# The Photogram

Newsletter of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society

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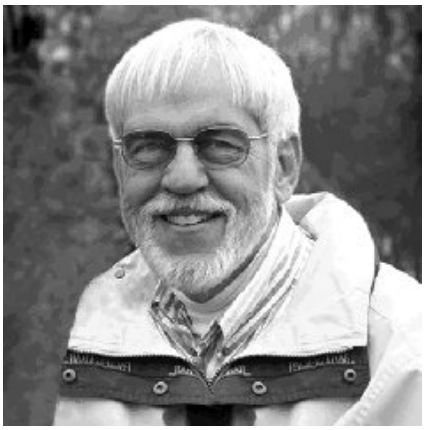

## GORDON BROWN

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## "PHOTOGRAPHY BC & AD: BEFORE COMPUTERS & AFTER DIGITAL"

With a BS in Photographic Science from RIT, and a Masters in Education, Gordon Brown enjoyed a 33-year photographic career at Eastman Kodak Company where he taught photographic workshops, worked in scientific photography, and coordinated black-and-white products. He originated the name "T-Max." Gordon, a Mensa member, is a consultant to Epson and Kodak for digital photography and printing, and holds six patents on professional photo equipment. Now in his retirement, he gives lectures and week-long workshops on Photoshop, digital printing and color management primarily at Palm Beach Photographic Center. An author of three books, he is currently working on a book entitled "Photographic Digital Workshop in a Book," for doing in the "light room" with a computer the things he previously did in the darkroom.

Gordon will be the speaker at our annual MiPHS Dinner and Lecture, Saturday, March 24, at the Birmingham Athletic Club, Bloomfield Hills, MI. His talk, "Photography BC & AD: Before Computers & After Digital," is a history of the digital camera. Reception 6:00PM. Dinner 7:00PM. Reservations are required.

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello members! Hope you're doing well in your part of the world. The winter solstice has passed, and the days are getting longer. Spring flowers ARE on their way.

A big THANK YOU to all who attended and helped with our 2006 Photographica Show and Sale. We had more attendees than the last two years. (My spouse thinks it was because it was a full moon.) We were lucky enough to have Bill Schwab demonstrating platinum printing and Judy Kalter showing us the cyanotype process. We also had some great educational displays: Gary Banas's WWII arm patch and photo display, Len Walle's ambrotype display, and my daguerreotype and tintype display. Hopefully, you noticed Yuki Kawai's camera display. It was at his sale table. Since they were so rare and expensive we didn't want them to "walk." We also had a small silent auction that cornered a bit of interest. Again, thanks to all of you who participated.

Looking ahead to March, we have invited Gordon Brown to be our annual dinner speaker. Several of us heard his talk on the history of the digital camera at the PhotoHistory Symposium last fall. It was a fascinating presentation, and since we have so many camera collectors in our group we thought that he could pique their interest. Then in May, MiPHS and the Detroit Institute of Arts are co-sponsoring Chris Mahoney from Sotheby's who'll be speaking on the current photography market.

Be safe, hang up and drive . . . Cindy Motzenbecker

***THE PHOTOGRAM*** is the official bulletin of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society (MiPHS). It is published five times a year. The contents are copyrighted the year of publication.


*THE PHOTOGRAM* welcomes contributions to its pages from both MiPHS members and non-members. To submit an article, review, occasional photo ad (MiPHS members only) or informational item for publication, write to:

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Please include your e-mail address with all correspondence. Authors and advertisers are responsible for the accuracy of their contributions to *The Photogram*. The views of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:
June 1 (July-Summer issue)
August 1 (September-October issue)
October 1 (November-December issue)
January 1 (February-March issue)
March 1 (April-May issue)

The MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an organization dedicated to advancing an understanding and appreciation of the history of photography through membership meetings, special events and publications, and through shared endeavors with other organizations and the general public. The MiPHS is a 501c3 non-profit corporation chartered by the State of Michigan.

The MiPHS welcomes new members. Dues are $25 per year (January 1- December 31), $30 outside the USA, $15 for students with valid ID. For information and application forms, call 248.549.6026, visit us online at *www.miphs.org* or write to:

MiPHS
P.O. Box 2278
Birmingham, MI 48012-2278



### WILLIAM J. CRISTEN, "PAULINE CUSHMAN: SPY OF THE CUMBERLAND," SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

Lecture at the Birmingham Historical Museum, 556 West Maple Road, Birmingham, MI, 2:00PM. Free parking for two hours at the structure across the street. ❧

### GORDON BROWN, "PHOTOGRAPHY BC & AD: BEFORE COMPUTERS & AFTER DIGITAL," MIPHS ANNUAL DINNER AND LECTURE, SATURDAY, MARCH 24

At the Birmingham Athletic Club, 4023 West Maple Road (just east of Telegraph Road and adjacent to the west side of Oakland Hills Country Club), Bloomfield Hills, MI. Reception with cash bar 6:00PM. Dinner 7:00PM. Lecture after the dinner. Dinner is $35 per person, must be paid in advance by March 17. Seating is limited. Reservations are required. A reservation form is included in this issue of *The Photogram*, or visit our website at *www.miphs.org*. There will also be a SILENT AUCTION to benefit MiPHS, so please donate a photo item and bid generously. ❧

