



LEFT ABOVE: **Champion kick boxer Steve Mackey** in the office door of his Bushidokan dojo about 75th and Metcalfe, Overland Park, KS, 1994, Mamiya C33 Twin Lens Reflex – for me and for Steve, I was taking lessons. As usual, simply brought cameras with me to everything I was involved with.

RIGHT ABOVE: **The Lyttles** in their health food store in Merriam Kansas about 1989, for "The Squire" (article)



Sherri and Matthew, Courtney Monday, Willis Coleman

Moving Into Dance Photography – Starting with Ballroom in 1994



Harriet - Open Embrace
9/30 # 6516-6

Mike Stutz



Harriet
6521-9 9/30 23 Oct 94

Mike Stutz

Arthur Murray's Harriet and Lewis (owner) at 87th and Santa Fe: Mamiya C33 (left) and Leica M2 (right) – 1994 when I started ballroom lessons at Arthur Murray's.



Spin - Louis de Harriet
6522-15 9/30 23 Oct 94

Mike Stutz



Mallee Margaret Maudes Morris
9/30 # 6513-12

Mike Stutz
15 Oct 94

Harriet and Lewis (Leica) and Mallee Morris (my first teacher here) (Mamiya C33)

This is where my photography began to focus (no pun intended) on dance. I was still a long way from understanding my subject. My basic dance style was to start stepping out a pattern when the music started and to stop when the music stopped. The idea of a beat or a count or any structure within the music escaped me, for some time.

Nonetheless my eye became attuned to what I, as a dancer, saw. That was different than other photographers who didn't dance. I spotted the differences early when I saw my work versus news photogs' work but it took a while to be certain of it. Much later, after tap lessons, this difference in what I saw became glaringly obvious, to me and to dancers, though not to non-dancing photographers.

This wasn't just a difference in covering the subject, dance, but in my understanding of learning itself. Experience. "Muscle Memory." **Subject knowledge.**



Frankie Hoang and Jean Denny dance Lindy Hop in Loose Park, Kansas City, MO, 1998. (Bronica 645, 75mm f/2.8, Tri-X), give a "Swing Bomb" promotional demonstration for "Cats' Corner" Lindy Hop lessons.

By the middle of the 1990's I was also shooting and editing in video, starting with a Hi-8 Sony, then a digital-8 Sony and Canon and Sony DV Cameras. My principal editor soon became Sonic Foundry's Vegas and Vegas Pro, to become Sony's Vegas Pro and in 2016 to become Magix's Vegas Pro.

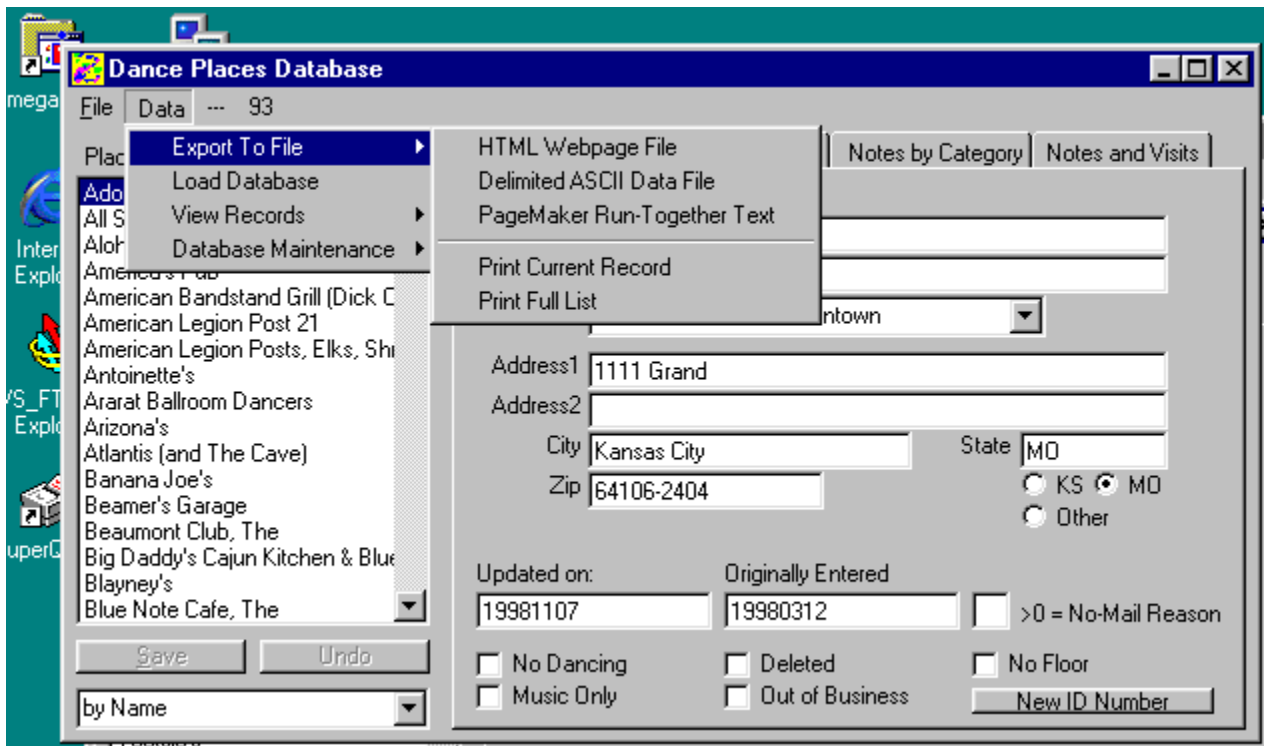
Here is a URL to a later "Swing Bomb" demo in Loose Park (2003):

