

RANGEFINDER

The Missouri Photo Workshop | September 28, 2016 | Volume 68, Issue 4



Erica Crider and Paul Chambers hang out in Paul's room on Tuesday as they surf Facebook and play video games waiting for school to end.

PHOTO BY MATT RAHNER

Musings and Insights at MPW68

Aristotle would've had a Nikon

by Duane Dailey

I hypothesize that you found a place to work on your photography and story telling skills this week.

In that place you found a situation. Now you seek a story that may have a beginning, middle and end.

As a photographer you found something visually exciting that made you want to work there for three days.

There you may also find a difference between situation and story. That happens. From what you saw and what you heard, something intrigued you. Your mind told you, there's sustenance here.

An eon or so ago on this earth a caveman found a similar situation. After a day of hunting, he took the burnt end of a stick from the fire and drew bison images on the wall.

Oh, my academic mind strays. Get back to MPW Cuba2016.

My laptop cave wall allows me a "do-over."

You're in a situation, trying to find a story. As a photographer you saw images you must record. Now we ask that you become a photojournalist who hears words and makes images for a story.

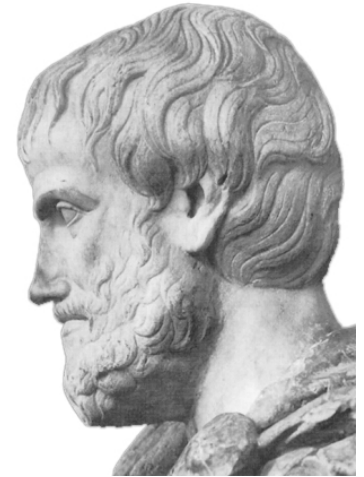
"Slow down and quit jumping to conclusions."

- Duane Dailey

Suddenly this went more complicated than you thought.

Humor your faculty and start over with that tiny group of paragraphs that will make sense to an audience.

Already some photographers have discovered they jumped to conclusions not supported by facts.



Happens all the time. Our human brains trick us. Now you must tell your brain to stop that. Let's do more research.

Years ago, then MPW Co-Director Bill Kuykendall and I proposed a scientific approach:

- A scientist observes a problem then forms a hypothesis about the truth.

- With tests, not one, but many, the scientist tests the hypothesis.

This isn't fast. With repeated tries it gives more reliable results. That's better than jumping to conclusions.

This isn't a new idea: Aristotle the Greek philosopher started us down a path to science about 400 B.C.

Instead of accepting myths, from the gods, he did things differently. He observed the world and wrote about his understanding for others. (A new book, *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science*, postulates that Aristotle gazed into a swamp all summer and that he then described everything he saw in detail. This was the start of the science known as Natural History.)

OK, Duane, back to Cuba68. Get real. The workshopers' job is to look into Lagoon Cuba to record what you see.

You're a scientist. Test the

hypothesis of your first impression.

Intuition can fool us. Remember the story of the blind men who described an elephant? Each "saw" something different with their hands. Tails aren't trunks. And a leg isn't a tree trunk. It depends on the point of view you bring.

As a scientific photojournalist, dismiss false ideas you brought to your situation. Start fresh. Look AND listen. There is a story right there where you are searching. Slow down and quit jumping to conclusions.

Here's a book for winter reading. Get Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. It's a 500-page slog by a Nobel psychological economist and warns of hazards of fast thinking. Often we follow intuition and jump to conclusions. We don't take time to think slow. That involves research data, statistics and a bunch of brain-numbing work.

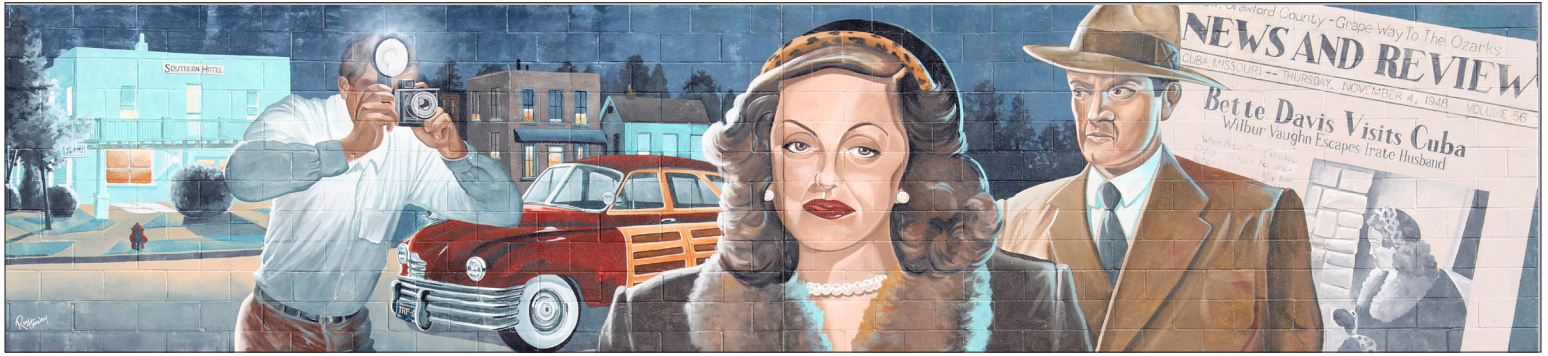
Recall the Trump/Clinton TV debate: Did you see intuition vs. analysis? I hypothesize people prefer intuition. People see analysis as borrrrring!

For eons myths won. Our job as photojournalists will be: "Show Truth with a Camera."

Aristotle would've done that if he'd had a Nikon.

