



MindStormPhoto California 2012

Burt and Evelyn Johnson

California 2012

Table Of Contents

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion	2
[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C	10
[Brag] Photo wins Best of Show at N4C	14
[Brag] Another N4C Best of Show Plus BCC Winner	16
[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner	18
[Brag] N4C Best of Show	22
Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills	24

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion

We started New Years Eve day with a tour of Antelope Slot Canyon, which is something I have wanted to see for several years. We really wanted to go on the longer Photography Extended Tour, but they don't give that on holiday weekends, so we had to settle for the shorter standard tour. Since the late 1990's, people are only allowed in the canyon when part of a Navajo guided tour, and nobody is allowed in the canyon for more than 2 hours at a time, which is their way of keeping the crowd sizes controlled.

The magical light beams do not penetrate to the canyon floor during the winter, leaving the canyon suffused with a palette of pinks. The canyons are every bit as beautiful as I expected, but the crowds were a bit difficult to contend with, making it hard to get the photographs I had hoped for.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



After our all-too-brief Antelope Canyon tour, we headed off to Zion National Park, arriving around noon. Zion has some spectacular scenery of multi-colored mountain faces, but they were surprisingly difficult to photograph well. The afternoon did produce a few nice images though.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



At one point, we came across a family of big horn sheep, which garnered the expected cluster of tourist cars, each of which attracted others to see what was being watched.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



We continued through the park, until we found a location that looked promising for sunset images.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



We then went to our hotel, only to discover there was no room for us! We had reserved a room the night before using Expedia, but the hotel said they never received the reservation, and they were fully booked. Oops...

The hotel desk clerk (whom I am pretty sure was also the owner) was very helpful though, and called around town to find us another room. We ended up with a very nice room about a block away, and at a lower rate than we had originally expected to pay. The night was saved – I was not looking forward to spending New Years Eve driving around looking for a vacancy!

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion

We had asked the original desk clerk where a good place for dinner was, and she instantly suggested Oscar's in town. When we checked into our subsequent hotel, we asked there too. That clerk gave three possibilities, with Oscars again heading the list, so Oscars it was.

As we were loading our luggage from the car to our room, a local came over and told us there would be a fireworks display at 7:00 at the local school ball field. We set up our nightly photograph download to the computer, and headed out to see the display. We got there just as the first fireworks went into the sky. The display lasted 10 minutes, and was better than we usually see in such small towns. We had decided not to bring tripods and large cameras, so Evelyn experimented with her handheld point-and-shoot that we always carry as backup.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion



We then headed over to Oscar's for dinner, hoping to beat the crowds that would likely head over from the fireworks too. We found a tiny restaurant with only 11 tables, completely filled with a short line outside. We were right about the rush, as the line grew to a couple dozen people within 10 minutes of our arrival. Evelyn had baby-back ribs that were fabulous (some of the best we have ever had), and I had the Murder Burger – “a burger good enough to kill for” according to the menu. And it almost was, at that.

New Years Eve With Champagne & Ribs in Antelope Canyon & Zion

Utah is a state that strictly regulates liquor, so it can only be purchased in state owned stores. It also turns out they are not allowed to sell any liquor chilled if over 5%, so we picked up a bottle of champagne warm off the shelves. We had never tried "chardonnay champagne", so decided to give that a try. We put it in the fridge in our room, and waited till midnight to open it.

We don't recommend it though... The "chardonnay" tasted more like apple cider, and not particularly good cider at that. Evelyn got a headache from the "cheap champagne" and we tossed out half the bottle.

Oh well, bad champagne, but a warm room and an excellent dinner in exotic mountain surroundings. Over all, not a bad score for ending 2011. If we can score that well in 2012, we will be very happy with the year.

Happy New Years Everyone!

[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C

Our Berkeley Camera Club (BCC) belongs to a larger federation of photo clubs. The regional level is N4C, which covers Northern California clubs. Tonight we found out the winners for the 2011 Annual competition at N4C. To my delight, three of my images won places this year.

To be eligible for any N4C award, the image must have already placed in competition at the local level, so all of these images have already won placement in 2011 BCC competitions.

My image titled "Peering Into The Future" won 2nd place in the Advanced Creative division:

[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C



"Preparing Breakfast" received an Honorable Mention in Advanced Creative:

[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C



Finally, "Eye Drops to Change the Color of Your Eyes" also won Honorable Mention in Advanced Creative:

[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C



, January 10, 2012

Brag, Photography

[Brag] Photos win Best of Year Awards at N4C

[Brag] Photo wins Best of Show at N4C

[Brag] Photo wins Best of Show at N4C

I was a bit bummed out last month when a recent favorite image of mine only received Honorable Mention at the Berkeley Camera Club competition. I was only somewhat mollified by the fact that I felt our judge that night was not very good (honestly -- I had that opinion long before the Masters category I compete in came up for review).

Today we received the results of the N4C Pictorial competition for March. This is the regional group that our club rolls up into. I was pleasantly surprised to see that they like the image a lot more than the judge we had that night. At N4C, this image was awarded First Place in the Masters level, and Best of Show overall. Yeah!