http://www.mikestrongphoto.com/CV_Galleries/VideoEmbed_LooseParkSwingBomb.htm

The Website – <http://www.KCDance.Com>

As a new dancer I wanted to know where to go for dancing, other than dance studios. No one really had any comprehensive list of places and information about locations for dancing. As a programmer, a photographer and as a former reporter I decided to start a website for myself and fellow dancers in the Kansas City area.

At first it was a folder in my personal website which was hosted by the same company that we were using as a download location for Preco's beta testers for the AutoScript. The next year or so, when domain names came down in price to about \$50 a year or less I bought "KCDance.com" and moved my existing pages into the new domain name. From there I expanded the offerings, at first writing my own database for visitors to enter their own calendar information. Later I changed that to the use of Microsoft's Access Database on the site.



Early on I wrote my own database application for the site. Later I changed it to MS Access and opened the database to anyone who wanted to add their own events or lessons. The tabs across the top were entry boxes for full descriptions, reviews and category expansions. The export option shown here on the menu allowed me to automate desktop publishing to create a printed booklet for distribution.

My first page model was the idea of reviewing and rating dance locations. I thought I could use a number, as in movie reviews, to indicate how good the location was for dancing. Good floor, type of floor, smoking, drinking, and so forth. I quickly discarded the numerical ranking. After talking to fellow dancers, I realized that different people at various times and in a variety of places had differing standards and expectations. What might not be even remotely acceptable in one type of location was great atmosphere to the same people in another location. So, I decided that pictures and descriptions were the best I could do. Everyone would have to decide for themselves what they wanted.



LEFT: Dave Stephens CD Release at The Hurricane (4048 Broadway, in Westport, KCMO) Sunday 30 August 1998
 RIGHT: Chris (L) and Janet (R) on a swing night at the Grand Emporium, 1998
 Both places are long gone, replaced with other clubs – Both shots are with Nikon 35mm (film) with 20mm lens



Lindy lessons with Frankie Hoang and Jean Denny (left picture at far right) in the old Westport School location which at that time also held the Westport Ballet (now defunct) and had previously held the Kansas City Ballet. It is now, again, a school.



I started with ballroom and moved into performance. Here, the left two photos show the Kansas City Ballroom Dance Club (now defunct) March 26,2000 at the top of the Kansas City Club (also now defunct) - Russi and Mayroo at far left- where I worked as the massage therapist from June 1987 to November 1989). At right are "Heavy and Snowflake" from Dallas, Texas, leading a West Coast Swing workshop in 1999 at the KC Swing Club (another defunct organization which lasted about 15 years).



Dance in the Park was my first approach to performance dance. Until then I shot in the clubs, thinking that ballet and other performance dance forms were a bit to push for me. As I began to shoot more performance I got hooked. On the left is “Small Dancer Running” behind the park stage at Dance in the Park 2002. In the middle is the “aha dance company” (sic) in a riverside park in Parkville, Missouri (north of Kansas City). On the right is Nicole English leading her Nikoria Dance Company at a KC Fringe opener.



