

DON RUTLEDGE

HE HAS HIS FATHER'S EYES

THESIS ACCEPTABLE FOR PUBLICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE EARLY YEARS WITH BLACK STAR	7
3. HOME MISSION BOARD YEARS	27
4. FOREIGN MISSION BOARD YEARS	52
5. CONCLUSION	78
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.	Harley Shield, Home Missionary in Alaska	1
2.	Carl Holden, Home Missionary in Utah	3
3.	Eskimo child playing	4
4.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	8
5.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	9
6.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	10
7.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	11
8.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	13
9.	John Howard Griffen coverage for <u>Black Like Me</u>	14
10.	Learning to count, Albuquerque, New Mexico	15
11.	Family inside the Arctic Circle in Alaska	16
12.	Inner-city of Cincinnati	18
13.	Seminole woman in Dania, Florida	20
14.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	30
15.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	31
16.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	32
17.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	33
18.	Luvenia King in Quinten, Mississippi	34
19.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	35
20.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	36

21.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	37
22.	Bailey King's children play in Quinten, Mississippi	38
23.	One of King children looking at bottle	39
24.	Bailey and Luvenia King in Quinten, Mississippi	40
25.	Bailey and Luvenia King in Quinten, Mississippi	41
26.	Bailey and Luvenia King in Quinten, Mississippi	42
27.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	43
28.	Bailey King in Quinten, Mississippi	44
29.	An Appalachian migrant family in Ohio	45
30.	Day care program in New York City	46
31.	Baptist community center in Kentucky	48
32.	Jane Parker, Foreign Missionary to Guatemala	54
33.	Ethiopian child at a Baptist feeding and medical station	55
34.	Baptist volunteer, Sally Jones, works at feeding and medical station	56
35.	Elderly Ethiopian man at Baptist feeding station	57
36.	Volunteer, Mary Saunders comforts Ethiopian mother and child	58
37.	Ethiopian child at Baptist feeding station	59
38.	Ethiopians eating at the Baptist feeding station	60
39.	Ethiopians leaving Baptist feeding station to return home to families	61
40.	Surgeon Tim Pennell	62
41.	Philippines families cluster together	64
42.	Dr. Jerry Bedsole, Foreign Missionary veterinarian to Ethiopia	65

43.	Ethiopian mother at Baptist feeding and medical center	66
44.	Ethiopian child suffers from malnutrition	67
45.	Ethiopian shields himself from elements	68
46.	Ethiopian's feet receive care	69
47.	Ethiopian mother brings her child to see doctor at Baptist center	70
48.	Ethiopians and their desolate land	71
49.	Volunteer, Mary Saunders with an Ethiopian child	72
50.	Volunteer Mike Edens teaches in Cyprus	74
51.	Ellen Duval, MK, loves her cats and books in Indonesia	76

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

DON RUTLEDGE: HE HAS HIS FATHER'S EYES

This writer has enjoyed seeing the world approximately 137 countries and all of the United States without ever leaving his own home. Most of the traveling was done with the help of The Commission Magazine and Missions USA. Both of the magazines have won some of the highest awards in the country. The Commission Magazine has placed third in magazines in the “Pictures of The Year” contest sponsored by the National Press Photographers

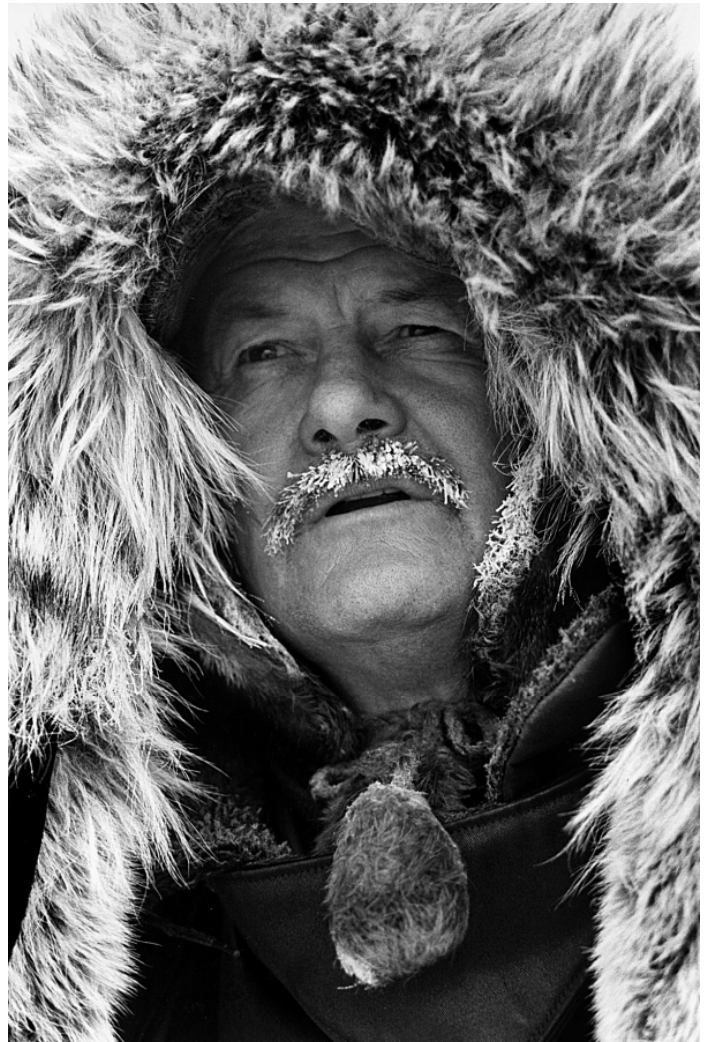


Figure 1 Harley Shields is a Southern Baptist Home Missionary whose work place is Selawik, Alaska. Don photographed him in 1978.

Association in 1989 and 1990. Missions USA has earned similar awards. These Southern Baptist magazines are in a league with National Geographic and Life Magazine for their photography and design.¹

The reason for their success can be tied greatly to Don Rutledge. For this reason this writer is doing his thesis on Don Rutledge for publication.

Don has worked for Black Star photo agency in New York for more than thirty years. During this time he has also worked for the Home Mission and the Foreign Mission Boards of the SBC. He has won more than 400 awards for his work. He has been published in many magazines and books around the globe. His work has taken him throughout all fifty states, all of Canada and to 135 countries.

Today, Rutledge is mentor to many professional photographers and students. All of the photojournalists in the Southern Baptist Convention point to Don as being the reason they are where they are today. All of them hope one day to make the impact he has already made for Southern Baptists and the cause of missions.

Having worked with Don Rutledge for many years, this writer has developed a great appreciation for him. He has come to understand that the common thread that binds all those in ministry is working with people. Don works with people so well that he has made major changes in magazines by his soft encouraging voice. Wherever Don goes he makes many friends.

¹ Howard I. Finberg, The Best of Photojournalism 16: The Year in Pictures, (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 1991), 232.



Figure 2 Every year Carl Holden, a home missionary, takes his young people tubing from his church, Central Baptist.

Don's ability with people is a gift. Don puts people at ease with or without his camera. This is a talent envied by photojournalists the world over. Those in the field of Christian photojournalism understand where this gift came from. They understand how Don's faith is lived out through his camera.

As one looks at Don's photographs, one feels as if he is in the room with the people. Don becomes a part of the woodwork wherever he goes. He blends in so well that people are able to be themselves. His subjects look as though Don were not present. They are not reacting to his presence but are free to be themselves. Don has allowed God to be so much a part of his work, that when one speaks of how Don is a part of the woodwork, one can picture how the Holy Spirit works through him.

His reputation often precedes Don, now that people know of his integrity without ever meeting him. They can see a man who gives dignity to his subjects. Often many photographers today will exploit their subjects. They photograph a handicapped person and exaggerate his handicap so that one never really sees the person. Don's photos call one to feel a part of the person. Don says the eyes are the windows to the soul.

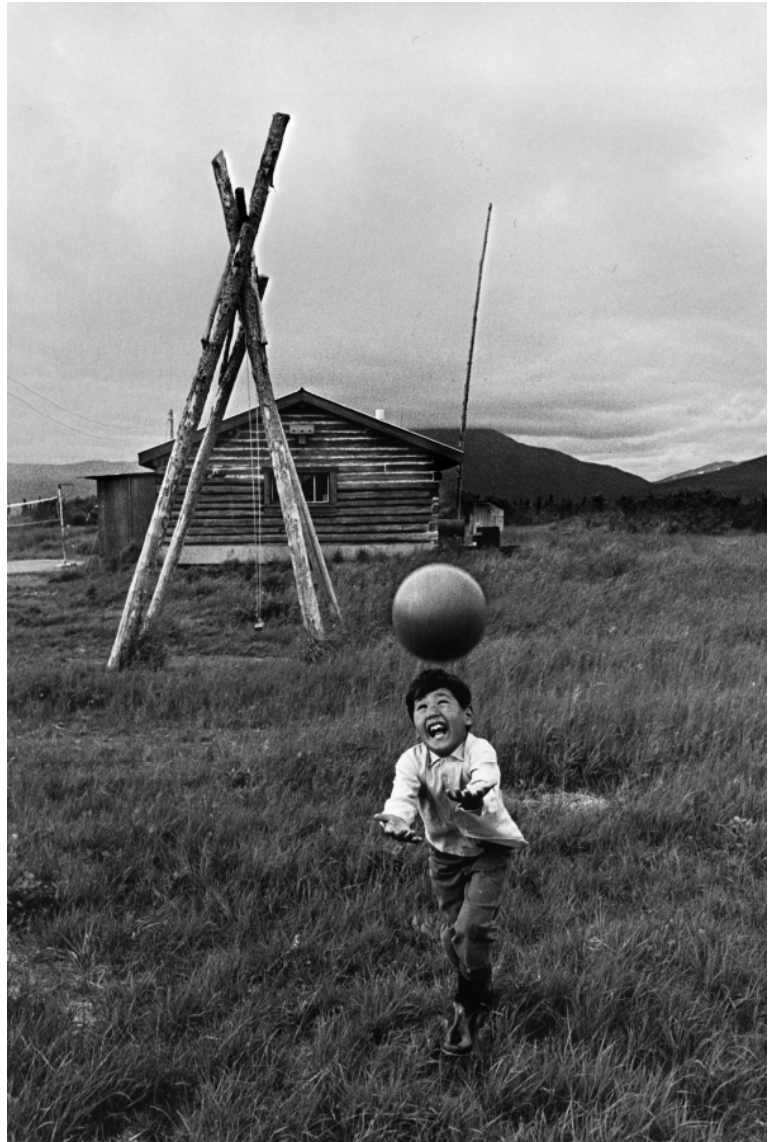


Figure 3 In 1967 Don Rutledge went inside the Arctic Circle and captured this Eskimo child playing.

He reveals the innermost part of people in a brief instant that is frozen on film. The more one looks at the photograph, the more one sees. He packs so much information into a photograph that one can go back over and over it and see something new every time. Don includes small details in his photographs like a good writer who pulls his reader into the situation.

Don studied to be a psychologist and worked on his doctorate in the field. He also studied for the ministry and was a pastor for a short period. He still is using his psychology in photographing people, and his pictures continually reach audiences of over 1.5 million people week by week.

Don's work has helped people see the work of missionaries around the world. By doing this he has helped the mission board reach the world for Christ.

Growing up as a home missionary kid helped this writer realize the importance of relationships in ministry. This writer felt the call to the ministry and went a traditional route of majoring in social work and then planning to go on to the seminary to become a pastor. While in college this writer discovered photography and the power of the camera as a communication tool. Knolan Benfield, Jr., was a photographer who worked on Missions USA magazine, and he introduced this writer to Don Rutledge. This writer was intrigued by the work that Don did on the magazine.

After talking with Don, this writer felt redirected in his call to be a minister who used the camera as a central part of his ministry. Many who are Christian photojournalists have struggled with the call. In many ways, the Christian photojournalist is a preacher. The photojournalist's illustrations are not done with words in the pulpit but with photographs on the printed page.

As one will see, Don's work is powerful and his style can be seen in the work of most photojournalists who work for the Southern Baptists. They will tell you they hope someday to be like Don.

Don dreams of publications combining words and pictures effectively to

communicate the concerns God has placed on his heart. This driving force in Don is the Holy Spirit convicting him of the message of missions. His photographs have one common theme: Love. They have moved people to become involved in missions. God has called them into missionary service after they looked at the mission field through the “eyes of Don.” Don's work has helped to meet the needs of people the world over.

When considering the skills of Don Rutledge one can see that he could have become very wealthy from his photography if he had not worked with Southern Baptists. In his three months before coming to work with Southern Baptists, he made more than he would make in the next two years working with Southern Baptists. His decision to be a minister with a camera meant choosing the narrow road. Don chose to follow Jesus Christ. Due to his following Christ, his work as a Christian photojournalist has help spread the gospel around the world.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY YEARS WITH BLACK STAR, 1955 TO 1966

Don was born in Smithfield, Tennessee. Not long after being born the family moved to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, south of Nashville. "Good ole' home folk," is what you would say about the Rutledges. They lived on a farm where all of them worked together as a family. Growing up in rural Tennessee is where Don was exposed to the world. Don's family was involved in the local Baptist community church, where they were often praying for and listening to missionaries from all over the world. Although this family was in the country, they were not limited by any means. This world vision is what would drive Don throughout his life.

One of Don's uncles had a box camera. Don asked if he could use it. Going to the local drug store, he bought some film and went back to the farm to explore his own home with a camera. Don took many different pictures of the farm while he was a teenager. Having these photographs developed, he started to see the mysterious power of the photograph.

