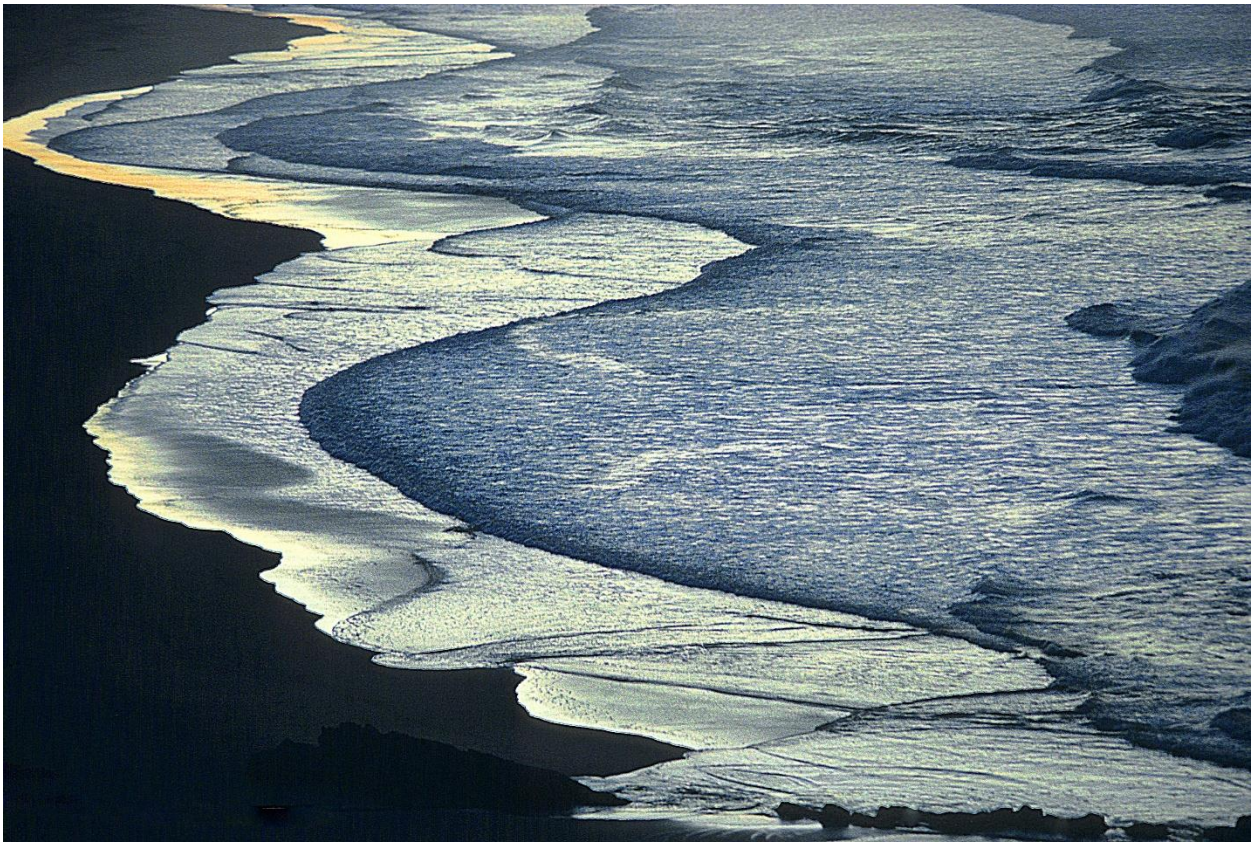
IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

Periodical Letter #51
November 2026

from
FREEMAN PATTERSON



Indian Ocean at Wilderness, South Africa

OCEANS, WAVES, and CONSCIOUSNESS

Flying into or departing from many New Zealand cities, the ocean below seems an unending texture field of black striated by short, irregular, ever-forming, ever-dissolving lines of white caps. Everything is the same body of water, yet the black seems to stretch forever in space and time while the white lines come and go so rapidly that it is impossible to hold one firmly in my vision for even a split second. The black seems permanent, the white is ephemeral.