### CHRIS MAHONEY AT THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS, THURSDAY, MAY 17

Speaker Chris Mahoney, senior vice president of photos at Sotheby's, will speak about the current photography market at the Detroit Institute of Arts., Detroit, MI. His talk coincides with an exhibit on Ansel Adams, which will be in the museum's Schwartz Galleries. MiPHS and the DIA are co-sponsors. At the DIA Lecture Hall at 8:00PM. Look for details in the next issue of *The Photogram*. ❧

### ANNUAL MiPHS PHOTOGRAPHICA SHOW AND SALE, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14

Novi Community Center, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road (½ mile west of Novi Road), Novi, MI, 10:00AM-4:00PM. See a very happy Paul Burk from the 2006 Photographica Show and Sale above. Mark your calendar now! ❧

## 35th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF THE PHOTOGRAM

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society. Come help us celebrate by submitting a photograph and a short description (limit 100 words) of a favorite photographic item from your personal collection. Is it a camera with a past? A stunning purchase? A remarkable image? They will be shared with the MiPHS membership in a special September-October 2007 issue of *THE PHOTOGRAM*. Our goal is to published 35 items from 35 members, one for each year of our organization. Send a photograph or jpeg along with your description to the editor Jan Schimmelman, Department of Art and Art History, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401, or via e-mail to schimmel@oakland.edu. DEADLINE is JULY 15. ❧

(Left) Lucille and Todd Webb at their home in Bath, Maine, August 13, 1998. Photo by Martin Magid.
(Right) Todd Webb, *Ansel Adams*, Detroit, 1941. Courtesy Evans Gallery, Portland, Maine.

# THE EMERGENCE OF TODD WEBB

By Martin Magid

The 10-day workshop that Ansel Adams conducted in Detroit in 1941 was a milestone for him. His Zone System was nearly complete, and Detroit was his first opportunity to teach it to a class of students and to see whether it helped improve their photographs. The Zone System, where the exposure and development of each negative is based on the photographer's vision of what the final print should look like, subsequently became a standard tool for those who use view cameras.

The Detroit workshop also changed the lives of Todd Webb and his good friend Harry Callahan. They were amateur photographers and clerks at the Chrysler Corporation and had the same dream: to create photography without the limitations of commercial considerations. Harry became an icon of photography of the post-World War II period.[1] He began teaching photography at the Institute of Design in Chicago in 1946, and established the Department of Photography at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1961, where he remained as head until he retired from full-time teaching in 1977. His work has been the subject of many books and articles, and his one-man shows have been exhibited the world over virtually every year since 1955. The catalog for a touring exhibit that ended at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1997 was selected as "Photographic Book of the Year" in 1996.

Todd Webb, Harry Callahan's fellow member of the Chrysler Camera Club, also decided after the Ansel Adams workshop that photography would become his life. Almost immediately recognized in New York circles in 1946 as an exciting new fine art talent, Todd remained a fiercely independent, free-lance photographer his entire life. He never worked as an employee. He only photographed what he thought was worthwhile.

Charles Clayton Webb III, born in Detroit in 1905, was called "Toddy" after a character in a children's book, then Todd as he grew older. He remembered Detroit as a kind and gentle place, but also one which had begun to expand rapidly because of the allure of Henry Ford's salary offer of $5-a-day. Todd had vivid memories from his youth of having a newspaper route early in the morning and then selling papers at a busy city intersection later in the day. One of his corner customers was an elderly, elegant gentleman who chatted with him about World War I while he waited for a street car. Todd's dad told him the man was a famous photographer. Many years later he learned that his customer was William Henry Jackson, famed for his 19th-century photographs of the West. Jackson had been responsible for purchasing all photographs for the Detroit Publishing Company, which sold postcards worldwide.

Todd attended Central High and then Northwestern High in Detroit, but when he went to a school dance against his parents' orders they sent him to live with his grandfather in Newmarket, Ontario, where there were no coed dances. He graduated from high school in 1924 in that town of 4,000. Todd wanted to become a writer, but his family steered him into engineering at the University of Toronto. He left school for lack of interest when his grandfather died in 1925 and returned to Detroit where he found a job with a bank and then with a brokerage firm. He was very successful in the stock market, lived in a deluxe apartment, owned two cars and dressed in high style. But the stock market crash of 1929 ended his career in finance. After selling his cars and driving one to California for a dealer, he began to prospect for California gold while

living in a shelter of scrap boards and sheet metal. After three years Todd's income from prospecting averaged 50 cents a day. His biggest single strike was two ounces of gold, sold to a dentist for $60, which allowed him to buy a burro and a washing machine motor. Todd said the burro helped, and the motor made a lot of impressive noise, but neither increased his gold production.

In 1932 Todd took steady employment with a survey crew, which paid $125 a month plus room and board, a significant improvement and an excellent salary during the Depression. He saved $1,000 in just eighteen months, and went to Mexico for new adventure. In 1933 anti-American feeling was strong in Mexico and Todd soon left for San Francisco. For a year he wrote short stories and worked at occasional odd jobs. With his savings nearly gone, Todd rode the rails to Detroit in 1934. During the five years he was gone, Todd's father had left for Europe and was never heard from again, and his mother had moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. The auto industry was beginning its slow recovery from the Depression, and Todd found work as a laborer for the Chrysler Corporation. By 1936, Todd had advanced to an office job with the Chrysler Export Corporation.

