Shuster Photograph Collection

Finding aid created by Humboldt State University Library staff using RecordEXPRESS
Humboldt State University Library
One Harpst Street
Arcata, California 95521-8299
707-826-3419
http://library.humboldt.edu/humco/
2018
**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Shuster Photograph Collection  
**Dates:** 1942-1990s  
**Collection Number:** 2006.02  
**Creator/Collector:** Merle Shuster  
**Extent:** 2.5 Cubic feet; 7 boxes  


**Repository:** Humboldt State University Library  
Arcata, California 95521-8299

**Abstract:** As a freelance photographer in Humboldt County during the mid 20th century, Merle Shuster was often contracted by local people, businesses, land developers, and insurance companies. Photographs in this collection represent a mixture of images he was hired to take as well as images he chose to take, helping to illustrate Humboldt County's growth during the post-war period. Highlights from the collection include: the evolution of suburban housing around Arcata, such as the Bloomfield and Sunny Brae areas; industry expansions and business developments in Eureka; documentation of accidents and natural disasters, including related recovery operations; and footage of marijuana seizures from both Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP) and Operation Greensweep in the 1990s.

**Language of Material:** English  
**Access**  
Open for research by appointment.

**Publication Rights**  
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**Preferred Citation**  
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**Acquisition Information**  
During 2005, while the Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection (2001.01) was being processed, arrangements were begun for the donation of related materials. The donation was finalized by Merle’s son Mel after his father’s death on behalf of the family.

**Biography/Administrative History**  
Biographical information provided by Edie Butler (2006), taken from the Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection finding aid: Merle Shuster's interest in photography started when he was in high school. After he graduated from Eureka High School he attended Humboldt State College for two years and then joined the United States Navy for two years. In the Navy Merle received intensive training in photography, including aerial photography. Upon his discharge in 1945 Merle returned to Eureka and took a job at Photo Specialty Shop. He worked there from 1946 until 1960. Merle also gained photography experience by working at Swanlund Studio and Camera Shop. Merle started his own photography business and by late 1946 was taking on assignments in aerial work as well as special occasions, such as weddings. In 1960 Merle took over the management of Philip's Camera Shop in Arcata while the owner was away for a year. Next he worked at the Humboldt Market grocery store in Eureka for four years, then he was at Proctor's Photographic Engineering Center for two or three years. During all this time he continued his photography business. From 1969 until he retired in 1991 Merle worked for Channel 6 television station in Eureka. Merle's sister, Evelyn Shuster Worthen, wrote about some aspects of the Shuster family history in a book titled, A Castle in Fairyland and other stories of The Carson Family and their Mansions.

**Scope and Content of Collection**  
As a freelance photographer in Humboldt County during the mid 20th century, Merle Shuster was often contracted by local people, businesses, land developers, and insurance companies. Merle’s photographs represent a mixture of images he was hired to take as well as images he chose to take, helping to illustrate Humboldt County’s growth during the post-war period. Strengths of the photographs in this collection include: the evolution of suburban housing around Arcata, such as the Bloomfield and Sunny Brae areas; industry expansions and business developments in Eureka; and documentation of accidents and natural disasters, including related recovery operations. The majority of photographs are in negative or print format, with a small amount of slides and few instances of electronic images (2 CDs and 1 ZIP drive). Photograph sizes range from 35mm negatives to 16 x 20 inch prints. The collection also contains some audio-visual materials that were
filmed by Merle. The content of these materials relate primarily to Merle’s work as a cameraman for the KVIQ news station during the late 1980s through the early 1990s. Footage highlights consist of: marijuana seizures from both Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP) and Operation Greensweep, Earth First! protests against logging operations in Humboldt County, and the 1964 flood. Audio-visual materials were donated in VHS format and transferred to DVDs in December 2011 for access and preservation purposes.

**Indexing Terms**

Arcata (Calif.)
Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (Organization)
Earth First! (Organization)
Eureka (Calif.)
Humboldt Bay
Humboldt County (Calif.)
Humboldt County (Calif.) - History - Pictorial Works
Sunny Brae (Arcata, Calif.)