This vast tapestry is a graphic visualization of how I regard consciousness – as a great ocean with each ever-changing white cap in its brief existence as a unique, but temporary expression of it. To put it another way, every living creature is the constantly-transforming, temporary receptacle of a certain amount of consciousness. A white cap is its perfect symbol.

To turn to the less philosophical, I love camping on the seashore. Lying in my tent, wrapped in my sleeping bag, the rhythmic crash of the waves lullabies me to sleep.

…….

"Although the rhythm of the waves beats a kind of time, it's not clock or calendar time. It has no urgency. It's timeless time. Because I know I'm listening to a rhythm which has been just the same for millions of years." *Alan Watts*

…….

As I've gone through my photographs from both New Brunswick and South Africa, I've discovered a huge number of images of waves breaking against rocks or diminishing in height and strength as they roll over broad sandy beaches. Also, by locating myself in sometimes perilous positions and using a telephoto lens that zooms out to 300mm, I've been able to shoot into the very "heart" of a wave, using both fast and slow shutter speeds. The camera enabled me "to be" visually in an impossible place.

Recently I assembled a folder of my favourite wave images from which I've selected the ones I'm including in this letter. (I deeply regret having to leave out many others.) The photograph of a huge wave approaching rocks (below) is a picture of anticipation. Will it hit the rocks in just the right way to enable me to capture images like the two on the next page?







Using a camera enables us to see waves as we can never apprehend them with our eyes, which are not designed to stop motion. So, where big waves are breaking I find myself trying everything from 1/500 sec. to as slow a shutter speed as I can possibly get. The different speeds alter the visual texture of the water and the results are often a beautiful surprise. The following image is an example of using a relatively slow shutter speed.

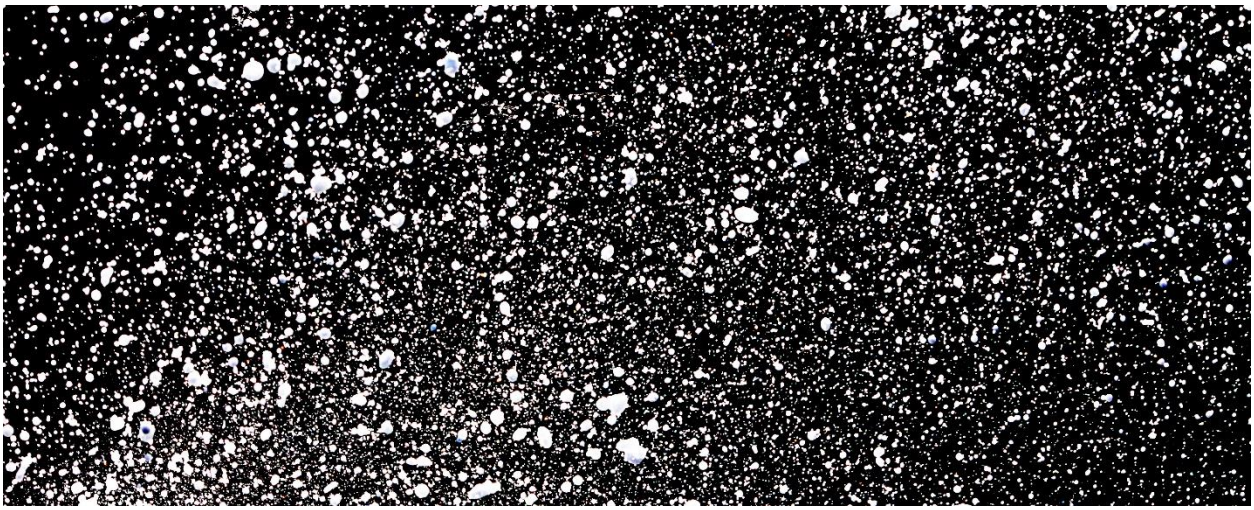


Fast shutter speeds produce equally surprising results, especially when I'm focusing into the impossible-to-locate centre of an approaching wave. Sometimes everything is completely out of focus, but if I use a fairly high ISO and a shutter speed of 1/500 I can usually get overall sharpness and record moving water in ways I could never have conceived.

