In this photo illustration—a visual metaphor—a TV set becomes the head (and brains) of a television addict.
Peter Haley,
Tacoma [Washington] *News Tribune*

Illustration

ILLUSTRATE THE ABSTRACT

Today's photojournalists are borrowing the techniques of the advertising photographer to illustrate stories based on issues and abstract ideas. This blend of advertising technique and photojournalism—the editorial photo illustration—came about as newspapers and magazines shifted from the "simple account of what happened yesterday" to analysis of what happened over a period of time and to evaluations of what may happen in the future. This change in journalistic emphasis from immediate reaction to longer-term interpretation of the news has led to stories about more abstract—and

A product illustration (below, top) is often an attractive still life that simply shows what an object looks like. An editorial illustration (below, bottom) depicts a concept. Here, the concept is how to guard against the vapors of the odoriferous onion.
Joseph Rodriquez, *Greensboro* [North Carolina] *News & Record*

non-visual—issues, such as such as those dealing with economics, psychology, and science. Stories might include causes for a bull or bear stock market, cures for manic depression, or potential results of gene splicing. To satisfy an increasingly visually literate readership, editors who understand photography's appeal often assign illustration photos rather than pen-and-ink drawings to accompany these difficult-to-visualize stories.

Photo illustrations work best when used to communicate concepts, feelings, and the intangibles for which a literal picture is not always possible, says Jay Koelzer, who specialized in photo illustrations for the *Rocky Mountain News*. "The photographer needs to take the reader somewhere outside the bounds of reality and the printed page," says Koelzer. "The photo illustration is the chance for the photographer to make people think."

According to a survey conducted by Betsy Brill for her master's thesis, more than three-quarters of the newspapers in the United States use photo illustrations. Almost every magazine, particularly *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, uses editorial photo illustrations, especially on their covers. In fact, the rise of the issue-oriented photo illustration may be the most significant change in the history of photojournalism since the 35mm camera introduced the era of candid photography more than a half-century ago.

Today's photojournalists are creating pictures from whole cloth. Subjects are actors, backgrounds are sets, lighting is artificial. Yet these pictures run on the same newsprint and often on the same page as documentary photographs, in which the photographer has traditionally remained only an observer, not a participant.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS
PRODUCT PHOTOS

The product photo is a photograph of a real object, usually involving food or fashion.

For example, the food editor might assign a photo to accompany a story about the lowly onion. To show how onions differ, the photographer might artfully arrange a number of different onions, ranging from white to red (see page 381).

Illustration fashion photos, too, are product photos that simply record what an outfit looks like. Some newspapers and magazines run fashion photographs of average people on the street—candids that accompany a story about new trends in hemlines or the new look in pleats. These types of photos are not illustrations. Instead, they are like other candid features a photographer might take. While the setting of a fashion show is staged, the photos document a real event.

A fashion shoot, on the other hand, might show off a new clothing line. Almost all pictures in fashion magazines result from photographers working with models to create idealized photographs of new clothing trends.

The setting might be a seamless background or an empty beach, but the pictures never look real. Stylists prop the photos so that the situations look better than real life. The photographer is not trying to illustrate an abstract editorial concept or imitate reality.

Whether the photograph is of an onion on a plate or a swimsuit on a woman, the photographer tries to accurately and attractively
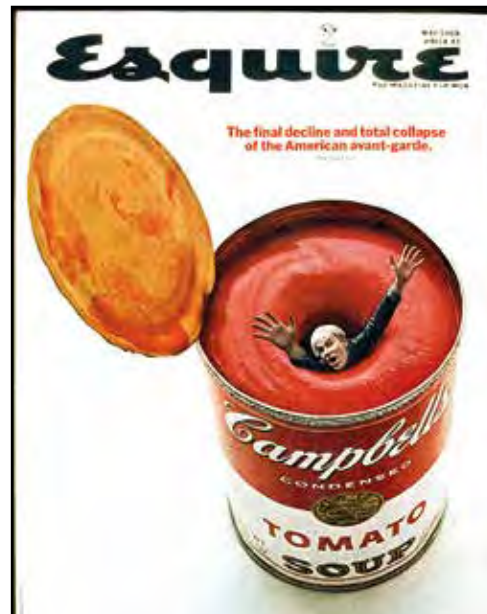
To illustrate an article about Andy Warhol, who turned ordinary objects—including soup cans—into art, Carl Fischer portrayed the artist as being consumed by his own icons.
© Photo illustration by Carl Fischer

This classic illustration of aging was created by photographing two women who strongly resembled one another, cutting their photos, combining them, and then having the resulting combination retouched by an artist. Today, the effect could have been achieved by combining the images with a computer.
© Photo illustration by Carl Fischer

record the object. The photographer is not trying to create a concept or dupe the reader into thinking the picture is really a candid.

EDITORIAL CONCEPT ILLUSTRATIONS

As the visualization of an idea, the editorial concept illustration may employ actors or models to create the photographic image, but the total effect is that the viewer instantly recognizes fantasy, not reality. By using subjects out of proportion with other props, backgrounds apparently reaching into infinity, and other trompe l'oeil, the concept photo (also called the issue photo illustration) lures the reader, like Alice, into a surreal Wonderland of ideas. No reader would mistake Wonderland for reality.

Carl Fischer's startling photo illustration of aging, for example, combines photographs to create an image of a woman's face—half-young, half-old (see opposite page).

Through his covers for *Esquire*, Fischer pioneered the use of the modern photo illustration. He also used the concept approach for a story about Andy Warhol, the pop artist famous for transforming everyday objects into paintings. One of Warhol's most famous images showed row after row of Campbell's red-and-white soup cans. Fischer created a picture that gave the impression that Warhol was drowning in a huge can of tomato soup (see opposite page).

For a story about "latchkey children" (youngsters who come home to an empty house while their parents work), Jeff Breland created a collage for the *Columbia Missourian* that conveyed the concept of children—perhaps perilously—alone. In Breland's cut-and-paste image, a little boy dangles from a huge key ring in the lock to a gigantic door (see page 397).

On the day the article was set to run, John Burgess' editors at Santa Rosa's *Press Democrat* assigned him to illustrate the range of digital cameras available on the market. Faced with the daunting deadline, Burgess could have opted to put the cameras against a backdrop and take a product photo.

Instead he recalled a photo of Lily Tomlin taken by Annie Leibovitz in which the comedienne's face was hidden behind a TV set showing her own image. The television face of Tomlin seemed to float above her real body, suggesting the merger of reality and medium. This recollection gave Burgess an idea of his own: to photograph the new digital cameras with parts of faces on each model's LCD screen.

At a local camera store, Burgess took each point-and-shoot digital camera and recorded part of a face. Then he activated the camera's LCD screens and had the store clerks hold the cameras in place. The engaging final illustration is certainly more interesting than a catalog shot of the equipment.

Faced with a different kind of potentially routine product shot—toothbrushes—Robert Hendricks imagined toothbrushes as trees in a fantasy forest. Letting his creativity fly, he conceived the idea that someone could be lost in this make-believe forest of toothbrush trees.

To execute the concept, Hendricks placed the brushes in a specially built, elaborate model made of floral foam and moss, and shot the set-up in the studio. Hendricks looked up a beauty pageant contestant who had dressed as a tooth fairy holding a large prop toothbrush. He photographed her in her costume against a seamless backdrop.

Rather than take a product picture of digital cameras, the photographer transformed them into a human face. At a local camera shop, he took pictures of several people's faces with different cameras and then arranged and photographed their LCD screens to form a single face.

