

A History of the Dallas Camera Club
Presented in 2014 on the 80th Anniversary of the Club's Founding in 1934

In the Beginning - 1934

52 area photographers got together 80 years ago and established the Dallas Camera Club. They were printmakers who often crossed paths at a local camera store and decided to form a club to help develop their black and white printmaking skills. From the beginning, the objective of the club has been - quote "the mutual entertainment and education of its members in all forms of amateur photographic art." Meetings were held in member's homes on the first and third Mondays each month.

To place the birth of the club in an historical context – let's see what else was happening in 1934.

- Hitler became Fuhrer of Germany
- The Queen Mary was launched.
- The FBI ambushed and killed bank robbers, Bonnie and Clyde.
- Donald Duck appeared on screen for the first time.
- The Photographic Society of America was founded.
- And, FDR was in his second year as president and the great depression had reached a turning point with unemployment decreasing to 22%.

Early Years

Little is known about the club prior to 1960, but here are a few tidbits.

In late 30s, two club members wrote a column entitled *Amateur Camera Editor* for *The Dallas Journal* which later merged into the *Dallas Morning News*. Amateur photographers were invited to submit their questions for the column.

In 1944, the Dallas Camera Club members mounted an exhibition at the Dallas Fine Art Museum – the DMA today.

The club continued meeting during World War II with about 40 members. The club had assigned competition-subjects, a print-of-the-month contest and field trips. Many other camera clubs ceased to operate during the war. Some say that we may be the oldest continuously operating camera club in the country.

Logos over Time

Over time, the Dallas Camera Club's logos reflected its Dallas heritage and the photo technology of the day. We do not have a record of the logo prior to 1958. View camera lenses and 35mm film were featured twice each on logos. A contest was held as part of the 75th anniversary celebration to update the logo. A new one was chosen by the membership from 29 entries. It drops the reference to film and provides a contemporary look.

Meeting Format

The club's present twice-a-month meetings format seems to date back into the 1950s and probably the 40s.

One of the primary functions of the club is providing help and encouragement for members, especially the less-experienced ones. To help members improve their skills, one meeting each month has focused on competitions in one form or another.

The second meeting has generally included an educational program with open discussions, member presentations or a guest speaker. The programs have been varied, but are usually educational in nature. Programs have included discussions of sports, time lapse, night, aerial and wildlife photography - software and equipment - image composition and image processing.

The tag line from a 2002 brochure pretty much sums it up – quote “Where amateur photographers become great photographers”.

Locations

Meetings were initially held in member's homes and later at the Skillern's Drugstore warehouse and Dallas Fine Art Museum. Then, the Dr Pepper and Texas-Pacific auditoriums. In 1965, meetings were moved to the Coca Cola Bottling Company on Lemmon Avenue and remained there until facility renovations forced us to move in 1987. We met at a number of places over the next 9 years until settling in at the Parker Chiropractic College in 1996. Under new ownership, Parker College started expanding their educational offerings in 2011 and needed the space we were renting. This led to our move to Congregation Shearith Israel in January last year.

Adapting to Technology

The club has embraced several new technologies over the years. It was founded in the era of monochrome darkroom processing. Slides were introduced in the 1940s when 35 millimeter cameras and Kodachrome film became readily available.

Color prints were added in 1970 and had to be member printed. In 1990, the rules were relaxed so that commercial prints could be used. Digital technology made it easier to make color prints, and in 2003, Masters were again required to print their own images.

The club considered adding video in 1991. Sentiments ran high - quote "When video cameras are mentioned at DCC, the common response is akin to that given three-day-old fish..." Video was never embraced.

Digital imaging provided a major technological discontinuity and forever changed the landscape. Ten years passed from the time the technology was first discussed to adoption. Digitally altered prints or slides were not allowed in the regular competitions initially. Although, there was a special Digital Print Category for a short time. By 2006, the classification of 'Digital Prints' was dropped and digitally processed prints were allowed in all club competitions.

