

Moose Podcast #503

Moose Peterson Howdy and welcome to the Moose podcast, number five hundred and three. Up in the air part two. Trust you folks are doing well. Had a great weekend and took a moment to remember those who are no longer with us. Who have sacrificed it all so we can enjoy another great day of freedom. So great thing to do every day, especially on Memorial Weekend. So thank you all who have come before and those who are serving now to make those freedoms free. Thank you. Been a busy week. I was had a absolutely marvelous ten time with some friends in Delaware photographing shorebirds. Uh, that red knot still a little bit elusive, but hey, I'm getting closer, but had a great time, had some great photography. I got a pen out of wow, you won't believe the panel I got. Wow. Hope you had the same great success and fun this past week. It's amazing how this time is flying. This episode of the Moose Podcast is being recorded with Adobe Podcast Beta. Yep. Still using it does a great job. Now you can listen to the podcast many places. Head to the website. There's a dedicated blog post for the podcast. You might want to look at this image from this week that's there. It has to do with, uh, yeah, the topic. You can also go to other locations YouTube, iTunes, Spotify, Spotify. You can drop a comment, a note, we'll have a conversation. It's a great place to do it. You can do that on YouTube as well. And you'll find a transcript for the podcast, many locations as well, all they're there to help you try to move your photography forward. So hey, let's have a conversation. So for those who are wondering, yes, I use Nick. I use Nick color Effects mentioned last episode that if you use the discount code M o o s those crazy DxO guys, you'll receive fifteen percent off. Now, how important is it? Well, Nick C's probably ninety nine percent of what I shoot, the pro contrast, which is a very personal, uh, filter formulation. And my recipes are there on the website and every single print that comes out of here sees Nick sharpener Pro. Uh, it just tells those dots how to get sprayed down on that paper correctly and cleanly, and it makes a difference. It doesn't sharpen image, but it does take care of the dots and how they spread on paper. That's all with Nick. So remember, you get that Nick discount. So good thing I haven't had my feet planted in one place for the last, oh, what, five weeks? Six weeks? I still haven't got a new book, but I want to thank Benjamin for emailing and, uh, recommending another title that I'm going to be checking out, and hopefully I will have that pretty soon. So I appreciate that. And remember that, um, you can't communicate. It is two way and I'd be happy to talk with you and help you any way I can. One thing my good friend Bedford Bedford's dot com for sponsoring the podcast, they've got. It's coming up, but only a little over, oh, five weeks from now, six weeks. They get the photo expo there in little Rock at the, uh, at the Windham River Riverfront Hotel. My good friend Mike will be there. Great speakers. Gonna have great topics, great person to, uh, spend time with and ask questions of really a really good guy and good shooter. And then of course, Benford's will be doing what Benford's does and that is helping you photographers, you'll see all these different, uh, manufacturers will be there. There's always going to be show specials. And guess what? You mention the m o s e when you check out, you're going to see even more coming back after that show special. Now if you can't get to, uh, to Arkansas, they have seven stores you can go and personally, they have a great website or you can talk with them personally with the old telephone, whatever happens to be, these guys are here to help you with their large inventory, killer pricing, um, move your photography forward. So hey, have a conversation with them,

