

Don't underestimate those cheap 'throwaway' cameras and their ability to document your successes clearly

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD

Ask a superintendent for photographs of a recent project and chances are he won't have any to show you. Even less adept at visually documenting their work are golf course architects. But with the latest advances in cheap, durable photographic equipment, there is no good excuse for refusing to snap a few before-and-after shots.

The rationales for not documenting a project have traditionally been thin but understandable:

- Superintendents and architects don't have the time.
- Architects think they can't be seen pho-

tographing their work because they are above such nonsense. Superintendents are too humble to be seen standing on the back of their golf cars taking photographs of their courses when they look their best.

- Cameras are not designed to bounce around in dust-prone maintenance vehicles.
- And finally, what good are a bunch of photos going to do anyway?

Why and how to document

When you see an effective then-and-now visual presentation at a conference, it's far more convincing than any written or verbal description.

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But let's forget about documenting a project for now for the purpose of educating a meeting or committee.

Think selfishly for a moment. Think about your next job. Committee types and executives can be sold on your handiwork by a simple set of photos. Nothing is more amazing than to see pictures of a beat-up course before a superintendent took over, followed by a set of photos showing a dramatic turnaround. Even the most cynical observer will enjoy seeing a bunker before and after a renovation.

The 'throwaways'

With the advent and refinement of the disposable camera, there is no longer any good excuse for failing to photograph your

work. It's hard to miss the one-time-use cameras at the local drug store or supermarket. They're in colorful boxes, typically stacked near the cash register. Kodak, Fuji and other companies have been selling them for years, but only recently have they started taking photos comparable to a traditional camera.

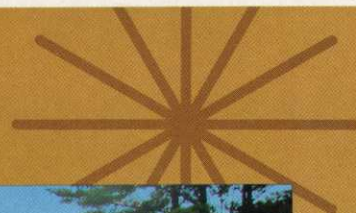
Throwaway cameras start around \$3 or \$4 for a generic brand from Staples and go up to \$12 for a digital disposable. (The digital disposable simply means that Kodak includes the \$3 developing fee to put the photos on a CD, assuming you select the Kodak lab developing option over the local lab.)

Kodak's black-and-white disposable (\$8) takes amazingly sharp photos. It's great for giving a timeless feel to family photographs or perhaps capturing the end-of-the-month crew

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Images of Fall

Text and Photos by Geoff Shackelford



In October 2003, I visited several New England courses to take in some of the oldest and most interesting architecture in America. Several generous superintendents let me ask questions, look around their courses and bring my camera along to capture the onset of fall. Here are a few of my favorite images:

Old Sandwich Golf Club — After a long day of growing in this Bill Coore-Ben Crenshaw gem near Cape Cod, superintendent Sean McCormick kindly slowed his truck down so I could get a photo of the beautiful scene between the club's 18th green and its future clubhouse site.

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barbecue. But you are not trying to make an artistic statement here. So stick with the color cameras.

There has always been a legitimate fear of taking a digital camera out on the course and having it ruined by the standard golf course elements. The latest digitals are still just as fragile as the old single-lens reflect (SLR).

Disposable cameras, however, are hardier than a seagull's digestive tract. You can drop them, kick them, get them wet, even subject them to dust. Just clean off the tiny lens and they'll still take the same photo until you hand them over for development, never to see that beaten-up camera body again.

Yes, digital and some print cameras do offer the option of including the date in the lower right of your photo, and the bet-

ter digitals now take magazine-quality images. But for the purpose of documenting a bunker renovation or an upgrade in maintenance practices, digital cameras still aren't worth the price — and inconvenience — of managing the sensitive memory cards that go with them, especially if you are not an avid photographer.

For around \$10 to \$12 in development costs at the local drugstore photo drop, you can place a disposable camera in an envelope. In a couple of days you get two sets of sharp 4 x 6 prints, a small proof sheet for easy reference, and a CD of your photos that can be e-mailed and plugged into a PowerPoint presentation — all developed by Kodak.

If you're in a hurry, many one-hour processors now offer the

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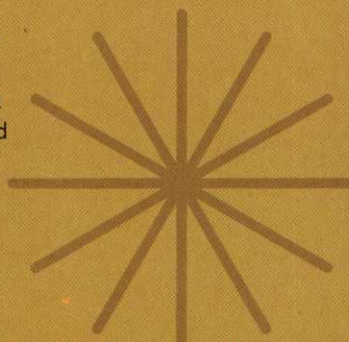


The seventh hole at Essex County Club — At one of the oldest and most underrated courses in America, superintendent Pat Kriksceonaitis masterfully balances environmental issues, classic architecture and the needs of modern golf. Not only is the design full of fun, quirk and challenge, the native beauty of Essex County Club is unmatched in the Northeast. This photo is of the par-3 seventh and its wild-flower-dotted stream, a look crafted by Kriksceonaitis and carefully maintained by his crew.



