

Focusing on versatile photographer Linda Solomon

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By Diane K. Bert

CORRESPONDENT

On a day in the life of Linda Solomon, you might find her gardening at her historic 1882 home in Bloomfield Township, or hanging paintings in her outdoor gallery, or helping homeless children in a major U.S. city know that someone cares about their dreams, or photographing Sidney Poitier's daughters, or making jewelry at her Tucson home, or photographing celebrities as they walk down the red carpet at the Oscar ceremonies.

All of these activities reflect the interests and talents of photojournalist Solomon.

This talented, gregarious person had her earliest experiences with photography when she was 5 years old and received a camera.

Solomon remembered, "The most important gift I received was on my 13th birthday when my father gave me an embossed leather photo album. This communicated to me that my photos were valuable and worthy of being placed in such a beautiful book."

As a teenager, she became the photographer of events and parties with her friends. The only disadvantage of this was that she has few photos of herself.

After graduating from Seaholm High School and the University of Michigan, her dreams of being a teacher were thwarted by the lack of jobs for teachers. She has used her love of teaching in ways which have benefited many children and women who are facing difficult times in their lives.

PICTURES OF HOPE

Solomon began the Pictures of Hope Program sponsored by GM and their dealers in many cities. She gave cameras and loving attention and instruction to homeless children and encouraged them to take pictures representing their dreams. It was therapeutic for the children to know that someone cared about them. "It made them feel

special at the lowest point in their life," said Solomon. "Their photos were used on Christmas cards to raise funds for the charities which were serving them."

One of Solomon's favorite stories is of a 12-year-old homeless boy in Memphis who aspired to go to college. The president of the local university was so moved that he arranged for a four-year scholarship for the boy.

In Miami, Trudy Novicki, director of a program for sexually abused children, said, "So many of these kids haven't had dreams, they've had nightmares. Linda Solomon's leadership and activities gave them back their dreams."

Steve Harris, retired head of Global Communications for GM, was a staunch supporter of the Pictures of Hope Program. "It had a strong impact. The kids loved it. It gave them an opportunity to express themselves and gain confidence. Linda is great, she has great compassion for other people."

Through her 28 years of photographing at the Oscar ceremonies and her best selling book, *People We Know and Horses They Love and The Key, Celebrated People Unlock the Secrets to Life*, Solomon has formed friendships with many famous people. While she was photographing Robert Redford at his ranch in Sundance, Utah, she mentioned how much she enjoys watching *The Way We Were*. He confessed that he had never seen it. When it was completed he was already deeply involved in his next movie.



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Morgan Freeman specifically asked her to do his photos for his recent magazine cover and feature article. Solomon is known for using only natural light in her portraits. She has been featured on Oprah, Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, and The Today Show. Local author Elmore Leonard said, "No one shoots me the way Linda does. I always feel her photo on the jacket of my book is the finishing touch."

Solomon has become very knowledgeable about American Indian artifacts. She collects handwoven textiles and displays them in her home, along with other artifacts and photos. Her creative flair is evident as she imbedded turquoise pieces in the grout of her stone countertops and the front of the kitchen sink. She chose tin ceiling tiles to cover the front of her refrigerator. Life size figures of Indians are featured in her decor. "I don't need the latest and greatest things, I love old things," she said. "I am addicted to garage sales."

The pine wood floors of their home which was once a barn and carriage house attracted Solomon and her supportive husband, Barry, as they purchased this unique abode. Colorful gardens and an outdoor art gallery surround the home. Solomon loves to go to sales and buy artwork to hang outside. "On a gray day, it is nice to look out and see artwork," she says.

Currently, Solomon is designing and making beautiful modernist jewelry. A special feature of her creations is that they are also meant to be displayed. She makes special decorative stands for each piece. She will soon have a trunk sale of her jewelry and vintage purses with jeweled straps. For information, contact drhschaver@gmail.com.

Generous with her time and talents, her photo essays helped save the Birmingham Eccentric. She serves on the boards of the Humane Society and Variety. "Photography is my love, my passion, and my profession, but it is fun to do other things on our artistic palette," she said.

Diane K. Bert is a free-lance writer and former educator. She lives in Bloomfield Township.



Photographer Linda Solomon has expanded her interests to creating jewelry.

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Linda Solomon and her dog enjoy a beautiful afternoon on the steps approaching her historic home in Bloomfield Township. It was built in 1882 as a carriage house and barn. Her whimsical garden was featured on the Franklin Garden Walk. (photos by Diane K. Bert)

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The advertisement features a smartphone displaying the USA TODAY AutoPilot app interface. The screen shows a 'USA TODAY Meeting' for Sep 21, 2009, with flight information for A6 (BNA to IAD) and weather for Washington (D.C.) as 73° and Partly Cloudy. There are also links to view a Flickr gallery and an article about Hilton Hotels.