

For the Love of Lissa

Written by Karen Peluso

Tuesday, 08 January 2008 10:06

The Beaufort Art Association will host a celebration of the life and art of Lissa Addington, a fine artist and dear friend to many, who succumbed to cancer in June after a long and trying battle.



Her husband, David, and the BAA Gallery will present a memorial exhibit and benefit titled “Lissa—Her Life in Photography.”

The exhibit will open January 8 with a reception to be held on Friday, January 11 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., and will continue through February 16. David Addington has arranged to have the majority of proceeds from sales benefit the Beaufort Art Association. The gallery is located at 1001 Bay Street in the historic Elliott House on the corner of Charles Street in downtown Beaufort. After February 16, the collection will then travel to Statesboro, Georgia where Lissa spent eleven years of her life as Secretary to the Music Department of Georgia Southern University. That exhibit will open March 7 and continue into April.

Lissa Addington grew up in an artistic family. Her father was a bass baritone for the Metropolitan Opera and was a very talented illustrator. Her mother, who loved painting, was an art teacher in her youth.

Lissa and her husband met in college where both nurtured interests in the arts. David went on to earn graduate degrees in theater. When Lissa was very young, she loved to take pictures with her Kodak Brownie. David had become addicted to photography when he was introduced to a darkroom at a Boy Scout meeting. It was only natural that, after their marriage, the Addingtons would take and develop pictures of their young children. While David was in graduate school, working hard on a career, Lissa was actively raising their family. As a consequence, their interest in photography waned. Then in the late 60s, when the the Addingtons moved to Bowling Green, Ohio, one of David’s graduate students introduced them to the new-fangled “single lens reflex,” and they, especially Lissa, were hooked on photography. Lissa began taking pictures of the plays—when they were in production—in which David was involved while in the theater department at Bowling Green State University. One thing led to another, and it wasn’t long before the university and the Toledo Repertory Theater and other individuals and organizations began hiring her.

In 1977, Lissa suggested they buy a 100-year old house on the main avenue in Bowling Green as both a home and as a photography studio. David, who was dumbfounded, asked her: “Do you really want to open a photography studio?” Lissa thought only for a moment before saying, “I do!” The house was gutted and rebuilt to their specifications and became the premier studio in the area. It was in fact so successful that David was encouraged to quit his job after changes in the department and university had caused the job to lose its luster. The business soon netted Lissa \$30,000 a year for which she was justifiably proud. While working as a professional, Lissa took week-long courses at Winona School in Chicago offered by the Professional Photographers of America, the organization (in which Lissa later became involved) that sponsored the school. Lissa also took photography classes at the Rochester Institute for Photography.

After a three-year period of unemployment, David was offered the position of Chair of

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Communication Art at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. Following an unsuccessful attempt to revive her career, Lissa was offered a job as the Secretary to the Music Department, thus reviving another of her enthusiasms. She nevertheless continued her photography, recording all musical events and creating publicity images for the department. That's when she began using a digital camera and software. David and Lissa were very happy to leave the darkroom.

When they retired, they moved to Fripp Island where they could fully indulge their long-held interest in art photography. Discovering the Beaufort Art Association was all they needed to nurture their passion. Together they also pursued their mutual interest in theater.

Animals were Lissa's favorite subjects. She loved her pets and took scads of pictures of each of them. Above all, she loved her trip to Africa where, on safari, she could see and photograph all the wonderful animals in the wild. David and Lissa's last trip together was a cruise that took them to the bay of San Ignacio off the Pacific coast of Baja, California, where Lissa was privileged to see, pet and photograph the gray whales up close and personal. She was moved close to tears when she saw mother whales lift their babies to allow them to be petted by those in the Zodiacs (rubber rafts).

Lissa had a wonderful sense of humor that was apparent in practically every shot she took. When she was working on the computer her love of play really came to light. Often the results of her playful attitude came out looking more like paintings than photographs. She often put several disparate elements together in a print. In one case she took a picture of some railroad tracks along the Blue Ridge Highway on which she then superimposed a guy, wearing a dunce cap, riding a bike.

David says, "Lissa loved doing stuff like that. She was great at it."

Lissa Addington was known and loved in many circles because of her warmth and infectious humor, her talent as a photographer and, in her last few years, as an actress. David had long recognized her as a "closet actress" and tried his best to get her on the stage, but her standard answer to his quest was: "No way José." But for their 50th Wedding Anniversary, she granted David his wish and offered to team up with him in a production of "Love Letters," a two act play. It was a huge success, and several other engagements, including a benefit for the BAA, followed. Lissa was an enthusiastic volunteer for Friends of Caroline Hospice. She sponsored a memorial award at two BAA Spring Shows in honor of one of her patients, Tollie Edmonds. Also, Lissa was honored with a Second Place Overall at one Spring Show and a memorial award at another.

"Lissa—Her Life in Photography" will be on exhibit at the Beaufort Art Association Gallery. The public is cordially invited to view and purchase the collected works of Lissa Addington for this special benefit beginning January 8. The works of 90 member artists will be on display as well. The gallery is open Monday to Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission is free. For further information call 843-379-2222 or visit www.beaufortartassociation.com.