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What does a photographer do when he is stricken with a serious illness? He picks up his camera and gets to work, of course

By GARY SOULSMAN

The News Journal

Wilmington native **John Kaplan** is an accomplished photographer, so it's no surprise that his **film "Not As I Pictured"** is loaded with 35 mm stills.

"Not As I Pictured" is Kaplan's documentary of his life after 2008, when he was diagnosed with two non-Hodgkin's lymphomas -- one in his bone marrow, another in his abdomen.

His 54-minute **film** is a diary of his treatments and family life, a visual record. He says the photos -- and the making of the **film** -- were his way of coping.

"For me, initially, this was a way to handle my fear," he says. "Some people write a journal. I began taking pictures."

Now the **film**, which has been shown on public TV stations around the country, has led to an exhibit of Kaplan's photos. It debuts Friday at Wilmington's Gallery 919 Market (at 919 N. Market St.) from 4:30 to 8 p.m.

The opening is part of the monthly art loop. The exhibit is a collaboration between Jerry Bilton, who curates the gallery; Kaplan; Canon USA; and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Delaware.

To benefit the society, Kaplan, who'll be on hand at Gallery 919, is donating a landscape painting to be auctioned at the opening.

Kaplan, who was 48 when he was diagnosed with cancer, grew up in Brandywine Hundred and graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in 1977. He went on to become a photographer, and in 1989 was named newspaper photographer of the year by Nikon and the University of Missouri.

Three years later he won the Pulitzer Prize for a series documenting the lives of 21-year-olds. He was also a Fulbright Scholar and his work is exhibited at museums and galleries worldwide. Today he is a professor of journalism and design at the University of Florida.

For the documentary, Kaplan photographed his life over eight months -- enjoying a birthday with his children, teaching at the university, receiving chemo and losing patches of hair.

"The dreaded news of cancer is certainly no fun, but you can make it through to the other side, back to health and the joy of every day," Kaplan told The News Journal last year.

Highlights: John Kaplan, film, Not As I Pictured