

Focus Group Camera Club

Photographers sharing their knowledge and experiences

Focus Newsletter

Sept 2015 Vol 3 #4

President's column

As summer comes to an end we are about to kick off the first meeting of the FGCC 2015/2016 calendar year. Ed has been working hard this summer to put together several informative programs for the coming year. We have a number of exhibits in the works and hope to have more. Ideas for field trips and workshops are floating around. We will have our annual critique and we will have several opportunities for members to show off their photographs. It will be a busy year with fulfilling experiences if....

The "if" is if members step up to the plate and pitch in. This is not meant as a veiled complaint. On the contrary, congratulations to everyone for making this club work. This club has been a success because members have contributed so much to make it work. This is a reminder, however, for the club to continue working as well as it has everyone needs to participate at some level. We are a small club by choice with a cap on membership. hat way everybody has the opportunity to share their photographs regularly and to get to know all the other members of the club. Larger clubs can't offer those kinds of opportunities.

Everyone can't pitch in equally every year – stuff happens in our lives that distract us from our photography and our commitment to FGCC. Still everyone can do something. Contribute to the Roundtable. Become an officer. Contribute to the newsletter. Chair a committee. Assist on a committee. Help hang an exhibit. Make a presentation at a club meeting. Bring refreshments to an exhibit opening. Take a secondary volunteer role but don't forget to take a turn at a primary volunteer role every once in a while.

In short, the club is the sum total of all our efforts. We're doing great. Let's keep it that way.

Stephen Retherford

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Club Meetings are held:

Second Tuesday 7:30 PM

River Road Presbyterian Church

8960 River Road.

Richmond

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Frank Feigert

Copy Editor

Ron Ratcliffe

Publishing

How to Photograph a Horsefly's Eyes

by Bill Billings

(ed. Note: Bill has obviously caught the bug)

Photographing a horsefly up close is very dangerous!

The first step is to stop him (or her) from biting you! What works for me sometimes is whacking it hard with a slightly cupped open hand. The degree of "hand cupping" depends on the size of the horsefly. Too little cupping results in a squashed mess. Too much cupping results in a very aggressive insect with a bad attitude.



The next step is to make sure it is stunned enough not to bite you. Then I had to move it around to get better sunlight on its eyes so I could show the detail with my pocket Fuji F850 EXR. I took several shots because it was still twitching and I didn't want the eyes blurred. The small sensor enabled me to get adequate depth of field using the very short (5mm) wide angle lens. To end the photo session, the environmentalist, paddling with me, stomped on the horsefly to "put it out of its misery"!

Safety on your hikes.

Many of us love to spend time in the brush and heavily wooded areas. I just wanted to pass on a recent encounter with a fox a family friend had in eastern NC. John noticed the recent storm had knocked down a large limb in his backyard. When he moved the limb, a fox came charging around and bit him on the leg. John is a retired Army General so he retrieved his personal .45 pistol and shot at the fox wounding it. A neighbor finished it off.

