

# Communications Workshop '83



photo by Fred Bunch

## Houston Post photographer visits campus

### Humble beginnings didn't stop shutter

by Keith Gresham, Shari Martin and Kelle Green  
Workshop Reporters

Experience doesn't mean an old pro can't get butterflies and goose bumps. Houston Post photographer Fred Bunch is living testimony.

"If I shoot something, and I think I like it, I still get sweaty palms," Bunch said. "It's magical to watch the film come up in the developer and (you) say 'Hey, that's mine.'"

Bunch, a Houston Post photojournalist, is teaching the advanced photography division at the High School Communications Workshop at Texas A&M this week.

"A good news photographer should be a good news writer first," Bunch said. "We may be aggressive in certain ways, but we're really just nosy."

Bunch developed his interest in photography by working on the Leonard High School yearbook. At first, he was interested only in printing other peoples' pictures, but he soon found himself behind the lens taking sports photos.

"Since we didn't have anyone who could kick the extra point, we used to sit on the goalpost and shoot the football players diving under," Bunch said.

"My first darkroom was a chicken house. It had dirt floors and I had a slight dust problem," he said. Bunch fixed it up, however, making it light-proof.

"I plugged the holes with cotton and tar," he said.

Bunch received his undergraduate degree from East Texas State University. Before working at the Houston Post, he was a reporter for the Galveston News.

"It's not uncommon for me to shoot fashions in the morning, the President at noon and cement in the evening," Bunch said. "I take everything—from food to fashion to advertising."

Bunch said that news photographers have to furnish their own camera equipment, take care of their own repairs and

buy their own insurance. Bunch doesn't let that stop him from loving the business. He does, however, have a few dislikes.

Bunch feels that too many photographers covering the same event gives every photographer almost the same photo. "I don't like the press mob," he said. "That's probably the main thing I don't like about news photography."

"You can take a journalist's story and rewrite it, but you can't take a bad picture and make it good. Everything we do is visual; it's concrete."

Bunch said that the difference between a good photo and a bad photo depends on whether the "decisive moment" is captured.

"This is where everything comes to a head," Bunch said. "If we don't capture the right moment, it's right there in black and white."

One of Bunch's more recent assignments was coverage of the NCAA Basketball Tournament in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"I realized down the line that the final game would hinge on one last shot," he said. His hunch was right. He photographed the last shot, but was disappointed by the expressions of the fans in the photo; they had not yet realized who had won the game. He said he had hoped to capture excitement in the fan's faces.

What makes a good photographer?

"A good news photographer captures the moment at hand," Bunch said. "And he's got to be aggressive enough to go where the pictures are. A student should have just as much ease in getting photographs as a professional would."

Bunch said he wants his students to become more involved in their subjects.

"I feel like they should be saturated in everything. I would like to convince my photographers to shoot more film," he said. "I'm not saying to machine gun everything in sight, just be there, get ready, sit back and wait for the fun."