Onset of Fall at Salem — At Salem Country Club, where Kip Tyler and crew meticulously maintain one of Donald Ross's finest designs, I snapped this shot of bright-red ivy climbing a tall tree just off the 17th tee. For a Californian, such hints of fall can be quite thrilling.

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same services at competing prices. For a little more, America Online users can even have Kodak send the photos straight to your "picture center," eliminating the need to upload images from a CD.

No, your disposable-created images won't remind anyone of Ansel Adams, but you'll have images sharp enough for a presentation or to put in a simple album for viewing by, say, a prospective boss.

Photography tips

Try to remember George Bernard Shaw's line: "The photographer is like the cod, which produces a million eggs in order that one may reach maturity." Just as Ben Hogan thought

an amazing round of golf meant hitting seven or eight shots just the way he intended, the best photographers rarely get more than a few award-winners per roll of film. So if you get three or four excellent images per roll, you've done well.

A few more well-worn tips that never hurt to remember:

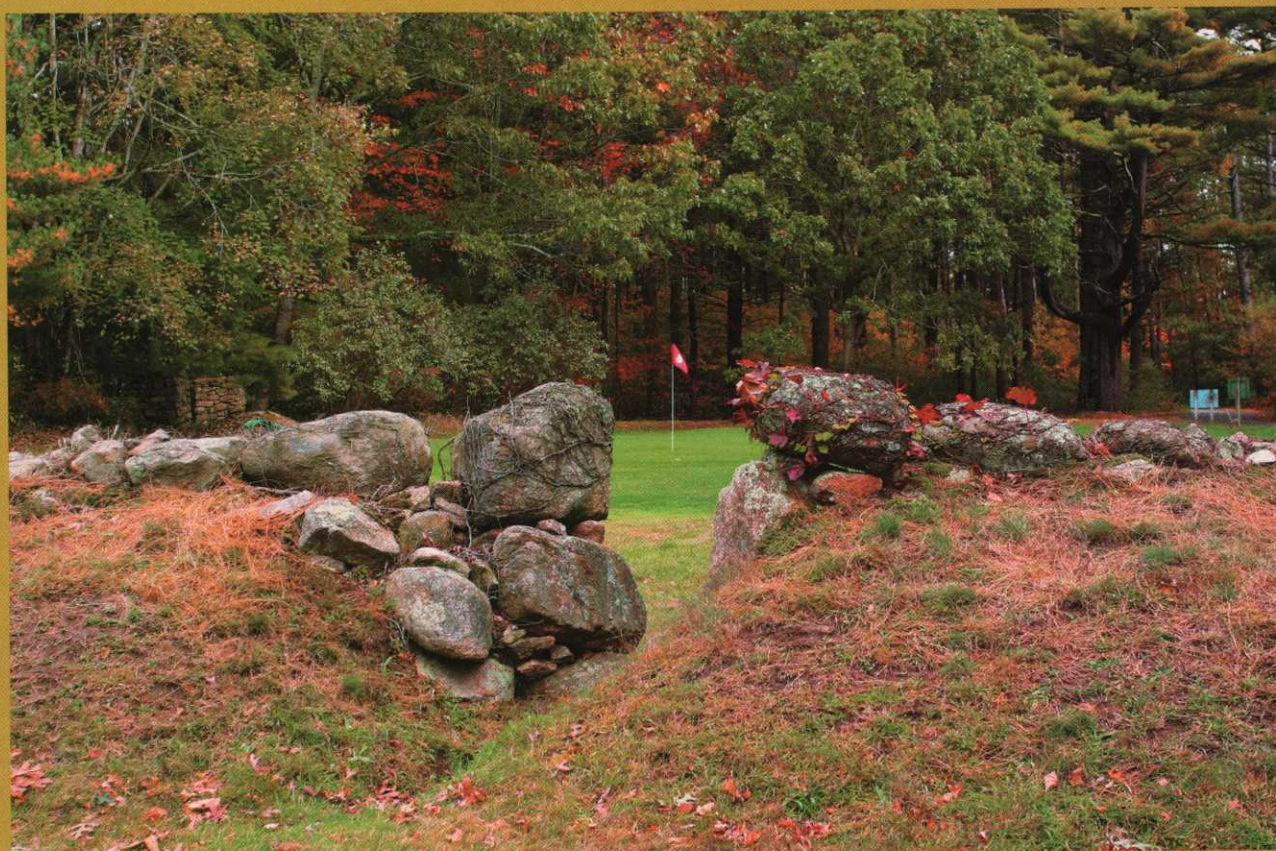
- Only take photos in the early-morning or late-afternoon light. Softer light, shadows or a little morning dew can take the edge off new and sometimes hard-edged features, like a newly sodded bunker edge.