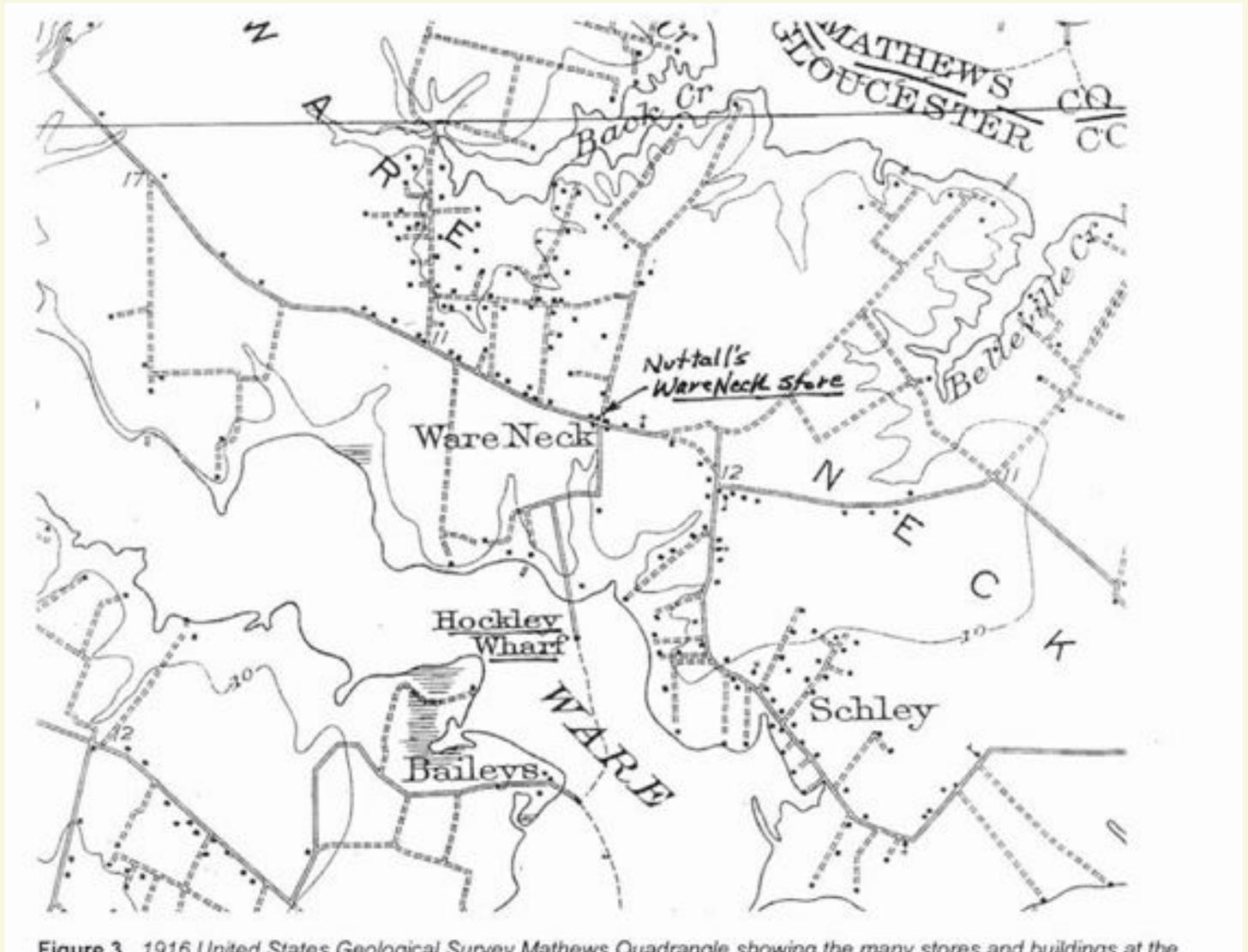
The fox was rabid and John had to endure some very painful surgery around the bite. If you don't have a .45 pistol, be very aware of any mammal acting unusual and leave the area.

Ron Ratcliffe

PHOTO ESSAY & Best Summer Picture: Trip to Ware Neck

By Bev Nelson

By driving with friends only an hour and twenty minutes from Richmond, I was able to conjure up where I summured in Quogue, Long Island in the late nineteen forties when I ran barefoot and was utterly free. We arrived in Ware Neck, Gloucester County, Virginia on Friday in time to stop at Nuttall's store and post



office and order sandwiches for lunch. There was a small table with two chairs; on the table was a checker board with sixteen soda bottle caps, 8 Coca Cola and 8 Nehi's. Before long two thin elderly men who appeared to know each other well sat down and began playing. Then I saw my friend go over to the post office window and pick up her relative's mail: two letters and a magazine. I noticed that behind her were rows of books with a sign indicating this was a library and to sign a card if you wanted to take out a book. But instead I was tempted to buy some jars of locally made green watermelon pickle, honey collected in Saluda, jars of strawberry and rhubarb jam, when someone called, "Bev, your sandwich is ready." I went over to pick it up and then approached the check out desk. The woman behind the desk was explaining that at Thanksgiving time they prepared and sold boneless cured and cooked Virginia hams. Since we were going to be coming back the next day, I decided to wait to decide what treasures to take home.

I was curious. Most of the people in the store seemed to know each other. It turns out Ware Neck was one of the earliest areas settled in Gloucester County and many seventeenth century estates are located here. This store including the post office was originally build in 1877. It was a natural setting as one-half mile down the lane was Hockley's wharf where steamboats brought passengers and goods to the area until the 1930s and the store became a gathering place which it still is today. It has changed little.



