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AWARD-WINNING PHOTOS BY CHARLES LOWE IN THE 1970s LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

Take a step back in time and check out this video recording of a slide show and panel discussion presented by the Cape Ann Museum that was offered in conjunction with its exhibition *Charles A. Lowe Photos: Gloucester 1975* (on display from March 7 to May 31, 2009). Charles Lowe (1932-1981) was a Gloucester native and the first full time photographer at the *Gloucester Daily*

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Times. This exhibit featured photos from the Cape Ann Museum archives that had been culled from approximately 6,000 images taken by Charles Lowe in the year 1975. The host of this presentation was Peter Watson, who was the editor of the *Gloucester Daily Times* from 1871 to 1982 and had worked closely with Lowe. Peter Watson also helped select the photos for the exhibition in conjunction with Cape Ann Museum archivist Fred Buck, who oversaw the digitization and organization of this vast collection of around 40,000 images.

A total of 150 slides of Charles Lowe's work are presented in this program with accompanying commentary from Peter Watson on the wide variety of subject matter. Following these slides, three professional photographers from Gloucester who either knew of or worked with Charles Lowe during his lifetime spoke about the influence Charles Lowe had on their own work and on the field of documentary photography. John Blanding, assistant chief photographer for the *Boston Globe*, worked under Charles Lowe's direction at the *Gloucester Daily Times* as a high school student in the late 1960's. Jim Mahoney, director of photography for the *Boston Herald*, directly succeeded Lowe at the *Gloucester Daily Times* after Lowe's death from lung cancer. And Nubar Alexanian, an award-winning freelance documentary photographer and Gloucester resident, was a younger contemporary and admirer of Lowe who learned from his work.

Subject list

Charles A. Lowe	Nubar Alexanian
Peter Watson	Gloucester in 1975
Fred Buck	<i>Gloucester Daily Times</i>
John Blanding	Documentary photography
Jim Mahoney	

Transcript

00:16

Linda Marshall

Thank you so much for joining us at the Cape Ann Museum.

I hope everybody managed to find a seat. I'm sorry for some of the confusion with that. Thank you for joining us for today's program on Charlie Lowe. I just wanted to remind you that the exhibition, "Charles A. Lowe Photos, Gloucester, 1975," is currently on view in our third floor gallery. And that will be up until the end of May. And if you don't know this already, the Museum is actually offering free admission every Saturday morning between 10am and noon, during the exhibition period. So, I hope you'll take advantage of that opportunity. Also, there's a wonderful catalog that was published in conjunction with the exhibition. These are for sale out in the atrium, as well as at the front desk. So please take a look at that. There's quite a few copies of this up in the exhibition room if you just want to leaf through that as well.

I did want to share some news before we begin. I'm very excited to announce that the Museum is about to launch a new program of docent guided tours starting in April. So every weekend in April and May, we will be offering tours at 11am and 2pm on Saturday and also on Sundays at two. And with your Museum admission, those programs are free. So we have recently completed a training program with eleven docents who are volunteers from the local area. And they are prepared to teach you all kinds of things about the highlights of our collection, about Fitz Henry Lane, and about other special exhibitions. I did put together a sheet of information on guided tours. So please take those with you and share that information with your family and your friends and neighbors. We're really sort of happy to be able to offer this new program. So today (this down a little bit) we're very pleased to be able to present a panel of distinguished photographers—John Blanding, Jim Mahoney, and Nubar Alexanian who will be all sharing their thoughts on Charlie Lowe. But before we begin, I wanted to introduce two individuals whose vision that made this exhibition, as well as today's program, possible. Fred Buck is the Museum's Archivist [applause]. Fred has spent countless hours digitizing Charlie Lowe's photographs and had much enthusiasm for this project from the beginning. So thank you, Fred. And also, of course, Peter Watson. Peter was the... [applause]. Peter was the Editor and then the General Manager of the Gloucester Daily Times from 1970 to 2002 and he worked with Charlie Lowe for 12 years. Peter is going to be moderating today's program as well as introducing our guest speakers. So I will turn the microphone over to him. Thank you very much.