check it out. And they're used department. They got a great use department. Let me tell you, it's a great use department. That's Bedfords bedfords dot com. My good friends who sponsor the Moose podcast. Well, part one seemed to have gotten folk's attention. I think it broke the, uh, number of response emails, uh, for the podcast and all these years. Uh. Very cool. I hope folks do get involved in aviation photography and, uh, eventually work to get into air, to air. Now a moment of, uh, very sincere, uh, sincerity when it comes to this, uh, you have to understand, people have died doing air to air photography. Uh, some of them are, are military folks, some are NASA folks, some are just plain old photographer folks. So you've got to treat it with a lot of respect. It can hurt you. Okay. So keep that in mind. Now what I'm going to talk about don't think is going to be at all. It's not going to capture or explain or illustrate all that goes into an air to air. My goal is to hopefully get you up there safely and back down safely. And if you have photographs, well, that's even better. So first of all, following up on what we talked about last week, this happens when you found a couple of pilots with aircraft that want to fly together. Now you want to make sure they have their fast card. And there are a couple of different ways of getting formation. Trading fast cards are your most common methodology because flying in formation is what you're doing. You have a subject aircraft and a photo platform. You're in the photo platform. What you're photographing, of course, would be the subject. And when you're flying up there together, that is a formation. Now, formation flying comes from a lot of places from a lot of time. Uh, a lot of it comes from military, what they do to successfully fly a sortie. And some of it has been, uh, I must say, translated and reused into civilian for different things such as air show performances, flyovers, jet and believe it or not, just for fun because pilots, they have a lot of fun flying formation because it's very technical flying. So in this process, you're really not part of that process. You're just a silly camera guy or woman. And there's a lot of there's some really good women in aviation, air to air photography, some really great ones. Jessica comes to mind real fast. Now, when I say you're not part of the process, you're not flying the plane. The first thing you should understand is you're in a photo platform. The pilot of your plane is the pilot for the formation. Whether it's just one plane off the wing or five planes off the wing, which would be a six plane formation, the pilot of the photo platform is doing the flying for everybody because they're the subject aircraft are basically watching your wingtip. That's how you avoid running into it. So common sense really is a big part of this process. So it starts with you're having your butt strapped into the plane. Now there's many different possible photo platforms. Your basic kind of Cessna one eighty five or Bonanza A36 is basically. The most common of the platforms now in my. I just had my three hundredth air to air, and I've been in about twenty twenty one different photo ships over that period of time. And the first thing that's so important is safety, safety, safety, safety. So the first thing is you've got a harness that is going to strap you and keep you inside the plane, and you got a pigtail that's so short that if you do happen to whatever the reason, somehow get outside the plane, it's only a leg or something that's out there breaking in the Windstream, not your whole body. Uh, the one thing you don't want to do is what we call an Arnold. Arnold is, uh, from the old, uh, movie, um, where Arnold's on the outside of that jet. Uh, true lies, and he's flopping around out there. Yeah. You don't want to do. No, Arnold. No, that's no, no, no. Good. Okay. So you're strapped in. The next thing has to be strapped in is the camera. Uh, I use an old strap called a Vulcan, which is made out of. Looks like, uh, seat belt material. Uh, it supposedly is able to hold five hundred pounds. And of course, the eyelets in the on the

camera aren't graded for five hundred pounds, and that strap is securely put around your neck. So the camera and the lens, that combo cannot eject out of the plane because it's going to do what it's going to smack into the subject aircraft. Then we have a whole set of big problems. At the same time, you're not going to want a shade on that camera. You don't want it so it can come off. You would be surprised what that Airstream can do. If you use a filter, you need a gaffer tape on that filter to the front of your lens barrel so it cannot spin and come off. And why you've got the gaffer tape out. You might put some on your camera body because there isn't really a an edge in an aircraft that's not designed to scratch the bejesus out of your plane, so you can protect the finish of your plane by putting gaffer's tape on all the edges. So summation your butt is strapped to the bottom of that plane with a safety harness. Two. You're going to have that camera strapped to you so it can't go anywhere. Three. You're not going to have anything that can be loose on that camera, like a shade or a filter that can eject out of that photo platform and hit the subject aircraft. Uh, you kind of want to work towards, you could say the worst case scenario. So you want to arrive at the airport ready to go. So you've got your camera strap all ready to go. You've got your harness ready to go. So if you get there and they say, let's go, you can just go. That's really important. That shows that professionalism shows that you have thought it through goes a long way with pilots. Now part of that is you want your camera settings. This is a big deal to the point where. And I should mention that I, I kind of follow basic kind of pilot logic. So I have lists. I have lists for everything. So I have a list laminated to my camera strap. Excuse me for air to air that goes through all the basics. The basics being the camera is going to be set to shutter priority. Okay, it's going to be set to ISO one hundred. I'm going to use personally either auto area AF or on the Z or Z. Nine. Z nine is my favorite platform for shooting air to air. It's going to be set to the C two twenty five by seventeen square. I'm going to set it to airplane detection, which really doesn't make a difference, but that's what it'll be set up. The camera will be set to continuous high exposure compensation will be dialed in based on the light. And when it comes to starting shutter speed, be one over one twenty fifth, one twenty fifth is the fastest shutter speed I use. I launch and I make sure I get that sharp picture. So I have something to share with that pilot. And then after that I lower the shutter speed. Then the fastest, probably one over eighty. Then most of the times be one over forty. Yes, it's being handheld, so you need to practice your hand hold technique before you get up. So all those settings are dialed in ready to go. Before I get to the airport. The battery is charged, card is wiped, the sensor is clean because dust is just part of this process. Thank bless that ACR now does an auto dusting, which will take take care of about eighty five ninety percent of the dust spots. So you get to the airport, you're ready to go because this is when you really. It just gets, uh, well, I have, I have worked with some really fine intelligent photographers. And as soon as they get in the plane, it's because your brain just goes to mush. When you first of all, flying without a door, right? You're just looking out the world and right outside your door, there's another plane right there, kind of basically doing whatever you tell it to do within, you know, safety margins. It's just an experience, an adrenaline rush, that wowzers. Okay, so you got to the airport, you're all set to go. Then comes the brief. What's the brief brief? Is it just a basic aviation term for communication? And personally, when I do an air to air, we do three briefs. Uh, the first one, the the pilots will talk to each other. You're going to listen and they're going to talk everything from where, you know, you think you're going to go fly. And then some basic things like what kind of speed do you

