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Hillbilly snapshooter was first artist in residence

BY DIANE GALE
 STAFF WRITER

In celebration of the 20th anniversary next year of the Farmington Area Arts Commission Artists in Residence program the Farmington Observer will review most of the 20 the winners in the upcoming months.

Joe Clark won the coveted position of the first person from Farmington and Farmington Hills to be recognized by this title.

He was known as the Hillbilly SnapShooter for the photos he took capturing the life in Appalachia. Pointing to his sense of humor, Clark used HBSS after his name.

In addition to 19 books, his photos have appeared in publications around the world, including Life, Look, Time, Newsweek, National Geographic and Sports Illustrated.

Some of his most famous photos are of Tennessee distillery workers, which were taken for Jack Daniels whiskey ads. In 1967 a photo Clark took of the Detroit riots ran on a Time magazine cover.

His first photo was taken when he was 35.

"He was known for his photography, but he was also a poet, a philosopher, a storyteller and an all-around good friend to a lot of people," according to his son, Farmington photographer Junebug Clark.

One of Joe Clark's suggestions for taking good photos: "It's not so much what you see that makes a picture, it's also what you feel."

"He always felt the most important thing was that the people in his pictures liked his pictures," Junebug said.

Junebug recently recalled that his father said the best pictures you take are in your own neighborhood, home and family.

"He would say that you don't have to go around the world to find extraordinary subject matter," Junebug said.

Joe Clark died after complications from a heart attack in 1989 at 85. He lived in Farmington and according to Junebug his dad was taking two or three rolls of film a week shortly before he had the heart attack.

His work can be viewed in the Southwestern Oakland County Cable Commission offices and the 47th District Court.



Joe Clark

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