Fiesta Hispana and Cinco de Mayo provided great shots with Mexican folkloric dance. In these three shots we see El Grupo Atotonilco Folklorico. The left most shows the smallest dancers at one of the last Fiesta Hispanas in the middle of KCMO. In the middle are the little ones at Cinco de Mayo at the Guadalupe Centers (sic). And on the right is Whitney Boyd with the grownup Atotonilco dancers also at Guadalupe during Cinco de Mayo.



Left: Spring 2012, Kansas City Ballet. One of the stills shot for a **video tour** of the new Bolender Center, home of the ballet, which was shown at the Ballet Ball Benefit at which seats went for as much as \$50,000 each. “We”

moved through the building to music, following the dancers, stopping at locations for a series of still photographs. Video and stills were all by me. See the link below for a full description and for the http://www.mikestrongphoto.com/CV_Galleries/VideoEmbed_BalletBall.htm

Right: Alvin Ailey ADT in “Memoriam” gala performance in the Kaufmann Performing Arts Center.



Technical Shooting: During the early years of shooting dance in performance I mostly avoided the clichéd pictures (at left) because those are 1) drop dead easy and 2) what most non-dance photographers shoot because it is familiar ground. I needed to learn to shoot technique and position. As a discipline, I limited most of my photos to technically difficult shots. Since then I’ve shot more of the regular person-to-person pictures you would get anywhere. I decided to work on those partly as support for my partner’s (Nicole English) PhD program and partly because I had achieved what I wanted technically.

While I have always included “tableaus” of the dancers, their studios and stages, as journalistic environment, the support for Nicole’s program brought me back to a fuller set of shots again. I decided that I was well enough along with technical dance photography that I could shoot more of the “cuter” shots.

A Technical Exercise I Typically Use to “Tune” Myself for a Concert



At left is one of my early technical exercises. I still do these, generally in “class” (pre-performance company warm ups) as my own warm up. Notice the eight shots in eight successive frames (numbered) for this set of fouettes (whip turns).

Each shot is taken individually, with no missed rotations (turns).


These are rapid, successive selections of when to shoot. It is one of the “studies” I use to illustrate how to shoot dance and to demonstrate how wrong it is to use continuous shutter release (what we used to call moter drive).

The camera has no sense of rhythm, can neither hear nor respond to the music and is the cause of a common complaint and question I get from dance companies after they’ve been visited by the area’s “best” news photographers. That is, why the pictures which show up in the newspaper are always off just a bit, either early or late. Almost never at the right moment.


Those photographers don’t know good technique or position when they see it. The result, embarrassed dancers and companies. If the photographers knew better, they would or should be embarrassed.

Dark Elegies

Two performances, two months apart, same dancer (Alyssa Gold), same four jetés, consistent shooting
Choreography by Antony Tudor - 1937
April 14, 2011—UMKC Spring Dance Concert



June 25, 2011—Tudor Curriculum and CORPS Conference demo performance



Explaining the Process - "How I Shoot"
Photos and copyright 2011 Mike Strong <http://www.kcdance.com> - dancer@kcdance.com

As a photographer my best photographic tool is subject knowledge. Camera knowledge and composition are assumed to be basic tools already mastered. Learning the dancers, the dance, the choreography and attending rehearsals is basic. For dance that means far more than a quick trigger finger. Never confuse so called "motion photography" with dance photography. Never confuse certain technical poses or leaps as dance photography.
Good dance photography is really journalistic photography. You are photographing stories and characters as much as you need to be aware of dancer's technique and musical timing. Never, ever use motor drive (called continuous drive). You should decide on each shot with each push of the shutter button.
About these eight frames shown above (with their individual filenames underneath each showing the sequential frame numbers) and to "Dark Elegies" in 1937 Antony Tudor introduced us to a dark story of a village in which the children are dying for reasons unknown. The villagers are frantic and have no solutions. The music by Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) is in German, "Song Cycle Kindertotenlieder" ("Songs on the Death of Children").
In the middle of the ballet is a circle of villagers and in that circle a soloist makes five frantic leaps, each leap in a different direction. I am showing you four of them.
In the top set I was determined to get all five jetés in dress. As the time for the five-leap series came I was shooting other actions and clogged up the camera memory just before the first jeté. I missed the first jeté waiting for the memory card but got the next.
Two months later I had the chance to redeem myself and get all five jetés. This time I was sure I was ready. But, I had a new lens and wasn't quite used to it. I made sure my memory card was clear just before the series of leaps. So memory was clear but just as the first leap came the focus went berserk. No first jeté again. I barely got focus back in time to get the rest of the leaps and that focus was too soft to make large pictures from each frame.
So, I am still waiting for a chance to get all five jetés in line. But in the meantime it makes a good example about shooting.

