

**Published Articles**  
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(hired by About.com Editor, Barbara Krasnoff)

## **Printers / Scanners**

with Barbara Krasnoff

Your Guide to one of hundreds of sites

## **Saving Your Family Photos**

**A scanner can help you save your old family photos for posterity.**

A popular use for scanners today is to record and save family photos -- all those old, treasured photographs that can tear, fade, or stain. If you don't already own a scanner, and are planning to purchase one in order to scan and store your family's photos, then there are a number of factors you may want to take into consideration.

There are two main issues involved in scanning photographs: input (scanning) resolution and output resolution.

### **INPUT (SCANNING)**

When purchasing a scanner, your first instinct may be to buy the scanner with the highest resolution possible. That's understandable -- the higher the resolution, the truer the image, and don't you want the best for your family photos?

Well, yes and no.

What you really want is the highest possible *manageable* resolution when scanning pictures. Why? One reason is because the higher the resolution, the more pixel depth information that is stored -- resulting in larger files. Much larger files. Files that may not be able to be edited with your software -- if you don't have a lot of memory in your PC and if you're using Photoshop, a 30MB file could crash your software.

(A good rule of thumb for Photoshop users: You'll need three times the amount of free computer memory as the size of the file. For example, if you have a 30MB file, you'll need to have at least 90MB RAM free to be able to manipulate a photo.)

On the other hand, the less information -- the smaller the files -- the fewer the tonal (color) values, so that the result may not be true to the original. You can also get jaggedness, meaning that curves won't be smooth. So a compromise is necessary.

In my opinion, the absolute minimum anyone should scan is at 300dpi. However, this is assuming that you are going to keep the image of your photo at the exact same size. If you are scanning a little 4x5-inch photo at 300dpi and want to create an 8x10 print, then you will have tonal and pixelation problems. To minimize these enlargement problems, you can scan the original at 600 or 800dpi.

In fact, my rule of thumb is that it's better to scale down than to scale up. Scanning an image at 150dpi and then increasing the image to 300 dpi results in a very bad image. However, scanning the image at 600dpi and then saving it to a 150dpi file (to, say, put on a Web site) won't hurt the quality at all

## **OUTPUT RESOLUTIONS**

Output resolutions are independent of the scans. They are dependent on the medium and output device. You will want a lower resolution for an image that will appear on the Web, because you need a smaller file size. (Why? Because higher resolutions simply don't show up on monitors. In addition, the larger the file, the longer it'll take to download or be viewable on the Web.)

## **YOU SAY INTERPOLATE, I SAY OPTICAL**

Be aware that when scanner manufacturers are touting their wares, they may speak in terms of interpolated resolution rather than optical resolution. They may imply that these two terms are interchangeable, but they're not.

Optical Resolution is the actual measure of the amount of data captured when a scan is performed. Interpolated resolution, on the other hand, is the process of the scanner software increasing the image's resolution based on image pixel values. The software estimates the new values and adjusts for them. This often results in softer images and is not an accurate way to determine the quality of the hardware. As a result, you should disregard interpolated resolution when buying a scanner.

## **RESOLUTION ISN'T EVERYTHING**

You can have two scanners with the same resolution, but that will produce different quality images. Why? Because they have different bit depth (also known as pixel depth).

Whether the scanner is 1200x1200 or 4800x4800, bit depth is critical.

The smaller the bit depth, the less information will be contained in the file. Bit depth is a bit complicated to explain; suffice it to say that it means that the scanner can offer more color information in each pixel, resulting in more accurate colors. Look for the highest bit depth you can get -- but be aware that PCs can't handle more than 24 bits. (Some scanners may say that they have a 48-bit internal depth, but this is technical slight-of-hand. The important part is the external depth, and that is actually 24-bit.)

## **ARCHIVING**

You will have the choice of saving your file in one of several file formats. Most professional photographers use TIFF (.TIF) formats for their final versions, and JPEG (.JPG) for images that they are going to store for reference. The TIFF format does not compress the data, which means that none of the information in the file has been eliminated to save space -- and which means that the image will not have that "dotty" look that you see in newspaper photos.

However, the TIFF format also creates large files. If you want to save a bunch of images on your hard drive, or use a simple photo editing program (rather than a higher-end one such as Photoshop), you may want to save the TIFF master images in JPEG format. JPEG will compress your images so that they will take considerably less space, and do it very efficiently, and with as little effect on the image quality as possible. However, there may be some loss of quality. (See article on file formats).