- Never shoot directly into the sun.

- To get maximum "wow" factor out of your before-and-after shots, take the "before" photos in the flat midday light seemingly preferred by regional golf magazines.

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The eighth at Marion — Amateur architect George Thomas's first design, Marion is a wonderful little nine-holer on the road to the great Kittansett. Marion is one of the best bargains in golf. Inside it's short nine the golfer will discover more character than he'll see in most modern "championship" courses. Old stone walls provide some of the hazards, including here on the eighth.

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Then plan on shooting the "after" at dawn or dusk.

■ Nothing impresses an audience like a good then-and-now shot from the exact same location. Pick a memorable tree, irrigation head or control box to shoot from if you want to make the most effective presentation. Making notes of your shooting locations never hurts.

■ Get up as high as you can, even if it means standing on the back of a golf car. Those extra few feet add just a little more perspective.

■ Press down gently on the button no matter what kind of camera you use, but especially if you are using a disposable. Jamming the button down will not improve image quality. A simple touch will get the job done and prevent blurring.

■ Try to purchase outdoor-use disposables. But if you buy one with a flash that's designed for both indoor and outdoor shots, don't worry about the flash. Let it go off. The camera is designed to adjust, and covering the flash won't make your photos any better.

■ Finally, if you're a superintendent reading this, keep a disposable in your utility vehicle at all times. Damage and theft aren't big problems with disposables. Besides, you might just catch something special, like a rare wildlife sighting. Or even better, maybe you'll see that golfer who always complains about your work driving his golf cars in all the wrong places. Keep those photos tucked in a drawer for the day he becomes green chairman. ■

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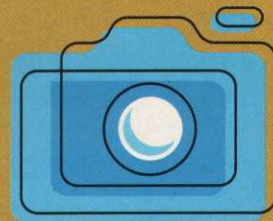


Newport Clubhouse — After Marion, I drove to the incredible Newport Country Club in Rhode Island, maintained by Bob Reynolds and cherished by its well-to-do membership. Many old-money clubs can be stuffy and arrogant, but Newport features a friendly and golf-serious atmosphere. Perhaps the members are humbled by the imposing clubhouse each time they arrive, seen here from the entrance driveway. It's the most distinctive clubhouse in golf.

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Disposable Images

By Geoff Shackelford



The following four images demonstrate the range of photographic possibilities, from a single-use camera to high-end digital. A quick glance makes it hard to detect significant differences. On closer inspection, our informal test of disposable cameras shows that you do get a better image from a name-brand model by Fuji or Kodak.

Image A – Kodak's black-and-white, single-use camera. Retailing for \$11.99 but generally sold for around \$7-8, the Kodak throw-away is the best-kept secret in photography. It takes crisp images and gracefully handles tricky lighting situations. Best of all, the Kodak black-and-white film uses color processing, so there is no extra charge to have rolls developed. Just hand over the camera when you're done. The Kodak is great for capturing timeless images of the family, too.

Image B – Staples 800-speed indoor/outdoor ready-to-use camera. Retailing for \$3.99, the Staples camera did a decent job, but a close inspection reveals not-so-crisp edges and an odd blurring effect on the outer portions of the image (note the oak tree and compare it to Image C).

Image C – Fujifilm's QuickSnap indoor/outdoor camera. Retailing for \$8.99 but often discounted aggressively, the Fuji takes an incredibly good photo using all-purpose 800-speed film. Note the all-around sharpness and vivid color. The images appear just as great on CD when using the higher-end disposable from Fuji.

Image D – Canon Rebel 6.1 mega-pixel digital image using a polarizing filter. Retailing for about \$1,600 with a high-end Canon lens, the same view as seen through a high-end digital camera obviously shows more clarity and crispness, particularly as the image is blown up. The filter helps capture the bunker depth and adds overall warmth to the light-colored sand. That's all great if you're shooting for a glossy magazine, but you can't beat a single-use camera for the purpose of a PowerPoint demonstration, e-mailing or documentation.

Thanks to Woodland Hills Country Club superintendent Steve Sinclair for allowing *Golfdom* to photograph the club's par-4 eighth hole.

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Image A



Image B



Image C



Image D