03:35

Peter Watson

Thank you. Alright, first question: how many people here had their picture taken by Charlie Lowe or someone in the family had their picture taken by Charlie Lowe? Where were the rest of you for all your lives? You didn't live here in Gloucester in those 24 years? This is Charlie Lowe—1957, weighing about 130 pounds, 25 years old, just out of the Navy, either just married to Christie Fosse who was a nurse in training at Addison Gilbert, or just about to be married. First job turned out to be his last job. 24 years he recorded Gloucester as it probably has never been recorded before.

Thousands and thousands of prints, thousands of photos. And that is represented for those of us who have been involved in this project, which Fred and I have been doing, both the mounted show upstairs and the slideshow we're about to show you. And for those of us who are involved in the 1983 book, *A Portrait of Gloucester—A Portrait, yes, A Portrait of Gloucester, Photos of Charles A. Lowe*. We all had this same problem—that is that Charlie shot so much, and he shot so well, that trying to cull 100 or 150 photos, out of the thousands and thousands of photos, it's been almost impossible each time we've done it. So we've had to use sort of artificial ways to create a universe in which we could cull pictures.

The mounted show upstairs is the year 1975. And that came about because I said to Fred, "Fred, maybe you can look at 50,000 frames that are in the archive, but I can't." So we cut it down to one year. So all I had to look at, 6000 frames. This show is different than that. And in some ways, it's a, it's a real treat that Fred and I have put together with the help, with the help directly of Charlie Lowe. Not just that he took the pictures, which of course he did.

But in preparation for *A Portrait of Gloucester*, which I had finally convinced him to do a book. He had said, "No, no, no, I'm too busy. I'm too busy. Go away, don't bother me" for years. He finally agreed to do a book. And then he became sick; he was diagnosed with lung cancer. And when he was at home before, after he had left work—he was no longer able to work—he called one day and said, "Can you come over I have some stuff you might, you might like to see." But that stuff was in a cardboard box. It was photographs that he had selected. I'm not sure for where or how. But he had selected them; he thought that they should be a consideration for the book. So they became the basis of *A Portrait of Gloucester*. But there was more. And with the cooperation of the Lowe family and particularly Rick Lowe, we came on a bigger box of photographs that Charlie had selected for whatever purpose, either for book, or another book, or whatever. And it's from that collection that this slideshow has been created. Now, Fred has also done an interesting thing with that. He is included in this show, not only the favorites that Charlie had selected, but he's gone back and he's found what we might call outtakes. Photos that were taken at the same time—frames taken at the same time as the ones that were Charlie's favorites. They show two things, they show one work in progress and they show secondarily, just the enormous breadth of really wonderful pictures that Charlie took. I want now to, well, actually I want to do one—I want to do two things, now. Quickly. One, I want to

introduce two groups of people here that are very special, were special to Charlie. One is the Lowe family, Cindy, and Rick, Charlie's third child. Charles has died. But Cindy and Rick here with their families. Please stand for a moment, please.

[Applause]

08:29

The other family is the newspaper family. We in the newspaper business expect a lot of people, we expect a lot of their families. And we appreciate the Lowe family for sharing Charlie. But within the newspaper family we have many, many people here today who worked with Charlie at one point or another in their career, and I'd like those people, the Gloucester Times, present and past to stand for a moment.

[Applause]

09:06

Okay, here's the deal for the rest of the time. We've got over 150 slides. We're going to show them largely interrupted with very spare comment by me. Pictures, speak for themselves. Then we're going to hear from the three photographers who all have had different relationships with Charlie and his work. After that, there's going to be an opportunity for people to make comments, ask questions. And then there's going to be time for those who have not seen the mounted show upstairs, because these are two completely different shows, two completely different sets of photographs. There'll time to go upstairs. So onto the show.

Slideshow

09:55

The first day of school. That's the one that ran in the paper I believe.

Last day of school. Pre-helmet in the 60s. We believe it's Roger Street, we know it's Roger Street, and it shot out the back window of the car. Don't even think how he did that. Anybody recognize themselves?

