

Early Color Images of Mid-Century Iowa • Pilot-Photographer Don Ultang • Iowa from Above

Winter 2009 • \$7

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers,

The other week my siblings and I got together in Chicago. Although three of us live within 50 miles of each other here in eastern Iowa, one lives in Virginia. These days, if all four of us are in the same room at the same time, it's a big deal. As a bonus, three offspring and one spouse came along.

My brother, Gary, brought a few ears of corn for each of us. Not sweet corn, mind you, but the real stuff—field corn.

My sister Gail plans to feed hers to the squirrels this winter, but I'm likely to keep mine forever, being the sentimental fool I am.

That corn came from the good soil of our family farm, which dates back to Gustav Bein settling there in the 1850s. Farm families plow their hearts and souls into the earth, so I figure there's some kind of family essence in that ear of corn, and I aim to hang on to it.

As I said, Gary brought corn. My sister Gloria brought pen and paper; she is always jotting down notes. Gail brought homemade peanut butter cookies and pineapple zucchini bread, tucked into a basket and covered with a remnant of the red kitchen curtains from our farmhouse.

I brought a digital recorder.

After lunch and catch-up conversations and group photos, I pulled out the little recorder, set it on the coffee table, and said cheerily, "Life is short."

Almost two hours later the pineapple zucchini bread and cookies were gone, and we had run out of steam. But I had a couple of bushels of family stories.

Back to that ear of corn from my brother. Farmers know that when a crop is



Logan, my son, and my brother, Gary Bein, check out the corn crop.

ready to harvest and the weather is decent, you just can't afford to wait.

I brought that recorder along because when it comes to family stories, you can't afford to wait either.

Don't wait until you get the family tree updated or the photos organized. Don't wait until you compose questions. Don't wait until the whole gang is assembled. Harvest time is now.

I haven't started transcribing that tape yet. I'm saving that for a snowy day. But you can bet that I'll have that ear of corn sitting right next to me.

And if I'm lucky, some more peanut butter cookies.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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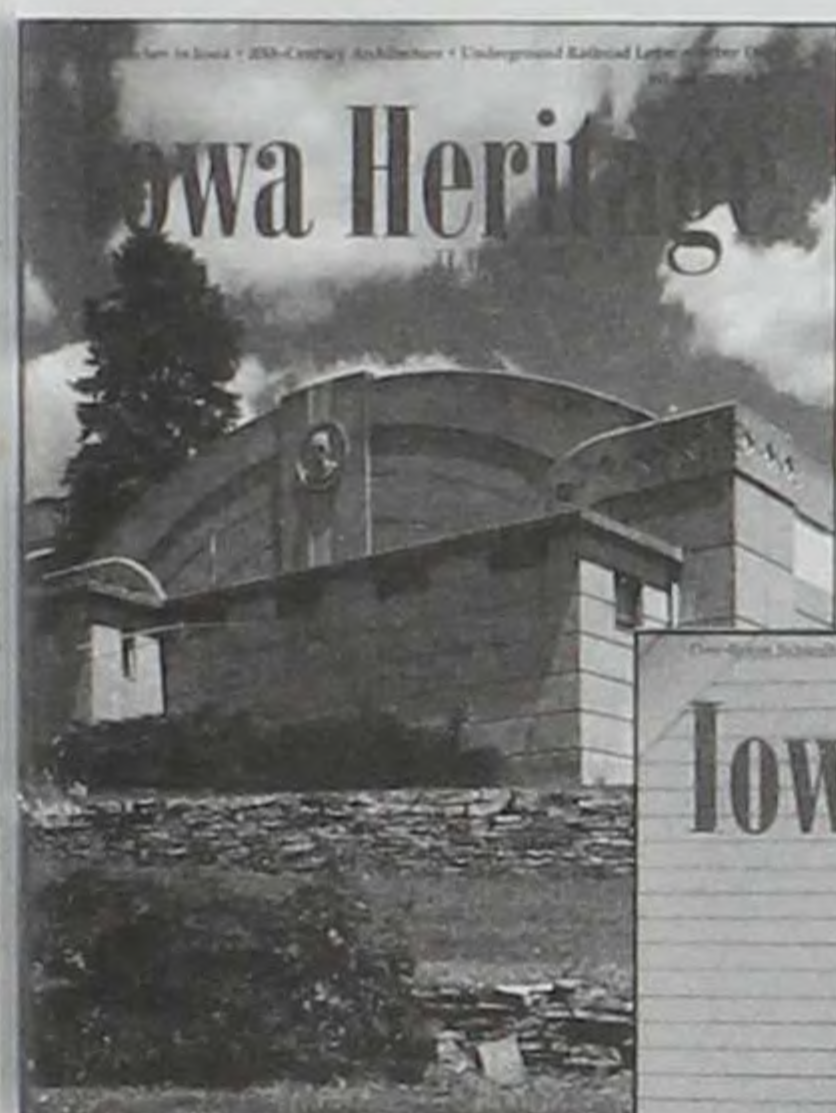
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Rare photos
and rich history
in every issue.



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as Iowa photographer Don
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1947. This issue shows us mid-
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Iowa Heritage

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The Magazine of the State Historical Society of Iowa

Winter 2009, 90:4

Special Issue— Images of Mid-century Iowa

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DON ULTANG COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY)
PHOTO OF NEWSPAPERS BY CHARLES SCOTT

On the Cover

Circus clowns Freddie Freeman and Otto Griebeling seem to be pondering life as Iowa photographer Don Ultang captures the moment during a Cole Brothers stop in Des Moines in 1947. This issue shows us mid-century Iowa as Ultang saw it. Above: Ultang's flight logs and a few of his photos as they appeared in the Des Moines Register and Picture magazine.



DON ULTANG COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY)

The photography of Don Ultang gave Iowans a visual perspective that few had yet been granted—Iowa from the air. By the middle of the 20th century, certainly some Iowans had looked down on the earth from an airplane—on a lark at a county fair or on a mission in World War II. But for most Americans, commercial air travel was still rare and would be for another decade or two.

Spread across the pages of the *Des Moines Register* or *Life* magazine, Ultang's aerial photographs laid out the towns and cities and countryside of this state in ways that only map makers had conveyed before. Here were the patterns of crops and pastures, the interweaving of roads, train tracks, and streams, the undulations of the terrain. Here, too, were the effects of the forces of snow, flood, and fire on individual livelihoods.

Ultang also shot photos from the ground, of course, slices of everyday life. And despite the recognized artistic power of black-and-white photography at that time, professionals were beginning to work with color film, and so some of his work captured the pale pink of a coed's sweater, the dark greens of shade trees, the school-bus yellow of ripe corn.

The Don Ultang Collection

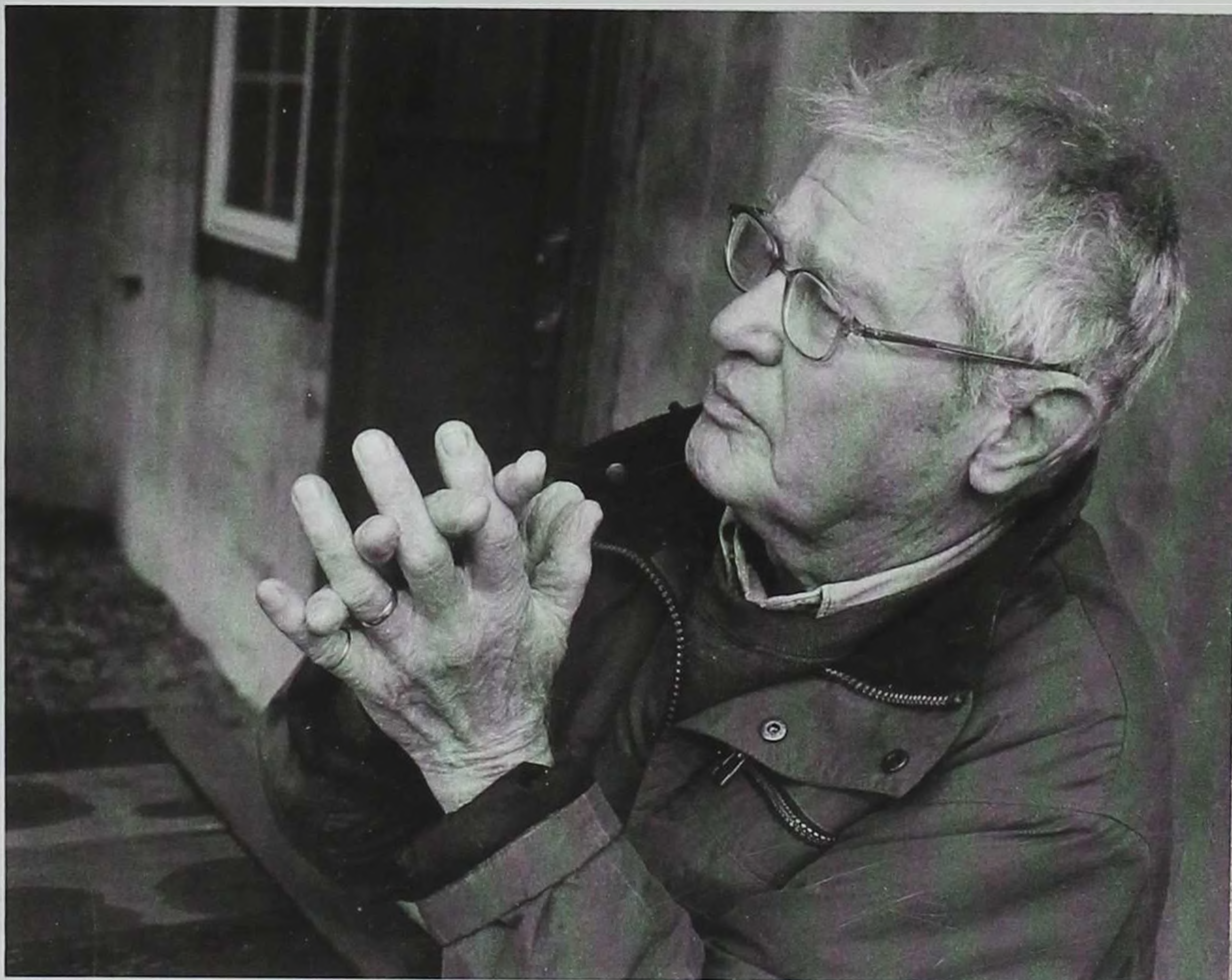
Ultang's Iowa

here at the State Historical Society of Iowa shows us mid-century Iowa through the camera lens of a young man in his thirties (*left*) thriving in the new field of photojournalism.

In no time at all, journalism turns into history and breaking news photos become evidence of the past. Ultang realized that. "A photojournalist is a recorder of history, a visual scribe, whose images document the changing times," he wrote in his later years (*right*).