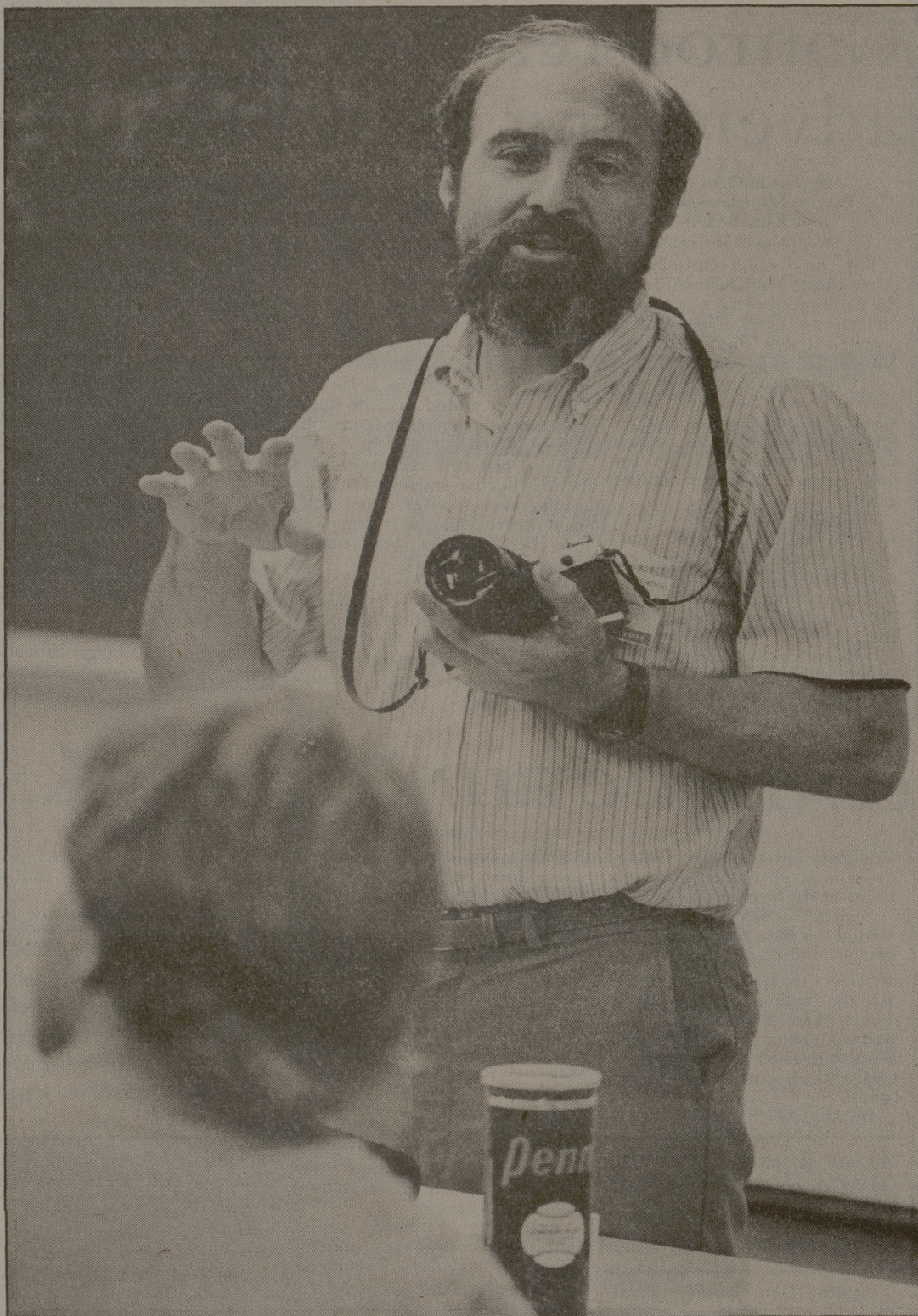


photo by Peter Rocha

Fred Bunch, Houston Post photojournalist, explains the finer points of photography during a session of the High School

Communications Workshop being held at Texas A&M this week.

### Documentary offers interesting venture

by Sherry Beisert, Steve Zach and Tracey Prelli  
Workshop Reporters

Some were sleeping on exercise mats. Others were watching a television set or playing cards. Still others were eating bologna sandwiches and drinking coffee. There were people of all ages: men, women and children—all housed in a single room.

While this was going on, a bearded man with a camera took photographs. The scene was Neartown Shelter in Houston. The man with the camera was Fred Bunch.

Neartown Shelter was an overnight home for those who needed a place to sleep. It beat life under a bridge or in a makeshift tent in temperatures that averaged near or below freezing.

The shelter, which was sponsored by the Bering United Methodist Church, was open from November 1982 to March 1983. The church is one of the two churches which providing overnight shelter.

"Only two churches out of 56 queried answered the call for help from those in need in the Houston area," said Bunch, a Houston Post photojournalist.

Bunch first visited the shelter just to take a few photographs for the Post. The idea for a documentary formed and he began visiting the shelter every night for 45 days.

"Usually, about 25 people had to be turned away each night," Bunch said.

The shelter opened at 7:30 p.m. and the residents had to leave by 7 a.m. No more than 125 persons were allowed to spend the night.

"Most of them were unemployed, or new arrivals to Houston—or both—and were in the middle-age to early-50s age group," Bunch said.

"I'm sure there were a few ex-cons there, but the mood was generally good," he added. Bunch said he had to be "sly and stealthy" at first because many people didn't want to be photo-

graphed. "I ended up buying them food and coffee before they would really trust me," he said.

Bunch met many people who became friends with the volunteers at the shelter. For example, a one-armed man who volunteered his help drove all the way across Houston once a week with food and blankets. He was a member of the church that was sponsoring the shelter.

"The biggest family I met was a man, his wife and their four kids," he said. "I remember that each night the man would hold one of his children while he slept."

To prevent theft, the shelter kept most of their possessions under the sleeping mats at night.

Residents represented a variety of people.

"There was one man who wanted me to photograph him and his drawings. He thought I was a repressed artist," Bunch said.

Yet the residents seemed to have a common belief.

"Most of the homeless blame President Reagan and the economy for the situation they were in," he said.

The photographer felt the real danger while at the shelter, but he was sometimes nervous.

"I just worked around those guys who told me they would break the camera over my head if I took their picture," Bunch said.

One of Bunch's favorite photographs is of a small child standing among some of the more hardened residents. The words "I am a world overcomer" were printed on his shirt.

Bunch said he feels the things are now on the upswing. "Some of the people I met at the shelter have jobs now," he said. Many of them received offers through the church.

Bunch is applying for a grant that would provide money to print and hang his photographs of the people at the shelter. "I'd like my photographs to be shown by November because what we need is public awareness. All we're trying to do is help people," he explained.