Armed with a friend on the way to school. How that man could put a camera in someone's face and make him love it I don't know.

10:57

Alice Babson at the old entrance to the Cape Ann Historical where we are now.

11:19

Charlie liked a pretty girl, very much.

Queen—Queen Ann Lace. That's the one that's in the book.

Now this, this is interesting. What's a good flood for if not for kids?
Guess who just discovered the photographer?

12:22

This is the Clearwater, a boat that goes up and down the Hudson that Pete Seeger founded a foundation to raise money to clean it up. It was built at the Harvey Gamage boat yards in Maine in 1969. Came down the coast and stopped in Gloucester. And Seeger did a concert at the Gloucester High School. It's still going up and down the Hudson and the Hudson's getting cleaner and cleaner.

12:52

Unknown

My wife, Helen was just with Pete Seeger two days ago when he was ninety, down in New York.

13:01

Peter Watson

Most of us saw Seeger at the Springsteen concert at the inauguration.

Night sailing.

Cape Ann Fisheries... the owner's here. This was the second to last fire. Didn't take it out. The next one took it out completely. It was closed at the time. This is about 1972.

13:48

Coming home in a fog bank.

Our Lady of Good Voyage. I don't know that Charlie liked heights but he liked shooting heights. But you can see he liked shooting heights from the ground. That's the Taylor Street sign.

14:06

There's more. You're apt to get acrophobic before we're done. City Hall.

14:17

Unknown

Is there a doctor in the house? No seriously. Seriously we have a problem. Peter we need one; we need a doctor. Give him some air.

[Chatter and break]

14:38

Peter Watson

Note the safety harness.

Coming past Ten Pound. Here is an example of what I call the outtake, two shots of the same thing, more or less.

This is Jack Gray at the Trinity Church. Going up to take down the weathervane to do some work on it. A grimace at the photographer.

15:26

Fred Buck who's better on East/West than I am, tells me this is sunrise on the Boulevard.

This is Janine Pourier with her daughter Lanning, the YMCA pool.

Gulls say there's fish aboard.

16:05

Hot time in Gloucester, We think the woman has a bathing suit on. That's the shot that was in the paper, it's actually taken from across the street with a long lens.

16:41

Marston's Farm.

16:43

Why is the shortest guy the big boss? It's Harry Lane and the Nathaniel Warner troop doing a reenactment . British are about to not do so well.

Sea smoke and a cloud bank coming or going and coming.

17:28

This is the storm everybody forgot: January 27, Friday, 1978. If it wasn't for February 5 and February 6 1978, we'd be talking about this one. That was the front page of the Gloucester Times on Saturday.

17:53

Backshore.

I think this is probably the river.

18:09

Track 1960 when the corners were grass and the straight aways were cinder. Larry Naisson almost won the race, but not quite.

Art Class on the backshore, all working, everyone. Whoever was running the class said “everybody work, the photographer’s here.”

18:54

We don't know who this young girl is. If she's in the audience, please identify yourself. Just wonderful pictures. I don't remember whether they ever in the paper, I don't remember them. But Charlie was obviously entranced and he spent a lot of time. Another one of those examples of making people love the camera.

19:41

Seagull on sentry.

This is a visiting ballet troupe at Gloucester High School. And these pictures are not easy to do. City lights from East Gloucester.

This is work at the railways Josephine and Mary, out of Gloucester.

20:59

Floyd Morris, Floyd the clammer.

Back shore surf, you'll see the point in the next one. Just the things you don't want your kids to do.

This is the Coast Guard exercise off Magnolia.

Charlie’s not the only one who likes pretty girls. Watch the eyes of the others in this shot. One of the things about his work is you almost have to see it a couple of times to appreciate everthing about it. Always background.

This is the Ina Hahn Dance Studio in the '60's. And Ina is the middle dancer coming up. There she is

She just told me she never saw those before. There’s Charlie taking the picture in the lower left.

This dance studio was at 1 Center Street. Ina rented early '60's. Until 1957 it was the composing room for the Gloucester Daily Times.

There is another form of dance.

Those are the Lowe children, 1962. Rick, Charles, and Cindy. Can't be a photographer's child and not have your picture taken.

