

Creating a regular activity group to stretch your mind and body – and still avoid golf!

Gary Schoer

With my wife Bronlyn, I have now been retired for 12 years from my role as HT Science/Maths with a continued love of (easy) bushwalking and a passion for photography.

Approximately once a week, half a dozen or so similarly retired folk...not all from education...choose a walk mostly within the Royal National Park, or occasionally around the Harbour or city gardens and highlights. While we are mostly men, some keen female shutterbugs join us. We call our group the 'Kanon Kids' – though other brands of photographic equipment are welcomed.

The nature of what we do has evolved over the years. Most of us, especially the walk instigators, belong to the National Parks Association of NSW (Inquiries: Ph. 9299 0000) so we can link our short notice walks to an organisation that specialises in bushwalks and also nature conservation. That gives us some added security as NPA carries insurance for walkers.

We try, where we can, to combine a cultural experience and an enjoyable luncheon location with the photographic theme of our excursion. For example, one outing started with a visit to a Max Dupain exhibition at Hazelhurst Gallery at Gympie followed by lunch at the lovely cafe there. We then headed to Cronulla's Oak Park to photograph beach and rock pool subjects inspired by Dupain's "Sunbather" and other photos. Visits to nature photo exhibitions at the Australian Museum were followed by lunch at a Macquarie Street restaurant then a photographic stroll around the Botanic Gardens.

We share a few of our successful images with each other via Facebook or email and mostly praise others' efforts or give some gentle advice. Fungi sprouting after autumn rains, the return of honeyeaters to flowering Banksias or big waves crashing against Kurnell cliffs is enough to trigger an outing.

What do I get out of this? I can't stand golf or swimming, so the bushwalking activity provides some much needed exercise. I always enjoy the stimulation of organising our excursion themes and making the effort to create some photographic images to satisfy some personal creative urge. The social stimulation ensures that I am mixing with a different group of people beyond established friends or former colleagues, but who each share a passion for photography.

Make your own group happen by matching your particular interests with those of some similarly retired acquaintances...educators or otherwise. The perfect group for you may not exist, but I am sure people who are used to making dozens of decisions a week can create a regular forum for creating a new habit that meets several needs. This is exactly what you dreamed about, especially on those days when you were tied down to your school so strongly.

If you would like to see what we share between our group and others, go to Gary's Facebook page <facebook.com/gary.schoer.3>, and you will understand why I am a happy 'Kanon Kid'.

Contributor details

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Gary and Bronlyn shared a life in education. Bronlyn was the principal of Lucas Heights Community School, 1992 -2006, and Gary, Head Teacher Science/Maths at Bradfield College. Since retiring, they have enjoyed many travel adventures together, but also endeavour to independently create new friendship groups and interests, as well as treasure their established family and friend connections.