

2020 Photo + Caption Winner #3

The Writing Initiative Award of \$100
2020 Photo + Caption Contest
Landscape/Vista Category

Nathan Morton, 2021



A brisk Saturday in the waning hours of the day in New York City atop Rockefeller Center is not a moment often thought to be captured. At this humbling height of 850 feet there are only a few things that one can do. One may choose to take a picture and capture this beauty that they may be experiencing for the last time in their lives. Some may reflect and ponder their own significance in this ever growing world. But on that

cold day with winter winds rushing through my hair, a feeling of tranquility wedged its way into my mind.

“Why do we insist on reaching heights that are forever increasing? Do we do it to escape the reality of life? Do we do it to rise above our past? Is it because we as humans can never be satisfied until we reach perfection in our work?” These are the questions I think to myself. You see, as a species we are driven to always one-up those who came before us. A son will strive to be better than his father, a student dreams of surpassing his master, and just as day will replace the night, what we accomplish will one day be made obsolete by the generations to come. Photos often do not do justice to the scene that they tried to capture, and this is no exception. From where I stood, I gazed down upon the world in awe, cars and people were but mere specs before the vast skylines of the life work of thousands if not millions. But the feats of those were simply impermanence. Buildings, once record-worthy, now stood dwarfed by the brilliance of the Freedom Tower. So from my perch I was once again led to ponder. “Why is it that we work so hard in this life, to attempt to leave our mark on the world when it will soon become second fiddle to the next big thing.” And then as I fell deeper and deeper down the rabbit hole, I realized that in time we will no longer be able to achieve these feats; that in time humanity will be gone, whether it be by plague, famine, war, or some other ungodly power; that we will all one day be gone. And in that moment it came to me. We do these things because we will one day be gone. We strive for greatness in the little time that we have because our time is limited. If we take the impermanence out of life we are left with no beauty in the world. Because one day at the end of time, all will not have been for naught if we achieved our dreams in our percentile of that which is all.