

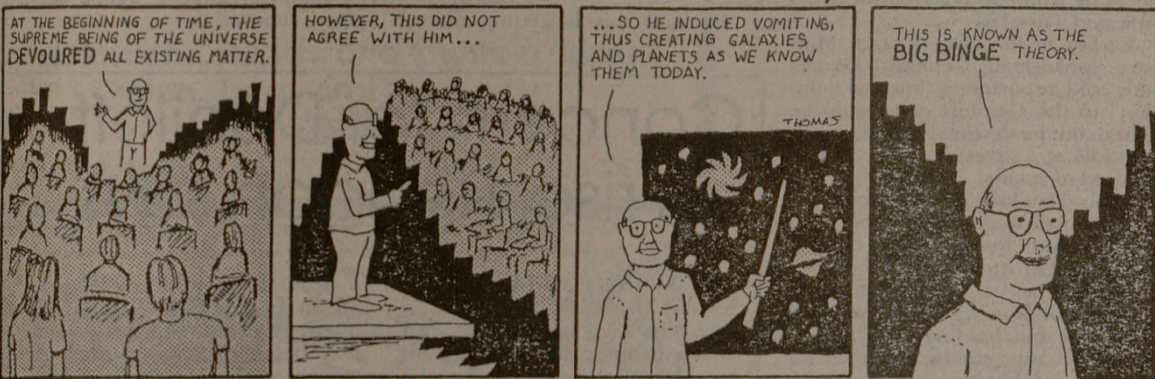
Warped

by Scott McCullar



Waldo

by Kevin Thomas



Texas artist's photo essays document Depression era

By Hal L. Hammons
Reporter

The work of Texas photographer Russell Lee is on display this month at the gallery in the Langford Architecture Center. The exhibit opened Sept. 1, four days after Lee died at 83 after an extended battle with cancer. Lee, who was a resident of Austin, is honored in "A Russell Lee Portfolio: Early Texas Portraits," a collection of his photographs from the Amarillo Art Center. The exhibit can be seen until Oct. 8. Accompanying the exhibit is a video documentary, "Photographer: Russell Lee," by Ann Mundy, who was a close friend and former student of Lee at the University of Texas Department of Art. A special screening of the documentary will be shown Sunday at 4 p.m.

Lee was best known for the six years he worked for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression. In the video, Lee describes his dissatisfaction after taking hundreds of photographs from roadsides and front porches. "I decided that perhaps the story was inside the house," he said. "Here was the way people lived. How do they eat? How do they sleep? ... All of these things were part of their particular way of life, and I wanted to get that." Lee said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, "Sometimes people would ask me (when I was photographing them during Depression days), 'Why do you take these pictures?' ... And I would say, 'You understand about the pictures you have of your family. Well, I'm

taking pictures of you because you are the history of today.'" Lee referred to his many series of photographs — ranging in scope and subject from Texas politics to Spanish-speaking Texans to retarded children — as "photo essays." The *Tulsa Herald* once editorialized, "(Lee's) pictures are ... artistry in the best definition of the word. But they are first of all a plain unadorned record." "The imagery is not always pleasant. There are pictures of sick children and miserable, homeless migrant farmers. "But the accurate image of poverty and deprivation is offset by a special kind of beauty and human spirit in nearly all of the scenes and faces. Call it grit. Russell Lee reminds us that ... the Depression generation had plenty of it."

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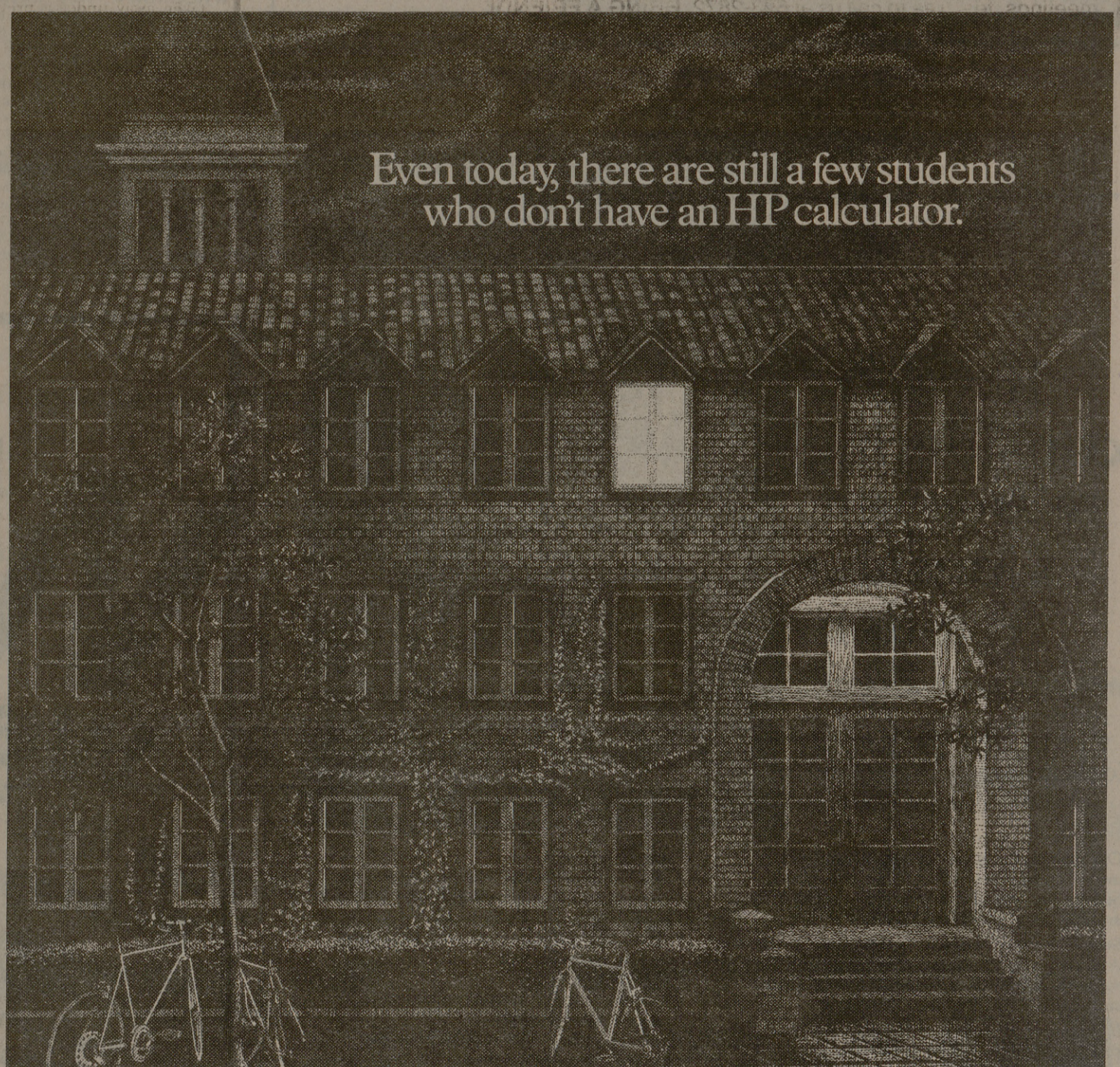
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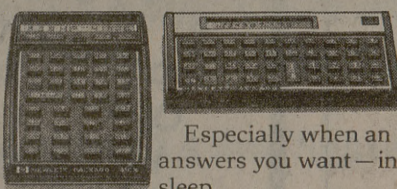
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