

# Golden Eye

The Oak Ridge Boys' **William Lee Golden** captures nature's beauty in photographs.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN  
PHOTOS BY WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN

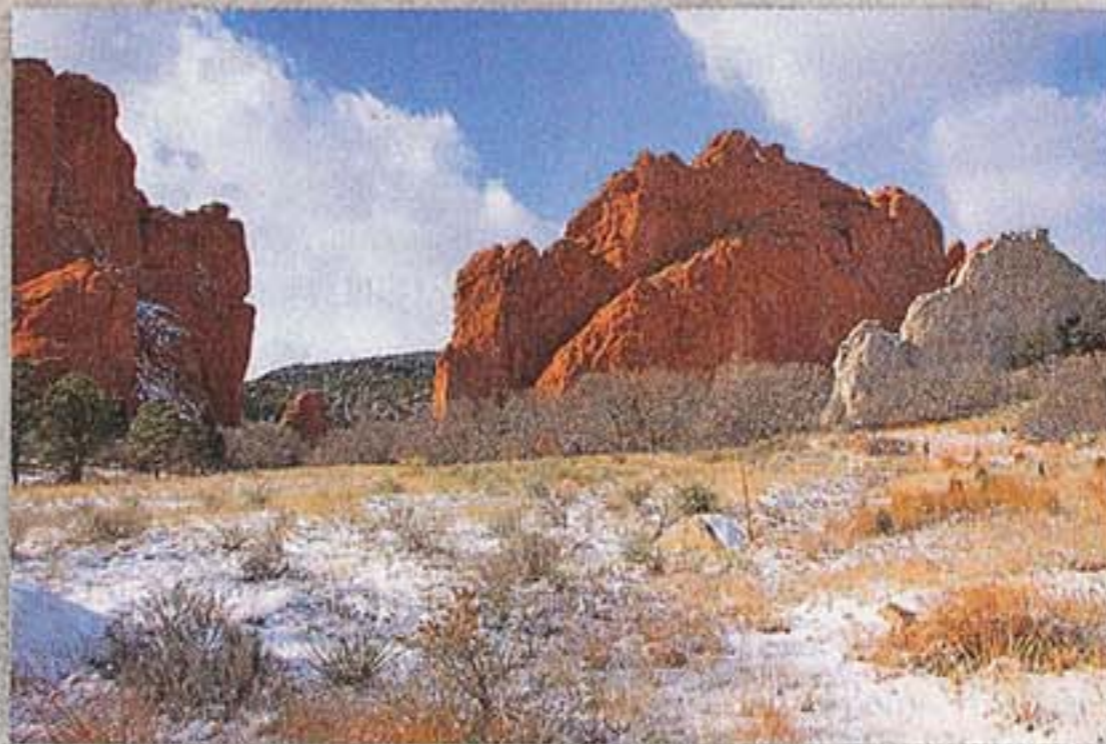
**W**illiam Lee Golden might not deem himself a Renaissance man, though the description would fit comfortably. The bearded baritone vocalist of The Oak Ridge Boys has expanded his artistic horizon in recent years to the world of landscape painting, and his works have been on display at such venues as the Nashville International Airport and the Tennessee State Museum. Lately, he's turned his creative eye to yet another visual pursuit: photography. "I got more serious about photography as an art form," he explains. William Lee shares some of his favorites here, but you can also check out William Lee's personal website, [williamleegolden.com](http://williamleegolden.com), to see some of his rich and detailed shots of Red Rock Canyon and the Valley of Fire State Park in Nevada, and other stunning locales.

## Landscape Inspiration

It was actually William Lee's fascination with landscape portraits that inspired his interest in photography. "I got started at this by taking photographs of landscapes to use for my paintings," William Lee begins in a soft, deliberate tone. "In the past two or three years, I have been taking

photographs during our Christmas tours and some of our regular tours along the way. I would use several photos as a reference point for the landscape paintings. I would shoot different spots of the same area and I would also shoot down at the landscape if there were bushes or flowers in the foreground, to get a better look at the subject." After he finished shooting, William Lee would head back to the hotel, run through the photos stored in his camera and proceed to paint his landscape portraits from the photographs.

