

Looking to the future – Graham Burstow, Patron, Toowoomba Photographic Society (re-typed by Geoff Adams, November 2020).

So often we hear it said that to age gracefully, we should keep our mind active.

Of all the activities that can achieve this, photography must be one of the best. If cost is a prime consideration, some of the modern cameras are not inexpensive, and, it costs so little to use them.

If camera clubs spent as much time attracting retirees as they do attracting the younger generation, they would have to relocate to larger premises. Great friendships are made.

The modern day cameras are efficient and easy to use, so nothing is more important than the choice of subject matter.

Retirees have a lifelong wealth of knowledge stored in their minds which is just waiting to be used. This is why older people seem to take to photography so quickly. I attend many functions looking for subject matter and at many of these functions; the senior generation are by far the majority of the photographers.

At times, the majority are senior women who have discovered that what was thought to be outside their sphere of activities is now enjoyable, satisfying, creative, giving results and not costly.

Often they have a personal way of understanding the subject matter and this can show in a special way in their work.

Vibration.

Most modern cameras incorporate image stabilisers. This can overcome a physical shake which was once a problem.

Physical Needs.

You can organise your photography to match your physical needs. If your movements are restricted, concentrate on suitable subject matter. Some of the most active people you can meet are landscape or nature photographers. There are many over 90 years of age (including the author! Ed.) still enjoying photography.

Some are doing photographic courses. Many of the famous photographers claim that they did their best work beyond 80 years of age.

Quotes from other photographers on judging.

1. John Williams, photographer

<https://www.jwfoto.net/>

“The most important ingredient – the emotional content of the photograph. We have been educated into a traditional way of looking at pictures.

The so-called rules of composition have been handed down to us, and they have become convenient things for judges to fall back on, when he doesn't know what to say about a picture. This is bad judging.

Emotional content is more important than a set of rules.”

2. Kevin Aston

“When you are invited to judge, the invitation is basically a compliment to your knowledge and appreciation of what constitutes a good picture. It is therefore important that your judgement gives the impression of a considered and impartial evaluation of all entries.

The most difficult picture is the ‘neither good, nor bad’ type about which you can find little to say. This is generally a technically acceptable shot of an uninteresting subject, approached with little imagination by the photographer.

This type of entry comes from the photographer who does not understand the subtleties of emotional content and impact found in more successful entries.”

3. John Zerby

“Judging is much more of an art than a science, and attempts to make it scientific are likely to be rather dismal ones. It is not possible to separate the practice of judging into small, easy to follow steps. The judging procedure depends on a large number of interchangeable things – like the previous experiences of the judge, or his approach to life in general.

These experiences and states of mind enable the individual to form a set of preferences.”

4. Max Johnson

“One of the requirements of being a successful judge is understanding just what a club requires. He must appreciate that he is speaking to an extremely wide range of people. He must train himself to be able to offer something to all of these people.

The second requirement of a good judge is success as an exhibitor, even at club level. Some of the club members may have national and international acceptances and so he has to address them on their terms.”

5. Graham Allen and Bob Sawyer

“Your criticism is not constructive unless you give an alternative way of doing what you say is bad. Don't let (put?) a person down. They say you can't teach an old dog tricks, but you can teach a human tricks and tell him how to do a particular task.”

6. Lionel Howes – The Judge as Lecturer

“First of all, a most important thing to me is that when I say something to you, you should be the same wavelength as I am. You should receive its meaning the way I intended.”

7. Chris Bennett – Searching for the Unattainable.

“I am quite certain the attributes to appraise photography cannot be attained quickly or deliberately. Competence or recognition as a photographer does not automatically bestow ability as a judge”.

TPS Photographer’s Retrospective - Graham Burstow, April 2020

(On 26 April 2020 Graham was to give the highlight in the TPS Photographer’s Retrospective series as part of the TPS 115th anniversary celebrations and this was to follow the launch of his 4th book in March. Unfortunately, both were cancelled due to the pandemic, but some of his thoughts are recorded here – Geoff Adams).

“How does one keep an ongoing involvement in photography for over 73 years?

Well, many years ago, my younger brother joined the newly formed camera club at his school and within one week, brought his first print home.

This certainly caught my attention and I could then see the use of photography in the two organisations – sport and music – in which I was an organising member.

So I purchased my first camera and soon joined the Toowoomba Photographic Society in 1952.

I then became involved in Exhibition Photography and in the setting up of the Australian Photographic Society.

