

**Editor's Note**

“Captured In Time” author Tim Tapscott explores his journey of becoming a photographer. As you read, notice how the significance and complexity of his pictures appear to unfold over time, and how he uses this development process to organize his essay. How does this structure contribute to the essay’s meaning? Are the transitions organic because they follow his journey?

Note how Tapscott’s photography is incorporated into the text of his essay. How do visual elements enhance his text? Consider how the essay would be different if the images were placed at the end with no captions. Examine the photographs. Which do you appreciate and why? Is there an argument in this essay? How do we know what Tapscott’s claims about photography are?

**Captured In Time****Tim Tapscott**

The course of our life is constantly being altered. We learn from each and every experience to become who we are today. Every person we talk to, every object we own, every success or misfortune we undergo, plays a small yet vital role in our life. We also have the ability to influence others, as well as be influenced ourselves. The memories we make will always be remembered, but can never be revisited – except with a photograph.

I grew up in a small rural town in northern California called Palo Cedro. It was a pleasant place to grow up – despite the strange climate consisting of blazing hot summers and cold snow-filled winters. With hundreds of miles of trails and dozens of mountain peaks to climb, I naturally became an outdoor enthusiast. I would normally choose my gear depending on the conditions – tent, filter, stove, snow skis, and trekking poles – then head out into the wilderness for a few days. However, the one piece of equipment I would always bring was my camera.

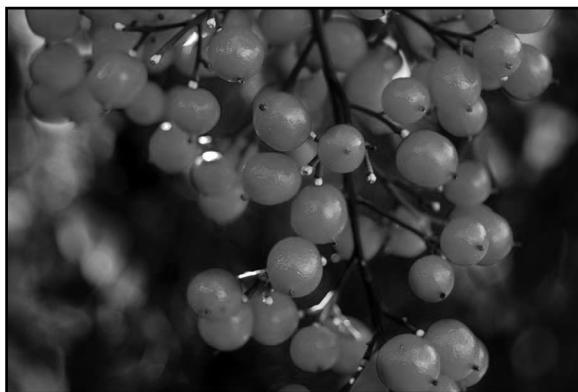
My camera was my lifeline. It documented my trips and allowed me to illustrate what words could not describe. I would



**FIGURE 2** Summit of Shasta Bally, California.

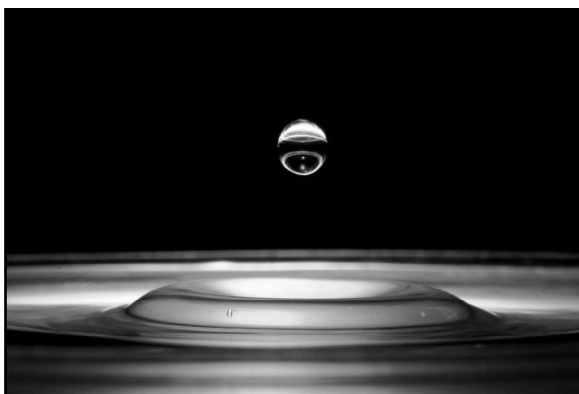
photograph the sunsets, the landscapes, the lakes, and the snow – anything that seemed “pretty”. I was not very good, nor did I have great equipment. I was using an old hand-me-down camera with no tripod, no fancy lens, and no meters or sensors. Over time I got better; I began to compose my photos, observe the lighting, and even dream of a better camera. I decided it might be time to upgrade.

After saving my money and reading hundreds of articles, I purchased my new camera – a Nikon d40x with Nikkor 18-200mm lens. After waiting impatiently for seven whole business days, it was like Christmas morning in October. I remember the very first photo I took with it, a photo of my lamp. Although it was underexposed and blurry, I could still see the light shining through and illuminating the desk in my dorm. I do not remember the next several hundred photos I took, but I do remember they were almost certainly flawed.