Not that he would finish them on the spot, however. By William Lee's own description, Michelangelo was a speed demon in comparison. "I'm a very slow painter," he says matter-of-factly. "Almost all of my paintings are at least started on the road, because I have all day to concentrate on something. I take my supplies to my hotel room, get my easel and brushes and set them up near the window in the hotel room and that becomes my studio. It usually takes me about three months to finish a painting because every day is not always conducive for it. But at the end of the year," he adds with a measure of satisfaction, "I have two or three paintings that I normally would not have."





To see more of **William Lee Golden's** photo blog, go to [CountryWeekly.com/go/wlg](http://CountryWeekly.com/go/wlg).

"For me, photography is really about capturing the beauty of the world we live in," says The Oaks' William Lee Golden, shown here in Red Rock Canyon, outside of Las Vegas.

## WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN CONTINUED

### Picture Perfect

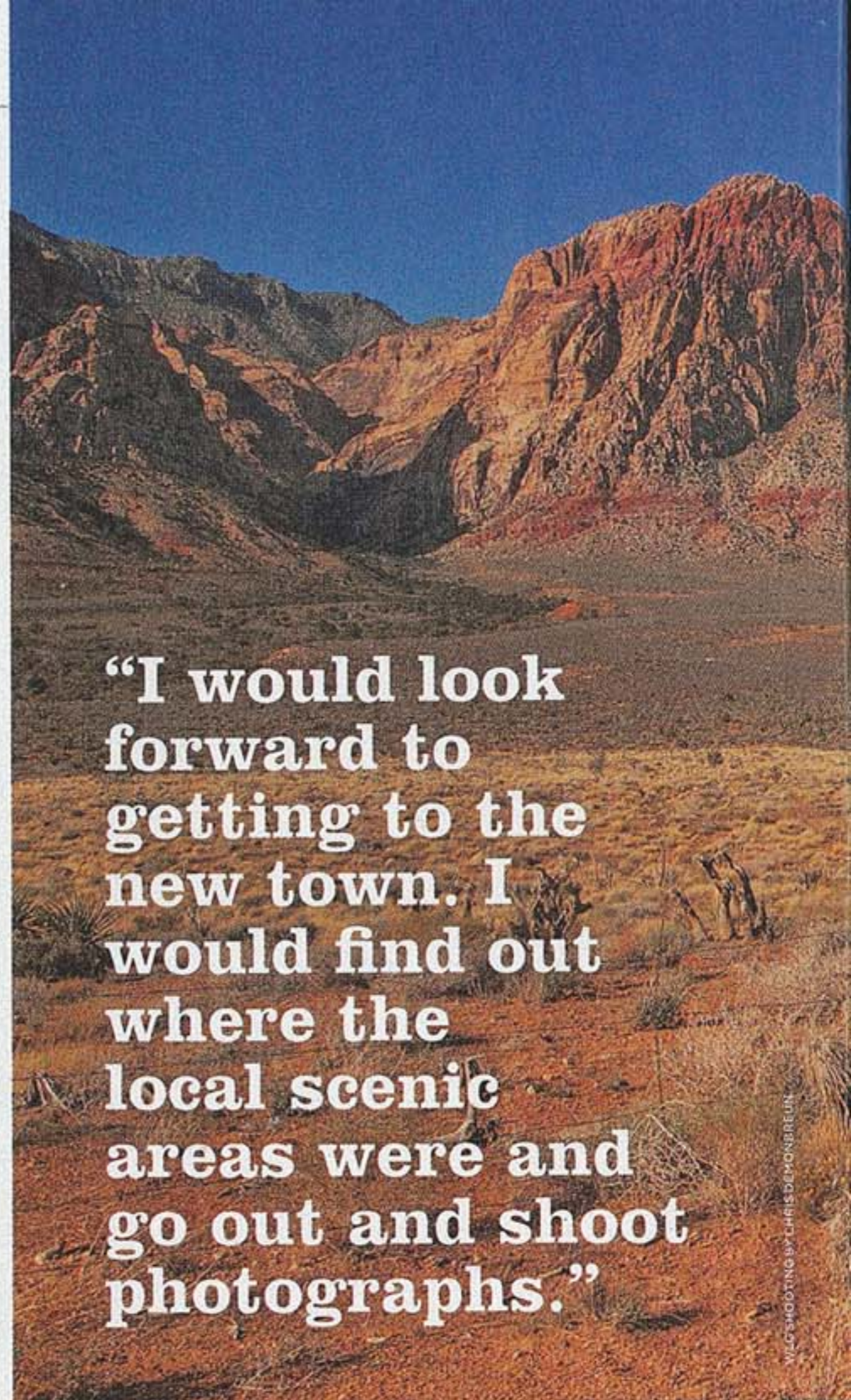
Photography provided a much more instant gratification, as William Lee discovered. He could shoot his subjects and, in relatively little time, post them to his website photography blog. “I bought a computer strictly to input my photography,” William Lee says. “I had to have people help me load them in until I was able to learn all that myself. I document what each place is and all the events surrounding that location.”

