

Jane and Joel Buchanan - world travelers and extraordinary photographers
(continued)

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on March 27, 2012)

In the last *Historically Speaking* column we focused on Joel and Jane Buchanan, long time Oak Ridgers and their world travels where they both took extraordinary photographs. They have shown these photographs widely and are recognized as excellent photographers, not just in Oak Ridge, but across both East and Middle Tennessee.

On Saturday, March 10, 2012, a photography sale was held and much of the proceeds went to the United Church Chapel on the Hill. Jane and Joel have also donated dozens of some of their very best and most favorite photographs to non-profits groups including Ridgeview, Daniel Arthur Rehabilitation Center, Free Medical Clinic of Oak Ridge, the Joy Baker Center in Knoxville.

I visited with Jane and Joel a few nights ago and their basement has a vast array of excellent framed photographs and I am sure there are some really good ones left, even after the very successful sale and donations. If you are interested in exceptional artistic photographic images, I would be pleased to help you arrange to view them if you contact me at 865-482-4224 or draysmith@comcast.net.

Now let me give you a bit more insight into this long time Oak Ridge couple who are now planning to move to Middle Tennessee. They are making this move with some trepidation as they are truly Oak Ridgers even though they both originally came from Middle Tennessee. Yet, their move, as with all other aspects of their life together is being treated as an adventure.

Both Joel and Jane graduated from Vanderbilt University with degrees in the field of Chemistry and both came to Oak Ridge to work upon graduation. However, they did not meet until they went on a blind date here in Oak Ridge. Both worked in their scientific fields when they first arrived. Joel as a Chemical Engineer and Nuclear Engineer and Jane as a Spectrographic Chemist.

Joel was enrolled in the prestigious Oak Ridge School of Reactor Technology and completing that program resulting in adding the credentials of a Nuclear Engineer to his Chemical Engineer status. He had graduated Vanderbilt as a Tau Beta Pi honors graduate.

Joel went on to co-found the Nuclear safety Information Center and the Nuclear Operations Analysis Center where he served as director. He edited the internationally acclaimed journal, *Nuclear Safety*. Highly respected internationally for his expertise in nuclear safety, Joel has received many honors, including an award for his work on the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.

He has served as President of the Camera Club of Oak Ridge and the United Nations Committee of Oak Ridge. He has also served as Chairman of the United Church Chapel on the Hill board and in various capacities of several other organizations, including the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association.

Joel retired in 1991 after forty years of service in his chosen technical profession. Rather than go the standard route of many by continuing working in his technical field as a consultant, he declared his intent to "turn the page" and begin a new chapter in his life. He surely did. However, the one role he retained for years was that of chairman of the Publications Committee of the American Nuclear Society .

In retirement, Joel and Jane intensified their mutual interest in travel and photography. They have remained extremely complimentary of each other's work, often finding that the recognition for certain

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images may even be given to the wrong "Buchanan" and they just let it go, seemingly pleased for the misplaced compliment regardless of who made the actual photo.

Jane, a spectrographic chemist by profession, worked for Union Carbide in that field and has also done technical writing for the United States Atomic Energy Commission which became the Energy Research and Development Administration which ultimately became the Department of Energy. Her career spanned all these designations.

While both Joel and Jane were highly successful in their technical careers with many significant accomplishments and achievements within their respective fields of endeavor, their love for travel and exceptional photographic skills have overshadowed their technical achievements in the eyes of most admirers of their wonderful exhibits of exquisite photographs...many awarded as best in class. Their low key and unassuming style belies their high degree of professional skill and untold numerous excellent photographs that have been awarded high honors.

In the early years, Joel was perceived by both Jane and others who viewed their photographs as "the photographer" of the family. Jane, always kept her camera at ready for family prints as Joel shot 35 mm slides exclusively and she wanted prints of family outings and adventures. Joel toted large quantities of camera equipment, Jane carried a small camera for "snapshots."

However, Jane's skill in photography demonstrated itself in a huge way after a trip to Egypt in 1989 that she took with Joel. They spent a month there and among many other photographs, she photographed the famous image of "The Sweeper" that truly launched her soon to be huge photographic career.

When Joel, whom she quickly tells anyone was her first photographic instructor, saw this image he said to her, "you should take that image to a professional, not to the local discount store for printing." That was a profound bit of advice as it served to turn Jane on to photographic excellence. She had been "taking pictures" since she was 11 years old, but never anything so exquisite as this. She was hooked anew!

I think the exotic culture of Egypt in which she became immersed in the month long stay there and the use of black and white images pulled the artistic eye from her early training and natural tendency to apply it to the photographic process and caused her artist at heart to resurface. She was now on a journey that would ultimately result in even more radical artistic expression. She became encouraged by the compliments paid her work and began to strive for even more artistic expression.

