



The Backgrounder

News and Information About Turning Backgrounds into Profits!

A publication of Virtual Backgrounds - ©2006

February 2006 Issue

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Virtual Backgrounds hosts "Sleep Over" for Key Photographers!

The night before the opening of the 2006 Imaging USA (PPA) convention in Austin, ten photographers (pictured right) from the USA and Canada were hosted by Virtual Backgrounds for an overnight "sleep over" on board Henry and Marian Oles' two historic Pullman sleeping cars. The cars are parked at Virtual Backgrounds in San Marcos, Texas.

The event included a presentation by Henry Oles, Jim Wilson and Trevon Baker followed by a discussion of the value of Virtual Backgrounds to enhance portrait photography.

The group was then served a homemade BBQ dinner on board the Virtual Backgrounds railroad dining car which is regularly used

for workshop functions and other events.

The guests then retired to their private suites in two 1947 sleeping cars. Light sleepers counted the passage of 7 freight trains during the night on tracks less than 30 feet away. This gives realism to the entire train experience! Some guests had to leave early Saturday morning for meetings in Austin, just 30 minutes away. Others stayed for breakfast tacos.

The picture on the right was taken on the authentic caboose located at the end (of course) of the three other cars. Everyone, including the Staff at Virtual Backgrounds had a fabulous time! We thank our guests for making the short trip to San Marcos.



Top (L to R): Jim Wilson, George Wilkins, Henry Oles, Marian Oles, Trevon Baker, Rick Billings. Middle (L to R): Janine Killian, Brian Killian. Bottom (L to R): Larry Peters, Frank Cricchio, Clarissa Colenzi, Louise Simone, Joseph Simone, Terry Deglau, Sam Pelaia, and Buddy Stewart. Not pictured: Lola Stewart

Special points of interest:

- 2006 Workshop Schedule
- Custom Slide-Making Now Available
- VB Spotlight: Jen LaGrange

Scene Machine Used to Photograph PPA Degree Recipients

Virtual Backgrounds was contracted for the third year in a row to create the background that was projected behind every degree recipient at the PPA convention in Austin, Texas.

Virtual Backgrounds' Vice President for Education, Jim Wilson, photographed more than 100 degree recipients in a little more than an hour, using four different slides of bronze plaques representing each respective degree. The entire

process was coordinated by Ralph Romaguera of Metairie, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans.

Before using the Scene Machine to create the background, only a plain photographer's canvas was used as a background. Using Virtual Backgrounds to project the degree recipient's degree helped to capture this special moment and make the occasion meaningful for all.



2006 Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Schedule

- April 3-4-5
- May 8-9-10
- June 12-13-14
- July 17-18-19
- August 14-15-16
- September 18-19-20
- October 16-17-18
- November 13-14-15

Click [here](#) to view our new workshop brochure containing valuable information on our Virtual Backgrounds training workshops.

Joseph Simone Receives the ASP Fellowship Award



The most prestigious award a professional photographer can receive from PPA is the ASP Fellowship Award. The award is usually limited to two photographers per year. This year's recipient is Joseph Simone of Montreal Canada. Joseph and his wife Louise are recognized as two of the most outstanding portrait photographers in the world. They have been using their Scene Machine for nearly 4 years. The gallery of images created by the Simones that were reviewed by the ASP panel in-

cluded several that were created with the Scene Machine Virtual Backgrounds system. We congratulate Joseph Simone for this outstanding accomplishment!



Custom Slides Now Available from VB

Virtual Backgrounds is happy to announce that we can now extend offers to customers to have their digital files made into background slides. Every slide will be mounted on glass-mounted square super slides. If you wish to have a 35mm slide instead of the perfect square, simply create a square canvas, insert your 35mm image, and fill in the remaining area with the color black. It's that easy! Slides are priced at \$10 each with a minimum \$50 order.

Digital files can be uploaded as jpeg images through our [FTP transfer page](#) located in the "Background Libraries" section of the website. It is recommended that files are sent as .jpg images with pixel dimensions of 2000 x 2000. If you have questions or need help setting up your digital files, contact your VB Consultant or our background library manager, [Jen LaGrange](#).

