

Photography

Photography While Downhill Skiing

February 18, 2018 | Charles T. Low, Photographer

Ski-photography - Obstacles and Enablers

The views while downhill skiing must present **terrific** opportunities for the photographer.

Not!

Downhill skiing and photography do *not* go together, or at least not in my books. I can say that, despite having made quite a few photographs - photographs which continue to please me - from various skiing expeditions, including skiing in the Purcell Mountains of British Columbia, just last week.



-this image from last week used with kind permission from my brother

But this resembles boating/sailing, my summer-time avocation. On the water, as noted in a recent blog, I get so busy that I have very little time for photography, even though I virtually always have a camera with me, and even though I have access to stunningly gorgeous scenery.

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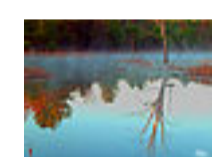
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February 2018 (4)

January 2018 (3)

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Once the day's boating has finished, then the camera can come out.

When skiing, first of all I have to stay *vertical*, and in my case that only happens with considerable concentration! Years ago at [Edelweiss](#), I got to the stage where I did a top-to-bottom run with a video camera in my hands. (I had fun!)



I could ski down those runs with a camera quite comfortably, and have a great day on the slopes, to boot!

But that kind of videography hasn't recurred since then, and the obstacles to ski-photography extend beyond the skill required to do two things at once. They include factors like:

- protecting the camera;
- the cold;
- not holding up my non-photographer ski-friends, and
- staying safely out of the way when my attention turns from my overall surroundings to the narrower world in the viewfinder.

When skiing, I wear my camera on the front, inside my jacket. So far, that has worked well, and I have never hurt either the hardware or myself that way, despite some fairly spectacular tumbles. But the potential bothers me.

I cannot imagine skiing with a tripod, nor even a monopod. Fortunately, most photographic opportunities for me have occurred during daylight, but it does create occasional limitations. (Someone should invent a combination ski-pole/monopod!)

When the thermometer hovers around -5°C , then stopping, unzipping, and whipping the camera out,

feels quite comfortable. It varies depending also on sunshine and wind. At -15°C, it feels ... less comfortable! Let alone my delicate torso, my hands suffer, and at a certain temperature, even liner-gloves, with which I can still work the camera-controls, don't quite cut it, once the mittens come off.

Then we have the issue that many cameras, in their operating instructions, declare that they will work well only above freezing temperatures. I have generally ignored this, with no ill effects noted other than diminished battery life. And my current camera, happily, claims cold-weather functionality.

Also, I will only use a smaller lens, and that means no telephoto shots. The bigger lens doesn't fit as well inside my coat. Sometimes, however - often, actually - the scene presented before me just cries out for magnification.



This shot, from the base of the mountain, used a 6-times telephoto lens, and not having access to that when up on the slopes does feel quite limiting.

(It also illustrates the dogmatic stupidity [did I say that out loud?] of those who say "always use a wide-angle lens for landscapes" - what about using the lens best suited to the occasion? *It will vary ... of course!*)

That should imply no disregard for wide-angle lenses:



This wasn't shot while skiing, but it was shot in the cold (high Arctic), and you get the idea - sometimes a wide-angle lens suits very well.

Skiing with non-photogs features prominently among my personal obstacles. I have to live with that, and would feel ridiculous asking anyone to stop frequently for five minutes, while I work on getting a shot, when they have spent good money and allocated precious time to go skiing - and are aching to continue carving!

Recently at the [Panorama](#) Mountain Resort - and by the way, if you want to see some phenomenal videography, then click that link - I stopped at the edge of one run, and made this photograph:



The narrowness of that run, however - and this photograph shows pretty well its full width, only perhaps three or four metres - concerned me, and so I found a long, straight stretch, got well off to the side, and unleashed my cell-phone while trying to keep a part of my mind on who might suddenly descend upon me. (Fortunately, cell-phone cameras get great photos these days [for "90%" of shots]).

So, with smaller mountains or easier runs, I may feel more comfortable keeping my "big" camera with me.

Or, I have a very nice, but quite small, camera - now a bit "old" (is over ten years "old"?):





-this photo made with my small camera last year from [Mont-Ste-Marie](#)

A small camera can compromise very intelligently when on the slopes. Importantly, mine has a great zoom lens, so that can take care of the telephoto problem. Do not underestimate the potential of a good point-and-shooter.

But of course I also like my interchangeable-lens, more versatile camera.





-made with my bigger camera

This camera offers more possibilities, including, as only one example, the option of editing with raw files - remembering that the most important hardware resides between the photographer's ears, not dangling from her neck.

And one other very minor but practical factor involves travel: I always strive to travel light, and therefore often only bring one camera. And for a major expedition, you can't ask me to leave my ILM camera at home.

("ILM" = "interchangeable lens, mirrorless", which I believe will eventually supplant "DSLR", "digital single lens reflex" - but enough about that.)

I only bring one *camera*, but at least two *lenses* - but then won't take the big lens up the slopes! If I had world-class skiing skills, then I for certain would consider it - but I don't, and I won't.



-me, resting on a bench, half-way down a slope - fairly able to coordinate that!



-me, on the slopes last week (a bit cold!)

Obviously, I could learn to ski better! There are ski-photographers out there with much more robust equipment setups than I could contemplate, and in order to photograph world-class scenery, or world-class skiers, they themselves need superlative technical skiing skills (and a super-human tolerance for discomfort!).

But in my case, back to the real world, that isn't going to happen, so I acknowledge some combination of the following:

- sticking with a smaller (less telephoto) lens;
- skiing with a point-and-shoot camera (many of which have excellent zoom lenses!);
- using my cell-phone camera;
- get a helmet-cam;
- photographing on relatively warmer days;
- skiing easier runs and/or on smaller mountains.

I could consider a harness which would keep my camera outside my jacket, but prevent it from bouncing around.

I could try to find fellow ski-photographers. (Feel free to get in touch, and no I'm possibly not doing the black runs, and certainly not the double-blacks!)

Given those limitations, I feel very grateful for the images I *have* obtained, many of which continue to please me.



-this from last year, skiing at the wonderful [Kimberley, BC](#), ski resort. (We like to move around - so

many mountains, so little time!)



-the mountains have a different beauty in snow and fog





While you're here:

Remember that I make photographs and that I sell photographs.

Almost everything which you see on this web site is for sale. Prices at the time of writing, for example, for an 11x14" fine-art print with a generous white border would be about \$40, and you can go up or down from there. Check the [rates](#) page. More importantly, check out my [gallery](#).

Book a [portrait-sitting](#) - the right frequency with which to commission formal portraits is a bit more often.

Remember also to leave a comment, or to contact me. Note that on the main [blog](#) page you can sign up for new-blog notifications. I am very careful and respectful with your privacy.

Thank you so much for reading.

Charles T. Low
Photographer



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