~ [by Melissa Beckman](#)

**Melissa C. Beckman**

Feature Article about author, Clifford Meth

Published in the magazine *Scans*, Issue 4, SyCo Distribution 1998

***Three Hours with Clifford Meth***

"My biggest problem is time," Clifford Meth says. "There's so many things I want to write." We're back in New York City, out of his element, his Rockaway – the "street Eden" he hails from and mythologizes in many tales-and his newest book *Perverts, Pedophiles & Other Theologians* is hot off the press. With illustrations by comic industry icon Gene Colan, *Perverts* contains some of Cliff's recent writings. Dash that – not writings: stories – for Clifford Meth is a story-teller, a natural, with lots of tales to tell. And time is his biggest problem.

I first met Clifford at an all-night diner. He was with Harlan Ellison, his friend and mentor, and we sat in the back of the diner drinking coffee. There were ten of us, but most of the conversation was between Clifford and Harlan, centering around comics and science fiction. There was a quiet assurance and confidence in Meth's manner that gave the impression you didn't want to cross him. I later learned that Clifford, a former entertainment writer for the L.A. Times Syndicate, had been publishing short stories for only a few years. His previous career entailed rubbing elbows with rock and roll royalty – from Ian Anderson to Frank Zappa. He'd also read poetry with Greg Corso, gotten drunk with Evel Knievel, and was granted Howard Stern's only 1988 interview.

After several phone conversations, we agreed to meet at a karate dojo on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in the City-one of Clifford's rare visits, these days, to Manhattan.

Although we'd scheduled three hours, I arrive early-just in time to observe the last twenty minutes of Clifford's workout. It's a large, spare room bright and white, with mirrors lining one long wall. Clifford and his instructor Alan Fisher [a former world champion and one of the finest karate experts on the East Coast] are going through a kata on a raised wooden floor. As they move, a sense of coiled energy is evident - not unlike Clifford's stories. His writing can have the impact a kick imparts: often visceral, raw, resonate with deep emotion, anger, desire, alienation. As I watch Clifford refine his kata, I can't help but see it as a physical metaphor for his written process.

When the session is over, we head toward a small par on East 12<sup>th</sup> street. I'm pleased that it's cloudy – the type of day that provides soft, even lighting and just hope the rain will hold off for an hour or two.

Our first stop is a playground. The children ignore us as we climb the blue jungle-gym and I begin to shoot the photos, pausing to pick up a dropped teddy bear as Clifford's topics leapfrog from silly to the sublime – changes in the comics industry; his pilgrimage to Jim Morrison's grave in France. He retells the events that inspired "I, Gezeh," "Bruises," and other stories that focus on child abuse or the abuse of power. There's just one problem photographing him – refraining from the conversation moving. And he can talk – really talk. He's just as comfortable telling a story as writing it. Suddenly, I find him approachable and funny – not a jokester, but naturally humorous with an ever-present dark side.

We leave the park for a Snapple break across the street. The sky has darkened, but there's still no rain. Adjacent to the local bodega are graffiti-scrawled walls – I suggest they're appropriate for the last shots of the day and Cliff agrees. We finish the photo session just as the clouds part and the sun breaks through – that's when Ron Kuby strolls by. For those of you who don't recall, Kuby was an attorney in several controversial cases – most notably, the defense of Sayid Nosair, an alleged conspirator in the World Trade Center bombing and the alleged assassin of Rabbi Meir Kahane. To say that Meth and Kuby don't see eye to eye is an understatement.

As Clifford recognizes Kuby, a subtle transformation overcomes him. His body stiffens; his face hardens; there's cold anger in his eyes. But one thing restrains him from approaching the lawyer and saying or doing who-knows-what: Kuby's wife and children are there, too. This tells me more about the young writer than anything he has said about himself.

As the afternoon ends, Clifford drives us through the city, his mind still reviewing the day's karate session; at red lights, his hand lifts off the wheel as he repeats a kata move. He apologizes, which isn't necessary. We end up at a noisy, mid-town pizzeria, a chance to talk a little without the camera. His voice softens as he discusses his three young sons and their distinct personalities. He says he believes it's important for children to be able to protect themselves. I offer no argument; I'm a city girl.

"I don't watch TV," he says. "It steals my time." And he has no time to waste. He writes everyday now because there's more stories to tell. And on the days he can't write? "No such thing," he says. That's the discipline; like doing martial arts. Indeed, poems often intrude in the middle of a story...or when driving...and when they do, he stops, no matter where, and works the poem. Some of these are popping up in such prestigious spots as the *International Literary Review*.

I'm curious about something: having read Clifford's stories, it's inescapable that he was/is religious; Jewish characters and culture pervade his tales. But the spirituality is often offset by overt sexuality. I ask him about these cross themes – the counterpoint they suggest. He admits that sex and religion are two of the things that fascinate him most. Then he laughs.

I have one last question before we part: I ask if his wife reads his stories. He smiles. No, he says; they make her uncomfortable.

We leave Manhattan in opposite directions. It rains later that night.

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