Use of the technique in practice.

At left are two series of pictures showing a set of jetés in the middle of "Dark Elegies" by Antony Tudor.

This is the result not only of selective shooting but of going to rehearsals in studio and on stage so that I can know when to shoot. No one is counting "1, 2, 3, go" for me.


In this case these frames show the set of jetés in the same piece two months apart under different circumstances. The pictures are nearly identical, showing consistency.

Pun Fun with Technique

In this case I am shooting my tap teacher, Billie Mahoney, on the "off beats" (the "ands" in "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and ..."). It is a visual dance pun I called "Off Beat Billie" by shooting only at the uncounted spot between "beats."

Instead of saying "1 and 2 and ..." I think "1 click 2 click 3 click ..."

The set of shots below adds in a set of extra positions to show what the on beat shot would look like. I used my mistake in shooting "4" to fill in the 1, 2, 3 illustrations.



"Off Beat Billie"

A sequence of shots showing tappper Billie Mahoney while conducting a Tap Jam at the Lighttown Arts Bar, 3611 Broadway, Kansas City, Mo. Thursday 2 August 2012. My intention was to shoot only the off beats (the "ands") in the count to catch Billie's leg in the air. I did alright except for one (the four count) which I had not meant to shoot. Shooting one frame on the 4-count broke the frame number sequence leaving me with usable frames 1032, 1033, 1034, and 1036 (with 1035 making a gap in the numerical sequence. In the picture set below I use frame 1035 (in lightened rayscale) to illustrate what the other on-beat shots would have looked like - not obviously dance unless declared in the caption. Technical note also that I never set my camera to shoot continuously, especially with dance (contrary to almost all shooters who I hear around me shooting in "motor drive" mode). Setting continuous mode on the camera would have given me a lot of frames but few usable ones and ND in sequence frame numbers with each shot at each right moment.

Explaining The Process—"How I Shoot"
Photos By Mike Strong—www.kcdance.com—dancer@kcdance.com

Here is a very short Gallery – technique and tableaux

You are invited to see all you want at: <http://www.mikestrongphoto.com>



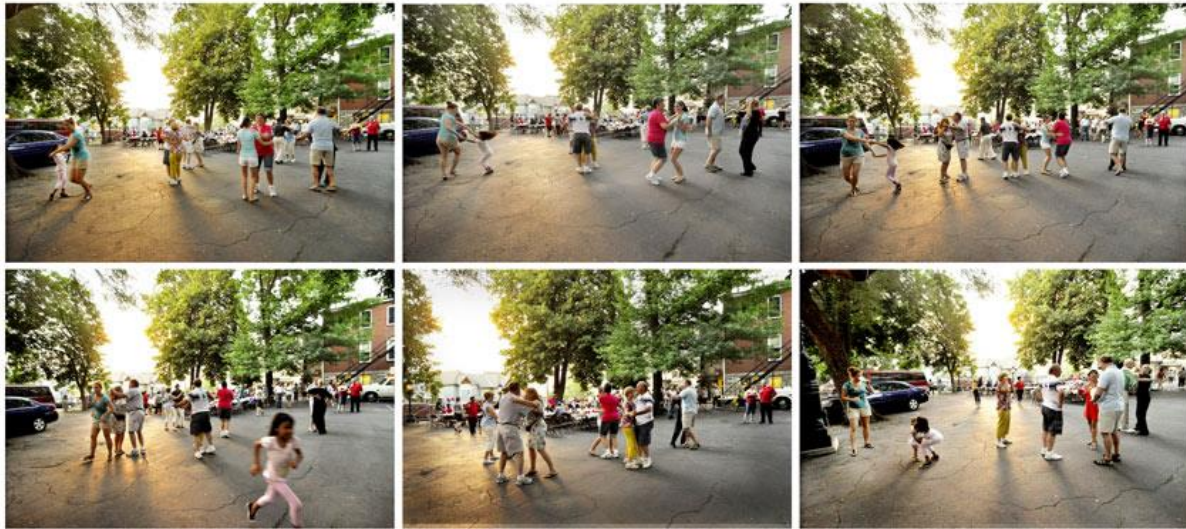
Photo, Copyright 2017 Mike Strong

The “Green Room” at Dancerz Unlimited dance recital spring 2017. Journalistic coverage of the recital, in addition to the technical performance pictures.



