



NIKI BUTCHER / COURTESY PHOTO

# BLACK AND WHITE IN COLOR

Drawing comparisons to Ansel Adams, Clyde Butcher takes photos of the Florida few have ever dared to discover



TOP: The photographer working in the back swamp. ABOVE: In the darkroom, hanging a print to dry.

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Town Chronicle Correspondent

**W**hen Clyde Butcher graduated college with a degree in architecture, he never thought landscape photography would become his life's work.

Popular Photography magazine has described him as the next Ansel Adams, who is known as the father of landscape photography.

Butcher was born in Kansas City, Missouri. His dad was a sheet metal worker and moved his family around the country as he searched for work.

SEE BUTCHER, A10 ►

## This 'bat girl' champions area's flying friends

BY JAMES MADERA

Town Chronicle Correspondent

Krysta Fowler might seem like an ordinary, mild-mannered high school student. But she's really a superhero.

At least, to bats.

She doesn't have to slide down a pole into a cave to don a costume. She doesn't even have a costume, except for her Girl Scout uniform, which is embellished with just about every badge she could earn.

But to the bats that dwell in Southwest Florida, she could easily be a member of the Justice League.

While most of the North Port resident's peers focus on badge requirements and cookie sales, Fowler has decided to embark on a unique endeavor: creating sanctuaries for bats.

A self-monikered "bat-vocate," Fowler's introduction to the world of bats all started a year ago, when she was in the 10th grade. While walking down a hallway at school, she had seen a small bat (which she described as "irresistibly adorable") on the wall. She explained what happened next in her blog:

"A few minutes later, my friends came in and one of them spoke up, saying something about a bat. I listened immediately as she explained how she and her friends found a bat on the ground when they entered school. I realized the bat must have dropped to the ground, whether on purpose or accident, my friends and I couldn't tell. She, in order

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Krysta Fowler brandishing one of her custom bat houses.

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### B-b-b-bad

George Thorogood and the Destroyers are set to rock the Van Wezel.

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### Showtime!

Locals will again dazzle the audience with the return of "North Port's Got Talent."

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# BUTCHER

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“The sheet metal business in Kansas City got really bad and the government was looking for workers,” he said.

They moved from Missouri to Paducah, Kentucky, then to Ohio and finally to California. In California, his father was permanently injured in a scaffolding accident and could no longer work.

“We stopped moving and I finished high school and went to college there, and my first couple of businesses were in California.”

It was in college that he met Niki, who would become his wife.

Architecture is what led him to photography. He began photographing architectural models.

“That was how I learned how to see. It’s really important for a person who’s going to try to do art that you learn how to see,” he said. “That was one of the things we were taught in architecture.”

He worked for architects doing model photography and some design work until he was laid off in 1971. At that point, he had a wife and two young children to support. Someone suggested he take his black-and-white photos to sell at a local art festival.

Butcher earned more money that weekend than he ever did in a week as an architect. He never returned to architecture after that.

## Death and discovery

For the most part, Butcher made his living working in color photography until 1985. His large-scale color prints were sold in department stores as wall décor. Until that time, black-and-white photography was a hard sell.

The Butchers made the move to Florida in 1985 and settled in Fort Myers.

“I hadn’t seen anything other than the beach until I saw Tom Gaskins’ place (Cypress Knee Museum) in Fisheating Creek,” he said.

Gaskins lived in the swamp near Okeechobee.

“Niki wanted to stop and see his little tourist thing.”

It was the first time either one of them had experienced the swamp — and they were hooked.

“I just fell in love with it,” Butcher said.

Clyde and Niki found their current 13-acre property in Big Cypress Swamp back in the ’80s. They established a home there and eventually opened a gallery. The property also features two cottages that visitors may rent. They live in Venice, but also operate Butcher’s studio and gallery in Big Cypress.

That move to the swamp was the catalyst for his shooting only in black-and-white. His favorite photo, “Moonrise, Western Everglades” was taken in 1986, after the death of his 17-year-old son, Ted, who was killed by a drunk driver that year.



Clyde Butcher in his darkroom with his assistant, Neal Obendorf.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Clyde Butcher’s photo of Casey Key on display at Historic Spanish Point.

