

ANITA CORBIN: PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER

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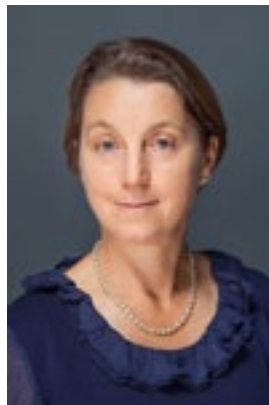
Baroness Betty Boothroyd,
First Woman Speaker of the
House of Commons
April 2010
©Anita Corbin

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THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' FORMULARY, INC.
P.O. Box 950, 7079 Hwy 83 North
Condon, Montana, USA 59826-0950
E-Mail: [Anthony Mournian, editor](mailto:Anthony.Mournian@photoformulary.com)
Website: Photoformulary.com
Tel: (800) 922-5255 or (406) 754-2891
Fax: (406) 754-2896

ANITA CORBIN: PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER



Anita Corbin, Portrait Photographer
©Charley Murrell

England's National Portrait Gallery contains paintings, sculptures and photographs of famous or notable British persons. It was established in the mid-19th century and has grown over the years to a vast collection housed primarily in London, but with three "outposts." First proposed in 1846, the National Portrait Gallery has grown from a small gallery noted for having every portrait in its collection on display, to a collection of hundreds of thousands of portraits in all mediums.

British persons whose portraits are displayed have been collected on the basis of their fame or importance. The portraits are not judged by the not the artist who created the work, but rather the person depicted in the work.

For an artist, to have a piece of work selected for display or purchase by the National Portrait Gallery is an honor. To have multiple works selected is implicit recognition of the artist's talent.

Anita Corbin of [Corbin O'Grady Photography](#) recently had eight of her photographs purchased by the National Portrait Gallery for the permanent collection. Seven of which are part of Corbin's ongoing multiyear project, *First Women*.

The eighth, "*Golfing Sisters in the Ladies' Locker Room, Royal Mid-Surrey, April 2010*," was selected as part of the gallery's collection of contemporary portraits of ordinary British citizens.

First Women is Corbin's growing body of work capturing portraits of 100 British women of note for being the first woman to be recognized for their accomplishment in their field.



Patricia Janet Scotland
Baroness Scotland of Asthal
First Woman to be Attorney General
July 2011 (NPG)
©Anita Corbin



Laura Hirst
 First Woman to be a full time member
 of The Brighthouse and Rastrick Colliery Band
 December 2011

More than halfway to the finish, Corbin aims to complete her project by 2018, which marks the Centennial of British women achieving the right to vote.

For example, **Baroness Patricia Scotland of Asthal** is the First Woman selected as Attorney General; while **Laura Hirst** is the First Woman to become a full-time member of the Brighthouse and Rastrick Colliery Band. In the past the



Sarah Outen
 First Woman to be row solo across the Indian Ocean
 November 2009
 ©Anita Corbin

Editor's Note:

This is an interactive newsletter. To view larger versions of photographs, *please click on the thumbnail* and a larger image will automatically load.

Attorney General was a man; for the past 130 years regular members of Colliery Bands were strictly males.

Corbin's *First Women* project grew out of her goal to create a body of work by which she could be recognized, and by which her children and grandchildren would remember her. An award winning photographer from the time she was fifteen years old, Corbin has been a working photographer for more than thirty five years. She and her husband, John O'Grady, have traveled around the world making portraits for some of the largest corporations.

The *First Women* project is different from Corbin's usual fare. It's her quest to recognize excellence among British women who have been the first to achieve in their field. **Sarah Outen**, the first British woman to row solo across the Indian Ocean, Outen will now stand beside **Baroness Betty Boothroyd**, First Woman ever in 700 years to be elected Speaker of the House of Commons, or next to a portrait of Sarah West, first woman ever to be appointed commander of a British warship.

As Corbin observes, her photographs of women purchased by the National Portrait Gallery have become their "go to" portraits for all time. When someone wants to see what the "first British woman to do. . .," they'll be looking at a portrait made by Anita Corbin.

Corbin recently visited San Diego, California where she exhibited her photograph, "Golfing Sisters." As one of 200 entries selected for "The Art of Photography" show, out of more than 13,000 submissions worldwide,



Golfing Sisters in the Ladies' Locker Room, Royal Mid-Surrey, April 2010
 (Art of Photography Show 2013)
 ©Anita Corbin

"Golfing Sisters" is a prime example of Corbin's talents.