Ultang hoped that his photos had "a universality, a timelessness." Timeless they are. Yet the photos in this issue also invite us to look back, to consider what has changed in the state of Iowa and what has not.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL ADAMS

Don Ultang poses with the bulky press camera he used to take stunning aerial photos of Iowa for the *Des Moines Register*, 1946–1958. In this essay, Ultang's daughter Joanne recounts her growing-up years tagging along with her father in the new world of photojournalism.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

From the Other Side of the Lens

by Joanne Ultang

The life and work of Don Ultang—my father—shaped my childhood and ultimately came to be a defining force in my adult life as well. As I was growing up, our family and life seemed “normal,” because I knew nothing else. In fact, from the vantage point of adulthood, I came to see it as an environment of privilege, though by this I do not mean monetary privilege; we lived modestly in a standard Arts and Crafts bungalow in a beautiful but uneventful part of Des Moines. Instead, I mean the advantages coming from growing up surrounded by some of the best and the brightest talents of my father’s generation, that legendary and so-called Greatest Generation.

Intelligent and educated, my father and mother set,

by example, an unstated but omnipresent household and family culture to match. In our home, bookshelves were crammed with books; an imposing volume of *The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary* was regularly consulted at meals to settle bets on words; my parents’ friends, dropping by to visit, discussed current events or finer points of the law. And always, and uniquely, there were my father’s photographs—expanding our personal horizons, making our surname widely recognized, and providing a rich visual environment—with some of them enlarged, framed, and hung as artwork on our walls while others were carefully preserved in family photo albums.

But ours were not destined to be any ordinary fam-

ily photo albums. For they were primarily a series of what I would call photographic “studies,” images usually captured with a more than sentimental purpose, using a large format camera and film that delivered exquisite detail, even when enlarged. These images were developed and printed by my father as he did all his own darkroom work then. This produced a collection of mostly 8”x10” (some 5”x7”) prints, the notable exceptions being unique sizes for Christmas cards, as my parents sent out family photo cards long before pre-cut photo-holder cards became commonplace.

Sometimes my father took photos of us simply to perform focused technical studies such as testing out lighting conditions or a new type of film. One summer evening I was drafted to hold a candle in our front yard while my father took pictures in the fading light of the day. At other times, our random childhood activities might grab his attention, and then his eye, famous for capturing people in spontaneous settings—as illustrated in some of the slice-of-life photos selected for this issue—would focus on one of us.

One afternoon, I donned a bandanna, pretending to be a cowboy, momentarily abandoning all care for my appearance. Knowing that I had only one remaining upper front tooth, my father, camera in hand, made numerous unsuccessful attempts to trigger a smile in me, now a very reluctant subject as I suddenly became self-conscious about those huge gaps in my teeth (and the remnants of a mosquito bite on my forehead). And after a number of his attempts, I was finally unable to contain my laughter any longer. The photographic result was honored by a prestigious award and later even headlined the nationally syndicated “Earl Wilson on Broadway” column.

The timing of my father’s interest in photojournalism could not have been more perfect. And what a time that was: A time when virtually everyone received the news in written words and still images printed on paper, courtesy of their daily newspaper. A time when these same readers eagerly anticipated more in-depth coverage along with more studied, even heroic, still images, courtesy of their newspaper’s Sunday edition as well as the great weekly magazines such as *Life* and *Look*. A time when the writing and still images had to be not only timely but also of a caliber that was compelling and enduring. And a time when Iowa readers were well served in this matter by a sort of Algonquin Round Table on the prairie. For the writers and photographers assembled by the *Des Moines Register* were fascinating and remarkably talented individuals. And while the public now, as then, is understandably impressed by my father’s Pulitzer Prize, as a youngster

I thought it was just part of the norm—and with good cause as other *Register* staff members won Pulitzers as well.

Although more than a half century has passed, I can still recall the compelling appeal to me of the physical and social milieu of my father’s work at the *Register*. My father had the great honor of being the only photographer to be included in the invitation-only *Register* bridge club comprising a handful of writers and their wives. On a rotating basis, my parents hosted the bridge parties at our home. The learned and always lively conversation was a magnet for me, and whenever possible, after my bedtime I would sneak downstairs to enjoy this great treat. It was many years later when I mentioned this to my father that I heard his explanation: that, as a rule, reporters are, indeed, unusually interesting people due to their innate curiosity.

I was the youngest of three children (all girls), the most like my father in looks, temperament, and curiosity, and the least interested in “girl things,” such as *Blue Birds*. All this gave me the desire and opportunity to tag along with my father when allowed—into his special, magical world.

In the evening if my father had to drive downtown to the *Register*’s office, I would jump at the chance to accompany him. I always stopped to peek into the ground-level windows where men were setting metal type and operating the huge printing presses. Every time we walked into the downstairs lobby, I was thrilled to encounter the enormous globe on display. Just a short elevator ride up, and we were in the domain of the photographers, who were as graciously at-

Jervas Baldwin, *Register* staff photographer and family friend, captured Don Ultang’s daughter Joanne (the author) engaged in drawing her father’s airplane during a routine evening stop at the *Register*’s photography department.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



The Des Moines Register and Tribune Company, at Locust and Eighth in the 1940s. The vertical sign of "500,000" refers to the circulation of the Sunday paper. The presses operated in the smaller building on the left.

tentive to me as the reporters were. A bonus was finding one of my favorite photographers, such as Jervas Baldwin, there to talk to me while I waited for my father.

If I was left to my own devices, my activity of choice was to wander alone through the darkroom suite. Each time was a new adventure in navigating this pitch-black labyrinth, and as soon as I was well into the first room, I was convinced I was forever lost. But soon enough, an acrid odor and distinctive gurgling sound of the chemical in the big tank told me I was in the developing room. When my wandering brought me to the inviting smell of a warm iron on linen, I knew I had arrived where the prints were finished. Comforted by

these familiar smells and sounds of the drying room, I was now confident that I would make it out safely once again. And that soon my father would find me and take me home.

Accompanying my father to the airport was another tag-along adventure I relished. Our visits could be for any number of reasons. Following the weather was like breathing for my father, and sometimes we would go to the top of the Des Moines airport to talk to workers there—especially the staff in the Weather Bureau (as it was then called). On one lucky visit, a bureau staff member even permitted me to officially release the weather balloon for the evening.

Or we might stop by Howard Gregory's Des Moines Flying Service, where the *Register's* plane was hangared, so that my father could speak to Bob Garmon, his primary airplane mechanic. Picture the laconic conversations between astronauts Yeager and Ridley in *The Right Stuff* and you have the essence of the bond between my father and Bob—not much chatter, but an immense level of trust.

Sometimes a trip to the Des Moines airport resulted in a plane ride with my father. Growing up in this plane, I was never afraid to fly in it. In fact, as a little girl I actually enjoyed the stomach-dropping bumps from turbulent air, sometimes imploring, "Do that again, please." Enchanted by the clouds, I was convinced that these giant cotton puffballs offered an ideal landing pad, should I be permitted to jump out of the airplane. My father patiently, and repeatedly, explained their vaporous nature—like fog, he said. This induced me to ask him to fly through one so I could see inside. As he was usually flying VFR (by "visual flight rules"), he consistently declined, and it was not until I flew on commercial flights some years later that I finally experienced the disappointing reality of seeing "inside" the clouds.

Often as not my father's front-seat passenger was one of any number of adults from that fascinating pool of mid-20th-century journalism greats. One such passenger, familiar to me as well as to many Iowans, was longtime friend and political writer Clark Mol-

lenhoff. Assigned by the *Register* in 1950 to the Washington Bureau, Clark quickly established himself as a major presence on the political scene. Our visits with Clark and his wife Georgia were greatly relished. Both were lively conversationalists, always entertaining us with compelling stories from exotic places or inside the corridors of political power. Their adventures included surviving government uprisings (hiding in hotel bathtubs and high-speed escapes to the airport through streets filled with gunfire) as African countries struggled to change from colonies to independent nations.

On one return visit to Iowa, the Mollenhoffs joined my parents and others at our home in a game of bridge. With my new autograph book in hand, I approached Clark and Georgia to sign my book. Clark simply wrote: "Stay out of the rackets!"—a directive well beyond me at the time. Much later I came to understand that this was an ironic but pointed reference to his 1950s investigative reporting on corruption in organized labor and organized crime, for which he won a Pulitzer in 1958.

Usually my father's passengers were *Register* news reporters or sportswriters traveling with him to jointly cover a specific story or event in Iowa or out of state. Reporter Walt Shotwell frequently accompanied him; once they traveled together as far as Kayenta, Arizona, to cover the search for two Des Moines Explorer Scouts lost in the desert. Another frequent passenger was the

late and most remarkable *Register* writer and Iowa historian George Mills. Reflecting the high-spirited nature of this band of distinguished journalists, George used to call my father and say, "Get the plane ready—we're going to start some trouble."

Passengers on the plane were in excellent hands due to my father's extensive experience as a primary flight instructor during World War II, essentially teaching the fundamentals of aerial acrobatics to an endless supply of novice navy pilots. After the war ended, his mastery of the risks in flying a small plane turned out to be invaluable—for his special brand of photojournalism required some unusual flying to get the commanding images he desired. But this skill also gave him some notoriety among the reporters, who on more than one occasion were terrorized or even made airsick from steep turns and air turbulence bumps, all in a day's work for such assignments.