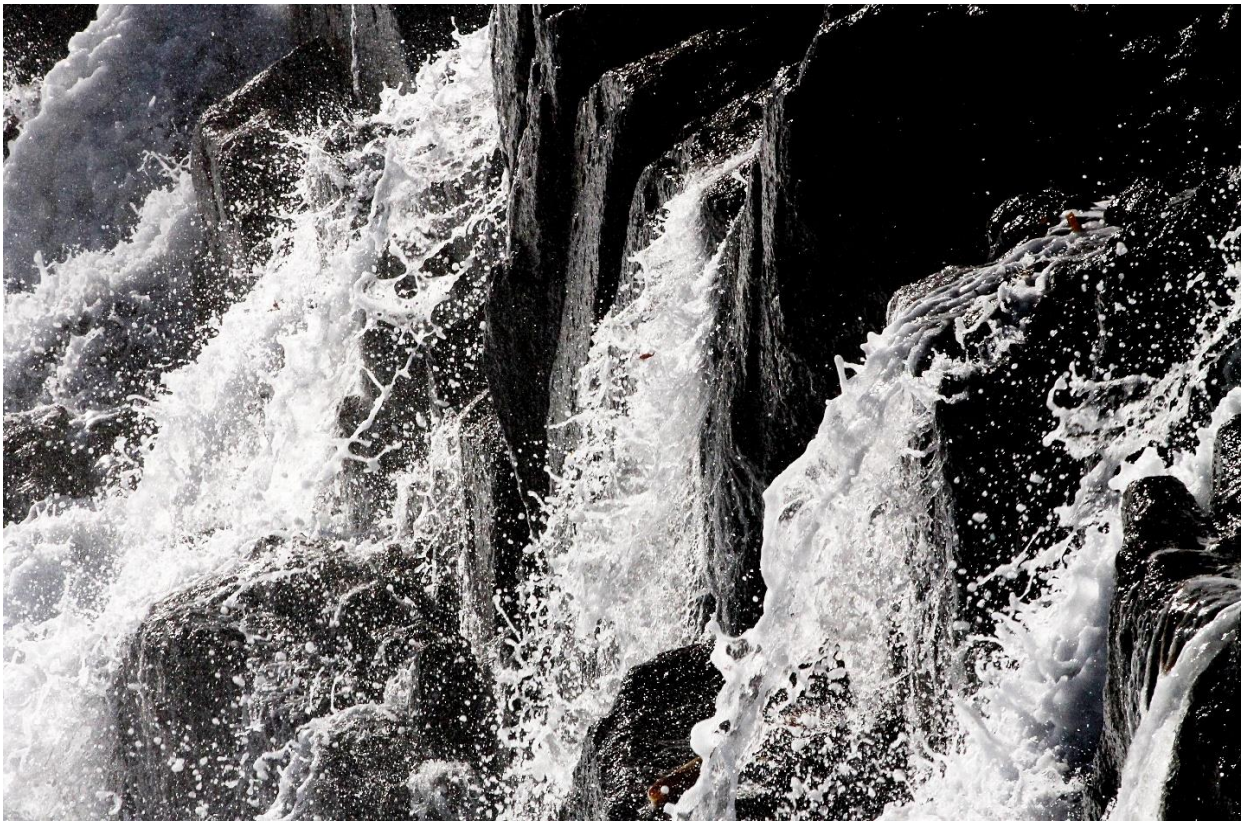
In a way, photographing like this has the allure of journeying into an unknown country or into totally unfamiliar territory with a big exception – I'm not putting myself in any danger, unless, of course, I position myself where a rogue wave could sweep me out to sea.

As utterly different as the next two photographs are, both are good examples of using fast shutter speeds to photograph waves and both enabled me to see water as I never imagined it.





Photographing waves can be addictive. I can watch them for a long while without making any pictures, but once I start I can't go back to just watching. It's rather like picking wild strawberries. As long as I don't eat one, I put them all in the pot. However, eating even one is fatal. After that it's impossible to resist the incredible sweetness, so no more strawberries go into the pot.



Before I end my discussion of the ocean and waves, I want to return briefly to their being symbols of consciousness for me.

