William A. Reedy Memorial Lecture in Photography



William A. Reedy 1917-1975

Bill Reedy's untimely passing on December 15, 1975 is mourned by his legion of friends among the professional photographic fraternity. More than any other person in the Kodak organization, Bill represented the commercial photographers and championed their interests in the councils of product design, marketing distribution, promotion and advertising. Bill's wise counsel was frequently sought and freely given.

Bill Reedy created and edited the quarterly *Applied Photography*. Under his guidance and genius, it flowered over 21 years and through 61 issues. Bill never let it stray from its original high standard of excellence in photography and in reproduction. He never let it wander from its objective of promoting, by example, the use of photographic illustrations in marketing communications. Bill's philosophy of what illustrative photography should do for the marketer was exemplified in the one word title which he chose for his book on advertising illustration: IMPACT!

The introduction to issue number one of *Applied Photography* in 1954 stated its objectives in Bill's own words:

"Photography, which today is vital to so many business activities, has become the universal language of advertising and selling. It is a language which can inform, persuade, or cast an emotional spell—and do them all at once if need be.

"You have in your hands the first issue of a new quarterly magazine which will illustrate outstanding applications of this most effective form of business communication. It is to be remembered that back of all such successful examples are artists, photographers, lithographers, engravers, and creative printers—men of talent who bring to fruition all good advertising and selling ideas."

Bill's unswerving dedication to his purpose can be seen in that this original explanation of the reason for AP would be as appropriate in the last edition as in the first.

Bill was people oriented. His unselfish interest in photographers and their work was his stock in trade. He knew most of the leading illustrators on a first-name basis, but he searched constantly for new talent. He was an avid browser in photographic exhibits and in photographic magazines. He would see pictures that excited him and then track down their maker to see more of his work. If there was a message or technique which Bill found interesting in this photographer's work, Bill would arrange to work with the photographer in his studio or at some location with the objective of producing something worth showing to the world through the pages of AP. Many nationally known photographic illustrators say that they can trace the real beginnings of their professional careers to their work with Bill and subsequent national exposure of their work in the pages of AP. Bill always accepted such accolades with great modesty and much pride.

Bill's working methods were unique. He was no "organization man." He was happiest when behind the camera with a fellow photographer working out the illustrations for AP.

Not many people know that Bill's academic background was in chemistry. His life-long interest in photography shunted him away from a chemistry

career shortly after his graduation from Colgate University. Only occasionally, when discussing a processing problem with laboratory people or a plate-making problem with a printer, did he delve into his understanding of the chemical basis of these processes in solving the problem of the moment.

Bill was one of that rare breed of people who have photographic talent and the ability to write well. His writings in AP were succinct and to the point. Yet, in their rich and abundant information, they often approached the lyrical in style. They made easy reading and had a high information content. It could be sensed that he was at his best writing about nature subjects. He loved plants and was a flower grower and bonsai tree cultivator of considerable repute. He admired natural beauty and his selection of natural settings for many pictures in AP reflected this interest.

Bill's legacy to us who follow in the field of photography is well expressed in a selection from his book, IMPACT!

"Among the pages of history there is no negation that truth bests the lie, that beauty defeats the ugly, and that good is better than bad. However, there are those to whom the mediocre is good enough, for whom the pursuit of excellence is uneconomic, those who believe that the intellectual and artistic level of the reader of mass media are such that the best is always wasted anyway. There can be no waste in the best. It occupies no more space than the worst. It never offends the ignorant.

"And it frequently pleases the knowing, for there are more knowing than not.

"Most important is a continuing effort to please oneself, to set standards too high for attainment, and reap the exciting satisfaction of trying. A single occasion of getting by with the barely adequate sets the stage for a future of mediocrity and attracts others for whom the best is too much trouble."

I can't say it any better.

Allie C. Peed, Jr.

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