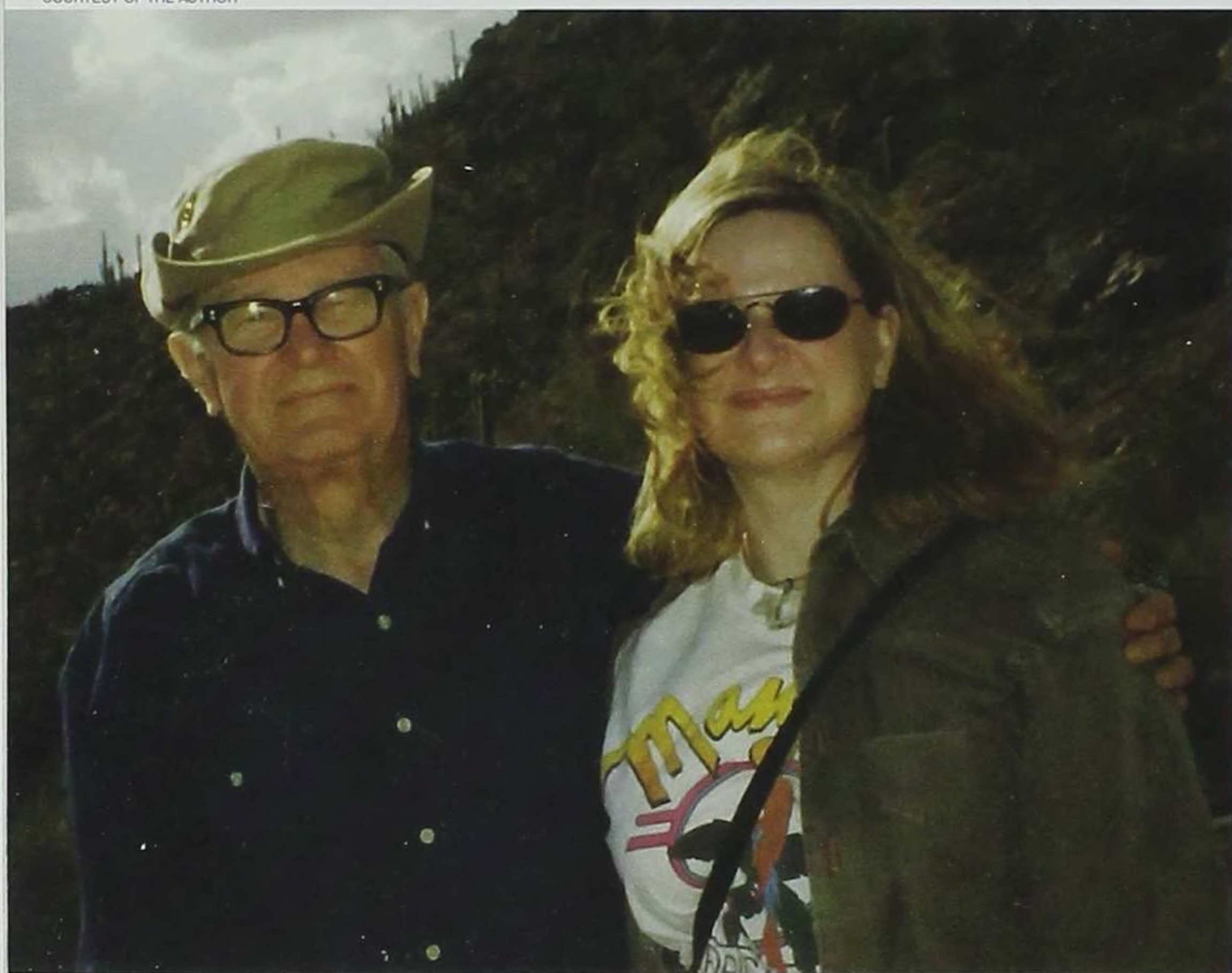
One afternoon my father stopped by our home, and finding me there alone, invited me to go along with him to the airport. Grabbing a pilot's snack of graham crackers, we headed out on what to me was the ultimate tag-along adventure: an aerial photo assignment. I can still hear him, while preparing to taxi and take off, using the toneless shorthand between pilot and control tower, always identifying himself as "4291 Bravo," despite the fact that everyone in the tower knew exactly who he was. A small plane requires only minimal runway to gain airspeed, and soon we were airborne, our destination the isolated site of a train wreck. With the approval of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, the window on the pilot's side of the plane had been modified to be removable, so that the pilot himself could take photos, one of several trail-blazing innovations that shaped my father's photojournalistic career.

Once my father's discerning eye had spotted the train wreck below and rapidly sized up the subject, terrain, and lighting, a series of moves followed that required the visualization talent of an Italian Renaissance painter and the

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



Lively conversation ensued at the bridge parties of *Register* writers, their wives, and Don and Veda Ultang. March 23, 1952 (Don Ultang's birthday) was the group's "After the Tax Party." Their raggedy attire in these photos presumably reflected the anticipated hike in federal income taxes that year. From left: Reporter George Mills, in suspenders and long johns. Veda Ultang (in checked dress, sagging slip, and bare feet) watches as Carl Gartner prepares to bid. Right: Don Ultang, in ripped shirt and bowtie.



Sharing a lifelong love for new visual experiences, Don Ultang and his daughter Joanne (the author) pause during a late 1990s visit to the Chiricahua Mountains in Arizona.

smooth, rapid execution of a gold-medal Olympic diver. With the window out and the heavy Speed Graphic press camera in his right hand, my father circled back over the target—the sight of it momentarily blocked by the plane—until just the right moment. After he banked the plane so steeply it was nearly on its side, the twisted train popped into view. In one continuous, precise movement, he leaned through the empty window frame, tripped the shutter once, and then leveled the plane and quickly re-established an appropriate altitude.

Continuing the motion, he removed and replaced the 4" x 5" cut sheet film holder, and then circled back and retraced those same steps, motions, and risks. Meanwhile, he was flying rapidly at a very low altitude, making sure that he did not stall the plane or fly into a rise in the terrain. As with the Olympic diver, the chances for a perfect performance were limited to one or two efforts. But the consequence of a small error could be far greater.

This elegant pilot-photographer juggling act was the standard procedure behind my father's superb aerial photographs, and yet the extraordinary thing to me was his ability to mentally compose the image—defining the angle and position needed and committing all to a kind of "4-D" visual and kinesthetic template in

his head—and then executing it under a variety of demanding conditions.

In those days, there was very little that could be done in the darkroom to modify a photograph, so each unique composition was necessarily done "on the fly," both figuratively and literally. Now, as then, I am in awe when I compare my father's particular skill to those of other great names in outdoor photography—Ansel Adams comes to mind—who typically had the luxury of scouting and composing dramatic scenery and of waiting for days for the correct lighting. For me, the genius of my father as a pre-eminent photojournalist of his day, and even now, was this consistent on-the-fly ability to capture images of great artistic composition, lighting, and dramatic or emotional appeal—under rugged conditions and with no control over the subject matter.

I am delighted that *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* has chosen to publish this rare and historically significant portfolio of my father's color work from that classic period, the time the late Ken MacDonald (the *Register's* outstanding managing editor and an early and long-time supporter of my father) once so aptly described as "the glory days of American newspapers." My father's decision to donate his *Register*-era photojournalism collection to the State Historical Society of Iowa was fortuitous, for there could be no better advocates for perpetuating his legacy than Mary Bennett, curator of the Don Ultang Collection and whom my father came to regard as a dear friend, and Jamie Beranek, whom we can thank for the painstaking selection of images and the thoughtful accompanying text in this issue. Knowing my father as I did, I am sure he would be touched and delighted by the result of their efforts. ❖

The author professes zero interest in piloting an airplane and says that while her photo composition skills are actually pretty good, her primary relationship with cameras has been to quickly lose or break them. By design, she has lived and worked in the visually rich cities of Boston, New York City, and Santa Fe. Currently residing in Chicago, she admits to taking the occasional decent photo of Lake Michigan, from the extreme comfort of her living room, with her compact digital camera with Leica lens, when she can find it.

"A CAMERA THE SIZE OF A BASKETBALL" is how Don Ultang described his Speed Graphic (sitting here on his equipment case). Large-format cameras were still standard equipment for press photographers in the mid-20th century. Each film holder, like the ones in the lower left, held two 4"x5" negatives, one on each side. Indoor shots required a large flash gun and a ready supply of flash bulbs.

In the foreground is Ultang's 35mm Leica, a far more versatile camera, and his light meter.

"Ultang wasn't the first flying photographer, nor the first to exchange that marvelous old weapon, the Speed Graphic, for an unobtrusive 35 millimeter, nor the first to try to make color photos a daily part of the daily paper," wrote James Flansburg, of the *Des Moines Register*, in 1991. "But he was an important leader and innovator in all those endeavors, and he gave each of them his own unique twist. That's accomplishment."

—The Editor



PHOTO BY CHARLES SCOTT; EQUIPMENT FROM ULTANG COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY)



ULTANG COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY)

Don Ultang, the *Des Moines Register's* pilot-photographer, poses here with the creative tools that made his career: his cameras and the four-person Beech Bonanza, the *Good News XI*. This photo, taken at the Des Moines airport in 1958, was from an advertising campaign designed to highlight the roles of the aircraft and Ultang in the *Register's* news and sports coverage for Iowa. A slightly different version of the ad ran in *The New Yorker*.

"It's an Ultang Photo"

by Jamie Beranek

For the past 22 years, it has been my great pleasure to volunteer at the State Historical Society of Iowa. I use those words intentionally because not only have I been able to work under Mary Bennett, head of Special Collections at the Iowa City center, but I have also had the opportunity to view and, in many cases, help process the collections of some of Iowa's best photographers from the past and present. Fred Kent, A. M. "Pete" Wettach, and Joan Liffing-Zug Bourret come to mind especially.

However, the photographer whose work I have come to admire the most is Don Ultang, staff photographer and later pilot-photographer for the *Des Moines Register* from 1940 to 1958. I had first seen his images years ago when I bought *Holding the Moment: Mid-America at Mid-Century*, a collection of his black-and-white work published in 1991. Immediately, I was drawn to the photos. They reminded me of other photographers whose work I admire: Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, Max Yavno, Andreas Feininger, all of whom possessed the technical ability and the artistic sense to capture and communicate the detail, texture, and atmosphere of a scene in a graphically interest-

ing way. For me, Don Ultang did that, too—with the added distinction that his photos covered Iowa and the Midwest.

Years after I had finished *Holding the Moment* and filed the images away in my mind, Ultang donated much of his work to the State Historical Society. This was when I first met him. Much to my pleasure, I was given the opportunity to process part of the donation. As I labeled and classified his photos, the excitement of his work struck me anew.

There was also an unexpected bonus. Along with some 10,000 black-and-white photos and negatives (not surprising for a press photographer at mid-century), there existed a sizable body of his color work. These were primarily taken to illustrate feature and some spot (or breaking) news stories in the *Des Moines Register* on Sundays—the only day the paper ran color—in either the rotogravure section or, later, the paper's *Picture* magazine.

The transparencies are a variety of medium and 4" x 5" formats. Some color tones had shifted because of age, but otherwise the transparencies are in excellent condition. Most came with only the barest identification as to dates and locations—something I remedied by

extensively researching in various sources and years of bound volumes of the *Register* available at the State Historical Society.

The vibrant color images added an exciting new dimension to Ultang's otherwise black-and-white coverage of Iowa. They were shot at a time when color was new to photojournalism, and editors were still defining when a color photo would have more impact than black-and-white. What is more, to the best of my knowledge, Ultang's color photos have not been published since they, or similar shots from the same assignment, originally ran in the *Register*.

Donald Theodore Ultang was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on March 23, 1917. Raised in Cedar Rapids, where his father worked for Quaker Oats, he enrolled at the University of Iowa in 1935. He was to graduate with an economics major in 1939, but an art appreciation course, classes at the journalism school, and a job at the *Daily Iowan* showed him that a newspaper career—as a photographer, not a writer—was what he wanted. “I liked the whole business of doing something and then getting your name and your product in the paper,” he wrote years later.