I found it a goal to publish some of my prints in book form and I am still doing this today.

As I am still a curious person and enjoy the company of people, I see reasons to continue.

Photographic interests of Graham Burstow (previously published).

When I searched the files in my cupboards to prepare this talk, I felt some embarrassment concerning the time I put into photography.

Did I give my children their full due proportion of their father's time?

Now, thinking back, I can see, with great satisfaction, how my photography directed my children's future in a most positive way.

Well, I did have the good fortune of being born into a singing family. As a boy, I was reciting poems and lyrics, and singing in choirs.

Later, I married a very artistic young woman. So no one questioned the time I put into photography.

They all obviously expected me to follow an art form, whatever it may be.

My younger brother joined the newly formed camera club at his school. During his first week, he brought one of his first prints home.

This certainly caught my attention and as I was an organising member of two groups – sport and music – I could see the opportunities of photography in keeping records and setting tasks.

I then purchased my first camera and joined the Toowoomba Photographic Society in 1952. I learned to appreciate the work of world ranked photographers, like Cartier-Bresson and Dorothea Lange.

Naturally, I became involved in International Exhibitions and was also involved in the setting up of the Australian Photographic Society.

I sent my prints to more than 30 countries to check their rules as I was chairman of the Print Division of the Australian Photographic Society for more than ten years and I wanted rules to be in agreement.

In my search for these rules, my prints were awarded five Fellowships.

One of my four prints that I first sent to an approved international exhibition was “Water’s Edge”, taken at Mermaid Beach.

There were seven family members photographing my little daughter there, and I noticed over my shoulder, the placement of the foam.

I quickly snapped this on black and white film and it was awarded the Sun Trophy.

As for history, I am the first Australian to be awarded a Fellowship in each of the American, Royal and Australian Photographic Societies.

The opportunity to gain a Fellowship is available to all photographers, but needs perseverance.

I was also awarded an OAM (Order of Australia Medal) in 1973 for leading the setting up of the Australian Photographic Society - established in 1962 (checked – ed.).

This followed the six American approved international exhibitions we organised and staged here in Toowoomba from 1960 to 1972.

I am still publishing some of my prints in book form.

My 73 years in photography have been very constant. As I am a curious person who enjoys the company of people, there are reasons to continue, all enjoyable.

About Graham S. Burstow (from “Closer” 2020).

OAM, FAPS, FRPS, FPSA, EFIAP, Hon. FAPS, PSQA, HAFB, PSQF, SAPS.

(Born Toowoomba, Queensland, 1927)

Graham started photography as a young man of seventeen – introduced to it by his younger brother Sydney, who had joined the Toowoomba Grammar School’s camera club. This began a lifelong passion for the art form and a commitment to its promotion through the photographic society movement – the latter seeing him recognised through the award of an award of an Order of Australia Medal for Services to Photography in Australia in 2004.

Other career highlights of Graham’s include:

- The publication of four books of his prints – *Touch me* (1998), *Sometimes a light* (2002), *Flesh – the Gold Coast in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s* (2014), and *Closer* (2020).
- His inclusion in a group of six prominent Queensland-based photographers chosen by the Queensland Art Gallery to document aspects of Queensland life for a major exhibition, *Journeys North*, as part of the bicentenary celebrations in 1988.
- Prints acquired by the Queensland Art Gallery, the State Library of Queensland, and the National Library of Australia for their permanent collections.

Graham is a life member and Patron of the Toowoomba Photographic Society, of which he has held most offices. He was a foundation member of the Australian Photographic Society when it was formed in May 1962. He is an Honorary Life Member, Past President, and Past Chairman of the Print Division.

Through submitting his work to exhibitions in more than 30 overseas countries and his role as chairman of six international exhibitions in Australia, Graham was able to use this experience to establish some of the services now part of the photographic scene in Australia.

One of these was the establishment of the ‘Social Documentary’ category in Australian exhibitions – a type of photography he particularly enjoys. As a result of his exhibition history, Graham is the first Queenslanders to have achieved a Fellowship in each of the Australian, British, and American photographic societies.

Graham maintains an involvement in the Photographic Society of Queensland. He continues to photograph using black and white film, and creates prints in his darkroom at home, using the silver gelatin process.

