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8 LES HUGUENOTS. · LES NOCES DU C^{te} de NEVERS

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1950s to 1980s History Preserved in Major 3-D Collection

by John Dennis

From the early 1950s to 1988, Chester Burger documented people, cities and news events around the world in 35mm Kodachrome stereo slides. Mr. Burger recently divided the massive collection representing his years of stereo work between the New York Historical Society (just over 5,000 views of New York City) and the New York Public Library (over 14,000 views from the rest of the U.S. and worldwide). These are the first new images added to the library's 72,000+ collection of stereographs in over 50 years, and the first 35mm stereo slides ever to enter their collection.

Chester Burger took full stereo advantage of his employment in network television news, which sent him to locations and events that most amateur stereographers could only dream about shooting. He was able to photograph in stereo news and history-making people that few of us ever even see at a distance. (Several of his stereographs are seen in anaglyphic format in *Amazing 3-D*, Morgan & Symmes, Little, Brown & Co. 1982.)

In his professional appraisal of the collection, NSA activities vice president and photographic dealer John Waldsmith noted:

"This collection is all dated, titled and categorized. Mr. Burger's photography has a very straightforward quality with an eye for documenting the unusual and often overlooked subject. This is seen particularly in the street scenes in New York and other worldwide cities. We see native types, street vendors, people at work, unusual storefronts, etc.

The New York City collection is of historic importance because much of what Mr. Burger photographed is now gone or dramatically changed. There are hundreds of images of neighborhoods long since demolished. The New York World's Fair (1964-65) section is the most complete collection known. Burger photographed almost every single building and exhibit and was able to make many photographs which appear to be no where else available. These were featured in the cover story for the April 1965 issue of *Popular Photography*.

The historically significant coverage of the 1952 presidential campaign is of particular value. This was the last campaign in U.S. political life that was conducted from trains with rear-end platforms. In addition to the two major candidates, there are excellent close, and often candid, views of the important political leaders of the time.

Note should be made of the atom-bomb tests at Camp Mercury, Nevada in 1953. Included is a scene of the actual detonation. Though photographed by the government, much of this was done on film other than Kodachrome. Much of this early 1950s photography has now faded or lost the color, making the Burger slides of great value because they retain the clarity of the original scene.

In the worldwide collection, special note must be made of the many scenes of obscure areas such as Afghanistan, the collective farms in Soviet Kazakhstan, Outer Mongolia and the remarkable coverage of Antarctica."

There are people, events and places skillfully documented in the stereo slides of these two collec-

tions which would delight most stereo enthusiasts, who generally assume that the 1960s, 70s and 80s escaped serious 3-D coverage almost completely. A quick scan of the basic inventory list in the appraisal reveals the wide scope of Burger's work. A random sampling of a fraction of the places and events covered includes the Bronx Zoo, Central Park ('78), World Trade Center construction ('73), Trump Tower ('81), an anti-nuclear demonstration ('82), Macy's Parades, Devil's Island ('66), Samarkand ('62), a Gay Pride Day parade ('83), Iraq, and about 600 slides of the Soviet Union in 1962 and 1985.

The *people* in Burger's views represent an equally wide variety of subjects and include Earl Warren, Robert Taft, homeless people, Andrei Vishinsky, Richard Nixon, journalists, Perle Mesta, a bag lady, Coretta Scott King, Ed Koch, Jimmy Carter, Harold Stassen, hippies, and Ronald Reagan. With its preservation assured, arrangements can eventually be made for the publication (perhaps in some future color SW issue) of more of this unique stereographic record, as well as for possible 3-D projection programs of dupe slides. Chester Burger, who retired from active photography in 1988, deserves the thanks of all who care in any way about stereo photography for his prodigious body of work and for his thoughtfulness in its preservation. ■

