1937

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Use Angles and Light for
Snappy Shots
by Jane Helser

"HOW DEAR to our hearts are the scenes of our college days"—one arm looped with attempted nonchalance through that of your man of the moment, maid and hero squinting at Mr. Sun and grinning self-consciously at the birdie.

But not so for long because Iowa Staters are taking up photography as a serious hobby and trying to put art into picture-taking. Even those of you who seldom snap the snapper should be interested in a few elementary rules of picture shooting which will make those infrequent likenesses a pride of possession.

We'll have to admit that photography is not something at which anyone can be outstandingly successful. One must have a natural flair, artistic talents and a sensitive perception—not to mention the ability to visualize results. However, we can all take good pictures from the standpoint of composition and subject matter, so draw up your chairs and listen to a few pointers on how to take commendable snapshots.

In order to take a picture you have to have something to photograph and that something will be either people or things and often a combination of both. Whatever the subject may be, make it interesting; anything can be made to possess interest if you try hard enough. One of the easiest ways to pep up a picture is to make it really live.

If you're emphasizing people, "shoot" them at some interesting activity. If they're given something to do with their hands and something to think about besides wondering whether the tummy is pulled in or the wind is ruining those curls, you'll have a more natural looking picture. The appeal of the natural pose is the main reason for the success of the candid camera shots. We all like action and ease.

"Please," implore those who are in the know, "avoid pictures that appear to have been carefully posed." Leave the posed studies to the experts and confine your activities to carefree, unaffected studies.

You may not have noticed, when you were snapping dressed-up Susy, cavorting about the garden, that the ashcan in the neighbor's alley was in full view, but your camera doesn't miss things like that. It records what is actually there—appropriate or not.

The experts plead once again, choose your background to fit your subject if you would achieve an effective photograph. Here the problem of light and dark enters in. It would be unadvisable to snap persons in light clothing standing in front of a white house. Visualize the difference if the subjects or their little white puppy are "caught" standing against a dark tree trunk or climbing out of a dark colored car. They would stand out against the dark backgrounds and be the centers of interest they were intended to be.

And now a word about composition. In general terms, the composition of a picture is merely its arrangement. In some pictures the arranging consists of a conscientious placement of persons or objects. Other compositions are created by selecting a different point of view. In taking pictures of moving objects, the composition is controlled by the exact moment at which the camera is snapped.

To achieve good composition, the photographer must have balance. This does not mean that everything in the picture must have an opposite on the other side of the picture; it means that the general arrangement should be pleasing and not lopsided. The final effect should give the same satisfaction as we find in the irregularity of a tree. The lines of the landscape, the glimpses of open sky showing through the trees, and center of interest should all be diagrammed to fit together in the most pleasing manner.

Although they are not to be emphasized, there must be objects of secondary interest in the picture unless it is a straight portrait. These secondary interests will balance the picture. For instance, if you wish to emphasize a mountain in a picture and there are going to be people in the arrangement, the people should look at the mountain instead of the camera. They should be photographed at least twenty-five feet from the lens.

One of the most effective ways to get a striking picture is to take the picture from an unusual angle. The viewpoint has much to do with the perspective obtained in pictures, and if the effect as viewed in the camera lens is odd and unusual, it will be recorded in the film. Although distortion is to be avoided, many interesting pictures can result if the cameraman shoots them at some angle other than that of the level eye. Try looking down on your subjects or take an oblique view instead of an ordinary front shot.

A leading camera manufacturer has listed a few concise pointers for beginners:

1. Misty eyeglasses prevent distinct vision. "Just so with the camera's eye. Keep the lens clean for clear, bright pictures."

2. "The camera cannot see through the tip of a finger which is placed over the lens."

3. "When focusing cameras, be sure to set the lens at the correct distance mark." Out of focus cameras result in blurred pictures.

4. "Two other causes of blurred pictures are: Camera was moved when shutter was clicked or shutter speed was not rapid enough to 'stop' the action. The latter results in fuzzy pictures."

5. "Two pictures are spoiled when you forget to turn the film and a 'double' exposure is made on one section."

Whether you take it seriously or just for fun, photography is an extremely interesting pastime. Modern developments have made commendable photography a simple matter for us amateurs. They have given us a simple method to pictorially record, once and for all, those scenes which we want to remember.

February, 1938