

# Focus on Oklahoma Camera Club, Inc.

In October of 1931, seven photographers, amateur and professional, met at the Oklahoma City YMCA and founded the **Oklahoma Camera Club (OCC)**. The founders wanted to advance their knowledge of photography through fellowship and sharing of information and skills as photography began to be recognized by the art world as true art. As the club grew in numbers and achievements, other small clubs were forming in the state with many looking towards the OCC as the *big group*.

In 1934, the Club participated in the founding of the **Photographic Society of America (PSA)**. Club representatives attended the 1946 National PSA Conference in New York and elected to sponsor the conference the following year. This was the first conference west of the Mississippi. The club sponsored a second National Conference in 1968; this was preceded by a Regional Convention in 1963. Today approximately forty percent of the club members hold individual membership in PSA. Many have been recognized for their outstanding performance in exhibitions and service to the organization, and the OCC continues to be an active part of PSA.

Club member **Dr. Ralph Venk, Honorable FPSA**, became President of PSA in 1987. Ralph received the Honorable FPSA recognition on October 31, 2006, PSA's highest honor. Only 16 members have received this recognition in PSA's 84 year history, only 25 members receiving this

recognition may be alive at any time. Ralph was instrumental in moving the PSA Headquarters from Philadelphia to Oklahoma City in 1988, a central location within the country. Three club members have served on PSA's Board of Directors. Currently, **Jaci Finch, APSA**, is Information Technology Vice President.

In 1958, the OCC became an active member of the **Gulf States Camera Club Council (GSCCC)**, an organization with a regional focus of clubs bordering or near the Gulf Coast. Current clubs represent the states of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. GSCCC works to promote cooperation between camera clubs and support interest in all aspects of photography with monthly club competitions and an annual convention.

Field trips became popular early in the club's history with most of the beginning destinations in Oklahoma. Since then there have been many interstate picture-taking trips as far away as Yosemite National Park in California. Today many OCC members annually visit the Smoky Mountains, joining members of a number of clubs from the mid-west.

Along with the field trips came the formation of workshops to improve teaching and fellowship in smaller groups. Workshops have changed as members interest and technology change. Current workshops focus on the learning and practice of Adobe Photoshop Elements® and stand-alone Photoshop®.

An early association with the Oklahoma State Fair led to the club conducting and hanging large photography exhibits during the Fair.



By Doug Finch, APSA



OCC Holiday Dinner 2018. Photo © Jackie Mesarick



End of Year Competition award recipients, J.D. McClung, Jackie Mesarick, Brandon Bowman, Jaci Finch, APSA.

Beginning in 1962, the club displayed the results of the Oklahoma International Exhibition of Photography at the fair for the next 40 years. The State Fair welcomed this service by contributing money to help cover the expenses. Prints were also displayed at the Omniplex and the Downtown Oklahoma City Library. The club continues to conduct annual worldwide photography exhibitions judging the **52nd Oklahoma International** this year. Associations with other organizations have provided opportunities for displaying members' work. Exhibits have been hung at Science Museum Oklahoma, the International Photography Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma City Library, the Edmond Fine Arts Institute and a number of local retirement villages and restaurants.

Beginning in 2013, the club managed the judging of the **Pictorial Print Division for the PSA International**. This year, in an effort to encourage greater participation by reducing mailing costs, the club will receive and manage all print competitions for the 2019 PSA International.

In 2003 the club began active participation in the **PSA Youth Showcase**, a statewide program with the goal of becoming involved in the promotion and education of photography among the state's high school students. OCC participation is another one of the club's successful community services, with as many as 119 students entering, representing up to 25 high schools from around the state. Selected prints and projected images are forwarded to PSA for judging in the International competition. Winning images are displayed as part of the Youth Showcase at the PSA international conferences.

The unique beauty of the club's logo has a wonderful history of its own. The original symbol



*Thumbs up, PSA Youth Photography Showcase*

grew from a high contrast version of a member's photograph made at an Anadarko powwow. This picture became the symbol for the 1968 PSA Conference sponsored by the club in Oklahoma. The club adopted this symbol following the conference as the official club circular logo. The current logo grew from the same original high



*Wichita Mountains Field Trip*



*Students attending the PSA Youth Award Presentation.*

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Bob Protus; Jaci Finch, APSA; Doug Finch, APSA; Wally Lee, FPSA; Jan Lee, FPSA; and John Key walking streets of Guthrie, Oklahoma.

contrast print accompanied by the initials “OK” identifying the state.

Effective communication becomes the lifeblood of an organization. The *HypoCheck (HC)*, the club’s monthly newsletter, has long served this function. The club published the first newsletter in 1944. Originally the HC was typed, cut and pasted, photographed, printed, folded and mailed to each member. Today, while still requiring the same creativity, the labor has been retooled and reduced by using software for both the narrative and graphics followed by electronic distribution.

Similar to newsletters, the online world offers opportunities for communication both within



Wally Lee, FPSA, presents new club shirt to Sandy Carr.

and outside of the club. Today the club’s website, [www.oklahomacameraclub.com](http://www.oklahomacameraclub.com), serves to provide information for members as well as attract visitors and potential members. The club’s Facebook page, set up in May, 2010, currently has over 900 followers.

The club takes great pride in its colorful history full of outstanding achievements made possible by the dedication, skills and talent of its members. You will find a full history of the *Oklahoma Camera Club, Inc.* posted on the club’s website; it is currently being updated as we look forward to the club celebrating 90 years of fun and service to the community. ■



Judging prints with digital showing for audience viewing. Photo © Jackie Mesarick