

Show & Tell Sell

BY DENNIS EILERS



ASKING AN AG PHOTOGRAPHER ABOUT AG PHOTOGRAPHY is like asking a presidential candidate why he should be elected . . . So, stop down to f/16 and duck.

While most ag photographers aren't running for office, they are constantly campaigning for more pictures, better pictures, and better use of them. And for good reason. Nowhere can a photographer find such immense spectrums of color, activity, action in machinery, livestock, crops, people and products to photograph as in agriculture.

Daily, thousands of action-packed, dramatic "moments of truth" flash by, begging to be captured on film. When you successfully seek out and capture one of these dramatic moments to highlight your product message, you capture attention and help your campaign ring with sales success.

That's what good ag advertising photography is all about—show and tell and **sell** your product, your story, your services, your ideas. But, it's no easy task.

In today's "hepped-up" visual world, the advertising photograph must go the extra mile. No longer can it merely be called upon to record what a product looks like, or what it does. It must, somehow—in some unique way—communicate special product features and advantages visually and dramatically for quick reader identification, and involvement.

Advertising photography must literally go beyond mere illustration. It must help get the selling job done. Without visual horsepower in the marketplace, a sales message may never get through.

This is interestingly intangible. But, tangibles exist which you can control: hiring people best suited to communicate your message; selecting photo locations and outlining photo shooting situations to best exhibit your product; and of course, selecting the best photograph—one that does the job of capturing that secret, illusive, selling "moment". Photos must meet, match, enhance your

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Low angle, wide angle plus filling foreground with plowed ground gives dramatic dimension to this scene. By "dodging" when printing photo, sun-sky-horizon contrast is increased.

marketing objectives. They set your pace, your style, your image. One of the best, most popular ways of setting this pace and bringing to life a product story is on-location realism.

Team a first-rate soybean patch, cornfield, or dairy farm with a creative photographer backgrounded in agriculture, schooled in journalism and briefed with your marketing objectives and a strong visual campaign is almost sure to follow.

Here are some checks on selecting your on-location photographer:

- ▶ First, ask for samples. Study them.
- ▶ Make mental notes on lens selection, use of equipment.
- ▶ Are wide angles, telephotos, used to create visual impact, tell the story?
- ▶ Are there a lot of close-ups? Interesting, bold, imaginative, dramatic compositions?
- ▶ Is action captured?

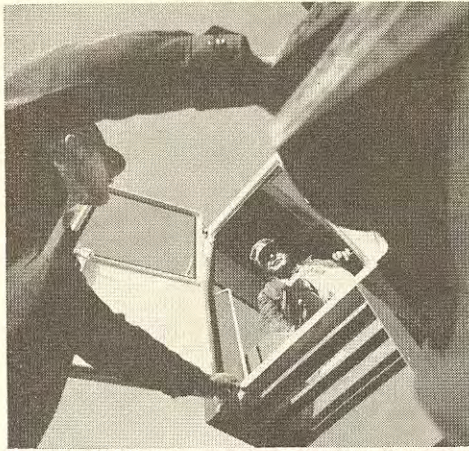
- ▶ Are the pictures expressive? Believable?
- ▶ Is back, cross and existing lighting used dramatically?
- ▶ Does the photographer know the subject? Become involved with it?

"Involvement" photography has been defined to death in contemporary discussions, but it's still a valid photo parameter.

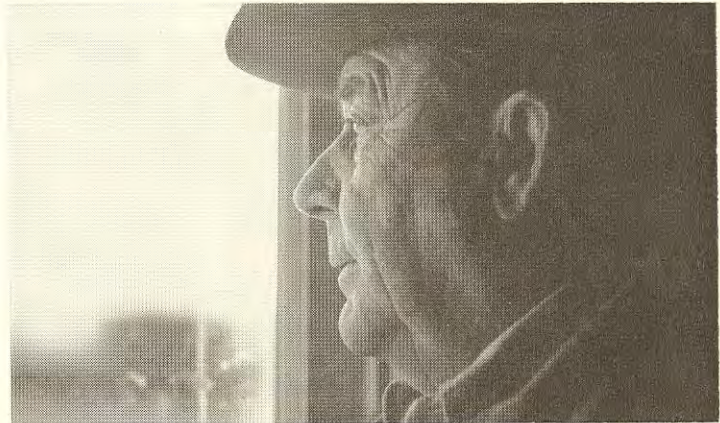
It's simply moving in close, creating tight compositions, involving the reader, enticing him to identify with the picture, the people in it, and its communication elements. It's usually the work of a photographer spending extra time, thought, effort, and energy, plus involving himself with subject during the shooting session.