While attending Temple College in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Don took photographs for the student paper and year book. This experience helps to build his technical skills and proficiency with the camera.

During the summers Don went on mission trips to help missionaries in

places like Central America. Recording these visits with his camera, he then would show the pictures to his church and other groups. They not only enjoyed the photographs, but were "transported" from Tennessee to Central America, through the "eyes of Don."

Don was always pulling for the underdog, since he could relate.

While in high school some

boys jumped Don and seriously hurt him. He had been wearing braces at the time. His mouth was beaten up outside and inside. He later found each of the boys alone and repaid the favor. He knew very well what it was like to be a minority in umber. This experience taught Don, that there are times when

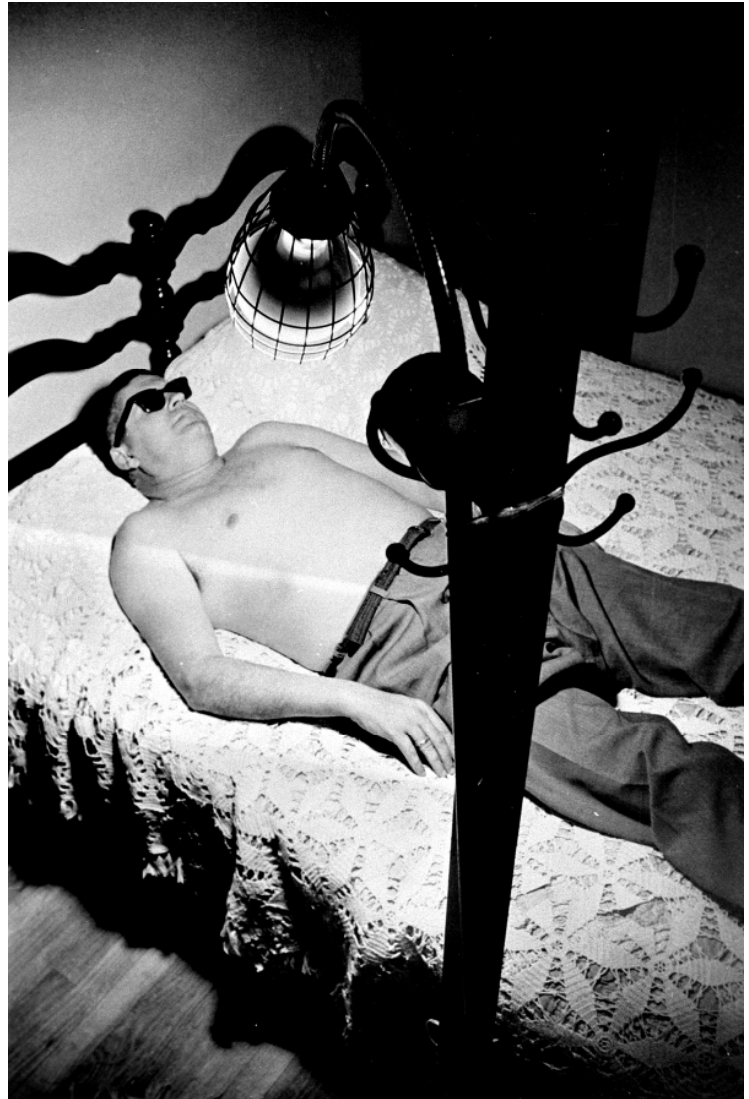


Figure 4 John Howard Griffen uses the heat lamps to help tan his skin with the aid of drugs. This process helped to change him into appearing Black.

people need others to help them.

Don's helping nature moved him into the ministry. Don was answering the call to the ministry that he felt deep inside of himself. After talking to church leaders, Don was led to believe that the only place that he could serve as a minister was as a pastor or a missionary.

Don Rutledge majored in religion and psychology in college. These two give Don the edge on understanding people. Theology is centered on relationships. The Bible teaches us how God wants and desires a relationship with his people. We also learn through the Bible about the relationships between people. Nurturing each other as believers and reaching out to God's world is what the Bible teaches. Jesus said,

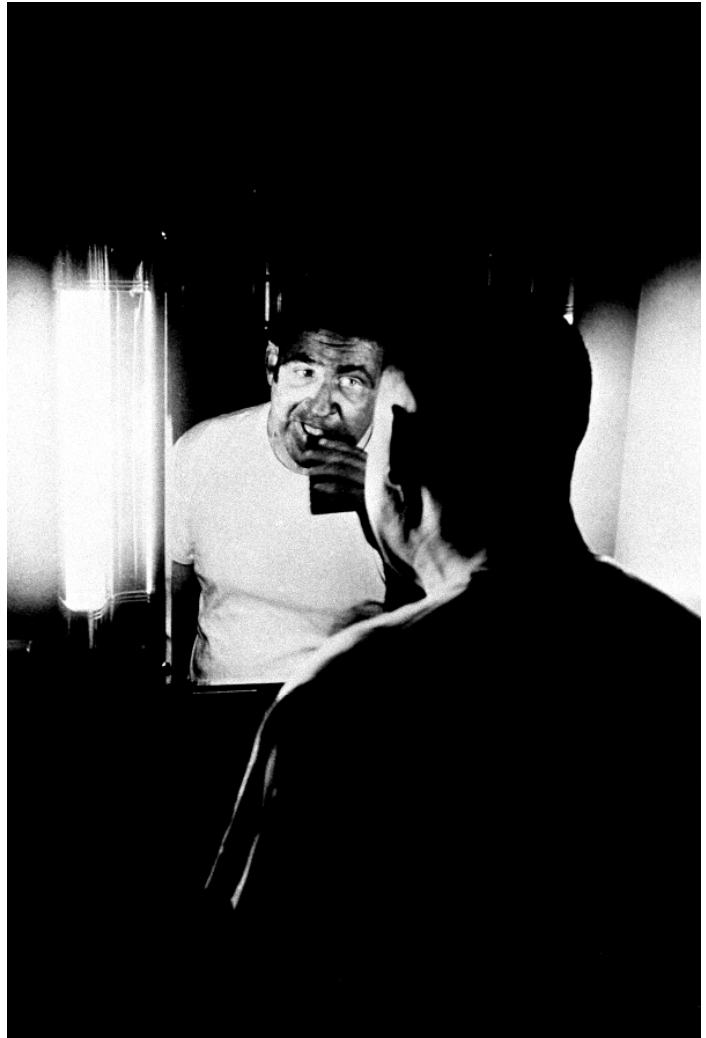


Figure 5 John Howard Griffen uses makeup to smooth out his complexion.



Figure 6 Checking his makeup one last time before venturing out as a Black man.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."²

Don's life reflects this passage.

The psychology taught him how to read body language. Body language is very important in Rutledge's photographs. The body language is more than

² Matthew 25:35-40, NIV (New International Version).



Figure 7 Mr. Griffin talks to the help in a restaurant in New Orleans.

peak actions of anger, sadness or happiness. It runs the full range of emotions.

Both the theology and psychology become so integrated in Rutledge's work that it is difficult to separate the two.

Don wanted to help people in need and aid them in acquiring dignity. Don, through his preaching, tried to communicate to people but was never truly comfortable in the pulpit.

While at Temple College, Don served as president of the student body. He was a very quick thinker in his own right. Don grew up in the most conservative of backgrounds. Like many from this conservative background, Don saw some of the fault of this thinking. Later Don would see that very few groups have it all together. Throughout college, Don started trying to find his

niche in society.

After graduating, the Director of Missions of Murfreesboro Association in Tennessee asked Don to consider pastoring a church. He talked to Don about how the church was falling apart. Going into this pastorate Don was planning to help the church close its doors. Coming from the very conservative group, where most pastors ruled with certain authority, Don took a completely different approach. Don encouraged the people to grow as individuals and as a group. He let them take control of the church. The reason for this "hands off" practice was twofold in nature: (1) Don did not believe in telling people what to do, and (2) he was pursuing the career as a photojournalist during the week.

Being a bi-vocational pastor allowed Don to combine two loves. Don was fulfilling the call to the ministry and was trying to understand this call of photography.

In 1955, Don frequently wrote Howard Chapnick at Black Star, a photo agency in New York. Don had noticed the cut-lines of the photographers in magazines and noticed that Black Star represented many of the photographers. Black Star told Don they wanted to see a portfolio before giving him an assignment. Don didn't have a portfolio. During the time Don was corresponding, he gave them story idea after story idea.

Black Star was frustrated with the person who kept writing them so often. He had some good ideas, but can he take a photograph? They wrote back letting him know that they liked one of his ideas. They contacted the parties to see if they were interested. That first story was for Friends magazine. This was the magazine of the Chevrolet Company.



Figure 8 The shoe shine man had to be told by Don that John Howard Griffen was white and not black. He could hardly believe that this man was really white.

Don was so delighted with the response, he immediately contacted the people in the area for the story and went and shot the story, also writing the material, and sent the package of contact sheets and material to Black Star. Black Star was quite upset. "We haven't even talked to them and you have



Figure 9 In New Orleans, John Howard Griffin outside a movie theater entrance.

already shot the story," was the reply Don received. They also informed him of the many holes in the story and how it would not work. This was their mistake.

Don contacted the people again and went back filling in the holes. This was Don's really first time to have someone critique his work and guide him. The Friends magazine not only liked the work but wanted to use Don again. This was the beginning of a close relationship of Don with Black Star and even more so with Howard Chapnick.

Meanwhile, Don's career with Black Star was growing and so, too, was



Figure 10 Don's awareness of body language is sometimes very clear-cut like here in this photograph of teacher and students. Often the body language is more subtle in Don's photographs. Body language is always important in Don's photographs.

the church. Don's leadership style, which required all the people to become involved, saved the church and helped it to become a strong church of the community. Don realized that the church needed someone full-time. Don joked with the people saying that when he was gone doing an assignment and another person filled the pulpit, the attendance was always higher. Don was feeling more at ease as a photographer and less content as a pastor. Don resigned, and the church today still has good memories of Don. They continue to invite him to speak at homecoming.

Living so close to Nashville was ideal for a photographer. Black Star was needing coverages of the Grand Ole' Opry and special coverages of the personalities in the Nashville area. Mirror magazine had asked Black Star to find the next up—and—coming country star in Nashville. Don was given the assignment. Don asked around about how to find someone who would know about the up—and—coming stars. After searching throughout the Nashville



Figure 11 Don took this in 1967 inside the Arctic Circle. People are so comfortable with Don that he is able to be apart of the woodwork.

area, Don was told about a man who gave pens to those stars that were up and coming. This man was supposed to be the best at spotting new talent. The man

happened to be under Don's nose all the time. The man who knew all the up—and—coming stars worked at the camera store Rutledge patronized. The man who had been waiting on Rutledge for years was the expert on the country singers.

After talking with this expert, Don went to this unknown country singer's home and wondered if this person new what he was doing. Don sat on a crate and talked to Loretta Lynn and did the story. This interview is portrayed in the movie "Coal Miner's Daughter." Don helped to launch the career of Loretta Lynn. Don photographed many of the stars of Nashville for Black Star.

Don did coverages for Black Star on religious subjects. He followed the Wycliff translators into the Amazon. He photographed a theater group at Georgetown College in Kentucky that painted their faces like stained glass. The story was again religious in nature.

While Don had started working with Black Star, our country was in a major turmoil. Although Lincoln had helped to free the slaves, the Blacks were still in bondage in America. Racism had led the country to the Civil Right's Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King and other prominent people in the movement, were photographed by Don. His camera helped America to see itself in the mirror. Most of the country did not like what it saw. Don Rutledge

helped America see how the South was an apartheid. Today in South Africa it is being played out again. But in the late fifties and early sixties the United States had its insides turned out for the world to see.

Don was raised in the midst of the racist environment of the South, but was not at all a part of the oppression of the

Blacks. Don was one of the strongest photojournalistic voices during this time.

Don not only covered the news events, but created with a writer one of the most powerful books during the Civil Rights movement: Black Like Me.



Figure 12"Don discovered these two youngsters who proudly displayed the results of their morning hunt. In that section of Cincinnati, rats were not particularly difficult quarry to locate." [Walker Knight, See How Love Works]

One day while he was reading the newspaper, Don noticed an article about a street in Atlanta, Georgia, that had more Black millionaires than anywhere else in the world. How could this be? Black millionaires in the South? Don contacted Black Star with the idea of doing a story on this idea. They checked their connections to see what magazines might be interested. They found a magazine based in Fort Worth, Texas, that was interested. They sent the writer, John Howard Griffin, to work with Don on the coverage. While the two of them worked on the story, Howard Griffin talked with Don about an idea concerning the Civil Rights issue.

John Howard Griffin had the idea of taking some hormonal drugs that would alter his appearance, making him look Black. He also would style his hair differently as to look as much like a Black as possible. His idea was to cover the story of what it was like to be a Black in the South just from being a different skin color. This story intrigued Don. After completing the story on the millionaires, John Howard Griffin and Don disappeared into the deep South to do the coverage for Black Like Me.

As they worked on the coverage, they sent the pictures back to the magazine. This made certain that everything was coming out fine and the cameras were working well. Howard Chapnick of Black Star told this story over and

over to many photographers emphasizing the difficulties in which one can get involved when working without a good agency. Don was not on staff for Black Star but was a major freelancer for them.

The editor of the magazine sent some of the photographs over the wire service before Don and the writer were ready for them to do so.