Ultang entered professional photography during his junior year at Iowa by working as a stringer, covering area news for such dailies as the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Davenport Times*, *Omaha World-Herald*, and the *Des Moines Register*'s sports pages, for a dollar per photo. His resulting stringbooks—scrapbooks of his published work—were his ticket to the big time. In 1940 he started working as a staff photographer at the *Des Moines Register*. The *Register* was, indeed, big time. “In those days,” Ultang recollected, “. . . we covered the whole state. Our Sunday circulation was 500,000 with our daily about 375,000.”

On March 19, 1941, a year after he started at the paper, Ultang took the step that would define him and his photographic career—he signed up for Civilian Pilot Training, a government-funded program designed to ensure a ready supply of pilots if the nation went to war. Three months before Pearl Harbor, Ultang received his limited commercial license. He spent World War II serving as a navy flight instructor at various bases around the United States, including the naval air station in Ottumwa.

After five years of almost total immersion in flying, Ultang returned to civilian life and his photographer's job at the *Register* in January 1946. Al-

though the newspaper had always owned a plane since 1928—actually a series of planes all named *Good News*—it had donated its latest model, a five-person Spartan, to the war effort and decided not to replace it. Ultang later recounted that it took him eight months to convince the *Register*'s executives to reconsider. The result of his efforts was that in late 1946 the paper purchased a two-passenger Globe Swift (which it dubbed *Good News VIII*), and Ultang became a pilot-photographer.

Ultang soon excelled in this role and created a new style of aerals for news and features. For example, whereas standard practice had been to take photos from high altitudes to minimize air turbulence and camera shake, Ultang's approach was the opposite. His background as a navy aviator made him comfortable with low-altitude flight. Flying “low and fast,” as he called it, he could take the photos and still retain full control of the aircraft. “To get the composition the way I wanted it, I would roll the plane on one wing. I would have about two seconds when the plane was going by itself.” His large-format camera and low altitude allowed for dramatic images with fine detail. “I wanted to get your eyes into the picture,” he explained years later.

With this approach to news aerals and his strong sense of composition, design, and light, awards and recognition rolled in. His first photo to appear in *Life*, the photojournalist's nirvana, ran in September 1947. The magazine was to publish many more in the future. Two of his aerals appeared in Edward Steichen's 1949 exhibit, *The Exact Instant*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, presenting, in Steichen's words, some 300 examples of “vivid, meaningful and penetrating reportorial photography of recent decades.” In 1952, he and fellow *Register* photographer John Robinson won the Pulitzer Prize for their photos of a white player on the Oklahoma A&M football team attacking a Drake University halfback, Johnny Bright, who was African American. Ultang minimized the Pulitzer; he was just “in the right place at the right time.” In his mind, the ultimate recognition was the inclusion of his work in the *U.S. Camera* 1954 annual along with that of Ansel Adams, Brett Weston, and Eugene Smith.

By 1952, Ultang believed he had “reached [his] photographic peak here at the *Register* and *Tribune*” (its evening counterpart). “A year ago I might not have made the statement, but I know now that I can compete on equal terms with the best in the photo journalist field,” he wrote to *Life* editor Irene Saint.

As other correspondence reveals, he was also

increasingly dissatisfied with his situation at the *Register*. The paper had promoted him to assistant chief photographer, but he saw this as a barrier to exercising his creativity in the field. The *Register* was also cracking down on freelancing by its staff—which threatened Ultang's strong desire to continue contributing to *Life*.

He chafed under what he felt was the resistance of the *Register's* editors to move beyond traditional newspaper photography: "No one here recognizes anything but the mechanical production of the same old picture from stock situations." Ultang believed strongly that photos for breaking news and features could hold their own with the best from all branches of photography. News photos didn't have to be posed, brightly lit, unimaginative "record" shots—"three guys at a convention," as he called it. A photographer aware of lighting and design and sensitive to what was happening in front of the camera—especially the versatile, unobtrusive 35mm camera—could produce work that communicated in a visually arresting way and whose value could survive well past the next edition.

Feeling that the *Register* wasn't moving in this direction, he took a serious look at leaving the paper to work for *Life*—"the ultimate goal of any thinking photo-journalist," as Ultang phrased it—and which had published several of his photos in the past. "My hope at this point is to probe your thinking and find out how I might fare if I chose to leave the *Register* and make myself available for whatever assignments that might come my way," he wrote to Hugh Moffett, assistant managing editor at *Life*, in October 1953.

The competition to work for *Life* was fierce. Despite Ultang's awards and honors, his unquestioned ability, drive, and artistic sense, and his proven record as a working photographer, Moffett's response implied that the magazine would continue to use some of his work, but that he shouldn't "lean exclusively on *Life* as the only outlet for [his] talent at this stage." For this and other reasons, Ultang stayed at the *Register* for another five years.

He remained in charge of the photo department and still took photos on the ground and in the air. Even so, he continued to submit his work to *Life*, sometimes under the pseudonym "Ted Madson" to avoid the *Register's* policy against freelancing. And always, he advocated for his vision that photojournalism could be a creative as well as a reportorial medium: "There is no more fertile field for the person who wants to deal directly with reality and at the same time apply whatever degree of artistry he can bring

to bear on the situation," he wrote in the journalism magazine *The Quill* in September 1954.

Ultang left the *Register* in 1958 at age 41. "After many years of doing a lot of this, I thought I was beginning to run out of steam," he commented years later. He entirely abandoned photography and went to work for an insurance company until his retirement.

Thirty years after leaving the *Register*, however, time and opportunity led Ultang to renew his photographic activities, this time on his own terms. He taught photojournalism at Drake University between 1981 and 1985, and a 70-photograph retrospective show of his work was mounted by Grand View College in Des Moines in 1988. Following that came his book, *Holding the Moment*, in 1991; statewide exhibitions of his photographs; and numerous interviews in newspapers and magazines. Through the 1990s he lived half of each year in New Mexico; he invested in a set of new cameras and lenses with which he produced a large body of color work focused on southwestern landscapes. In his last years, he donated his *Register*-era photos to the State Historical Society of Iowa and his later work to Simpson College in Indianola.

Don Ultang died on September 18, 2008, at age 91.

The images on the following pages date from the years 1939–1952 and are a representative sample of his aerial and ground-level color work from that period. Each is a rich addition to the visual history of Iowa, presented in a format—color—not usually seen from that time. I hope you enjoy this presentation of the work of a great photojournalist and a great artist, two phrases that Ultang believed fervently could be linked together. ♦

Jamie Beranek is a former architectural photographer and has volunteered in Special Collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City center) since 1988.

Rich in detail and atmosphere, this photo is a splendid time capsule of what could be a Sunday family or church picnic anywhere in mid-century rural America. Note the adults attired in their best clothes, the only bow to informality being the men's removal of their jackets. At the right, a timid child peeks at the photographer. At the far left, a man is already stretched out in a shady spot for a post-picnic nap.

Ultang may have happened upon this scene while on assignment on June 11, 1948. He and reporter George Shane flew to Mount Pleasant, in southeastern Iowa, and then drove 16 miles to the small, wood-frame Lutheran church in New Sweden. That day, over 2,000 people, in a convoy of buses and cars, had descended on the church, which was being dedicated by the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod as a shrine, "the first church in the first Swedish settlement in Iowa."

Treating the dedication as significant news, the *Register* ran the story on the next day's front page. According to Ultang's label, this photo (though not published) was shot near New Sweden in 1948.



ALL PHOTOS, PAGES 146-182: DON ULTANG COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY)



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On August 8, 1950, two thousand Iowa American Legion members assembled in Sioux City for their annual convention. According to *Register* reporter Louis Cook Jr., the serious part of the program was devoted to "get tough with Russia," talks a demand from the Legion's national chaplain for "immediate compulsory military training", and reports on the Legion's activities in local communities.

After that came the convention's traditional parade. Despite the chaplain's injunction that the public not regard the conventioners as "playboys, funsters and elbow-benders," clearly the legionnaires—and the spectators—had a good time.

The parade featured traditional floats and marching bands, including an all-girl drum and bugle corps from Yankton, South Dakota, playing music "a little on the hepcat side," according to reporter Cook. Even more in the spirit of fun, there was also a "legionnaire under a green parasol cavorting through the parade in an electric wheelchair [as well as] the customary collection of souped-up Model T's and miniature cannon which went off at unexpected intervals."

Two more of Ullang's photos of the parade appear on the next page.



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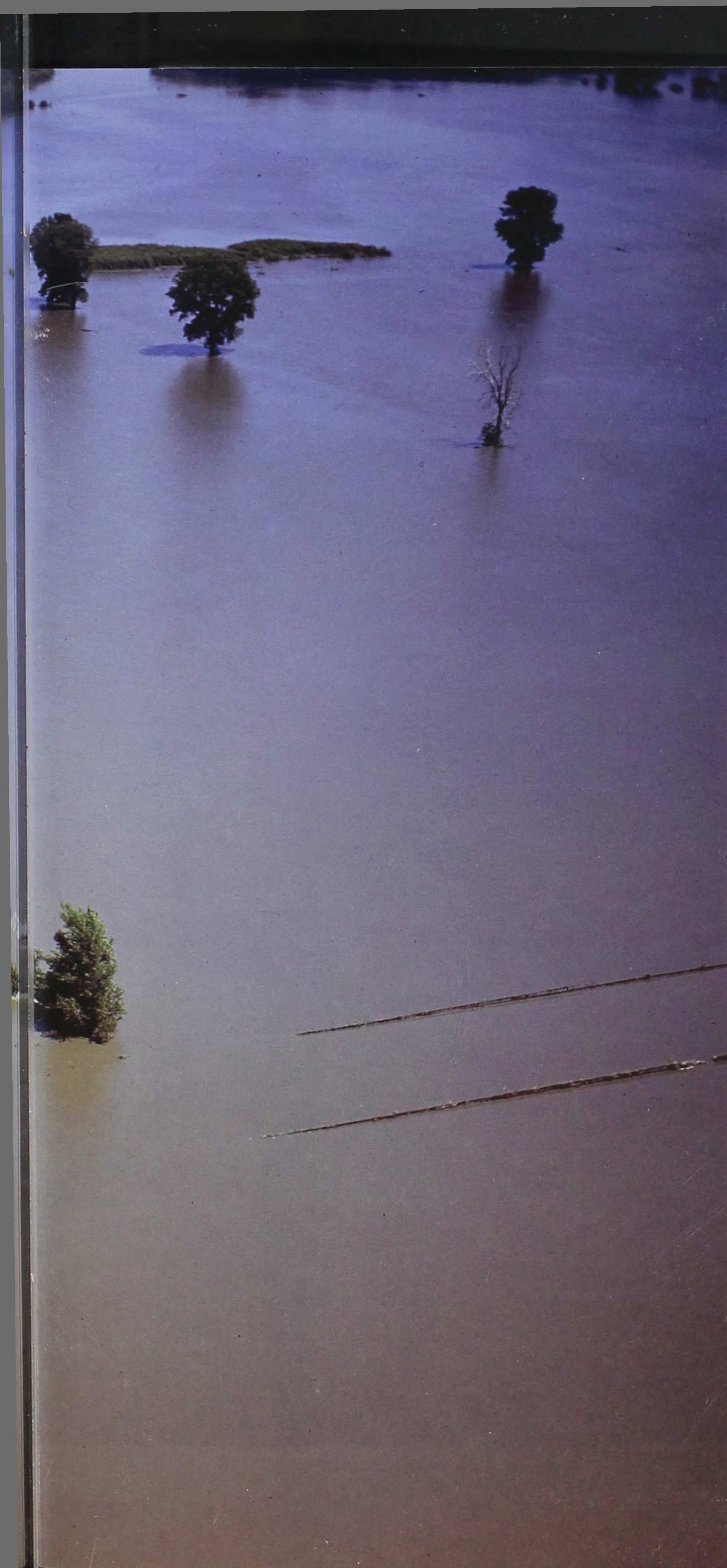




Young spectators—a few less excited than the others—watch as the Iowa American Legion parade proceeds west on Fourth Street in Sioux City, August 8, 1950. Opposite: a woman leans out the window for a better view.







