

NORTH CAROLINIANS *of* NOTE

Hugh MacRae Morton

The visible legacy of a remarkable man

By Abby Moore

He took the famous picture of UNC football player Charlie Choo-Choo Justice ramming through the University of Tennessee defense. He shot the widely published portrait of former UNC President Frank Porter Graham throwing horseshoes. He caught the orange and gold scenes of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the fall and images of Mildred the Bear promoting Grandfather Mountain. He captured Michael Jordan airborne, Charles Kuralt chuckling and Doc Watson strumming.

Hugh MacRae Morton, known as the father of North Carolina photojournalism, began taking pictures at summer camp in 1934 when he was 13. "I had no inkling then of the interesting people and events I would eventually cover," Morton wrote in his book, *Hugh Morton's North Carolina*.

Morton attended UNC in 1940 and took pictures for several campus publications, including the student newspaper, *The Daily Tar Heel*, and the yearbook, *the Yackety Yack*. When World War II came, he left school and became a photographer in the Army. He took pictures of basic training at Camp Davis in N.C. and photographed Gen. Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines. After the war, he took tens of thousands of pictures of N.C. sports, tourism and politics until his death in 2006.

William Friday, President Emeritus of the UNC System, was a longtime friend of Morton's. Friday says that Morton's legacy goes far beyond his photographs: "Hugh Morton, in my view, was one of North Carolina's pioneering public spirits," Friday says. "He was a man who gave most of his free time to helping the state."

Morton's photographs heavily influenced state tourism, and he contributed in other, impressive ways. Morton owned Grandfather Mountain, the well-known tourist attraction in the western part of the state, and made it accessible to the public. He was also an avid conservationist. He led the fight against air pollution in N.C. and organized planting wildflowers along state highways. He worked to save the USS North Carolina battleship

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William Friday,
President Emeritus of the UNC System

from being scrapped, helped start the Azalea Festival in Wilmington and led the fight for the conservation of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

"He was the kind of man you could always count on," Friday says. "His greatest contribution was teaching people that public service is part of your citizenship."

Morton also served as president or chairman of countless N.C. clubs and councils. He chaired the Carolina Motors Club and the Blue Ridge Parkway Association. He was a member of the N.C. Board of Conservation and Development and was inducted into N.C. Sports Hall of Fame. He even considered running for governor in 1972.

In 1990, Morton became a member of the N.C. Public Relations Hall of Fame. He also received the state's highest award for public service, the North Carolina Award.

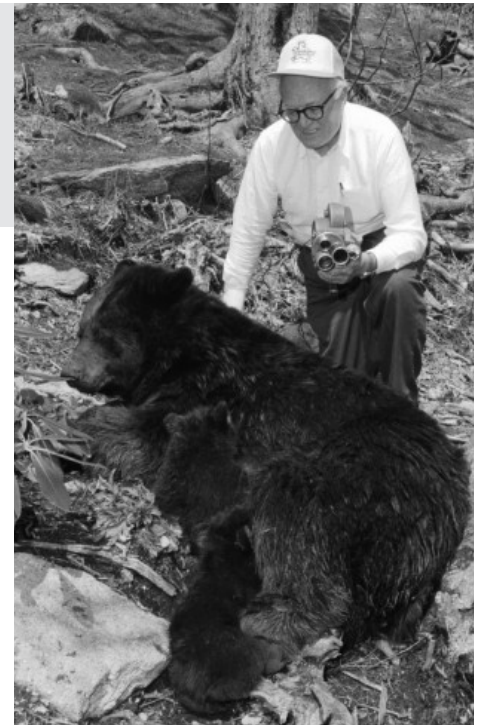
Friday says that he and Morton were together almost once a week for many years, working on various projects.

"He had a way of thinking up projects," Friday says. UNC "never had a more loyal alumnus, never had a man who worked as hard as Hugh did."

Morton's legacy is visible on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. He gave his entire photographic collection to the university's North Carolina Collection when he died.

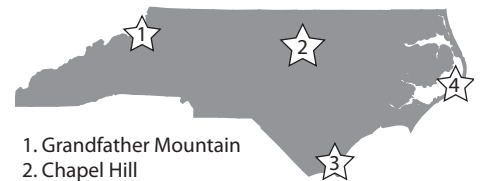
Speed Hallman, associate dean for development and alumni affairs in the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communication, calls this Morton's visible legacy: "He left images, iconic images over a period of more than 50 years,"

After Morton's death, his wife Julia established a professorship in the journalism school. Hallman says hundreds of donations and memorial gifts fund the position. Laura Ruel, who teaches multimedia journalism, holds the professorship.



HUGH MORTON PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILMS,
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Hugh Morton visits with Mildred the bear at Grandfather Mountain.



1. Grandfather Mountain
2. Chapel Hill
3. Wilmington
4. Hatteras Island

"When Julia set it up, she was adamant that it shouldn't be just reserved for someone in photography," Hallman says. "We need to be training journalists who are still asking the tough questions and serving the watchdog of democracy role."

Hallman picks up a camera out of a box next to his office door. It's a speed graphic, complete in its bulky, square shape.

"We want to put these on display soon," he says as he gingerly puts the camera back in the box. They are a small representation of the vast legacy left by, as Friday would call him, a remarkable man.

Profile written by a student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, UNC-CH. Provided by the N.C. Press Foundation, www.ncpress.com.