need? How much smash they're going to talk about frequencies for the radio, for ATC, the tower. Then once in the air doing formation work communication, it's a biggie. It's really important. The next brief and they all follow in sequential order. You're going to talk about what your goals and objectives are for that photo mission. In that process, you might be part of the first brief because you're going to talk about where you're going to go and you're going to decide what is the background you want for your photographs to tell a story that is on you. That's not on the pilots. It's you. You're the photographer. Um, and then after you, you talk about your goals and objectives and basic plans that you want to, you know, choreograph for that flight. Then comes the last or third brief where the pilots then talk about what you did, how they can accomplish it safely in what order. And it's communication. Now you can, uh, most pilots will write things on the back of their hand. So when they're flying, they can see like you'll hear them say, let's be on fingers and fingers is it's uh, channel one two, three, four one two, three point four five. Uh, your fingers and they'll turn their tune, their radio to fingers so they can talk to each other. That's a real common air to air frequency, for example. They will talk about, you know, the things you want to do, um, how close up and down you'll probably breathe some hand signals. Hand signals are very important. Uh, I've been, I the number of air airs I've done that. The headsets work perfectly. And you could talk count on two hands, because you're gonna be the one that moves that plane around to get the shot you want. Communication. It's really important. Hand signals really a must. If you could see me right now. I'm doing hand signals as I talk. Just, uh, you know, it's just part of it. Now, I actually wear red, bright red gloves so pilots can actually see that my hands and my hand signals because you're going to be in a cabin. Sometimes it's in shade. Sometimes the pilots are looking straight in the sun. Communication really important to do. And once you go up, you're going to fly. Now, personally, I like to get my photo missions as succinct and brief as possible. I don't want to spend a ton. I mean, I shouldn't say that I would love to spend a lot of time up there doing it. I could do it forever. I've had some cross country trips where we were able to do air to air basically the whole time. That's really a luxury. You gotta remember as soon as the wheels come off the ground, that's when safety starts cranking up and things can get dicey. So you're going to fly out. You're going to either do a race track. Just think of how racetrack shape or an orbit, just a circular pattern. And you're going to photograph the airplane. Now when I do my air to air photo clinics, I always debrief the pilots after it's over with. After all the students are gone to see what's going on, to see how we can improve it. And every single one has had one major complaint from the pilot standpoint, and that is lack of communication. Um, and I try to warn them before we go up that photographers just are overwhelmed and in awe and they just don't talk. Some pilots are really good at what they call self positioning because if you don't move around, they get bored. Uh, because there's just nothing going around. Just go around in circles can get boring. So move them now. How do you know how to move them? Great question. It's all about the background. Is the background city. Is it urban? Is it sky? Is it clouds? Combination thereof? The story you want to tell is how you move them. You move them in small increments. So you go up or down in this is in the brief. You talk about it and I say up five, ten, down five, back five. That five is just five feet. There's small increments, not inches, but feet. And you have to realize that they don't have some magic tool that they go, oh, and they just set it and they drop down five feet. It's their skill as a pilot that makes that happen. But it will completely change the background that will change the photograph.