On his website, Butcher describes how he came to shoot it and the photos that followed.

He has written, “Only in black and white can I see design and textures. I don’t consider color photography art. Black and white is an interpretation. Color is a duplication.”

Butcher is famous for his use of a large format camera — a large 8-by-10-inch box. He takes his Everglades pictures while standing in the waters of the swamp. And he ain’t afraid of no gators!

“I’ve never heard of anybody getting hurt by gators in the wilderness,” he said.

“Realizing color photography was not my passion, and it was not expressing what I felt, I decided life was short, and if I wanted to do black-and-white, I should at least try.”

— Clyde Butcher

Of course, gators on golf courses and around people’s homes are another matter. They’re familiar with people — and often it’s because people feed them. He related a story of an airboat operator in the Ten Thousand Islands.

“One of these guys that take out airboat rides would pound on the side of the boat with his hand so the gators would come up to him. They’re attracted to sound. That is why you must

move quietly and slowly (when walking through the swamp waters). A gator took his hand and he got fined.

“Gators are not interested in a huge, big human. They like fish and other small animals. Oh, they love little puddles, too.”

You might think that this is why the Butchers have no pets, but Butcher is actually allergic to most furry beings. Plus, the couple would not have been able to travel as much as they have.

“Pets would have just tied us down,” he said.

The swamp inhabitants are his pets.

## Surviving a stroke

He loves sharing the swamp experience with visitors and, for many years, he led swamp walks through Big Cypress. Visitors still come from miles around to brave the swamp with his tour guides. The tours may be booked on Butcher’s website ([www.clydebutcher.com](http://www.clydebutcher.com)).

He has taken some famous folks on these walks, including President Jimmy Carter. Butcher shared part of a conversation he had with the former president.

“He said to me ‘Is it difficult to do what you have to go through to do this?’ and I said ‘Well, is it difficult to run for president?’”

Butcher took Carter on a swamp walk, accompanied by Secret Service agents who, unlike the president, were none too thrilled to be walking among alligators and snakes.

“They were nervous and figured it would be a 10-minute walk. I said to myself that’s not going to work. We got to the point where they wanted to turn back, and I said if we go straight here,



Clyde Butcher at Gator Hook.



NIKI BUTCHER / COURTESY PHOTO

**Clyde Butcher in Big Gully.**

it gets prettier and deeper. I'm sure they were afraid he was going to get eaten by an alligator.

"But the problem would have been if they would have shot a gator. The bullet could have bounced off the gator's skull and killed him (Carter)."

"Clyde Butcher represents what we hope all great artists in our country hold true in their work: the responsibility of communicating the goodness of our world through the arts," is how Carter has described Butcher's work.

Butcher has walked the swamp with Marjory Stoneman Douglas (who wrote "The Everglades: River of Grass"), many politicians, CBS News, NBC News, "Good Morning America" and other national news people.

"But you know, to me they're all the same. Everybody puts their pants on one leg at a time."

Six years ago, he suffered a stroke.

"I was in hospital five weeks. I couldn't walk. I couldn't do anything. I didn't think I'd ever do photographs again, but with my walker now, I've gone where no man has taken a walker before."

He was back to work about five months later, only this time he began using a medium-format, digital camera, which is much easier to carry. He has even climbed a ladder, held steady by Niki, to get over a fence to get that perfect shot. His doctor was not pleased.

Butcher has traveled all over the country taking photos and has published several books with photos taken in the National Parks, the Everglades and Cuba, among others.

He hopes he's remembered as an environmentalist and an educator. Butcher believes in solar power and uses it at both his properties in Venice and the Everglades.

"We have to stop burning carbon. I see Elon Musk as a No. 1 environmentalist in the world today," he said, describing Musk's production of electric vehicles and his use of solar panels and turbines. "Basically, his plan is to get us off of carbon."

Butcher praised Selby Gardens, which also administers Historic Spanish Point, for its carbon-neutral plan.

"I think that's important to see that other people are doing the right thing. President Biden's trying. He's the first one that's tried to do it. No other president has actually pushed electric cars. They've talked about it, but they haven't done anything about it until now."