Disasters are tailor-made for aerial photography, and the *Register's* pages from the 1940s and '50s are replete with Ultang's news aerials of floods, tornados, snow storms, fires, explosions, and train wrecks.

Because of the sheer magnitude of their devastation, floods are particularly dramatic visual events. Ultang shot some of his most famous aerials of the Des Moines and Missouri rivers (and, less frequently, the Mississippi) on their spring rampages.

This shot is one of a series of flood photos, all taken on the same day and which Ultang labeled only as "Des Moines River, 1946." Unfortunately, its exact location is unknown.

Disaster aerials were, of course, breaking news intended for immediate publication and the overwhelming majority were in black-and-white. Ultang did take some in color, however, and a few of these were published in the *Register's* Sunday rotogravure section.

As Iowa's flood experiences in 1993 and 2008 have shown vividly, scenes like this are not quaint relics from the past.



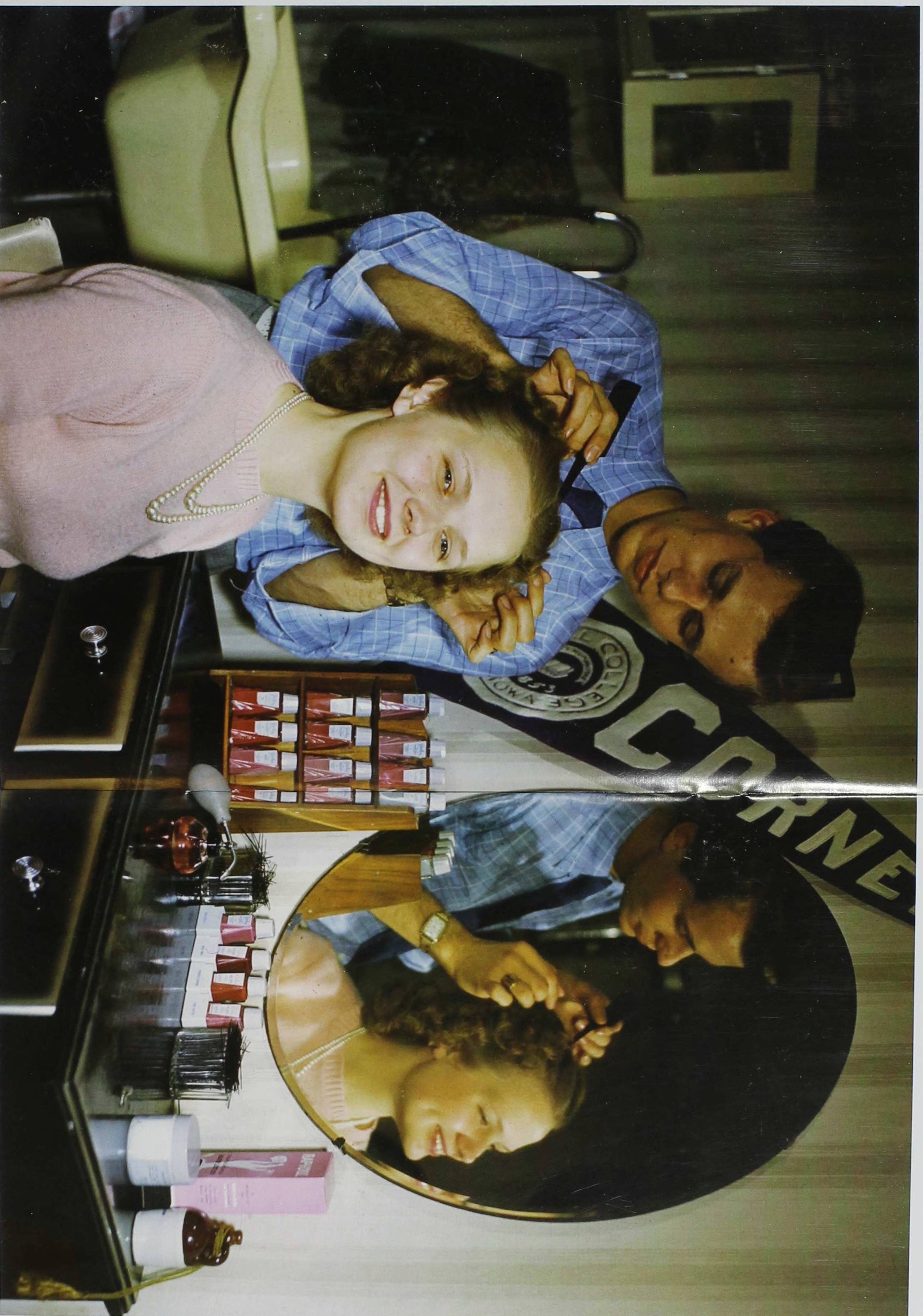
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Cornell College freshman James Crider clearly has a happy customer as he styles a fellow student's hair during the 1940-1941 school year. Published in *The American Magazine*, the accompanying story explains that Crider, a Cedar Rapids native, had studied and practiced hair dressing for two years prior to entering Cornell in Mount Vernon.

Crider acknowledged receiving "plenty of ribbing" from the "professional he-men on the campus" about his vocation. His comeback was that styling hair was "much pleasanter and more profitable than stoking a furnace"—a common job for young men working their way through college.

According to Crider, this "casual campus bob" was far easier to create than the more formal "exaggerated pompadour" favored for college dances.

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Not surprisingly, Ultang photographed many farmers over the years, from the air or at ground level, as they tended to routine chores or did battle with snow, fire, or flood. Close-ups of farmers, such as this one of Harold "Pete" Palmer, are rare.

Palmer farmed 320 acres near Keota in southeastern Iowa. Taken on October 17, 1939, the photo had news value because a few weeks earlier he had won the corn-yield contest for the six surrounding townships. Palmer beat 157 other farmers in his area with a near-statewide record yield of 157.61 bushels per acre on his ten-acre test plot.

The Keota contest was one of many across Iowa, but the *Register* was focusing on Keota because the highest yields had come from this area in 1938 and equally high numbers were expected again.

What makes this Ultang close-up different from his other photos of farmers is its unposed quality—the off-center composition, the shallow depth of field that throws the machinery and the red corn crib in the background out of focus, and Palmer's obviously genuine smile.







In this striking aerial of downtown Cedar Rapids, May's Island resembles a ship headed down the Cedar River, with City Hall (far left) as the wheelhouse and the Linn County jail (far right) as the "brig," as one nautically minded wag called it. The Linn County Courthouse is in the center of the island. The Quaker Oats complex is the cluster of white buildings in the upper left.

Although this photo was not dated, the shadows and the arrangement of the railroad freight cars around downtown match a higher-altitude, black-and-white view published on Sunday, October 23, 1949.

Apart from its particularly steep angle-of-view, this photo is particularly compelling in that it shows downtown Cedar Rapids at its postwar peak. In subsequent decades, transportation changes, the decline in retail, urban renewal, and flooding would radically change the city's skyline and layout.

Cedar Rapids was served by four major railroads and two electric lines at the time of this photo. Four freight houses were located downtown, as well as railroad roundhouses and two major passenger stations. Of the many downtown railroad buildings visible here, only the former headquarters of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway remains today.

Residential areas also changed greatly. The neighborhoods west of the river (lower part of the photo) were particularly hard hit. Construction of Interstate 380 in the late 1970s demolished whole blocks and cut a six-lane swath through others.

What survived—including such unique Cedar Rapids neighborhoods as Time Check and Czech Village—was devastated three decades later by the June 2008 flood. While there is hope that these historic areas can be revitalized, their future remains clouded at this writing.

On this sunny afternoon in 1949, however, the only clouds over vibrant downtown Cedar Rapids are the actual ones casting the shadows that appear in the upper right.



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Nineteen fifty-two was the peak year for new cases of polio in the United States. Western Iowa, especially the Sioux City area, was one of the hardest-hit parts of the country. Ultang put a human, yet hopeful, face on this terrifying and grimly relentless disease by illustrating a story for the November 29, 1952, issue of *Collier's* magazine on the 16-member Joe and Clara Thiel family, who farmed 280 rented acres near Mapleton in western Iowa.

Their story was shocking: between July 22 and August 8, 1952, 11 of the Thiels' 14 children came down with polio—3 on a single day. The unstoppable nature of the epidemic, the sheer number of the children involved, and the rapidity with which they fell ill made a riveting national story.

Of the 11 Thiels who were stricken, 9 recovered. Two sons, however, suffered paralysis, then thought to be permanent—Lawrence lost use of both legs; Bob, the use of his left arm.

Ultang's photo shows 12 of the Thiel children in their home (Donald was in the army and Lawrence was still in the hospital). It captures the exuberance of this obviously close-knit family and their affection for Dr. Arthur McGill (center) of nearby Danbury, who cared for the family with the limited medical tools then available. Only 20-year-old Bob, with his left arm in a brace (upper right), gives a hint of the suffering that the Thiels had just gone through.





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Whether this photo was intended as straight news or tongue-in-cheek is unknown—although the irony of a woman picking corn while wearing lipstick, nail polish, and a nice sweater would not have been lost on a cynical photo editor:

The woman on the right looks more comfortable with the task at hand, having donned heavy gloves, overalls, and a formidable hat. And though the woman on the left is wearing a dress, she looks at ease holding the reins of the horse-drawn wagon.

Ultang's labels on this and a similar image tell us only that the photos related to a women's club, photographed on October 4, 1939. Neither was published in the *Register*.