VB People Spotlight: Jen LaGrange

In this month's VB People Spotlight, we highlight Jen LaGrange who wears many hats at Virtual Backgrounds. She serves as the company's trade show coordinator, editor of *The Backgrounder*, manager of background slide production, and graphic artist for most informational literature and marketing ads that Virtual Backgrounds releases.

A native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana (near Lafayette), Jen has been a part of the Virtual Backgrounds family for three years. Prior to Virtual Backgrounds, she was a college volleyball coach at the University of Maryland and Texas State University (formerly Southwest Texas State University).

Feel free to [contact Jen](#) with questions about custom slide-making or anything having to do with Virtual Backgrounds.



Image by Trevon Baker

The Largest Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Ever!

Twenty-seven photographers from all parts of the United States and Mexico came to San Marcos in February to attend the new three-day Virtual Backgrounds workshop. We normally like to limit a class to 15-18, but this time we decided to allow the enrollment to increase and everyone showed up!

The class was a rousing success. Everyone actively participated and interacted with each other beautifully. The class on Monday and Tuesday went from 9 am to



nearly 10 pm. On Wednesday morning, the guest presenter was San Antonio

photographer, [Rick Harding](#). Rick is often referred to as "The Prom King" because he handles so many high dollar proms. He also is a very active senior and school photographer. Rick presented his methods of operating and marketing.

The Virtual Backgrounds workshop is conducted most every month throughout the year. It is available free of charge to Virtual Background system owners and is available at a reasonable charge for others with the cost of the workshop being refunded if one purchases a system after the workshop. The workshop is PPA approved for merits.

The Business Class with Attitude is coming to Texas!

San Marcos, Texas is the fourth stop of a five-city tour for this highly acclaimed business growth workshop presented by marketing guru Greg Stangl and sponsored in part by Virtual Backgrounds.

Greg Stangl's dynamic *The Business Class with Attitude* workshops cover sales and marketing for professional photographers and studio personnel.

Greg will be talking in part about how to use Virtual Backgrounds as a primary marketing tool and how to also use background variety to significantly increase sales averages.

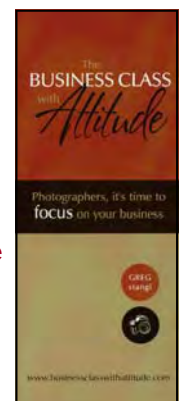
Kill Two Birds With One Stone!

Make plans now to attend the San Marcos, Texas stop. As well as being the host for the workshop, we will also provide complimentary drinks, snacks, and a Tuesday evening dinner and social.

Class will be held in our studio which is filled with many beautiful sample images from photographers all over the world! Consultants will be available to answer any questions that you might have about the Virtual Backgrounds process!

Don't let this opportunity pass you by. **Sign up today!** Greg can be contacted via his [website](#), [email address](#) or by calling 630-896-3542.

Mention Virtual Backgrounds and you will receive a \$50 discount on the workshop tuition!



Trevon Baker Scheduled to Teach at the Triangle Institute

Course Description:

What are the four dimensions of a good portrait? Varying any one or combination of these dimensions makes it easy to provide your customers with more variety. Learn how to incorporate unique and contemporary backgrounds into your portraiture to make it easier than ever to offer that "something different" that so many of today's clients are demanding.

Along the way, discover how this new approach can expand your posing and lighting alternatives to

easily create more variety for each customer and have you making more profits in your studio.

Take your studio portraiture to the next level by combining custom backgrounds with creative posing and lighting techniques to separate yourself from the competition as you create "timeless" portraiture that will bring the public back to the professional photographer.

Trevon Baker has had a successful studio for over 20 years and has assisted the Simones and Don Blair in their teaching over the last few

years. He was named "Photographer of the Year" by the Montana Professional Photographers Association.

Class Dates:

March 26 - 31, 2006. Click [here](#) for more information about the Triangle Institute of Professional Photography.

We hope to see you there!



FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: Basil Pecknyo of Flint, Michigan

Basil Receives His Photographic Craftsman Degree at Age 80 and is Going Strong!



"I love humor, I love people, I love making them laugh, and I love making photographs of them that they love."



Background created with the Virtual Backgrounds Scene Machine.

