
NORBERT R. HOFERICHTER

Bert Hoferichter MPA of Mississauga, Ont., has lived through a variety of experiences as a commercial and portrait photographer before becoming a teacher and the Director of Creative Photography at Humber College in Etobicoke.

“In one of those unnerving episodes of my life I arrived at a bride’s home with my assistant to start the portraits at 3 PM. The place was totally deserted and despite repeated knocking on both front and back doors, we were unable to raise any response. I decided to wait ‘til at least 4 PM. In the interim I phoned back to the studio to have the details checked in my appointment book. At 4.15 I saw a lady walking up the street with two shopping bags; with relief I recognized her as the mother of the bride. When she saw me she calmly asked, ‘Hi Bert what are you doing?’ I replied, ‘I’m here to do your daughter’s wedding.’ Well, at that she broke into gales of laughter and I was perplexed by her actions. ‘I’ll tell you what, Bert,’ she said. ‘You have the right date... you have the right day... you have the right month... but you’ve got the WRONG YEAR! You are a whole year too early.’ Well, I must say that I’ll never do that again as it was an experience never to forget!”

“I was involved with a movie shoot for Ontario Place to produce a film called BIG NORTH. We were working outside of Thunder Bay in a provincial park to photograph some bears. There was a film crew of six people with myself shooting the stills. We had no luck in spotting any bears all day long, so I decided to scout around for some scenic shots taking a lane way through tall bushes down to a lake. I humped all my equipment along with me. Low and behold, what should show up but a mother bear with her two cubs. A mother bear always spells danger, so the film crew scampered back to their vans while I was isolated and stranded - the bears being between me and safety in the van. To compound the problem, the mother was on one side of the road, that I had followed, while the cubs were on the other side. My retreat was cut off completely. The cubs were taking their time feeding while

the mother was ripping apart an old log to get at an ant colony. Periodically, the she-bear would stretch herself up to check her cubs and survey the area for intruders. For the next hour, I patiently waited for them to finish and move off, but they just kept on feeding. I, at least, made use of the time by photographing them with my longest telephoto, but I knew at some time I had to make



a move to get back to the crew. My patience was wearing thin, so I

decided to make a mad dash the moment she put her head down to feed. I crept forward as far as possible, positioning my equipment for unimpeded running. I intended to be like a football player making a 50 yard dash to a goal line. With my head down, sweat on my brow and heart pumping madly, I chose the moment and took off. I got up speed and tore along the pathway to safety. I didn't know it, but at that same instant the she-bear had decided to join her cubs on the other side of the road. Fate couldn't have planned it more precisely, because just as I reached the danger zone, this furry blob came loping out of the bushes onto the road right in front of me. We collided with a BANG! I was a complete wipeout, sprawling onto the gravel and clutter. I instantly looked up to see her reared in the air and eying me warily. Bears look awful vicious when you are that close and your life is in jeopardy. It seemed an eternity as we eyed each other... I was terrorized to make any move... then she slowly lowered to all fours and retreated to her little ones. We never saw each other again..... thankfully!"

"I was covering a political campaign in Mississauga involving Joe Clark who, at the time, was running for Prime Minister. I was assigned to record him with local MP Don Blenkarn. The setting was at the Port Credit Yacht Club with the VIP's on one of the sailboats. I was alternating shots on several Nikons that hung around my neck. I had worked with Mr. Clark before so I guess he knew my name. 'Bert,' he said, 'have you ever dropped one of them [cameras] in the lake?'... 'NEVER!' I replied and kept clicking away. To get one of the Nikons out of my way I swung it around to my back. That was the moment the safety clasp decided to come apart and the strap parted sending the camera flying overboard into the water. I can still remember how elegantly I swung that camera around my neck and then thinking.... 'Where is it?' Then realizing it was in the lake.... camera body, zoom lens and motor drive. Would you believe the ill luck and poor timing? I gave a kid twenty dollars to dive and recover it for me."

"After the PPOC National Convention in PEI, I was passing through the Airport Security checkpoint, heading for home. With all the sunshine during our PEI visit I had allocated time to shoot colour scenics with my 4x5 equipment. The exposed film was unloaded into a box and put into my carry-on baggage. Not want-

ing it to be X-rayed I asked for hand inspection. After clearing personal inspection I returned to the desk to pick up my belongings and found an inspector opening up my 4x5 film boxes. He already had one lid open, so I slapped it down fast with my hand just as he was ready to open the final lid. There goes my work for the last four days, I figured. The inspectors would not take no for an answer, in regards to opening up the box, since they were determined to see the contents. Finally I had to take the film back to the Air Canada check-in counter where I got into another discussion as to why I would not allow the contents to be inspected. The check-in clerk asked, 'Why are you so stubborn? I can take my film out of my camera anytime in daylight.' She was obviously talking about a 35mm cassette camera while mine was unprotected sheet Ektachrome in a box. She could not see the difference. We finally worked out a compromise by taping my little box inside a huge cardboard box which was then put on board with the rest of the luggage."

"I had a commercial assignment up north in the fall and again I was part of a video crew taking the still photographs. I had to produce a sequence of slides that would tie in with the AV presentation of leaves falling from the trees. It was a very calm day and too early in the season for falling leaves, so we sent one of the crew up into the tree to shake the branches while we took the shots from below. The guy was shaking the leaves while I was shooting with a motor drive. In the whine and clatter of the camera, I heard a scream but I kept shooting to get lots of shots. Suddenly into my finder, I saw this body passing downward through the leaves. All I recognized was a pair of shoes passing in front of my camera. The chap unfortunately broke his arm in the fall, but we did capture his descent in slides and in motion picture... and of course the falling leaves!"