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National Medal of Arts program biography

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National Medal of Arts

GORDON PARKS

Gordon Parks was born in Fort Scott, Kansas, and in his youth, supported himself by working as a piano player and professional basketball player. A newsreel of the bombing of the USS Panay led him to buy his first camera, and within a few months, he had his first exhibit. His career includes 19 years on assignments for *Life* magazine. Mr. Parks is an accomplished photographer, composer, writer, and director of films, including *The Learning Tree*, written from his best-selling autobiographical novel.