John Burgess,
Santa Rosa Press Democrat

THE FACE OF TODAY'S DIGITAL CAMERAS
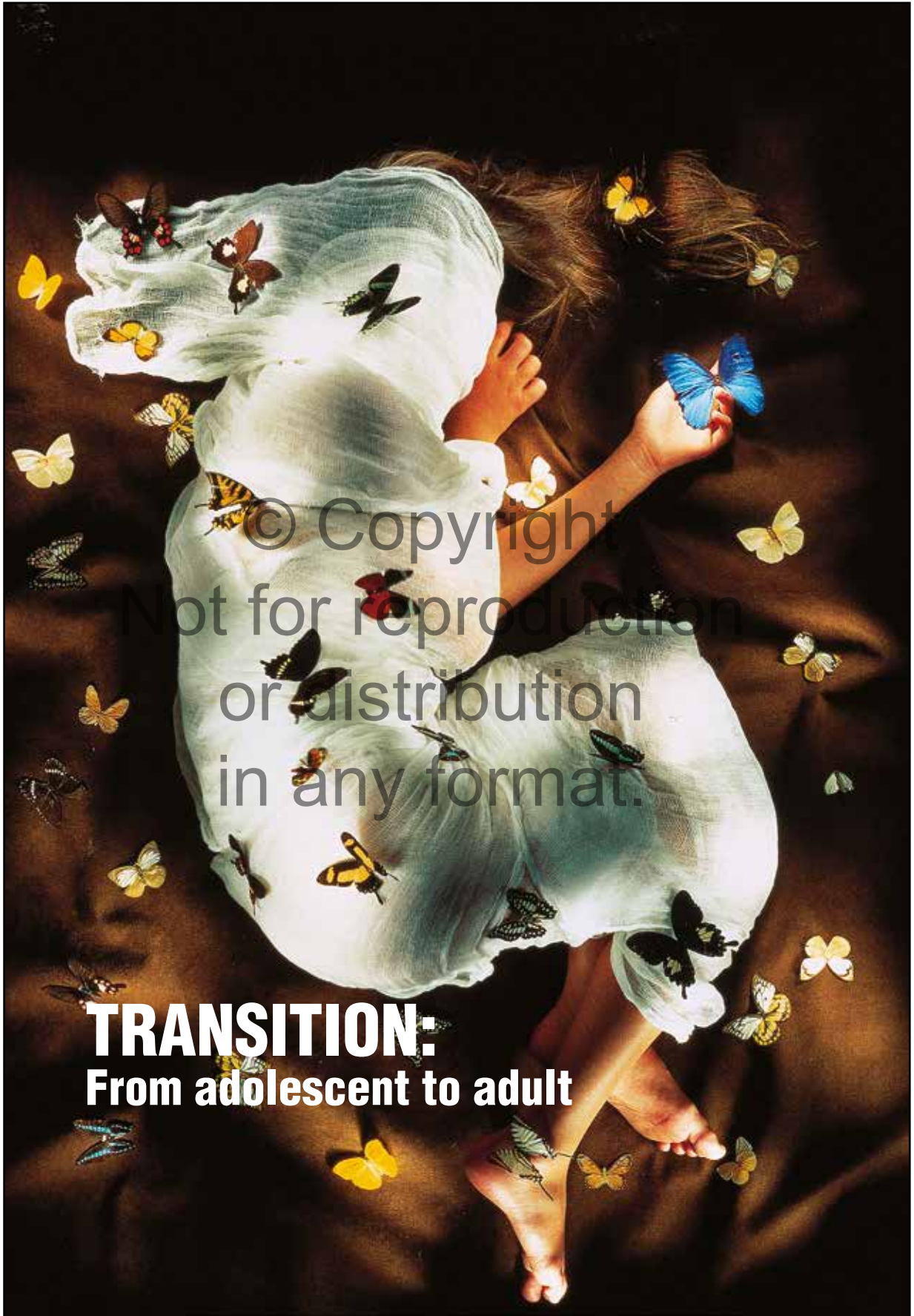
TRANSITION:
From adolescent to adult

A picture of a blue sky completed the original photography for the project. Then Hendricks combined the three images in Photoshop for his final picture.

Hendricks transformed what could have been a dull product shot of toothbrushes into a concept. The tooth fairy, lost in a forest of brushes, provides a more captivating image than a catalog shot of common teeth-cleaning instruments.

The subject of an editorial photo illustration may be about aging, latchkey children, or it might involve politics or food. But if you create a concept photo about onions, you will not produce a photo of the onion itself. Rather you may try to show how people defend themselves against the vegetable's vapors—perhaps with an image of a chef wearing a gas mask while cutting the odoriferous onions (see page 381).

DOCUDRAMA

The docudrama photo illustration, by contrast, actually appears to be real. The docudrama looks just like a candid but is really a complete creation or recreation. Rather than abstracting or idealizing, like the product photo or the concept illustration, the docudrama photo imitates reality; intentionally or not, it fools the reader.

Avoid the docudrama at all costs.

The docudrama approach is tempting to photographers with little time to establish contacts for a story, or to conceive and prop a concept photo. To set up a real-looking photograph may not seem so far from what an artist does to "illustrate" a story, but docudramas threaten to undermine a news outlet's credibility.

Jeff Breland's picture of a latchkey child dangling from a key chain is clearly unreal (see page 397). A docudrama photo illustration, on the other hand, depicts a lonely-looking child sitting on a doorstep. While this young model surely was not really alone or lonely, the reader's only clue to the deception was the tiny tag line "photo illustration." The reader has no way of knowing from the picture that the image was purposely staged.

And, equally important, do latchkey children really look lonely? The one thing we know is that they do in the imagination of a docudrama photographer.

PRODUCING EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATIONS

After a photo illustration appears, you might overhear the following conversation in the newsroom.

The writer whines, "This headline doesn't go with the gist of my insightful story."

The copy editor replies, "When I wrote that head, the story wasn't ready, and I never saw the picture."

From the photo department: "The headline type runs across the model's face."

And, from the page designer's corner of the room: "The inept photographer didn't leave room for type on the picture. And anyhow, the vertical picture didn't fit into the

LOST IN A FOREST OF TOOTHBRUSH CHOICES?

horizontal hole on the page left me by the copy desk." Avoid this scenario.

When producing an editorial photo illustration, get all the players together from the beginning. The advertising world calls a group like this a creative team. Businesses in Japan call it a quality circle. Regardless of what you call it, get everyone together who will participate in the creation and execution of the photo illustration. By communicating, all team members will perform their own creative tasks better; knowing what others are doing will help quell territorial battles.
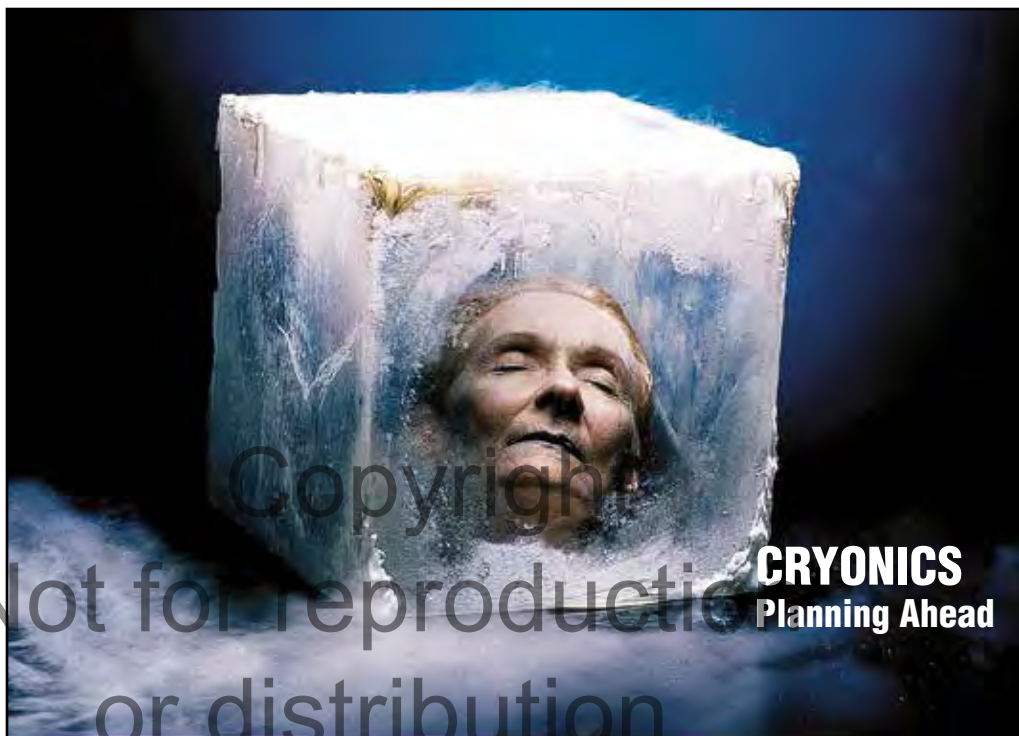
► This shocking photo illustrates cryonics, the practice of freezing people who have just died in hopes of reviving them with future medical advances.
Susan Gardner,
Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