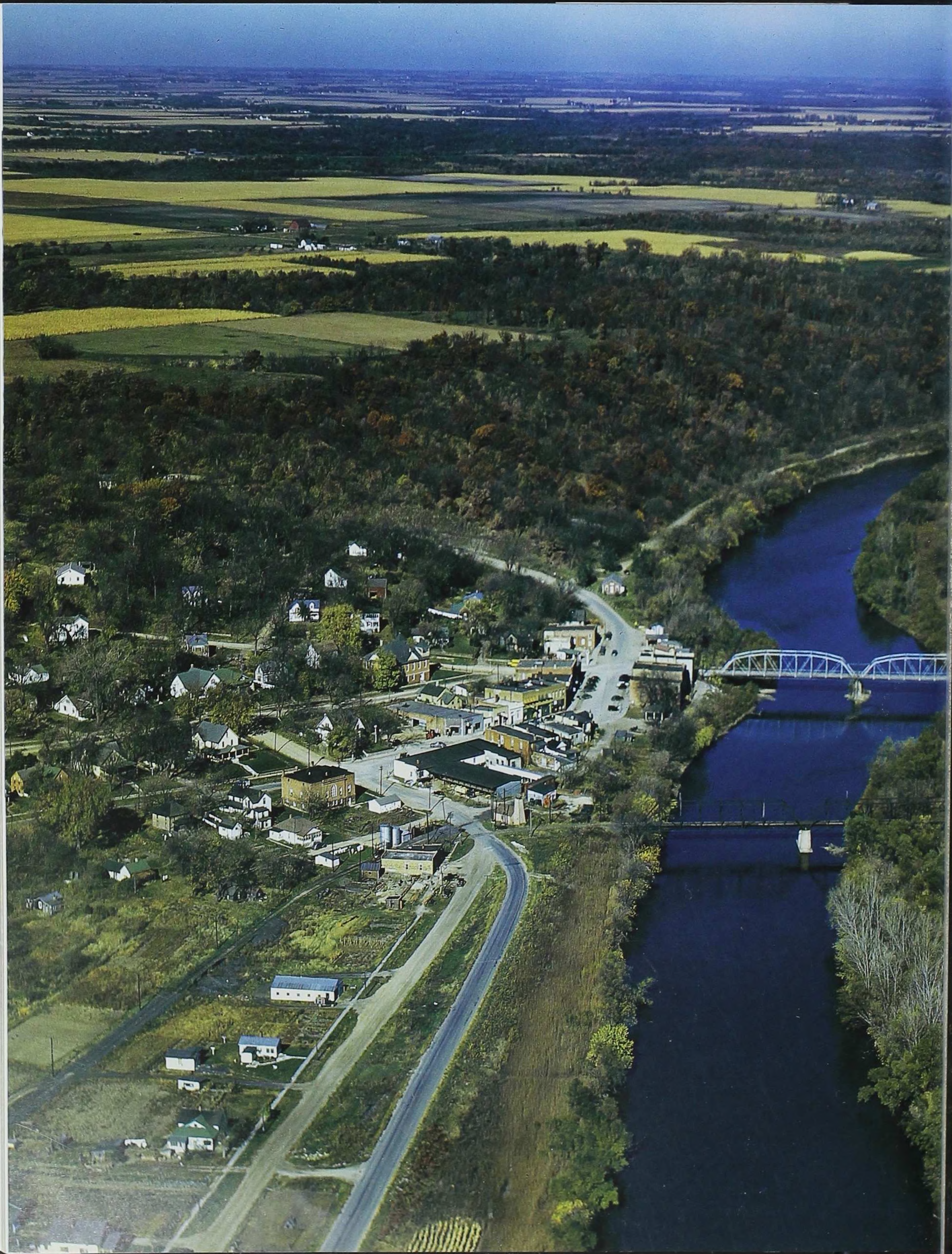
In 1946, Des Moines native Cloris Leachman's career was just taking off. Already known in community theater and on local radio (and to the *Register* for her brief employment there during the war as a typist), she had previously won a scholarship to Northwestern University's drama department. During a memorable 1946, she was named in quick succession Miss WGN, Miss Chicago, and third runner-up for Miss America.

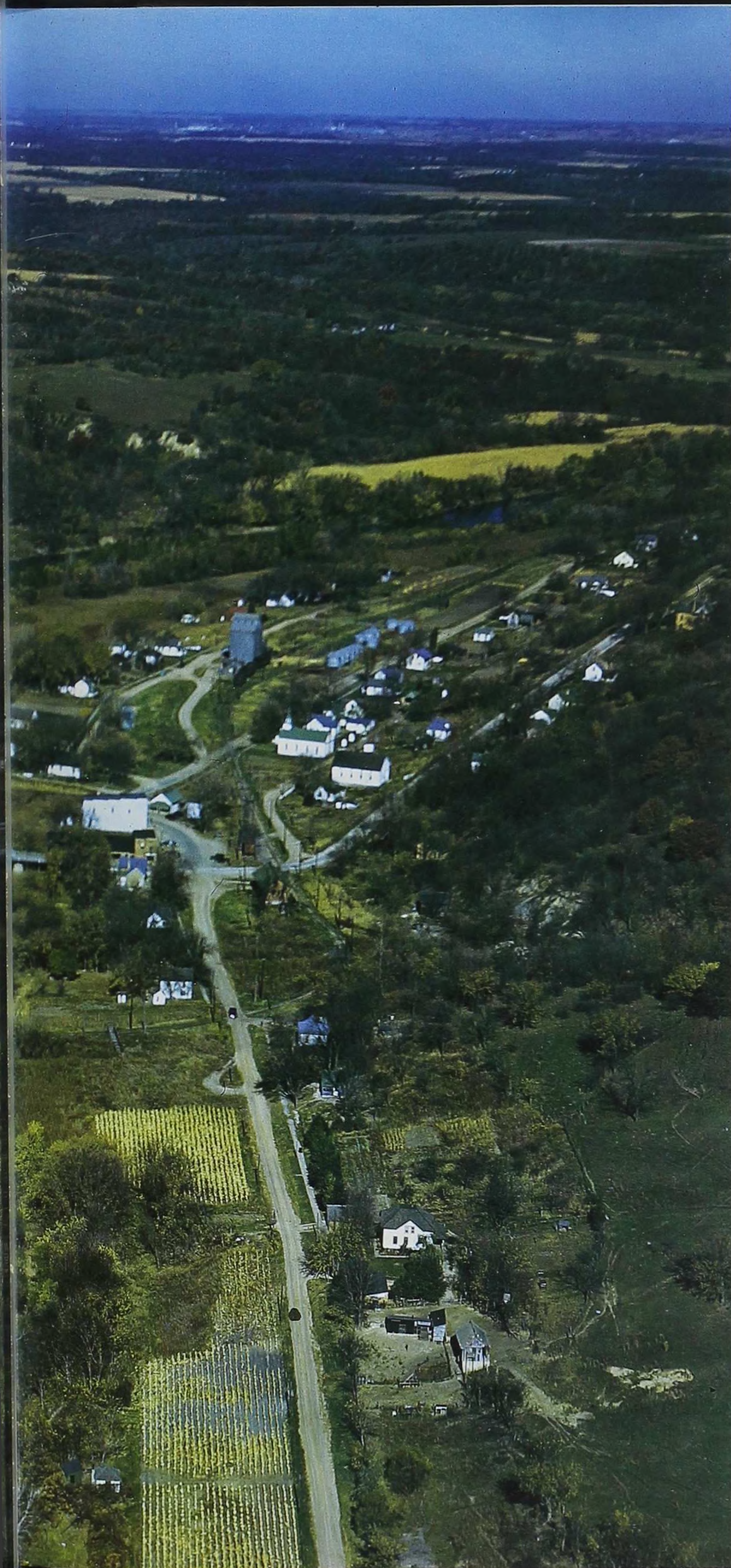
Shortly after Leachman's return to Des Moines from Atlantic City, the *Register* assigned Ultang to photograph the 20-year-old beauty queen and aspiring actress at her family's home. Most of the color shoot consisted of fine, if conventional, photos of her in both domestic and glamour poses.

As he would explain later, however, Ultang was posing Leachman and her younger sisters, Claiborne and Mary, on the sofa when the three suddenly dissolved in laughter over some private joke about him. Always the news photographer, he was ready and captured this spontaneous photo of sisterly mirth.

The *Register* chose not to run it in its October 6 half-page spread on Leachman, picking instead two more conventional views. Ultang liked the photo so much, however, that he included a black-and-white version in his book, *Holding the Moment*.







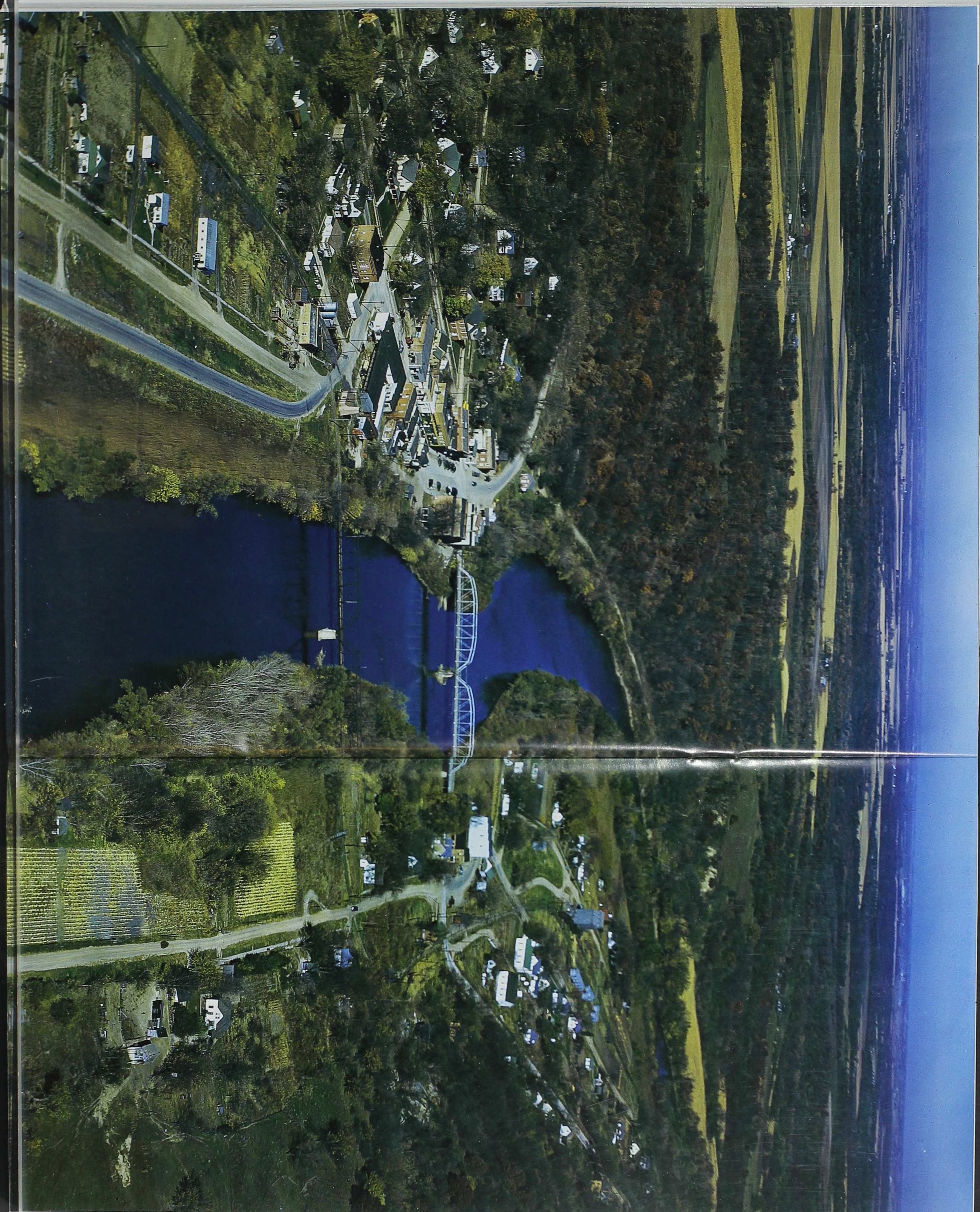
"An art colony, looking for a spot of quaint beauty . . . should settle here," wrote *Des Moines Register* reporter Herb Owens about the Webster County town of Lehigh. Indeed, Ultang's combination of composition, angle of sunlight, and time of year illustrates that Lehigh was, according to the photo caption, "one of the loveliest spots on the Des Moines River."