Soon a friend from Todd's California days convinced him they should be prospecting for gold in Panama. He was well-liked at Chrysler and was given a one-year leave of absence, a remarkable occurrence considering the thousands of qualified people that Chrysler could have chosen to replace him. Before Todd left his boss gave him an Argus 35mm camera. Todd had no prior experience with cameras and needed someone from the Chrysler Camera Club to show him how it worked. In Panama Todd prospected with his friend and traveled some. When his friend became very ill while traveling in the wilderness Todd paddled him to a doctor in a dugout canoe. A sudden storm capsized the canoe plunging the two prospectors, the Argus and six rolls of exposed film into the Atlantic Ocean. Todd took his friend back to the United States for treatment and in 1938 returned to Chrysler Export.

While the Argus camera was short-lived, Todd's new interest in photography was not quenched by the Atlantic storm. He bought a brand new Kodak Bantam Special, an elegant Art Deco styled miniature camera—a model coveted even today by camera collectors. Todd thought he would use the camera to illustrate travelogues with color slides. Before he tried color film, Todd loaded the camera with black and white film and took it on a fishing trip. He watched as a friend developed the film and enlarged three prints. He was hooked.

After fifteen years of having his fictional stories and nonfiction essays rejected by publishers, Todd gave up writing and decided that black-and-white photography would be his creative outlet. He joined the Chrysler Camera Club and met Harry Callahan, who was with Chrysler's accounting department and used a Rolleicord twin-lens reflex. Both men were equally enthusiastic about photography, and both were essentially beginners. Todd entered a fishing photo in the Chrysler Camera Club's first contest and won a prize. Determined to become proficient in the darkroom, Todd bought an enlarger. An opportunity for self-study came when labor-management talks broke down, resulting in a two week strike. Todd spent the entire strike period making prints of the same three negatives enlarged by his friend. By the time of the Camera Club's third annual show in 1940, both Todd and Harry were well on their way to becoming skilled photographers and printers. Todd won the Second Grand Award and four Merit Awards, and Harry won three Merit Awards.

The loss of detail in prints enlarged from the Bantam's small negatives disappointed Todd. He he traded it for a high quality 5 x 7 Deardorff view camera in 1940. That size film did not require enlarging for comfortable viewing, and the prints showed all the detail captured by the camera. Harry was impressed by the results, and in 1941 he purchased an 8 x 10 view camera. Harry won the Second Grand Award and two Merit Awards at the 1941 Chrysler Camera Club contest, and Todd took the Third Grand Award and one Merit Award. The jurors were outside photographers and critics sympathetic to modernism in photography. The two friends were not interested in the pictorial style favored by most of the other club members, characterized by soft focus and rules that Todd and Harry considered outmoded. Arthur Siegel, a prominent Detroit photographer, was one of the judges of the 1941 contest. Siegel had studied at the New Bauhaus School of Design in Chicago and was definitely in the modernist camp. Todd and Harry's abilities had grown beyond the Chrysler Camera Club, and together they joined the Miniature Camera Club of Detroit, where Siegel was an active member, along with many other professionals and very advanced amateur photographers.

Chrysler Corporation President Spencer Avery (left) presents awards to Todd Webb (right) and Harry Callahan (next to Webb) at the Fourth Annual Chrysler Camera Club Show. *Chrysler Motors Magazine*, May 1941, courtesy of Chrysler Historical Foundation. Collection of Martin Magid.

In 1941 Ansel Adams was the best known photographer in America and a recognized leader and teacher of technique. A year before, he had been a prime mover in establishing the nation's first museum department of photography, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). His recommendations also led to the appointment of Beaumont Newhall as the department's first director. When Arthur Siegel invited Adams to put on a workshop for the Miniature Camera Club, Adams was at or near the height of his creative power. It was later in 1941, just weeks after the workshop, that he took what many consider his finest photograph, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941*. Adams discussed the workshop with Newhall, and they decided it fit in with their desire to modernize American photography. Adams' appearance fee was underwritten by MoMA, and the Miniature Camera Club paid his expenses.

Adams' visit to Detroit began on Friday, August 22, 1941, with an opening reception and dinner for 150 people, followed by a lecture. The 40 photographers enrolled in the workshop paid a $10 fee for two Saturday darkroom sessions, two Sunday morning field trips to the Cranbrook Institute in Bloomfield Hills, a Sunday afternoon lecture at the Detroit Institute of Arts, five evening sessions, and a lecture on August 31 at the University of Detroit. Many participants were unprepared for Adams' honest and sometimes merciless criticism at the first evening session. They were told to bring their best prints for him to see, and he began his critiques by describing a respected member's print as "stinko" because of its soft tone. Several became discouraged by his criticism and dropped out. Some were annoyed by his disparagement of pictorial photography and his promotion of straightforward modernism. Harry Callahan and Todd Webb, however, were uplifted, perhaps even enchanted by Ansel Adams and his brand of photography. After every evening session they went out with him and talked into the early morning hours about the day's events and about photography in general. Adams answered all of their questions, technical and otherwise, and he went to their home darkrooms and gave them individual lessons on developing negatives and making prints. Adams spoke about the importance of technical perfection, and described the theories and contributions of Alfred Stieglitz who encouraged the idea that photography was an art form. Harry said that Ansel Adams set him free and allowed him to be his own judge. Todd felt that Adams "jelled the whole thing" for him, made him feel he was on the right track. When the workshop closed, Todd and Harry gave a party for Adams, but only a handful of the others from the group came. Ansel asked Todd and Harry to keep in touch and to send their prints to him, and he promised to send his comments and suggestions. Ansel Adams' Detroit workshop transformed both Todd and Harry. They now had no choice. They had to make photographs.