Photo © Mike Strong, kodance.com

Studio Rehearsal at American Youth Ballet – 11-16mm at 11mm, about 6-foot distance on closest dancer. My favorite lens.



Membership and Culture - Passing It On

In the upper left a mother brings her daughter in to the dance, first dancing around her, then the two dance around each other and finally the little girl is dancing around her mother. Then the girl runs off (bottom left) and is gone for a frame, only to return in our sixth frame with a younger sibling to bring her into the dance also, and the community.
 Photo © 2010 Mike Strong - at Creation festival in the Strawberry Hill district of Kansas City, Kansas, St. John's Churchyard behind the Strawberry Hill Museum.

A sequence of pictures at a Croatian picnic showing culture passing from one generation to another. At the top left the mother dances around her daughter. Pretty soon they are dancing around each other. Then the little girl takes off (bottom left) and returns with her young sibling. The girl now dances around her younger sister as her mother had danced around her (bottom right).



One of my illustration/studies showing how shooting at rehearsals pays off later, on stage. Here John Swapshire is tossing and spinning Caroline Dahm, then catching her. At left in studio and at right on stage. Wylliams-Henry Contemporary Dance Company. Being at rehearsals is central to how and what and when and why I shoot.



Photo. Copyright 2016 Mike Strong

Slice of life: UMKC Conservatory Spring Dance Concert tech rehearsal at The Folly Theater Wednesday 20 April 2016. (front group) Alexandria Brant, Hannah Wagner, Julia Martin and (in back) Caroline Purcell, Alaina DeRaedt, Alexandra Wallace, Kelsey Crawford, John Swapshire on stage waiting to start rehearsal of *White* by Paula Weber, dance division chair and ballet chair.



Ballet kids of Incolballet Escuela in Cali, Columbia at Kansas School for Classical Ballet in Overland Park owned by Stefani Schrimpf and Juan Pablo Trujillo (Incolballet was Juan's early school). Their school in Cali uses the Cuban style (via Vaganova). Despite their clear merriment, they are very disciplined, intense dancers.



Quixotic, rehearsal break in The Madrid, on the extended stage apron.



Quixotic bows and audience, in The Madrid.



ADP Company Picnic in Lee's Summit, MO. ADP runs a number of nursing homes.



Photo, © 2016 Mike Stroug, kcdance.com

Tudor Workshop rehearsal for workshop performance. Center is Sally Brayley Bliss, Tudor executor, to her left is Jame Jordan, then ballet master for Kansas City Ballet, now ballet master for Sarasota Ballet. To Sally's right and Amanda McKerrow and John Gardner, Tudor repetiteurs and directors for the workshop



Getting ready to go onstage at Dance in the Park for the last time as 39th Street Dance School. Behind is Kim Shope, owner and teacher and former dancer with Kansas City Ballet.



Raoul's Velvet Lounge, swing night with the Dave Stephens Band.



Benefit for Heartland Men's Chorus. Clown Beth Byrd (center, in maid costume) tweeks a behind, in the line at the bar.



Photo, Copyright 2017 Mike Strong

Morgan Faw (jazz musician, saxophone) and Leah Wilczeswki (actress) are a young couple who slipped away from their high school prom to listen Rich Hill (piano) and his Latin Jazz group at the Blue Room on 18th and Vine, Friday April 14th, 2017. On their way out the door, Morgan and Leah stopped to dance one piece then left quickly to head back to their prom before their carriage turned into a pumpkin but not before I got a nice set of shots of the only couple who danced to jazz music that evening.

Parting Shots – A Pair of Documentaries

A Visit to Shaw

Our 2004 documentary, arranged by Dr. Phil Olson (sociology) was a follow up on the PBS Frontline documentary "Throwaway People" with correspondent Roger Wilkins from 1990 which painted the Shaw district of Washington D.C. as crime infested. Nicole English was the faculty organizer, director and chaperone. We get a tour from one of the black entrepreneurs, Ernest "Pete" Peterson, who worked with the community center and his own development projects to improve the neighborhood showing us how a "slum" with a bad reputation reworked itself. Note, also, gentrification woven into the improvements.

http://www.mikestrongphoto.com/CV_Galleries/VideoEmbed_Shaw-2004.htm

Antony Tudor

Tudor Foundation Documentary on choreographer Antony Tudor as an introduction to a Tudor Curriculum in dance schools. This was done for the Tudor Foundation.