1890s photograph of the south façade of Nuttall's store and Post Office

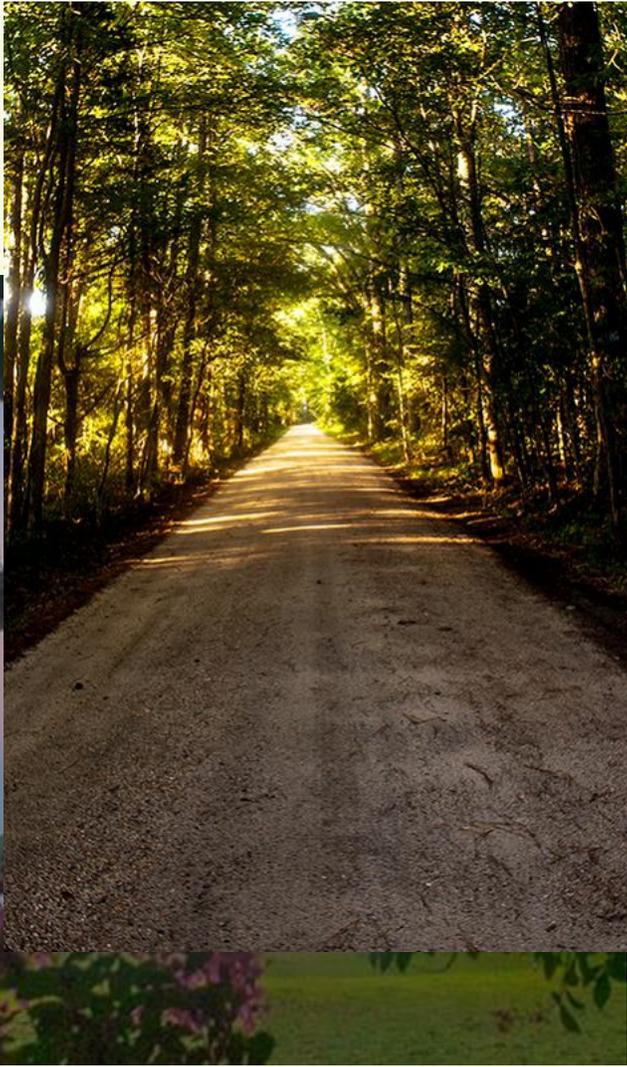
http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/Counties/Gloucester/0365016_Ware_Neck_Store_&_PO_2009_FINAL_NR.



Nuttalls' store and Post Office, July 31,2015

In 2009 the store and post office were added to the National Register of Historic Places and as you can see there are few significant architectural changes and most of them were made in the first fifty years.

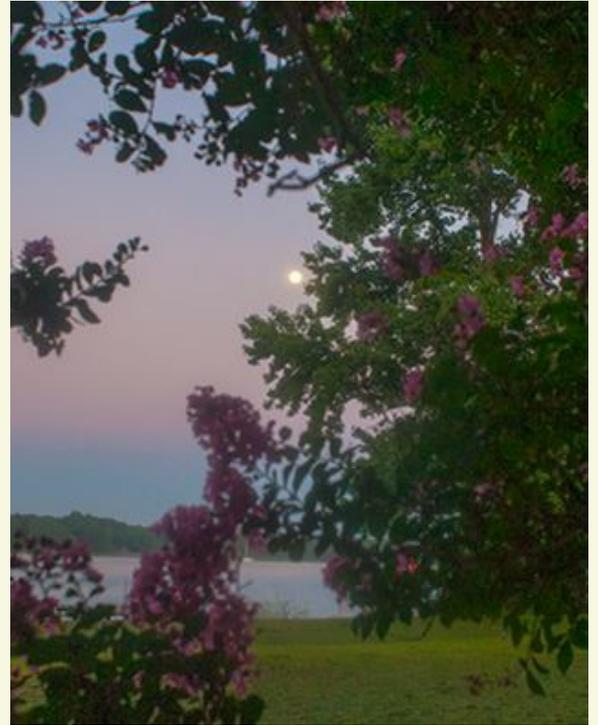
We approached the house from Hockley Lane and crossed over to a house on Chalkley Lane that faced the river on the south. The house we stayed in was a yellow wood frame building with four bedrooms with their



own baths. Each had different angles to see the river and a balcony to walk out on to better see the views. It was surrounded by 19 acres of fields, lawn, and most of all old trees. In the evenings we sat out on the dock watching a quiet, peaceful, even lazy river at low tide. The waves flapped against the dock and we sat there and watched until after the sun set.

Then we went walking. It was the night of the Blue Moon. We were keen to photograph it.

Even though it was beastly hot all the days we were there, the breeze from the land that flowed through the house allowed us to sleep comfortably with the windows open.



When I woke early I got up to shoot the moon some more, because I hadn't really gotten anything I liked before I went to bed. The morning seemed to give me better opportunities. There was even an egret on the dock for a while. Then he went fishing.