On December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, Todd tried to enlist. He was 36 years old, and the recruiter barely looked at him when he said: "Too old." Later Todd heard that the American armed forces needed experts in many occupations, so he volunteered for the Navy as a photographer. Since he had never actually worked as a photographer, the Navy asked for references and recommendations. Todd wrote to Ansel Adams in January 1942 and asked him for help. Adams wrote to the Navy and Todd was accepted, but he was not called to serve until November 1942.

The Miniature Camera Club changed its name to the Photographic Guild of Detroit in December 1941. The members thought the word "guild" more accurately described them, because it implied advanced skills. Also, there were members like Todd and Harry who used cameras that were hardly miniature. Todd and other Guild members volunteered an evening or two each week to tutor beginners in their darkrooms, one-on-one. Todd and Harry also met periodically with a small group of members more interested in modernism than pictorialism. Calling themselves "Les Morons," they met at Arthur Siegel's house to talk and show their latest prints to each other.

In July 1942, Todd, Harry and Harry's wife Eleanor drove to Rocky Mountain Park in Colorado to take photos in the manner of Ansel Adams. They planned to stay two weeks, but seeing nothing he wanted to photograph, Harry and his wife left after only one week. Todd remained. When he got home, he developed and printed the first 12 of the 200 5 x 7 photos he had taken. They were all of beautiful snow-capped mountains, and he was bored by them. He realized he could not be, and indeed did not want to be, another Ansel Adams. He threw away the rest of the exposed negatives without ever developing them. Reversing his course, he spent the next month photographing only the details of his room, and the results were exciting to Les Morons. He and the group believed that strong photos could come from any subject matter.

Todd continued to look for subjects nearer to home. He photographed the children of a black family with whom he had become friendly on walks through his neighborhood. Adams had advised him to overexpose portraits of white people, so Todd decided it was logical to underexpose portraits of black people. The results were outstanding. Todd mailed a set of prints to Ansel, who agreed they were terrific. He told Todd to show them to Dorothy Norman, Alfred Stieglitz's assistant, when he went east to boot camp. When Todd got to An American Place gallery in New York, Stieglitz, his wife (the artist Georgia O'Keeffe) and Norman all liked them. Norman immediately said she would use one to illustrate the next issue of her literary journal, *Twice a Year*. She tipped actual prints into the journal, rather than use reproductions made on a printing press. One thousand copies were scheduled for the next issue, and Todd had less than a week before he reported to the Navy. Harry Callahan came to his friend's aid and made one thousand 4 x 5 prints for hand insertion into the 1943 double issue of *Twice a Year*. It was Todd Webb's first published photo.[2]

Todd Webb, *Black Boy*, Detroit, 1942. This is Todd Webb's first published photograph. It was tipped into each of 1,000 copies of Dorothy Norman's 1943 *Twice a Year*. Collection of Martin Magid.

While in Photographer's Mate training in Rhode Island, Todd visited Alfred Stieglitz in New York as often as he could, and they corresponded when Todd went overseas to Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines. In June 1945, he returned to Detroit on a 30-day leave and stayed with Harry and Eleanor. He was on a train heading east back to the Navy when he heard about Hiroshima and knew the time was approaching when, at the age of 40, he would have to decide how to spend the rest of his life.

Todd's discharge came through on November 11, 1945. By then, Harry and Eleanor had moved to New York City and had brought everything that Todd had left with them, including his 5 x 7 camera. Todd thought he would eventually return to Chrysler Export, but before returning home he gave himself a brief vacation in New York with the Callahans. He never returned to Chrysler or to Detroit. He slept in their kitchen and set up a darkroom in a closet. Film was scarce in those early postwar days, so Todd rationed himself to taking six pictures a day. This discipline was a great learning experience. He was forced to take extreme care when planning a picture to avoid careless failure.

Early in 1946 Harry was offered a teaching position at the Institute of Design in Chicago, the former New Bauhaus, where Arthur Siegel was now head of photography. The lack of privacy in the one-room apartment was one factor in Harry's leaving New York—Todd was too good a friend to evict. So Todd kept the apartment and gave himself another year in New York. He set aside money for two new cameras and still had $1,500 left from his Navy savings upon which to live. As a veteran he was a member of what was known as the "Fifty-two Twenty Club," whereby the government paid him $20 per week for 52 weeks. Rent was $38 a month. If he ate simply, he might not have to touch his savings.

Todd was fascinated with the human activity that took place on Third Avenue in New York. He walked those streets for many hours and days with his big camera, a tripod and three double film holders for his six exposures. April 1946 was a special month for Todd. Beaumont Newhall arranged for the director of the Museum of the City of New York to see Todd's prints and he was so impressed that he offered Todd a one-man show for that September. He also hired Todd to work one day a week photographing the museum's collection, at $20 a day. Also in April, the May issue of *U.S. Camera Magazine* published some of Todd's Third Avenue photographs. Although pleased to see his work in a national magazine, he found the poor quality of reproduction disappointing. Stieglitz had done better in his 19th-century magazines, he thought. In a curious coincidence, another emerging artist was featured on the cover of the same issue of *U.S. Camera*. Norma Jean Dougherty, soon to be known as Marilyn Monroe, was one of four Hollywood starlets posing as bathing beauties.

