

# Life and Times of Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks 1912-2006

**1910**

**1912**  
November 30,  
Parks, youngest of  
15 children born to  
Sarah and Andrew  
Jackson Parks, in  
Fort Scott, KS

Elementary  
schooling Fort Scott

**1919**  
Self taught piano

**1920**

**1928**  
Upon death of  
Sarah Parks,  
moves to St. Paul,  
Minnesota, to live  
with sister

Attended  
Mechanics Arts  
High School, St.  
Paul

Forced from home,  
works menial jobs,  
continues  
education

**1929**  
Father and three  
older sisters move  
to St. Paul.  
Meets future wife,  
Sally Alvis  
Travels to Chicago,  
IL

**1930**  
Back in St. Paul  
with sister, Cora.  
First composition,  
"No Love".  
Travels with band  
to NY, NY

**1930**

**1933**  
Joined the Civilian  
Conservation Corps

Married Sally Alvis  
(divorced 1961)

**1934**  
Returned to MN,  
Dining car waiter  
and porter on the  
North Coast Limited  
Railway's Chicago  
to Seattle run

Son, Gordon Parks,  
Jr. born

**1937**  
First camera  
purchased,  
Seattle, WA

Free lance fashion  
photographer St.  
Paul, MN, &  
Chicago, IL

**1940**

**1940**  
Daughter Toni born

**1941**  
Julius Rosenwald  
Fellowship for  
Photography

**1942**  
Farm Security  
Administration  
photographer,  
Washington, D.C.

**1943**  
Correspondent for  
the Office of War  
Information

**1944-49**  
Vogue freelance  
fashion photos  
Chicago, IL

**1945**  
Hired by Standard  
Oil of New Jersey

**1947**  
Published first  
book, Flash  
Photography

**1948-1972**  
First black  
Photojournalist Life  
magazine, on staff  
until 1968,  
contributor until  
1972

**1950**

**1951**  
Completes three  
years in Paris  
bureau of Life  
magazine

**1954**  
Began serving as a  
color and black and  
white consultant on  
motion picture  
productions in the  
USA and Europe

**1953**  
Composed his first  
"Piano Concerto"

**1960**

**1960**  
Photographer of the  
Year Award The  
American Society  
of Magazine Photos

**1962**  
Documentary  
Flavio filmed

Married Elizabeth  
Campbell  
Rollins(divorced  
1973)

**1963**  
Learning Tree  
published

**1966**  
Notable Book  
Award, ALA for  
A Choice of  
Weapons

**1967**  
Composed "Tree  
Symphony"

**1968**  
Learning Tree  
movie written and  
directed by Parks

Emmy Award for  
documentary, Diary  
of a Harlem Family

**1970**

**1970-73**  
Essence magazine  
editorial director

**1971**  
Film Shaft

Books: Whispers of  
Intimate Things,  
Born Black

**1972**  
Film Shaft's Big  
Score

Spingarn Award

**1973**  
Married Genevieve  
Young (divorced  
1979)

**1974**  
Film The Super  
Cops

**1975**  
Moments Without  
Proper Names

**1976**  
Film Leadbelly

**1978**  
Photo essay and  
documentary  
Flavio, Christopher  
Award

**1979**  
To Smile in Autumn  
Gordon Parks Jr.,  
dies in plane crash  
in Kenya

**1980**

**1981**  
*Shannon*

**1984**  
Commencement  
speaker at the  
Kansa City Art  
Institute; Inducted  
into NAACP Hall of  
Fame; Films *Half  
Slave, Half Free;*  
*Solomon Northup's  
Odyssey*

**1986**  
*Gordon Parks'*  
*Visions: Kansan of  
the Year*

**1987**  
First major  
retrospective  
exhibition of his  
photographs New  
York Public Library  
and the Ulrich  
Museum of Art at  
Wichita State  
University.

**1988**  
National Medal of  
the Arts; PBS  
*Moments without  
Proper Names;*  
Kansas Arts  
Commission's  
Distinguished Arts  
Award

**1989**  
Library of Congress  
National Film  
Registry Classics  
*The Learning Tree*

**1990**

**1990**  
Voices in the  
Mirror: An Auto-  
biography

**1994**  
Arias In Silence

**1996**  
Glimpses Toward  
Infinity

**1997**  
Half-Past Autumn

Honorary Doctor of  
Letters,  
University of the  
District of  
Columbia

**1998-2001**  
Half Past  
Autumn: A  
Retrospective.  
Exhibition Corcoran  
Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.,  
Sept. 10, 1997-Jan.  
11, 1998, and nine  
other museums,  
Feb. 14, 1998-Dec.  
2001.

**2000**

**2002**  
Oklahoma City,  
Oklahoma  
Inducted into the  
International  
Photography Hall  
of Fame

Jackie Robinson  
Foundation Lifetime  
Achievement  
Award

**2003**  
Sun Stalker

**2004**  
Gordon Parks  
Center founded at  
Ft. Scott, KS

**2005**  
A Hungry Heart: A  
Memoir

**2005**  
William Allen White  
Foundation  
National Citation for  
journalistic merit,  
Univ. of Kansas,  
Lawrence, KS

**2006**  
Death New York  
City, March 7  
Burial Ft. Scott, KS,  
March 16

State Library of Kansas ..... Kansas Center for the Book  
2007, KANSAS READS... The Learning Tree  
[www.kcfb.info/learningtree.htm](http://www.kcfb.info/learningtree.htm)