These are taken from, there's a series of these, taken from the top of the MacPherson housing project. You can pick out your house, maybe. St. Ann’s in the center, there.

24:12

This is Cruising Club.

24:14

Audience Member

Oh, god.

24:15

Peter Watson

1980. That was Joe Garland saying, "Oh god." It gets worse, Joe. That's Larry Dom onboard it. One of the interesting things about these pictures is not just half what the pictures are, but the fact that Charlie took these pictures because he knew that with that sort of wind and sea, here comes the one you'll recognize, with that sort of wind and sea that would be the danger point in the harbor. So he was cruising at seven o'clock on a Sunday morning looking to see if something was happening to those boats. This is what he found. Cruising Club was not saved. This is the crowd of Fiesta. Another Charlie trademark is turning the camera away from the action to get the reaction. He did it all the time. You get some wonderful pictures doing that.

25:07

Just missed. This is what he gets for his miss. Salvi Benson. Remember Salvi Benson without a beard?

25:29

Not sure exactly what year, the dog didn't care.

Ferris wheel is of course from the Fiesta carnival.

This is Salvi Benson again. This is 1974 we believe. And guess what? Got it again. And here's his reward. The triumph of walking up the beach with people trailing behind him and grease in his eye,
as you'll see. King of the pole.

26:27

He's got a fan. A lot of grease in his eye.

This is the New Centenarians, 1974 Saturday. No, 1975, I'm sorry, Saturday. They won on Saturday and on Sunday they had a dispute. Big surprise, they never settled it.

27:06

This is Frank Frontiero, a scuttler, declaring victory.

27:06

Washington Street in Lanesville. Snowblower guy ends up getting his just desserts...you'll see that in a minute. I've seen this show six times this week, so I do know what's happening.

27:41

Trinity Church. Remember that? That's the photo that was in the paper.

27:51

Interesting thing coming up. Charlie was a, was a terrific newsman, as well as a photographer. He knew what to look for, he knew he recognized news when he saw it. Even if we didn't always print it. That's the electric company turning the power off to the Trinity Church.

28:18

Unknown

It was the painters that burned it down.

28:22

Peter Watson

Yep. Now, here's a generational picture. His generation meets American Graffiti. The Old Northshore. I don't think he was impressed.

1970's rock concert. It couldn't look more 1970's, and Gordon Baird with a very full head of hair.

29:02

Unknown

Richard and David Duken.

29:07

Peter Watson

I love this picture. Complete with a Volkswagen Van. That's Dexter Murry in the middle in the hat and Earl Foote with a cigar in his mouth to the right. Alex Destino behind him. Joe Palazola with the camera. Guess who he's taking a picture of... Jay Palazola and Mike Cusumano. I think this is the best action picture of football I've seen in a long time. These two guys sitting on the bench talking with each other meant the game was probably well in hand. That's Cusumano at work on the field. Football was Charlie's favorite sport to shoot. He hated hockey. Lord knows what happened to Dexter Murry there. Something.

Man at the Wheel standing up to the storm.

The 1962 Chevrolet intrudes. I know that because I had a car just like that.

This is one of the—these are Prize winners. Charlie won 17 prizes.

Good Harbor beach burning down, 1957, Good Harbor Beach Inn.

This picture was a corner of a four by five negative he had to put the enlarger on the floor to get it large enough. That was a news winner 1970 I believe. Feature, no animal, animal.

Els Neilson 103 years old. Winner of personality.

That we saw earlier. That's, that's a weather category.

That's the North Atlantic Fisheries burning down. First year Charlie worked, 1957. Out of 13 major fires most of them at night.

That's another weather picture, de-icing a dragger.

French horns, that was a feature winner.

31:38

An animal winner.

31:47

This was a news winner. A person was overcome by [?] gas in the boat.

31:55

Intentional double exposure. Utility workers working the ice.

Kids beating their feet in the mud in the marsh.

Keith Trefry coming to the aid of someone hurt in some sort of accident.

32:18

And a friend.

32:25

Sheila Wilson, high jumping, late 70's.