Also in April of 1946, Chrysler offered Todd his old job back. The security was tempting and he knew if he went back the direction of his life would be set. Good things were starting to happen for him in photography, and he turned Chrysler down. A few weeks later, several old friends from Chrysler visited him and he heard all about their jobs, which made him even more content about the choice he had made. By the end of May 1946, Todd had finished printing for the one-man show. He had also been hired to photograph the Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit at MoMA, and he continued to photograph the collection at the Museum of the City of New York. His friendship with Stieglitz and O'Keeffe was growing, and he was frequently their sole guest for dinner at their apartment. Stieglitz had been very frail, but it was still a shock when he died on July 13, 1946. Todd appreciated Steiglitz for what he meant to the art of photography, but even more for the doors he opened for him. Just a few months earlier Todd had taken a wonderful portrait of him, and Stieglitz had described it as "tenderness without sentimentality."

That summer of 1946 in New York found Todd working and playing hard. He was busy with photography and parties with the artists and literary people of the city. Late in the summer Harry Callahan sent a telegram inviting him to teach at the Institute of Design. Todd, however, wasn't confident that he knew enough about photography to teach on the college level. More to the point, he liked what he was doing in New York—making photographs that were beginning to reach an appreciative audience. In December 1946 Arthur Siegel asked Todd again to teach at the Institute, but he still was not interested.

Todd Webb, *Alfred Stieglitz at An American Place*, 1946. Collection of David Rubello.

*Fortune Magazine* was planning a story about traffic in New York City and in July 1946 one of its researchers saw Todd's photos being framed for the September exhibit, which included many scenes shot on the streets of the city. *Fortune* hired him to shoot traffic, but Todd was stumped by the question: "What will you charge?" He agreed to the magazine's offer of $50 a day, or payment by the space used in the magazine for his photos, whichever was greater. He photographed for 15 days, and expected a check for $750. However, *Fortune* used nine of Todd's images to illustrate "The Traffic Outrage" in its October 1946 issue. His check came to a totally unexpected $1,795, a huge paycheck in those days.[3]

Todd's one-man show opened on September 15, 1946, at the Museum of the City of New York. The exhibit *I See a City* featured 165 photos taken in the neighborhoods of small shops and crowded living quarters of New York. Two hundred people came to the opening reception in a rainstorm. The show got excellent reviews, but only one photo sold in a month. However, it was seen by many who could make a difference, like Roy Stryker, the former director of the photography project for the Farm Security Administration during the Depression. After the war, the Standard Oil Corporation hired Stryker to develop an archive of photographs showing facets of life and industry affected by the company. The photos would be made available to newspapers and magazines without charge, as long as Standard Oil was acknowledged as the source. Stryker hired Todd as a free-lancer, an association that produced 3,000 photographs for Standard Oil over a period of several years.

By the end of 1946, his first full year in New York, Todd had the self-confidence that enabled him to work anywhere. He felt the year was the richest, most productive of his life. *U.S. Camera Annual* included Todd's photographs as among the best fine arts photographs of 1947, 1948 and 1949. Through the years, Todd maintained his independence. He never accepted work as an employee, since that would tie him down, or freelance work that did not interest him. Todd felt secure enough to turn down several more teaching opportunities over the years and decline a *Life Magazine* assignment, as well as other commercial and government offers. Richard Avedon was his anti-role model because Avedon, an immensely successful photographer, told Todd he could not afford to close down for a vacation.


Todd Webb, *April in Paris*, 1948. Founder's Society Purchase, DeRoy Photographic Acquisition Endowment Fund. Photograph © 2006 The Detroit Institute of Arts.

The photo agency *Cameraclix* gave Todd a 12-day vacation bonus in Paris in 1948 following his three-month assignment to shoot 5 x 7 Kodachromes of the English countryside. This began his love affair with Paris where he would spend most of the next five years, and meet and marry the love of his life. The photograph *April in Paris, 1948*, is one of two Todd Webb photos in the collection of his hometown art museum, the De-

troit Institute of Arts. The title is something of a puzzle since Todd spent all of April 1948 in New York and Pittsburgh, arriving in Paris for the first time that September. He returned to Paris in February 1949 and stayed for over four years, so *April in Paris* was shot after April of 1948. The other Webb photograph in the DIA collection is the portrait of Alfred Stieglitz discussed above.

In Todd Webb's future were about 50 more years of independent freelance and fine art photography, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, ten books of his photographs and reminiscences, many solo exhibits and group exhibits in the finest museums and galleries, including participation in *The Family of Man* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955. Also in his future was marriage in 1949 in Paris to Lucille Minqueau, and their lives together in Europe, particularly France, New York, Santa Fe and Maine, and their lifelong friendships with Georgia O'Keeffe and Harry and Eleanor Callahan. Todd's book of photographs of Georgia and her ranch was published in 1984, with an elegant slipcover edition. Todd and Lucille went to the 1987 opening of Georgia's show at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., where a giant 10 x 7-foot photo of Georgia from Todd's book marked the entrance to the exhibit.

