



PF BENTLEY

## 2003 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Dirck Halstead

By David Hume Kennerly

What were you doing when you were 17 years old?

If it wasn't covering a revolution in Central America, or some other armed conflict, then you aren't "The Youngest Shooter to Cover a War." This is one of the many titles that Dirck Halstead has earned in his 50 years as a news photographer.

More impressive than covering a revolution in Guatemala fresh out of high school is the fact that Dirck persuaded LIFE Magazine to give him a thousand bucks to do it! On top of that, they ran one of his pictures double-truck, and featured him in a story titled, "Bless 'Em All, The Young, The Short, The Tall." A picture of Dirck ran next to the short one, Alfred Eisenstadt.

After his revolutionary experience, Dirck

landed a job at United Press and the Dallas Times Herald. When UP became United Press International, he was named UPI's first photo bureau chief in Saigon. One of his first major assignments in Vietnam was covering the U.S. Marines' amphibious landing near Da Nang in 1965. Dirck would also be one of the last photographers to see the Marines leave Vietnam in 1975.

In 1966, Dirck was appointed UPI's first roving staff photographer. He covered stories on a worldwide basis and was one of the very few photographers allowed to accompany President Nixon on his historic trip to the People's Republic of China in 1972. Several months later, he accepted a contract with TIME magazine and became its White House photographer. Dirck has 54 TIME Magazine covers to his credit, and he has photographed every U.S. president since John F. Kennedy.

Dirck received the Robert Capa Gold Medal for bravery for his coverage of the fall of Vietnam. Over the years, Dirck has won countless awards from the White House News Photographers' Association, World Press, National Press Photographers Association, Newspaper Guild, New York Press Photographers Association and two Esies.

However, Dirck is an old dog who has learned some new digital tricks. Rather than resting on his laurels, Dirck has been a pioneer in photojournalism, promoting and advocating the transition from traditional still photography to multimedia and "digital journalism." Dirck started the Platypus movement, allowing still photojournalists to cross the barrier between print and television.

Dirck is now a fellow at the University of Texas Center for American History and has donated his life's work to that institution's News Media History Archive. He is now dedicating himself to preserving historic images taken by other photographers.

Part of what makes Dirck such a formidable competitor is his unparalleled instinct for news. He seems to know what's going to happen before it does. When President Reagan met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986, others decided the second summit of the two leaders was a non-event. Dirck, however, convinced TIME that he needed a cumbersome picture scanner sent in, and a lab to process the film. When the high-level meeting ended in disarray on a Sunday night, Dirck picked a photo of the steely eyed Reagan looking at Gorbachev, and transmitted it on the only scanner in Iceland. TIME discarded their planned cover, almost unheard of on a Sunday night, and substituted the photo. Dirck's keen intuition once again produced a major journalistic coup.

I first met Dirck in 1968 when we both worked for UPI. Dirck was its premier shooter and I was assigned to help him with his coverage of Republican presidential nominee Richard Nixon in San Diego. What evolved was a lifelong friendship and collaboration. He unselfishly helped my career as well as many others. Dirck's most recent recognition as the White House News Photographers' Association Lifetime Achievement award winner only confirms what I have already known, Dirck is the best of the best; he is the epitome of the news photographer.

When I grow up I want to be just like him!