CRYONICS
Planning Ahead

**HIGH
OVER
COLORADO**
**The state's
soaring
population**
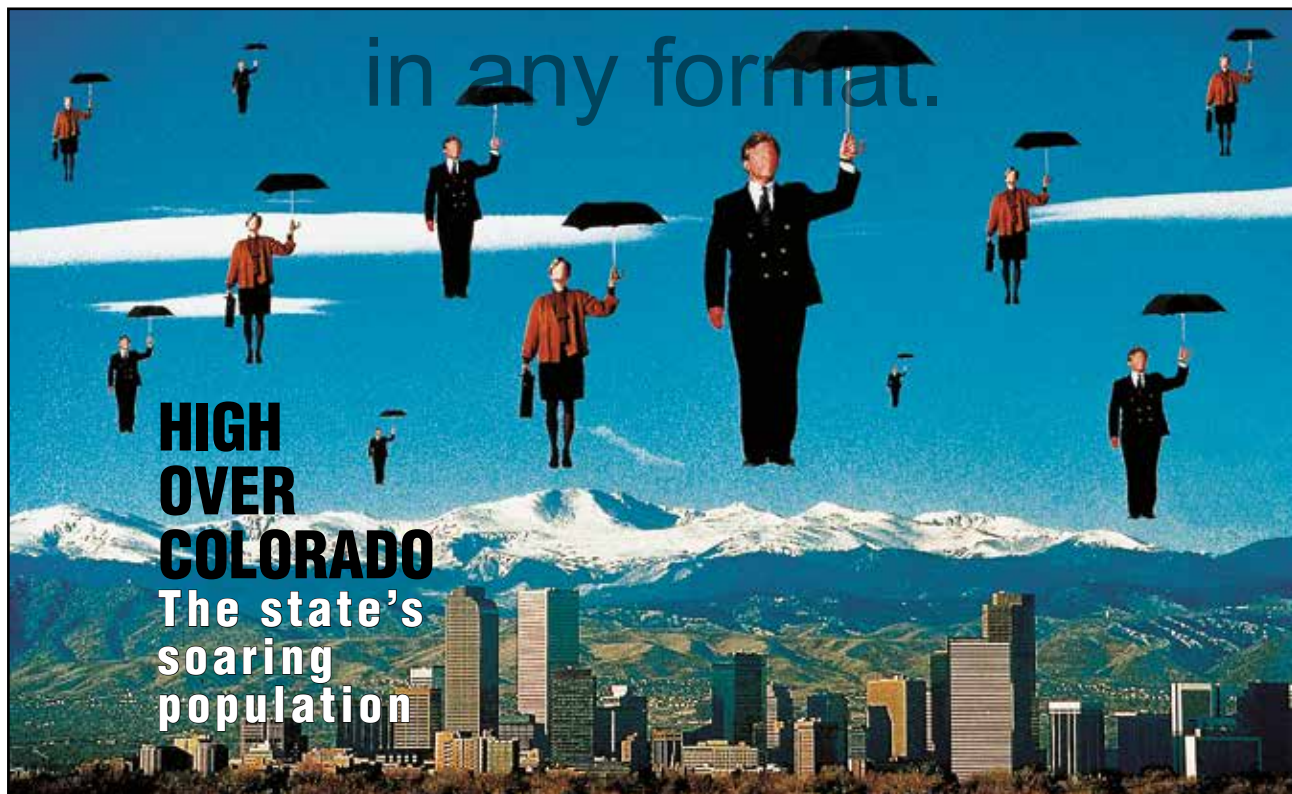
BRAINSTORM THE CONCEPTS

Alex Osborn, a partner at Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn (BBD&O), a large New York advertising firm, formulated the brainstorming method for bringing workable, productive ideas to the surface. He recommends getting a group of people in a small room where everyone can voice their ideas, no matter how foolish-sounding. Each suggestion stimulates and generates another suggestion. A brainstorming session can produce more than a thousand ideas, Osborn claims. Brainstorming works even if you just talk over your ideas with another person.

Philippe Halsman, who produced more than 100 *Life* covers, explains why he uses the brainstorming technique in his book ***Halsman on the Creation of Photographic Ideas***. "You are not alone, you face someone who serves you as a sounding board, who prods you and who expects you to answer… Your system is stimulated by the challenge of the discussion. There is more adrenaline in your blood, more blood flows through your brain and, like an engine that gets more gas, your brain becomes more productive."

One cardinal rule prevails when working in a brainstorming session: never put down anyone else's ideas. Like turning on the lights at a high school dance, a negative comment will be inhibiting. By the end of the brainstorming session, surprisingly good ideas will float to the surface and poor suggestions will sink out of sight from their own weight.

WRITE A HEADLINE

After each member of your group has read the story or heard a presentation of the central theme, everyone should try to write a headline. Compared with writing headlines for a news story and documentary picture, writing headlines for a photo illustration requires the writer to take a different approach.

In a traditional news headline, the editor tries to summarize the story in a few words. The headline usually includes an active verb: "President proposes new legislation today."

A photo illustration headline might have no verb. In fact, the headline might consist

DRUG TESTING Medical Martyrdom?

◄ **To illustrate the problem of population growth in Colorado,** the photographer shot an overall of downtown Denver with the mountains in the background. In the studio, keeping the light from the same direction as the overall, he photographed two models holding umbrellas. With software, he cloned the models, obliterating their faces so that they would become generalized figures representing all newcomers. Finally, he melded all the elements together into one image.
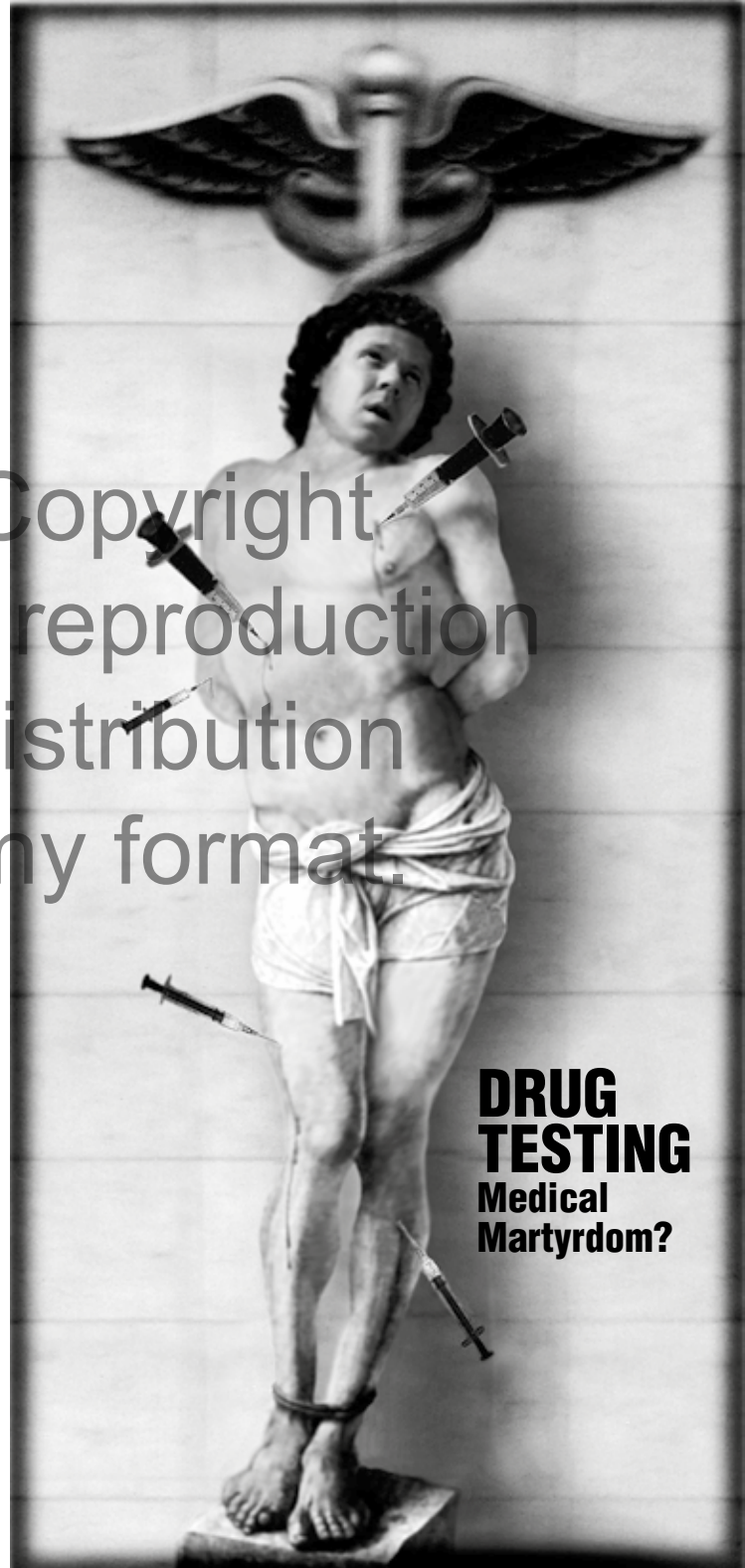Jay Koelzer,
for the *Rocky Mountain News*