Digital projected images were added to the Slide competition in 2004, and the category name was changed to Projected Images the following year. By 2008, slides were no longer being entered and the rules were changed to allow only digital projected images.

Will video or phonography be next?

Competitions

Monthly competitions, with both open and themed entries, appear to have been part of the club from its inception.

Special competition topics were assigned to encourage members to step outside their comfort zone. Some of the many interesting themes included triangles, darkroom enhancement, emotions, design in nature, signboards, love, railroads, moving water, opposites and cemeteries.

Prints were displayed on a lighted easel while the judge's comments are presented. It was just three years ago that the current format of projecting all images was adopted.

Judges used to attend the meetings and comment on the images real time. This presented some challenges when members questioned the judge's critiques. By the mid-1980s, the club turned to recording comments which were played as the prints and slides were shown. Judges are now submitting written comments which are incorporated into the competition show.

Training

Mentoring programs have been tried over the years with varying degrees of success. A member could bring slides or prints and receive written comments by a capable photographer in 1962. In 1972, an Expert of the Month would show examples of his or her work and provide a critique of any pictures brought in by members.

In 2007, these programs morphed into training sessions held before the meetings. These sessions addressed topics of general interest and have become very popular. Some recent programs covered mat cutting, panoramas, portrait retouching, digital processing and audio-video presentations. Study groups were added to the training program in 2012.

Field Trips

Field trips have been part of the club's activities as early as 1940. The club hosted three or four field trips per year in the 1980s. Recently, we have been taking about ten field trips each year. Field trip destinations have included New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and all over Dallas and Texas. Some trips are one day while others are two or three day outings. Some of the more unusual field trips have been to the Roller Derby, Avery Island, Queen Wilhelmina State Park, Taos, Jerome Pine Tree Farm, Golden Triangle Saddle Club, Ice Skating, Big Bend and Argyle Acres. The club even took field trips to Hawaii and France. And, a trip to Ireland is planned for this year.

Some Other Activities

The club has supported workshops, work groups, exhibitions, conferences, salons and competitions over the years for its members, PSA and GSCCC, and the Dallas photographic community in general.

Club members presented a program on Channel 13 titled *Basic Photography* in 1967. Several years later, a four-part series called *Creative Photography* was produced for Channel 33.

The 1970s and 80s seemed to be particularly fertile for workshops and seminars presented by the club for its members and the general public.

Both PSA and GSCCC annual conferences have been held in Dallas.

In the 60s, the club underwrote the photographic contest at the State Fair of Texas. This continues as one of the state's premiere photo contests today.

In 1978, the club held the first North Texas International Exhibition of Photography. This PSA sanctioned salon drew entries from all over the world and continued for the next 13 years.

The Trinity River Photo Contest is held by the City of Dallas to showcase the Trinity River Corridor Project. DCC was one of inaugural sponsors when the contest started 5 years ago.

Annual Events

Several club events are held annually.

The Holiday Party started as a Christmas Party back in the 1970s and is held during December each year since, except for 2008, when it was canceled due to an ice storm.

The Annual Awards Banquet is held in April when the end-of-year awards are presented and new officers installed. It goes back to at least 1962, when it was held at the Baker Hotel for a price of \$3.00 per person. The banquets have been held at a variety of venues including the El Chico's, Wyatt's Cafeteria, Melrose Hotel, and several country clubs.

The audio-visual slide competition presentations led to the idea for the Potpourri night back in 2002. Themed shows are presented by members. Shows initially used multiple slide projectors synchronized to an audio tape, but by 2005 were all digital. Today, about 20 members, each produce 5 minute shows for Potpourri night.

The Annual Dallas/Fort Worth Interclub Competition was first held in 1964. It is known today as the BIRD competition after the perpetual trophy. The competition is held in October and the location alternates between the two clubs.

