

# HORIZON NEWS #69

IMAGES, THOUGHTS AND NEWS FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

*“Concentration comes out of a combination of confidence and hunger.”*

Arnold Palmer

## The Five Dumbest Things I’ve Ever Done: Episode 3

Steve Gottlieb

### Striking Stupidity

Arnold Palmer’s quote, though simplistic, captures my mindset when I took this shot. I was hungry to get a really distinctive baseball shot and I was confident I knew how to do it. I applied my highest level of concentration to the task which, as I’ll explain, can have a downside.

A friend of mine who was a high school baseball coach wrangled a pitcher and catcher so I could execute an idea I had—to visually capture the feeling of a batter facing a pitcher. To produce a realistic perspective of the pitcher in action, I positioned myself about two feet from the catcher. I didn’t expect the image to freeze the ball mid-flight, but I figured a blurry ball would give me an accurate sense of where to superimpose a separate image of the baseball, which I would take in my studio.

When he saw how close I was to the catcher, the pitcher balked—one pitch two feet off-target would destroy my camera and maybe even my eye. “Just throw easy and down the middle,” I insisted. “If your throw is wild, the catcher will snare the ball before it hits me.” After some anxious discussion, they agreed. I got my shot. Happy ending.

But what if the worst had happened? One bad pitch, one slow catcher and my life would have dramatically changed. To me, important shots may be worth taking some risk, but only if risk is necessary. Here it wasn’t. I could simply have used a tripod and triggered the shutter remotely. Why didn’t I? I was so hungry to get my shot and so confident I knew what I was doing that I didn’t consider safer alternatives. How can a reasonably intelligent person—at least I like to think I am—not ask himself if there were a better way? Believe me, it’s possible. That’s the downside of concentration. You can get so wrapped up in what you’re doing that your common sense takes a vacation.