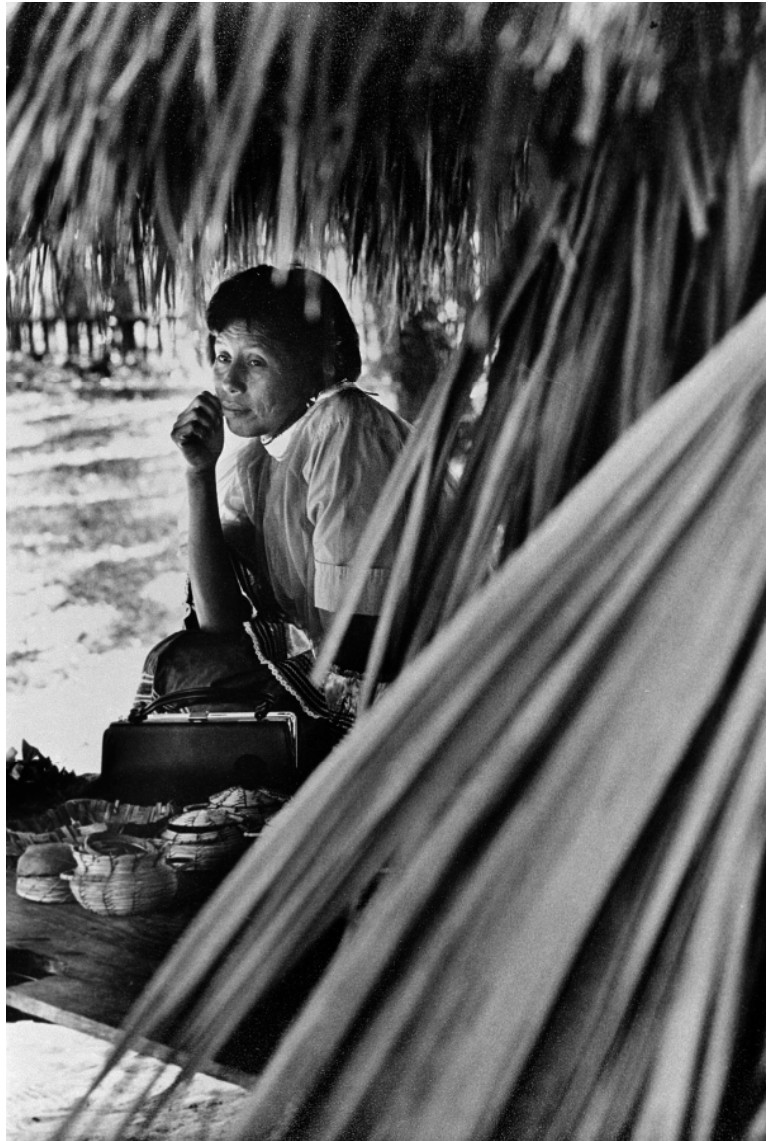


Figure 13 During 1967 Don went to Dania, Florida and photographed this Seminole woman sitting under a chickee, a thatched hut of Indian design.

This had editors all over the world calling, wanting the story. They were bidding for first rights to the story. Black Star sold the story all over the world. Then the publisher indicated that Don had committed to him all the rights. "This was what I thought was an unscrupulous publisher," according to

Chapnick.³ There were meetings with Don, Howard Chapnick and the publisher. The publisher said, "You are sophisticated urban New Yorkers, and I am just a country boy." "Well this country boy really took us over," remarked Howard Chapnick. "Because of his high sense of ethics, he really didn't want to battle the man for money. So all this good work that he did and the good work we did in placing the material, all went for naught as far as the financial return for Don."⁴

"His strength over the years was his high sense of ethics and his religiosity, if you will," commented Chapnick. "This carried through into his concern for mankind and the important issues. He tried to use photography to make people aware of the great problems in the world. He used it as a force for change; changing public perceptions and alerting the world to the problems that the world suffers like poverty and sickness."⁵

"One of his great strengths is that he was very observant of the world around him, not only in terms of the big stories, but the little stories, too. He had this happy faculty of being responsive to visually translatable ideas which

³ Mr. Howard Chapnick, interview by author, Tape recording, New York, New York, 12 October 1992.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

could be made into saleable entities."⁶

Don was concerned that the pictures were becoming more important than the story itself. Don gave the negatives to John Howard Griffin. The book came out. Don never received any royalties. The result was that Black Star had to give all the money it had received to the magazine.

"Don was always good at providing background information and captions, and this is something that isn't always apparent with a photojournalist. They tend to be pretty sloppy in adding the important words which give more information than photographs, which sometimes are ambiguous. There were few that were as prolific as Don," remarked Howard Chapnick.⁷

Eugene Smith could be considered to be Don Rutledge's mentor in photography. Eugene Smith was one who tried to capture with the camera more than just people as objects—he tried to capture the essence of the person in his photographs. Eugene Smith kept the dignity of those he photographed and made them heroes in the story. The subjects were romanticized by Eugene Smith. People, like the Doctor that he shot for Life magazine,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

were always portrayed in such a way that the viewer identified with the subject.

Don studied photography masters and often quoted them. This was Don's education——reading and studying the masters of photography and being aware of the world in which he lives. Being a Christian means growing in Christ. As a Christian grows he should be able to just move easily into situations and respond with the heart of Christ. "One does not think during creative work, any more than one thinks when driving a car. But one has a background of years——learning, unlearning; success, failure, dreaming, thinking, experience, all this——then the moment of creation, the focusing of all into the moment," was the statement made by Edward Weston.⁸

Jesus looked at people as individuals——he saw the tree in the forest. Christians, too, must focus on the individuals in their ministry. Photographing people should reflect how one cares for people. "The photographer should not come to his subject with his image all fabricated in his head," says Robert Doisneau. He continues saying, "The photographer must be absorbent——like a blotter, allow himself to be penetrated by the poetic moment, by the spirit of the place where he finds himself."⁹

⁸ Jacob Deschin, 35mm Photography, (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company 1959), 14.

⁹ Ibid.

Don is true to the moment and never asks people to stage something. He may ask them to repeat something but never fabricate anything unnatural. "Nature has a great deal more imagination than I have; why should I try to improve on it? The best I can do is to look for these manifestations and to photograph them before they get away."¹⁰

Don believes that pictures are not merely to document an event or show what a person looks like, but to communicate the essence of the event or person to the audience. "The best pictures are made by those photographers who feel some excitement about life and use the camera to share their enthusiasm with others. The camera in such hands is a medium for communicating vital experience," voiced Roy Stryker, editor of Life magazine.¹¹ For Ben Shahn, "Photography is a matter of communication in human terms and mostly in human subjects, and I have set this very simple problem for myself, of showing humanity in those terms that interest me and in the clearest way."¹² Eugene Smith said, "The more important the story, the better the photographer should try to tell it. Even when the material is sufficiently important to make its

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

impact regardless of the quality of my print, the more powerful the picture, the more certain I am that people will have a chance to understand what I want to say."¹³

Jesus, rising from the tomb was the culmination of the gospel. He defeated death. The choice of his words were so wise and timely. The Bible pictures important events as moments, not as long events.

To me, photography is recognition in a fraction of a second, simultaneously of the significance of an event as well as of precise formal organization which brings to life that event.

The camera works fast, and so does the photographer. Within the second he has to see and to feel, to understand and to select, to react and to act. Movement and expression unseen before it is stopped. A moment is captured that never was and never will be again.

All attention is concentrated on the specific moment, almost too good to be true, which can only vanish in the second that follows and which produces an impact impossible with any staged setting.¹⁴

Photography has a unique power to awaken social conscience. If you are genuinely concerned with the plight of the people you are photographing, and are convinced that your photographs can do something—however little—to help them, then your sincerity and good intentions will inevitably shine through. This in itself will help you to secure from the people around you the cooperation that is essential if you are to produce good pictures.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

On a practical level, try to be as sensitive as you can to the feelings of the people you are photographing or working with, and make sure your photographic technique reflects this sensitivity. Keep a low profile by using available light, not flash, and remember that many people are easily intimidated or antagonized by ostentatious display of photographic equipment.¹⁵

When Don's colleagues are asked about Don and how he has impacted them, they all refer to his integrity. Don communicates well the idea of the eyes being the window to the soul. Maybe this is because Don tries to keep the innocence of a child when photographing. Don says,

Photography is a fascinating communications medium. It forces us to see, to look beyond what the average person observes, to search where some people never think to look. It even draws us back to the curiosity we experienced in our childhood.

Children are filled with excitement about their surrounding world: Why is the sky blue? Why is one flower red and another yellow? How do the stars stay up in the sky? Why is the snow cold?

As the years go by that curious child matures into a normal adult with the attitude of "who cares anymore about those childish questions and answers?" At that moment much of the world becomes mundane, little more than a place of survival until retirement and finally death.

But photography, in its best usage, will not allow us to do that. It forces us to continue asking questions which began in our childhood and probe for answers in the maturity of our life. The "seeing beyond what the average person sees" fills us constantly with excitement and allows us to keep the dreams of our youth. It

¹⁵ George Constable, Photographing the Drama of Daily Life, (Chicago: Time-Life Books, 1984), 72.

gives "seeing" a newness and freshness as a person works hard to communicate through photography the messages that need to be conveyed.¹⁶

Don always tried to look at life in a creative way. Don took frequent rides into the country with his wife Lucy. The writer and his wife would go along. Often Lucy wanted to look through Don's camera to see what Don was seeing. "He always sees something that I do not see," was Lucy's praise of Don. She enjoyed seeing Don's photographs. Don says that she is his biggest critic and fan. She can be so honest with Don, and Don listens.

For Don to be on the road and have two young boys growing up required Lucy to run the household while he was away and help make the transition when Don returned home. Things were not always smooth at home, but today Mark, the oldest, is a missionary with his wife in Haiti. Craig, the youngest, works with the Home Mission Board in Atlanta at the main office.

Today Don does not enjoy eating at fast food hamburger places. For the first years on the road that was all that he could afford. Often Don drove home several hours after a coverage to return early the next morning, because he did not have the money for a motel. For Don to make the pilgrimage that he did, he

¹⁶ Don Rutledge, "Better photos for your publication or photography for communicators." Unpublished article given to writer by Don Rutledge, 1992.

had to remain committed. He also had to have a real call, for the struggles were sometimes unbearable. Going from the pulpit to the streets of the world opened Don's eyes and allowed him to see God's world as a boy from the farm in Tennessee could have never imagined. Don's coverages in the fifties and sixties helped to pave the way for the coverages he would later request to do in the religious establishment. These years with Black Star established him as one who was capable of delivering. Don had a background that showed he had covered the top stories in the world. Even with this background, Don continued to struggle. Portfolio or no portfolio, his next stop in Atlanta tested his patience and endurance at wanting to be a minister with a camera.

CHAPTER 3

HOME MISSION BOARD, 1966 TO 1980

When Walker Knight went to the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, in 1959 he was handed photo story packages done by Don Rutledge. He published some of those photo stories. Walker Knight became acquainted with Don Rutledge. When Don traveled to Atlanta for coverages or when passing through town, Don stopped by and visited Walker Knight. At the time they had Ralph Rogers as a photographer. Mr. Rogers' direction was portrait and commercial. When Mr. Rogers' left they were without a photographer. It was the hope of Walker Knight and Jay Durham that they could secure Don Rutledge to fill the position.¹⁷ Jay Durham was the Director of Media Services for the Home Mission Board at the time.

Don did not drift into missions work. Don Rutledge's turning from a secular career to express his artistry as a Christian was a conscious decision on Don's part.¹⁸ This was not the only avenue open for him. The economy did not force this decision. Actually in the three months before Don went to work for the Home Mission Board, Don made more money than he did in the next two

¹⁷ Mr. Walker L. Knight, interview by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 22 November 1992.

¹⁸ Ibid.

years at the Home Mission Board, even when his salary and travel budget were included.¹⁹ All this is to say that Don's acceptance of the invitation to come to the Home Mission Board was the fulfilling of his call to the ministry.

Walker Knight offered the position to Don. Don agreed to come on a trial basis for a year. Right from the start there were problems. These problems all revolved around changes. Most of the

changes were from the old technology to something better. The Home Mission Board had been using 4 x 5 cameras, and Don was accustomed to using 35mm cameras. Earlier Don had an experience with LIFE magazine over this issue. He had been assigned through Black Star to photograph a story at Georgetown

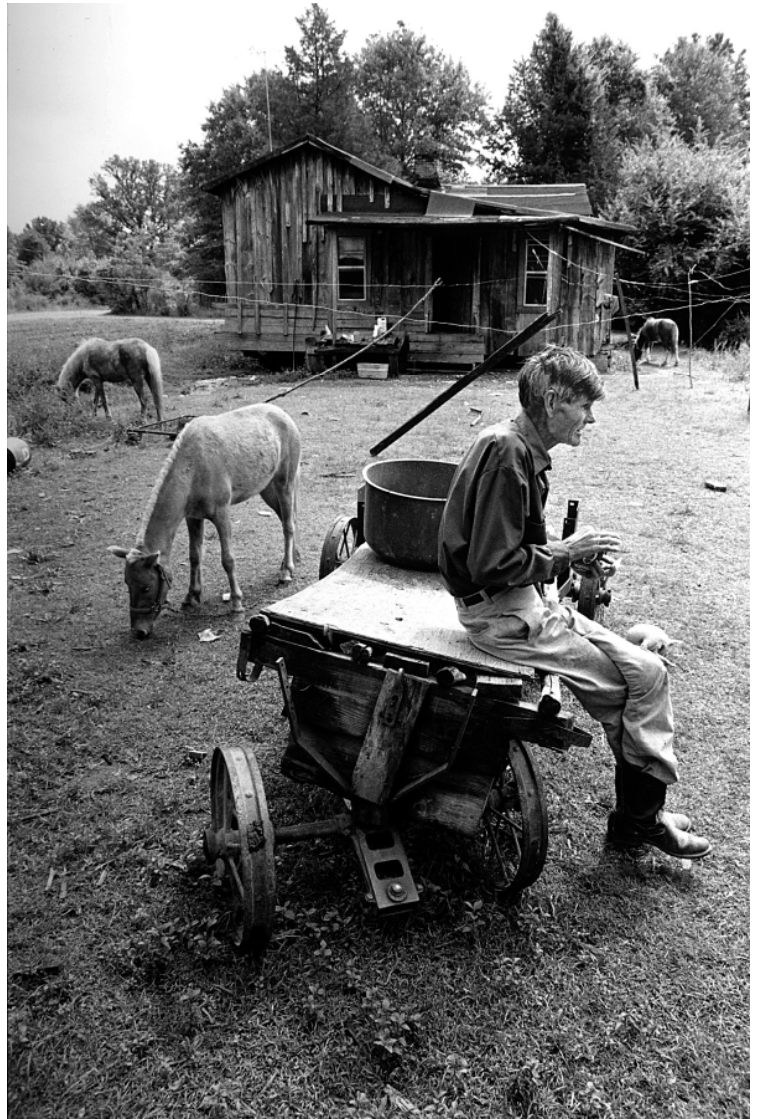


Figure 14 Baily King in front of his home in Quinten, Mississippi.

