

Betty Hudman travels Texas armed with camera, notebook, curiosity

Horizons of an A&M library cataloger extend far beyond the books, journals and microforms that cross her desk going to the library shelves.

Armed with camera, notebook and inquisitive outlook, Betty Wilke Hudman has traveled the length and breadth of Texas for magazine articles.

She often stops at roadside and gets out the camera. Abandoned farm houses, windmills, rail and stone fences or Clabber Girl bak-

ing powder signs are most frequently framed in the viewfinder.

"Usually I stop to photograph something that may not be there the next time I go past," Mrs. Hudman explains. Old wooden and brick structures etched by wind, sun and rain are her favorite subjects.

But these are sidelights of business-related trips, contends the librarian whose photography is a family heritage.

"Photography has always been

an accessory tool for my freelance writing," she notes. Betty Wilke Hudman bylines and credits have appeared in "Texas Star" and numerous other publications.

She draws on professional newspaper experience for features such as a recent "Texas Star" spread on A&M Prof. Claude Davis' political button collection, articles on a local florist and the TAMU floral test garden for "Southern Florist and Nurseryman" and a piece in "Chuckwag-

on," trade publication of the Texas Restaurant Association.

The red-haired librarian also shoots and writes for two Fawcett publications, "Startling Detective" and "True Police Cases." A future "Texas Star" piece will feature a Fort Worth man who carves military miniatures. She also plans to use part of the summer assembling pictures and facts on "bush" rodeos.

Mrs. Hudman is the daughter of veteran Texas newsman and

outdoors writer L. A. Wilke, believed to have fired the first photo flash bulb in the state. Former editor of the "Texas Game and Fish" magazine, he writes outdoor columns for several magazines and is on the "Texas Star" editorial board. His early photos were illuminated by burning flash powder.

Her son, Mike Cox, is an Austin American reporter. Some of her photos illustrate his book, "Red Rouser Country," dealing

with the country around San Angelo.

Mrs. Hudman was born in Fort Worth, grew up in El Paso and was a general assignments reporter on the Gainesville Register while the family lived there. They also resided in Sweetwater, Amarillo, Abilene, Corpus Christi, Denton and Dallas.

L. A. Wilke took up free-lance photography to supplement family income during the depression. Betty's mother did his darkroom

work.

"I grew up with it," Mrs. Hudman points out. "Our home was never without a darkroom. My childhood toys were the old block-type newspaper cuts."

She taught in Dallas Sunset and Del Valle schools after receiving the bachelor degree in education at Texas Woman's University in 1957. Mrs. Hudman, whose photographs have been exhibited in the TAMU library, received the master's in library science at TWU in 1969.

A member of the library staff here three years, she finds no conflict with the two interests.

"The library is a gold mine of information," Mrs. Hudman explains. "It's a detailed sort of work, such as cataloguing microforms and the newspapers we have on microfilm. It is really exciting to work with the old historic issues."

She found the camera useful while working in the Oak Springs branch of the Austin Public Library, to illustrate newspaper stories, for exhibits of children participating in programs that helped get people in the library and with library public relations work.

"We sometimes had trouble with some of the older boys in the reading room," she recalls. "If it got too rowdy, I would snap a couple of pictures and things settled down rapidly."

As a means to an end, Mrs. Hudman's photo equipment is kept simple. She shoots a Yashica D twin lens reflex with a strobe flash. A yellow filter to bring out clouds and a closeup lens are the only accessories she uses.

"I try to keep it as simple as possible, so I can put my mind on other things," she comments.

Her home work room is decorated in black and white, as a background for photographic enlargements of her favorite roadside scenes.

"Most people are attracted first by the windmill," she remarks. "Everyone tells me they know exactly where this one is located, but no one has called the place right yet. But this is indicative of what the photo means to people, and how it ties them to a particular place and point in time."

Microfiche answer to file problems

A&M's Library offers one solution to overflowing office filing cabinets.

It's a microfiche production unit which can produce, almost instantly, a microfiche with space for eye-readable title plus 60 regular letter size pages.

The machine can reduce the 8 1/2 by 11 inch page format or smaller.

Don A. Halvorson, assistant to the library director, said the library is leasing the machine on a trial basis during which fiscal records and other materials will be reproduced. The microfiche produced is easily read on conventional microfiche readers.

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