Todd Webb's most famous photograph, which illustrates both his technical skill and his fascination with people and the details of their lives, is a panorama of the entire block of the west side of New York City's 6th Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets. Todd used ten 4 x 5 negatives shot in vertical format on March 24, 1948, with a used Auto Graflex purchased the previous summer. From the east side of 6th Avenue Todd photographed the west side, moving his camera down the street after each exposure, slightly overlapping the previous shot, keeping the tripod in the same position relative to the curb, the lens board parallel to the street, using the same lens opening and shutter speed. The result was a remarkable study of city life, with enormous detail, a photograph that remains fresh regardless of how often it is viewed. The nine places where the individual prints meet are difficult to find without close inspection. Each pair of matching edges are sliced vertically so that the image appears to be from one negative. Such a feat is rather simple today with computer image manipulation and camera automation, which can quickly stitch together more than twenty shots. But in 1948 Todd had to shoot his panorama very quickly, before the light changed, using a very heavy camera and tripod and sheet film, and his darkroom work had to be extremely precise so that each exposure would be developed and fixed identically. The combined 6th Avenue panel was not shown until 1953 when Edward Steichen included it in a group exhibit, *Diogenes with a Camera*, at the Museum of Modern Art. Today it is his highest-priced work.

In 1996 a four-day seminar and retrospective exhibit of Todd's career took place at Westbrook College, Maine, along with the premiere of the movie *Honest Vision: A Portrait of Todd Webb*. Two years later, Todd and Lucille traveled together for the last time when they attended his one-man show in Tokyo. Later in 1998, Todd spoke of old age. He said his greatest regret was that he could no longer print in the darkroom due to his arthritis. He was very cheerful and amusing, still driving at 92 and blaming the traffic on a Phish concert. He joked about the complex Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Dorothy Norman relationships, looked forward with confidence to the future, and spoke of traveling to Australia. Todd Webb and Harry Callahan and their wives communicated frequently through the years, mostly by telephone and through the mail. Harry died in March 1999; Eleanor and their daughter Barbara and her children now live in Atlanta. Mostly because of Todd's arthritis, he and Lucille moved from their home in Bath, Maine, to a retirement community in Auburn, Maine, early in 1999. Todd died on April 15, 2000, at the age of 94. Lucille still lives in the Auburn residence, where she celebrated her 100th birthday on September 16, 2006. She described herself as "the most ancient" resident of the community.


Admission ticket to Todd Webb's 1998 one-man exhibit in Japan illustrated by his *Georgia O'Keefe at Ghost Ranch, N.M.* Collection of Martin Magid, gift from Lucille and Todd Webb, 1998.

In his introduction to Todd Webb's 1965 book *Photographs*,

historian Beaumont Newhall wrote: "Todd is an historian with a camera. He photographs subjects that interest him. Not for him the world of abstraction, where form dominates subject to the exclusion of any literal interpretation. . . . Todd records what moves him, what fascinates him; he photographs that which defines the character of a place."

Ansel Adams, Harry Callahan and Todd Webb became a solid creative threesome in September 1941 in Detroit. Adams' work in the 1930s and '40s made photography the colossal art form it is today. Callahan was a leader of the postwar modernist movement and contributed to the development of a generation of students. Todd Webb was a hugely successful independent fine art photographer, photographing what he liked and whom he liked, inspired by his own vision and perfect taste. Adams and Beaumont Newhall were never more prescient than when they decided that the Detroit workshop would be a perfect step toward their vision of what modern American photography should be.

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(Right) Todd Webb, Todd and Lucille Webb Holiday Card, 1998. This photo by Todd, originally in color, shows the vestibule of their home in Bath, Maine. Behind the door near the top is a framed poster of his *Sixth Avenue Between 43rd and 44th Streets, New York*, 1948, from the exhibit and catalogue *Todd Webb: Photographs of New York and Paris 1945-1960*. Collection of Martin Magid.

1. A *Playboy Magazine* demonstrates Callahan's status in American culture. The centerfold shows the Playmate-of-the-Month reading a Harry Callahan monograph. The centerfold was kept pinned to his darkroom wall even after his death. (As told by Joseph Sterling, Callahan's student and friend, to Corinne Rose of the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, 2006.)

2. Todd Webb said in 1998 that Harry Callahan made the thousand prints. When I saw that the 1943 *Twice a Year* credits the printing of Todd's photo to Margarethe Wurst, I phoned Todd, and he remembered her as perhaps the daughter of the founder of Detroit Camera Shop. He suggested I talk to Harry Callahan about Ms. Wurst's role in the printing since he believed that Harry had done it all himself. Harry confirmed that he had printed all 1,000 copies. He also recognized Ms. Wurst's name in connection with Detroit Camera, and could not explain the attribution in *Twice a Year*. In 2006, a retired longtime employee of the store and a manufacturer's representative who had frequently called on Detroit Camera said they had no reason to believe that Margarethe Wurst, apparently the store's bookkeeper, had ever practiced photography or printing. If anyone can shed light on this mystery, please contact the author.

3. In addition to seven other photos, *Fortune* attributed photographs on pages 270 and 271 to Todd Webb. However, there are no photographs on those pages. A companion article, "A Day in New York's Traffic Jungle," appears on pages 266 and 267 with two photographs that have no attribution. The one on page 267, *Impasse on Thirty-third Street*, appears in Todd's book *Looking Back*, identified as 33rd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, New York, for *Fortune Magazine*, July 1946. It is reasonable to assume that that photo and the one of a truck driver on page 266 were taken by Todd.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article revises and updates "Todd Webb," by Martin Magid, which appeared in *The Journal*, published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, No. 155, Issue 2, 1998. The author would like to thank PHSNE for permission to republish it in *The Photogram*. For lists of the author's resources and books by Todd Webb, please email him at: mmagid3005@aol.com.

