

LYON, from page 9

pictures. But no, you shouldn't take a lot of pictures. You see them in your mind's eye, and you make that picture.

My pictures are almost perfect, but I work hard to do it, and I don't take a lot of them. I actually number the rolls of film I've taken my entire life, and in 50 years I think I've taken 2,000 rolls of film. I think "The Bikeriders" was done with about 150 rolls of film. But I'd have one great picture on every contact sheet, or maybe two. That was enough.

With a 35-millimeter, there are 36 exposures. So you can take 36 pictures before you have to change the film.

I take very few pictures. I mean, I would go work all day long; I would photograph the prison system almost every single day for 14 months. I would go out there. I would shoot two rolls in a day. And I would take all day to do that. And maybe in those two rolls, I would have one masterpiece, and that was what I was trying to do.

You can't take great pictures by taking lots of pictures. That's not what photography is about.

I think (Ben) wants me to talk about new journalism vs. Instagram, and that's a complicated and interesting discussion.

I have four children, and three of them are artists, and I remember one of the boys saying, "I'm a filmmaker." And he took out his phone or his camera or whatever, and I said, "Well, you didn't edit it."

You can't just take pictures and put them out there – you can, but they're of no interest to anybody. It's kind of like vomiting or diarrhea or something. It's terrible, because it's visual pollution.

Instagram is interesting. I have an account, it's new for me and someone was doing it for me. Mine, because I don't take pictures much anymore, are mostly old, mostly stuff from 50 or 30 years ago. But then anybody who follows me, you can look at their pictures, and it's almost like looking at someone else's diary – like peeping or looking in someone's life who you don't know. I do it now and then. It is a kind of voyeurism. I enjoy it, but it's a visual



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY LYON
Danny Lyon and his wife, Nancy Lyon, on audio, during the filming of "Willie."

communication.

You know we have been really raised, through Western Civilization, with verbal communication. With reading, reading words. Thank God I love reading, but this is a visual communication, and it's different.

I like these emojis, I know they're silly, but they're like hieroglyphics. They're visual communication. Instead of saying the F-word you can find a yellow, white or black finger or whatever. I think among my most favorite are women in sports and yoga positions, because I think inside me is a pretty girl standing on her head.

E.G.: *I have another photographer question, and this one is from Arkady Brown, who shoots boudoir photography; she wants to know what photography has taught you about the human experience.*

D.L.: I've had a great human experience. I don't think I could have done better with my life. I regret nothing. I've had a wonderful time being alive, and the reason I mention that is I'm old and I'm not going to be here forever. I'm not even going to be here for a long time.

Because of what I did, I was able to get into so many other places in America. I was able to enter prisons without being convicted of a crime. I was able to join a motorcycle gang without being a right-winger and muscle guy and any of that stuff. I was able to be part of the black revolution without being a black person. I was able to spend a year with construction workers without doing any work! All I did was take pictures. I've had a wonderful life.

E.G.: *Have you been documenting recent protests?*

D.L.: The last thing I did was the night the devil was elected. I joined the spontaneous marches in Manhattan and filmed that. I did the original Occupy (Wall Street), which I loved, and I did it passionately. I had enough money to just get on a plane, and I was at the park where it happened. It began in New York, but it went on for months. I was able to fly to L.A. and photograph that. They had just busted it up, it was the steps of City Hall, and they were all getting out of jail, and I loved that, and I was able to do Occupy Oakland when it was

still going on. I loved that. But there are so many people there, so many cell phones. They don't need me.

E.G.: *With so many people on the scene with cell phones, how does that change the photography of civil rights movements today as opposed to the 1960s?*

D.L.: I didn't go to Ferguson, but when it happened, I was interviewed by The Times because the images that came out of Ferguson were so similar to my images, which became quite famous over time.

One of the great things for me, was I had the Civil Rights Movement to myself for about a year, which is just awesome, before the photographers came down. When they came down, I left. But it's about history. When I talk about the Civil Rights Movement, it happened over 50 years ago. That's two full generations, and in times of revolution, time is compressed. That means so much happened in say five years, what normally takes a century, that's the nature of revolution.

What I find amazing is that people are so interested in what happened 50 years ago. I think when I was a young person in the Civil Rights Movement, white people – the culture I came from – had no interest in what had happened, and the media had zero interest in what happened, 50 years earlier. Nobody was interested.

I think in a way, America has become so backward and so conservative for so long, things have become so terrible, that I think in a way it's like water in a dishwasher that's turning over, or in a washing machine, and this inspiring period is coming back big time, and people care about it because they're activists now, and they realize how drastic things are and how drastic the measures are needed by people to overcome them.

Most of Lyon's films are viewable at Vimeo.com. His blog and other publications, including signed copies of his books, can be found at his website, bleakbeauty.com.

emily@streetroots.org
[@greenwrites](https://twitter.com/greenwrites)

Did you serve in the
Armed Forces
and are experiencing
or at risk of
becoming
homeless?

**Transition
Projects**

Please call 855.425.5544
or visit 650 NW Irving Street

**OREGON WILD'S 2018
OUTDOOR PHOTO
CONTEST**

Submit your images of the Oregon you love and
love to explore for the chance to win great prizes at
www.oregonwild.org

Submission Deadline:
Friday, September 7th

SPONSORED BY
**Pro
Photo
Supply**

OREGON WILD

Photo By: Inshua Meador