

History
Slow Exposures Photography Exhibition
2001-2006

Five years ago, in the winter of 2001, Chris Curry invited a group of women to her home one afternoon for a conversation. Brenda recalls that day this way: "Driving to Chris's home in the countryside near Meansville, with the wide open spaces, a farm here, a couple of homes there and pastures of cattle and horses, I was so impressed with the scene that I passed her driveway and kept on driving, seeing more photo opportunities. Everywhere I looked presented another breathtaking view." These women were transplants from other areas, as far away as New York and Paris, as close by as Atlanta, but they all had seen Pike and the Southeast with different eyes and different perspectives. And they had all chosen to make it their home. The talk soon turned to the recent news story of how our county and those surrounding it had been awarded the dubious honor of being the fastest growing counties in America. The desire to see the county grow and prosper was countered by fears of the loss of individuality, personalities, miles of fields and woods and gorgeous landscapes.

As we all know, we often take for granted what we have around us--in beauty and life. With the radio blaring and your attention on not spilling your hot coffee, that gorgeous 200 year-old oak tree you glimpse every morning on your way to work is often taken for granted until one day someone shows you a stunning photograph of that tree. Its image is captured at sunset, with cirrus clouds spread across the background, and you see what you have. It's times like this that we realize we have to slow down, stop and look in order to realize what's around that is worth not losing. And a photograph is a nice way to stop time and do just that.

So that afternoon, with those thoughts in mind, the natural progression was to create a photography exhibit. We would take a little bit of time each Autumn to stop and appreciate the beauty and history of the rural Southeast and, closer to home, our own Pike County.

The first year, 2001, was cobbled together using what knowledge could be borrowed or stolen as to how to put on a photo show. Amazingly, we cobbled together 131 entries and our judges, Jan Fields and Pat Hankins chose 72 for our show. The show was held in the Chandler Building in

Zebulon and it was hot. It was so hot. Still, over 350 people came and looked, and exclaimed how surprised they were at the caliber of work and the beauty of the photographs. We were so happy we threw in a Buttermilk Ball during the first weekend to celebrate. We offered over \$1,000 in funds to purchase several of the photographs in the show—the four selected images were the beginnings of a public collection that would be added to every year of the show.

Year Two was a bit better organized but to say we were still inexperienced would be a careless exercise in understatement. Predicting huge growth, we moved the exhibit to the R.F. Strickland Building in Concord and made the Ball a bit more refined. Susan Todd Raque, Lucinda Bunnan and Corrine Adams curated a strong and solid exhibit of 86 photos. Over 685 folks from all over the metro Atlanta area and beyond came to view the exhibition, purchase photographs at the first Silent Auction, and dance till dawn at the second Buttermilk Ball.

Year Three brought us John Bennette, a major photography collector and lecturer from New York (originally from Birmingham, Alabama) and Celina Lunsford, curator of the Fotografie Forum International, Frankfurt, Germany (and, originally from Tennessee) as our jurors. We made R.F. Strickland's our home and added a Sponsors and Collectors Soiree to celebrate those who have helped us to grow so successfully. Sponsors and photographers and judges and collectors mingled under the stars at Chris's horse farm. Over 80 photographers entered great work and 92 images from over 300 were chosen to grace the boards during the show. Black tie and formal dress topped off Year Three at the Cotton Ball held in Strickland's during the second weekend of the show.

In Year Four we were honored to have Julian Cox, curator of photography at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta and Debbie Fleming Caffery, a renowned and published photographer from Louisiana as our judges. They chose 67 photographs from a field of 385 submissions. We added a photographer's workshop, hosted by Ms. Caffery, which sold out. Its success has encouraged us that it is time to further grow the exhibit to include other educational opportunities. Our attendance increased to over 800 photo lovers and we were reviewed in the Atlanta Journal Constitution among dozens of other news and travel publications. In a nod to the rural setting, we held The Boll Weevil Hop, complete with great casual food and a rousing southern band that played on till the early hours of the morning.

This year is our 5th anniversary. Our judges are Birney Imes, a well-known photographer and chronicler of the rural South and Sylvia Plachy, a published photographer who has enjoyed numerous awards and has recorded New York City's diversified cultural life for many years. In addition to a workshop on collecting to be held by Mr. John Bennette, Dave Anderson of Little Rock, Arkansas will offer a two-day photographer's workshop on composition. The Sponsors and Collectors Soiree, the Boll Weevil Hop and the workshops and Opening Reception will be held on the first week-end of our show, September 21, 22, 23.

And, last but not least, the benefactor of all this good work is the Whiskey Bonding Barn in Molena. The show that began as a way to appreciate the visual landscape of our area has now begun to support its history and cultural heritage by saving our remarkable historic buildings. This remarkable structure is thought to be the only existing whiskey bonding barn in Georgia. Once it is renovated, it will serve as a gallery for our wonderful collection of photographs and a place to hold SlowExposures events. Please see the attached page on the barn.

We appreciate your interest and we hope you will want to join us in this great adventure.