He's out.

And that is Charlie Lowe. I was on the desk that day, he came in and just dropped that picture on the desk without saying a word, walked away. But he was then wearing black cossack fur hats. And he didn't get more than a foot or so, and I said "that's you!" He smiled and kept walking. He took it with a tripod that he had set up and it was on something on a hill. And actually, he had to go back up and down this snowy hill about five times, there's five or six pictures of it. And this was the first one. He got it dead on, first time. The others were not nearly so good.

That's it.

[Applause]

Put the lights up. All right. The next phase of this is I—Fred and I asked three people, three professional photographers all had relationships with Charlie and Charlie's work in different ways. We asked them to share their thoughts on Charlie and his work. First is going to be John Blanding who is the Associate Chief Photographer with the Boston Globe now. The second is going to be Jim Mahoney, who is the Director of Photography for the Boston Herald. The third is Nubar Alexanian, who is a documentary photographer, living in Gloucester who has documented places as far away as Peru— published books on Peru—and as close as home he published Gloucester photographs in the year 2000. They're going to each speak in order. I'm done until they're done. John?

34:49

John Blanding

In late 1960s, I was going to Gloucester High School and I got interested in photography, and I started doing darkroom work and looking at pictures like Life magazine and Look magazine where, yeah, they were the best. But it was noteworthy that the Gloucester Times had remarkably good pictures. And you always noticed it was Charles A Lowe under them. So anyway, at that time, the Gloucester High School paper, the Flash, was published on Saturdays in the Gloucester Times. It was an easy way for them to fill space and find people that could help them out. Cheap, cheap money. And I guess the pictures occasionally were in focus, because Charlie called me and asked if I could start doing work for the Times. And that led to a summer job in 1969.

In those days, the Times was still printed in Gloucester, and Charlie had a pretty busy day. He would, you know, come in in the morning, and process his own pictures, and also film from the reporters. The paper was printed in Gloucester. And he also did the engraving. So he had total control of the product. And then after all that, after the presses had finished their run, he'd be out doing assignments. So they hired me to help out in the summer. It was actually a remarkable summer, 1969. And I learned more from him than from anyone else. He worked in a dark room that was in the basement of the Times then. It was directly under the publisher Phil Weld's office. And Phil Weld had a rather loud voice. So we were privy to everything he said. The dark room was a mess for photographers, it was remarkable. It was a mess, but there was no dust in. And among other things, he had a film dryer that he created from an old red beauty parlor hair dryer. And you have to be careful because it would melt film if you left it in too long. He also started doing color processing and getting ready for the switch to offset printing in Beverly. And it didn't have a temperature control sync. So we would juggle faucets and we put signs on the bathrooms upstairs, "Please do not flush while we're working."

[Laughter]

One of Charlie's secrets that made him so good was that technically he was a remarkably good photographer and very advanced for the time. We saw the picture at the beginning of him with the four by five speed graphic. But he was one of the first to switch to 35 millimeter. And he also, there's very few flash pictures that he's taken. He did, he could use flash very well, a lot of times you didn't know he used the strobe. But he, he had a secret and at that time, photographers were starting to push film. Best I can tell it as a chemist Harold Bauman, who started a company making acufine and diafine film developers for high speed, you know, increased sensitivity to light. And I'm pretty sure he lived on the Back Shore. And I think when he was developing these formulas, he was working with Charlie. And that's why when the waterfront in Gloucester was burning down and Charlie had all these spectacular photos, he had a secret edge. And he was also one of the first, he was the first photographer I've ever seen to use a motorized camera. Every newspaper photographer everywhere now uses them. But Charlie was the first and no one at the time did. And so it's fitting that that camera was later passed on to Jim Mahony.

38:38

Jim Mahoney

Thanks, John.