¹⁹ Don Rutledge, Interview by author, Richmond, Virginia, 5 November 1985.

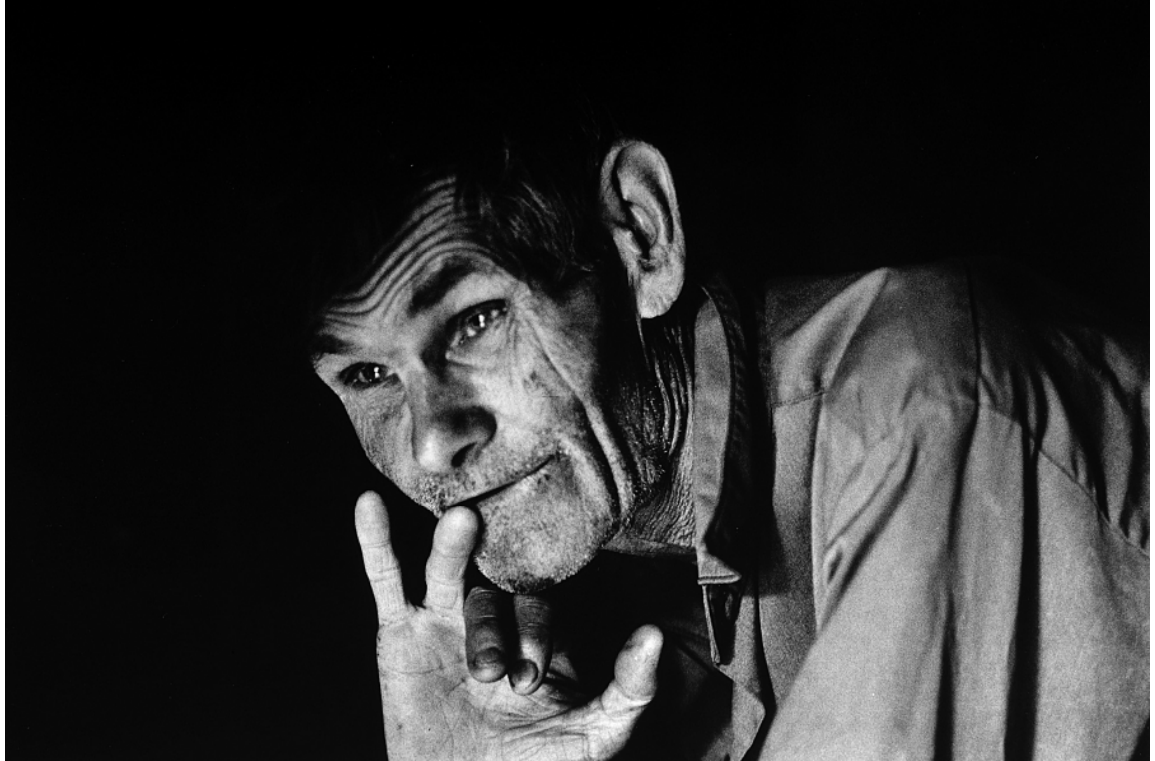


Figure 15 "I got what I knew from watchin' and listnin' and thankin' for myself." [Home Missions, December 1979, 2.]

College in Kentucky. The story was about how the actors were made up to look like stained glass. Don thought this would make a good story and had contacted Black Star who then contacted LIFE.

Everything was going fine until checking into the hotel the night before doing the coverage. Don called the theater department to confirm a story he was doing. The director informed him that another LIFE photographer, Don Cravens, was there to photograph the same story for LIFE. It was not uncommon for this to happen; since LIFE was so large some departments would cover the same story. Don Rutledge contacted Black Star, and after talking with



Figure 16 The difference from Bailey King and one of his childhood neighbors is that his neighbor only had to buy a guitar and Bailey had to buy land. That was the difference between him and Johnny Cash. [interview with Don Rutledge, 1985]

them, the decision was made to go ahead and shoot the story and then LIFE would decide on which coverage to use. Don let Don Cravens shoot the story first. Don Cravens shot the story on a 4 x 5 camera and took until 4 am in the morning with the actors to shoot. Don Cravens had to set up lights due to the nature of the camera. Don shot the following night on 35mm and was done by 12 midnight. Don was using 35mm cameras which allowed him to use available light and record the natural setting easily. LIFE used Don Rutledge's pictures in their national and international editions of the magazine. The pictures were used all over the world by many different magazines. Don Cravens' pictures were never used. It could be that the time involved in shooting a 4 x 5 does not do well with photographing people in everyday life



Figure 17 Most of Bailey's neighbors are all poor and black. He was one of the few white men in the area. Bailey also saw himself as equal to his neighbors. They all had a great deal in common—even though their skin was different.

situations.²⁰ The 35mm allows for a more candid look to photographs since it does not require as much light for exposure or a bulky tripod.

L. O. Griffith, the Director of Communications, at the Home Mission Board, was a photographer himself and could not understand why Don could not make the transition from those "amateur 35mm cameras" to 4 x 5 cameras. He liked Don's work, but had a real problem with understanding Don's refusal to shoot with 4 x 5 cameras. The issue of using 35mm versus 4 x 5 had to go all the way to the top of the Home Mission Board to be solved. Dr. Arthur

²⁰ Ibid.

Rutledge, no relationship to Don, but the Executive Director, had to decide. Dr. Rutledge stood behind Don, Walker Knight and Jay Durham. Many other issues just like the camera issue would be repeated at the Home Mission Board.²¹

Broadman had a contract with the Home Mission Board regarding film strips. Broadman would produce the filmstrips and the Home Mission Board would supply

the material. They came to the Home Mission Board for a major meeting to set things straight. In a large department meeting Don was told how to set his camera for proper expo-



Figure 18 Luvenia, Bailey's wife keeps an eye on the children.

²¹ Don Rutledge, Interview by author, 15 January 1993.



Figure 19 This is George, a bowlegged Chihuahua, and Bailey's companion and friend. He keeps Bailey company since the doctor said Bailey would not work again.

sure and what filters to use in different lighting situations. Shortly after this meeting the Broadman group complied with the demands of the Home Mission Board. They were to listen to Don and the photo department and not the other way around. This did not work. The Home Mission Board ended up producing the programs by themselves.

While Don was considering coming to work at the Home Mission Board, Walker Knight hired an associate editor: Dallas Lee. Dallas Lee and Don Rutledge teamed up as a writer and photographer team. The idea of two specialists, one being the photographer and the other the writer, was very new for Southern Baptists. They revolutionized the way of communication for the Home Mission Board. Walker Knight commented that he "credited Don Rutledge's photography as changing the whole nature of photography in the Southern

Baptist Convention. We never had a standard before, and Don provided that standard."²² Don taught and befriended many photographers throughout the convention. Many of these have gone on to work for national magazines like National Geographic. Ken Touchton, Steve Wall, Jim Wright and others went on to major careers in photojournalism after meeting Don.

Jim Wright was a college student who worked as the only lab technician for the Home

Mission Board in the very beginning of Don Rutledge's time at the Home Mission Board. Jim knew very little about printing. Don had contacted the lab Modern Age that Black Star was using in New York. He had Modern Age print some negatives for Jim Wright

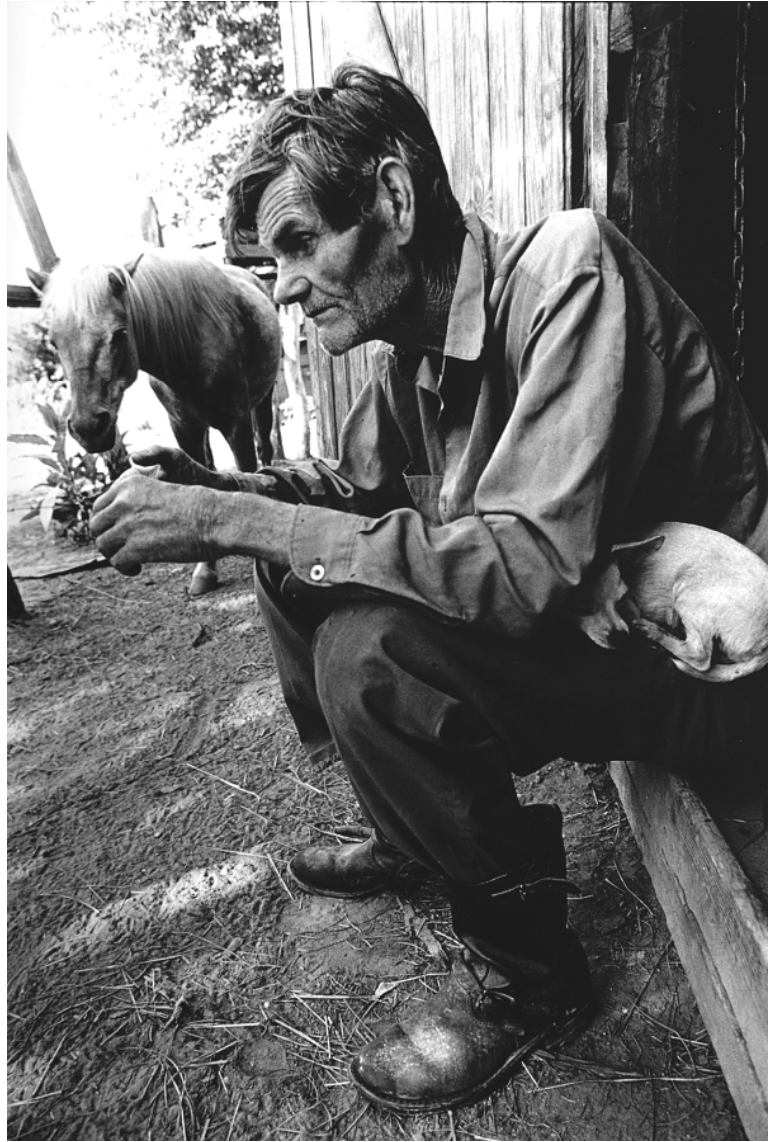


Figure 20 Lacking a formal education did not stop Bailey King from living, it just held him back.

²² Interview with Knight.

to use as guides. Jim Wright put them on the dark room walls as guides. Jim printed the negatives until he could match the quality of the prints made by Modern Age. Every good photographer needs an equally good lab technician. The lab technician is just as creative as the photographer. Often negatives are difficult to print since they were shot under existing light. Existing light gives character and mood to the photograph, but often it needs a good lab technician to develop within the print the qualities that enhance the communication process and play down the distracting elements. This requires the printer to understand what



Figure 21 All those years of back breaking hard work caught up with Bailey King. He had a stroke and has been unable to work.

the photographer was thinking and to bring out those elements to enhance the message and to play down the other elements so that the print grabs the viewer and gets their attention.²³

²³ Interview with Rutledge.



Figure 22 The King children enjoy the water to cool off during those hot days.

Jim Wright helped establish quality control in the printing process that is still used today at the Home Mission Board.

Dallas Lee was excited by the stories that Don and he were working on together. He would walk in early and see all that was going on and would assume that Don saw what he saw, and was busy shooting. He would find out later that Don often would go into a situation and not pick up his cameras until he had been absorbed by the place. Don would wait long enough to understand what was going on rather than immediately beginning to shoot.²⁴ Don has an ability with the camera to see situations. There is always that special moment from every situation that Don would capture. Henry Cartie-Bresson called this the "decisive moment." Dallas Lee said that Don

²⁴ Mr. Dallas Lee, interview by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 7 January 1993.



Figure 23

taught him to have patience and to absorb information before jumping into the story. This was the "rounding out" of a journalist: allowing the story to tell itself rather than his getting in the way with the journalist's own perception of the story.²⁵ Don's ability with people and his love of people is a driving force of Don's work.²⁶

"Skilled hunters don't crash through the woods with guns blazing or overload themselves with unnecessary gear. On the contrary; they move quietly and carefully so as not to attract attention or frighten off the game. They blend with the environment."²⁷ Don's ability

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with Knight.

²⁷ Dave LaBelle, The Great Picture Hunt. (Bowling Green: Kentucky, Western Kentucky University, 1991), 15.

