

# Writing Your Biography Statement

By Scott Heide

So you have decided to join the Yavapai Digital Arts and Foto Club, and you now suddenly need a bio for the club's website. You may be asking yourself, "What do I do now".

Some of you have expressed interest in gaining assistance in writing your bio. Writing a bio can be easy or frustrating, but remember it is essential. A good bio allows people who love your work to find out more about you, offers your audience more ways to connect with you, and increases their appreciation and perceived value of your work.

You don't have to be a writer to write one. Your bio is about facts, a basic introduction to your style; it's not instructions on what to experience, what to think, how to feel, how to act, or where to stand. People who come into contact with your creative expression and want to know more will have questions. When you're not there, your bio answers for you.

Imagine that all of your objections to writing have been overcome and you are simply going to write whatever you believe to be true, at the moment, about your work. The good news is that by letting yourself go, you can discover and create a working biography and statement. There is an un-self conscious language about your work which you use all the time.

Use simple language. An effective bio reaches out and welcomes people to your creativity, no matter how little or how much they know about it to begin with; it never excludes.

Remember the 5 keys to writing a good bio is to answer the following questions about yourself and your craft: WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN & HOW. In three to five paragraphs of three to five sentences each, provide basic information like:

WHO YOU ARE

WHAT YOUR CREATIONS MEANS TO YOU

WHY YOU MAKE YOUR CREATIONS

WHEN DO YOU MAKE YOUR CREATIONS

HOW YOU DO IT

Your bio is about you, so personalize it. Infuse it with your unique perspective. Whenever possible, make it conversational, like you're talking to readers. You can include interesting facts about your background, where you grew up, what has been the major influence in your life, how all of this has led you to where you are now or where you wish to go in the future.

## Additional Considerations:

- Make "I" statements, rather than "you" statements. Talk about what your creativeness does for you, not what it's supposed to do for the readers.
- Avoid comparative or evaluative comments that have been made about your work by third parties.
- Connect what your work expresses. For example, if your work is about world peace, and it consists of twigs protruding from pieces of clay, explain the connection
- Avoid obscure references to music, art, literature, history, or anything else that requires detailed explanation.

- Tell the story about what led up to your work ONLY if it's short, compelling, and really relevant.
  - Avoid comparing yourself to others. If other photographers or artists influence you, fine, but don't say, "Like Ansel Adams, I do this".
  - Don't instruct people on how to see, feel, behave, respond, or otherwise relate to your work. Nobody likes being told what to do. Instead of saying "You will experience wonderment when you see my images," say "These images expresses my wonderment".
- Before you go public with your bio, get feedback. Show your work and bio to friends, friends' friends, and maybe even a stranger or two. Make sure they understand what you want them to understand. If they don't, or you have to explain yourself, do a rewrite and eliminate the confusion.

### **Getting Started:**

- Treat your bio with the same care that you treat your work. It's all about you.
- If you are a newbie to the world of photography and art, state that. However state it in such a positive manner that the reader feels your passion to better yourself and your budding craft. Always be truthful in your assessment of your position in any level of experience. If it is your intent to learn as much as you can about that new camera you received as a Christmas present, state that! Writing from the heart, truly expressing your innermost desires to become what it is you wish to become will always be received well.
- Look at other bios. Most books have bios or statements from the author. These can give you a wealth of information and examples that you can adopt for your bio.
- Take the time to jot down any fleeting thoughts that come to you about your work. Give yourself permission to gather. Selecting and sorting can come later when you have enough in your basket.
- Make specific times and dates with yourself to transform your notes and write your bio. Respect these times. Do not tolerate interruptions.
- Write more than one bio. Like different works of art, a bio also thrives on change and rising out of "the moment." What suits this month's work may not work for next month's work.
- Give yourself permission to make mistakes. Let yourself write badly. Crumple up lots of paper balls and throw them in a corner. That's the beginner's way. Then, when your bio comes out great, which it eventually will, you will know the difference.