

AN ACCELERATING POSSIBILITY CURVE

BY DEWITT JONES

THE TIMES OF GREATEST CHANGE HOLD THE MOST POTENTIAL.

It was 8 a.m. in the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge.

I'd been photographing snow geese since before dawn. Thousands stop here on their yearly migration and, until an hour ago, the morning sky had been crowded with them. Now however, the sky was empty.



“They’ll bed down right after dawn and won’t get up for anything after that,” the ranger had told me. “About the only thing that frightens them once they’re down is a low-flying plane, and we don’t get many of those around here.”

Well, they were sure “down” now. I could hear them squawking somewhere over the corn rows in front of me. After a good bit of hiking, I found them, thousands of them, in a tiny lake in the middle of the reserve.

I set up my long lens and waited. An hour. Not one flew. Another hour. Nothing. They certainly were “down.”

SHIFT YOUR ATTITUDE

In the heat of the morning, my mind began to wander. Strangely, looking at that empty sky and the immovable snow geese, I found myself thinking about the nature of change. In so many areas of our lives, we simply don’t want it. None of us want to get older, face a new onslaught of IRS regulations, or have our favorite TV series dumped unceremoniously from the airways.

But in photography? There I worship change! Right now, if I thought it would help, I’d get down on my knees and beg for these snow geese to take flight. It’s not the status-quo that makes great photography, it’s change.

How many times have I begged for the weather to shift, for an eyebrow to raise, for the light to become a little more golden? More times than I can count. If I see the value of change so clearly in my photography, why does it frighten me so much in the rest of my life?

REFLECT ON THE POTENTIAL

As my musing continued, I began to see that this awesome change curve we hear so much about, this phenomenal rate of change in today's society — was really my ally. In fact, if I viewed it from just a slightly different perspective, it wasn't a change curve at all, it was a possibility curve.

A possibility curve? Could I see it like that? I knew from my photography that it was true. Change is possibility — and the times of greatest change always hold the most potential.

So why do I dig my heels in so much when things around me start to change? If I did that in my photography, I'd take only one picture, the same picture...over and over and over again.

I believe we do live in a possibility curve, and it's accelerating. The earth today is like a landscape of turbulent weather or a sky with 10,000 snow geese. Viewed as change, it threatens to overwhelm us. Viewed as possibility...now that's a much nicer frame, a far more exciting vision.



EMBRACE CHANGE CONFIDENTLY

Perhaps we can't control the wave of change, but we can learn to ride it...like a surfer off the North Shore of Oahu. To take advantage of the flow and use it to take us where we want to go.

To live in uncertainty, yet act with confidence.

One hundred years ago Charles Darwin wrote, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change." Today he might have penned, "...but the ones who've learned to embrace and utilize the possibility curve."

Far in the distance, I heard the sound of a motor.

RIDE THE POSSIBILITY CURVE

I was still musing. Photography is a great teacher. What a collection of metaphors and lessons. A possibility curve. I was definitely going to think some more about that. The sound of the motor grew louder finally penetrating my reverie. A plane! Holy cornfields, a plane!

I barely had time to get my eye to the lens before the snow geese heard it, too. A ripple of excitement spread out across the pond. Change ...possibility was in the air.

Whoosh! Ten thousand wings beat the air at the same moment. The landscape was changing faster than my motor drive could comprehend. And I was right in the middle of it, clicking like mad, riding that ever accelerating possibility curve!