Because here's the key, the one thing you have to understand, because I'm always amazed how many photographers get locked into prop blur and they don't notice how the background is the crappiest thing on the planet. But you will see the best background and you have one millisecond with that background, and then it's gone and you'll never have it again. That's because there's no way of hitting that direct mark. The light won't be the same. The plane attitude won't be the same. It's just boom. That's why the camera's in continuous high. It's why continually looking forward briefly to see what's coming and then adjusting the aircraft accordingly to get the background. I want to tell the shot. All this is going on and your mind is being blown by this entire scenario. Um, some some folks, uh, the invisible wall. That's right. Between you and, and falling out of the plane, that Airstream really gets to some photographers. It takes very little insertion into that Airstream and your, uh, break your arm. That's not unheard of, because it just gets slapped back against the airframe and snap. Oh, um, people worry about things being sharp. Well guess what? That that happens. I often ask, what's my keeper rate when I did the air to air. Three weeks ago now, I guess it was. Anyway, it was the first time I had a three knot turbulence. I was they had moose in a bouncy house. I mean, they had all sorts funds. They thought, you know, the camera was smacking me in the face and I was bouncing all over the place and I, I kept about fifty six percent of what I shot, which was really kind of down from the normal seventy percent. That's part of the process. And it's just it's just a lot of fun. Now, you're not going to want to start out in a B-25 for a photo platform. Photographing Fifi, a B-29. You don't want to start out kind of the top of the heap and trying to make things work. You want to start out, and there's a lot of a lot of folks with RVs that are out there doing formation work. A lot of them, there's a lot of folks with Stearman out there doing formation work. These basic aircraft, which are gorgeous, are, for lack of better terms, more forgiving. You will learn a lot photographing these planes, especially when it comes to moving them, which is so critical as you're, you know, up or down, back and forth, in and out to get that background that we wanted to start seeing that light because that light, right? You're doing a, you're doing a three hundred sixty, just walk outside and put your hand in front of your face and, and just spin and look at the light on the palm of your hand, how it changes. That's what you're constantly working with when you're doing air to air. So you need to communicate with those pilots. And the more effective you are at communicating, the better your photographs, the better your photographs, the more complicated or expensive or glamorous of a, of a subject aircraft you want to have in front of you. Now, here's the, the one thing that I'm going to emphasize, I can't emphasize enough. You can't be too critical. You've got to give yourself a break. When you look at those photographs, especially the first five or ten times you do air to air, you will look at those pictures and you will mumble like, God, you I mean, I mumble, I like, I missed that, blah, blah. That's part of the process. The other thing that you have to understand and do continually, and I can't emphasize this enough, is share your images with those pilots. I the pilots I work with, I have a really well earned reputation that a big box, a big ass prints is going to show up to them as a big thank you. You gotta realize that it's not inexpensive, especially today with gas prices to fly an aircraft, to maintain them, to have them where they're ready to go. Um, that brings up another point. Don't be surprised your photo mission gets scrubbed. Oh, man, I, uh, I was going to look it up before I started doing this. I, I keep notes, I use a digital logbook called log ten and it keeps a log of all my flights, be it just for fun for air to air. I also keep notes of those that have been scrubbed, and I gotta say

at least ten fifteen percent of the times I. I head to the airport to do a air to air. The mission gets scrubbed either A, mechanical or B because of weather. Weather is very common. Um, you don't want to fly in rough air. It's just not fun. It's just not fun. Uh, in a certain area, you can't fly in because it's not safe. Uh, so all those things come into, into play. A lot of people ask me if I'm a pilot and some people say it would help if you're a pilot. So you can do pilot pilot speak, I would agree it would be very helpful to be able to, to do more pilot speak, but you find the right pilots. They will start the process of you learning more and more about how safe flying is done and, and what can and cannot be done with certain aircraft. Uh, a classic example, if you're going to be photographing a jet and you've got your neighbor's, uh, fast or slow, uh, Um, pedal plane. The two speeds are just such a mishmash that you. You simply can't fly together. The jet just is gonna. So there's some of those basics you can learn and there's, there's more complicated things. The thing is, you've got to start. You just got to start. So I'm hoping these two parts will kind of get you curious. Who knows, maybe you'll come and join us on one of our air to air photo clinics, or just head down the airport and start talking to folks. You'd be surprised what could happen because, uh, as I've said one time, said a million times, just show up and, uh, by just showing up, that's how you get up in the air. You folks have a marvelous week. Appreciate you hearing from you. I appreciate you for being a listener. And engaged means a lot to me. Take care and make every click your story.