The "Golfing Sisters" are two elegant older ladies preparing for a day on the course. They are not named, and they don't reveal their ages to anyone! Corbin encountered them at a funeral and asked if she might be permitted to photograph them. They agreed, and the appointment was made to meet and to photograph them on the golf course.

That didn't happen. The ladies had to get their clubs from their lockers in the clubhouse and make some last minute adjustments to



Baroness Betty Boothroyd
 February 2012
 ©Anita Corbin

their makeup. Corbin followed and realized they seemed much more relaxed outside the public gaze. She asked if she could photograph them as they got ready to play. They agreed, and at Corbin's suggestion chose their own positions.



Dr. Jean Venables
First Woman to be President
of the Institution of Civil Engineers
(NPG)
©Anita Corbin

Corbin included their reflections in the dressing room mirror. She could easily have changed her angle of view to avoid this, but decided the mirror was part and parcel of the portrait.

Making a portrait is all about communicating what you see in another person; their interests, their passions and their essence. She is looking for what a person has or how they present themselves beyond their “public person.”

Being sensitive to the moment is important to Corbin. She stresses listening closely to what your subject is saying, and how they are saying it. She keeps her eyes open and says there is a sweet sense of recognition that something will work in a frame, though she does not see that frame until she raises the view



Jade Jones First Woman to win a gold medal at the Inaugural Youth Olympics in Singapore, December 2011
©Anita Corbin

finder to her eye and composes the shot.

With minutes to establish an element of trust in her ability to capture their “essence,” Corbin says her powers of observation are in high gear whenever she is taking a portrait. Not unlike *Cartier-Bresson*, Corbin is waiting for that decisive moment when the person reveals herself in an instant of lowering her guard and allowing Corbin to see behind her “public face.”

It’s in that instant Corbin finds success. She knows how to establish a mutual trust with her subject by simply being herself, and how to find an equality between herself and her subject which will allow her to capture the person in a single image.

In Corbin’s view photography is intuitive. You cannot preplan beyond the barest of details because the reality of a situation will invariably be different than your pre-conception.

Given the chance, Corbin likes to take a look around first. She has to be ready for the unexpected, such as when a subject shows up dressed in something light when Corbin’s plan was to photograph her in a darker area.

Corbin calls it “getting into the zone,” and says the more photographs she takes the quicker she finds her creative sense. She can’t force a creative feeling, and says sometimes it’s necessary to just go away and come back later.

She says there’s no need for lengthy captions. Her photographs should explain themselves. “*Golfing Sisters*” is a good example. No caption is needed to tell the viewer these elegant ladies are about to play a game of golf. No words are necessary to describe them as

fashion conscious and stylish. It’s all clear in that one shot.

“*Golfing Sisters*,” by the way, was on display at the National Portrait Gallery as one of the finalists in the prestigious Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2010. It was selected as one of sixty portraits out



Edith Kent
First Woman to receive equal pay in 1943
November 2009
©Anita Corbin

of 6,000 entries, and was used as the portrait in the competition’s publicity mailings. It was displayed among the prize winners.

During the four months it was on display at the NPG, it was seen by more than 100,000 people. More than a year after the exhibition, Corbin received a call from a collector in Zurich, Switzerland asking to buy a limited edition print.

Corbin has always been surrounded by cameras and photographs. As a



Dame Helen Alexander First Woman to be President of the Confederation of British Industry (NPG)
©Anita Corbin

child she enjoyed looking at glass negatives and prints from the 19th century taken by her grandfather. A mining engineer, her grandfather traveled the world, always with a camera. He photographed the mines, because that was his profession, but he also photographed the people he lived with, and some of those talents rubbed off on his granddaughter.

Corbin's father, a horticulturist, a photographer in his own right, was skilled in taking photographs of plants and flowers. His professional knowledge of plants enabled him to photograph them in ways he knew would be pleasing to the viewer, and his "part time" profession helped to support the family.

As Corbin grew toward adulthood she took photographs of family and friends. She always had a camera with her. She and her teenage friends would make albums for each other of postage stamp size prints taken in photo booths.

After Corbin finished high school she took time off before going to university. She traveled alone, but always carried a camera to use as her way to break the ice and to make friends. For eight

months she traveled alone in India, again always taking pictures of places and people.

She quickly discovered if she wanted to photograph people she had to be alone. She used the camera as part of the communication, to make her subjects relax and to help her capture their essence.