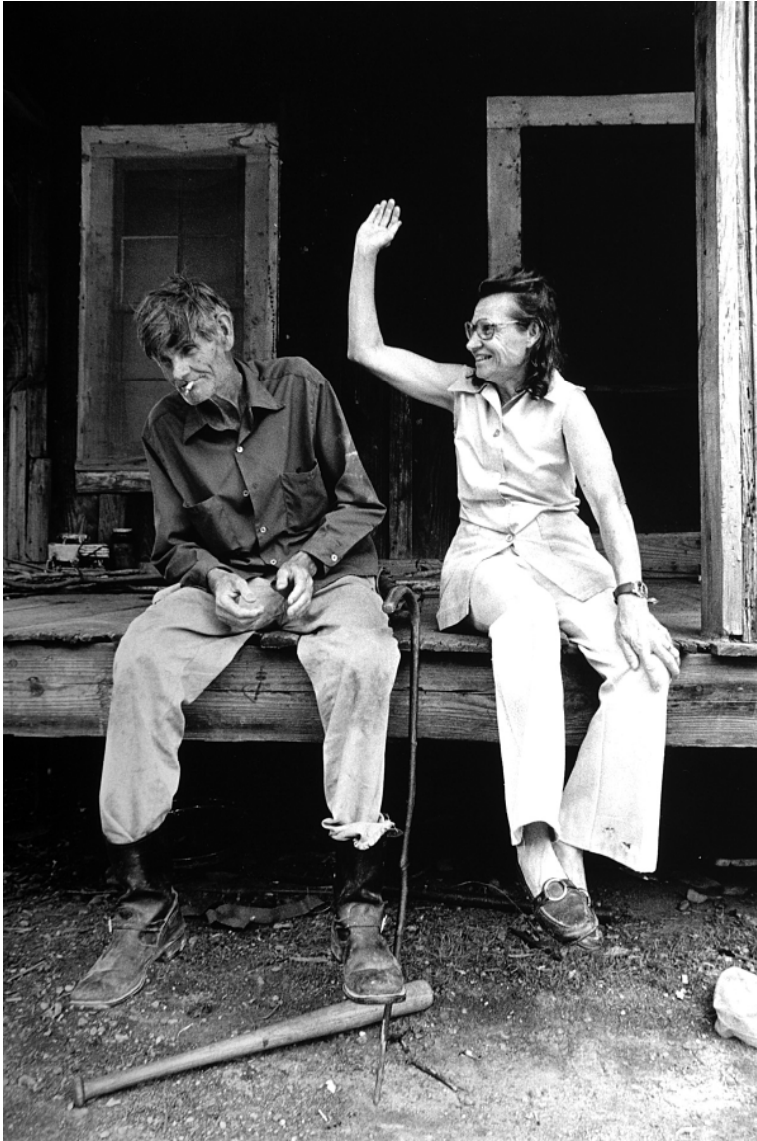


Figure 24 Luvenia and Bailey King enjoy moments like these that keep them going and keep them close.

to blend into the woodwork is best shown in the coverage of Bailey King. Looking at the pictures moves one from where they are to the subject. This immediacy brings with it an interaction between the reader and the subject that breaks down barriers of time and space.

"Being poor ain't so bad. It's just inconvenient," said Bailey King.²⁸ Bailey King was photographed by Don for some three weeks. Don went to Quinten, Mississippi, to show how a poor family lived in this country. Don bathed in the pond like the rest of the family and ate just like

they ate. He contributed just enough to cover his cost without changing the level of the family's income while he was there. Later he gave them money to help the family. Due to this story photographed by Don and written Phyllis Thompson, the King's were provided a

²⁸ Phyllis F. Thompson, "Somebody, A Poor Man," Home Missions, December 1979, cover.



Figure 25

brick home by the readership of the magazine.²⁹ Just before going to Mississippi to do the coverage on the King family, Don had been reading Hans Kung book On Being a Christian. After listening to Bailey King, Don heard many of the deep theological concepts out of Bailey King's mouth that he had been reading earlier by Hans Kung. Considering that Bailey King couldn't read or write, Don realized that God speaks to all people in special ways. God seemed to be preparing Don for this story. With this preparation, Don not only listened to

Bailey as a good journalist, but for the common sense that was gained from everyday life with Bailey King.

Mr. King lives in a primarily black neighborhood. Everyone around him lives in

²⁹ Rutledge.

similar clapboard-styled homes. Poverty is the lifestyle, but that does not make King less of a man. Don sees to it in his photographs that people will see into the man. Don uses the camera to move the viewer to a new level. People who sing in church all hear the music; some get a little deeper and let the words speak to them, but those who lead the music must be functioning on a spiritual level to move the people beyond the music.³⁰ Don, like all ministers, must go ahead of the people and be able to bring the audience to the experience. Don moved Southern Baptists with this coverage. As a communicator he had mastered the skills to show Bailey King to Southern Baptists. He did not allow himself to get in the way of the communication.

"The Bible says man, not white man, not black man, not Chinaman. Jus' man. So



Figure 26 "On special occasions, people pay \$100 for a plate of food, when I'm happy to get a sweet potato. The pore man spends most 'o his life halfway livin'!" [*Home Mission*, December 1979, 14]

³⁰ Dr. Leafblad, Fall 92 lectures in Introduction to Church Music.



Figure 27

why do some of us think we are better than others?" — Bailey King³¹ King had a good understanding of such a complex idea. Theologians study for years to come up with the same understandings of the Bible that King put into words. The gospel is for everyone and not just for the elite. What better way to communicate the need for us to go and help the poor than for a poor man to humble us all.

"I been workin' since I's five, and I ain't got no more now'n I had then. It is hard for me to walk. But you can't give up jus' 'cause you hurt a little bit. If you fall on your knees and break down 'round here, you ain't gonna get up no more." --Bailey King.³²

As one looks at Don's photographs you notice that often the pictures have two or three

³¹ Thompson, 6.

³² Ibid. 8.

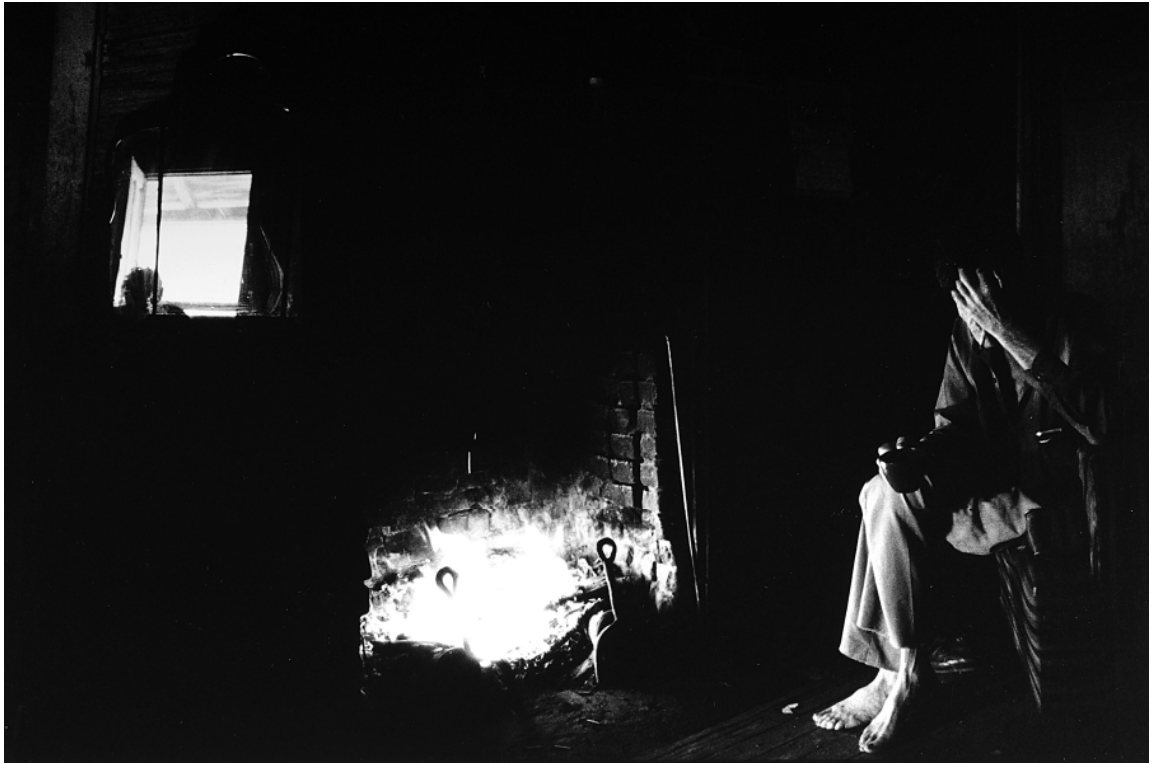


Figure 28 "People don' wanta fool with nothin'. But you gotta fool with things. People is worth foolin' with. All o' them is. I guess not carin' is 'bout as bad a thang as is." [Home Missions, December 1979, 18.]

pictures in one picture. This approach of Don's is what he excels in more than any other dominant style of photograph he does. Usually when Don uses this composition technique, there is a primary subject in the photograph. Then the secondary element adds a touch of information about the environment. It also adds that quality called the "slice of life." By including these extra elements the photograph does not look trite or so much composed as just making you feel as if you were there yourself. The photograph has much information and keeps giving information everytime one looks at the photograph.

Many photographers like to keep things simple. They may use a real tight shot to show the tear in the child's eye. Don does this also, but his ability to capture the big picture sets him apart from most of his colleagues in the profession.

To tell someone's story through pictures one must come to a deep understanding of the people he is photographing. He needs to understand the subject matter well enough to

simplify the message so it does not get lost in the communication process. By living for three weeks with the King family, Don was able to get to know the people. Many other photographers have tried to do what Don had done, and usually they have come back too soon with the story. Often the story others come back with is their own perception of the situation. Many photographers can not get their egos out of the way to listen to the people.

While egos are being mentioned, it is important to note that most people who

are photojournalist many have rather large egos. Without some ego in this business of photojournalism many would not survive. The ego gives the drive necessary in a field so competitive. Photojournalist are called many names by media personnel. Christlike is far from the description given to the media in general. The difference with Don is that his ego

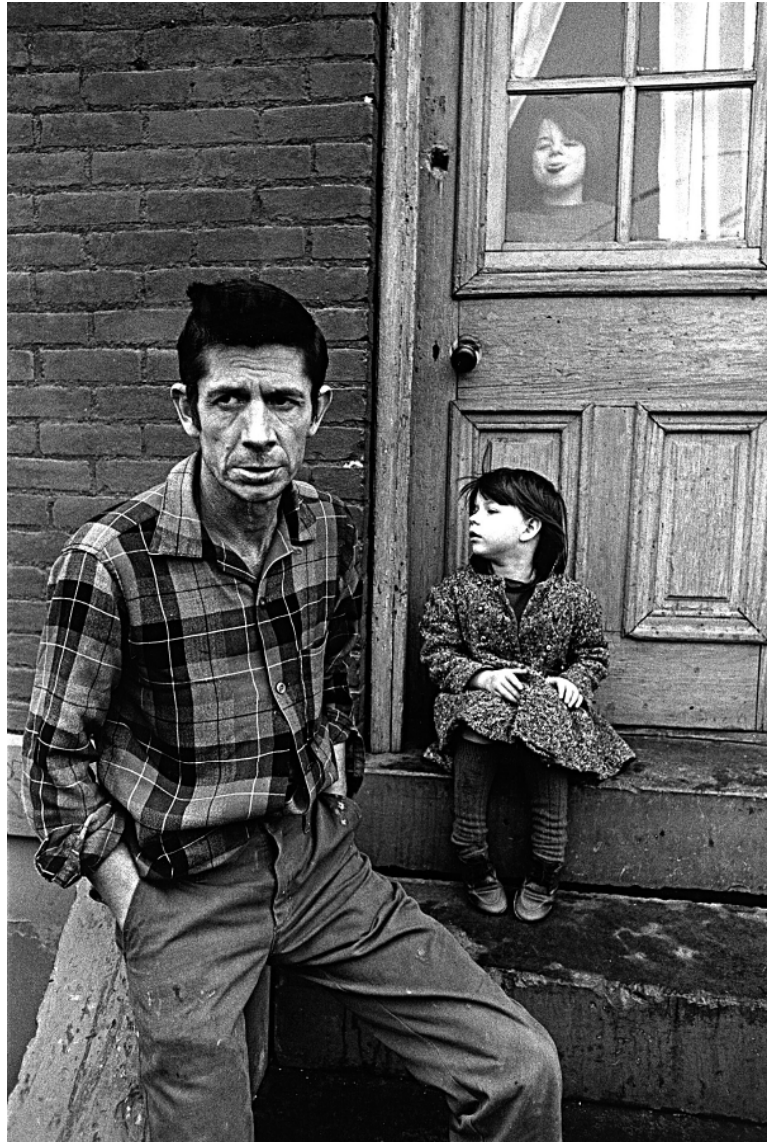


Figure 29 An Appalachian migrant family in Ohio during 1968.

does not show like most journalists.³³ What drives Don is not the ego but the love of God. Don listens to Christ in his walk and in this way is very different from the secular photojournalist. "When a bunch of photographers, including some big names like Eugene Smith, would get together, Don was the one who would go for coffee for everyone— he's just that kind of a guy," said Knolan Benfield.³⁴ Knolan Benfield was the Director of Photographic Services for many years at the Home Mission Board and worked very directly with Don. Don was his manager. Knolan Benfield is this writer's uncle and the one who introduced Don Rutledge to him.

"The most important thing about Don is that he al-



Figure 30 Angela Fung works in the day care program at Utopia Parkway Baptist Chapel in New York City.

³³ Interview with Lee.

