

Louis Schmidt Award presented to Thomas P. Hurtgen, FBPA

The following is a transcript of the text of the Schmidt Award presentation address given by Dr. Ralph J. Marshall, the 1988 Laureate and director of Medical Illustration at the University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff Wales.

Mr. President, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. As you know, the Louis Schmidt Award is the highest honor the BPA can bestow, it is named after one of our founders and our second President, who was Head of Photography at the Rockefeller Medical Center in New York, a dedicated teacher and a worker of the highest technical standards. It is made each year for "outstanding contributions to the progress of biological communications."

The full criteria upon which the award is made are:

- Outstanding contributions to the progress of communications within any of the life sciences.
- Promotion of understanding and cooperation within the field of biocommunication.

- Maintenance of an ethical approach to professional relationships.
- Willingly shared technical information.

This year the Louis Schmidt Laureate is Thomas Patrick Hurtgen. Tom Hurtgen was born of German/Irish stock in a part of the U.S.A.—the middle west—where farming is paramount. That kind of country helped shape his character, a character molded by the firm influences of family, church and the very land that bore him. A part of the country where arrangements and contracts between people are made, not necessarily by written and notarized, signed legal agreements, but, a shake of the hand. A part of the world where a man's word is, in short, his bond—a matter of personal honor. Tom Hurtgen is that kind of man.

Such a family background puts great importance on the value of hard work, work with hands, work with head, and the need for education and training. The work ethic then, has a great importance. Tom Hurtgen showed and sustained this in his school and college

work. He graduated from Waukesha Memorial High School (Wisconsin) in 1964.

Tom went on to study photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology—not in the Biomedical photography field that is now so famous there, for that course had not, in 1964, been established, and he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photographic Illustration in 1968. It was while he was studying at RIT that he met Nancy. I believe that behind every great man is a great woman—if not behind then alongside him, and I believe this to be true in the case of Tom and Nancy. They are very much a team. He later went on to get his Master's degree at RIT, but that was all in the future.

In 1968 then, following his graduation from RIT, he started two-years service with the U.S. Army, and it was in the military that he was introduced to financial matters and to medical photography at Fort Dix, New Jersey; and here I see fairly obvious origins of the twin disciplines—Photography and Finance—the twin pillars that his future success was to be built upon.

On leaving the U.S. Army he joined Eastman Kodak as a Technical Editor, entering a favored route for high flyers in photography, a kind of postgraduate course, for no one in my opinion should ever underestimate the scholarly work done at Kodak.

He worked at Kodak with Lou Gibson prior to Lou's retirement. Tom wrote and edited a number of scientific and medical photography data books. Many of these were revisions of booklets that he brought up to date, but amongst others, one an outstanding book on "Biomedical Photography—A Kodak Seminar in Print," was conceived and produced by Tom. It is an excellent book—and a milestone in biological photography. In 1976 he took a job as a technical editor in Eastman Kodak's Health Science Marketing Division.

At about this time the Rochester



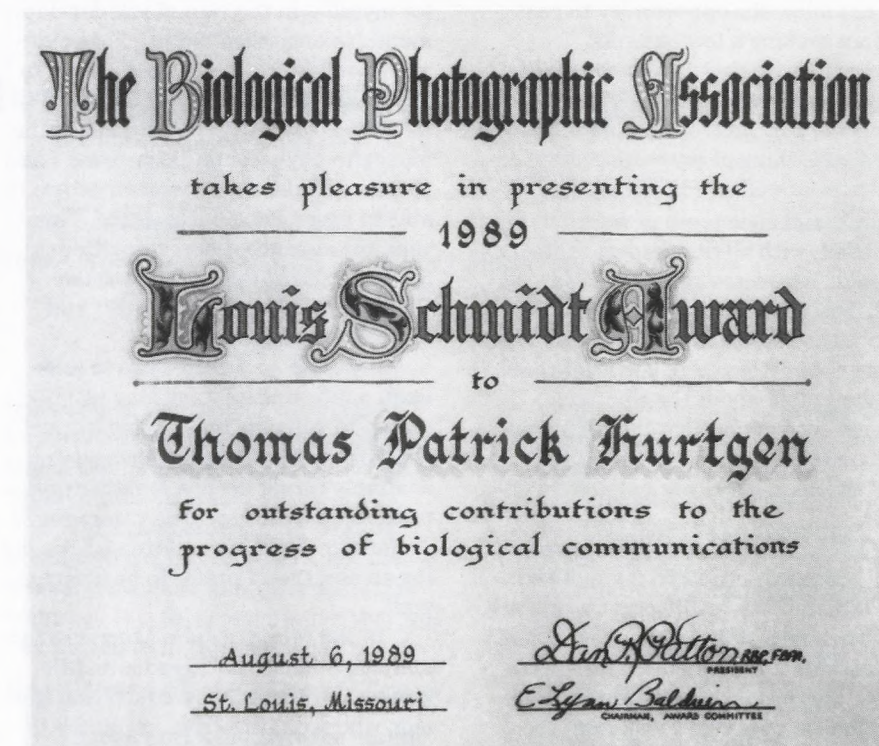
1989 Schmidt Laureate Tom Hurtgen with BPA President Dan Patton and last year's recipient, Ralph Marshall.

