

# STANLEY LEARY

People & Location Photographer

[www.StanleyLeary.com](http://www.StanleyLeary.com)

Understanding the culture

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Give Stanley a call for your next project at 770.998.3504 or email him at [stanley@stanleyleary.com](mailto:stanley@stanleyleary.com).

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## Understanding the culture

According to Mark Twain, "America and England are two great nations separated by a common language."

He was right. For many Americans arriving in England it's a huge cultural shock to discover that American English can be vastly different from English English.

When we think we fit right in and don't stand out from the natives is when it's easy to make some simple mistakes there. (Don't ask for a "to-go" order at a restaurant, it's a "take-away" order.)



July 4th celebration in Panama City Beach, Florida.

The most successful business people try to win and hold clients for the long run not just close a sale. If we focus on selling a product and just finding a one-time buyer we are focusing on the short-term. Like the missionary who thinks she has just "converted a soul" and not learned the culture it's a shortsighted approach to life.

Many successful people I have encountered are collectors. They may collect baseball memorabilia or classic cars or

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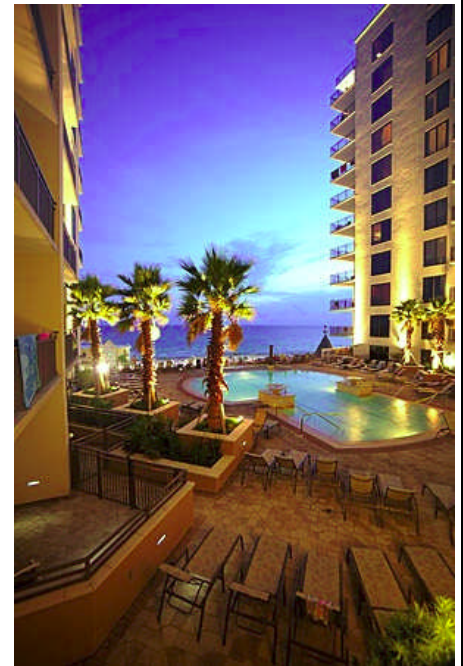


**Mother and daughter in Burkina Faso, West Africa.**

Lately, I've been reading about Autism. Asperger's Syndrome is a type of Autism where language skills are somewhat higher than other types of Autism. Many people with this diagnosis are often found in higher education as professors. They have the ability to lock in on a subject and stay focused. In the movie "Rain Man" Dustin Hoffman showed us the savant aspect of Autism with his ability with numbers. He also showed another aspect of Autism - being clueless about things around him.



art. They enjoy finding something and holding on to it. I think this is also how they feel about people. They enjoy "collecting" them and keeping them around. They are interested in developing a relationship, not just a transaction.



**Condo in Panama City Beach, Florida.**

In some cultures it is rude to immediately jump to the transaction or point of the visit. You must spend time with a cup of coffee or tea, talk about families and complete other cultural necessities before getting down to business. Most cultures reward those who develop relationships and not just transactions.

I believe if we focus on the people and connecting with them the rewards will follow. However, I believe focusing on

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**Market in Ticul, Yucatan, Mexico.**

As a photographer I study people and how they act and react to all sorts of things so that I can photograph them and show who they are. As a result I have, over the years, become an armchair sociologist. I'm fascinated with people's behavior, especially within groups.

I have watched missionaries in Africa "convert folks" only to find out that the locals were just being kind and didn't want to embarrass them. These missionaries were used to how people respond in their culture "back home" and not aware of the foreign culture.

In parts of America people are extremely polite. It's difficult to know where you really stand with them. In other parts of the country people don't hold back their feelings and unless you are accustomed to this behavior it is easy to take it too strongly.

Sometimes your best friends will point out your worst faults, yet your worst enemy is always pleasant to you.

the rewards is the surest way to failure.

It's easy to tell the difference. How many people have you met that made you feel you were important to them? How many made you feel that you were just a steppingstone on their path to their success?

It's not only good business to show an interest in people and their lives, it's an interesting way to go through life.

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