

National Geographic Society

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January 20, 1954

Miss Laura Gilpin
Photographer
Box 1173
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Miss Gilpin:

I became familiar with your work in connection with my position as Editor with U.S. Camera Annual. I am now connected with National Geographic Magazine as a Picture Editor. I would be interested in any photographs which you might care to submit to me.

I am particularly interested in short picture sequences, such as those concerning natural wonders, animals, unusual places of geographical interest, and similar material such as you might see in National Geographic. I am enclosing a list of photographic requirements for our publication. You might be interested in looking them over.

Should you have any photographs on the subject of Christmas in New Mexico, particularly in color, we would be glad to see them. The 35mm Kodachrome transparency size is perfectly acceptable. Of course, we are interested in seeing black and white and color of all your photographs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write to me.

Sincerely yours,

William C. Baughman
William C. Baughman
Illustrations Staff

WCB:SLH
Enclosure
Air Mail

ESSENTIAL REQUISITES FOR PHOTOGRAPHS SUBMITTED TO

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

In diffusing and humanizing geography The National Geographic Society requires for publication monochrome and natural color photographs showing artistically and naturally the physical characteristics of every country and the manners, customs, activities and costumes of every people.

A most important requisite of the pictures used to illustrate The National Geographic Magazine is pictorial effectiveness obtained through careful attention, in treatment of subject, to composition and arrangement. Such photographs of the physical features of a locality including aerial views, typical dress, customs, festivals, occupations, industries, and amusements of the people become attractive and informative illustrations. Art and architecture of unusual or characteristic design, important public institutions and public works, scenes of historical significance, natural history and phenomena and always the "strange and curious" provide subjects which help to present humanized geography.

Whenever possible photographs should include people, preferably in action. Purely pictorial landscapes and other general views are usually improved by the inclusion of people, or in some cases animals, in the composition, if only to provide a scale. Readers are usually most interested in scenes showing how other peoples work and play--the folkways of our world. "Types," either unusual or attractive, always provide good subjects. Even a dull subject is enlivened by the introduction of "human interest."

The size of the original negative is unimportant so long as a sharp, clear print without grain is obtainable from it. In general a glossy print or enlargement about 6 1/2 by 8 1/2 inches, showing full gradation of tones is found most suitable for reproduction. Negatives are not required, although in some cases it may be desirable for The Society to borrow original negatives to make satisfactory prints in its own laboratories. Borrowed negatives receive the best possible care while in The Society's possession and are returned promptly by registered or insured mail or, if the bulk warrants, by insured railway express.

Every issue of The National Geographic Magazine contains fifty-six or more pages of color illustrations.

The same rules for subject and composition apply to both natural color and monochrome photographs. In natural color photography, however, it is essential to strive for true, clear, and harmonious color. Flat lighting, to avoid strong shadow contrast, will be found most satisfactory as a rule. Obviously, because of the vastly greater expense of natural color reproduction, subjects which will appear as well in black and white should be reserved for that medium. There are several continuous tone natural color films now available, of which Kodachrome, Ektachrome, and Ansco color are the best known. Both the miniature (35mm) and larger sizes of these films are satisfactory for reproduction. However, motion picture frames are not suitable.

Because National Geographic color illustrations are presented in series in multiples of eight pages, photographers are urged to submit a generous collection of pictures on a single general subject so that a varied selection may be made. Color transparencies are usually purchased in groups of eight pages and rarely

(over)

individually. Whenever possible, the leading picture of a color series is a full page vertical composition. The photographer should keep this in mind and look for subjects which would compose vertically and adapt themselves to the lead position in the series.

Generous rates are paid for photographs upon acceptance, but these prices vary widely due to the conditions under which the pictures are made and acquired. The National Geographic Magazine pays a minimum of \$500 for enough natural color photographs to make an eight-page series. For unusual material a bonus may be added.

Color transparencies should be submitted in a form convenient for viewing. We prefer to receive them numbered, with the identifying captions of the entire group listed separately. Please do not wrap each transparency individually, place each one in a separate envelope, or affix a caption to each with an adhesive.

Full rights to black and white photographs are not essential, except in special cases, and the photographer may use them elsewhere if he desires after Geographic publication. However, good practice dictates that the same photographs should not be offered immediately to another American illustrated magazine unless the subject has definite "news" value. A condition of acceptance of color photographs, however, is that they be not published elsewhere for three months after their appearance in the Geographic. All material published in The National Geographic Magazine is protected by United States and international copyright for the benefit of both contributor and publisher.

Full information must accompany each photograph. Usually from ten to fifty words are sufficient to give the exact location, names of mountains, buildings, statues or other features and to point out things of particular interest in the picture. The year within which the photograph was made also should be stated. Accurate information is essential, for The National Geographic Society is an educational institution, and its Magazine is used in libraries, schools, and homes for reference.

Prospective contributors should make a careful study of several issues of The National Geographic Magazine and analyze pictures already published.

March, 1949