Institute of Technology was planning to improve its teaching in medical photography. These plans were made in consultation with the BPA, and Tom with other members of the Association, was an important member of the committee that designed the course. Tom went on to act as visiting professor and as an adviser. As you are aware well over 100, probably over 200 or more graduates of that program are now in responsible positions in medical photography in the U.S.A. and indeed in other parts of the world. I would hazard a guess that many of you here tonight are graduates.

Since joining the BPA in 1971, Tom Hurtgen has given unstinting service to the profession and to the BPA in many areas, adding to the great contribution he has made to biomedical communications in general. His writings, particularly the many thousands of words he produced while working with Kodak as a technical editor have been of inestimable value. His list of "personal" publications is also formidable, covering a range of topics from advice on selecting the right film for the job through photomicrography to the use of management information systems and computerization. This kind of scholarship included the production of a Cumulative Index to the *Journal of the Biological Photographic Association*, covering fifty-two years of publications of the *Journal*—1932–1984.

In 1980 Tom Hurtgen left Kodak on his appointment as director of the Division of Audiovisual Education at Duke University Medical Center. A relatively young man to follow Sam Agnello into that prestigious university post, a post in which for the past 9 years he has directed a central, full-cost recovery medical media department with a staff of 30. A department that produces a wide range of medical media—medical art, photography and instructional television—and in which he has demonstrated his mastery of those fiscal skills and medical illustrative-photographic skills first acquired, perhaps twenty years ago at Fort Dix, and honed and polished over the years to their present state. The Beth Anderson interview of Tom in *Biomedical Communications* magazine encapsulates his philosophy, and is a model for any aspiring Director of A.V. services particularly for his ideas of cross-training.

In 1985, with Nancy, he formed



T&N Hurtgen Enterprises Inc. at Chapel Hill, NC and was appointed Executive Director of the BPA providing management services to our Association.

All of this adds up—I'm sure you will agree—to an impressive record. Friends of Tom will know he is a very giving and generous of spirit man—giving to his job, to his profession, to his family and to his friends. If there is anyone who comes out on the short end of it, so to speak, it's Tom himself. There are things Tom has wanted to do for years that he hasn't got around to doing. There is a grandfather clock that Tom bought some 15 years ago in kit form. I believe it is still waiting for him to finish it and set it going. He has still to stain and paint the case!

Something that was deeply instilled into Tom when he was growing up was that you haven't really established yourself and your family until you own a piece of land with a house and a barn on it—not only a house but also a barn. For the farmers of the midwest, pride is in one's barn—having a good well-functioning barn is more important than having a luxurious house to live in. Well Tom has his house, his land now, and a barn—he is settled where he is in his home at Chapel Hill and established in Duke University at Durham, NC.

The Louis Schmidt Award Committee believes that Tom Hurtgen has indeed made outstanding contributions to the progress of biological communications. He has vigorously promoted understanding and cooperation within the field, and maintained a high ethical approach to the work. His willing sharing of technical information cannot be questioned. In all these aspects he has demonstrated service to biological communication pressed down and running over.

Tom Hurtgen—Louis Schmidt Laureate for 1989—we congratulate you. We salute you!

Tom Hurtgen's comments

Thank you very much! To the Louis Schmidt committee and the Louis Schmidt Laureates, I feel very honored that you would think so highly of me and the work that I've done.

I've learned many lessons from you as we have interacted over the years. Some lessons have been about technical matters; but to be honest, I remember and am most in awe with the wisdom shown in informal conversations. I'm humbled that you honor me to be in your number.

Well, it is not often that one gets this kind of platform. Those of you who know me have probably guessed that I

will not allow the opportunity to pass without making a few remarks.

I am aware that I sit in the middle of three generations of biophotographers in this profession. You have heard something of my management experiences as well as editorial, photographic, and civic types of work.