► **St. Sebastian, who was executed with arrows,** symbolizes martyrdom in this illustration for a story about college students who are paid to test new drugs. With the help of Photoshop and an out-of-copyright painting of the martyred saint, the photographer replaced the arrows with syringes and used the traditional symbol of the medical profession for a background above the figure.
William Duke,
Spy magazine

of only a phrase or sentence fragment. The headline might play on words, like a pun, or it might work off a movie, play, or song title. Or the words might raise a question.

- "Is There a Hare in Your Soup?" for a story about rabbit stew.
- "M-M-M Mail Order" for a story about buying food through the mail.
- "Making the First Move" for a story about women asking men on dates.

Once everyone has read the story, the group must try to write several headlines. Do not stop to analyze each one. Never reject any idea at this stage of the process. Let your thoughts flow. Then read over each one to see if the idea lends itself to a photo.

Almost always, the best idea pops out.

TRANSLATE WORDS INTO IMAGES
Symbols

Once you have the headline you must translate words into pictures. When you translate to picture language, you speak with symbols, analogies, and metaphors. You are trying to find visual ways to express amorphous, sometimes theoretical ideas and concepts.

For photography, however, concepts must become something concrete.

For example, how do you say America or American without words? You might use a generally accepted visual representation of an idea—a symbol like the Stars and Stripes. You could use an actual flag or turn something else into a flag. You might decorate a cake in red, white, and blue to symbolize America's birthday. The Statue of Liberty also serves as a symbol of the United States, as does the "Uncle Sam Wants You" recruiting poster from World War I. Grant Woods's painting, "American Gothic," which shows a farmer and his wife staring stoically out at you, also has become a symbol of the United States.

Photographs themselves can become symbols. Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima has been reproduced and transformed so many times it has become a symbol of American patriotism.

The Eiffel Tower, a baguette, or a bottle of wine might symbolize France. Balanced scales suggest justice; a dove represents peace; a gun symbolizes war. A light bulb often stands in for abstractions like thinking or ideas.

Carl Fischer, who produced many famous *Esquire* magazine covers, says that some symbols come to exist in our subconscious, like those that the psychoanalyst Carl Jung described as archetypes. Some of these symbols, although they may originate in one culture, become cross-cultural icons that people instantly recognize. The multi-armed Hindu god, Shiva, appears over and over as a symbol for handling multiple tasks.

Literature, too, can provide visual symbols. The nose of Pinocchio, which grew longer with each lie he told, turns the act of lying into a concrete object. In an illustration for *Spy*, a humor magazine, William Duke played off the image of St. Sebastian, who has come to symbolize martyrdom. The story concerned college students who earn money by participating in tests for new compounds for drug companies (see page 387).

Symbols can be reinterpreted or newly invented. As pointed out by Steven Heller and Seymour Chwast in ***The Sourcebook of Visual Ideas***, smokestacks were used at one time to symbolize progress. Today, they represent pollution. Still, the skull and crossbones, an ancient symbol for poison, continues to evoke the message "hazardous to your health."

Will computers, which today convey the idea of technology, someday be associated with obsolescence?

Visual Metaphors

When you use a metaphor, you replace one image with another to suggest a likeness of some characteristic.

Photo illustrator William Duke used the headline typography in this image to crush a house representing home values. The final image took 12 hours to produce and consisted of 75 layers including different stock pictures—a house, a wrecked roof, several cracks, a 'for sale' sign, clouds, a broken drain pipe, etc. Using the blur tool to soften the trees in the background and the grass in the foreground, Duke made the picture look as if it had been captured with a minimum depth of field.

William Duke, *Advertising Age*

For instance, you might substitute an hourglass for an old person to suggest aging. In this situation, the hourglass becomes the passing of time. The sand at the bottom of the hourglass represents age. Sand can also become power. Sand sifting through hands could become a metaphor for disappearing power.

The metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly could represent the change from childhood to adolescence, as in the photograph created by Jay Koelzer for the *Rocky Mountain News* (see page 384). A TV screen becomes the head of a television addict (see page 380).

The collapse of the housing market might have been hard to see in a documentary photo. In an illustration for *Advertising Age* magazine, William Duke used a crushed house as a metaphor for the market disaster. In this photo illustration, Duke placed the headline type so that the letters themselves were destroying the house (see page 388).

A stomach that looks like a corkscrew is a metaphor for the agony of digestion gone wrong. Normally, you can't see a person's digestive tract. The twists of a corkscrew stand in for stomach pain. For a photo illustration for *US News and World Report*, William Duke twisted Silly Putty into the shape of a spiral and photographed the result. He tried to match the lighting on the Silly Putty tummy to look like the lighting on the woman's arms.

SELECT THE MOST WORKABLE IDEA

Simplicity and practicality come into play when you are pondering a list of headlines to illustrate. Sometimes, the least number of props, models, backgrounds, and special effects give the best chance of producing a successful photo illustration.

For example, suppose you have selected the following headline: "The Nuclear Family Crumbles."

You could illustrate this idea by breaking apart clay figures made in the form of a family. Great idea, but… you do not know how to work in clay, so you call a sculptor friend. She says, "Great idea, but… I'll need five days and $500." Your editor says, "Great idea, but… I need the illustration in three days, and we have a $20 prop limit."

It is time either to rethink the visual for the headline or to continue down the list to find a different headline that can be illustrated more easily. Remember, the nuclear family can unravel just as easily as it can crumble, and knitting a family portrait just might be easier than sculpting it.

PRODUCE THE PICTURE

Once you have a headline to accompany a visual and have drawn a sketch, you need to plan the location, props, and models. On a big-budget ad shoot, you might hire a stylist to find the props, call a casting director to locate models, and ask a location specialist to scout the best backgrounds. On a low-budget shoot, you probably will play all the roles yourself.

Props

Remember that precise propping can perfect the picture, whereas inappropriate props can destroy the desired illusion. For example, a photographer was assigned to illustrate a story about an English butler serving tea. The sketch called for the butler to wear a bowler hat. The photographer returned from the local theatrical prop shop with a hat that was black like a bowler but round on top like a hat worn by the Amish. No self-respecting English butler would be seen serving tea (or much else) in such a piece of headgear. While viewers of the picture might not spot the exact error, they would sense something was wrong with the high tea scene.

