

GUY OFFLEY COX

Guy Offley Cox was born in Wilson, North Carolina, on November 19, 1922, to William and Elizabeth Hill Cox.

After graduation from Charles L. Coon High School, he enlisted in the U. S. Navy on June 13, 1942, and completed boot camp followed by duty in the mess hall. In September 1942, he was sent to photography school for four months in Pensacola, Florida, graduating about December 29.

Then he was sent to Boston to wait for the *USS Bunker Hill* that was still being built. During the wait, he was sent to Gunnery School at Quonsett Point, Rhode Island, and to vectograph school in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he learned to use Polaroid products to make stereo pictures.

After the *USS Bunker Hill* was commissioned on May 30, 1943, they sailed a shakedown cruise to Trinidad, British West Indies, then returned to Boston for alterations. They sailed again for San Diego for supplies, passing through the Panama Canal in September 1943. In San Diego, they picked up 3000 Marines to transport to the Pacific front. From there they sailed to Honolulu, Hawaii, on to the Solomon Islands, past Guadalcanal, entered the combat zone in November 1943, where they were attached to Rabaul Airfield.

Guy was involved in air reconnaissance. Sitting in the rear seat (the gunner's seat) in a dive-bomber, he took pictures of bombed sites to be used to make corrections in the next missions.

The *Bunker Hill* sailed and its fighter planes attacked Okinawa intermittingly. At 10 am on May 10, 1945, the *Bunker Hill* was attacked by a Kamikaze pilot and heavily damaged but not sunk. There were approximately 400 casualties. Guy and many others abandoned ship due to smoke on the hanger deck. After several hours, the destroyer *USS The Sullivans* picked up twenty to thirty survivors including Guy. The next day they were transferred back to the *Bunker Hill* by trolley on lines between the ships. The *Bunker Hill* limped to Ulithe then back to the States, docking at Brimington, Washington, for repairs to the ship.

After the atomic bomb was dropped, Guy was reassigned to Whidby Island, north of Seattle, where he was again attached to a photo lab. Later he was transferred to Little Creek, Virginia, where he was discharged December 29, 1945.

A presentation made by Guy of some of his memories was video taped and transferred to DVD format. Copies of the DVD were presented to the Wilson County Public Library and to the World War II memories project.



as told to Sue Evans Powell

STRIKES IN WHICH THE USS BUNKER HILL PARTICIPATED

11-11-43	Strikes against Rabaul Naval Base (Treasury-Bougainville Operation)*
11-18-43 to 12-5-43	Capture and occupation of Tarawa, Makin, Apemana Islands (Gilbert Islands Operation)*
12-8-43	Strike against Nauru Island
12-25-43	1 st strike against Kavieng, N. I.)
1-1-44	2 nd strike against Kavieng, N. I.) (Bismarck-Archipelago Operation)*
1-4-44	3 rd strike against Kavieng, N. I.)
1-29-44 to 2-8-44	Capture and occupation of Marshall Islands*
2-16 & 2-17-44	Strike against Truk, Caroline Islands*
2-22-44	Strike against Tinian-Saipan Marianas Island*
3-30-44 to 4-1-44	Strike against Palau, Yap and Woleai, Caroline Islands
4-21-44 to 4-27-44	Support for capture and occupation of Hollandia and Wakde (New Guinea Operation)*
4-29-44, 4-30-44	Strike against Truk, Caroline Islands
6-11-44 to 6-17-44	Support for capture and occupation of Saipan, Marianas Islands. Strike against Tinian & Guam.
6-19-44 to 6-21-44	Battle of the Eastern Philippines
6-24-44	Strikes against Pagan Island
7-18-44 to 7-23-44	Support for capture and occupation of Guam.
7-24-44	Strikes against Palau Island
8-4-44 to 8-5-44	Strikes against Bonin Islands (Iwo Jima, Chichi Jima, and HaHa Jima)
9-6-44 to 9-8-44	Strike against Palau*
9-9-44 & 9-10-44	Strike against Davao Area, Mindanao, Philippine Islands
9-12, 9-13 & 9-14-44	Strike against Leyte, Samar, Cebu, Southern Luzon, (Visayas), Philippine Islands. Strikes against Negros, and Southern Philippines*
9-17-44	Strike against Palau
9-21-44 & 9-22-44	Strike against Manila area, Luzon, Philippine Islands
9-24-44	Strike against Calamian Group, (Visayas,) Philippine Islands
10-10-44	Okinawa Shima, Nansei Shoto
10-12-44 to 10-14-44	Formosa
10-18-44	Luzon, Philippine Islands
10-21-44	Visayas Islands, Philippine Islands
11-11-44	Ormoc Bay, Leyte Island, Philippine Islands
11-13-44 & 11-14-44	Manila Bay, Luzon, Philippine Islands
2-16, 2-17 & 2-25-45	Strikes against Tokyo area
2-19-45 to 2-22-45	Landing and ground support of Iwo Jima, Bonin Islands*
3-1-45 to 5-11-45	Pre-invasion strikes, landing and ground support of Okinawa Jima*
3-18, 3-19 & 3-29-45	Strikes against Kyushu
3-28-45 & 4-10-45	Strikes against Ninami Daito Jima
4-7-45	Strike against the Japanese Fleet. (The Yamato), BB