Max Planck (1858-1947) was a German theoretical physicist who originated quantum theory, which won him the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1918. This theory revolutionized our understanding of atomic and subatomic processes, just as Albert Einstein's theory of relativity revolutionized our understanding of space and time. Together they constitute the fundamental theories of 20th-century physics. Both forced humankind to revise some of its most-cherished philosophical beliefs.

Planck's reflections on consciousness were not merely abstract; they were intertwined with his scientific work in quantum theory. He believed that the ultimate mysteries of nature could not be fully understood without acknowledging the role of consciousness, and he saw science and faith as complementary rather than contradictory. His perspective suggests that the observer, or conscious mind, is central to the very fabric of reality, a view that that makes little or no sense whatever to the average person, but resonates with later interpretations in quantum mechanics by other leading physicists, including more Nobel prize winners.

Probably no one has written more about this recently than multi-disciplinary scientist Robert Lanza, whose books on "biocentrism" examine the idea that consciousness is the fundamental reality. I have Lanza's three books, written between 2010 and 2020, and feel that anybody who wants to plunge into this hard-to grasp topic may just as well start with the 2020 book, The Grand Biocentric Design: How Life Creates Reality by Robert Lanza (principal writer,) Matej Pavsic, and Bob Berman. They've produced a very readable book.

Such things as colors, tastes and smells "are no more than mere names," Galileo declared more than 400 years ago, as "they reside only in consciousness." These qualities aren't really out there in the world, he asserted, but exist only in the minds of creatures that perceive them. "Hence if the living creature were removed," he wrote, "all these qualities would be wiped away and annihilated." The philosopher David Chalmers coined the term "the hard problem of consciousness" to designate the difficulty science has in trying to explain how matter – carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms or electrons (i.e., electric current) travelling along neurons – gives rise to the subjective experience of a purple twilight or the smell of freshly-cut grass. To date all explanatory efforts have proven futile.



Wave and Ship, Durban, South Africa 1967

NOVEMBER

Lots of Canadians hate November. Not I. It's one of my favourite months of the year. Around Shampers Bluff all the brilliant hues of early autumn have blown away, save perhaps for a few lingering yellows and subdued reds that punctuate the greys and dark greens of the forest's edge. I wander the paths I've mowed through huge stands of once green hay-scented ferns that turned briefly yellow in October and now are tapestries of soft, glowing brown with scatterings of leaves virtually devoid of all colour.

When I was a child snow always blanketed the ground by around the 20th of the month and I couldn't have been happier. Out came my toboggan and the long season of hurtling down hills and becoming airborne over natural "jumps" began. That's no longer the case. Climate change has extended autumn into early December and some years hardly any snow falls before Christmas. As I no longer have a huge interest in careening fearlessly down steep inclines, this development suits me just fine. I can make more photographs like these two.





NOVEMBER *DOWN UNDER*
(and getting there)

To all of you who find the Canadian November difficult to bear, may I recommend an extended holiday in Australia or New Zealand, where spring is in full and glorious swing. My very first trip to New Zealand included all of November and my last visit to Australia began in mid-October. I have never made the mistake of visiting both countries on the same trip, but always moved slowly and saw more.

Mind you, spring in Australia and New Zealand, as in South Africa, does not arrive everywhere at the same time. For example, North Island, New Zealand is sub-tropical, but South Island is temperate, so spring moves basically from north to south. The wildflower spectacle of Western Australia is splashing its hues across the landscape in September, while the gigantic rhododendrons of the Blue Mountains hold off for a couple of months before they "wow" visitors from northern climes.

When I turned 65 I decided that I'd had enough flying in Economy! Ever since I've chosen Business class for a flight longer than five hours and always used a travel agent to make my booking. Time and again she's come up with the most amazing deals.

For example, on that last trip to Australia, which takes at least 15 hours from Vancouver to Sydney, I simply couldn't afford the cost of flying Business, but could have handled Premium Economy. However, in my opinion the back row of Premium Economy is

really the only row worth the price, because if you sit in any other row whoever is sitting behind you is likely to pull back hard on your reclining seat when they get up to use the toilet. A good night's sleep is usually out of the question. So, I called my travel agent and she solved my problem in precisely two minutes.

