

**Photography as History  
To See the Real Thing  
By LINDA ST. HILAIRE, West Palm Beach, Fla., Correspondent**

**Margaret Bourke-White (1906–71) started as an industrial architectural photographer before developing the photo essay concept. She covered World War II for ‘Life’ magazine and later recorded the troubles in India, Pakistan and South Africa.**

Just as birds migrate south during the winter months, so do people. Many begin to descend on Florida in January, and some stay as late as April.

Photographers are no different. Hence begins the season for the Palm Beach Photographic Workshop, a learning center and exhibit hall for both seasoned photographers and new generations discovering the camera. The season begins with Fotofusion, a week of workshops, lectures and field trips that bring together the forces of master photographers, professionals and students from across the country and world.

This year, the center in Delray Beach opened the season with an exhibition from the pioneering photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White, who rose to pre-eminence during 1925–53. Bourke-White began as a freelancer capturing vivid images of America’s new industrial era. Her photos appeared in *Fortune*, and she became one of the first four staff photographers for *Life*. Her photo of Fort Beck Dam in Montana was the cover photo on the first issue of *Life* in 1936.

The editors got more than they bargained for when they gave her the assignment. Instead of focusing on the construction of the dam, she focused on the lives of the builders and their families forced to live in temporary desert cities.

She was the forerunner of the photo essayist in documenting world news, going on to record a wide range of historic events — from the Depression in the American South to the German attack on Russia in 1941 and Nazi atrocities during World War II; from Gandhi’s fight for Indian independence to the racial and labor unrest in South Africa.

Arnold Drapkin, an editor at *Time* for more than 40 years and now on the board of directors for the Photographic Workshop, said of Bourke-White: “Peggy was intensely curious about what was happening in the world around her... There was no hardship she wouldn’t endure to get her story and to get the job done.”

Since newspapers and magazines were major forms of communication during the first half of the century, such images offered honest and timely stories about the atrocities of war, the difficulties endured by freedom fighters and the conditions under which people worked.

Bourke-White’s images are a slice of life — the real thing.

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