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**SEND A FRIEND A PHOTOGRAM** — Let us send a friend a copy of *The Photogram*, along with an invitation to join the Michigan Photographic Historical Society. Just contact Jan Schimmelman (schimmel@oakland.edu) or Cindy Motzenbecker at MiPHS, P.O. Box 2278, Birmingham, MI 48012-2278.

# PHOTOGRAPHY: TRUTH AND FACT

By Bill Rauhauser

Hamlet: "Do you see nothing there?"
The Queen: "Nothing at all, yet all that is I see."

This verbal exchange between Hamlet and his mother, the queen, from Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, serves to introduce the subject of this paper. The scene taking place in the queen's chamber is suddenly interrupted by the ghost of Hamlet's murdered father, which is seen by Hamlet but not by the queen. With a little imagination we can alter the plot and see them looking at a photograph. The queen sees it as the camera would, and sees only what the lens would have recorded on the film, what I am referring to as the facts. Hamlet, on the other hand, interprets the image on the photograph, influenced by his agitated state of mind. He sees, or imagines he sees, the ghost of his slain father, and accepts this as the truth. The ghost in our photograph represents a viewer's interpretation of the image based on his personal feelings or beliefs. While both are looking at the same photograph and the facts are a constant, the truth is a variable and changes with each viewer. The ghost seen in the photograph by Hamlet serves as a metaphor for the viewer's interpretation of the picture, which goes beyond the facts shown.

The words *fact* and *truth* are at the heart of this paper and must be defined so as to avoid any misunderstanding. Webster's dictionary defines *fact* as something that exists and is known by actual experience or observation. The meaning of the word *truth* is more complicated. In its simplest form it means conformity with fact and may be used interchangeably with fact. Truth may also be used to represent an accepted belief associated with philosophic, religious or social issues, which may have little relation to fact and depend on interpretation or beliefs which may change over time.

As an example of how the passage of time can alter the reading of a photograph, consider the photograph above. This photograph, taken in the 1950s at the Northland Shopping Mall, shows two men and a small boy walking past them in an apparent state of total unconcern. I did not print the negative for over fifty years because I saw little of significance to warrant a printing. However, the situation has changed dramatically. We read almost daily of small children being molested. The two men are seen now as a threat. The facts recorded fifty years ago have not changed, but our response to them has, and so has the implied truth of the photograph.

For over a century and a half photography was the only information medium accepted as a reliable witness. Our trust was based solidly on our experience with the snapshot, the subject of which was known personally to us and thus we had no reason to doubt its truthfulness. This experience carried over into other areas, such as photojournalism. Many of us were aware that the photograph could be altered, and on occasion was, but only with great difficulty, and was easily detected. Our belief in the truthfulness of the vast majority of photographs we saw remained strong, as can be seen by considering of all the tens of thousands of photographs we have seen, how few we have questioned. Acceptance of the truth of a photograph had become ingrained in our belief system.

With the development of digital photography, all of this has changed. Our belief system regarding photography has been dealt a near fatal blow. The introduction of a new technology, which is fundamentally different from the existing one, forces us not only to learn new procedures, but also tends to alter our way of life as well. This can be seen clearly in the invention of the printing press and the automobile, for example, and the tremendous impact they each have had on our way of life. The

electronic revolution is having a similar effect on our lives today, and not only in photography. It is changing the way we educate our children, seek entertainment, conduct business and engage in war. In truth, we are witnessing a total remake of our lives. We have yet to become fully aware of all the changes, because, as Marshall McLuhan, Canadian educator and scholar, wrote, we tend to view the future through a rear view mirror. We hesitate to relinquish cherished traditions.

Marshall McLuhan understood the impact that new technology had on our lives, and expressed his concerns in the 1960s by claiming that: "The medium is the message" (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964). While his early writings invoked great interest, it was the development of electronic technology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries that helped us to understand his arguments. Briefly, McLuhan was saying that the medium itself had a greater influence on society than the message it was disseminating. For example, the act of watching television has had a far greater influence on our lives than any of the programming found on the screen. We tend more and more to allow the medium itself to dominate our time, to the detriment of active participation in social relationships. And the computer is having an even greater disruptive influence. While it is clear that these technologies have changed our lives, it is the digital communication systems (camera, computer, software) that are having the most damaging effect. The truth, formerly associated with the photographic image, will no longer be a given. We are living at the end of a very short period in the history of civilization when there existed a communication system that inspired belief in its message. This never happened before and will probably never happen again.

While the case for "the medium is the message" may not be as easily demonstrated for digital photography as it is for television, it is clear we can claim the medium has changed the message. Photographs depicting news events will be no more reliable than the pencil sketches made by the "special artists" for *Harper's Weekly* during the American Civil War when the camera was not capable of stopping action. Digital photography has brought dramatic changes that we must accommodate. The replacement of film technology by electronics has altered our reaction to the captured image from unquestioning acceptance of it as fact to questioning its truthfulness. Final verification of the truth of the image will require a healthy skepticism and a good understanding of our social, political and historical environment.