On a low budget? Here are some ways to find props for a limited outlay of cash. You can find period props in antique and

A stomach that has become a corkscrew is a metaphor for the agony of digestive problems. Duke purchased two different stock shots—one of a woman wearing a black halter; the other of a woman wearing white pants. For the tummy he twisted Silly Putty into a corkscrew and photographed that. He tried to match the lighting on the Silly Putty tummy to look like the lighting on the woman's arms. He combined all the separate shots digitally and then matched the color of the putty to the woman's skin tones.

William Duke,
US News and World Report
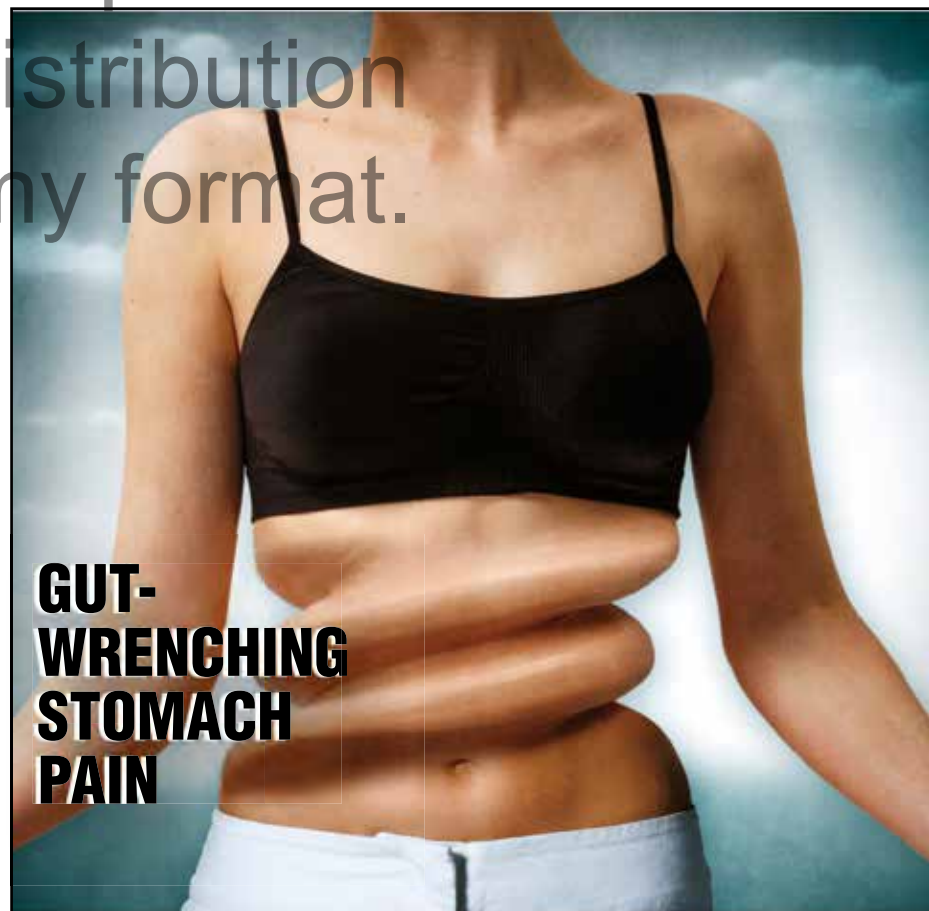
GUT-WRENCHING STOMACH PAIN

second-hand stores. High schools and colleges maintain costumes for their theater departments. They, too, will often lend out period clothing for photo shoots.

John Burgess based his idea for "The Face of Today's Digital Camera" (see page 383) on an Annie Leibovitz portrait of comedienne Lily Tomlin. Burgess found all the props he needed in a local camera shop.

Models

You do not need a trained Shakespearean actor to model in your photo illustration. Most illustrations do not depend on facial expressions or acting. They do, however, depend on stereotypes. You need a person who fits the part.

For an editorial photo illustration about runners hitting "the wall" at 22 miles, you may not need a world-class marathon runner, but do not pick a couch potato, either. Save your friend the couch potato for the story on the dangers of being sedentary.

William Duke often uses himself as a low-cost model in his illustrations. For example, the photographer constructed his illustration of St. Sebastian from an out-of-copyright painting of the martyr's body topped with Duke's own face (see page 387).

Backgrounds

A background is a photograph's most important layer when you are creating the mood of a photo illustration. To avoid any confusion between true and manufactured pictures, photographers have shot many successful photo illustrations against seamless paper backgrounds. The seamless paper adds an abstract quality to a photo since almost nothing in the natural world is ever seen against the purity of simple black or white.

Award-winning photographer Jay Koelzer, however, says that photographers can "look at the background not as something to make disappear but rather as something to add to the image so that it will carry a stronger statement." Koelzer frequently combines realistic backgrounds shot on location with subjects photographed in the studio to produce eye-catching, intellectually challenging images. For example, he photographed Denver's skyline for an illustration about population growth in Colorado (see page 386).

In the studio, he photographed two models holding umbrellas. Using the computer to assemble the final image, he replicated the photos of his models, erased their faces, varied their sizes, and positioned them on the background. Like images from a René Magritte painting, the faceless charac-ters appear to be gently rising and falling over Denver's cityscape with the Rocky Mountains in the background. Although the background is real, no one would mistake the final picture for a documentary photo.

The bottom line with all photo illustration, including use of the background, is that the reader should instantly know that the image is created, not recorded. Do not confuse the reader.

Time

Allow time—lots of time—to conceptualize, prop, and photograph an editorial photo illustration. Editors are accustomed to asking photographers to run down to Castro and 14th Streets to take a quick shot before the 5:00 P.M. deadline. Unfortunately, editors frequently maintain the same mindset when they request editorial photo illustrations.

Most photo illustrations, though, require much longer than two hours. Photo illustrations can take hours that stretch into days. Dreaming up concepts takes time. Rarely do the first headline and visual that come to mind result in the final photo. Propping takes shopping.

Without the right props, the picture will look amateurish. Finding the perfect model can be as difficult as finding the perfect spouse. Then comes shooting. With the patience of Job, the meticulousness of a watchmaker, and the flair of a set designer, you will build the picture. The clock ticks as you move the props one inch to the left or right. Each change requires an adjustment of the lights.

After you have taken many test shots to check each detail, the time finally arrives to click the shutter release. The moment is almost anticlimactic.

When an editor at the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* in Florida assigned Susan Gardner to illustrate an article on cryonics—freezing corpses in the hopes of reviving them in the future—the photographer knew to allow time for the whole production (see page 386).

First, Gardner commissioned a fake block of ice from Plexiglas. She sprayed this with fake snow, lit it with blue gels, and created a mist with dry ice. A hole in the bottom of a table allowed the model to slip her head inside the cube.

The first model, however, took one look at the set and backed out, saying it would be "detrimental" to her career. Her replacement, an elderly woman, was touched up with some white and blue makeup.

One month elapsed from the original concept to the final exposed image.

Melanie Rook D'Anna, shooting for the *Mesa* (Arizona) *Tribune*, was illustrating the return of the movie "101 Dalmatians."

She contacted the local Dalmatian kennel club and persuaded members to bring their dogs to a movie theater—all at the same time. She positioned several highly trained dogs in the front row. These dogs followed the commands of their owners to stay. The rest of the dogs were not so well-behaved, so their owners hid under the seats, their dogs resting comfortably above. The photographer filled the theater with more than 81 Dalmatians, all in their seats at the same time.

The addition of popcorn, colas, and careful lighting gave this picture its striking look.

THINKING CREATIVELY: A STRUCTURE

John Newcomb's *The Book of Graphic Problem-Solving: How to Get Visual Ideas When You Need Them* is based on the premise that visual problem-solving starts with words. He suggests that the starting point is the editor's working title for the story.

Take a story about men who are losing their hair. The editor's working title: "Are You Worried about Balding?" Start by analyzing the nature of the subject.