Just more evidence that photographic judging is highly individual and to never be too surprised when something you love doesn't receive the reception you expected in any given competition...

[Brag] Photo wins Best of Show at N4C



, March 18, 2012

Brag, Photography

Competition at the Masters level of photography at our local Berkeley Camera Club is fierce. There were 30 entries at that level again tonight, and as always, there were some really spectacular images presented. This is really a talented group of Photographers.

[Brag] Another N4C Best of Show Plus BCC Winner

[Brag] Another N4C Best of Show Plus BCC Winner

As such, I am no longer King of the Roost, as I was in prior years at lower levels, and am happy to walk away with recognition for any of my entries. Tonight I garnered 3rd place with the following image, titled "Shattered":



[Brag] Another N4C Best of Show Plus BCC Winner

The wine glass for this was created by heating a small area of the glass bowl with a propane torch until it was glowing red, then pouring a few drops of water on that spot. That caused the glass to shatter, blowing a hole in the side. I did this to 6 glasses (old ones that we had retired last year), and got 4 with usable holes. In the studio, I then poured Sangria wine into the glass, while photographing the splashing. The photo was then cleaned up in Photoshop, and a posterizing filter added. finally I played with the hue and saturation to get the effect I was after.

In the Journalism category, I am still competing at the Basic (lowest) level. That hasn't really been my strong suit. However, our trip last October to Cambodia and Vietnam resulted in several winning photos. (Click on the October 2011 link on the right panel to read our blog from that trip.) One of the photos that won a couple months ago in our local BCC competition was just announced to have won 1st place and Best of Show at N4C -- our parent photo club competition. If I keep this up, I'll be bumped up in level for Journalism too...



[Brag] Another N4C Best of Show Plus BCC Winner

[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner

[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner

Tonight at the Berkeley Camera Club, we had Creative and Nature category competitions. Creative has always been one of my favorites, while Nature has never really been my strong suit. Tonight's results followed those strengths.

The procedure for competition at our club is to have the photos projected on a screen one at a time, while a commentator discusses the strengths of each image, along with suggestions for improvement. The audience (club members, most of whom have images in the competition) sit quietly and listen, only occasionally whispering comments of agreement or not among themselves. For my creative images, I try to shake things up and get a reaction. Sometimes I try for a gasp from the audience, if I have something I think is stunning visually, or will instantly make the audience wonder how it was done. Othertimes, I try for a laugh -- something that will strike them funny enough that they can't help themselves but give a loud guffaw.

Tonight I was trying for the guffaw -- and I got it! There was an immediate loud laugh, followed a moment latter by more laughter as the caption was read. A double winner this time!

[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner



I titled it "*In Hot Water Again*," and I am happy to say it was awarded 1st place at the Masters level of Creative photography tonight.

[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner

The image was actually pretty simple to make. I put one of our pots on our home stove, added a oil thermometer, lit the stove and shot a few pictures handheld. I then went into my studio and placed the lights to mimic the lighting in the stove, stood against a white background, and clicked off a dozen images while I made faces that I thought would work here. 15 minutes of Photoshop created the composite.

I also had an entry in the Nature competition, which won an Honorable Mention at the Intermediate level (2nd level of 4). It is an image I shot of a Red Footed Booby on a trip to Galapagos Islands a few years ago. Almost all my nature winners have come from that trip. It is almost cheating using photos from there, since they are so easy to get. In this photo, I was no more than maybe 8 feet from the bird, who had no fear of humans at all. When walking, you have to careful not to step on the birds and reptiles that cover the islands.

[Brag] Another Creative Photo Winner



, May 16, 2012

Brag, Photography

[Brag] N4C Best of Show

[Brag] N4C Best of Show

I hadn't expected to post again so soon, but we were notified of the latest round of N4C photography winners. I was pleasantly surprised that I picked up another 1st place and Best of Show at the Masters level of Pictorial competition:



Brainwashed

Each duck was shot separately with a syringe in its head, with colored water. In a couple cases, I couldn't get the color to quite match the duck, so I tweaked the syringe color a bit in Photoshop. I then combined them into one image, and added the reflections and gradient.

[Brag] N4C Best of Show

PS: I see that the blog is truncating off the right of the image. The original has a full blue duck on the right. You can see the entire image, along with some other favorite eclectic studio images of mine at:

<http://www.mindstormphoto.com/20-studio/10-eclectic/>

Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills

Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills

This weekend we attended a Civil War reenactment at Duncans Mills, about 2 hours North of San Francisco. We have thought about going to one of these for a couple of decades, and finally really made the trip.



We had originally been promised access to the battlefield during the battle, as part of a small photographic group. Unfortunately, at the last minute, the group said that would not be allowed, due to insurance liability issues.

Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills



We were still allowed to roam the encampment before the battle began. We spent most of our time on the Confederate side, for not particular reason other than it was closer and we came across it first.

Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills



That battlefield places most of the canons well out of view of the main spectator area. Of course that didn't stop Evelyn, who found a small hole in the fence right near the canons and came to let me know. As a result, I spent most of the battle trying to get good canon firing images. They are surprisingly difficult to get, but I managed a few over the course of the day.

Civil War Reenactment at Duncans Mills



, July 16, 2012

Event