*Eleven bronze stars authorized in accordance with General Order No. 207 of 7 February 1944, to be worn in Asiatic-Pacific Campaign

*Authorized to wear the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars. One to be worn for action with enemy while landings were being made between 10-17-44 and 10-21-44 and one for being in Philippine waters for a period of thirty days.



Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Center [Mercy Hospital] postcard



Carroll Building (circa 1970)

Wilson's Heritage

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Guy Cox Chronicles Wilson's History in Pictures

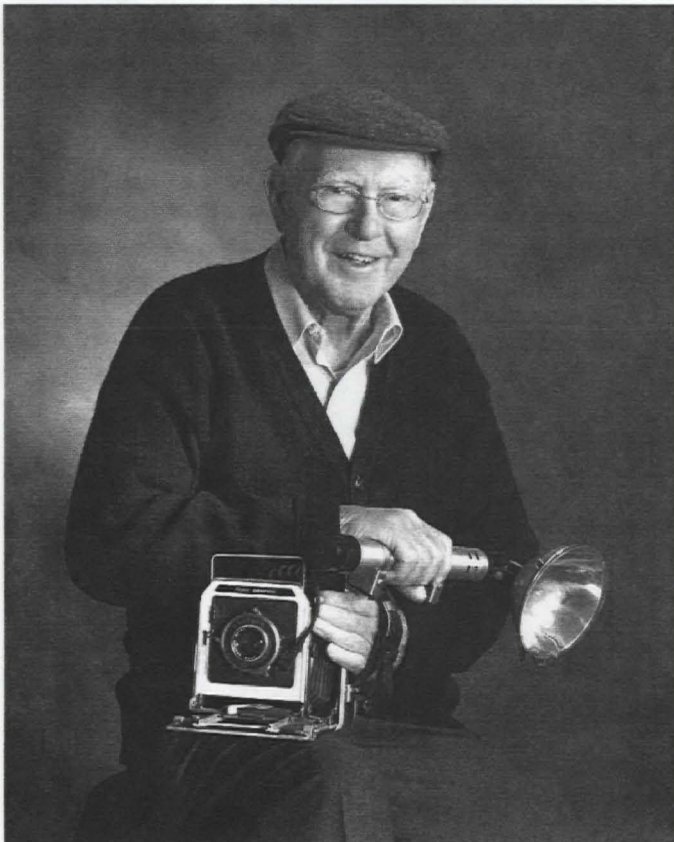
Ever since his mom bought him a 49 cent Univex camera in about 1936, Guy Offley Cox had found his niche. He studied photography at Charles L. Coon High School, and worked after school at

a photo finishing lab owned by Bisette's Drugs for 10 cents an hour. He enlisted in the Navy in June of 1942, attended the Naval School of Photography, and was stationed on an aircraft carrier nicknamed the "Holiday Express" where he photographed the war from reconnaissance and fighter planes. He was in such places as New Caledonia, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

After being discharged, Cox studied at the School of Modern Photography in New York City, and returned to Wilson in February 1947 where he wanted to go into business for himself. Instead, he joined his friend Charlie Raines and the legacy of Raines & Cox Photographers began. The firm has recorded births and marriages; school portraits, athletic teams and newsworthy events throughout the years. It would be difficult to find a Wilsonian who hasn't been photographed by Guy.