LIST THE FACTS

What is balding? How would you describe balding to someone from another planet? What words might you use? Round, smooth, hairless. List some of the characteristics of the subject.

Source. What is the source of the problem or item you are illustrating? In this example, where does balding originate? What causes it? Balding in men is a hereditary trait that comes from their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers.

Delivery. If the topic is about a service or object, describe how it is delivered. If the story is about a cure for balding, how would the patient get the cure—pill, surgery, or diet?

Size. How large is the object or problem—both physically and emotionally? In the balding assignment, is the hair loss partial or complete? Does balding make men feel like jocks or like jackasses?

Weight. Is the subject of the assignment physically or emotionally heavy or light? Is it a crushing burden or a minor irritant? Do those

Theater distributors were bringing back the movie "101 Dalmatians." For an illustration, the photographer propped an entire movie theater with dogs from a local kennel club. The well-trained Dalmatians in the front row sat unattended, but the less orderly animals in succeeding rows were firmly held in place by their owners, who were hiding under the seats.
Melanie Rook D'Anna, *Mesa* [Arizona] *Tribune*

101 DALMATIANS
Play it Again, Spot
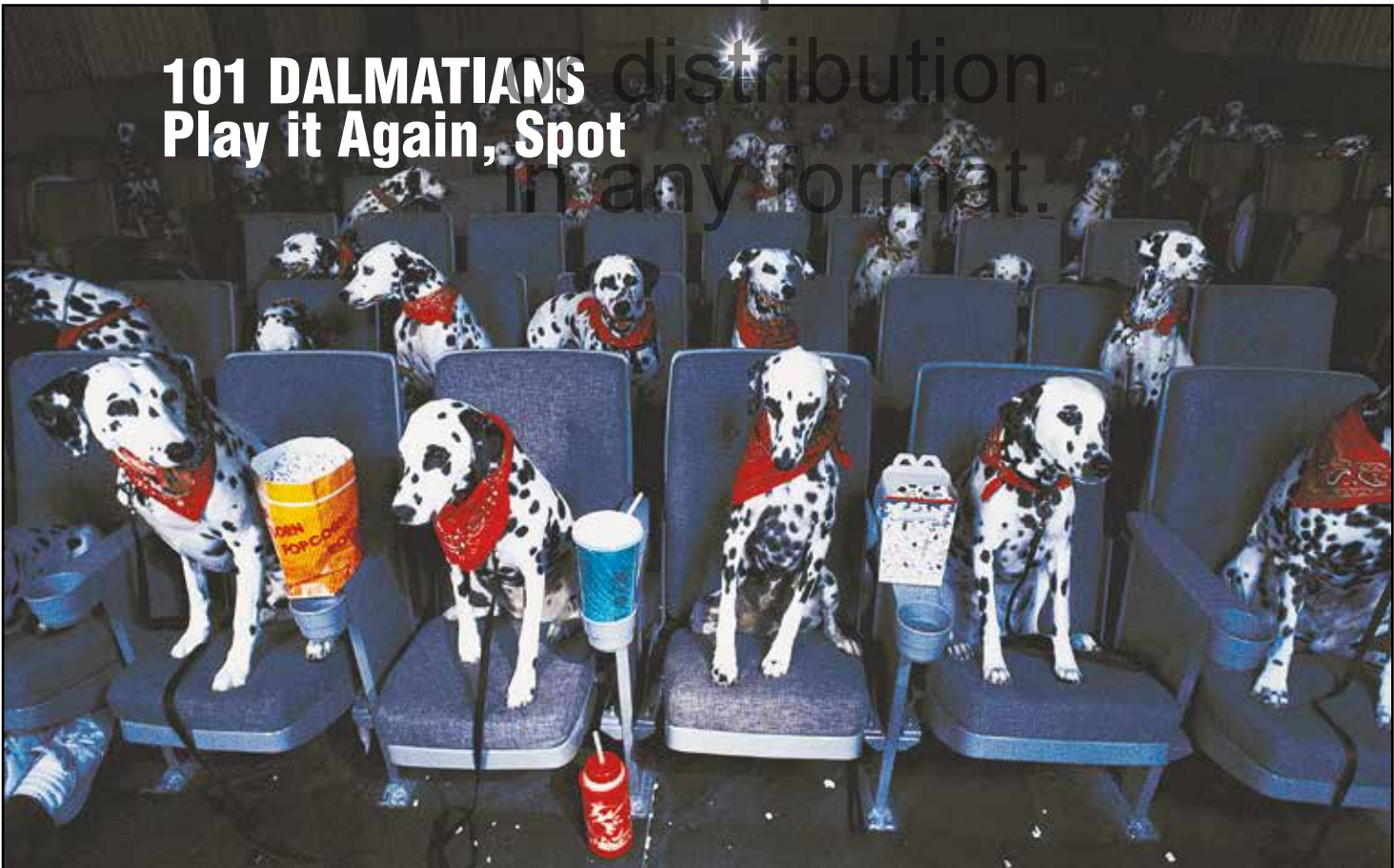
with just a few remaining wisps of hair feel dragged down or light-headed?

Winners and losers. Who gains and who loses with balding? Most stories requiring illustration have a winner or loser, a survivor, or a victim in the plot. At first, you might not think anyone gains from balding. But charlatans with patent cures gain, as do pharmaceutical companies that develop cures for baldness. Doctors who perform transplants gain. Wigmakers gain. Psychiatrists gain. Who loses? When men lose hair, do they sometimes lose their wives or girlfriends, too?

Facts Become Phrases

As you have just seen, Newcomb's method requires you to identify the facts about your topic. Write each answer down without worrying about being creative. Just start listing information.

Next, try sayings, phrases, proverbs, or any other bits of traditional wisdom. In the list of facts, we noted that the source of balding is genes inherited from the mother—not the father. Try the headline "Balding—Not Dad's Fault After All." To illustrate this idea, you could photograph a bald man holding a hairless baby.

In the fact list under "weight," we noted that some bald men feel like jocks and others feel like jackasses. Think about twisting the emphasis. To suggest that bald men are not burdened by their hair loss, twist the line "Blondes Have More Fun" to "Balds Have More Fun." Now illustrate this line with a photo of a Telly Savalas-like character, bald and proud of it, surrounded by women.

Play Word Games

Now take the key words from each of the facts above and play word games with them. For instance, in describing the nature of a bald man's head, we listed the word "smooth." Smooth as a balloon, as a billiard ball, as a bowling ball. Imagine a bowling ball looking like a bald man's head. The phrase "Bowling, Anyone?" could evolve into a photo of a bald man with his head in a rack of bowling balls.

From the editor's original working title, "Are You Worried about Balding?" came first a set of facts about baldness. The facts led to plays on words and phrases. These sayings, puns, and double entendres produced visual ideas that could easily illustrate the story.

The final photograph, by the way, of the man's head lined up next to bowling balls, has since been shown to hundreds of editors, photographers, and others. The photo has never failed to bring the house down with appreciative laughter.

ELECTRONIC CUT AND PASTE

To create a surreal effect, you might want the picture's subjects to appear completely out of proportion—the mayor of New York towering over the Empire State Building, or a sailor carrying the *QEII* under his arm.

To do so, you might need to photograph each element separately and then combine them. If you cannot photograph all the subjects and props at the same time in the same location, remember to keep the light consistent for each image you plan on combining later.

For example, if the light appears to be diffused and coming from the upper-left-side of the scene, keep the same effect on all subsequent studio photos. Then, when you put all the elements together, the final picture will have natural-looking light that appears to be coming from only one source.

