

Lynn Freeny, photographer and friend

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of February 1, 2021)

In the Ed Westcott tradition of capturing exceptional photographs of Oak Ridge activities, Lynn Freeny has done that for us since 1992. His recent losing battle with cancer took him from us way too early. He was my friend and I miss him already.

Not only did he take outstanding photographs of routine activities and the people involved, he also had an exceptional intrinsic aptitude for capturing artistic scenes such as the rainbow over the Department of Energy's Federal Office Building which he posted as wallpaper on the doe-oakridge Flickr site. Lynn was an expert in his craft. Here is a link to his professional photography: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/>

Most of us who benefited from his coverage of our events just saw the journeyman efforts of Lynn plying his professional craft. We just saw him with a large camera bag hanging from his shoulder and moving his glasses up and down from his forehead to his eyes to check focus, framing and layout of photos he was taking. Photos that ultimately told the story, often in a single select image, to the public of what was going on at any given event in Oak Ridge.

Not to take anything away from Lynn's professional work as the official DOE Photographer in Oak Ridge, there was another side to his photographic skills and dedication to photography. He gave equal emphasis to nature photography and artistic images. His online blog states: "This is a photo blog of self-expression. All the images I post are self-assignments driven by the need for more creativity in my life. This is my escape from the everyday shooting as a professional photographer."

Here is the link to Lynn's Fine Art blog: <http://lynnfreeny.blogspot.com/>

As I contemplated this Historically Speaking column honoring Lynn, I knew many people felt about him as I did, and I knew many others had also benefited from his outstanding photography. So, I asked DiAnn Fields to help me gather quotes from folks who had interacted with Lynn and desired to honor him with a quote.

What follows are those quotes submitted:

Jay Mullis said,

"There's so much to recognize about Lynn's work and character, and we are heartbroken by his passing," Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management Manager Jay Mullis said. "As only the third Department of Energy photographer since the Manhattan Project, Lynn is part of Oak Ridge's history as much as the special moments he captured. His photo albums contain our top moments— visits from presidents and governors, ribbon cuttings, and groundbreakings— but they also showcase his unique talent to see the extraordinary in the everyday around Oak Ridge – a sunrise, a quiet country road, or the vibrant fall colors on the East Tennessee landscape. I was proud to call Lynn a friend and will miss him. We know his work and memory will be cherished and his legacy will live on."

Pam Bonee said,

"It's hard to believe that Lynn won't be documenting the events and people of Oak Ridge anymore. He was always there to offer a smile, a creative approach to the needed photos, and a funny story.

I will miss that smile, and the proud stories about his girls."

Amy Fitzgerald said,

"I've been fortunate to know Lynn for almost twenty years as both a colleague and a friend. He would always go out of his way to help when we'd ask the Department of Energy for photos to support our

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heritage tourism activities or other community events. Lynn photographed many of the beautiful Oak Ridge scenes that are used on our city website.

"When I think of Lynn, I will always remember the conversations we had about our kids, who were about the same age. He was so proud of his girls and loved to watch their swim meets. I liked to follow Lynn around at events where he would casually walk the crowd, because I knew he would be taking the best, and most interesting shots of the day.

"One of my fondest memories is watching Lynn set up and take the fabulous Manhattan Project National Historical "Park Opens" photographs in Jackson Square on November 12, 2015. I caught him standing high above the crowd working silently, but expertly, in setting up his iconic photograph.

"Lynn was the consummate professional, and one of the kindest, most humble individuals that ever graced our presence. His photography will leave an imprint on our community, but more importantly, his friendship has left an indelible mark on our hearts."

Steve Wyatt said,

"In my work as a DOE spokesperson, I had the distinct pleasure of knowing and working with all three DOE Photographers in the history of the Oak Ridge Office. I've known Lynn since 1992 when he was hired to replace Frank Hoffmann, who had retired. Lynn was a superb photographer who worked very hard to get the very best shot possible in everything that he covered. He captured many important events through his work and was always a joy to work with. He will be greatly missed."

John Shewairy said,

"I had the absolute honor to serve as a team member with Lynn for over 14 years. Lynn brought great joy to everyone, and he also left us with memories to last a lifetime. I will miss him immensely and hope to see him again one day. Rest in peace my friend."

Each of these quotes demonstrate the value added by Lynn Freeny to his job photographing events in Oak Ridge. Thanks to each of them for taking the time to submit their quotes.

I also should mention that Lynn has done more than anyone else to make historic Ed Westcott images available to the public by posting them online. He knew more about the files of Ed Westcott images that are still in reserve than anyone else.

Lynn was my "go to" person anytime I was searching for information on Ed Westcott images in those files. He never failed to find what I was asking about and would send the image to me promptly.

The value of Lynn's contribution to the history of Oak Ridge will continue to be realized for generations to come. Without his photographs, as is also the case for Ed Westcott images of the Manhattan Project, we would not be able to capture our history nor tell our story to those we desire to inform.

But most of all, it is his friendship I will miss most. Being a photographer as well, Lynn and I could share insights and appreciated each other's work more than might be the case for someone who is not into photography as much as we were. His frequent comments on my images and eager sharing of his images with me was a bond of friendship that is not often experienced. I surely do miss that!

I have chosen to share a couple of Lynn's nature images to illustrate his depth of photographic skill as many of you readers only know of his documentation of Oak Ridge events through photographs. He was so much more, but the value of his dedicated efforts to document Oak Ridge events will be appreciated for decades to come.

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Photo of Lynn when remaking one of Ed Westcott's most famous images (Photo by Amy Fitzgerald)

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Lynn said, "I shot this image early in the morning at about 6am. Fog was in the valley and the sun was just beginning to light the sky with warm tones. The best light for outdoor photography is morning or evening or first light and last light. The sun being lower in the sky creates warm tones along with light that produces more color saturation. The light is much more exciting because we only see it for a few fleeting moments a day. For best results when shooting outside would be to get to your destination before sunrise then shoot until the sun gets high in the sky, take a good nap then get up and shoot one hour before the sun sets. The times will vary with the time of year so find out what time sunset and sunrise is and plan it that way." (Photo from Lynn's blog: <http://lynnfreeny.blogspot.com/>)

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Lynn said, "The best time to shoot is early morning at first light or late evening at last light. I drove in the fog and dark from my house all the way to Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. I waited in the dark on the gate to be open into Cades Cove loop road. The Park Service opens the gate as soon the sun starts to rise. The gate was opened to a magical sunrise through a thick fog. What a wonderful place to have a camera! I stopped at an area with trees in an open field. I started shooting the sunrise through the trees when suddenly a buck topped the hill coming full speed toward me. The deer was startled as much as I was. I had the camera mounted to my tripod so all I had to do was focus on the deer instead of the distant trees. Always get to your location in the dark before first light." (Photo from Lynn's blog: <http://lynnfreeny.blogspot.com/>)