³⁴ Knolan Benfield, Interview by author, 30 May 1992.

most single-handedly raised the level of photojournalism within the convention, and also created a standard of excellence by which everybody else who worked around him had to be measured or measured themselves. These two things are enormous contributions to Southern Baptist communications efforts. Just his presence demands such a high standard of production from editors, writers, as well as other photographers. Don does all this with a great deal of humility. This is also reflected in his willingness to help young photographers. This all stems from Don's enormous sense of security within himself. He is sure of who he is and what he can do. He knows what his abilities are. This gives him a solid foundation for helping other people without any threat to his own career or his own fame or notoriety."³⁵

Don has an ability to help one grow in the field of communication. His gift is in pointing out the weaknesses in a shoot as well as the strengths.³⁶ After the writer had been taking his work to be critiqued by Don for several years, the writer noticed that Don would look for positive things on which to comment and would pass over much of the work. Slowly, as the writer started to focus in on the positives, the more Don would comment. Finally when the writer became bold and asked Don what was wrong with some of the other photographs, Don spoke more openly. Don is careful not to criticize. He looks for the positives in the work of others.

Knolan Benfield remembers many times when he thought that Don should just tell the person to try another field. Don would ask others look at the work and let them state the negatives. On one occasion a photographer came to see Don and, after talking with the man, introduced him to the writer. After looking at the portfolio, the writer made a few suggestions for improvement. Several months later the same man returned with the same

³⁵ Everett Hullum, interviewed by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 5 January 1993.

³⁶ Ibid.



Figure 31 Boys at a Baptist community center in Kentucky in 1970.

portfolio. No changes had been made. It was as if the man never listened to Don or the writer. Don commented later that he could not believe one could have the nerve to show the same portfolio to him twice and not correct the problems.

Don's graciousness was needed to talk to the Southern Baptists who were in leadership at the Home Mission Board and other agencies. He had a way of gradually getting others to join his team. He did not put down the work they were doing, but by showing what he was doing, he led others to join in and be a part of the process.

Dallas Lee, naive and still young in his profession, thought that he could just go and photograph and write with the best of them. After meeting Don, he was humbled.³⁷ Don has only good things to say about many of his colleagues at the Home Mission Board. His

³⁷ Interview with Lee.

admiration for the direction that Dr. Arthur Rutledge had taken in home missions not only made Don proud to be Southern Baptist but inspired him to do some of his best work ever up to that point.

Don is not able to do alone all that it takes to put out the work of his caliber. It takes the team approach to make it happen. Don believed in the photo lab to do its best in printing his work to make it stand out and make people stop and look. Don always had professional labs print his work. While with Black Star He tried to develop a style of his own. One day he walked into the lab that he used and a lab technician was out front. He asked Don if he was Don Rutledge. The man wanted to talk to Don. He had been printing Don's work for many years and admired it. Don did not want the man to know that he was not aware of his style. So he asked the man what he liked about his style. The man said he liked the way he treated people with dignity. He noticed that Don was a very religious man and had a deep appreciation for social issues. This man told Don so much about himself, that at that moment Don realized that what he had been working so hard to do was succeeding. He also realized how much one knows about him by just looking at the photographs.

The main theme in all of Don's work is LOVE.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways

behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.³⁸

While working with Black Star Don was able to communicate this message through his photographs and did not necessarily need to work at the Home Mission Board to accomplish this task. Today many Christian photojournalists work in secular positions all over the country communicating the Christian message through their pictures. One group that the writer and many others are a member of is Christians in Photojournalism.

Why did Don leave Black Star and come to the Home Mission Board, take a cut in pay and status to work with people who frequently produced inferior quality products? This question points very directly to the pioneering spirit that Don has about him and his work. Photojournalism is a relatively new profession. LIFE did not transpire until 1936, and this is the magazine that developed the picture story and basically fashioned the field of photojournalism. Staying with the major magazines would have proven very lucrative for Don.

Walker Knight knew that photojournalism was the direction needed. However, few Christian photojournalists existed who could have made the dreams of Walker Knight and others become a reality for Southern Baptists. Don Rutledge was able to do this. His studies at a very conservative Bible college and his upbringing in the Baptist life coupled with his skills as a photojournalist made him a prime candidate to deal with many of the issues that he was to take on while working for the Southern Baptists.

Many of the leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention have one thing in common.

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 New International Version.

They were pastors at one time or another. This common connection helped Don in ways that other photojournalists after him have not had. This ability to understand those with whom he was working when dealing with difficult issues helped him communicate effectively. While in college studying psychology, Don learned a valuable insight into the human nature from one of his professors. When it comes to logic and emotion on any given issue, emotion usually wins out in the argument.³⁹ Walker Knight realized that by writing alone he was preaching to people, but with the photographs people saw for themselves the condition of people and how they were living. The photograph argued through emotion. Don let his work speak for itself and used very few words in meetings to make his points. If people liked Don's work and respected his opinion and asked for the opinion, then Don spoke. On a few rare occasions Don gave his opinion when not asked.

After coming to the Home Mission Board in 1966, Don made a major impact upon the publication work being done by the agency. The coverages done by Don and the writers that he worked with had a major effect on Southern Baptists. People were writing to complain and to complement the magazine. Due to Don's abilities, the Home Mission Board was making a difference in Southern Baptists. Walker Knight had moved in the direction that he saw as his calling and Don Rutledge visually helped to make it possible.⁴⁰

³⁹ Interview with Rutledge.

⁴⁰ Interview with Knight.

CHAPTER 4

FOREIGN MISSION BOARD, 1980 TO PRESENT

When Dr. Keith Parks went to the Foreign Mission Board in 1975, his responsibility was to head up the mission support division. Establishing one of the finest communications departments possible was one of the goals that Dr. Parks had set for himself and the Foreign Mission Board. Taking a look around the denomination he discovered that the finest photojournalism work being done was done by Don Rutledge. However, now Don was working for the Home Mission Board.

During this time while Dr. Parks was trying to give direction to the communications department, Everette Hullum and Don Rutledge were asked to give a workshop at the Foreign Mission board. During the workshop Don and Everette talked about working as a team and how they did coverages. Don remembers that Dr. Parks sat in on the workshop.

Later around 1979, Dr. Keith Parks heard through the grape vine that Don Rutledge may be interested in leaving the Home Mission Board. It was then, that Dr. Keith Parks approached Don to come to the Foreign Mission

Board.⁴¹ He also tried to get Everette Hullum but was unable to do so.

"I feel that he [Don Rutledge] brought a new standard and new level of photojournalism here [Foreign Mission Board] to The Commission as well as other products," said Dr. Parks. "The significant detail about Don is not only his sensitivity but that he gives so unselfishly. Many others have come on our staff fairly new and fairly young and Don has given a lot of time training them, giving them tips and working with them. He has shared his own expertise very unselfishly."⁴² This writer is one of the ones that Don took under his wing and trained at the Foreign Mission Board. Joanna Pinneo was another of those whom Don helped. She successfully took the suggestions of Don and moved on to work with Black Star and later with National Geographic.

⁴¹ Dr. Keith Parks, interview by author, Tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, 26 October 1992.

⁴² Ibid.



Figure 32 In Guatamalla, missionary Jane Parker works with the Kechi Indians.

When Don worked with a person it was usually because they initiated the contact rather than Don. This occurred as a person went to Don asking for advice and continued to return over and over and put into practice Don's suggestions. Those that did understand and were able to incorporate the suggestions of Don into their own direction in photography did very well.

"We needed a flagship piece at the Board," said Dr. Parks.³ They made The Commission magazine that flagship. To communicate the message through this piece they determined that they needed on the spot coverage. In the past they had done this, but had got away



Figure 33 Don often talks of the eyes being the "windows to the soul."

from on the spot coverage. They were relying on the missionaries to send in information that they could from the fields. They designed the idea of getting information at the location. The philosophy of team coverage was

³ Ibid.



Figure 14 March 1985, was when Don went to Ethiopia to cover the hunger problem. Here volunteer nurse Sally Jones holds an Ethiopian child and comforts the child in the midst of other babies who are being held by their mothers.

the direction taken by the board. They hooked a writer and a photographer together to work on projects. They went to the countries to gather the together material to be used in publications. Some of the material was used for mission studies, for news releases and feature articles.

The team philosophy was not new in Southern Baptist life. It was basically copied from the Home Mission Board with Don acting as a consultant. Don also brought ideas from his days with Black Star to the Home Mission Board. The old saying of two heads are better than one really applies to effective communication. Besides a writer and pho-

tographer working together the team was actually bigger. A designer, editor, department head, librarian and others were included in the planning process all the way to the distribution of the product. The team concept made everyone on the team become specialists. This specialization cause

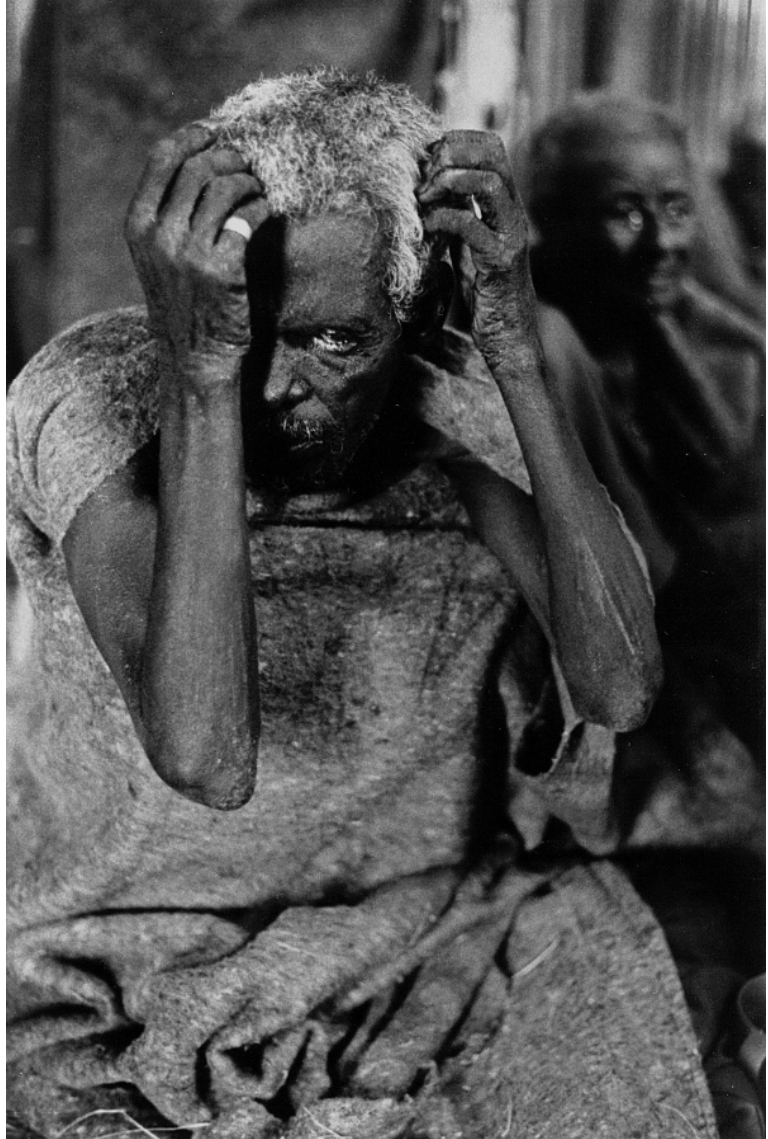


Figure 35 The shows an elderly man who came to the feeding shelter sponsored by Baptist. Many are not only hungry but very sick.

each person to make his contribution the best possible. The photographer concentrated on the images and the writer could concentrate on the words. The designer worked at combining the two elements to work together to communicate the most effective package possible.

Before these coverages could take place, issues like budget needs had to be raised and planned into the schedule. Often planning a year or so in advance was done to work out necessary details. Often these plans would change at the last moment. Even with detailed planning the team discovered that when they arrived



Figure 36 An Ethiopian child is rescued from starvation by volunteers. Mary Saunders, one of the volunteers, comforts the mother of the child.

on the field, the missionaries did not understand what the team was doing. Due to the miles and cultural patterns involved in trying to communicate with the whole world, many problems had to be faced.

All this planning later helped them to respond positively in crisis

situations. They covered the Earthquake in Mexico City, and the mud slide in Columbia.

Both of these coverages were released through Associated Press and helped the world see how Southern Baptists were responding to the crisis of the world.

This provided good public relations. It helped Southern

Baptists who never see The Commission magazine or a Baptist state paper see for the first time in their local paper the positive work being done through Southern Baptist missions.