I was pleased with these last four images but not excited like I get when I really like what I have taken. I had hoped the moon seen through the crepe myrtles would have turned out better.

BUT, I did get one image that I am proud of which is below. I will call it my best shot of the summer.



Tangier Island -

Frank Feigert

Two days off from grandchild-sitting took us to Tangier Island. There is no photo of my eating too many crab dishes, but the attached give some idea. See the island now, while people still live there and the island sinks even further!



Decisions, Decisions



Warning

Gray Fox –

Rob Sabatini

This is a gray fox that I have been watching throughout the summer in Chester, Virginia. the location is a mixed residential and commercial area that also has significant wooded areas and a large pond. I believe that this is one of a pair that comes from an uncut field toward a commercial zone that has several restaurants. I am fairly certain that during late spring and summer the foxes were bringing the food to one or more dens, but I did not try to locate them. my goal is to get images of the fox coming out of the open field, using my car as a blind. this is one of them. canon 5dIII, 400 mm f /2.8 lens, shot at



ISO 1600, 1/1000 sec, f/4 –

Summer Squash

Richard Schieken

In July, our family went to Israel. Our first stop was the Salad Trail. Pictured are the fruits grown in the Judean Desert using shading tents, drip irrigation and recycled water. This is the desert, no rainfall and yet bountiful crops. The kids were able to pick and eat ripe fruit. The squash look

good enough to eat without cooking. I used a Nikon 105 mm close up lens for this shot



Teamwork: A Story about Collaboration

Linda & Al Warfield

A client requested 8x10 prints of two buildings in Richmond to go with some other pictures of Richmond buildings in her home. This is the story of how images taken by 2 different people during the same time frame were used to create one image that worked for the project. The building is the old city hall building on Broad Street, which is always busy, has all kinds of obstacles in the way, and the street is 4 lanes wide. The gothic architecture is spectacular. But photographing it is not that easy.

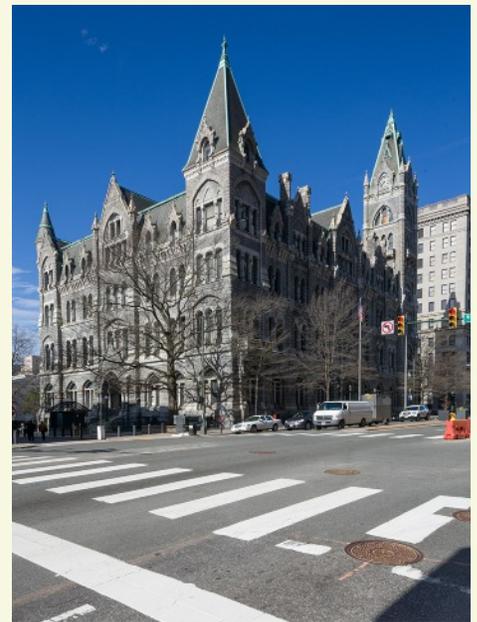
Figure 1 shows the original image we started with, taken by Linda. Notice the concrete median with the crooked sign blocking part of the building. The image was made using a Canon 7D Mark II camera with Canon 17-40mm f/4.0 lens (APS-C sensor), 1/1600 sec @f/16, ISO 2000, on a tripod. Initial processing was in Camera Raw.

The first post-processing step was to correct perspective distortion and straighten the building in Photoshop CC (2014). Note the presence of a traffic light blocking the upper left corner and a crooked sign on the left at the base.

