

ART

Photographs capture Cuban revolutionaries

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Three years ago, Jack Kenny took his first trip to Cuba. He was fascinated by the country's revolutionary history and its people. While visiting Cuba at the invitation of friends who were shooting a documentary, Kenny was introduced to photographer Roberto Salas. The two became friends almost instantly.

Kenny, a fine art photographer, and owner of Quicksilver Photo in Plymouth, purchased an image that Salas' father Osvaldo had taken of Fidel Castro, showing the revolutionary with flat raised and clenched in the early days of his regime. Not long after arriving home Kenny hung it in his office. Business associates and friends began asking where he bought it. Now four times a year, the Ann Arbor resident travels to Cuba to photograph the people and bring back images of Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara taken by the Salases in the 1960s.

Salas' work and that of his late father Osvaldo is currently on exhibit at Frame Works in Plymouth. Kenny hopes the images will create an awareness of Cuba, then and today.

"Cuba is so close to us and people know very little about it," said Kenny. "My interest is the revolution, primarily the roles Fidel Castro and Che Guevara played but I also feel a connection to Roberto. I was in Vietnam as a soldier when Roberto was taking photos for the North

What: Cuban photographers Osvaldo and Roberto Salas show images taken in the early 1960s of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.
Where: Frame Works, 833 Penniman, (west of Main St.), Plymouth, (734) 459-3355.
When: Through Wednesday, Dec. 23.

Vietnamese as a war correspondent. That's where the picture of Ho Chi Minh is from. But most of the people who buy the photos are familiar with these events in the 1960s."

Beginning in December of 1956, Castro led a guerrilla war with Che Guevara and others forcing dictator Fulgencio Batista to flee the country in January of 1959. In several of the photographs at Frame Works, Osvaldo captures the early years of Castro's rise to power. Since his father's death in 1993, Roberto has continued to print from the original negatives. The photos on display show Castro smoking a cigar, playing baseball, harvesting sugar cane in the fields, and playing with his German Shepherd. Many of the photos are published in Osvaldo and Roberto's book, "Fidel's Cuba," scheduled to arrive in the U.S. in December. Roberto will exhibit his work in New York and Los Angeles in January.

Candid shots

"The photos are so personal," said Kenny. "None of them are posed. They're candid shots;

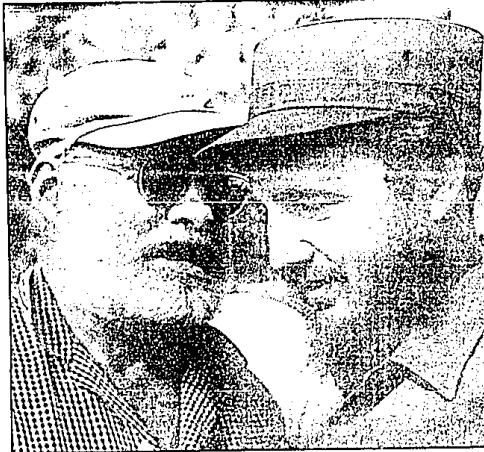
they're caught in action. Che is revered in Cuba. He was killed in Bolivia in 1967 and just reburied in Cuba last year."

Osvaldo was born in Havana but lived in New York City in the late 1940s and 50s. As a photographer for the magazine "Camera over Broadway" he met and recorded the achievements of many of America's most important celebrities including Louis Armstrong and Rocky Marciano. A photo of Salvador Dalí in 1954 shows the eccentric surrealist and his trademark mustache. Osvaldo's work also appeared in "Life" magazine and the "New York Times." In 1958, Osvaldo returned to Cuba after an invitation to photograph Castro and Guevara during the final days of the Revolution.

Born in New York, Roberto joined his father in photographing historical events after the Revolution including the counter revolution in Cuba, Bay of Pigs invasion, Cuban Missile Crisis, and Castro's and Guevara's trips to Argentina, Venezuela, Washington, D.C. and New York. By 1960, Osvaldo directed the photographic department of Granma, Cuba's leading newspaper. After returning from Vietnam Roberto and Osvaldo shot photos of the embargo's effect on the Cuban people in the late 1970s. The photograph shows Castro addressing a crowd of thousands in Revolution Square.

Cuba today

Kenny, who bought his first camera in Vietnam in 1967, is taking photographs for a book of



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BISHOP

his own about the life of the Cuban people living under Castro's control today. During his quarterly trips, Kenny delivers photo equipment and supplies to Roberto which are unavailable in his country.

"I'm fascinated by the architecture, the people, the old cars from the 50s," said Kenny. "It's like a time warp in Cuba where everyone earns \$15 to \$20 a

First meeting: Osvaldo Salas took this photo of Ernest Hemingway and Fidel Castro rapt in conversation in 1960.

month but my main interest is the people. Last year, I photographed open heart surgery after meeting a cardiologist, and a voodoo ceremony where they

sacrificed a goat. But it's all networking and that takes time. There's no phone directory. You walk to people's homes to find out if they're home."

Art Beat from page C2

■ Ali Muhammad Jackson, Jr., percussionist for Emerging Artist Award
■ Choreographer Peter Sperling of Ann Arbor for Michigan Artist Award
■ Elmore "Dutch" Leonard of Bloomfield Township for International Achievement Award

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