



## Travel Moments

by Doug Ethridge



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### Commentary

I was fortunate to travel through China in late 2016 with photographer Doug Ethridge. He later contributed to my Editor's Comments with a story and strategy that is simply terrific. Let me quote Doug from that article.

I am reminded of the first time I ever hired a really experienced video shooter. We went to a huge plywood mill, which is an incredibly complicated sort of place to shoot. There's just too much to take in. I started to describe what I was after, with no real concept of how we were going to pull this off. Suddenly, he held up his hand to stop me. "What's the story," he asked? We talked about it for less than five minutes, and then he was off. With no knowledge of plywood manufacturing but a great command of how to shoot a story, the resulting raw video tapes were almost a finished edit. Every scene got the same treatment... watch for a few minutes and then get to work: establishing shot, tight shot, reverse angle, human interest shot, interesting texture shot. Now look for the bonus shots and better angles. Repeat. Go to the next scene. That was probably 30 years ago and I'd say that my personal photography has been done with this basic method ever since.

A simple five-shot that any of us can use easily enough. And it doesn't always need to be five shots as you see here. Doug's three-image combination

(left) tells a story that is greater than the sum of the parts. We know something of these people even if we don't see their faces or know what they look like. We know something of their *story*, and to my way of thinking, that is far more important than seeing a smiling face posed for the Kodak snapshot.

Art making formulas are always suspect — and subject to exceptions. The "formula" Ethridge describes, however, seems to be universal. I've tried with my own photography; it works. I've used this way of thinking to analyze at all kinds of work by the best photographers in history (thanks to the library and my own collection of photography books); it works. I've asked a number of other photographers who also use this five-shot strategy; it works. Being a pragmatist, when something works so well, I'd be a fool to ignore it. So ...

1. Establishing shot
2. Tight shot
3. Reverse angle
4. Human interest shot
5. Interesting texture shot

ETRHI doesn't make a very snappy mnemonic aid, but however you choose to learn and remember this strategy, I cannot recommend it highly enough.