On the other hand, those among us who aspire to being artists have seen photography morph into art by means of the digital camera and computer software, and we have seen fact as truth replaced by interpretation as truth.

## IN MEMORIAM: JOHN B. NASLANIC (1925-2006)

A remembrance by Andee Seeger

"You shouldn't be superstitious. It's bad luck," said John, a past president of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society, brilliant engineer and keen scientific mind. Then he died on a Friday, the 13th (October 2006).

He brought MiPHS back from the edge of extinction. With renewed member interest, sharp programming, and a lively, expanded and informative newsletter—*The Photogram*—John Bohdom Naslanic, president from 1987-1991, re-invigorated a fading organization, built membership, and made the group into a player among photographic historical societies.

John was present at the creation of MiPHS, as a charter member, and served also on the board. As president he also edited *The Photogram*, making it almost a full-time job, and except for one year continued with it until 2003. He developed an encyclopedic knowledge of products and processes through the whole range of photographic history, read voluminously, collected avidly, and never stopped learning.

John poured into MiPHS the hard work and energy that characterized his life. Born in Detroit of immigrant parents, he seemed destined for the Ford assembly line like his elders. Then as a teenager he found a prospectus for Cass Technical High School, which he said opened new worlds to him and changed his life. From that moment, he knew what he wanted.

Uncle Sam had other plans. During World War II, John graduated into the U.S. Army and served in combat in Europe. Of his growing deafness, he said he'd been in the artillery. But the G. I. Bill paid for his degree from what was then Wayne University. Despite a skeptical family, he became the first among them to achieve a college education. Then he did a stint as a technical

copywriter for the Rossi & Company ad agency. When John, too, went to work for Ford, it was as an engineer.

Laid off during the Eisenhower recession, John quickly found a job at Detroit Testing Laboratories, then went back to Ford until the next recession, when he landed at the Budd Company. As soon as the opportunity arose, he returned to Ford as a materials testing engineer, staying until his retirement. He also taught company trainees, and supplied most of the photos and text of the chapter on materials analysis in the internationally acclaimed *Materials Handbook,* though largely without recognition.

Though he loved his work, his real passion was photography. On the job he shot photos through a scanning electron microscope. On his own, he preferred pictures of nature, landscapes and pretty girls. For many early years he wrote and edited the newsletter of the Detroit Camera Club Council, producing it on a small second-hand printing press he lugged down to his basement.

The throat problems which plagued him in later years turned out to be cancer. He completed radiation therapy and seemed to be on the mend when, following a minor automobile accident, he collapsed and died. Survivors include a niece, Karen, and nephew, Kenneth, and their families (Kenny chauffeured John to his many medical appointments); and, of course, MiPHS.

What was John doing out on his own that day? One hopes he was enjoying a flea market. ❧

NEXT IN *THE PHOTOGRAM*

**" 'SUICIDALCOMPETITION': THE RISE OF ART PHOTOGRAPHY"**

by
James Jensen


## Through a Lens…Softly

The Lure and Magic of Toy Cameras

February 1-28, 2007
Pierpont Commons
UM North Campus
Ann Arbor, MI

Reception, Thursday, February 1
7:00pm - Piano Lounge
Pierpont Commons - 2101 Bonisteel

Photography Exhibit by Mark F. O'Brien

## PHOTO-HISTORY CALENDAR

January 20: **MiPHS** – Lecture: William J. Cristen, "Pauline Cushman: Spy of the Cumberland," Birmingham Historical Museum, Birmingham, MI, 2:00PM
February 1-18: Exhibition: "Through a Lens . . . Softy: The Lure and Magic of Toy Cameras," Pierpont Commons, Ann Arbor, MI
February 1-June 17: "Working America: Photographs from the Ewing Galloway Agency, 1910-1950," Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo St., Lansing, MI, www.michigan.gov/museum
February 18: New York City Historic Faire, Holiday Inn, New York, NY, www.showsandexpos.com/image.htm
March 18: D.C. Antique Photo Show, Holiday Inn Rosslyn-Westpark, Arlington, VA, www.stereoview.com
March 24: **MiPHS** – Annual Dinner & Lecture: Gordon Brown, speaker, Birmingham Athletic Club, 4023 West Maple Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 6:00PM reception, 7:00PM dinner followed by lecture. Reservations required. Cash bar.
April 1: 45th Michigan Antiquarian Book & Paper Show, Lansing Center, Lansing, MI, www.curiousbooks.com
April 1: Boston Antique Photo Show, Westford Regency Hotel, Westford, MA, www.stereoview.com
April 12-15: Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD), Photography Show, 7th Regiment Armory, New York, NY, www.aipad.com
April 15: MPM All Image Show, Emeryville Courtyard Marriott, Emeryville, CA www.mpmpresents.com
May 6: International Camera & Image Show & Sale, Chicago Photographic Collectors Society, Holiday Inn, Rolling Meadows, IL, www.chicagophotographic.com
May 17: **MiPHS & DIA** – Lecture: Chris Mahoney, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI, 8:00PM.
May 25-27: Ohio Camera Collectors Society, Trade Fair & Auction, Radisson Hotel Columbus-Worthington, Worthington, OH, www.historiccamera.com
October 14: **MiPHS** – Annual Photographica Show & Sale, Novi Community Center, Novi, MI 10:00AM-4:00PM