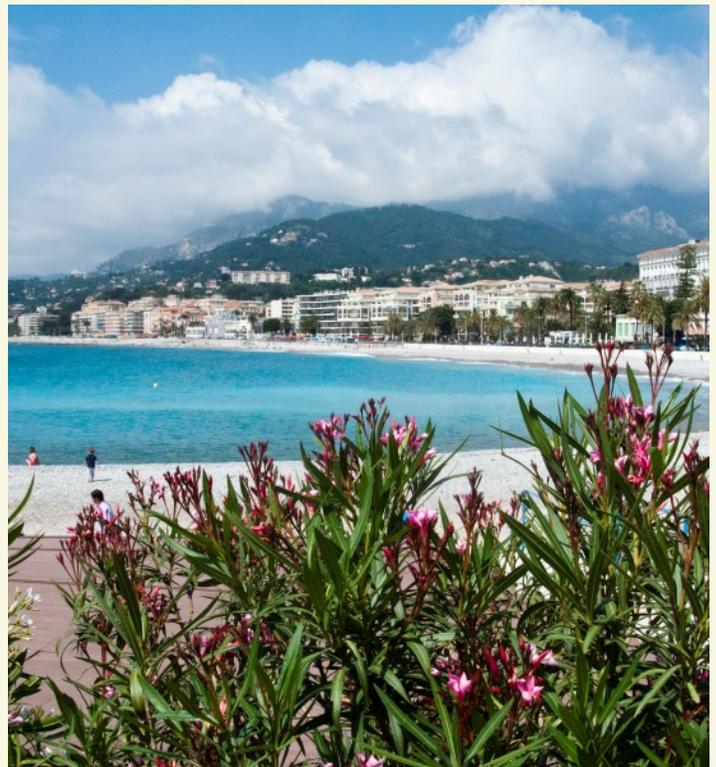
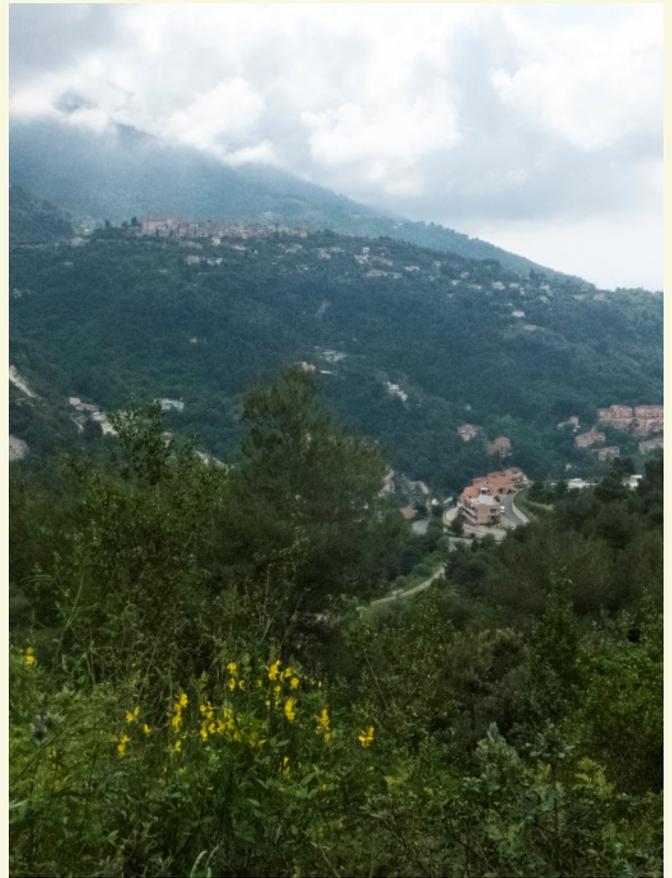
Al had taken another shot (Figure 2) from the same corner of the intersection but a little further west. The camera was a Canon 5D Mark III (full size sensor) and Canon TS-E 24mm f/3.5 lens, 1/125 sec @ f/16, ISO 200. From this position the traffic light that blocks part of the building was not in view. A selection was made from Al's image that included the part of the left tower blocked by the traffic signal in Linda's image. That was used to cover the blocked portion. It took some pixel bending in Photoshop and further editing. Also, the crooked sign was taken out by covering it using a selection from Al's image. In both of these procedures the selections were made using Quick Mask, which makes it easy to blend the selection into a different image.

Figure 3 shows the 8x10 image that resulted from cropping the original after making the adjustments. Simply by cropping some extraneous objects were removed. Further work was done to remove the "No Left Turn" sign, and lighten the very dark North face of the building. That was done by making a selection of the area, converting to a layer, and then making a Color Range selection of the dark tones, which was also saved as a layer. This layer was lightened using a Curves layer that was clipped onto it.

It was a lot of work for just an 8x10 print, but accomplishing this somewhat difficult task generates a nice warm feeling. Goes to show that photographers have feelings too! It may seem unusual to combine portions of two images taken with a completely different camera/lens/sensor/ISO, etc., but as you can see it really didn't make a lot of difference in this case. The image was printed on Epson Hot Press Natural Fine Art Paper using an Epson 3800 printer. Our client was pleased.



This summer, Cyane Lowden hiked some 40 miles in 4 days from tiny villages perched in the Alps to the French Riviera, Menton, to be precise. It was quite a trip since a moderate hike for European hikers is far from the American idea of moderate. The reward was the French Riviera after slogging from peak to peak. We certainly were not mistaken for the glitterati that hang out there.



