



THIS PHOTOGRAPH of Mt. Jefferson was taken by Donald Lowe from Bear voint. Lowe's photography work

will appear in the May publication of Alpine Country of the West. The Sandy Library will hold an autograph party for the Lowes in May.

## Lowes love high country

Friends of Don and Roberta Lowe don't even bother to ask what the couple is doing anymore.

It's too confusing and changing all the time, according to the husband-wife team of photographer and writer who live near Sandy.

According to Roberta, "there's a very definite division of power" in the work going into the couple's well-known hiking and trail guides. Don takes charge of the photography work, and Roberta sticks to writing.

The Lowes are the authors of such books as "100 Oregon Hiking Trails", "70 Northern Oregon Cascade Hiking Trails", "100 Northern California Hiking Trails" and a large book, "Mt. Hood".

They've also produced hiking guides for trails in Southern California, Northern Colorado and West Central Colorado.

Right now they're working on a book of 36 hiking trails in the Columbia River Gorge and other plans include dividing and updating "100 Oregon Hiking Trails" into guides for central, eastern, coastal and southern areas of the state.

This summer they will work on hiking guides for the Sierra-Nevada Range, Northwest California and Central Oregon.

In May, Graphic Arts Center in Portland will publish "Alpine Country of the West" featuring Don's photography. The 44-year-old photographer also does some freelance work for such publications as Time-Life Books and Oregon Rainbow Magazine.

Don's first love is landscape photography. He doesn't photograph people.

"I'd last four minutes as a child photographer," he quipped.

Publishers are quick to praise Don's technical ability.

"We process our own color," said Don, modestly explaining the quality of the work.

"The 'we' is used very loosely," chimed in Roberta. "I don't even vacuum the lab."

Meanwhile, Roberta does a little freelancing of her own, contributing to The Oregonian and writing a regular column entitled "High Country" for the monthly Oregon Times.

Those columns are often based on the couple's experiences as they travel in their blue Volkswagen bus which serves as home during much of the year. The Lowes have logged 124,000 miles in the vehicle.

Those experiences include stepping on a rattlesnake in Colorado (Roberta wasn't bitten); camping in Yosemite National Park in a spot where a woman was later killed by a grizzly bear; and jumping in a lake while wearing nice clothes to save their dog, Faust, from drowning (Faust learned to swim later).

"My best columns," she said, "are based on fear."

The most dangerous thing in the outdoors is stream crossing, according to Roberta. "But what really frightens me are the lightning storms in Colorado," Roberta said. And she's discovered a new rule governing lightning.

"It strikes where it strikes."

Don moved to Sandy from California when he was 14-years-old with his mother, a retired doctor. Amanda Lowe had moved to Oregon after giving up a private practice in Los Angeles which catered to such clients as actress Lana Turner. She was an artist as well, said Don, and once painted an ear of corn which looked so real that a horse ate it.

Don has been a bicycling enthusiast since his youth, chalking up 18,000 miles while commuting back and forth during his four years at Sandy High School.

"He would sit in school soaking wet, steaming all day," joked Roberta.

During the 1950s Donald sometimes would bicycle 200 miles a day to stay in shape. He was good enough that the Federal Reserve Bank considered sponsoring him for the Olympics at one point, but those plans never jelled because he left the bank.

Don later worked in the trust department of the Oregon Bank. Those were the days when he and a friend would run up five flights of stairs without taking a breath to keep in shape.

After attending the

University of Oregon and studying journalism, for one year, Don transferred to Lewis and Clark College to finish with a degree in political science.

He worked as coordinator of the program planning department at the University of Oregon Medical School before he went into photography and working on the couple's hiking guides full time.

Both said they haven't regretted the decision.

The two were married ten years ago, just three weeks after their first date.

"We were going to go on a hike for the honeymoon," Roberta recalled. They were both sick instead and the honeymoon was postponed.

Roberta, who will be 37 in June was born in Portland. After high school she attended Reed College in Portland for "two years, three weeks and a day."

Roberta was a physics major until quitting Reed one day in a fit of rage.

"They suggested that I either switch schools or switch majors," she said, adding that Reed was just hastening the inevitable.

She then transferred to Portland State University and majored in geography.

After college she spent some time as a professional dancer in Las Vegas-type nightclub revues. It was before the time of go-go dancing, said Roberta—and it was respectable.

She still keeps in shape with regular ballet lessons from Jacqueline Schumacher, director of Portland Ballet

School.

During the summer, the couple's lifestyle is simple. They're the kind of hikers who regularly bathe and wash clothes.

Some hikers don't take a bath for a month, Don said with a shudder.

While at home, the schedule tends to be less regular, but both try to spend at least two hours reading each day.

"The bathtub's a good place," said Don.

Cooking for Donald is easy and his tastes aren't gourmet, according to Roberta. He has a sweet tooth and has been known to put up to five packets of sugar in one cup of coffee.

The Lowes said that rewriting and updating their current hiking-books should take up most of their time in the future.

They've hiked the trails featured in their books, with Roberta taking meticulous notes during each trip. The Lowes have also made it a policy to never feature the same picture in more than one book.

Roberta and Donald have favorite memories of each area they visit.

The Northern Cascades have the spectacular scenery, they said. It's easy to get away from civilization and there's generally better weather in the Sierra-Nevada Range.

Colorado has the edge on wildlife and wildflowers, the couple noted.

But as far as year-round living goes, Sandy's definitely home.



Story/photo  
by Sue Lafky  
Sandy Post editor



DON AND Roberta Lowe hike every trail critiqued in their well known hiking guides. Don does the photography work; Roberta sticks to writing.

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FROM LOWER left: Faust, named after the literary character who sold his soul to the devil, doesn't live up to his name, said the Lowes. Don takes a drink from a mountain stream in the Columbia River Gorge and discusses new book with Roberta at the recent Sandy Library Tea.