Don's ability to capture people on film in such a natural way provides

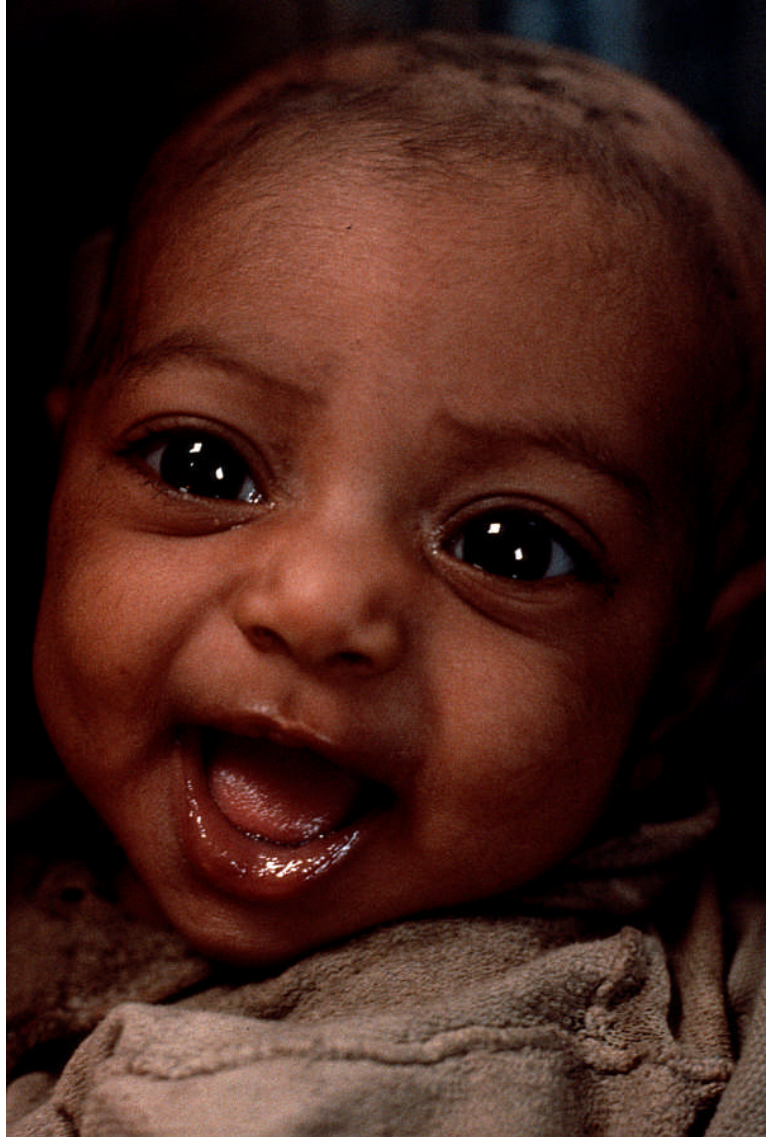


Figure 37 Joy is all that can be seen in the eyes of the young. Rescued from starvation and given hope once again.



Figure 38 HOPE—In the face of starvation food is provided to many of these people at the shelter, while others take the food and return home.

a positive contrast with photographers who wet up posed situations. Don's photography "has helped in the total scope of communications" for the Foreign Mission Board.⁴

Don is a very sensitive person. He is sensitive to other people. He has a way of gaining their confidence and very subtly working himself into a situation. He has tremendous spiritual depth. Therefore his pictures reflect his sensitivity to people as well as his spiritual commitment. I have never seen him take a picture or seen a picture he has made that in any way it would embarrass people who saw it. He always did it in such a way that the people who saw it would be as proud of it as he was. He has such a sensitive touch, and such a high standard and the feeling of wanting the people who were the objects of the picture to be as proud of the picture as he was as the

⁴ Ibid.



Figure 39 With food in hand, the people leave the shelter and grounds to return to their families.

taker of the picture. Of course, he has such tremendous background in all of his travel and his awareness of Southern Baptist life and other Christian groups, he just brings a quality and a character to the work that many people don't. It's not just a technical profession to him, it's a spiritual calling. You really sense that in what he does and how he does it."⁵

Dr. Keith Parks resigned late in 1992 due to the controversy in the Southern Baptist convention which was making it difficult for him to do the job as he saw it. Don Rutledge and writer Robert O'Brien went with Dr. Parks on his last trip to Rio.

⁵ Ibid.

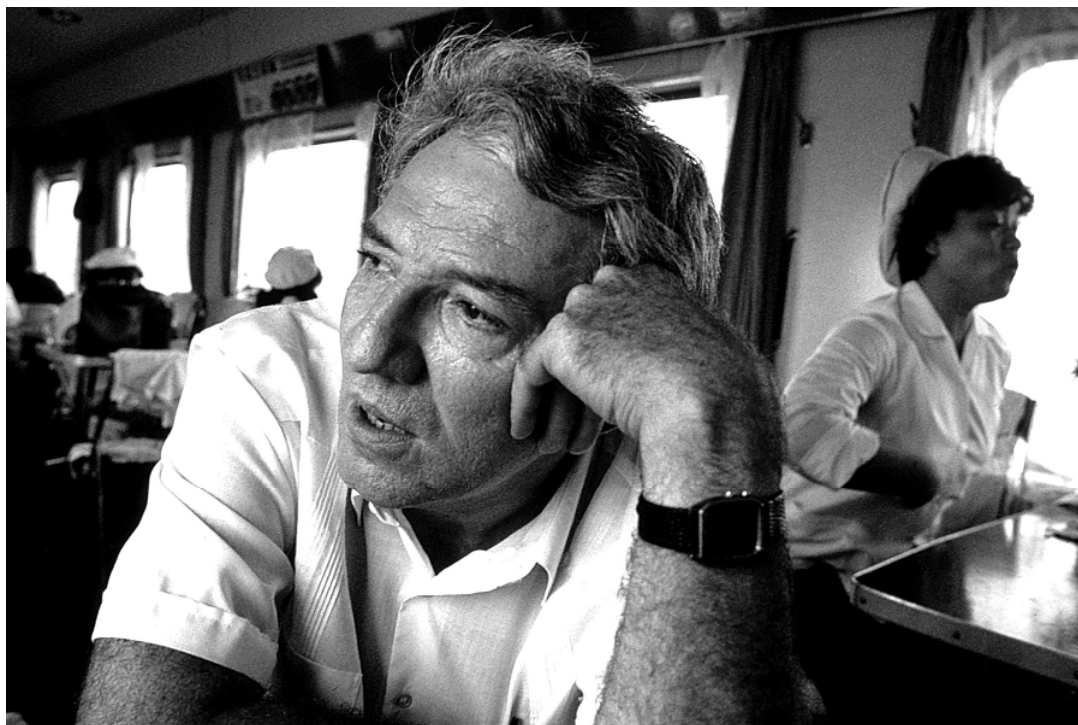


Figure 40 Surgeon Tim Pennell was able to get five of his colleagues from Bowman Gray School of Medicine to commit weeks of vacation time and thousands of dollars to meet their Chinese counterparts.

Although Don took hundreds of pictures, I hardly noticed because he did it in such an unobtrusive way. When he put it all together he had really caught the highlights of the meeting and the impact that he wanted. I just think that he is a first rate fellow from every measurement professional. Of course, he can and does meet the highest standards of the secular world, and yet his deep spiritual commitment has caused him to give himself to the spiritual cause he believes rather than selling his skills to the highest bidder. I just think that quality and character come through in his pictures.⁶

Dan Beatty, the design editor of The Commission magazine commented,

Don is the one person who has completely influenced the direction of the magazine. Before Don came we knew that there was a certain way we wanted to present the missions material in the magazine.

⁶ Ibid.

None of us had a firm grasp on what direction we should go to achieve our goals. Don really provided the direction for us to go. Don never expressed any strong feelings about—in a critique type way—on the magazine. Just Don's presence and constant example of someone who always strives for the best is what guided us along. He was constantly putting us into contact with different individuals in the field of photojournalism and layout and design. He felt these would be good influences on the magazine or influences that would help us along the road where we wanted to be with the publication.⁷

Dan was heavily influenced by Don and those around Don. Through Don, Dan was introduced to the people of National Geographic, The Virginia-Pilot and The Ledger-Star, those at Black Star and others. The awards for best use of pictures by a magazine, given out by the National Press Photographers at the annual Pictures-of-the-Year contest, were basically awarded the efforts of Dan Beatty.⁸ As a result of Dan receiving this award, most persons in photojournalism considered Dan to be at the top of the field. Dan says,

I would not be doing what I am doing, at the level I am doing it if it hadn't been for Don. He is an example of consistency and integrity in a field where that is not always a constant with the different people that I've met. He represented something that I wanted to achieve myself. He has been the biggest influence that I can think of on me personally and the different photographers that I have worked with

⁷ Dan Beatty, interview by author, Tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, 27 October 1992.

⁸ Howard I. Finberg, The Best of Photojournalism 16: The Year in Pictures, (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 1991), 232.



Figure 41 In the Philippines families cluster together for meal.

along with Don. The thing that impressed me most with Don is his sensitivity and his regard for human beings. I think that is what made him the asset that Dr. Parks was looking for in communicating about Foreign Missions to Southern Baptist and other people as well. The dignity of the human being no matter what the situation is so very important to Don. To me that is the real strength of Don's work.⁹

Not everyone at the board was so excited when Don came on board.

When he went to the Home Mission Board he was replacing the only

photographer. There was not a photography department. However, when

Don went to the Foreign Mission Board, there was a lab, the photo library,

⁹ Interview with Beatty.

and photographers already working there. The Foreign Mission Board was in many ways not any further along photographically than the Home Mission board was when he went there in 1966. Here in 1980 they were shooting their coverages on medium format cameras.



Figure 42 Dr. Jerry Bedsole, a career veterinarian missionary, doctors the animals of the people in his open-air clinic.

Hasselblads to be specific. These cumbersome bodies did not let one shoot available light photography. The photography being done was only glorified snapshots.

Survey trips were the way that photography was done. The

photographers would plan a trip and shoot stock photography. These pictures were for the files and not for any specific story usually. The pictures did not tell a story at all. They were scenics of buildings and when people were included they all stood facing the camera. If there were more than two people, generally they just lined them up for the group shot.

The magazine was dull and boring. The technological advances had passed the board years ago in layout and design. The Foreign Mission Board had a larger lab, more photographers and even a larger photo library, but still their work was much poorer than what the Home

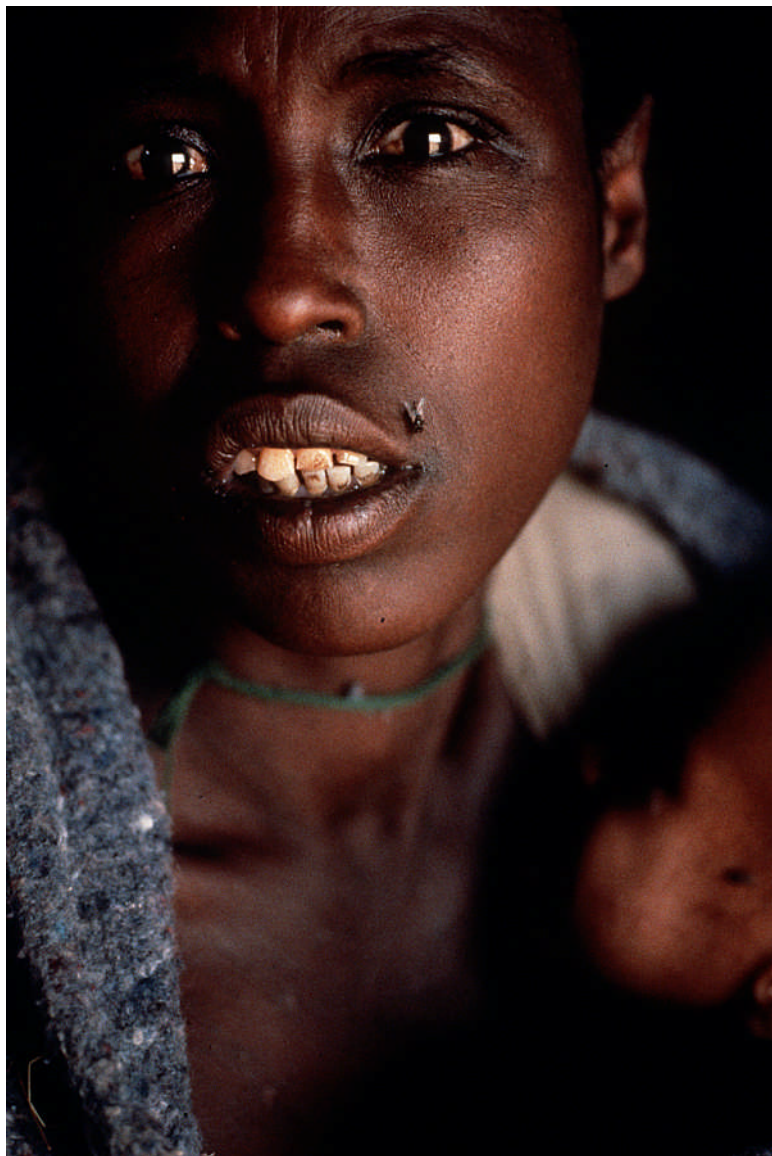


Figure 43

Mission Board was producing. Some might say that Don had lost his marbles. Why leave the Home Mission Board and go to a place like the Foreign Mission Board. Sounds so familiar to the same reasons that he went from Black Star to the Home Mission Board.