Lens selection, camera angle, lighting, distance to subject are big picture improvers.

Selecting a wide angle lens, for example, and moving in extremely close produces unusual ef-



Above: Wide angle lens (40 mm on Hasselblad) lets photographer work in close to create unusual angle, perspective and picture that tells a story while holding viewer's interest longer. **At right:** Filling half the picture area with wheel builds unusual, interesting relationship of men, machine and product. **Right bottom:** Wash of window light across face brings out concern, experience, hope and completes informal character study. With camera at same level as subject, viewer gains feeling of involvement with subject.



facts, interesting perspectives, pictures snap alive.

Combining telephoto, backlighting or cross-lighting produces shots that sparkle, capture, stop eye and involve reader with your message.

Moving camera to ground level eliminates horizon, creates drama, rids photo of "static" look.

Freezing a slice of action (machinery), or catching a candid moment (testimonials), can bring your message to life vividly, believably, with an extra dash of realism.

Basic consideration of all advertising photography: technical quality. No matter how great the idea, if it doesn't print, or project, forget it. Since print collateral occupies big ticket spaces in most budgets, demand is for top technical—as well as creative—quality.

Reason: print standards are set for sharp, in-focus, color-rich originals. Moving from layout

to separation to platemaking to offsetting the image onto a printed page at 32,000 impressions per hour, puts you four generations away from original.

Only by starting with superior originals do you obtain superior print reproduction.

In this area, professional quality original chromes will do more to upgrade finished quality than anything else.

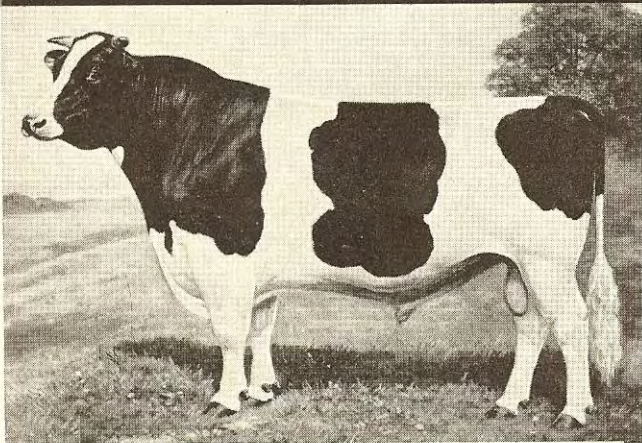
In agri-marketing, tiny pieces of film, transparencies, photographs are called upon daily to help sell products. It's a tall order.

It's asking that specific picture to communicate a message visually, creatively. Plus it's asking top reproduction on a multitude of farm magazine printing presses, billboards, posters, collateral brochures, direct mail pieces, and sales literature.

The more critical, more demanding you are in obtaining and using quality photography, the

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SHOW AND TELL AND SELL

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better the reproduction, the more communicative the message, and hopefully, the higher the sales volume.

Agri-visuals that go beyond illustration, that show and tell and sell will get the job done. Plus, they'll help motivate profit-minded growers, ranchers, feeders to listen to your story, and buy it! ■

7 most deadly signs of bad photography

If you're "blessed" with handling photo chores yourself, here's a list of seven most deadly sins of bad photography. Avoid committing them while shooting, or directing, and you're a sure bet for better pictures:

1. Horizonitis. Easy. All you do is put a horizon in every photo—right smack in the middle.

Correct by tilting camera down or up for low or high angle, making more interesting, more dramatic photo.

2. Fifteen feet. Most common problem—just back up 15 feet from subject.

Correct by moving in close to action. Famous photo school rule applies here: "fill the frame."

3. Everything in. Put everything possible into picture. Old cans, new cans.

Remember: effective use of photography is to **eliminate** "unwanted" distractions from picture when it is being made.

4. Nothing in. Opposite of everything in, this sin committed by moving as far back from subject as possible, if that's possible.

Correct with telephoto lens, moving close.

5. Sticking out. Line up farmer so telephone pole, old windmill, barn cupola protrudes from head, ear.

Correct by changing camera angle, eliminating distracting background.

6. Forty-five. Oft-committed sin of all photoraphers. Pros, no exceptions. It's simply shooting everything at eye-level so lens angle dissects ground at 45 degrees. Causes sameness look.

Improve picture by moving camera up, down, as subject dictates—such as shooting young soybean plants at ground level.

7. Out-of-focus. No excuse.

Take extra time, focus sharply on picture center of interest, then shoot.