Although he says he's glad he doesn't have to start over again, because technology is changing so rapidly, Guy continues to photograph events. His favorite event is shooting weddings, which he says gives him a sense of accomplishment and great joy to save such a precious moment.

In a February 27, 2002 Wilson Daily Times article written by Keith Barnes, Janice Walston Aycock, then Executive Director of the Art Council, stated, "Guy Cox's work touches the hearts of all Wilsonians. He is an artist whose photography chronicles the history of Wilson that will live for



Images Photography

years to come." We couldn't agree more. The Wilson County Historical Association salutes Guy Cox.



Images Photography

What's Next?

Annual Membership Meeting, May 17, 4:00 pm, Wilson County Public Library Program:

The Search for Toisnot Town-Update, with archeologist Tom Beamon, and election of officers and directors for 2007-2008. Please mark your calendars now for this important annual meeting.

Membership Committee Needs Your Help

The membership committee, under the leadership of Mary Lou Smith, is diligently working to increase membership in the WCHA, but they need your help. The committee has compiled a list of 250 – 300 prospective members and will be mounting a membership campaign beginning the last week in April. Please provide the membership committee with names of individuals you think would be interested in the WCHA. You may reach Mary Lou at 243-3649. The committee's work is already paying off. The Association welcomes new members Bill and Nancy Williams, Katie and John Covington, Bill Marlowe, and Cora Morrison.

Wenger to Deliver 2007 BB&T Lecture

Mark R. Wenger, of Williamsburg Virginia, a former resident of Wilson, will deliver the fourth annual BB&T Lecture in American History at Barton College on October 16, 2007. Wenger's topic, "Restoring Madison's *Montpelier*," will draw upon his experiences as chief architectural historian of America's largest and most exciting historic preservation project. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is currently restoring *Montpelier*, a mansion resting upon a 2,700 acre estate in Orange County, Virginia, to the condition that James and Dolley Madison knew in the 1820s.

Mark Wenger is the son of the late Dr. Arthur D. Wenger, former president of Atlantic Christian College, now Barton College, and Doris K. Wenger. His brother, Mike, a World War II historian and an ACC-Barton graduate, lives in Raleigh. The lecture series is sponsored by BB&T, Barton College, and the Wilson County Historical Association.

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Preserving memories for future generations

By Althea Simpson
Special Sections Manager

Photographer Guy Cox attended a photographic convention in Research Triangle Park recently, where he checked out the newest digital equipment. He'd like to buy a new digital camera. "But at 85 years old, how much should I spend on new equipment?" he mused in a recent interview.

Cox has been working in his third floor photography studio for over 60 years now. He tried retirement on for size in 2001, but just couldn't break the habit of going to his shop every day. Now, he's decided that retirement can wait.

Cox actually began his long career in photography while still in high school. He was in what was called an apprentice program, and would leave school every day and go to Bissette's Drug Store, then in downtown Wilson, where he would work at developing photographs.

"That was from about 1939 to the early 40s, and I earned 10 cents an hour," he recalled with a chuckle, "which added up to about \$1.50 a week. Some weeks when I got my pay check, Mr. Bissette would tell me that I owed him 45 cents or more — too many milkshakes at the soda counter."

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

After high school graduation, Cox joined the Navy and was sent to photographic school in Pensacola, Fla., and then to Rhode Island for gunnery school. Following that, he went to Boston for a special school where he learned vectograph, which was a new technique that allowed aerial photographs to be taken and graphed as negatives, then printed with Polaroid materials. The process produced photos that were used for naval intelligence, he explained. "The images were designed to be held and viewed with special 3-D glasses, to get a better three-dimensional view of target sites," he said.

After training, he was assigned to an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Bunker Hill, which was commissioned in 1943, then headed south and proceeded through the Panama Canal.

"I would get off the ship to take photos as it entered the various locks," he explained, "But at one of the locks, I got off the ship when it was level with the dock, and the ship rose so high I couldn't get back on." A chance encounter with a friendly tug boat captain allowed him catch a ride from the Atlantic side of the canal to the Pacific side, where he was able to rejoin his ship.

In San Diego, the ship picked up 3,000 Marines to transport them to Honolulu. The ship traveled throughout the Pacific, near Guadalcanal and New Zealand, and had its first battle engagement in November 1943, launching air strikes on Guadalcanal. "We spent all our time going from island to island," Cox recalled, "the Marianas, Guam, New Guinea...we saw them all."