Well, with all due respect to the Schmidt Laureates and Ralph Marshall, last year's recipient and our presenter, the listed accomplishments are those of many of you in our profession. I'd like to talk about the common themes in whatever I've chosen to participate in—maybe some things that even Scotland Yard was not able to uncover.

These themes go back to my youth on a Wisconsin farm and my mother and father. They instilled in me and my brothers and sisters a deep respect for one another and others. We learned to work hard. If you ask my Dad he'll tell you that we played baseball hard too. Playing baseball is something that I still do—hard. We learned that it's proper to give without expectation of anything in return—I believe that's called love.

I remember city folks occasionally running out of gas way out in the country—they'd give Pa some hard luck story and he'd give them a gallon of gas to get to town. He never took any money and always explained that he had "a family and some day they'll be in trouble. I hope someone will help them out too."

In the early 1970's a colleague at Kodak philosophically explained about why scientific societies exist—and that is: *to hold, develop and pass on to future generations the body of knowledge for a particular field*. BPA and our Journal have that same goal.

Thanks for what we have gained from BPA must take the form of holding (belonging and supporting BPA), developing (researching and innovating) and passing along to future generations (teaching and publishing). It's been my experience that hefty fees paid to consultants, for instance, will not yield the help and wisdom gained from BPA and its members.

Along the way I learned how to learn—this probably happened in graduate school. Every year I do something

for myself—in the vein of self development. No one asked me to go to graduate school. I took a one-week course in photographic processing and statistics in the mid-70's. In 1984 I borrowed the money to buy a computer because I was convinced that it was necessary to be able to make a computer dance. This year, for instance, I'm reading from a list of books that includes Norman Cousins, *Anatomy of an Illness* and *The Healing Heart*.

I learned a long time ago to seize upon opportunities; they may be presented to you only once. I also learned that life without passion, enthusiasm, or simply caring deeply, is rather uninteresting. Further, contrary to society's preference for being entertained, for being an observer, I prefer to be a participant.

In the words of John Murray, a former neighbor, an RIT graduate, Milwaukee Journal photographer, and the man who took time from his family to teach me his passion, photography, "the difference is the distance between the letter 'A' and 'E', apathy and empathy. *Empathy* means understanding, caring and trying to help your fellow man and *Apathy* means not giving a damn." Although Mr. Murray died several years ago, I'm grateful for his early training.

Can you imagine, for instance, studying photography at the prestigious Rochester Institute of Technology and missing even one class? I can't.

I remember fondly a couple years ago when I took quite a bit of razzing from BPA'ers over a particularly short haircut, and a good friend came to the rescue with "well, Tom's always been known for getting his money's worth."

When my Dad took me to the bus depot at the age of 18 to head to Rochester, New York, his words were, "Son, give it your best effort, nothing less." I'm glad he hastened to add that "you're always welcome here if it doesn't turn out right or if you decide that it's not for you." It was all right to try things and even fail, but honest effort was required.

You've heard about "going for the brass ring"—to me there's no sense to getting on the merry-go-around of life if you don't go for the brass ring. There are a few people here who work with me

at Duke, who are former employees, or who I worked with at Eastman Kodak Company. They may have a perspective on what makes Hurtgen tick. They know I don't like getting beat. I like to hire winners. A desire to win and a service orientation is what happens in our department at Duke University. Art, photography, and television are what we do in delivering service, and we aim to win at it.

Throughout my career, the themes brought out in some of these stories have been what has driven me. I've been blessed with some of life's ups and some of its downs. I can honestly say that my association with biocommunications and BPA has been one of the high spots.

As I mentioned, this platform is not provided to one very often. My family, friends, teachers, RIT faculty, and yes, the U.S. Army, Eastman Kodak Company, Duke University, and BPA members and officers, and now the Louis Schmidt Laureates—all those whose paths have crossed mine in small and large ways, have helped me be who I am.

- To Ma and Pa, your act is a hard one to follow but still the goal.
- To my children, did you hear what I said?
- To Nancy, thank you for everything but mostly for allowing me to be who I am.
- To the Louis Schmidt Laureates—I am in awe of you gentlemen and ladies (both here and not present) and hope I can live up to your standard.
- A special "thank you" and deep admiration to H. Lou Gibson, a gentle man who allowed a "green horn" to work next to him and who willingly shared his vast experience at the beginning of my career.
- To the BPA officers, governors, committee heads and members I've worked with, thanks for the challenges.
- To the BPA members I haven't met yet, I look forward to working with you.
- To St. Louis and the Production Team, this memory is for life.

Thank you for tonight's snapshot in time, and for bearing with me. The best is yet to come.