Lehigh's past included grittiness as well as beauty. The town was known for its extensive coal fields, sand and clay pits, and brick-and-tile factories, the products of which were shipped out on two railroads, the Chicago Great Western (abandoned into Lehigh in 1932) and the electric interurban Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern, which was still operating under wire at the time of this photo in 1946.

The interurban arrived from the north (top) from Fort Dodge. It carried passengers until 1928, and dropped them off at the brick depot on the east side of the river, just opposite the center of town. Freight trains did whatever switching was necessary near the depot and then crossed the bridge in the foreground and headed south to serve the various mines and brick-and-tile plants on Crooked Creek.

In the early 1960s the depot was torn down to make way for a new highway bridge and the tracks were removed.

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The Sunday Register used a variation of this image as part of a photo essay that ran on August 18, 1946, about a music program for five-year-olds at Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa) in Cedar Falls.

Described in the story as taking "kindergarteners fresh from the sandpile and turn[ing] them loose on violins, violas and cellos," the program was run by Melvin Schneider, the school's music director, and his wife. The Schneiders believed in playing as a group rather than individually as a way of making music an early "experiment in democracy." Indeed, the other two of Utlang's color photos in the story show children playing in a string quartet or singing together accompanied on the piano by Mrs. Schneider.

Young Robert Rockwood, shown here with his cello, was one of 51 students, of whom Director Schneider found "32 with an aptitude for strings." Those whose musical interests lay elsewhere would be exposed to woodwinds and percussion instruments in subsequent years.



Ending their tour of the American Freedom Train (shown in the background), youngsters sign the Pledge of Rededication, recommitting themselves to the nation's ideals. The Freedom Train was a joint public and private project that brought some of the nation's most valuable documents directly to over 300 cities. Between September 1947 and January 1949, the train exhibited such historical treasures as the Mayflower Compact, an original copy of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights,

and George Washington's Farewell Address, along with significant artifacts from World War II.

This photo is a good example of the lengths to which the Register went for a story. To have a color feature ready to run before the Freedom Train actually arrived in Iowa, Utlang flew the Good News VIII to Fargo, North Dakota, and photographed the train there, seven weeks ahead of time. The photos, of which this is an outtake, ran in the Sunday Register on June

11, just prior to the train's visit to five Iowa cities—Burlington, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Davenport (the train had stopped in Sioux City a month earlier). As it turned out, the weather in Des Moines during the train's stop at the Rock Island Railroad station on June 20 was cold and rainy, in contrast to the sunny skies here in Fargo back in April.

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Although not as well known as Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, Cole Brothers ranked as one of the two largest circuses touring the United States in the 1940s.

When Ultang photographed the Cole Brothers show on July 18, 1940, he chose less conventional subjects and settings than those of the standard circus shot. Here, a barker hawks cotton candy, and a young performer prepares for her act, while another steals a look. Perhaps they were two of the "100 Beautiful Dancing Girls" in the opening spectacular, "La Habana," or among the "beautiful girl riders" astride "fifty dancing horses" later in the show.

Traveling by rail, Cole Brothers played two-performance stands ("Every Matinee Precisely the Same as the Night Performance") in four Iowa cities—Iowa City, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Council Bluffs.

Another scene from the Cole Brothers show in 1940 appears on the next page.





Opposite: Ultang catches two fellows counting the house on July 18, 1940.

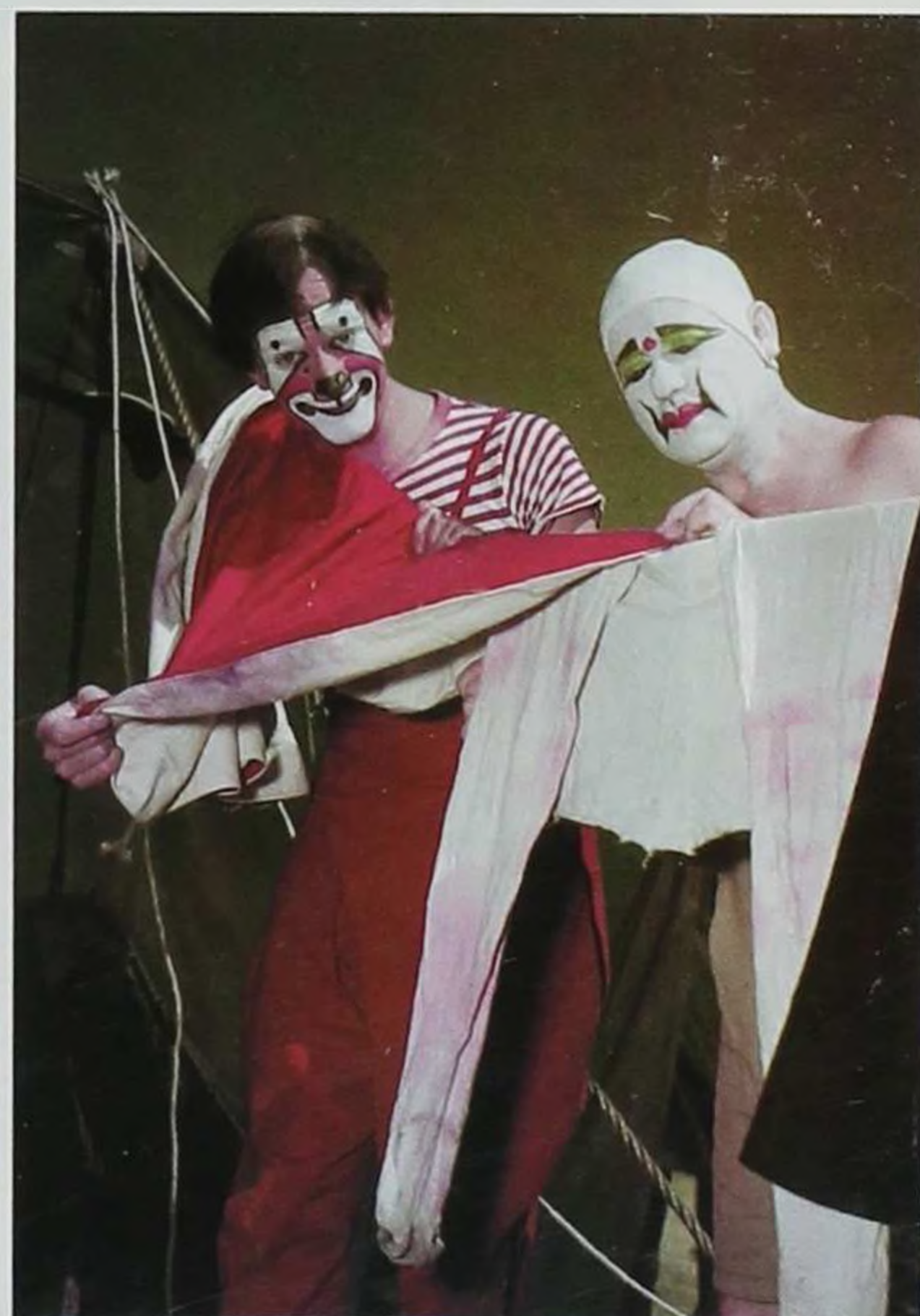
Right: Seven years later, when Cole Brothers played four performances at the Iowa State Fairgrounds on July 18–19, 1947, Ultang was there again with his camera. The Des Moines stop proved to be a singular success for the circus; the trade paper *Billboard* called it the "Top Two-Day Stand of [the] Year" thus far.

Surely the clowns were a big part of that success, and Ultang photographed several of them. Top left: Freddie Freeman and Otto Griebing were partners in the 1940s and were known for their boxing skit for the "Championship of Clown Alley." Griebing (seated) was Cole Brothers' longtime "producing clown," the one who assembled and choreographed the show's various clown skits.

Along with his friend and Ringling Brothers star Emmett Kelly, Griebing developed the "Weary Willie" hobo character shown here. Kelly's clown persona was that of a resigned down-and-outer, while Griebing's hobo displayed more of an attitude, with sharper responses to the embarrassments and indignities of his created world.

The clowns in the bottom row are Billie Burke (left), and Horace Laird and Lee Virtue (right). The two clowns at the clothesline are unidentified. The *Register* ran the photos on September 7 to illustrate a feature on the types of clowns.

Two years after these photos, Cole Brothers went bankrupt and closed in July 1949. As in all circus stories, however, there is a happy ending. The show was revived in the 1950s and continues to tour the United States today, albeit by truck but still under canvas.







As if he had isolated this fierce competitor with a spotlight, Ultang dramatically conveyed the intensity and physicality of the 1940 national cornhusking championship. Competitive cornhusking was a grueling test of speed and endurance—80 non-stop minutes to determine not only who could husk the most ears, but who could do so with both the cleanest ears and the fewest left on the ground.

The 1940 national competition was held on October 30 on the Henry Keppy farm near Davenport. *Register* farm editor J. S. Russell, estimated that between 125,000 and 150,000 people watched the 21 contestants, with spectators so crammed into the corn rows "that it was almost impossible to move about in the field during the contest" (in the photo, onlookers appear in silhouette in the background).

