

## *Jane and Joel Buchanan - world travelers and extraordinary photographers* (part 3)

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 3, 2012)

In the two previous *Historically Speaking* columns, we have looked at Joel and Jane Buchanan, long time Oak Ridgers, through their travels and exceptional photographs. We looked last week at how they came to be in Oak Ridge and started looking at what they have accomplished over the years.

We noted they are moving from Oak Ridge and are selling many of their really great exhibit quality images. If you are interested in exceptional artistic photographic images, I would be pleased to help you arrange to view Joel and Jane's high quality images. Just contact me by phone at 865-482-4224 or by email at draysmith@comcast.net and I will put you in touch with them.

Both Joel and Jane have shown their photographs in many venues over the years and have been recognized as excellent photographers by members of the Camera Club of Oak Ridge, their favorite forum for showing their photographs, and in other photographic forums as well. Many ribbons have been awarded them for prize-winning images.

Now we will further explore the evolution of Jane's photography and her many exhibits. You will also be pleased to learn more about the constant supportive relationship between Joel and Jane. This is something that I believe is admirable and a secret to their long standing success.

Although they might be competitors in photographic shows, I am convinced they never see that competition personally. Each of them are truly proud when the other wins. It is amazing to talk to them and see the manner in which Joel talks about Jane and Jane talks about Joel. Theirs is a relationship that has obviously grown through the years into a mutual admiration and a joint supportive love that is truly enviable. It is a joy to see.

As they have gained substantial recognition for their mutually developing talents and skills in photographic art and exhibit expertise, they have never stopped learning. I think that is another of the secrets of their much deserved success.

I have come to admire them both as I have done the research for these articles and have come to appreciate their skill and even more, their humbleness. Some of the photographs they have shown me are great captures resulting from being at the right place at the right time in the right light, but many of the images they have exhibited over the years are ones that have required much thought and preparation to achieve just the right touch.

One of Jane's accomplishments that I am most proud to own is the book, *Early Inns and Taverns of East Tennessee, A Photoessay*. I have researched the Emery Road and written about its history as the earliest road from this area to what is now Middle Tennessee. I have written about the early trails, the Emery Road being the earliest cut and cleared route, having been started in 1788.

The Emery Road came right through present day Oak Ridge (that is where the current Emory Valley Road got its name). The other main route, coming a few years later, but carrying many more settlers, was the Walton Road. Another early route was the Avery Trace. In some cases, these routes followed some of the same trails and the names have become somewhat confused over the years.

Many of the Inns for which Jane documented the history were located in upper East Tennessee. However, some, such as Campbell Station, Shields Station and the Morgan Tavern House, were located along these early routes.

Baldwin Lee, Professor of Art at the University of Tennessee, said of Jane in his Foreword to the book, "Jane Buchanan's photographs reveal far more than surfaces. Her photography is a complex process of weighing and balancing not only how the structure will reside in the viewfinder, but also how her

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knowledge of and feeling for the structure is being revealed. Her point of view reveals a profound sensitivity, knowledge, and affection for her subjects. The photographs made by Jane Buchanan for this book are clear, perceptive, intelligent, and sympathetic."

The book is an excellent reference work on early East Tennessee history and at the same time an exceptional photographic study of architectural design and detail. She was faithful to both the preservation of the history and the alluring shapes and shadows of these historical structures. She could even make a front door exciting as she did on page 59 with the 54" front door of Campbell Station.

Jane said of her continuing interest in art, "I had always been interested in art and even took a course in college when I was supposed to be focusing on science. My mother was an oil painter, and I also did some painting. I enrolled in several art classes at the Oak Ridge Community Art Center when our sons were young."

Jane continued, "Art and design have always been a part of my life, I suppose, and I always enjoyed 'taking pictures.' When I was twelve years old and found a camera at a bus station, I turned it in, but the owner didn't claim it, so it was given to me. I saved my allowance for film."

Wow, what insight into what has driven Jane's craft over the years. Her interest in photography goes way back, even if she delayed the pursuit of formal training and professional quality printing until later in life.

Jane held an exhibit in Franklin, TN, in August, 2000, where the news release stated, "See photography at its eclectic best! 'Painting With Light,' which opened July 1st at James-Ben: Studio and Galleries, is a fine opportunity to do just that...Buchanan uses her cameras with a painter's eye..."

She also included her most recent artistic variation known as "Impressionist Photography" in the exhibit. It was a key element of the exhibit according to the press release.

Jane's unusual approach to artistic expression has also been featured in Greater Knoxville Homes and Living magazine where Jennifer Bradford-Epstein notes that Jane was so fascinated by the new technique that "...she was inspired to produce a whole new body of work. They have become somewhat of a specialty for her. She uses the camera with a painter's eye and creates an effect very much like that of an impressionistic watercolor painting."

The intense interest in Impressionist Photography began, according to Jane, as follows, "I learned the technique on one of our photo safaris -- the one to Venice -- from Katherine Van Torne of Austin, TX, who was with our small group of photographers. She was actually a painter and had her work exhibited in art galleries back home, but she also enjoyed photography and came along on the trip to Venice.

"She was doing Polaroid manipulations of the famous Venetian sites --The Bridge of Sighs, etc.-- that reminded me of the paintings of the old masters. I was completely taken by the results of what she was doing, so she was kind enough to teach me the process, although she warned me that I would have to develop my own technique and that it would take time.

"The Polaroid SX-70 camera that we had at home was put to use shortly after our return to the States. Katherine gave me tips by email if I ran into trouble, but it still took me six months to come up with an image that I felt comfortable about having Thompson's enlarge. (They did the prints on heavy watercolor paper -- they were really nice, but the \$30 charge, which increased over time, for a 16" x 20" print forced me to be highly selective.)

Don't you just delight in Jane's discovery of this wonderful new artistic process and at the same time don't you just smile at her frugal nature regarding the printing costs. That is so like Jane...she and Joel don't

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mind spending what it takes to get to the most exotic locations in the world to take photographs, but closely count the cost of printing.

One example of the "Impressionist Photography" technique is titled 'The Red Door.' Jane has this to say about that door, "The Red Door" is one of the Polaroid manipulations. The great variety of windows and doors within a country, but primarily as a signature of a country, has fascinated me.

"Moroccan doors. even in small villages, are quite often colorful with panels of intricate design -- a matter of pride. Doors and windows with sunrise panels are quite popular in northern Russia, where there is little sunlight during the winter.

"The Red Door' was taken in Westport, Ireland, and to me is something of a symbol of the warmth and friendliness of the Irish people.

Jane described the technique to Dorothy seen of The Oak Ridger, in an earlier article on the subject, this way, "It is just not easy to do. Physically, you have to press hard, and it is hard on your wrist. Also, great care has to be taken in manipulating the emulsion to create the desired effect. It is easy to overwork it and ruin the photograph. There is no way to correct a mistake.

From the manipulated image a negative is made so the picture can be enlarged and printed. The finished product is something that causes debate when exhibited as viewers have a hard time deciding if the image is a photograph or a painting.

I hope you have enjoyed getting better acquainted with Joel and Jane Buchanan. It is a sad thing that they are leaving Oak Ridge. We lose not only two excellent photographers, we will miss the quiet dignity and humbleness of this fine artistic couple. Our loss is Middle TN's gain!



Joel and Jane - two beautiful people with tremendous talent

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The Red Door

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Impressionistic Photography: "The Red Door" - according to Jane, a perceived "symbol of the warmth and friendliness of the Irish people,"