



Ralphie Jacobs

Ralphie Jacobs is a photographer who lives in Texas. Interviewed September 20, 2008. Website: bandralphie.blogspot.com

How did you get started with photography?

Getting my kids to acknowledge me any time I had a camera in my hand was hard work. Getting a good picture out of it was impossible. After several attempts, I'd hand it over to my husband and proclaim dramatically, "I can't take it any more!" So, I think that my interest in photography started innocently: just trying to get pictures to be sharp in low light, adding a little drama to a photo by finding an interesting angle or focusing on detail. Basically, I just wanted beautiful pictures of my busy, growing little girls. I wanted to learn how to freeze time.

In one of your blog posts, you mentioned that you're always working on how to get better at your craft. How do you do that?

Experimentation. I am always trying to work the

system. I figure, "A lot of other people know how to get this done. Why can't I be part of that group? I'm a good groupie." So I ask questions, read books, and push lots of mysterious buttons! But most importantly, I fill my memory card, upload the pictures, and then fill it again.

You also mentioned that you take lots of bad pictures. Can you talk a little about that and how experimentation figures in to your photography?

Ha! You read my mind—it's everything! If you don't keep trying, you'll never figure out how you accidentally got that great shot! (Which happens to me all the time, by the way.) And I do: I take a lot of bad pictures, but that's okay. Typically, one out of every ten frames you shoot will turn out to be a good shot. That's not very good odds, so put that single-lens reflex (SLR) camera on "continuous shot" mode and go crazy. You'll find after taking two hundred pictures that there are about twenty that are really good and worth flagging for post-processing.







What cameras/lenses have you used? Has that made a difference? Any favorites?

What I do best is photograph individuals. And for that reason, I love a lens that can give me low apertures and great depth of field. I find all of this in my 50mm 1.8 lens.

I shoot with a Nikon D80. When purchasing my first SLR, I wanted something that would give me room to grow, that had all of the major features of the high-end cameras, and that would be a good friend to me right from the beginning. I am very happy to say that the D80 has been all of that. It really does know how to treat a girl right. Nikon, I love you.

What are your favorite types of shots?

All of my photographs are taken with natural lighting. Like I have said on my blog many times, I don't use my flash. Never, ever, ever. If the lighting isn't good

enough, then I don't take the shot. I dislike the flash that much. Natural light is pretty snooty sometimes, and it can get a little dicey, but that's when you get to unleash your creativity. One of my favorite shots is a picture of my daughter running in a field of tall grass and the evening light is making the tips of the grass glow like candles. Light is a secret ingredient to great art. Often I'll find myself staring at a photo, struggling to put my finger on why I love it so much. And every time the answer is the same: lighting.

You mostly photograph people—why?

I love personality. And people have no end of it. The more obvious the emotion, the more a photograph moves me. These are the pictures where there is a true story being told—when people are relaxed and keeping it real. Children have so many of those looks—they have yet to learn to hide their feelings from a camera, and for this reason they are my most cherished subjects.

What sort of post-processing do you like to do on your images?

I am the kind of photographer that loves drama. Scratch that. What I meant to say was, I'm a female; therefore, I love drama. So, post-processing is one of my favorite parts of photography—I get to be dramatic!

I am a huge fan of black-and-white conversions. I love the way it makes skin look porcelain and smooth. That and I get a kick out of clicking back and forth between the before-and-after pictures, dreaming that we could do that kind of processing in reality: before-after-before-after ... I could do it all day.

I also have a passion for vintage post-processing and adding texture.

How do you balance motherhood and photography? Or is it ever even an issue?

This really hasn't been an issue. In fact, it has given me a new perspective on life. Seeing a huge mess of sidewalk chalk and dust-covered children is not viewed

as an infraction but a great opportunity to freeze time and make a memory. It's something that I can do to feel more rounded and fulfilled but at the same time not lose any quality of family life. I believe that my passion for photography has been an aid in getting us to spend quiet time together, make silly faces, and love one another for who we really are.

How do you see the gospel influencing your work?

The gospel has always been centered around families, on relationships between people and our Heavenly Father. This truth underlies everything. Because I believe that I have a Father in Heaven, I take pictures of things that are meaningful—that feel important to me because of what I know: pictures of happiness, individuality, and loving families. I have often looked through pictures of my grandparents and parents, soaking in every detail, every little thing that would tell me something about who they were. Pictures link generations together in a way that is personal. ■

