



The Backgrounder

News and Information About Turning Backgrounds into Profits!

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March 2006 Issue

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Greg Stangl's *Business Class* was a Huge Success in San Marcos!



On February 20-22, 2006, Greg Stangl brought his three day workshop, *The Business Class With Attitude*, to our Virtual Backgrounds Teaching Facility in San Marcos, Texas.

For Illinois photographer and business consultant, Greg Stangl, Virtual Backgrounds was a key part of the class primarily because of its role in marketing and advertising.

Jim Wilson of Virtual Backgrounds presented a special segment on the use of Virtual Backgrounds. A special highlight of the workshop was a BBQ dinner served by Virtual Backgrounds on board the company's private railroad dining car which is parked on a side directly next to the Virtual Backgrounds facility.



Greg at Work!

Special points of interest:

- 2006 VB Workshop Schedule
- Custom Slides Now Available from VB
- VB People Spotlight: George Wilkins
- Coming Soon: *Perfect Storm* -by Henry J. Oles

Rick Harding's Virtual Backgrounds Forum

Rick Harding of Harding Studios in San Antonio, Texas is a long time owner of Virtual Backgrounds systems. Rick has had a great deal of success with his 8 Scene Machines capturing virtually all of the major prom contracts in the region. Rick frequently fields questions about Virtual Backgrounds and is always willing to

help a fellow photographer learn more.

In an effort to generate more Virtual Backgrounds "talk" Rick has started an online forum where ideas can be shared and questions can be answered. Click [here](#) to visit his forum and get more involved in the world of Virtual Backgrounds!



Local Austin Television Station Spotlights VB

During the recent PPA Imaging USA National Convention, held in Austin, Texas, local newsman, Fred Cantu of CBS affiliate KEYE Channel 42, visited the Virtual Backgrounds booth.

Cantu was amazed at the versatility that the system has to offer and decided to run a feature story on Virtual Backgrounds in a segment that he calls the "Gadget Guy." The story was run on Friday, March 3,

2006. The text and video of the story can be seen by clicking [here](#) or by clicking on the image to the right.

This is yet another example of the Virtual Backgrounds *WOW Factor!* Fred's reaction to the system was similar to the way that customers react when they see their results for the first time. Owners of Virtual Backgrounds systems really do offer their clients that special "something different" that customers are looking

for today, and customers respond with an enthusiastic "WOW"...and that says it all!



2006 Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Schedule

April 3-4-5 *closed*
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.

Last Chance to Register for Trevon Baker's Class

If you would like to spend a really exciting and educational week with Trevon Baker, there are still a few spaces left for his class as part of the Triangle Institute in Pittsburgh. The title of Trevon's class is "Using the Four Dimensions of Portraiture to Set Yourself Apart and Generate

More Profit." Although the class covers all aspects of professional portraiture, special attention is given to the implementation of Virtual Background technology into everyday studio photography.

Trevon was Montana Photographer of the Year in 2005. His classes are

always highly acclaimed. He is a highly accomplished user of Virtual Backgrounds at his studio in Kalispell, Montana. Click [here](#) or contact Becky at 724-869-5455 to enroll in this exciting class!



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: George Wilkins

In this month's VB People Spotlight, we highlight one of our friendly consultants, George Wilkins. George has been with Virtual Backgrounds for nearly a year. He has become an important asset to the company. George spends much of his time cultivating relationships with people. With his friendly and upbeat personality, he is dedicated to teaching people about Virtual Backgrounds. George works diligently to help each photographer and each studio find the right fit to help them grow their business. George's vast experience in the photo lab industry helps those who he talks with learn how to expand their business and creativity through the use of a Virtual Backgrounds system. Feel free to [contact](#) George Wilkins with questions.



Image by Trevon Baker

Have Fun Capturing Your Own Backgrounds!

Virtual Backgrounds has more than 1000 stock background slides available. The stock slides are a great way for a new user of a Virtual Backgrounds system to quickly get started. There are many other stock slides such as The Simone Collections and Old Masters backgrounds that should be part of every photographers background library. The real fun of using your Virtual Backgrounds system, however, is in capturing your own backgrounds.

In some ways, it's a whole lot like a fishing or hunting trip. You never know what you are going to find. But, every time you venture forth, whether it is just down the road a piece or off to other cities and countries, you should carry your film or digital camera with you to capture the backgrounds that catch your attention.