"If you're up there in Business class, you don't care how long the flight is, do you?" she queried. "Of course not," I replied. "Well then," she said, "I'm going to fly you from Saint John (my home airport) to Montréal on Air Canada, then from Montréal to Beijing on Air China, which takes 15 hours. You'll have a four-hour layover in Beijing, then fly south eleven hours to Sydney." The price: exactly the same as Premium Economy on Qantas and Air Canada between Vancouver and Sydney.

On another trip my agent sent me over the pole to Japan and then on to New Zealand (i.e., in the wrong direction,) because she found a Business class bargain. A good travel agent is your best friend when you need to book a long flight, especially if you give them some lead time. For instance, you've probably never heard of a consolidator ticket, but your travel agent has and can scoop one up if and when it becomes available.

Another tip: don't give your agent a specific day on which you want to fly, but rather a specific week. That has often made a difference for me.

So for those long flights to the southern hemisphere and elsewhere, arrive rested and without suffering jet lag, able to enjoy spring in November from day one!



Magnolia in November, Luera (in the Blue Mountains,) Australia

WORKSHOPS 2027

(For full details, please see www.freemanpatterson.com)

INSCAPE (12 participants) – with David Maginley, Margery Nea, and Freeman Patterson
St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martin's, N.B.
June 20-26 (depart Sun. June 27)

ARTISTS RETREAT (6-8 participants) – with Freeman Patterson
Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts, Kingsbrae Garden, St. Andrews, N.B.
July 22-27 (depart Tues. July 28)

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL DESIGN (12 participants) – with André Gallant and Freeman Patterson, St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martins N.B.
Sept. 19-24 (depart Sat. Sept. 25)

AUTUMN (12 participants) - with André Gallant and Freeman Patterson
St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martins N.B.
Oct. 10-15 (depart Sat. Oct. 17)

ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS (1-3 participants) – with Freeman Patterson
Freeman's home, Shampers Bluff, N.B.
August, late October through April, (exact date determined by participants and Freeman)



Breakfast and Lunch Nook, St. Martin's Country Inn, St. Martins, New Brunswick



Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts (KIRA), Kingsbrae Garden, St. Andrews, New Brunswick

I began facilitating workshops in photography and visual design in 1973, well over half my lifetime ago, and I anticipate each workshop experience today as much as I ever have. The reason, of course, is the participants, who have come to New Brunswick from every continent, except Antarctica of course, but I also feel the same about workshops elsewhere. Among the thousands of participants over the years, there have only been five "stinkers," persons who were never satisfied with anything, and who were usually quickly ostracized by everyone else.

For the first five years all the New Brunswick workshops were held in my home and participants stayed with neighbouring families. I decided to find a new venue the afternoon I went to my bedroom for a nap to find two workshop participants (an older woman and a much younger man) enjoying each other's company in my bed. In the years since I've taught in five other NB venues, the current ones in St. Martins and St. Andrews providing the best facilities, meals, and atmosphere by far. My NB photographic teaching partners have been Dennis Mills (1973-1977,) Doris Mowry (I978-1995,) and André Gallant ever since. Also, from time to time I taught workshops in British Columbia and later in Ontario.

There were four annual workshops in Namaqualand (South Africa) from 1983 to 2006 (except 2000, the year of my liver transplants,) most of them with Colla Swart, one to three yearly in New Zealand between 1997 and 2016 almost all with Sally Mason, in Claude Monet's garden in France with Charles Needle in 2017 and 2019, in Israel with Susan Meyer and Danny Hadas five years between 1996 and 2023, and in Australia in 2015 and 2018.

Before the internet, ZOOM, and Webex most late autumns or winters I was also on the road for four to six weeks doing all-day teaching seminars for 250-500 persons across Canada and the United States and had a couple of three-week lecture tours (the second with André) in northern England and Scotland.

Obviously, this can't continue for much longer, which is fine. It's been a long, rewarding, and very happy journey, and I am deeply grateful. Thank all of you who have been part of it, including the couple who did me out of my afternoon nap.

and then, before you know it, CHRISTMAS!





Geseënde Kersfees

Joyeux Noël

Happy Christmas

FREEMAN

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