

# How to Make a Sequence - A Good One, That Is

by Dorothea van Westrienen, FPSA

Making a sequence isn't entirely new to anyone with a stereo camera. When you go on vacation, do you take your camera with you? Have you ever taken pictures of a wedding? Or a birthday party? Or a boat race? Or Johnny's first trip to the zoo? Or your garden from the time the hyacinths poke through the snow until the mums are in their glory in the fall? We all take lots of these pictures, and these are *Sequences*. So maybe you already have something you can show. If you haven't, there's still time to start from scratch.

How do you go about it? Probably there are as many ways as there are photographers. Lee Hon, who is a real authority on the subject, says you should write a script first and then plan out each shot to fit your script. No doubt that's fine, if you have a streak of movie director in you (Lee's with CBS!). Only we aren't all that methodical. Personally, I think the main trick is to get an idea and then *get going*. Anything can happen, and probably will.

Being an analyst by profession, I've tried to figure out what it is that makes a good sequence. Eight factors seem to me to be important. Let's take a look at them and see why each of these factors help make a sequence good.

**1. Simplicity.** First of all, a simple idea! You can't always tell where an idea will lead you if you let your imagination go, but hold it down to something equal to your photographic ability. Keep your main theme simple, and the development of it, too. One little episode, well handled, will make a better sequence than an ambitious production with delusions of Hollywood grandeur.

**2. Entertainment or Educational Value.** The subject possibilities are endless, but it's a good idea to pick one with some universal appeal. A sequence is a "show", and it must capture the attention of your audience and hold it. Above all, it must be interesting!

**3. Quality of the Photography.** Although the total effect is more important than the technical excellence of the individual images, it helps the overall effect to have good composition, exposure, color harmony, sharpness, etc. - and also proper alignment. Use all the skill at your command to produce the best possible images. You may even come up with some by-products you can use for club competitions and/or international exhibitions.

**4. Unity.** A sequence isn't just a series of images, it's a series designed to present one idea. Each image is part of the whole and it's the whole that's important, not the individual images. Use every device you can think of to pull your images together and give your presentation unity. A common denominator running through all of them is one such device; the same characters, or locale, or background, for example.

**5. Editing.** Editing and re-editing! Every image should contribute to the development of your main idea. The images you leave out may be just as important to the success of the sequence as those you keep. No matter how terrific a particular image is, if you can take it out without weakening the sequence as a whole, leave it out! Another good test of good editing is the order of the images. If you can change the position of a single image without hurting the sequence, your editing still isn't as "tight" as it might be.

**6. Narrative.** Here is your timing device! The narrative carries your audience from one image to the next. Try to fit your words to your images so that they keep each picture on the screen just the right length of time. Don't let yourself indulge in discourses that outlive the interest-holding power of an image. And don't try to use your narrative as a crutch to support your whole sequence! A good narrative can add a lot to the effectiveness of a sequence of course, but if the whole thing will fall apart without the narrative, it isn't very strong. The best sequences can stand on their own without any narrative at all.

**7. Climax.** You can't hold interest on an even keel. It must rise, or it must fall. As with any dramatic presentation, a sequence needs a climax. Image by image you are developing an idea or story. It has some kind of point to it. Work up to that point! The better your climax, the more dramatic the impact of your sequence.

**8. Ending.** A good sequence doesn't just stop, it ends! Plan the ending carefully, because the last image may well be the most important one. It rounds out the whole sequence and leaves the final impression. You want the audience to applaud, don't you?

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*OK DSS Members! Let's use this information. Right now think about your own images and what kind of sequences you could put together from what you have. Think of other pictures you could take to expand or fill in gaps in a potential presentation. The March program will feature only these member creations, so don't be shy! After all, this is not a competition - just a chance to show images you have taken of a subject. -Editor.*