I make it a practice to always look at nearly everything in my environment, trying to anticipate how I would use that background in the studio with real subjects. Backgrounds can be of anything. Initially, you'll just look for special places where, if you lived in the area, would want to take your subjects to be photographed. As your experience grows, you'll come to realize that you are able to make big things little and little things big. Even silly objects can be valuable captures. I was recently traveling across Germany on an ICE train. We stopped in the Frankfurt station, and I was attracted to the domed ceiling with thousands of glass panels sloping up and over with a blue sky behind the panels. I captured it...and it made a great abstract background that is made even better when I vary the image with color gels. On the same trip, I

passed very close to an old rusty factory with big beams and other pipes. With the current interest in industrial backgrounds, I grabbed that image too.

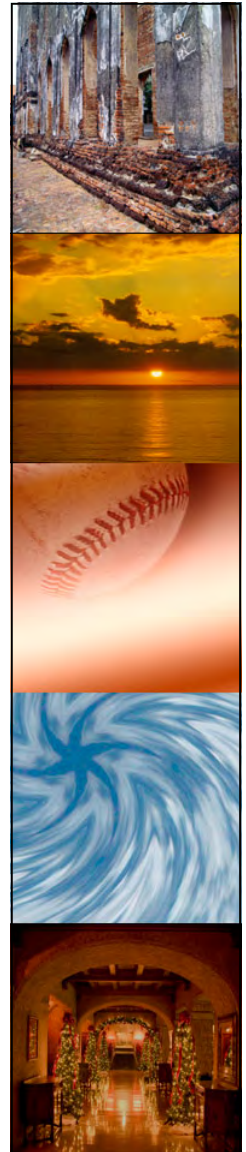
I now use my digital camera to capture all my backgrounds. It costs nothing to grab a background. Then, when I have time, I look through what I captured and find the keepers and erase the others. It's kind of like being a shrimper. You drop nets and then pull them in and sort through your catch. With digital cameras and programs such as Photo Shop, you can perform an infinite number of manipulations too!

Sometimes one or more unusable images can be made into something really special when combined together and enhanced.

I find that when I use images that I captured myself in the studio with a real subject, I feel as though I am back at the location. And when I return to a site where I captured backgrounds, perhaps years earlier, I have a unique feeling that I've been there many times over. Once in a while, I return to a site that yielded really great backgrounds only to find that the location has been re-decorated. Very often, it is possible to re-photograph the same site but with entirely different results.

So, you see, capturing your own backgrounds and utilizing them creatively in the studio can be loads of fun. It personalizes your work and your style, and it gives your customers that special "something different" that they desire.

-written by Henry Oles
Founder and President



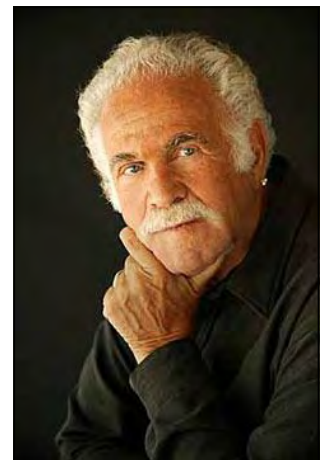
Monte Zucker Scheduled to Appear at WPPI Trade Show

World famous photographer, speaker and teacher, [Monte Zucker](#) from Williams Island, Florida, spent two days at Virtual Backgrounds in San Marcos, Texas immediately following the PPA's Imaging USA National Convention in Austin. Monte has used Virtual Backgrounds in the past but was anxious to tour our facility to learn about the latest developments. While in San Marcos, Monte stayed on board the private Virtual Backgrounds railroad Pullman cars.

Every photographer uses Virtual Backgrounds in a different way. The beauty of the system is that your

style of photography does not necessarily change, it only enhances with Virtual Backgrounds. This holds true of Monte's and other famous photographer's work.

We are pleased and excited to announce that Monte Zucker will be demonstrating his use of Virtual Backgrounds in our booth (#315) at [WPPI](#) in Las Vegas this April. So, if you are attending WPPI, be sure to stop by our booth to see how Monte and other photographers use Virtual Backgrounds to enhance their photography. You'll be glad that you did!



FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: Angela Vaught from Somerset, Kentucky

In Less Than One Year, Angela is Looking to Expand Her Studio!



"I see a trend for people to go to private studios that offer more unique and artistic products."

