

UNH Exhibition Gets Up Close with Campus Photographers

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UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- A new exhibition at the University of New Hampshire Museum turns a camera on the campus and focuses on the photographers who have documented UNH history in the making. Among them are today's staff photographers Gary Samson, Ron Bergeron, Doug Prince and Lisa Nugent.

"A Campus in Focus" will be on display until March 3, 2000. The museum is located in the Special Collections section of Dimond Library.

Among the features are prints documenting university life, dark room chemicals, camera equipment and a poster-size restoration print of the man responsible for launching the university's pictorial history.

The legacy of Clement "Centimeter" Moran is seen in his approximately 15,000 images of campus life from 1914 to 1940, according to Dale Valena, museum curator.

Moran was a physics professor, but he also taught photography and had a small business on the side. "Small in stature and always impeccably dressed," Valena says, "Professor Moran taught physics in the morning and photographed in the afternoons, and never one at the expense of the other."

He set up a darkroom in Demeritt Hall on campus where he processed photos, sold images and taught a course in photography.

In gathering and researching materials for the exhibition, Valena and co-curator Jennifer Carroll sifted through piles of photos -- many with no identification and no way of knowing whether the work was that of Moran. Then they discovered the professor's meticulously kept catalog notes, which linked him to many of the images. "We knew if it had a catalog number, then it was his," Valena continues. "All would be lost if it weren't for his catalog and identification system."

Between photo CD and mounted prints, the show contains 100 images by Moran. His work ranges from the formal class portrait to the unconventional fraternity

pledge class in its underwear. (A handwritten note on the back of that particular print asks that the names of the young men not be published.) vWhen Moran died in 1940, he left a void that would take almost a decade to fill by a new era of professional staff photographers, Valena explains.

Examples of the work of Richard Merritt, John Adams, Samson, Bergeron, Prince and Nugent (all displayed in the show) illustrate the role of the photographer as campus historian, artist and technician.

Adams recalls many rewarding assignments and says the everyday variety fueled his creativity. Always willing to travel, he says, "from mountain tops for a Physics Department assignment to woods and streams for forestry, to Appledore Island for the Marine Program." And always willing to go to extremes for the perfect shot -- "lots of aerials from planes and helicopters, on snowshoes, skis, snowmobiles, and across lakes by canoe for university departments."

"The exhibition has been quite an undertaking," says Valena. "There was so much to choose from." And while she and Carroll also uncovered some appealing freelance photographs of campus life, they decided to keep the focus on the work of UNH staff photographers. "It's history through their eyes and lenses -- a very personal touch." For more information, call 603-862-1081.

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