



# Distinctive Image

featuring...

Carl Soerens, FPSA, MPSA  
Temple, Texas



*Big man tackle*

This month the *PSA Journal* is featuring a very distinguished photographer who has been an active PSA member since 1985. **Carl Soerens, FPSA, MPSA**, is well-known in the Photojournalism Division (PJD) because of the many positions he has held in the division over the years and because he has frequently been listed in *Who's Who in Photography* as one of the top North American exhibitors in PJD projected images and prints. He served a term on PSA's Board of Directors as the VP for Publications, managing the *PSA Journal*, and is well known throughout PSA.

Carl's Star Ratings include Galaxy 5 in PJD, Galaxy 6 in Color Projected Image Division (CPID), and 5 Stars in both the Photo Travel Division (PTD) and the Electronic Imaging Division (EID). He earned his APSA in 1996 and his FPSA in 2012. In 2011 he was awarded his MPSA for achieving more than 1,500 acceptances in PSA International Exhibitions. But, Carl was not just collecting awards, he also gave back to PSA in many capacities: being a Study Group Commentator

for multiple groups in several divisions over fifteen or twenty years; judging competitions; being a Director of Star Ratings, Exhibition Standards, and *Who's Who* at various times; serving on committees, and writing news columns.

Carl became interested in photography when he got married and got his first camera in 1959. He shot slides with a fixed lens Zeiss camera, keeping a record of his family history and travels. His daughter and two sons, and eventually eight grandchildren, gave him plenty of photo ops. Then in 1985 he bought his first 35mm SLR camera and joined a camera club which was very active and had frequent critiques and competitions. That same year he joined PSA and started to enter exhibitions. His club was active in photojournalism (PJ), nature, and pictorial but he developed a real interest in PJ, which then turned into the main focus of his photography. His special interest in sports photography is evident in his action images.

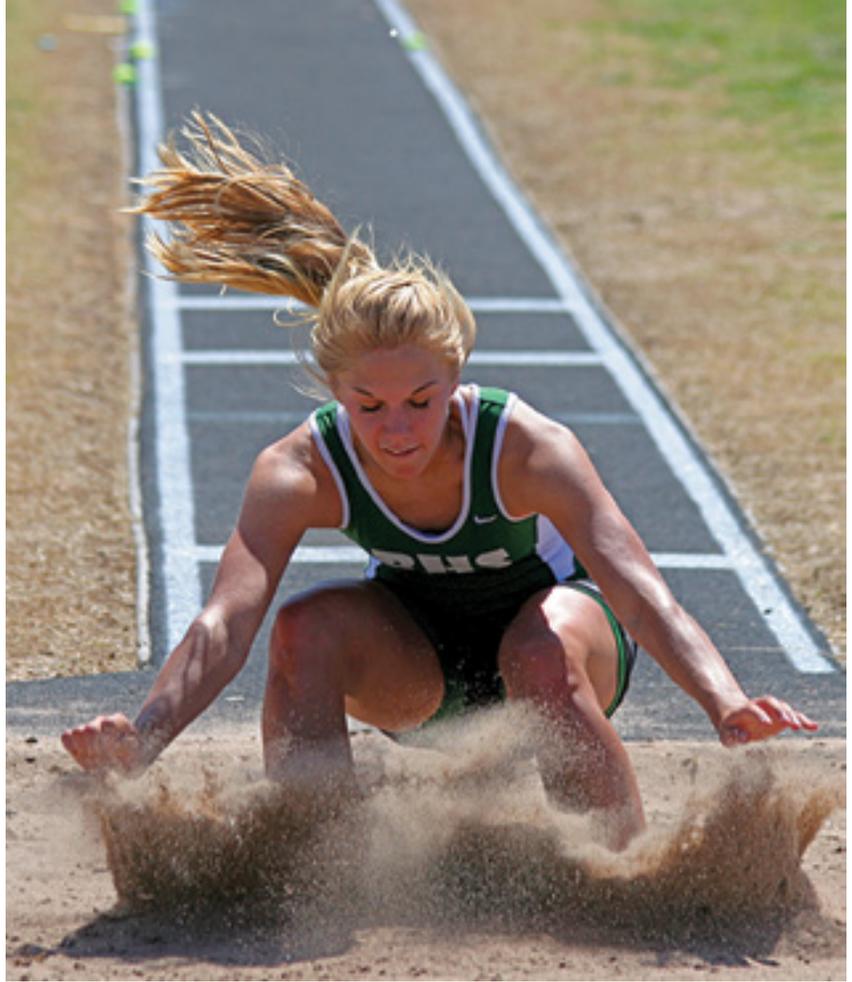
Carl earned a BA in mathematics from Central College in Pella, IA. In 1961 he joined the



*Give me the ball*

JC Penney Company as a Computer Programmer in the IT department in Milwaukee, WI. He worked as a Project Manager and Technical Specialist in Milwaukee until 1993 when he moved to the JCP Corporate Headquarters in Plano, TX, where he recruited and hired personnel for the corporate IT department. He retired in 1998, moved to northwest Arkansas for a few years, and then moved back to TX where he now lives in Temple.