Angela Vaught opened her studio in Somerset, Kentucky less than a year ago and already she is looking for a larger facility to accommodate her growing needs. While Photography by Angela Vaught is Angela's first studio, she is not new to professional photography. She was with Sears Portraits for 17 years doing everything from running the local Sears Portrait Studio to working as a training manager which took her all over the country. Eventually, she grew frustrated with the limitations a major national studio chain has to impose on their photographers and decided to follow her dream of having her own studio. Although Angela does all kinds of photography, her specialty is children 5 and under. Angela's first major purchase after



purchasing her Canon 10 D camera and studio lights was a Virtual Backgrounds system. She first saw a system on display at a Kentucky trade show and immediately thought, "This is really cool" and recognized that infinite background variety would give her a definite edge over other studios, including Sears and Wal-Mart. At Sears, she was always

Virtual Backgrounds workshop and the rest is history. "My customers love it. I often do 3 or 4 backgrounds on a single sitting. It's a big deal for my customers to have multiple backgrounds and very different looks as part of their sitting. I see a trend for people to go to private studios that offer more unique and artistic products."

"If I never made a nickel with the Virtual Backgrounds it's worth having just because it's so much fun to use. However, my Virtual Backgrounds paid for its self in just over a week, so it's twice as much fun... (isn't that exciting!)."

frustrated with using just a few simple backgrounds. Now, a whole world of backgrounds could be at her fingertips.

Angela does not see her former employer, Sears Portraits, or the nearby Wal-Mart Portrait Studio as competition because she can offer her clients so much more. She em-

While backgrounds are important to Angela, she makes sure that her operating philosophy is that backgrounds must be secondary to the subject. "Too many photographers make the mistake of making the backgrounds more important than the subject." Angela has just started creating some of her own background images which she finds especially fun to use.

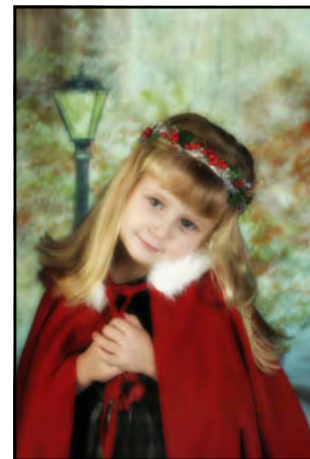
White House Custom Colour makes Angela's prints 8 x 10 and smaller, but anything larger, she prints herself because she prefers to have total control. She just recently took a class with Larry Peters and is excited about experimenting with some of his new looks that he is creating with Virtual Backgrounds.

Virtual Backgrounds is a fundamental tool for Angela...one that she wouldn't want to do without. Angela's email address is photosmart125@aol.com. Her work can be viewed on her website at www.photographybyav.com.



Initially, she purchased a copy of the book, *Background Power!*, to find out all she could about backgrounds. Then she ordered her Virtual Backgrounds system. She admits that at first she was a little intimidated, but then she came to Texas to attend a

phasizes very different looks, made possible in part by background variety, so she can encourage customers to come back again and again...she gives them reasons to come back often.



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!

SW PPA Convention

March 18-22, 2006
(Arlington, Texas)

Simone Class w/ Sana 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)

Trevon Baker—VPPA Spring Seminar

April 30, 2006

Professional Photographers of Canada

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

Kerrville Summer Seminar

June 25-28, 2006
(Kerrville, Texas)

Houston—Simone Seminar

July 11, 2006
(Houston, Texas)

BC—Canada School

July 16-20, 2006

Terry Deglau in Tampa

August 8, 2006
(Tampa, Florida)

Florida State Convention

August 27-28, 2006
(Florida)

Photokina

September 26-October 1, 2006
(Germany)

The Professional Photographer's

PERFECT STORM

WHAT EVERY STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHER
NEEDS TO KNOW NOT ONLY TO
SURVIVE BUT ALSO GROW BOTTOM
LINE PROFITS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

by
Henry J. Oles

It will take you just a short time to read this booklet. The information here could be lifesaving to your business. It is very different from what you will normally hear or read elsewhere and completely relevant to the issues you are facing today. It's a "wake up" call. Unless you are independently wealthy and not worried about tomorrow, you need to read this. You can start putting this information to use right now. Tomorrow may be too late.

Coming Soon

The Professional Photographer's PERFECT STORM

By Henry J. Oles

Virtual Backgrounds founder and president, Dr. Henry J. Oles, has just completed another book for professional photographers. Its titled, *The Professional Photographers Perfect Storm*. The book discusses the many factors that threaten professional photography today, including the digital copy systems and most importantly, the proliferation of digital cameras and the public's do-it-yourself attitude when it comes to photography. The book is not all doom and gloom. The reader is presented with many ideas for ways to combat the storm.

Quoting Dr. Oles, "when a major storm falls upon us, the first step is to get under an umbrella. The second step is to find a way to sell rainwater!" The book is scheduled to be out during the month of April. Virtual Backgrounds via [email](#) or by calling 1-800-831-0474 or 512-805-4844 for information on how you can get an advance copy of *The Perfect Storm*.