NBC and CBS radio carried live accounts while overhead the Goodyear blimp "and at least a half dozen airplanes ... flitted about over the field." With weather "a bit too warm for the comfort of the huskers," some "stripped down to the waist as the midday sun struck the field."

The identity of this competitor is unknown, but he obviously attracted Ultang's attention.

The winner that year was Illinois farmer Irvin Bauman, who "husked his way into agriculture's hall of fame" with a record-breaking 46.7 bushels (or 3,261 pounds) from roughly a half-acre.

The runner-up and, not surprisingly, the crowd's favorite, was the Iowa champion, Marion Link of Ames, who finished a mere one-third of a bushel behind the leader.

The *Register* did not run this photo even as a black-and-white, opting for more conventional views.



As if he had isolated this fierce competitor with a spotlight, Uliang dramatically conveyed the intensity and physicality of the 1940 national cornhusking championship. Competitive cornhusking was a grueling test of speed and endurance—80 non-stop minutes to determine not only who could husk the most ears, but who could do so with both the cleanest ears and the fewest left on the ground.

The 1940 national competition was held on October 30 on the Henry Keppy farm near Davenport. *Register* farm editor J. S. Russell, estimated that between 125,000 and 150,000 people watched the 21 contestants, with spectators so crammed into the corn rows "that it was almost impossible to move about in the field during the contest" (in the photo, onlookers appear in silhouette in the background).

NBC and CBS radio carried live accounts while overhead the Goodyear blimp "and at least a half dozen airplanes... flitted about over the field." With weather "a bit too warm for the comfort of the huskers," some "stripped down to the waist as the midday sun struck the field."

The identity of this competitor is unknown, but he obviously attracted Uliang's attention.

The winner that year was Illinois farmer Irvin Bauman, who "husked his way into agriculture's hall of fame," with a record-breaking 46.7 bushels (or 3,261 pounds) from roughly a half-acre.

The runner-up and, not surprisingly, the crowd's favorite, was the Iowa champion, Marion Link of Ames, who finished a mere one-third of a bushel behind the leader.

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Left: Nineteen-year-old Ruth Anderson strikes a spirited pose as Miss Iowa 1947. Anderson graduated in 1946 from high school in Oelwein and then worked there as an accounting machine operator for the Chicago Great Western Railroad. She won the Miss Fayette County contest and then on July 4 the Miss Iowa competition at the Paramount Theater in Des Moines.

The *Register* noted that "Miss Anderson brought down the house each of the three times that she came upon the stage, in the 'grace, poise and charm' phases of the contest." Although she had played the drums for six years, she chose to sing "All By Myself" for her talent and "the audience almost brought her back for an encore."

In September, with a big send-off from her home town, Anderson went to

Atlantic City to compete for Miss America. Her winning ways ended there, however. She didn't make the 15 finalists.

Back in Iowa, Anderson worked again for the railroad and later attended Cornell College. She married Gordon Erickson, raised a family, and eventually moved to Solvang, California, where she lives today.

Above: Four of Miss Iowa's competitors from July pose with her on the same diving board at the Wakonda Club in Des Moines as part of Hawkeye Holidays. From left: Betty Fredregill (Des Moines); Betty Kuehl (Spencer); Miss Iowa; Lorraine Thompson (Storm Lake); and Pat Owens (Traer).

The above photo ran in a full-page photo essay by Ultang in the Sunday *Register's* rotogravure section on August 3, 1947. The photo opposite is an outtake.

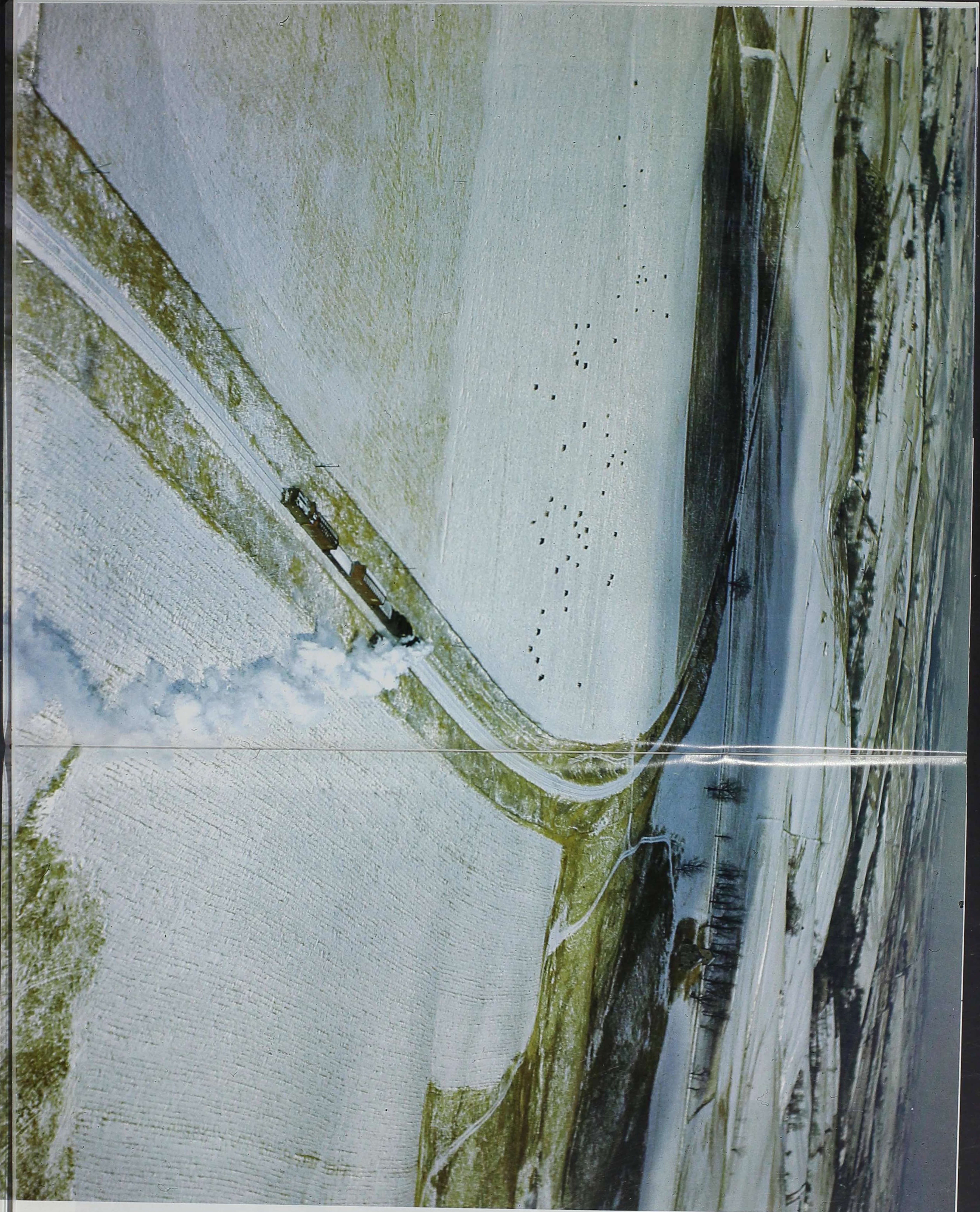




Black angus cattle are scattered across a nearby field as a five-car freight train heads towards a curve. A dusting of snow covers the rails ahead of the steam locomotive.

This was the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy train #118, which ran daily except Sunday between Humeston and Mount Ayr in south-central Iowa. If the train was on time (a big assumption for a branch-line way freight), Ultang would have shot this photo between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m., the departure and arrival times at Lamoni and Kellerton, respectively.

Titled "Winter's White Patterns on the Iowa Countryside," a variation of this photo appeared in the *Sunday Register* on February 5, 1950.



Black angus cattle are scattered across a nearby field as a five-car freight train heads towards a curve. A dusting of snow covers the rails ahead of the steam locomotive.

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Left: Of the more than 1,000 people who worked for the *Des Moines Register & Tribune* in 1950, one of the least visible employees was W. A. Bedgood, shown here in a photo that dates from the late 1940s. Known inside the paper as *The Mole*, Bedgood was in charge of the *Register's* darkroom and got his nickname, according to longtime *Register* reporter Walt Shotwell, because he was rarely seen even by his fellow employees.

Bedgood kneels alongside a huge drum of sodium sulfite, a component of both developing and hypo-clearing solutions. The number and size of the containers illustrate the amount of chemicals needed to process the 4" x 5" black-and-white negatives, which were still the standard in photojournalism, and the volume of prints required to illustrate the *Register* and its evening sister, the *Tribune*. Bedgood's job entailed mixing chemicals, developing negatives, and making prints, although Shotwell says that sometimes the photographers did their own darkroom work if they were covering a breaking news story.

The photo below, from the same period, is of an unidentified *Register* staff artist.



Special Acknowledgments

The author particularly wishes to thank Mary Bennett (special collections coordinator, State Historical Society of Iowa in the Iowa City center) for her invaluable encouragement, enthusiasm, advice, and myriad factual contributions to this article. More than anyone outside of Don Ultang's family, Mary has been the most tireless advocate of Ultang's photographic legacy.

Thanks also to Charles Scott (library resource technician, SHSI-Iowa City) for his expert work overcoming the age-related color shifts in many of the transparencies used in this article and for his unfailing good cheer in all matters.

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Color images that appear in this photo essay are also available to the public for a fee. Due to color shifts caused by aging of the film, however, some of the other color images in the Ultang Collection cannot be reproduced with fidelity. For more information regarding these particular images, contact Mary Bennett, Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240; phone 319-335-3911; mary-bennett@uiowa.edu.


NOTE ON SOURCES

In addition to thousands of negatives and prints, the Don Ultang Collection at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City) includes other items. For this article, tear sheets, flight logs, correspondence, and articles by and about Ultang were especially helpful. Major sources include bound volumes of the *Des Moines Register*, 1939–1956; and Don Ultang, *Holding the Moment: Mid-America at Mid-Century* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991).

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Telegrams always convey a sense of urgency (as do editors). This 1952 telegram to Iowa photographer Don Ultang from Milton Orshefsky is no exception. Orshefsky worked at *Life* magazine, known for its groundbreaking photojournalism. In the telegram he spells out deadlines for Ultang and what kinds of color film *Life* will accept.

Even though color advertisements filled pages and pages of *Life* in the late 1940s and early 1950s, color photos accompanying news and features were limited to a few pages per issue, if that. The magazine was trying to change that.

In a 1950 memo, Irene Saint, of *Life*, advised photographers to always carry color film in case an event "is reported better in color even if the picture runs three weeks after the event."

As examples of what Saint had in mind, she noted a few breaking news stories with which *Life* had used color

photos: the eruption of Mauna Loa, "Ghandi's ashes," and "the oil well fire off Louisiana."

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