It’s a passion that he pursues with considerable vigor. “I know last year when we were out in the West touring, I would look forward to getting to the new town. I would find out where the local scenic areas were and go out and shoot photographs. I would then pick out the photos I wanted to blog for the day and put those on the website.” The response was greater than he ever anticipated. “It was amazing,” William Lee says in a low-key but obviously pleased tone. “People would tell us that they couldn’t wait for the next day or the next show so they could see more photographs.”

A few of William Lee’s favorite scenic spots include the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, Colo., and, not surprisingly, Mount Rushmore. “I also liked Deadwood, South Dakota, where we played last year,” he says. “We had a couple days off between there and somewhere else and each day we went to a different place. That is just a beautiful, historic area.” Lately, William Lee has corralled a couple of the group’s crew members to share his passion for all things visual. “They are getting more into photography,” he reveals. “It’s great to have them along.”

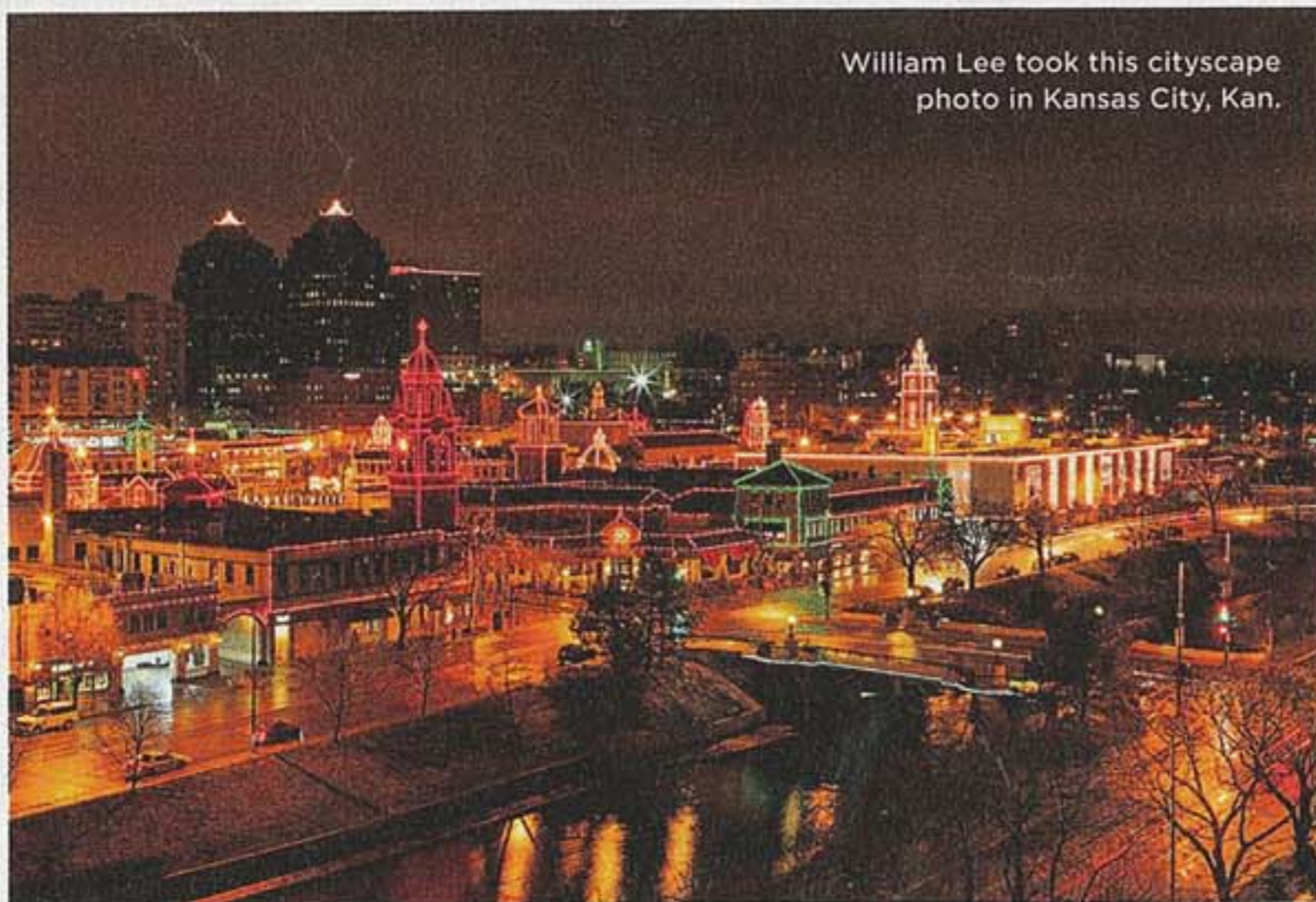
### A Golden Book?