Basil Pecknyo was honored with the presentation of the Photographic Craftsman degree at the recent Imaging USA (PPA) convention held in Austin, Texas. Basil and his wife, Margaret (pictured with PPA President Ann Monteigh) were thrilled. They have been married for nearly 56 years! He's had more than enough merits to earn his Craftsman degree for years, but at least 16 merits were lost when PPA converted to a new computer system.

Basil is very well known and loved by many photographers. In 55 years, Basil has missed only two PPA conventions. He also attends and participates in many other conventions and training programs, such as SPA

in Florida and many local and regional conventions. Basil never wants to stop learning and always wants to improve and become a better photographer.

rarily slowed him down. He says his new knee will bring him back to normal again shortly.

The Scene Machine has been a fundamental part of his studio for

"My customers like me. They like how I treat them. I make them feel good, I have even helped the kids get scholarships. And they really like the work I produce for them with my Scene Machine Virtual Backgrounds system."

His whole life has been devoted to photography. Photography enabled Basil to raise five children, and he now has five grandchildren. He owns several buildings in Flint, had a lake house in northern Michigan and two condos in Florida. At one time there were seven or more studios in town, but now his downtown studio Van Dyke Photography is the last one standing.

Basil is in the process of moving to his new studio near his home, but a knee replacement operation in December has tempo-

more than 20 years. He started using the Scene Machine back when it was very primitive compared with today, but he was able to achieve great results. Basil has created thousands of his own background images.

When asked, "How does an 80 year old Caucasian man operate a thriving business in Flint, Michigan photographing teenagers, most of whom are African American?" His response is simple. "My customers like me. They like how I treat them. I make them feel good, I have

even helped the kids get scholarships. And they really like the work I produce for them with my Scene Machine Virtual Background system."

Basil reports that better than 80% of his work is done with the Scene Machine in order to generate the variety that is so popular with his clients.

When asked about what's in his future, Basil says with a laugh, "I love humor, I love people, I love making them laugh, and I love making photographs of them that they love. I had fun coming into this world and I intend to have fun going out!"



Upcoming Schools & Conventions

Are you interested in seeing the Virtual Backgrounds system up close and personal but can't come to San Marcos to attend a workshop? Check us out at one of the below events. Chances are we'll be coming to a town near you!

For more information click on the title of the event!

Business Class with Attitude!
February 20-22, 2006
(San Marcos, Texas)

PMA Convention & Trade Show
February 26-March 1, 2006
(Orlando, Florida)

Mid-East States Convention
March 1-6, 2006
(Dayton, Ohio)

PP of North Carolina Convention
March 3-8, 2006
(Raleigh, North Carolina)

**South Dakota Winter Seminar
w/ Trevon Baker**
March 5-6, 2006
(Sioux Falls, South Dakota)

Children & Family Photo. Convention
March 5-7, 2006
(Austin, Texas)

Simone Class w/ Michael Koska
March 7-10, 2006
(Columbia, South Carolina)

Business Class with Attitude!
March 14-16, 2006
(Boston, Massachusetts)

SW PPA Convention
March 18-22, 2006
(Arlington, Texas)

Simone Class w/ Suna Lee Photo.
March 26-28, 2006
(McLean, Virginia)

8th International Seminar of Photo.
March 26-28, 2006
(Monterrey Mexico)

Triangle School w/ Trevon Baker
March 26-31, 2006
(Greentree, Pennsylvania)

Heart of America Convention
March 31-April 5, 2006
(Omaha, Nebraska)

WPPI Convention & Trade Show
April 7-11, 2006
(Las Vegas, Nevada)

PP of Michigan w/ Greg Stangl
April 21-24, 2006
(Kalamazoo, Michigan)

Texas School w/ Simone Class
April 23-28, 2006
(College Station, Texas)

Professional Photographers of Canada
May 6-10, 2006
(Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada)

Kerrville Summer Seminar
June 25-28, 2006
(Kerrville, Texas)

Look at what Dave Filler from Montana is doing with his
Scene Machine Virtual Backgrounds System!



Parents are Loving It!
Seniors are Loving It!
And You'll Love It Too!

www.virtualbackgrounds.net 1-800-831-0474