

Photo tip - Portraits with Personality

My good friend and fellow photographer, Rick Lang, had just finished a full day of making photo-portraits at a school open house/fund raiser. I walked in as he was about to dismantle the set. I stopped him.

“Hey! Rick, sit down over there” I said as I pointed to the stool in front of the backdrop cloth.

“No, no, I like the back of the camera. I have a good face for radio.”

After a little cajoling he sat in front of the camera, but like anyone else about to have a portrait done, he appeared a little nervous and self conscious (Figure 1).



Figure 1

Now I've always believed that the best way to take good pictures is to take lots of them and throw away the bad ones. So I started clicking the shutter ad nauseam until he got used to hearing it. I tried to get him in conversation, but all that did was move his lips (Figure 2).



Figure 2

I cajoled some more but he could out-cajole me any time, so that went flat. I thought—the best way to get someone relaxed is to tell a joke. But my jokes are the ones everyone has heard before, so I got a volunteer comedian from the sidelines. It worked (Figure 3).



Figure 3

Uh, oh! His glasses caught the overhead light. So what—Photoshop, you say? I say—let’s do it right the first time. So I kept on clicking. That also worked (Figure 4).



Figure 4

With a totally relaxed laugh fading into a pleasant smile. Even though I’ll have to live with a little glass reflection, I’ll call this the best of take. But I wasn’t finished. I wanted the complete personality—the cajoler himself. So I kept on clicking.

I said with a straight face: “Rick, I want talk to you seriously for a minute. The reason I came over here tonight is . . .” That got his attention (Figure 5).

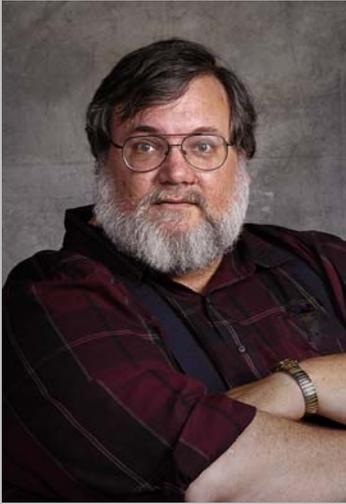


Figure 5

“ . . . I need to borrow \$300 from you until next week” (Figure 6).

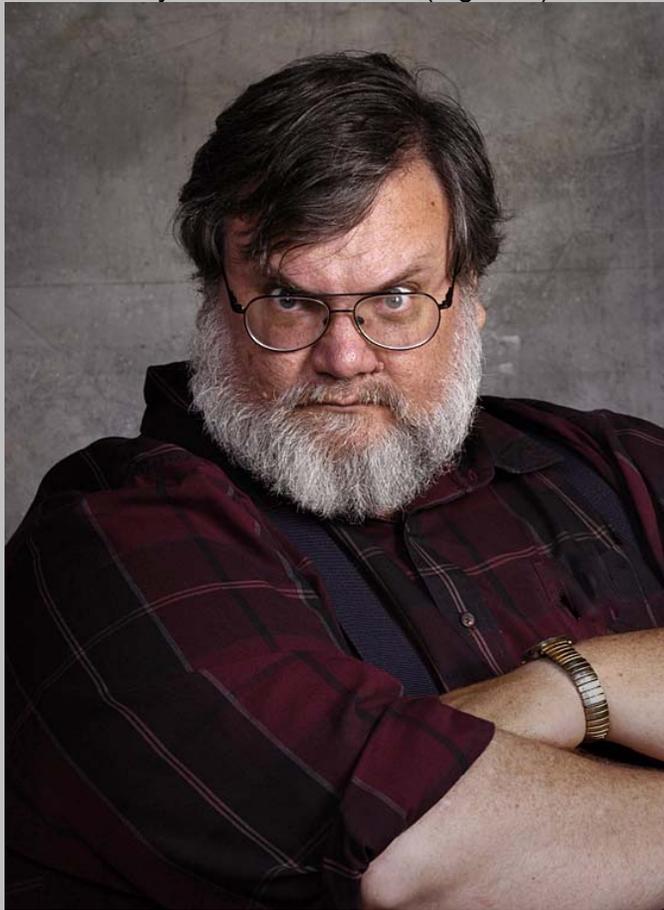


Figure 6

That got more attention!

The point here is to gain a rapport with your subject and get his or her mind off that threatening Cyclops lens that's staring him in the face. From that point you can bring out any mood or personality trait you want. BTW: I didn't get the money. 😊