William Lee admits that with his growing number of photos—more than 40,000, he estimates—the website

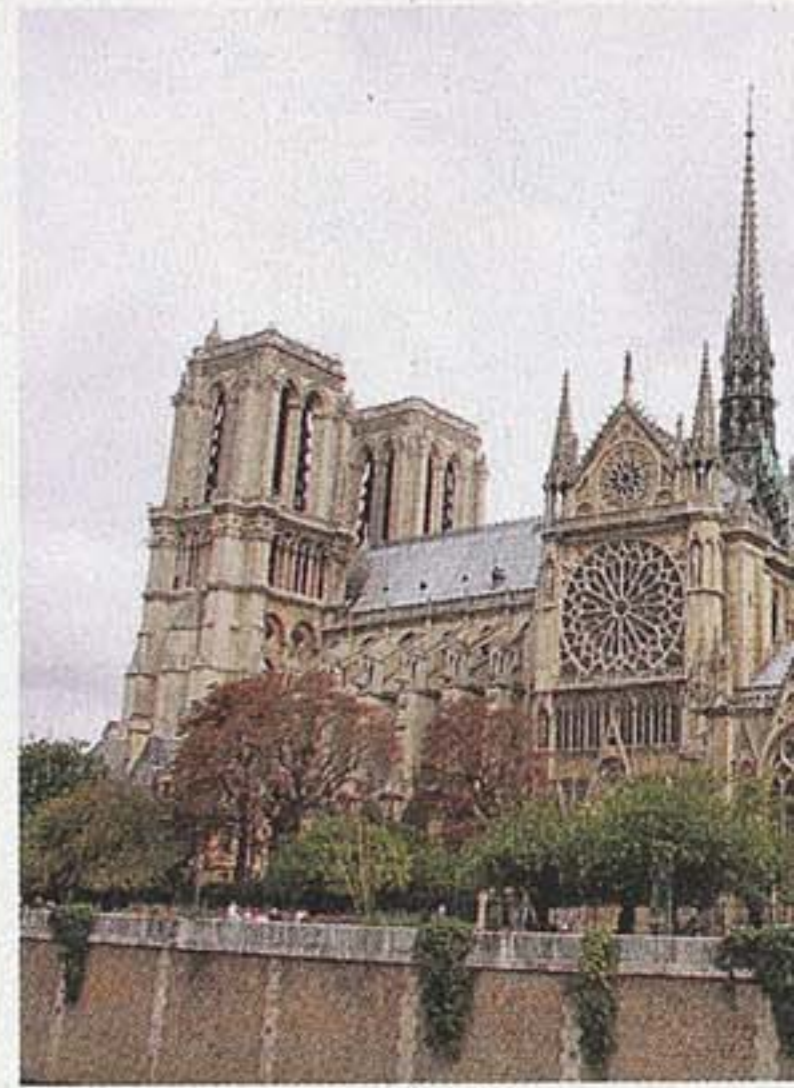


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WLC SHOOTING BY CHRIS DEPOWREUN