After going to the Foreign Mission

Board, Don ran into problem after problem once again. The board had just adopted a policy to help those moving to Richmond to be able to get loans through the F.M.B. But Carl Johnson told Don that although the governing board had approved it he could not let Don use this program. Interest rates

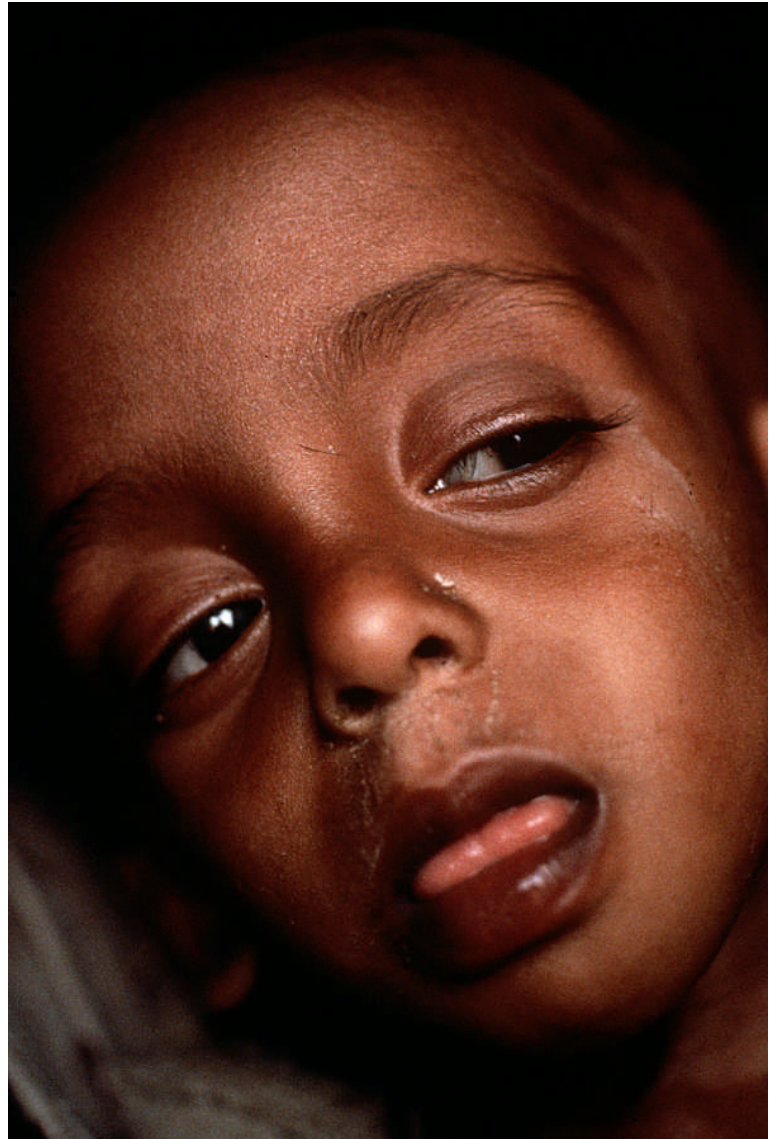


Figure 44 The child is suffering from malnutrition. The volunteers often see these faces of hopelessness and they bring back the hope for the families.

were sky high. Don took a cut in salary and went from paying a house payment of a couple of hundred dollars to four times as much. The house wasn't much bigger. It was just the nature of the housing market. Don said he took a major cut in pay when figuring in all the costs of the move.

Phil Douglas, a layout and design specialist, was putting together a book and had asked Don to contribute to the book some of his work. The Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board were using and had used Phil Douglas' consulting services at the time. Ken Lawson did not think that



Figure 45



Figure46 No shoes or protection for their feet, leaves many with feet problems.

this was a good idea and refused to let Don's pictures from the Foreign Mission Board be used in the book. The Home Mission Board did cooperate with the project and let Don's photo's be used. Many in the communications department were giving Don a hard time. Dr. Keith Parks had assigned Don directly to the top of the Communications Department head, Johnni Scofield. This infuriated many in the department. They felt they had been there longer and deserved the prestige that was being given to Don by Dr. Parks.

After looking at the two agencies and comparing the acceptance of

Don by then the difficulties that he incurred at the two agencies, this writer has drawn a conclusion. At the Home Board Don was faced with people questioning his knowledge of the technical, while at the Foreign Board they



Figure 47 A mother brings here child to see the doctor. In the background is a sheep that she brought for the doctor.

were jealous. He communicated well at both agencies. The sources of his problems at the agencies were very different.

Those that were being asked by Parks to change their approaches were having to deal with major issues. Dr. Parks wanted Don to direct the publications. Perhaps those who followed willingly posses more self-esteem than those who fought the battle of falling. Don did not confront this

issue. He just let his work do the talking. Slowly many changed their views after seeing the impact of Don's work.

The ties that Don had with Black Star and others in the secular world helped many on the staff. Steve Helber, the Associated Press Photographer for the state of Virginia, called Don one day asking for some help. Steve had worked in Atlanta and knew Don from those days in Atlanta. Don



Figure 48 Seeing this landscape gives an idea of how the area looks without any grass, anything growing, a very desolate place.

was too busy but suggested that Joanna Pinneo could probably help. This introduction helped Joanna, then a lab technician in the darkroom at the

Foreign Mission Board, get the experience shooting. Steve Helber took Joanna under his wing and taught her the in's and out's of wire service



Figure 49 Volunteer Mary Saunders has made a good friend in Ethiopia.

photography. With Steve and Don working with Joanna, soon Joanna was doing coverages for the Foreign Mission Board.

Don helped Joanna by going over her contact sheets with her. Slowly things were coming together. Her background was art and psychology. Don helped her use this background in photojournalism. Steve Helber

helped Joanna develop her style of impact. In the wire services pictures had to have immediate impact or the editors would not use them in their papers. This understanding coupled with Don's magazine background helped Joanna get some of the foundations that she later built upon to make her one of the most successful photographers in the field today. Howard Chapnick was grateful for being introduced to Joanna through Don.¹⁰ One can see through Joanna, Don's teaching ability.

What does Don teach others that they do already know? Don teaches persons how to see again. "Why is the sky blue? Why is one flower red and another yellow? How do the stars stay up in the sky? Why is the snow cold?," are questions Don says that children ask and adults forget to ask. Once these questions are not asked the world becomes humdrum. Don teaches those around him how to appreciate the small details and how these small details say so much. Don says, "Photography forces me to continue asking questions which began in my childhood and probing for answers in the maturity of my life. The 'seeing beyond what the average person sees' fills me constantly with excitement and allows me to keep the dreams of my

¹⁰ Interview with Chapnick.



Figure 50 Volunteer Mike Edens taught these two pastors Mikhail Shehata Ghaly and Anwar Dakdouk MasterLife Discipleship training in Cypress during 1984.

youth. It gives my 'seeing' a newness and freshness as I work hard to communicate through photography the messages I want to convey."¹¹

Black Star gave Don the opportunity to pursue this direction and later the Home Mission Board nurtured this call of Don's. The desire keeps him going now with the Foreign Mission Board. As a result of work with these groups, Don has been in all 50 states, all but two of the Canadian Provinces

¹¹ Don Rutledge, "Using Photography: To look beyond the backyard fence" unpublished, 1992.

and 137 countries.¹² This travel has help Don to see how small the world really is. He has noticed that once he arrives in another country the people are very similar and live very much alike. The smile still means the same the world over.

Often Don is asked to speak to photography conferences. He advises the photojournalists who work on the local papers to learn how to work where they are now. The ability to look good has little to do with where you are located in the world and who you are photographing. The ability to communicate must be there in the local market. For the past twenty years this writer/photographer has looked at Don Rutledge's work. The pictures in Russia look very similar to his pictures in Kentucky. The differences were smaller than the similarities. Don's photographs concentrate on the emotions of people. No matter where you are located in the world, people's emotions stand above languages and cultures. These small moments of expression communicate across our language barriers. Foreign Missions has been one of the best places for Don's work to excel. Here his style of photography was not bound by words or cultures. Body-language is a very powerful form of communication. The difference between a "No Comment"

¹² Ibid.

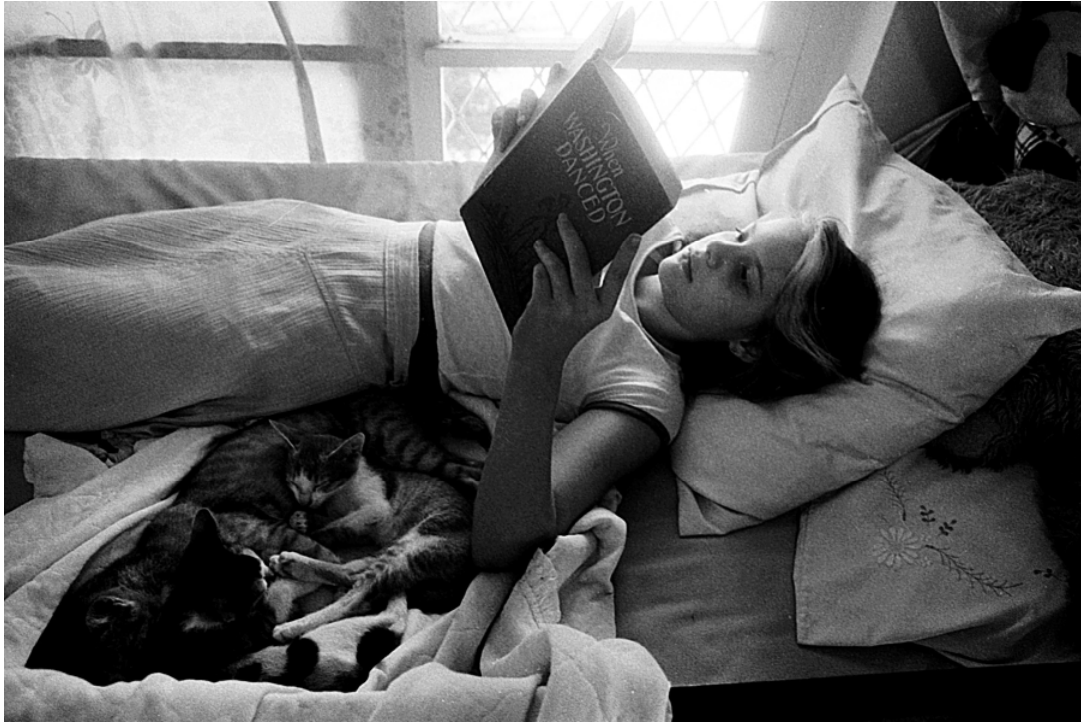


Figure 51 Missionary Kid, Ellen Duval, loves her cats and books and this is what helps her make home in Indonesia.

on a show like 60 Minutes and the same words in print is obvious.

While Don was doing a coverage to show where Lottie Moon grew up in the mountains of Virginia, he was reminded of how small the world had always been. He discovered that Lottie Moon spoke several languages and that many of the people in the hills of Virginia today speak many languages. Some of the people Don ran into speak Asian languages like Chinese.¹³

How does Don continue, year after year, to make photographs where

¹³ Don Rutledge, Interview by author, Richmond, 1985.

the people appear not to notice Don. Don's favorite lens for years has been the 28mm lens. This lens requires Don to get twice as close as he appears to be in the actual photograph. When viewing Don's photographs, realize that he is usually twice as close as he appears. Don's style of photography requires the subject to allow Don to enter his personal space. If someone enters the personal space of most people, they appear uptight and tense. But if their best friend enters that space they seem warmer and personable. This immediacy that Don creates with the camera breaks down the walls of culture and status. People become real when Don photographs them. Don wants us to see the positive side of people. This ability comes from years of hard work on the part of a man committed to his calling to ministry, the ministry of helping others the people and the world with "his father's eyes."

CONCLUSION

To a non-Christian, Don would have been considered crazy for taking the positions with Southern Baptist. Going to the Home Mission Board was definitely a step down in pay and prestige for Don Rutledge. Why would someone leave a super position to take a drastic cut in pay and work with people who generally did not understand photojournalism? Why would Don repeat the cut in pay and prestige and leave the Home Mission Board to go the Foreign Mission Board? The answers to these questions only come from one source and that source is God.

Don turned down positions with Life magazine, Associated Press and many others. The Associated Press job would allow Don to travel the country doing any feature story that he wanted to do. The AP job also would require him to go with the President of the United States on any over seas coverages. Don turned down what most would have not thought twice about taking as jobs.⁵⁴

Don did not follow the normal direction that most Americans seek. He did not climb the ladder as most would. In our culture we are trained to continue to go up vertically. We move through our school years doing this and most continue to do the same in the corporate ladder climb. However, Don learned to follow his Lord—Jesus. Whenever Don decided, there was no brass ring to grab. In hindsight Don's life is a testimony to how the Lord takes care of his children.

Don's life has been a testimony to other photographers who are not Christian. He is asked often to speak at conferences for the National Press Photographers, Atlanta Press

⁵⁴ Interview with Rutledge.

Photographers, The Southern Short Course and also speaks for numerous camera clubs around the country.

This writer concludes that Don has exemplified better than most that following your Lord does not mean giving yourself to a lesser life. Those that earlier criticized Don for leaving Black Star to work with Southern Baptist have called him over and over asking if there are any openings for them to serve.⁵⁵

For those who want to follow in Don's footsteps they need to be warned that the road that Don has paved, still has pot holes and other problems that will require one to still proceed with caution. They must realize Don focused on relationships with all those around him. They must build strong relationships.

While working with Don at the Foreign Mission Board this writer observed how the secretaries and those that worked in the file area of photography were often teasing Don. After one trip, Don's office was completely rolled with toilet paper. Another time one of the girls in the office had everyone dress like Don. Don always wore the same style shirts and this made it easy to tease him.

Another time Don came back to discover his desk stacked in mail. The office secretary had made up labels with Don's name and address. She asked everyone to bring in all their junk mail. She then put the labels on all that mail.

One does not build this type of relationships by looking out for themselves alone. Don was not around a great deal at the Foreign Mission Board, but he knew how to put all

⁵⁵ Rutledge.

at ease around him. He was well known for the stories that he told. Don always had a story to tell and keep people laughing.

Don ability with people is strongly related to his relationship with Christ. No matter how good one is with the camera or with words, they must understand that Don's success is due to his diligence and patience given to him by Jesus Christ. You will never hear Don preaching or grabbing shirt collars to witness. Due to Don's life many have come to see the compassion that Christ has for the world. Looking at Don's photographs allows one to see the world in a Christian perspective. One does not have to work with a Christian institution to do what Don does so well. One only need a Lord that they call their master to understand how he does it all—his Lord enables him.

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