http://www.mikestrongphoto.com/CV_Galleries/VideoEmbed_Tudor.htm

And on Vimeo directly, recent work:

A Couple of promos

This shows dance editing on the music. This is a set of composite edits in four lengths of various dance pieces for Wylliams-Henry Contemporary Dance Company. I've worked with them since 2004 directly and shot them since 2001 with other companies. The promo here uses the actual sound from each piece and blends them, except for the shortest version which uses one sound track underneath all the pieces and has more samples (8 as opposed to 6). Mary Pat Henry and I put this together in March 2018.

2 min 23 sec: <https://vimeo.com/260612995>
1 minute: <https://vimeo.com/260613011>
30 seconds: <https://vimeo.com/260613014>
15 seconds: <https://vimeo.com/260613009>

Scenes for a movie: “Why White Men Can’t Dance”

A little Hip Hop dance choreographed to Honky Tonk Music

This is in three lengths for insertion into a movie called Why White Men Can't Dance. So I started with the long mix which is really too long at 8:43, then the middle mix which gets us close at 5:30 and finally the shortest version so far at 4:30. The final insert will be shorter yet. This was shot on a Sony PXW-V150 XDCAM at 30 fps and at 120 fps April 23, 2018. Then combined with video shot of The Wilders in November 2008 on a Sony FX-1000 HDV. Kevin Medlin is the choreographer and principal dancer along with his girlfriend, Maribella Gibson.

8:43 min: <https://vimeo.com/266780213>
5:30 min: <https://vimeo.com/267199385>
4:30 min: <https://vimeo.com/267199432>

The remaining items were from August 2017 through January 2018.

Viennese Waltz – Group: <https://vimeo.com/253194549>
Viennese Waltz, Phil & Lisa: <https://vimeo.com/228015950>
Bunny Costume “party”:
Swingsters Edit Composite: <https://vimeo.com/250615842>
<https://vimeo.com/250615815>

A “Making Of ...” from a project with FHSU

A 360 video at FHSU <https://vimeo.com/260075025>

A Few Companies & Events I've Shot or Shoot For

- Adams Photographic
- aha! dance company
- Ailey Summer Intensive
- Ailey Trio
- AileyCamp
- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- American Crane and Tractor Supplies
- American Youth Ballet
- Arts and AGEing
- Arts in Prison
- Bacchus Ball
- Belly Dance Coalition
- Belly Dance United
- Bill Whitener Dance
- Billie Mahoney Dance Troupe
- Boogie Ball
- Byrd Productions
- Camelot Ballroom
- City in Motion
- Cleo Parker Robinson Dance
- Concept Zero
- Cowtown Dance Club
- Culture Through Ballroom Dance
- Dance in the Park
- Dance On (5 years of interviews)
- Dancerz Unlimited
- El Grupo Atotonilco Folklorico
- Ethnic Enrichment Festival of Kansas City
- Fool's Fortunes
- Foundation for Aging
- Geneva Times (now Fingerlakes Times)
- Grand Prix of Swing
- Gurukul Academy (Kuchpudi)
- Heartland Men's Chorus
- Heart of America Dancesport
- Hrvatski Obicaj (Croatian)
- Johnson County CC Performing Arts
- Jonah Bokaer
- Kacico
- Kansas City Ballet
- Kansas City Ballroom Dance Club
- Kansas City Dance Classic
- Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey
- Kansas City Fringe Festival
- KC Dance Club
- KC Jazz
- Laid Back Fundraiser
- Lawrence Journal-World
- Louis and Company
- Modern Night at the Folly
- Music of Our Lives
- Nartan Academy (Indian classical)
- New Dance Partners
- Nikoria
- Nritya Indian Classical Dance
- Owen Cox Dance Group
- Preco Industries
- Raghsidad Middle Eastern Dance
- Rich Hill Jazz
- Rose Marie's Fiesta Mexicana
- Sports Photographers Plus - Jim Seers
- Sierra Latina
- Soundz of Africa
- Störling Dance Theater
- Tamburitzens (KC)
- The Flock
- The Squire
- The Swingsters
- Traditional Music Society
- Two Steppin' KC
- UMKC Conservatory Dance Division
- UMKC Conservatory Opera Division
- Walters Dance Center
- Wylliams-Henry Contemporary Dance Co.