William Lee took this cityscape photo in Kansas City, Kan.



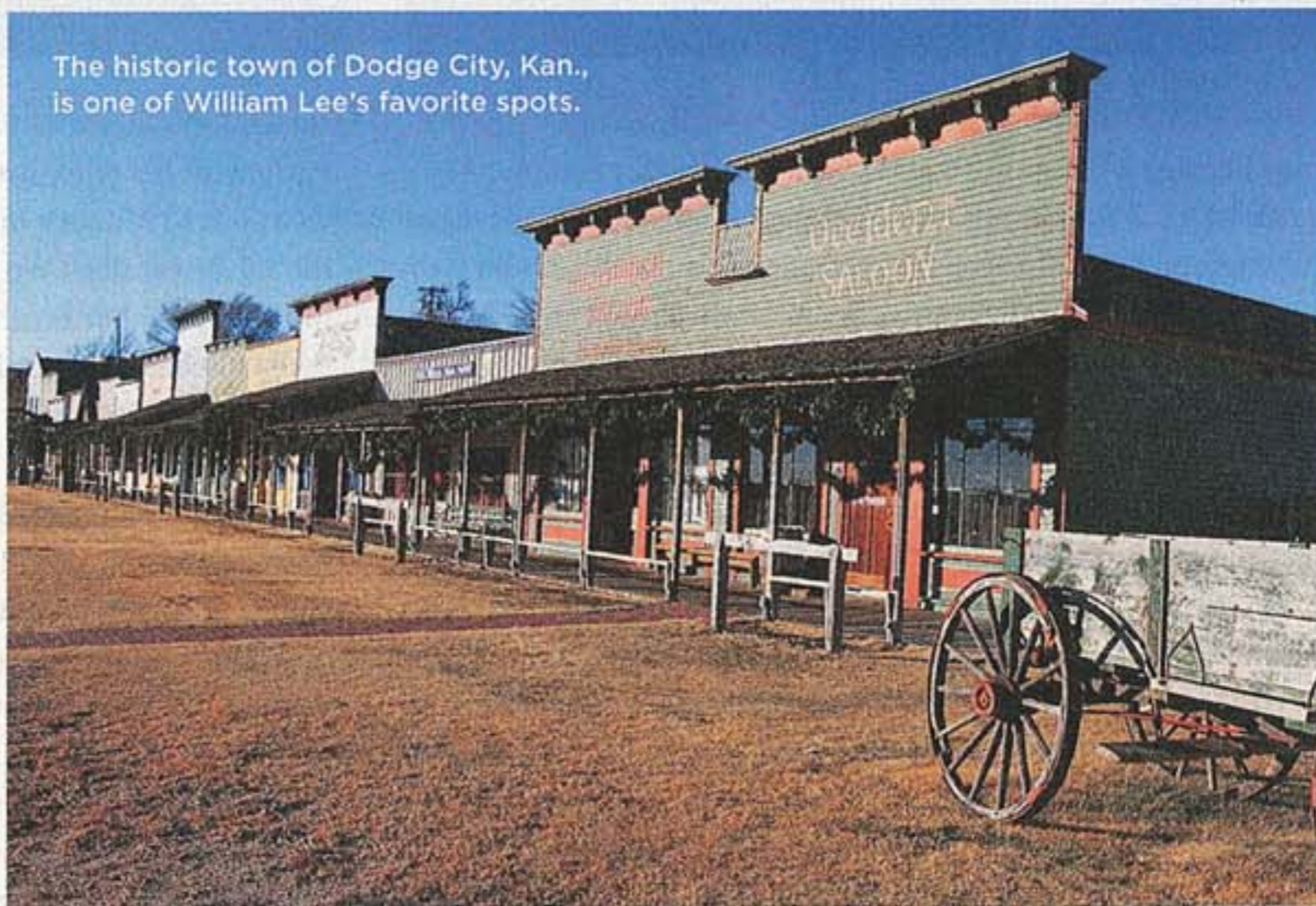
William Lee expanded his interest in photography to help him with his landscape painting.