Collections holding Graham's work

- Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Australian Photographic Society
- Federation of Indian Photography
- City of Toowoomba Gallery
- Heritage Collection, Toowoomba
- Private collections

Prizes, awards and honours

1978 Arts Medal – Royal Photoclub Entre Nous, Belgium

1980 Commonwealth Australia day Award (#1)

1982 Caltex award

1988 Gold Award – Bicentenary International Exhibition, Geelong (#2)

1988 Gold Award – Sydney International Exhibition (#3)

1994 Gold Award – Vigex International Award (#4)

1991 Ilford/Anitec Award

1997 Ilford/Anitec Award

1996 Muswellbrook Acquisitive Award (#5)

1997 Winton Acquisitive Award (#6)

1997 Emerald Art Prize

1996 Regional Art Development Board Grant, Toowoomba

1986 Queensland Art Gallery Grant supported by the Commissioning Program of the Australian Bicentennial Authority, National Arts and Entertainment Committee

1964 Australian Photo Review – Recognition Medal

1974 Commonwealth Medal for Amateur Photography

1960 AFIAP – Associateship of the International Federation of Photographic Art

- 1967 ARPS - Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society
- 1974 AAPS – Associateship of the Australian Photographic Society
- 1986 Hon FAPS – Honorary Fellowship of the Australian Photographic Society
- 1989 FAPS – Fellowship of the Australian Photographic Society
- 1992 APSA – Associateship of the Photographic Society of America
- 1993 PSQA – Associateship of the Queensland Photographic Society

Solo exhibitions

- 1975 Adelaide, South Australia
- 1978 Innisfail, Queensland
- 1982 Christchurch, New Zealand
- 1984 Ipswich City Gallery, Queensland
- 1984 Image Gallery, Brisbane
- 1984 India, travelling exhibition
- 1987 India, travelling exhibition
- 1992 Gisbourne, New Zealand
- 1997 Ipswich, Queensland

Group exhibitions

- 1972 Limousin, France – Twenty Australian Photographers
- 1983 Sydney, Brisbane, Toowoomba, Lismore – Ten Australian Masters
- 1989 Sichuan, China – Selected Australian Photographers
- 1991 Russia – Selected Australian Photographers
- 1990-6 Queensland Photographic Society Travelling Exhibition, *The Queenslanders*
- 1989-98 Downlands Art Exhibition, Toowoomba – Selected photographers with other artists
- 1994 Sutherland, NSW – Selected Australian Photographers
- 1995 Dalby, Queensland – Dalby Images, Six Australian Photographers
- 1996 Bendigo, Victoria – Six Australian Photographers

1996 Brisbane – Selected Members, Royal Photographic Society Chapter

1978 Belgium – Royal Photoclub Entre Nous, Nevilles

Five Photographers, Five Continents (Graham Burstow, Australia; Wellington Lee, USA; Dr Miroslav Stibor, Czechoslovakia; Pedro Raota, Argentina and Ted Dickinson, South Africa)

1988 Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane – Six Australian photographers selected. Funded by the Australian Bicentennial Authority for exhibition *Journeys North*. This exhibition has been presented in several overseas countries

1996 Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane – Selected photographers for exhibition *Power to Move*

Publications

FIAP Yearbook, 1962

Camera in Australia – edited by Allen G. Gray, 1970

Australian Photography – edited by Laurence Le Guay, 1976

Australian Photography: A Contemporary View - Edited by Laurence Le Guay, 1980

Camera & Cine Annual, 1977

Journeys North – Queensland Art Gallery, 1988

Christmas in Australia – Hutchinson, 1993

Photography Yearbook – Fountain Press, 1993

Magazines

Photographic News, 1972

Image: Journal of the Australian Photographic Society, 1966-97

Australian Photography 1996

Lecturing and judging

Graham Burstow has lectured and judged extensively for over 30 years at local, national and international levels. Some activities include two lectures at the Dome of Science, Canberra, a keynote speaker at the Annual Convention of the Photographic Society of New Zealand, 1992, and a *Photographer's Retrospective* on his 73 years of photography presentation at the Toowoomba Photographic Society as part of the Society's 115th anniversary celebrations.

Positions held

1971-81 Chairman of the Print Division of the Australian Photographic Society

1983-84 President of the Australian Photographic Society

1959-90 President and then Secretary of the Toowoomba Photographic Society – now Life Member and Patron

1962-74 Chairman of one National and six International photographic exhibitions

1977 onwards Curator of Acquisitive Award, Toowoomba.

For over 60 years, Graham Burstow has been an active entrant in approved open International and National Exhibitions in the following countries – China, Russia, England, Portugal, Brazil, India, South Africa, USA, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia.