

Dec 31, 2019



Reflecting on 2019 and
Looking Forward to 2020

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As I sit in my studio on New Year's Eve, 2019, writing the post for the last Podcast of the year, I'm feeling somewhat overwhelmed as I reflect on the year, and try to figure out where the last twelve months have gone. My plan for this post was to share my personal top ten photos for the year, but by the time I'd finished writing what I expected to be a few short paragraphs of reflection, I found myself with a full episode, so I'll share my top ten next week.

2019 wasn't a bad year, but as 2018 ended, I remember telling myself that 2019 was going to be better, and it was, although I was hoping it would be much better, not marginally. You might recall that I had issues in Morocco in 2018, both with the bullies on the Customs gate, and with a mysterious illness that knocked me for six towards the end of the tour, and kept me from doing anything at all for two full weeks after I returned home.

We never did find out what it was, but it took a seven-day course of antibiotics to rid me of the cough and congestion, and I was still as weak as a kitten when we finally got rid of it by around the end of the first week of December. A doctor would later look at my blood test results and tell me in hindsight that I should have been hospitalized. I was really ill, my wife and I both knew that, but the doctor that I did see apparently didn't have it in him to read my blood test results.

As weak as I felt though, here in Japan, it's customary to clean the house before the year ends, so that we leave our dirt in the previous year and enter the New Year clean. One of my main jobs in this period

is to clean our windows. I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit that I only clean our windows once a year, at this time, but like the elderly Japanese men that make their wives cry by saying thank you very seldom, it's always really nice to see the crisp winter sun shining through our freshly cleaned windows as we wind down for the year.

I was so weak at the end of 2018 I recall really struggling to clean my windows, and I really only started to get my strength back as I embarked on the first of my three winter tours here in Japan. I'm setting off for the first of the 2020 tours in less than a week now, and I am looking forward immensely to meeting this year's groups and spending some time with Brian Matiash on our Landscape Tour, which is going to be a blast. I intend to take my new Rollei TLR camera and a box of film too, and I hope to get some nice medium format shots of the winter landscape, as time allows.

The tours went great in 2019 as did my Namibia Tour in May, and I'd looked forward to spending the second half of 2019 completing my new Mentorship system, but a number of hiccups prevented me from completing the final steps, so that's coming in the Spring of 2020 now. Despite my not planning an autumn tour to make time to complete it, that time ran away from me due to various personal issues. I'm not going to go into detail, but let's just say that the mid-fifties for turned out to be very tough on my wife and I as we came to terms with getting older.

I'd also had a runny-nose after my Moroccan malaise, and thought it was

some kind of allergy, until a hospital visit between my second and third winter tours resulting in us finding out that I was leaking cerebrospinal fluid. It turns out that there's a hole in my dura mater left by the brain tumor that I had surgery to remove nine years ago, and the coughing in November and December had torn the wound from the surgery at the back of my nose, allowing the fluid to leak out.

The doctors wanted to operate to block it up, but I asked them to get my historical yearly MRI files from their main hospital and when I returned from my third winter tour an inspection of the files shows that I've been leaking CSF for around five years now, and I've been fine, the main problem was the tear from the coughing, which I opened up myself, so I figured I could also close it up, and so that's what I did. I took it easy for a few months, and by April the leak sealed itself. That was a bit scary again for a while, but all is good again now, so nothing to worry about. It's going to take more than a hole in my brain to stop this photographer from enjoying life to the full.

I did learn a few things from this last year though, and apart from the importance of not coughing too hard and too often, I learned that I need to spend more quality time with my wife, and I also learned that my time management skills are going to pot. There's probably a disorder name for what I have, but I tend to work way too hard on projects that I dream up, and they completely consume me until I reach a point where I can back off from them again.

My latest project started around 10 days ago and has pretty much kept me down-periscope until today. I was working on a shell script to update the EXIF data in images that I've shot on film and scanned into my computer. I am relatively accustomed to updating EXIF data with ExifTool by Phil Harvey but remembering the commands and keeping snippets for the various things that I do is tedious and error-prone.

I decided to write myself a shell-script so that I could easily recall commands and apply changes to my scanned film images, but after writing that for a day, I had something that I realized would be useful for others shooting film, and the following nine days disappeared down a black hole as I wrote over 500 lines of code to enable the script to ask the user for answers to some generic information about themselves, like their name and camera model etc. and then store that in a file for future use, before moving on to ask information about each individual image.

MBP Exif Updater

The script now traverses a directory of images and asks for shutter speed, aperture, and ISO information as well as focal length, date and time and then embeds the information into the EXIF data before automatically moving to the next image. There are a few finishing touches to be coded, but I intend to start selling the script for a small payment over the next few days, so stay tuned for that if you shoot film and have been looking for an easy way to input your shooting information. I know that there are other tools available, but none of

them work the way my new script does, and I personally prefer what I've created, so I hope others find it useful too.

Back to my point though, I am going to back off from this for the next day or so, to ensure that I enjoy the year-end and New Year celebrations with my wife, especially as I'll be leaving her alone as I travel with my winter tour groups, and that's always somewhat stressful for her as well.

As I'm talking about my wife, I wanted to mention one last thing related to my reflection of the last year, and that is that someone emailed me during the year to say that they were disappointed about the fact that I'd said that my wife isn't able to help much with my business. They felt that I'd been unkind in my remark because there must be ways in which she helps me. I sent a detailed reply spelling out the reasons for the comment, but didn't receive a reply, so I wanted to mention it here in case that person is still listening, but also, in case I happened to offend anyone else with my remark.

I'd basically said that I'd really like to be able to hire someone to help out because my wife can't help with much of what I do. To hopefully avoid misunderstanding, I wanted to add that my wife cannot use a computer. She can send text messages on her phone and knows how to use some of our electronic appliances better than me, but when it comes to computers, she is not able to use them, at all. I'm not saying that to put

```
#####
MBP FILM EXIF UPDATER V0.5
Exiftool version is 11.80 and you are using zsh version 5.7.1
You are running Mac OS X
#####

If you have any problems visit: https://mbp.ac/feu
You can also get the latest version of this script.

Settings file QMBP_EXIF_Update_settings.txt exists.

=====
CURRENT DEFAULT SETTINGS
=====

These can be changed per photo but save time for common settings

Camera: Rollei - Rolleiflex 3.5 F (serial# 2285035)
Lens: Planar 1:3.5 75mm, Max Aperture: 3.5
Owned by: Martin Bailey
Your Timezone Offset: +09:00
Copyright: Copyright © 2019 - Martin Bailey - All Rights Reserved
Default shooting settings:
ISO: 100, Aperture: 8, Shutter Speed: 1/125, Focal Length: 75.0
=====

Type "edit" to change the defaults or Enter to proceed...
|
```

her down. I'm just stating a fact. And it's that fact that prevents her from being able to do many of the tasks that I would like to get help with. Financially, I'm still not in a position to hire anyone full-time, but if I was, realistically why would I hire someone that cannot use a computer when 90% of the work I need help with is performed on a computer?

Having said that, in my brevity I upset this particular listener by not going on to say that there are things that my wife helps with and that I am incredibly grateful for. She keeps our receipts in order to take them to our accountant. I

have to input the information into our accounts, as that's a computer job, but she makes sure that they are all in order and nothing is missing. On the rare occasion now that I do a commercial shoot, she does a great job of helping me to set up studio gear, and there is a certain amount of paperwork that we do each month that involves handwriting documents. Although I can read and write Japanese, her hand-writing is much neater than mine, so it always looks better if she does this. We pay her a part-time salary for her time and I do really appreciate the work that she does, so I'm sorry if anyone else thought I was

disrespectful with my comment.

I do wonder if this person had listened to many other episodes though. I would hope that a long time listener would also have heard me talk about how much I respect my wife's opinion on my images. When I have an important image selection process to complete, I always ask her opinion before finalizing the edit. She is not only impartial, but she also has a great eye, and most importantly, she is not afraid to tell me when something sucks. In any creative pursuit, it's vitally important to have a trusted critique to provide advice, and in my life, that is one of the rolls that my wife is great at.

Having said that much, I should also go on to say that she's also my best friend. We have long talks, which we both enjoy, and she sometimes makes me laugh so hard that we both end up crying. And sometimes she is so deep and profound, that we once again both end up crying. If I ever made anyone think that she's anything less than amazing and the most important thing to me on this planet, then I apologize, and I assure you, it was purely unintentional. Unfortunately, like my late father, I sometimes have trouble talking properly because of the foot that ends up in my mouth a little more than most people.

Anyway, we'll wrap it up there for this year. I hope 2020 brings us all everything that we hope for, and more importantly, that we and our loved ones enjoy good health throughout the year and beyond. All the best!



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