



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

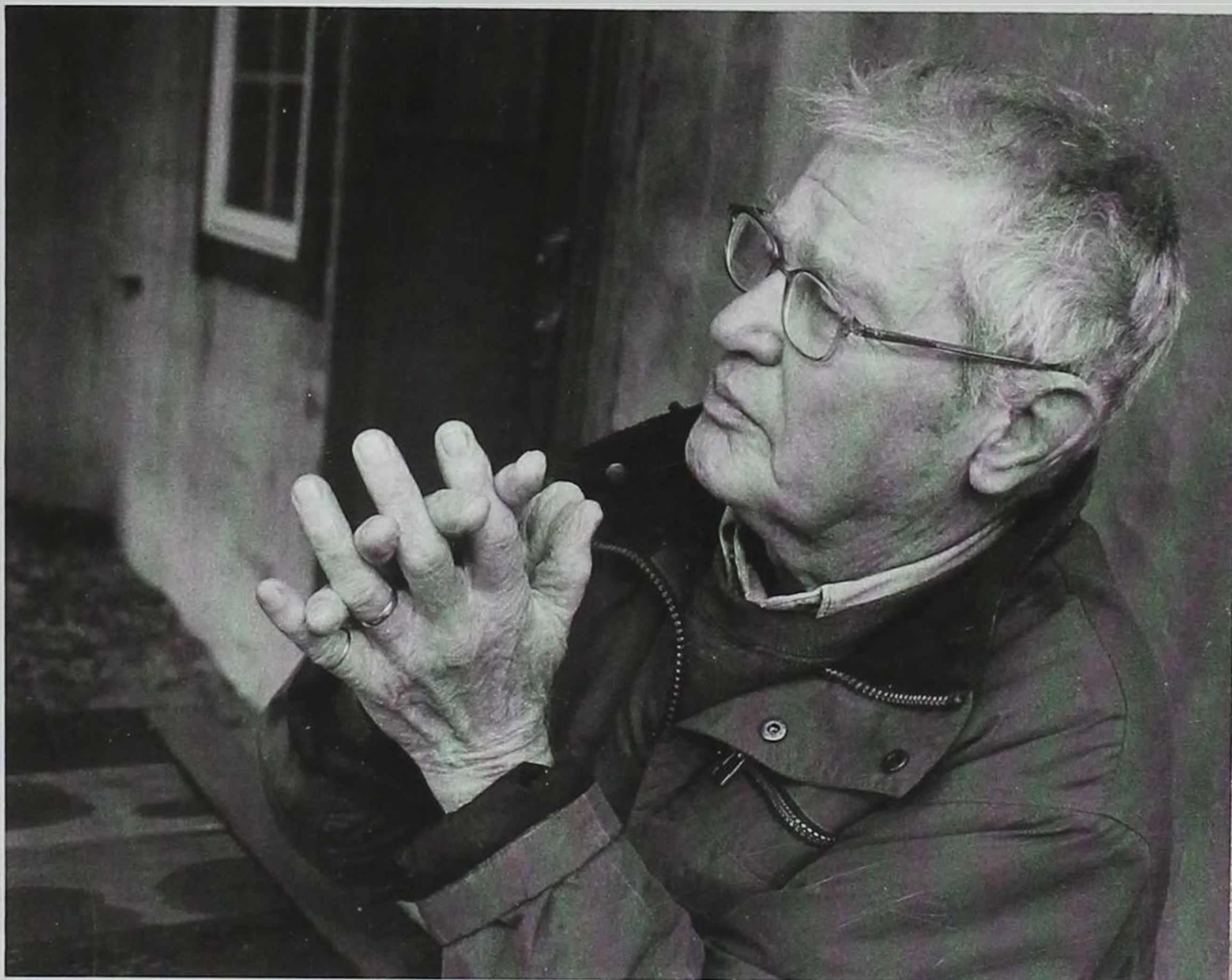
Ultang's Iowa

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