In today's high-tech age, you can scan in or photograph old images or new ones and electronically alter them freely. Once you
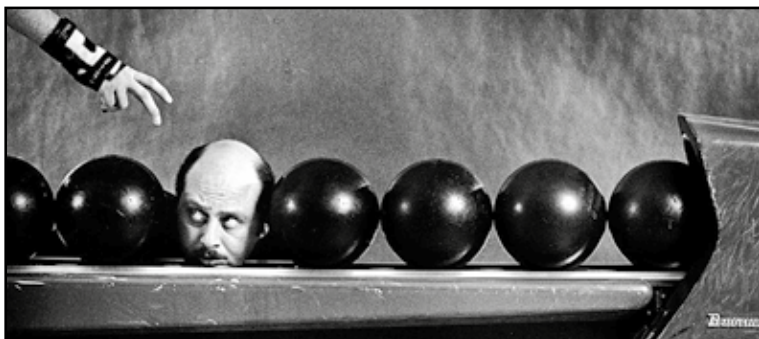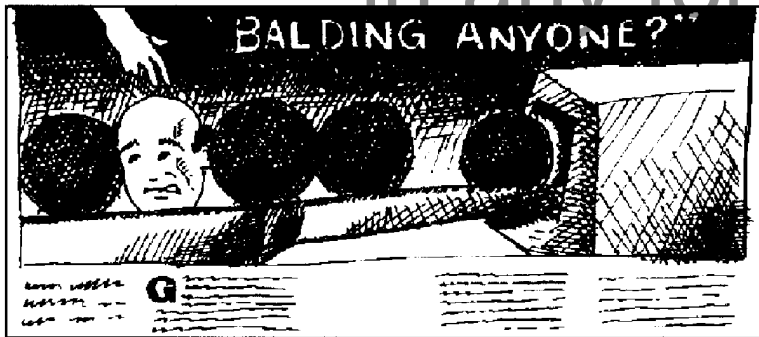
have digitized the pieces, you can easily change the sizes, colors, and left-right orientations of each separately. You can place the subject into another setting (see pages 383, 385, and 393) or take the head off one subject and put it on another (see page 387). Software can bring alive almost anything you can dream up.

Having shot or gathered the individual pieces for the illustration and scanned them, you can manipulate and combine all the parts seamlessly. Do beware that combining pictures in Photoshop can absorb much more time than originally planned. Even powerful fast computers can take a long time to process complex images.

STAYING CONNECTED
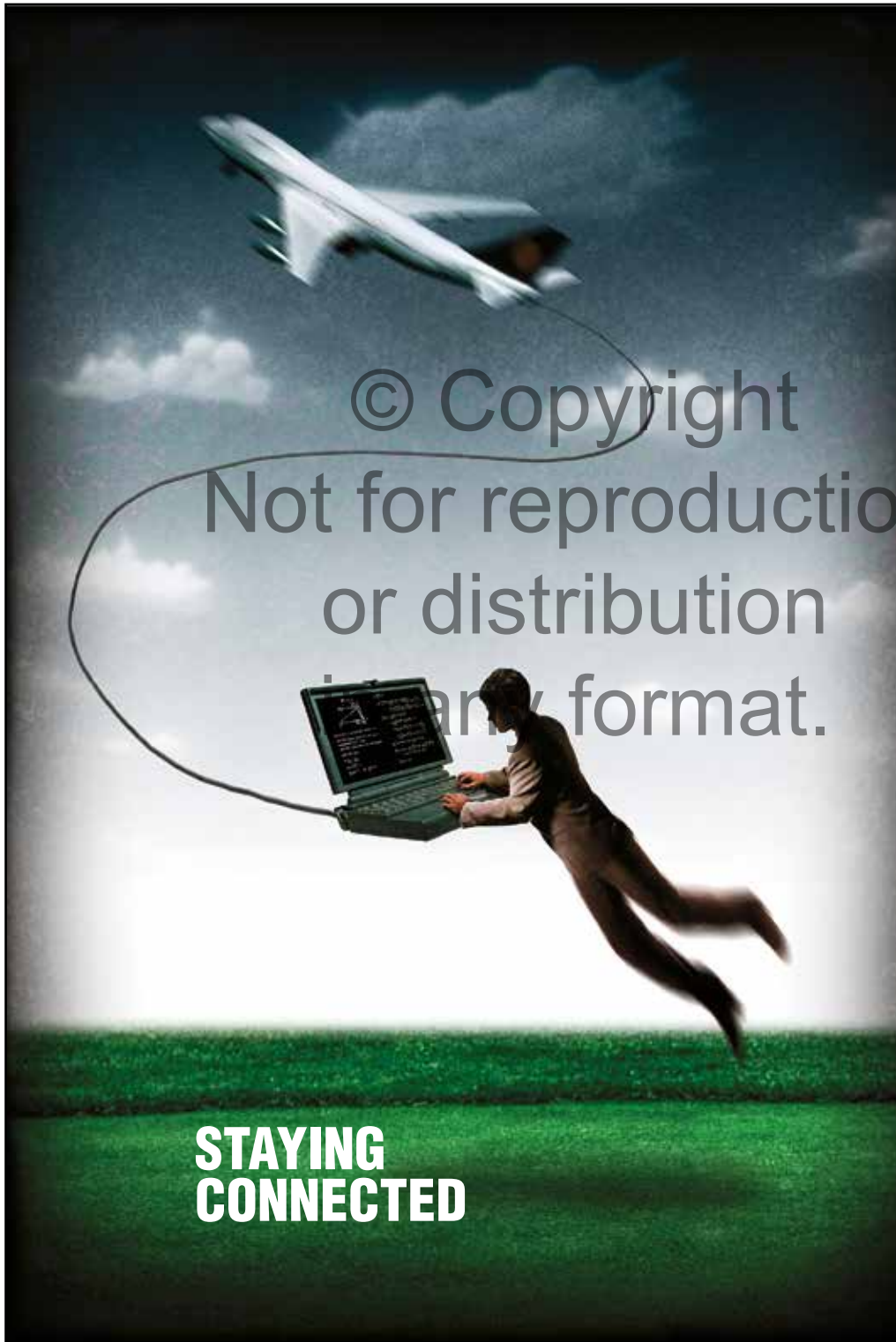
Business travelers using their laptop computers on airplanes are ubiquitous. To illustrate a story about the trend, the photographer combined three images to create a photo of a computer user tethered to an airplane. The photographer gave both the airplane and the man's legs the effect of movement by applying a computerized blur filter to that part of the image.
William Duke,
Fortune magazine

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I
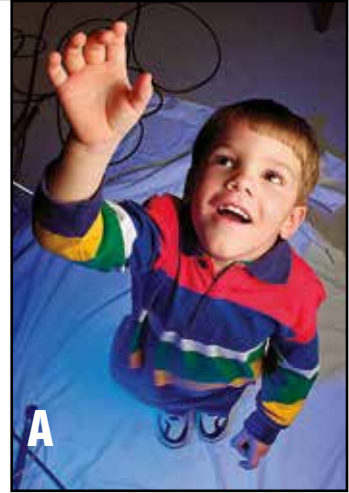
MOON PIES: COOKING UP A PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

To illustrate a story about the saucer-sized, chocolate-covered sandwich cookies known as a "moon pies," Jerry Wolford of the *Greensboro News & Record* combined seven separate images. In the studio, he photographed a child with his hand raised (A) and then later used the computer to digitally erase the background (B). To achieve the proper perspective, he also digitally stretched the child's image at this point. Also in the studio, Wolford photographed the cookie (D) and later super-imposed the moon's image (E) onto the cookie's surface using Photoshop.

With photographs of the earth (C), sun (H), planet (I), and star-filled sky (G) in the computer, Wolford was ready to assemble all the parts. He manipulated the size of the cookie and placed it so that it appeared to be in the child's hand (F). He then added a dark area to the child's hand as if the cookie had cast a shadow. Using Photoshop, Wolford was able to seamlessly combine all the elements into an eye-catching final image.

Jerry Wolford,
Greensboro News & Record

DO NOT INFRINGE COPYRIGHTS

One word of caution. Copyright protection extends to "found" images in magazines, newspapers, and on the Internet.

Unless the image is one you have shot or one that you have permission to use, do not be tempted by the ease of scanning it or downloading it to use someone else's image or work of art to enhance your photo illustration. Unless you find images with Creative Commons licenses that allow adaptations and reuse (see pages 462–463), doing so is illegal—regardless of how much you change the originals.