His job was to take aerial photos from the rear seat of a dive bomber. The last five photographers before him were all lost in battle engagements.

"After a while we went back to the Bremerton, Wa., Navy yard for minor repairs," he recalled. "When we returned to the war zone, we supported the Battle of Iwo Jima. At that time, two photographic teams of fighter pilots were formed on the ship.

They flew torpedo bombers and would take photos as they dive bombed their targets. 'A tisket, a tasket, a single engine casket', that's what we called them," he said wryly.

The ship progressed from Formosa to Taiwan and just off Okinawa, on May 11, 1945, the ship was hit by two kamikaze planes and suffered extensive damage.

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Photo by Bill Reeves

Guy Cox, pictured above in his third-floor studio's workshop, has been taking photographs of Wilson and its people for over 60 years.

Guy Cox

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"They hit at the island tower on the flight deck and wiped out a whole ready room of pilots below," he related. Cox was forced to hastily abandon ship with other crew members because of the heavy smoke and fire. In the water, he and another sailor grabbed onto an empty 40 millimeter ammo can that came floating by. "They were about the size of a 30 gallon garbage can. Eventually, a destroyer, U.S.S. The Sullivans, came by and put out a boat to pick up survivors. We were covered with smoky residue and oil," he said.

"The next day we were transferred back to our ship by trolley lines." Sadly, Cox said, nearly 400 of his fellow sailors, out of a crew of 2,600, were lost in the attack.

The Bunker Hill hobbled back to Bremerton, and while it was there under repair, the war ended. Cox was transferred to a base in Puget Sound and after a short time was discharged.

COMING HOME

It was now December 1945, and Cox immediately made his way back to Wilson.

"My longtime childhood friend, Charles Raines, was already in business in a photography studio downtown," he said. "I decided to go to photographic school in New York, and while I was waiting to go, I worked for him for part of 1946."

Cox was in school for a short time, about four months, he recalled, and then came back to Wilson once again and formed a partnership with Raines.

"Our partnership started Feb-

ruary 27, 1947, so I've officially been in business 60 years now," he said.

The two stayed busy photographing life in Wilson, year after year, generation after generation.

Children are Cox's favorite subject. He remembered taking photos for high school annuals in the early 50s, taking his equipment and shooting pictures on campus of activities and sports events.

"Even after all this time, there's still on file in our studio over 41,000 envelopes of negatives, 19,000 bags of color negatives and 9,000 bags of photos taken outside the studio, some of them for business use, some of them for private photography sessions, including weddings.

"In the 50s, with both of us working, we would sometimes

shoot three weddings in one day," he recalled. "I've done at least 1,000 myself." Eventually, he found himself photographing 50th anniversary celebrations for couples whose wedding photos he also took.

Raines retired in the 80s, and later passed away in February 2001, but Cox continued to work, although he freely shares that he's not as active as he was earlier in his career. "But I still have the same office, and the same elevator."

The elevator, with its telescoping accordion door, has transported thousands of Wilsonites. It was broken for a while, but now it's fixed, and when the bells rings, Cox still takes it down to the ground floor and picks up customers to ride them up to the third floor studio on East Nash Street.

Since his "retirement" in 2001 he has continued to photograph weddings and taken countless portraits of children. He's also made an attempt to clean out his many shelves and file drawers, offering to sell negatives, old photos, cameras and other equipment.

But however hard he tries to retire, his studio seems to always look the same. It's a virtual step back in time, a working studio where he still uses rolled film, still prints black-and-white photos by hand and still shows photographic proofs rather than digital images to his customers.

"I still do it all the old-fashioned way. Digital may be more versatile, but I think doing it the old-fashioned way makes the photographer more selective and more observant of his

subject," he said.

His advice to those considering a career in photography is to "get a degree or a good foundation in business, and then do your fun thing later. We (Raines & Cox) could have been more successful, if we had had more business sense," he explained. "But we were just hometown boys; photos came first and business second."

Cox now says he intends to continue photographing just as long as he can, and might even go ahead and get that digital camera he's been thinking about.

"If my back lets me, I'm going to keep right on going. As my bookkeeper says, 'it's someplace to go.' I feel real comfortable in my studio; even if it looks junky, it's home," he said with a smile in his voice.