

Focus On: Paul Gauche

SW: Paul, how did you get started in stereo photography?



I've had an interest in stereo photography since the late '50s when I got my first ViewMaster and a few reels for Christmas. Whenever I ordered sets of reels through Sawyer over the subsequent years, I longed for one of the cameras shown on the order forms. But, having no income at 11 or 12 years old, I had to be satisfied with an Instamatic 100 and an occasional sleeve of little blue flash bulbs from Mom and Dad. I've been shooting 35mm slides since about 1977 when I purchased an Olympus OM-1, which I still occasionally use.

I generally don't jump into hobbies right away, even if I'm really fascinated by them, so it wasn't until about 40 years after I got the ViewMaster that I started dabbling in stereo photography. That only happened because my wife, Barb, met DSS member Dennis Green in 2003 and volunteered to shoot stereo pictures for him while he performed with his Irish band. That got Barb hooked and soon she joined the DSS, bought a Realist, then bought boxes of mounts, a film cutter, projector, screen, light table, etc. with funding from her husband (me). Barb has never had trouble jumping into any hobby and dragging me into it as the equipment carrier.

Dennis has been a great inspiration and educator to both of us. After attending a couple DSS meetings as a guest, I became a member last April and started shooting a few outdoor pictures here and there with Barb's Realist. I recently have tried a couple table tops and some indoor shots, and Barb and I are both starting to dabble in stereo digital photos on the computer screen.

What kinds of photos do you like taking the most (subjects or styles)?

I'm most drawn to outdoor scenery. I really like woods, streams and seashores, but I find all kinds of subjects interesting; nature, sports, boats, cars, trains, planes, people, and mixtures of those. I guess the

ideal shot would be people playing football on a ferry boat that's hauling cars along a sea shore with a plane flying overhead and woods in the background. I've been keeping my eyes open for that.

What are your favorite pieces of photographic equipment (cameras, lenses, slide bars, etc.)

My equipment so far is limited. The Stereo Realist is a lot of fun when I can wrench it away from my wife. It draws comments and questions from passers-by, it's pretty simple to use, and the pictures are usually crisp and bright. I made a slide bar last year that has given us some good results with table top shots using an SLR. We recently bought a new slide bar from George Themelis and will be trying it out soon. Barb and I bought a great Kodak 7590 digital camera last October and I have just started to experiment with cha-cha and slide bar shots to see if we can produce stereo cards. It seems to be working fairly well and I'm quickly learning some of the advantages and pitfalls of shooting with a digital camera, and of the time delay between the left and right pictures when using a slide bar. The biggest advantage of digital is being able to immediately see the results (and immediately delete the bad ones).

What photographic tip could you pass on to other photographers – is there something you have learned that improved your own photos remarkably?

I'm quickly learning that it's a lot more difficult choosing subjects that result in good stereo pictures than it is to shoot mono photos. I guess my tip is to be patient. Stereo pictures that may turn out to be of lasting personal value or of competition quality are more likely when there are the fewest obstacles to overcome. For example, it is very difficult to get a good outdoor picture on a dreary day, regardless of how much effort is put into setting up the shot. Blue sky and intense colors raise the picture quality immensely. Also, it's difficult to achieve good stereo results when the foreground isn't right. For indoor photography, it's difficult to get a good shot when there are signs posted that say "No Flash Photography" and guards staring at you from across the room.

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Sometimes it's better to save the film and wait for another opportunity rather than force the shot. Over the past six months I have tried several times to shoot pictures with a certain theme in the last week before a competition, and more times than not the results aren't acceptable because the conditions aren't right.

Is there a photo you have wanted to take that you have not yet taken – a new style or subject you have not yet tackled?

I can't wait to try some underwater stereo. I've shot enough underwater video to be familiar with the unique aspects of shot setup, stability and lighting that occur underwater. My immediate plan is to rig a couple inexpensive submersible point-and-shoot cameras together and shoot slides. I've been investigating the low-cost underwater camera/housing market and have a couple candidates in mind but haven't bought anything yet. I had planned to try it on an upcoming trip in May but a snorkeling excursion that was supposed to occur during the trip has been cancelled. My first shots will probably be of divers in a pool during one of the SCUBA classes that Barb teaches in Rochester.

Of the photos you have taken, what is your personal favorite? Why?

So far I have only a few dozen stereo slide pairs that have been worth keeping, but my favorite of those is a picture I shot on the northern coast of Ireland last October. I crouched for a low angle shot over boulders and a rocky outcropping toward breaking waves about 80 feet away. It was a cold, sunny day with good light angle and deep blue sea and sky. The rocks were reddish-brown and the combination of colors and depth of the scene made a very nice picture. In the foreground was a small puddle of very clear, still water that mirrored some of the rocks. I entered the picture in the DSS "Water" competition last November.

[Editor's note: Paul's image, "Puddle", received a second place ribbon in the November competition.] [][]