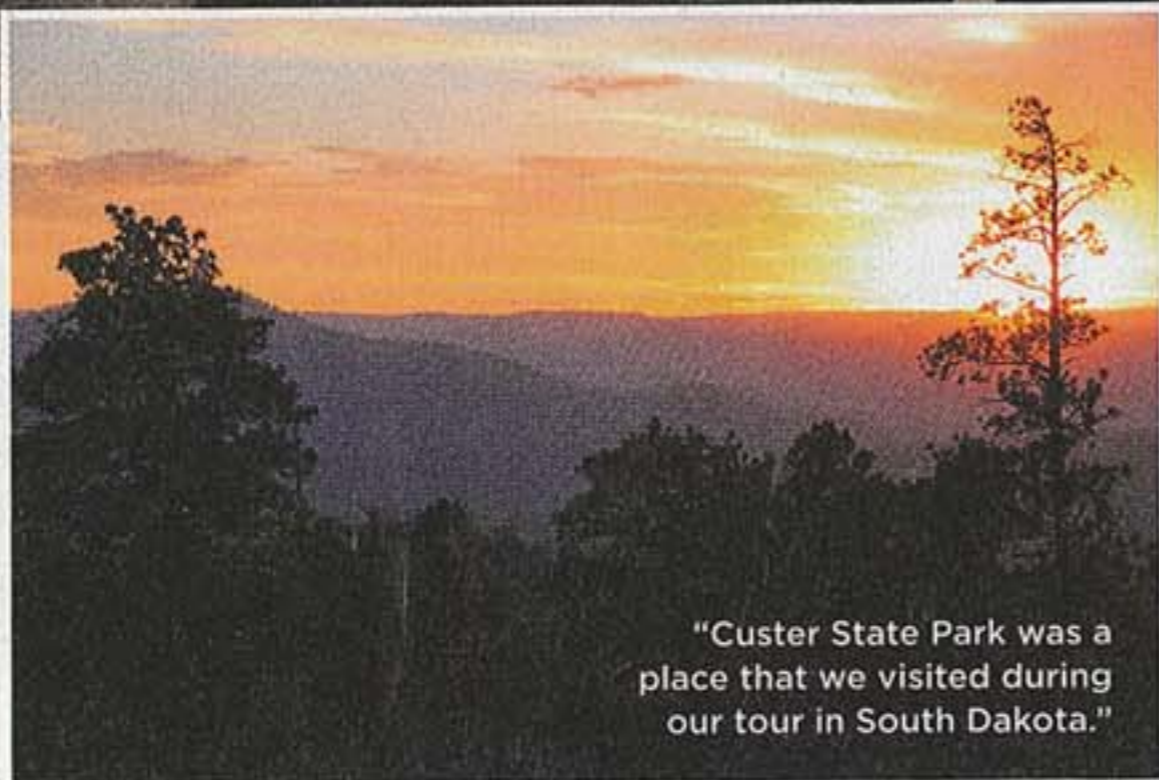
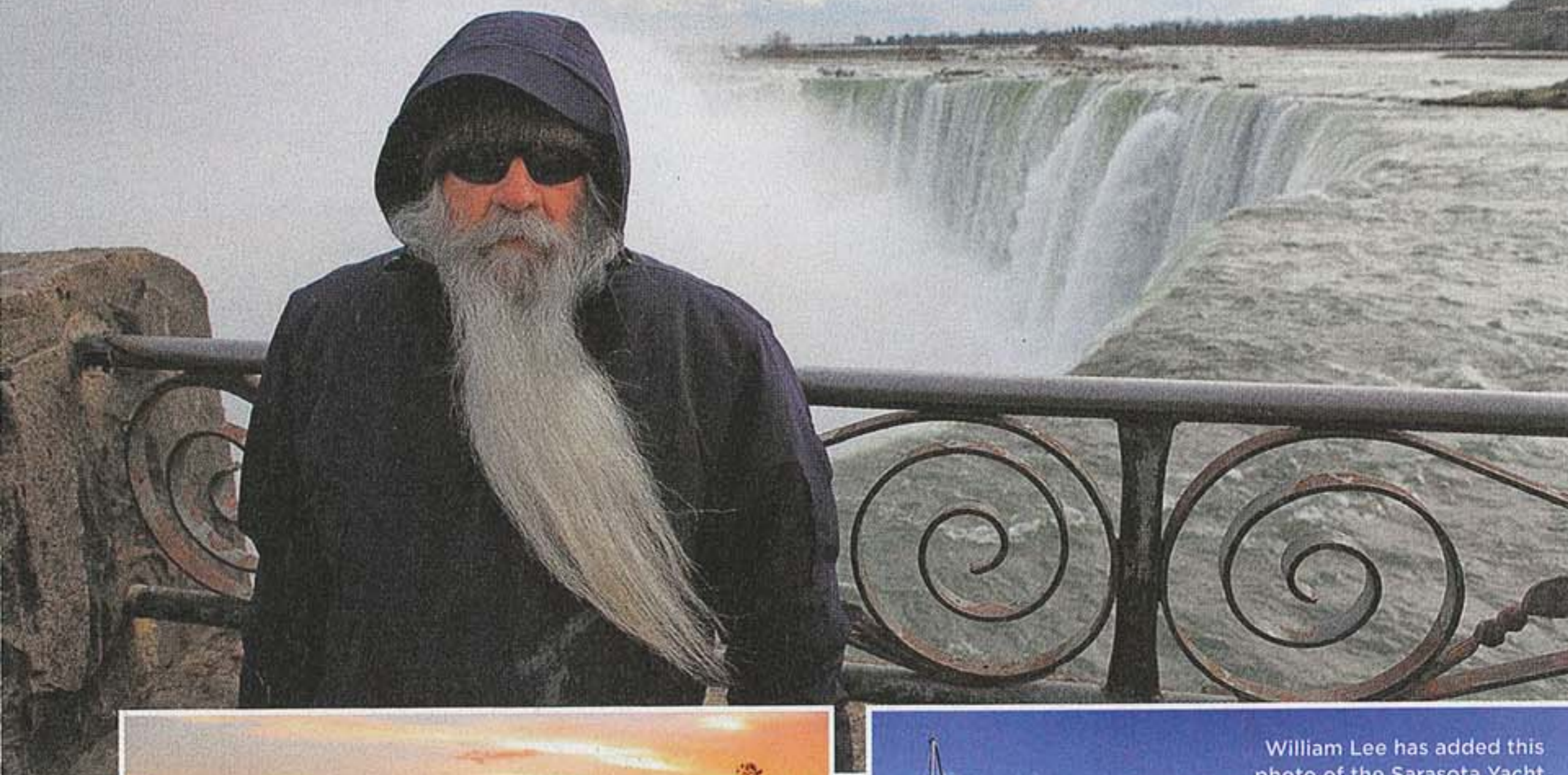
William Lee captured the stunning expanse of the Palace of Versailles outside Paris in this photograph.



