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# —THE CLEAR LAKE— Lifestyle

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PHOTO BY RUTH BURKE



# Photographer's Images Show Beauty and History of the Bay Area



by K.L. Reeves

For the record, Ruth Burke never intended to be the visual historian of Seabrook. Character, not history, is what she hoped to evoke with her images of the landmarks and seascape of her hometown.

And yet it is her photographs of Curley's Corner and the Seabrook-Kemah Bridge that have captured Seabrook and the essence of the small, evolving seaside cousin of Clear Lake City.

In her quest for local color over the past dozen years, it has been Burke's images that have painted the retrospective on local landmarks such as Curley's Corner, from "smallest beer joint in Texas" to a lone building stranded by the widening of Highway 146.

"I just thought of the pictures of Curley's as an image, not as history," said Burke. "I look for pictures of things that have character."

Burke has seen character in numerous local landmarks, such as the original Seabrook-Kemah drawbridge, which was replaced in 1986. Her images of the bridge—then and now—document the progress of the Bay Area.

"You look at the bridge, and there's really nothing beautiful in it, but it changes in the right light," Burke said. "I'm always looking at images, taking pictures in my mind."

The majority of Burke's images are seascapes taken on or near the shores of Seabrook. She takes many of her photographs, she said, "on a whim."

"I see the right light, the right subject, and I take the picture," Burke said. "A lot of it is knowing the picture when you see it."

Burke sees the shore as a scene that is constantly changing. The lighting, the water and the seasons change each frame of film. In the winter, as the fog rolls into the harbor, Burke will climb to the top of the bridge to capture the shrimp boats in the harbor.

Originally from Houston, Burke still feels the mystery and the beauty of a community which was almost wiped out by Hurricane Carla three decades ago.



Pictured above are two beautiful images by photographer Ruth Burke. Her work will be on display at the Bay Artists Festival on September 1. For more information call 474-4016, or visit her Seaside Gallery at 1105 Second Street in Old Town Seabrook (follow Nasa Road One past Hwy. 146; the gallery is located one block from Galveston Bay).

"I'm drawn to Seabrook as an artist because of its character," said Burke. "It wasn't polluted or stamped-out like some of your so-called planned communities."

Burke's career in photography began in local college photography classes in 1978. Between children and part-time jobs over the next decade, she continued to perfect her craft and build her audience, selling her images at sidewalk art shows, including the Bay Artists Festival.

"That's where I got my biggest education," Burke said. "You learned which images are the ones that the public likes to buy. It teaches you how to present your work out there in the real world, and how you create images that people want to buy."

When Burke's business outgrew the art shows, it expanded to her house, and, eventually, to a small frame house which has served as

her gallery for two years. Seaside Gallery, 1105 Second Street, is nestled near the water among 30 shops and restaurants of Old Town Seabrook. The gallery displays Burke's Gulf Coast photography, as well as nautical gifts, local memorabilia and jewelry.

Burke has participated for a number of years in the Bay Artists Festival, which is celebrating its 18th year. The show, held quarterly, will display a variety of work of approximately 100 local artists and artisans on September 1 of Labor Day weekend.

Coordinator Sharon Ferguson said the festival is the oldest and largest free outdoor show in Harris County. Paintings, photography and crafts will be displayed in the Columbia Savings lot and adjacent parking lot of the Nassau Bay Village Shopping Center.