Boy, where to begin. I'm probably the, well, I am the only guy who's going to stand up here today that actually never met Charlie. I was hired shortly after he had left the paper and he died virtually after I arrived at the paper. So sadly, I never had the opportunity to meet him. But in many respects, I did meet him. I met him every day when I walked into the Gloucester Times, and turned around and looked at this wall of unbelievable prize winners. And as a 23 year old, and I'll readily say a snotnosed kid, that was impressive. And that was a bar that was set so high for me and for every other photographer that has followed, apparently there has been a bunch, sadly. And as John said, this was just a marvelous place to work as a young photographer, cutting my teeth in the industry, to see all these incredible photos that Charlie had made. To be able to go back into the archives daily and just plow through, what made this guy so good. Everywhere I went, of course, how could I not have, I'll run into you folks and say, "Hey, where's Charlie, what's up with Charlie?" Of course, a lot of people hadn't realized he had become ill. And there were so many who may have said, boy, you have a very unenviable job. You know what, I had a very enviable job. You know, I didn't have to follow Charlie's footsteps. I didn't have to step in them, in fact, Peter made a point. What I remember indirectly and saying, you know, carve your own path, but here's the bar. Keep jumping, keep jumping, keep jumping. And until the day I left and to the day I stand here in front of you, we're still jumping. It's really been a remarkable time.

But Charlie was an amazing photographer. Just for a young guy myself, to be able to look at his stuff, to “pick his brain” if you will. To look at pictures, to try to dissect, how did he make this? To take those photos and tear them apart.

The dark room I walked into was a much improved one. It was somewhere along between John's time in the darkroom and what I ended up with was immense improvement. It was this nice, double barreled action, had the developing film developer on one side, and the printing apparatus on the other side with a revolving blackout door that went between it. The only caveat to it, the only funny story I have is, it had double light switches all over the place. So as you might imagine, if one light switch was in the on, the other was in the off, you never quite knew where it was going on. This is probably my funniest story of the dark room, although they weren't funny. After a fairly large storm, I had someone who sent me 8 rolls of film loaded up, all reels all out in the open. We had lost power at the Times, but I was still in the process of developing the film. We could easily do this. When I get a knock on the door simultaneous with the lights coming back on, and all this film out, with “hey, I fixed the door, I fixed the lights.” And I apologize, I've forgotten the name of the electrician who was just proud as peach that he had fixed the lights.

Who was it?

41:28

Unknown

Toby Cooming.

41:29

Jim Mahoney

That was it, that was it. And I was standing there with eight rolls of completely blown film. The entire weekend of nor'easter of snow, rain and all something. Plus the Rockport film, probably Lisa's film, and everybody else's... it was just chaos. It may have been one of the few times the Gloucester Times went to press with you know, like an Associated Press Photo from Gloucester on page one that John probably shot on his way into work. But to have that, to have what Charlie and Peter and others had done... Charlie's talent, Charlie's ability to make just beautiful, spectacular narrative photos, as John pointed out, far ahead of the time then the rest of the industry kind of accepted this as the, as the norm. What became the kind of documentary kind of photography that we became accustomed to in the probably mid to late 70's, through the bulk of the 80's, Charlie was doing. He was doing in the 60's. And I suspect when he switched over to the 35 millimeter format, which is the motorized camera that John alluded to, you can see, to me, I can see his photography just really changed. It took on a whole new dimension. And I could see that, I remember this very distinctly from the four by five, which is a very stilted

way of making pictures to the 35 millimeter which was very portable way of making photos. But Charlie was a master. He had learned very quickly how to use his lenses, how to command the scene and how to operate and make the light sing for him. Peter talked about people making love to the camera. He did it with his, the people who he shot, the scenes that he shot in Gloucester. Clearly he loved Gloucester. He was Gloucester.