Communications

The newsletter, *Thru the Lens*, was originally published twice monthly. In 1972, it became a monthly publication. Electronic distribution of the newsletter began in 1999.

The DCC website is relatively new. The original website was activated in 2002. The website continues to evolve today. Many of our members have learned about the club through the website. The website continues to expand to meet members' needs. The first yearbook was published in 1958, but was discontinued when the club went paperless last year. The yearbook's contents are now available on the website along with the newsletter.

Year End Awards and Banquet

A number of awards are presented at the annual banquet each year. In addition to the High Points and Image of the Year awards, the club presents the Annual Service Award which started as the Photographer of the Year Award in 1960. The award originally recognized photographic skill and service, but was changed in 1978 to an award for outstanding service to the club. A Fellowship Award was started in 1981 to recognize our outstanding photographers who have won Masters High Points Awards. It is a lifetime award and there have been 59 recipients in the past 33 years.

Year End Competitions

Special competitions are also held in conjunction with the banquet and named in honor of six members who have made major contributions to the club.

The Creative Portraiture Award was established in 1994 to honor Dr. James J. Spurlock, a UNT chemistry professor, who was known for his portraits of seniors which utilized creative processing techniques.

The Travel Award was established in 1997 in honor of Milton Rudick, an aerospace executive and avid world traveler. He was the father of our past president – Dave Rudick Davis.

The Contemporary Images Award was also established in 1997 honoring Marge Dance. She served on the board for 16 years and held every office except print chairperson. Marge was known for her images using non-standard processing techniques.

The Field Trip Image of the Year Award started in 1999 as the Field Trip Slide-of-the-Year Award. The award was renamed in honor of Ken Zapp in 2002. Ken was instrumental in creating the audio-visual programs which are a backstay of the field trip presentations and competition shows.

The Photojournalism Award was established in 2011 honoring Barbara and Ralph Pyke who have both been recognized for their outstanding photojournalism images. Both have been long time members of the club, GSCCC and PSA, serving as board members and actively contributing to these organizations.

Alumni

The Dallas Camera Club has flourished because of its members. Over the years, many have graciously given their time and support to make the club a success. A fitting place to end this history is to take a look at some of our club's alumni who have distinguished themselves as successful professional photographers or have made other notable contributions outside the club. Here are a few.

Bank Langmore was a preeminent photographer of the American West and his book, *The Cowboy*, is considered one of the seminal bodies of work on the subject.

Lynn Lennon was a documentary photographer with an impressive list of one-woman shows across the US and Europe.

Dr. Paul Greenberg's prints can be found in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the Amon Carter Museum among others. He was a founding member of the Allen Street Gallery.

Chris Regas is one of Dallas' most respected photographers and his work is in the permanent collections of museums and corporations throughout the state. Chris has been a Judge at the Terlingua Chili Cook-off for more than 22 years and documented the event in photographs.

Sid Rucker is a nature photographer specializing in hummingbirds and co-authored of the book, *Hummingbirds of Texas*.

Jeremy Woodhouse is one of the best nature photographers working today with images in the Smithsonian, the Dallas Museum of Natural History, and the Natural History Museum in London. Jeremy leads photo tours all over the world.

Honorary member, Jerry Comer, is an excellent photographer and an avid collector. He amassed a collection of over 200 rare and important photographs that has been given to UT Dallas. Some of the photographers represented in the collection include Mary Ellen Mark, Cindy Sherman, Ernst Hass, Gordon Parks, Berenice Abbott and Ansel Adams. UTD has already held five exhibitions drawn from Jerry's collection.

Jack Kilby was the inventor of the integrated circuit and Nobel laureate. He was also an avid photographer and recipient of the prestigious PSA Progress Award. Over 18,000 of his negatives and prints are now housed in SMU's DeGolyer Library.

Credits

We have come to the end of this journey. This presentation was made possible by the following. The Dallas Camera Club continues to thrive because of its dedicated and selfless members. This history has been put on the club website.