Cuba's notorious photo encounters

Residents talk of past and present interactions with photographers



Artist Ray Harvey's mural commemorating Bette Davis' infamous visit to Cuba, MO adorns the front of the Cuba Free Press building.

by Davis Winborne and Kelsey Walling

When 82 photographers, faculty and crew from around the world show up to a town with a population of 3,369 there's a chance the residents might notice a difference.

"As a business owner, this is making a big impact," Frisco's Bar & Grill owner Ben White said. "We want people to love what we have in our special town." Frisco's was the site of Sunday night's welcome dinner.

"It's exciting to have a little more energy around," Linda Donahue said from the sales floor of Hayes Shoe Store. "I think we've maintained an active small town and I want everyone to see that we are all a big family."

Erik Lowes, who created Lowes Landscaping at the age of 13, thinks the workshop will refresh his hometown.

"So many of us take Cuba for granted and usually see everything as boring and plain," Lowes said. "Everyone lives in their own box and they don't realize that they have a story."

Lowes explains that there are some people who are not fans of the photographers walking around town.

"There are always those people who don't like the publicity and hoopla," Lowes said. He has heard



Photo by Davis Winborne

The Cuba Free Press displays a newspaper depicting the original headline of Davis' visit.

from some residents who don't understand the point of the workshop and wonder why photographers want to invade people's privacy.

"However, most of the things I've heard from people have been positive," he said.

Ashley Pitts, an employee at Meramac Package Liquor, said she likes the idea of the people in her town getting the attention.

"I really think it's neat that all these photographers are working so hard to feature the people in Cuba," Pitts said.

As it would turn out, photography and the town of Cuba collided once before, resulting in an infamous piece of local lore that is memorialized in a mural on the Cuba Free-Press building.

"Bette Davis came to town when Cuba was a hoppin' place," said Three Rivers Publishing composition coordinator Tracy Brandenburger Miller.

In 1948, Cuba Free Press photographer Wilbur Vaughn took a

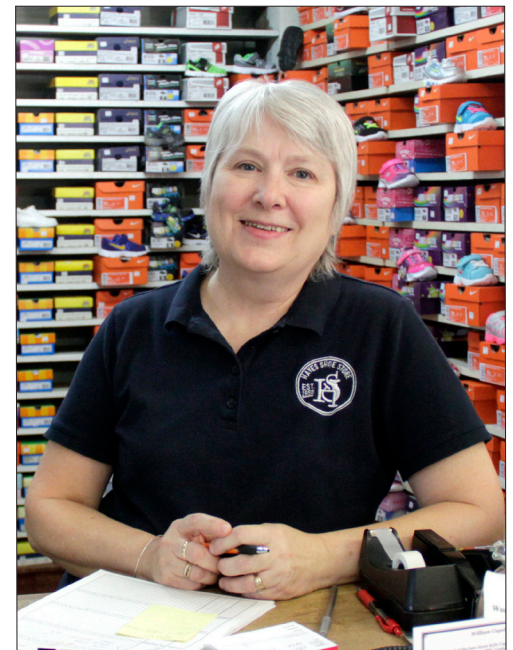


Photo by Kelsey Walling

Linda Donahue works at Hayes Shoe Store.

picture of Davis as she was leaving the Southern Hotel. Davis' husband became irate and chased Vaughn down the block before falling in the mud. The story of the incident and its mural have helped bring travelers from all over the world off of Route 66, Brandenburger Miller said.

Seal of approval

by Nadav Soroker

Eric Seals has learned first-hand about the dangers of preconceptions. When Seals was a workshop photographer at MPW46 in Washington, Mo., he pitched a story about an African-American woman living in a predominantly white town. The story was approved. As he photographed, Seals discovered a person completely different from who he thought she was.

That lesson reverberates in Eric Seals' first year as an MPW faculty member. Lois Raimondo (MPW 42,43, 45, 47-52, 54-59, 62-64, 66, 68) is his partner on Team Cliff and Vi. He brings his photo and video experience from the Detroit Free Press, a newsroom where he

had dreamed of working since he first submitted photos to them as a college student. In 2008 he added the title of video journalist to his position at the Free Press, a journey which he has found challenging and interesting. He regularly corresponds with producers whose work he finds inspiring, actively seeking critiques from them so he can reach for the high bar he sets for himself. That bar is intentionally always out of reach. Seals keeps moving that bar so he will always be growing. This is a philosophy he recommends to everyone.

"I was honored to be asked, especially as a Missouri alum and a shooter at the workshop," Seals said about being on the faculty for the first

time. "And I was so excited to come I used vacation time." He has plenty of vacation time to spend however, since he receives several weeks more vacation time per year than his wife.

"It's surreal being on the other side of the table with people I have looked up to for twenty years," Seals said about becoming faculty. Back when he was a student at MU he looked up to photographers like Melissa Farlow (MPW 39-41, 44, 45, 47-49, 53-60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68) and Kim Komenich (MPW 46-56, 58-65, 67,68) and now he sits next to them and talks to them as equals.

"He brings a distinctive combination of still experience and a love for video and relates to the current trends in photojournalism," said MPW co-director David Rees.

Looking back on his time as a shooter his advice to workshop photographers is to push yourself.

"You are getting close to being in the home stretch. Now is the time to push both what's in your viewfinder and the holes in your story," he says. And he says he thrives on being at the workshop.

"I get so excited to be here, it's an adrenaline rush and a kick in the pants." Seals said. He bottles up that kind of energy in his head and uses it in his own work whenever he gets stuck and is having a hard time.

"Remember that once the workshop is over, don't put your notes away." He said, "Go out and develop your own story and work on it."



Photo by Michael Cali

Eric Seals talks about his work at the Detroit Free Press and the power of being part of a community that feels ownership over its local newspaper.

WEATHER

TOMORROW
69° / 54°



FRIDAY
70° / 55°



SATURDAY
69° / 52°



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