**FIGURE 3** Learning to use my new camera.

Over the next several weeks, I photographed anything and everything that was worth capturing at that moment. I had hundreds of photos of leaves, birds, berries, and again my desk lamp. I taught myself many new techniques in those few weeks, from basic concepts like proper exposure, to more advance concepts like hyper focal distance. I never wanted to take a photography class because I felt photography was a talent that was best learned from one’s own mistakes and successes. For example,



**FIGURE 4** A macro of a water drop.

if an entire series of photos did not turn out, I never considered it a failure because I was able to learn from those mistakes.

I still have never taken a photography class; nor do I believe it is necessary to be taught what looks good or bad. I have taught myself everything I know about photography by just using my camera. Photography is a form of art, and the only way one can

become better is from practice. I learned how to manipulate my surroundings in order to create photos how I envisioned them. A famous photographer by the name of Ansel Adams once said, “You don’t take a photograph, you make it.” Anyone can take a photo, just as anyone can splatter paint on a canvas. However, it is how the paint is arranged that makes a beautiful painting, just as how the right lighting, mood, composition, and focus produces a photograph.

I noticed my perception of my surroundings began to slowly shift. I began to see the world in a different way. I realized a great photo did not always have to have a great subject. The small, hidden masterpieces in nature that I normally would disregard turned into small works of art that could be captured on film. A simple water drop could convey a symbol of strength, or a wisp of smoke could illustrate tranquility. I had overcome one of the most difficult challenges in photography – my photos now had meaning.

Each photograph began to tell its own story. Each one contained a memory and a moment imbedded into it – I can remember the camera settings, where I was, what I was thinking, and what I learned from almost every photo I have taken. For instance, two of my favorite photos were taken at Shell Beach, California when I was photographing the sunset. I must have been an interesting sight – climbing on the rocks, struggling with my tripod, not slipping off – because I noticed a family watched me



**FIGURE 5** A long exposure of the sunset from Shell Beach, California.

almost the entire time. After snapping a few dozen photos, I retreated to my car and saw a paper tag on the window. My first thought was a parking ticket, as I noticed I parked illegally. I pulled it off and saw a phone number with writing on it that said, “Please contact me I would like to purchase photos if you were taking them.” This sounded strange to me, but I stuffed the note into my pocket and drove home.

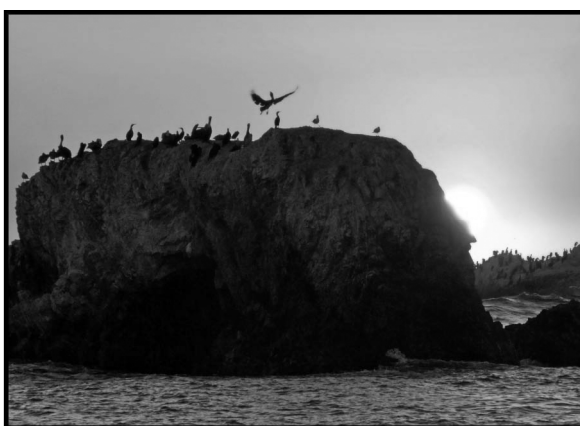
Upon investigating the mysterious note, I gathered enough courage to call the number. After saying who I was, the woman explained to me they were visiting Shell Beach from Fresno, California, and had forgotten their camera.

Her son, a part of the 160th infantry was leaving for Afghanistan in a few days. She wanted to give him some of my photos as a gift to remember the moment they were together the night I was photographing the sunset. I did not have the heart to request money, even if it was a scam, so I emailed a few photos and added my P.O. Box at the end. Three weeks later, almost completely forgetting about this strange incident, I received a letter in the mail. I opened the letter and was shocked to see a check for \$100 and a handwritten note. The quote I remember reading even to this day was, “I hope you recognize how your talent has played such a significant role in our lives.”

I have sold the sunset photos from Shell Beach to different people around the world, and I have told this story to each person who has purchased them. Now they will be able to share this moment, as have I. It was not the memory that makes the photo special to me – it was the moment I captured with my camera.

Although I have never met the soldier, his mother, or his family, they have played a significant role in my life. As I continue to photograph the world around me, I like to think each and every one of my photographs has impacted someone else’s life. Just as each photograph I take has a small impact on mine.

*Tim Tapscott is a biological sciences major.*



**FIGURE 6** A soaring bird admist the sunset from Shell Beach, California.