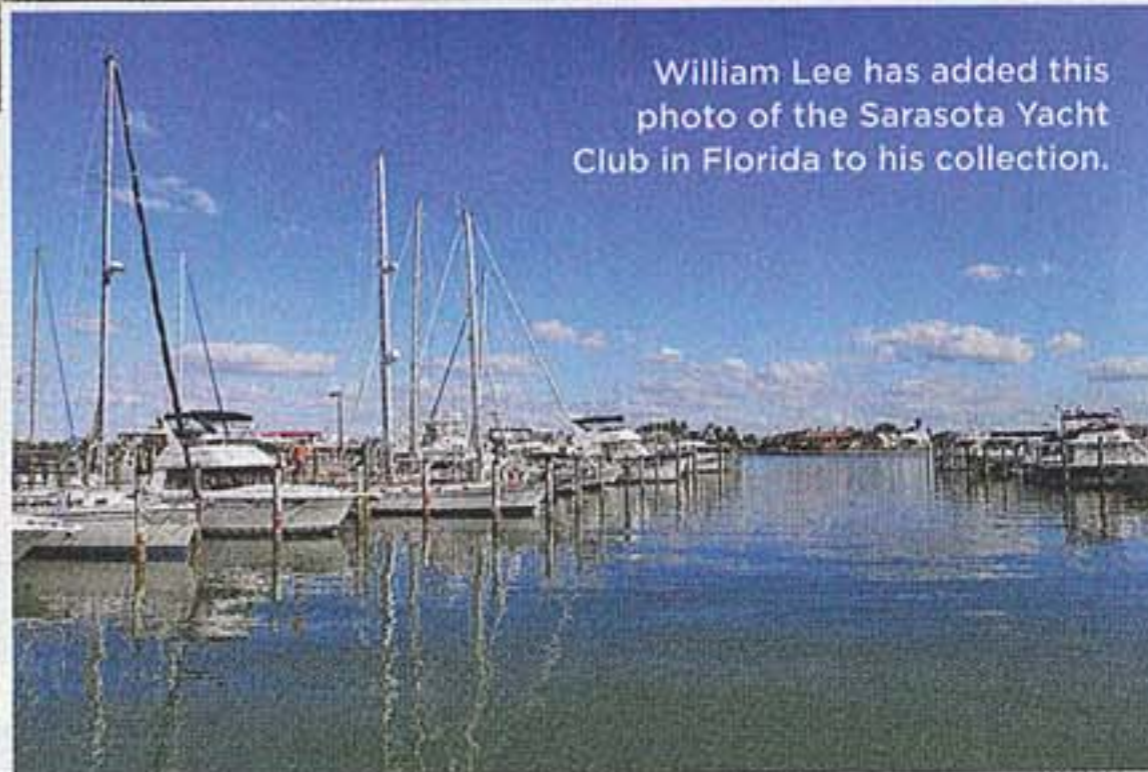
The historic town of Dodge City, Kan., is one of William Lee's favorite spots.