43:20

Nubar Alexanian

Good afternoon. I moved to Gloucester in 1971, because I was coming here from Boston to take pictures. And, oh you have that picture up, great. Well, and, you know, I'd look in the newspaper and see these pictures and I'd see Charlie Lowe's name under it. And I figured that, when I was out photographing, he was the guy in the big coat, because I didn't know him then. And I'd just sort of be wandering around... I mean, my relationship with Charlie was one of very, very few words. But I would always be out photographing and there'd be Charlie and we'd been photographing a Fiesta. He'd be, you know, you, he'd sort of like get the shot that he needed, which we all knew where that was from. And then people would sort of move on, but I'd sort of start wandering around. And I'd often find myself sort of right near Charlie. And after a while I was like this young sort of, had all these big beliefs about what I was going to do when I was very eager and sort of full of myself, really. But Charlie, Charlie one day said to me, "Good instincts kid." And I thought, I said to him, "Well, how do you know? You've never seen any of my pictures." And he looked at me like, "why would I have to do that?" So, and but, I was... I learned an amazing amount just by being out in the world with Charlie. And I've sort of been, and I thought about the whole notion of instincts that, you know, you... Charlie could anticipate things happening. It wasn't like just being there. It was... he was sort of ahead of the action in some way. And you know of the many things that I've learned from him and his work, I think it's really true that it's easy to take a beautiful picture of beautiful things, and it's easy to take compelling pictures of compelling situations. But it's very, very difficult to take interesting pictures of everyday life. And that's what Charlie did. And you look at his pictures and his pictures will teach you everything you need to know about photography just by looking at them. That's all I have to say.

45:31

Peter Watson

Boy, Fred, did we pick good, good people to talk. Wow. All right. That was, that was terrific. I thought they were just, just wonderful. This is a time now for people in the audience to comment or have questions for me or for one of the three photographers. Yes.

45:58

Unknown

I'm just wondering how he got started, what inspired him, what his training was.

46:04

Peter Watson

Oh, Charlie. Well, the best I know is stuff I read, actually. I never talked to him about it. He, he had a darkroom in his cellar on Centennial Avenue when he was growing up as a kid. He went into the Navy, where he was trained as a photographer's mate, and got some of his technical training. That's what he did in the Navy. And when he came out, in 1957, he went to the Franklin Institute for Photography as well. So he was a, he was a trained photographer. It wasn't as if he was, you know, playing piano by ear. He knew what he was doing. And as the people have mentioned, he loved technology. He was always into the newest thing. I mean, when Charlie got his first wide angle lens, we'd have lots of wide angle pictures. And then his telephoto and his motor drive and all that, he, he was always looking for the next advance. And always reaching for that.

I might add just one thing, the darkroom that that John describes was really a pit, although it's good to hear what Phil Weld had to say. But then, we got really crazy because Charlie, this was the time when Charlie was winning three, four or five awards a year, so we built him the darkroom that Jim described. Now, this is like in 1972, I think we spent \$10,000 on the dark room. It was, it was double, every cabinet in it was made, especially made by Cal Cook and Dave Young. Every piece of formica was laid on by Cal Cook and Dave Young. And we spent a fortune on it and Charlie kind of grunted and thought that was nice. But we weren't, we weren't counting on him to tell us how good we were to him. We were counting on his pictures. Someone else? Yes.

48:00

Unknown

Did he take pictures not intended for publication in the Times but just for its own enjoyment, and if so, what were the subjects?

48:10

Peter Watson

Did he take pictures not for publication but for his own enjoyment? A few, but not a lot really. Or if he did I don't know about them. He, they didn't come through the darkroom. So I don't think he did. And I would see his proofsheets. One of the things when you're an editor of a small newspaper is you're everybody's backup. And I was Charlie Lowe's emergency darkroom

backup. So I would sometimes be printing a, something off one of his proof sheets. Proof sheet is the miniature of all the, of all the pictures that he took that day, like 20 little miniature pictures. And that was when I first realized, in a sense, I would look at those and I'd say, "Oh my God, look at what we weren't able to get in the paper." I mean, it would be of 18 exposures, you know, 10 would be great. And six would be really really good and two would be throw away. But I rarely saw on them pictures that he would have taken around the house, that kind of thing. I suspect that photographer's children, in fact, don't get photographed as much as yours and mine might be.

Anyone else? Okay, no more? All right, there's time to go upstairs. Because if you liked what you've seen down here, there's a whole other dimension of Charlie Lowe's photographs mounted upstairs on the third floor. The year 1975. And there's 125 of those. The award winners which you saw on the slides are up there too. But the, the rest is the year 1975. Thank you for coming. I understand we're doing this again in April.

[Applause]