

The Butterfly Effect

by Clem Wehner

The Butterfly Effect is a metaphor popularized 50 years ago to illustrate the Chaos Theory of physics. It refers to the phenomenon of small changes in one place that have profound effects later in another place. It purports that the mere flapping of a butterfly's wings could move the air just slightly, but enough to start an ever-increasing chain of atmospheric disturbances that eventually become a hurricane.

So, what does this have to do with us? We have all had experiences with seemingly minor events that result in unforeseen but significant changes to our lives. Years ago, when my wife, Fran, had just joined the Professional Photographers of Oklahoma (PPO), she hesitantly decided to enter print competition for the first time. She picked up her prints at a local lab, but really didn't know how to properly prepare them for competition. Two very experienced photographers happened to be at the lab that day and though they didn't know Fran, they offered their help and encouragement. Their simple act of kindness for a beginner impressed her and inspired her to become increasingly active in the organization. Thus began a chain of events that led to Fran becoming the State President of Professional Photographers in 2008. This may never have happened without the kindness of two strangers.

The concept of the Butterfly Effect reminds us of the importance of helping other fledgling photographers at the start of their journeys. Look for opportunities to help, teach, mentor, and contribute to others, even if only in small ways. You never know how profoundly you could affect someone's life and all the people that are touched by the chain of events that follow. Don't miss a chance to flap your wings.

A personal note: This is the reason that I feel so strongly that WWPS is important and can enrich lives.