Because her subjects are sometimes persons in high places or of high social status, or they are very busy or prominent, they often have a "front" she must get behind if she is to capture anything more than their public persona. How does she do it? It can be difficult not to be intimidated, but she finds her greatest success in being normal and ordinary and in treating her subject as an ordinary human being.

Others of Corbin's *First Women* include [Edith Kent](#), First Woman to receive equal pay for her work as a WWII Plymouth dockyard welder; [Jade Jones](#), First Woman to win Great Britain's first gold of the inaugural Youth Olympics in Singapore, and the First Woman to win an Olympic Gold Medal for England in *taekwondo* in the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

Corbin's *First Women* are of all ages and come from every corner of Great Britain. Edith Kent was 102 when Corbin photographed her; Jade Jones was 18 years old.

That's what makes the *First Women* project so intriguing and wide ranging, and it's what keeps Corbin at the top of her game as a portrait photographer.

Corbin's patron for *First Women* is Baroness Betty Boothroyd, now in her mid 80's. She is a powerful stateswoman and Corbin's mentor and supporter; she believed in the project from its very start.

Of Note: Four of Corbin's *First Women* portraits are on display at the National Portrait Gallery, London until the 5th of January 2014, in the show, [Achievements-New Photographs 2011-2013](#).

[The Art of Photography Show 2013](#)

[San Diego Art Institute](#)
October 12-17 November

www.1stwomenuk.co.uk

www.corbinogradystudio.co.uk

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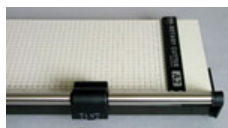
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Rendezvous West 2013

Last year about this time we reported the end of an era. In what Al Weber acknowledged would be the last of his annual Rendezvous of photographers, he invited others to take over the tradition, and the considerable task of organizing and straw bossing a remarkable gathering of photographers from across the nation, and, frequently, from around the world.

Three stalwart souls, Bruce Carter, and Barbara and Fernando Batista, rose to the occasion. They renamed it, "*The Photographers' Rendezvous*," and in the best tradition of show business, it was, "*On with the show!*"

On the third weekend in October, fifty photographers gathered at San Lorenzo Regional Park in King City, California.

They came to renew friendships, show their newest, as well as some of their oldest work and to enjoy the camaraderie of like minded souls.

Rendezvous West was not a workshop. It was more like a family reunion of friends and relatives you hadn't seen for many months, and with whom you could swap stories, exercise bragging rights, and appreciate the work of fine photographers. With it there were a couple of speakers, a great barbecue dinner, and the delightful surroundings of [San Lorenzo Regional Park](#).

The next Photographers' Rendezvous is already in the planning stage. In the past the Rendezvous was limited to students

of Al Weber, past and present. That's changed. If you are a photographer, and you'd like to become a part of one of the most unusual annual gatherings of photographers in the United States, write to us. We'll send you contact information and an invitation come Springtime 2014.

In the meantime, for all of you who have enjoyed the knowledge and expertise of Al Weber as a teacher, [take a look at this little movie](#) of a presentation of some of Al's portrait photography, featuring his three sons, Chris, Ben and Robert, as children.

We're inviting you now to the Photographers' Rendezvous 2014, and hope you'll be able to come!

Formulary.editor@gmail.com
619-888-0886 (cell)



Students Make Movie Trailer on Gun Violence

Gun violence has become an unfortunate and increasing part of our lives. In Chula Vista, a smallish city a few miles north of the US-Mexican border, a class of high school students hopes to make a documentary, and in the process effect positive change about the tragic issue.

High Tech High Chula Vista (HTHCV) is a charter school with a mission statement to "develop and support innovative public schools where all students develop the academic, workplace, and citizenship skills for post-secondary success." Now forty-five HTHCV Juniors have made a 4 minute trailer laying out their

plans for a full length documentary about gun violence.

About as far away as possible within the continental United States from the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, even Chula Vista was sadly, directly impacted by the deaths of twenty little children and six teachers and staff last December.

Classroom discussions about the tragedy became a driving force behind the upcoming documentary. Adding to this, HTHCV lost one of its students, Sean Fuchs, to gun violence in 2011 when Sean and his brother, Kyle, were shot and killed by their father.

We're all familiar with the tragedies of Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999; the UT Tower Shootings at the University of Texas in 1966; the twelve deaths and seventy injured in Aurora, Colorado on opening night of "Batman, the Dark Knight Rises," and the thirty-two students and faculty who died in 2007 at Virginia Tech. This list only touches the surface.

[Watch High Tech High Chula Vista's trailer.](#) See what kids think about the problem. Then decide if you want to help them with their documentary.