She began to pursue a serious education in photographic excellence from the University of Tennessee under Baldwin Lee and Dianne Fox to Arrowmont and numerous photographic workshops taught by well-known photographers in the United States and abroad. Jane had become very serious about developing her renewed interest in the photographic craft.

A few years later, in 1995, Jane completed editing LaReine Warden Clayton's books *Stories of Early Inns* and *Taverns of the East Tennessee Country*. This enormous and difficult task was made even more challenging when Clayton died. Jane was sad that she had not completed the work before the author passed away.

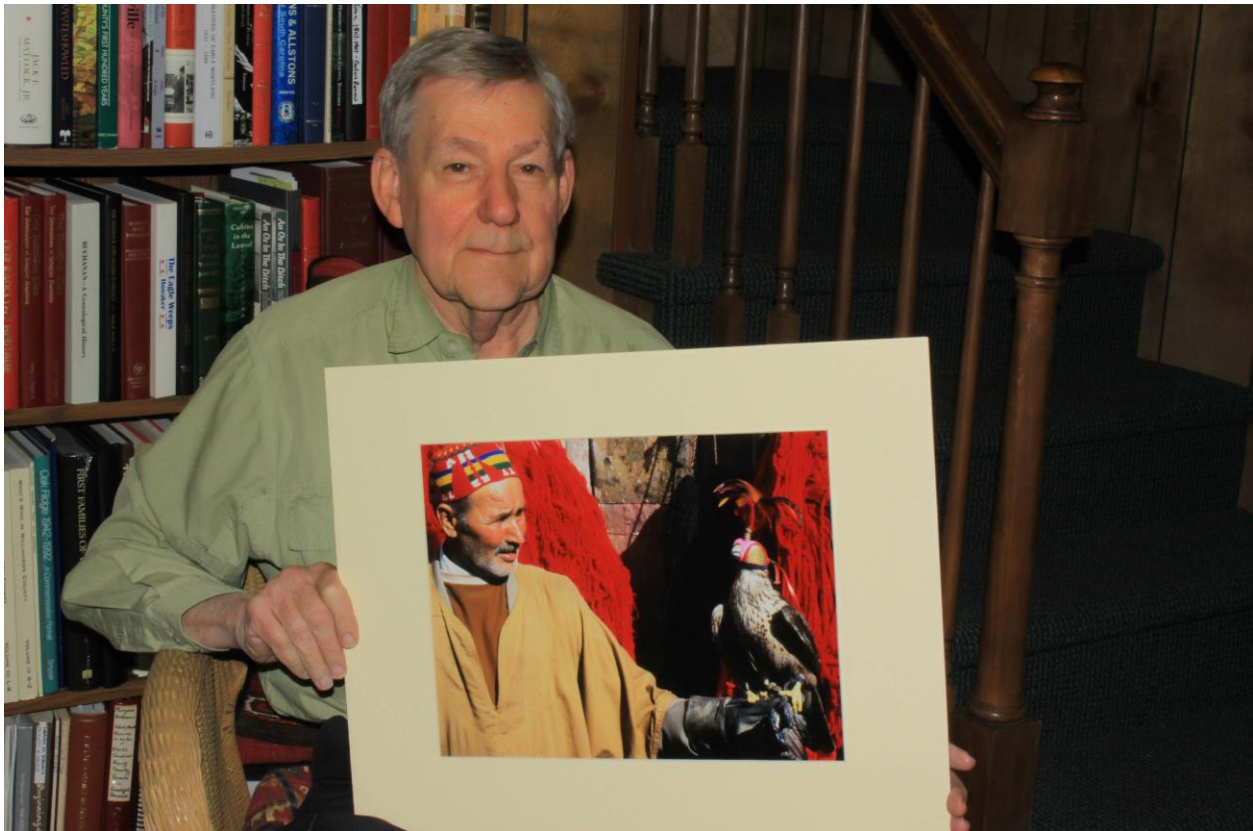
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The research she had done for the editing of these books and her natural tendency to photograph everything she researched resulting in her having more than enough material for a book of her own. I am pleased to own a copy of *Early Inns and Taverns of East Tennessee, A Photoessay*, by Jane Gray Buchanan, with a foreword by Baldwin Lee. It is an exceptional reference book for those interested in the early travels in East Tennessee that is a true pleasure to read and a joy to view the beautiful photographs.

Next we will explore the evolution of Jane's photography, her exhibits. We will also examine the constant supportive relationship between Joel and Jane as over the years they have gained much deserved recognition for their mutually developing talents and skills in photographic art and exhibit expertise.

I have come to admire them both more and more as I have done research into their quiet but commanding expertise. And they are both very nice people...as you who know them well fully appreciate.



Joel holds one of his many photographs made on their many travels

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Jane holds a favorite scenic image