For about twenty years, Carl and his wife, Elaine, worked as Volunteer Chaplains in the Texas state prisons. In that role he was able to photograph inside the prisons where cameras are not normally allowed. Carl and Elaine have retired from their chaplain positions but he now volunteers with a group that provides meals for poor and homeless people in his community. For years he has been photographing various events involving volunteer groups. He then donates the



*Ponytail landing*

photographs to the groups for their websites and promotional materials.

Carl has put his long-standing interest in photojournalism to use for the good of his community and his images in this article provide examples of his talent.



*Safe at 2nd*

## Technique

I have not been in a position to have sideline passes in order to be close to the action for Pro or major college sports, so I decided to concentrate on amateur and high school sports. I study major newspaper sports pages to get ideas for my own shooting. When I attend a major sport event, I find myself watching the photographers and where they position themselves in various situations. I try to use that knowledge to shoot my images.

There are a variety of sports photo opportunities in every community. I check out local parks and fields on weekends to see what is happening. There are youth soccer and football teams along with Little League baseball. I have also found club sports, such as rugby, where you can get up close. I read in the newspaper a few years ago that a Senior Olympics competition was scheduled in a nearby city. I was able to get easy access to the field to shoot Track and Field events. Many high schools and colleges provide easy access to minor sports like track meets and baseball/softball.

When shooting youth football or soccer, I try to find a coach or a league official and explain that I do this as a hobby and offer to share my photos with the league. This way I have permission, so when a nervous parent asks me who I am I can say "Coach Jim said it was okay." I usually offer to send photos to a coach or parent, if they give me their email address.

Whenever shooting, I try to eliminate background distractions. I look for a position where the background is the least distracting. At one of the football fields where I shoot, one end of the field has a parking lot and the other end has a row of trees, so I shoot from the end zone toward the trees. Another way to avoid distractions is to fill the frame to block out the background or shoot from a low or high angle so the background is sky or the field.

I want to show emotion in the players' faces, not just a portrait. I try to know a sport, so I can anticipate the action. For instance, in softball if a runner is on 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base, I line myself up to take a photo at home plate if a player scores.

My primary lens for most sports is my 70-300mm IS lens. The stabilizer lens allows me to shoot most situations handheld. My standard setting is f/5.6 at a fast shutter speed. The speed I shoot at is dependent on the sport. I shoot with a Canon 50D. A motor drive is essential to catch peak action. I enter my images in PJD International Exhibitions, so I only do limited sharpening and cropping in post editing, since major adjustments are not allowed in PJ competitions.



*Muscle strain*



*Quinton hurdles*

## Artist Statement

### Carl Soerens, FPSA, MPSA



People photography has always been my main interest. I also enjoy shooting travel, scenic and nature. My goal is to show emotion or something unusual to create an interesting image.

I attempt to find a different viewpoint of anything I photograph, finding photographs where they are not obvious. After shooting slides for all these years before converting to digital, I still attempt to create the image in-camera and do a limited amount of Photoshop editing. I don't shoot primarily with competition in mind, but rather try to craft an image that will be pleasing to me and my family.

Sports are an important component of people photography, but I enjoy capturing people in all situations. Portrait setups don't interest me. I am looking for candid situations, "capturing people being themselves," as Alan Funt said about "Candid Camera." A rich environment for that is street shooting—street entertainers as well as those watching them. If there is a parade in town, I go to the staging area to photograph people getting ready for it and interacting.

I don't do weddings. I tell friends that I won't take the formal pictures, but I will take a lot of shots at the reception and donate them to the bride and groom. I am strictly a hobby photographer; I never intended to make money with my photography and I have achieved that goal.

*Photos © Carl Soerens, FPSA, MPSA*

Any mention of products or services in this article or anywhere else in the *PSA Journal* does not constitute an endorsement or approval of those items.



*Foot to face*