

Smile! You're On Popular City Photog's Candid Camera

By Patricia Smith
Deering

Phoenix Managing Editor

Hang around downtown long enough or often enough, and sooner or later you'll see him hustling along, feet splayed in quick steps that belie his short, slightly portly frame. Weighing down his shoulder is the ever-present tool of his trade - his camera bag loaded



L.B. Speas Jr.

with equipment for all occasions. The man is L.B. Speas Jr., and in all probability, he's on his way to take care of business.

His business puts him in demand for everything from weddings and reunions to events around town covered by the news media. A professional photographer since 1975, Speas - or "L.B." to the many who know him in the community - brings an artist's touch to his profession, as well as a keen eye for capturing the essence of whatever or whomever he photographs.

"There's a difference between a photographer and a 'snapshooter'," Speas says, describing the stance, positioning, and photo composition ability that are some of the hallmarks of a competent, professional photographer. He prides

himself on his craft, something that began for him as a hobby in 1965 while he worked as a lab technician at Talton Professional Photo-finishers.

Watching the work that other photographers were doing, Speas decided that he wanted to try his hand. "One lunch hour, I went with a friend to the pawn shop and bought a Yashica," Speas said, chuckling at the memory of his decision. He credits one of the city's well-known photographers, James Fields, with teaching him the finer points of using a camera. A week later, he landed his first job - taking pictures for the church where he has been an active member for years - Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church.

His work surprised not only his church members but himself as well. "Those photos were some of the best I ever made," he recalled, the surprise still in his voice. "I don't know what happened." Speas continued to hone his skills, learning from other photographers and at Talton. "By doing, I learned," he explained. Beyond "one little, short course," his expertise has been all OJT (on-the-job-training).

Speas left Talton in 1980 after 15 years and held a variety of other fulltime jobs, still pursuing on the side, what had become his profession. In 1990 he joined the staff of the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* as the newspaper's photographer. After being laid off twice, he was more or less propelled into his own business in 1991, the type of service-oriented business that can survive recessionary times. "For now, I can't see the effect because I'm still getting calls for weddings and other jobs."

He is also the photographer for the

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