Canadian Travels

Gilpin Brown

They were amazing! Moraine Lake, Lake Louise, big horn sheep, black bears and on and on... Pam and I spent eight 70 degree, sunny days in the Canadian Rockies in June. Everywhere you looked there was another incredible photograph. It was almost like 'just close your eyes and press the shutter release'! One thing I did differently this time - in many of my photos I thought ahead to when I would process them and bracketed all them in order to use all three exposures (-1, 0, +1) in a single HDR image. All hand held. Three of the results are on this page.



Capturing the Night Light and the Morning Light

Bill Billings

From the breakfast bar it was easy to capture the metallic sparkle and shadows from the sunrise peeking in. The crescent moon took more work. First I wanted to get the correct exposure of the golden crescent. 1/60 second at f5.3 with an ISO of 200 worked OK with reasonable noise. Since I didn't have a tripod handy, I set the self timer on two seconds and auto bracketing at +/- 1 full stop. The self timer and auto bracketing took out most of my shutter release camera movement. To further help reduce camera shake for the 40X shot (20X optical and 2X digital) I propped the camera on the bed of my F150 pickup. These two images are straight out of the Fuji F900 without manipulation except for the cropping of the moon. Have fun, shoot more!



4th of July with no Adult Supervision

Summer Shots



Ratcliffe

Franklin VA



Ratcliffe

Charleston SC



Ratcliffe

Charleston, SC



Pelican, pasted into an HDR sunset
Al Warfield Sandbridge VA

Here is the lineup of speakers we have confirmed for the next 6 months :

September 8 - Bill Billings

Oct 13 - James Center Reception

Nov 10- Tim Wright

Dec. 8 - Lynda Richardson

Jan. 12 - Open

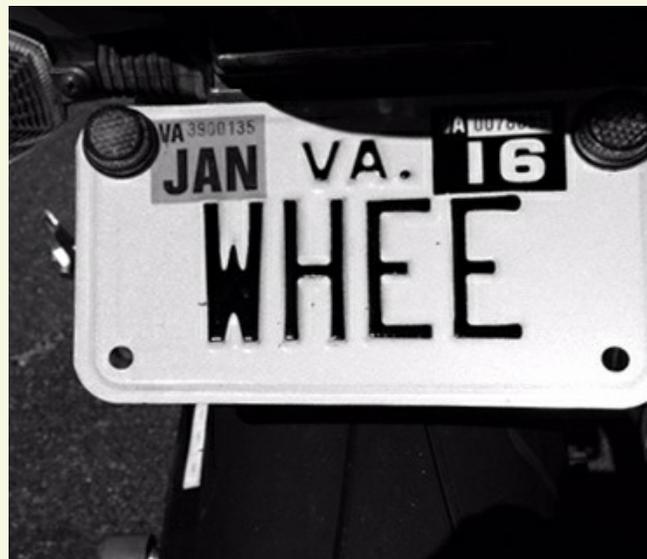
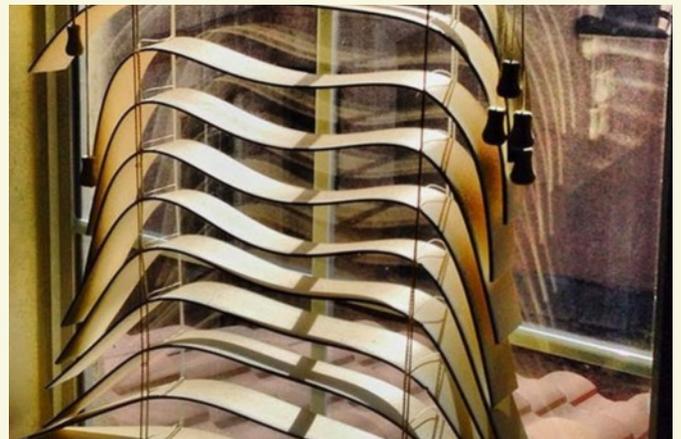
Feb. 9 - Alex Nyerges, Director of VMFA

Upcoming events

9/1 Board meeting – John Marshall Hotel at noon
(Remainder of Board meetings are TBA)

- 9/8 Club meeting – Bill Billings presentation & Roundtable
- 10/13 Club meeting – James Center Reception
- 11/10 Club meeting – Tim Wright presentation & Roundtable
- 12/8 Club meeting – Lynda Richardson presentation & Roundtable

Was your summer as hot as California?



Say it is finished

Ron and Frank