William Lee is the subject of this photo, taken at the famed Niagara Falls.



"Custer State Park was a place that we visited during our tour in South Dakota."



William Lee has added this photo of the Sarasota Yacht Club in Florida to his collection.

### WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN CONTINUED

may become a bit jammed and overwhelming for visitors. As such, he's contemplating putting together a book of his favorite photographs that fans can enjoy at their leisure. "I've been going back through about four or five years of my photography," he says. "Most of them are landscapes. But I remember a few from the coast of Oregon," he adds with a slight chuckle, "where I ran into this lady in a wedding dress and she had the guy with her. I became one of their wedding photographers. They pressed me into duty, you might say."

The pictures would undoubtedly produce a lovely book, but for the moment, his website remains the primary viewing point. "I've been playing around with different ways to show them," William Lee says. "Maybe I can put my 100 favorites on there for a while. Or each week, I could show a new location." The proposed book project might encompass his photography from all around the globe. With the Oaks, he's been able to tour

some of the famed cities in Europe and once spent a week in Paris with his wife, Brenda, and their son, Solomon. "We went out to Monet's home and garden and I shot some things there," he recalls. "We also went to Versailles, which was magnificent. Another favorite spot was the Virgin Islands. It just takes me back to see all these beautiful photographs," William Lee says. "That is why I've been thinking really hard about a book project."

Even at a cursory glance, the sharpness and detail of William Lee's work would seem the products of a trained professional. But he reveals that he's never had a lesson or any sort of formal classes. "I learned mostly by trial and error," he says. "I think it's all about having an eye for composition." An appreciation of natural wonders is also a must. "For me, photography is really about capturing the beauty of the world we live in," William Lee says. "America is such a beautiful country. This has opened up a whole new window in my life." CW