SOME WORK, SOME DO NOT

Some editorial photo illustrations cause the reader to say, "Dear, you have to see this. It's just too funny." Others fail to stop the reader at all or, even worse, they cause the reader to ponder the strange picture, wondering why anyone would go to the trouble to publish it.

Why do some photo illustrations hit the reader like a sledgehammer and others leave no mark at all?

WEAK PHOTOS

Sometimes the photo is weak. Everyday, readers see slick ads produced by high-priced ad agencies. Consequently, readers are accustomed to illustrations that appear flawless.

Poorly planned editorial photo illustrations look unprofessional. If the models look like they were grabbed out of the newsroom, if the set looks like it was a corner of the cafeteria, and if the whole production looks like it was thrown together between assignments, then the final photo will look amateurish.

For an illustration titled "Sitters Can Be a Pet's Best Friend," the photographer had a subject pretend she was reading comics to two German shepherds. The scene, however, took place on a beat-up old couch. The rundown setting distracted from the concept.

One publication ran a photo illustration showing a man's handwriting on a chalkboard with the words "American education stumbles." The foreground contained a few books sitting vertically on a desk. The strong headline in this instance was not supported by an imaginative visual. The photographer failed to find a symbol for American education or to play off the idea of stumbling.

How might you have conceptualized the headline?

POOR HEADLINES

While editorial illustrations often fail because of poor photography, they also fail because of poor headlines. Rather than "leaving 'em laughing," an unclear headline leaves readers scratching their heads in confusion.

Sometimes, even a clear headline is not enough, if it is clear but dull. Beware of headlines that start out "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Pizza" or "The Entire History of Bicycles." These headlines do not suggest a theme but instead lend themselves to an encyclopedia entry on the topic.

Sometimes the writer has provided a label headline like "Potatoes." A headline like this probably came from a story that had no theme or focus. Suppose the story had focused on the role of the potato in the Irish famine or had described the many ways to prepare potatoes. Either article would lend itself to a possible editorial photo illustration. If the story has no focus, however, the photographer is left to take a product photo of the potato itself, a vegetable all too familiar to most readers.

Sometimes headlines are too news-oriented. Photo illustrations work best with ideas, not events. Avoid headlines like "Stock Market Drops for Third Straight Day."

### HEADLINE AND PICTURE DO NOT MESH

Still, the headline might be great. The photo might be eye-popping. But if the two do not mesh, then the final package looks like an afterthought. Sometimes the reader gets the impression that the headline was written without the editor seeing the photo.

Or the page looks like the photographer never saw the headline or story before snapping the shutter.

One copy editor wrote this catchy headline: "When Marriage Seems Like War."

This headline and this picture leave the reader wondering just what the central theme of the story is. The headline, not the subhead, should tie the picture and the words together. A nicely executed photo loses its impact with a weak headline.
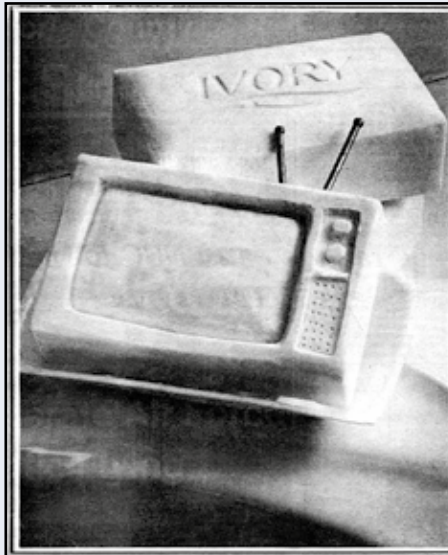
Small-screen hypnotism

Tuning in on TV soaps, see pages 18-19

A good image in this example was matched with a weak headline. A better headline might read "Picture Perfect Pears."

PEARS Homer sang the praises of this fruit of the gods

This illustration combines an unimaginative headline, "Super Bowl Snacks," with a picture that is too literal. Try thinking of some alternatives for both words and pictures.

SUPER BOWL SNACKS

The photographer produced a strong photo showing a couple having a highly stylized argument. The man's tie is blowing out behind him. Both models look like they are talking with their hands. The problem: they do not look like they are at war. The couple appears to be arguing in the wind, not battling. The words and pictures, like the married pair depicted in the photo, do not communicate.

WORDS OF CAUTION
DOCUDRAMA CONFUSION

Like editorial photo illustrations, docudramas are created situations. By mimicking reality, though, docudramas cause confusion in readers' minds. They are fake photographs that masquerade as authentic documentary images. Avoid these real-looking docudramas. Create photo illustrations that look unbelievable and cannot be confused with honest reportage.

Look at the images illustrating stories about "Latchkey Kids" on the opposite page. Is it not conceivable that a photographer could have happened upon a child sitting on the front steps of his house, as depicted in the top image? The picture looks like a candid but in fact is a docudrama. No reader, however, would mistake the bottom photo illustration, of a child dangling from a keychain, as real.

Even with the words "photo illustration" published beneath the picture, photographers should avoid docudramas. Docudramas detract from a publication's credibility. The reader should never have to ask, "Did that picture really happen that way?"

The job of the photojournalist is to show the world as it is, not as the photographer imagines it is. True editorial photo illustrations, by contrast, add to the reader's understanding and can even add a little fun. A picture should either be real or so outrageous that no reader is fooled. Do not leave the reader in the twilight zone of the docudrama.

PROBLEMS IN PLACEMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

Imagine for a moment a newspaper that sprinkles its editorials and analysis—unidentified—throughout its pages, including the front page. How would a reader, accustomed to the straight news on page one, know where fact ends and interpretation begins?

Failing to identify contrived photographs is every bit as serious as failing to properly identify written editorial comment—and playing editorial photo illustrations on the front page or alongside documentary photographs is as questionable as mingling editorials with unbiased news stories.

While newspapers prior to the Civil War did not hesitate to mix fact and opinion on the front page, most modern media outlets shy away from this practice and carefully limit opinions to a well-marked editorial page or clearly designated opinion column. The same stringent rules should be applied to editorial photo illustrations. Regardless of how unreal they may appear, they, too, should be labeled and segregated from straight photo reporting.

PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The following are practical and ethical guidelines for using photo illustrations:

- Eliminate the docudrama. Never set up a photograph to mimic reality, even if it is labeled a photo illustration.
- Create only abstractions. Studio techniques, for example, can help to make situations abstract—the use of a seamless or abstract backdrop, photomontage, or exaggerated lighting. Contrast in size and content, juxtaposition of headline and photo—all can give the reader visual clues that what appears on the page is obviously not the real thing.
- Clearly label photo illustrations as such—regardless of how obvious you may think they are.
- Never display photo illustrations on news pages. Restrict them to feature pages or to section fronts. Display them so that they are obviously distinct from news or feature pictures.
- If you lack sufficient time to do a photo illustration properly, do not do one. Suggest another solution. ■

DOCUDRAMA VERSUS CONCEPT PHOTO

Avoid docudramas such as the top one, below. They fool the reader. Instead, create a concept photo like the one at the bottom, which is so abstract that no one will mistake it for real.

DOCUDRAMA
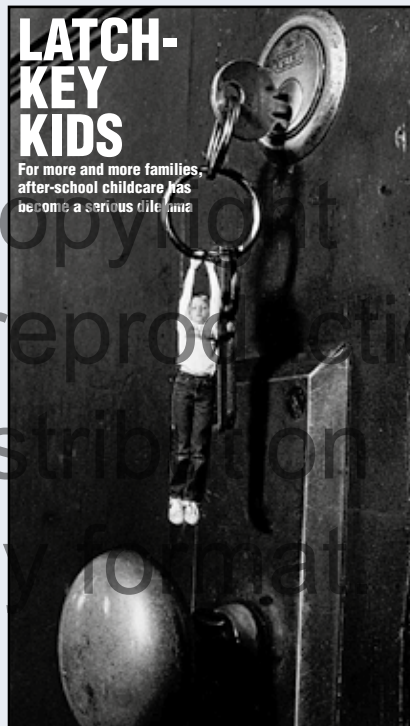
EDITORIAL PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
Photo illustration by B. Jeff Breland