Clyde Butcher's large images are currently on display at Historic Spanish Point in Osprey. The exhibition, "Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens," runs through Aug. 31. His work will also be on display in September at Las Cruces Museum of Art, Las Cruces, New Mexico. He welcomes visitors and fans of his work to his galleries in Venice and Big Cypress. 📍

# Peripheral Neuropathy Breakthrough!

**"My feet feel like they're on fire."  
"Each step feels like I'm walking through wet paint."  
"I live in constant fear that I'll fall."  
"I can't sleep, my hands and feet tingle all night."**

What do all these people have in common? They suffer from **peripheral neuropathy**. It's estimated that more than 20 million people in the United States have peripheral neuropathy. Unfortunately, this figure may be significantly higher as the disease is often misdiagnosed because of its wide array of symptoms.

Dr. Lauren Milligan of Sage Point Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine in Venice, FL shares this belief. "I've been treating neuropathy in all its various forms, for years and so often my patients come to me because of the symptoms, not because of a diagnosis. They saw one of my television appearances or read the testimonial of another patient and say to themselves, 'Hey, I feel the same thing'."

Frankie M. of Venice testified to this. "I remember my husband driving me to my consultation and I saw a woman running just outside our neighborhood. I was so envious - I just kept thinking 'I would give anything just to walk again'. My primary care doctor told me my troubles with pain and balance were just symptoms of old age and gave me a prescription. I was so depressed."

Fortunately, Frankie would eventually see Dr. Milligan on the local news talking about similar symptoms and how she offers a real solution at Sage Point Acupuncture. "I just knew I had to see her. She was my last hope."

**"Almost all of our patients come to us with a story similar to Frankie's. They've been everywhere else. They've been told there's no hope. They've been told 'it's just part of getting older'," shares Taylor, a Patient Care Technician at Sage Point Acupuncture. "It just breaks my heart, but I know how much we can help people like Frankie, so I'm always so happy when they walk through our door."**

Those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy often face a very grim reality: Western medicine declares that there is no solution while

most alternative therapies carry large price tags and offer little to no resolve. Which is why Dr. Milligan and the staff at Sage Point Acupuncture pride themselves on being 'the last resort with the best results'.

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves and this damage is commonly caused by lack of blood flow in the hands and feet. A lack of blood flow results in a lack of nutrients; the nerves then begin to degenerate and die which causes pain ranging from discomfort to debilitation. Because neuropathy is a degenerative condition, once those nerves begin to deteriorate, they continue to do so until they are completely expired, leaving those suffering with crippling balance issues. "In this case, the absence of pain is not necessarily a good thing," shares Dr. Milligan. "This usually indicates that your nerves are hanging on by a fragile thread."

So how exactly is Dr. Milligan able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease?

"Acupuncture has been used to increase blood flow for thousands of years which helps to get the necessary nutrients to the affected nerves. But the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy®. This is tech that was originally developed by NASA to expedite recovery and healing."

**"I just can't say enough about Sage Point," Frankie shared through tears of joy. "My husband and I moved here 3 years ago, he walks to the Jetty and along the beach almost every evening. I always stayed home because of the pain and discomfort. Yesterday, I walked with him! Next week we're starting dance lessons. I am truly living life these days."**

"According to Frankie's test results, she has seen a 74% improvement in pain and functionality, which is on par with a majority of our patients," shares Taylor.

"But more important than those test results is the joy she's expressed being here and hearing about all the amazing things she's able to do because she feels great!"

By seamlessly blending the ancient science of acupuncture with modern medical solutions, Dr. Milligan has achieved a 87% success rate in reversing the effects of neuropathy. She starts each patient with an initial consultation during which a sensory exam is performed. "This not only aids in making a proper diagnosis, but it helps to define just how much nerve damage has occurred" tells the doctor. "This is important because if a patient has suffered more than 95% damage, there is little that I can do to help them. I'm familiar with the medical miracle, but I know my limits as a practitioner and the limits of my medicine."

When it comes to treating peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its origin, early detection greatly improves your chances of a full recovery.

If you or someone you love are suffering with chronic pain that presents as burning, tingling or 'pins and needles', or you've recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, it is important to know that there are options. There is hope.

Call (941) 451-8154 to schedule an initial consultation, or visit [SagePointAcu.com](http://SagePointAcu.com) to read more incredible success stories.

