GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY

FEATURES

Covering Denver

By Morey Engle

My father-in-law, Harry Mellon Rhoads, was so infatuated with his job as a newspaper photographer that he kept it for 69 years. He was 94 when he died in 1975, leaving behind thousands of plates and films he took for the Rocky Mountain News and the old Denver Republican.

He was, as news columnist Pasquale Marranzino wrote, "probably the country's greatest visual reporter, historian and documentarian - certainly Denver's most consistent, most beloved and most effective timekeeper." The decades frozen in Rhoads' photographs illuminate the gripping story of Denver and the joys and sorrows of the people who lived and died there. Gene Amole, of the Rocky Mountain News, said, "He saw them on the ground-glass back of his ponderous 8x10-inch view camera, and later through the view finder of his 5x7-inch Press Graflex. In more recent years, Harry used the classic Speed Graphic, and finally he reluctantly went to a 35mm Nikon."

Harry Mellon Rhoads

Harry, as a youth, took pictures of family, pets and general scenes around town. Later he worked in the circulation department of the Denver Republican. One day, when all the photographers were out of the office, there was a fire call, and the publisher, understanding Harry had taken pictures, sent him to photograph the fire. Harry came back with some really good photos, and the publisher added photographer to his duties, all for seven dollars a week.

Harry covered court cases on occasion, and in order to not have the Graphic visible, he covered most of it with his big bowler hat. When he made the exposure, he lifted the hat, made the shot, and covered the camera again. Harry always made two exposures, one for protection, to be sure he got the picture. Occasionally he used the flashgun as protection when anyone tried to take his film or camera from him. The flashgun was a good blackjack.

I worked with Harry and his daughter Harriet, whom I later married, at the News (which purchased the Republican), after I returned from service. Harriet used a Speed Graphic and referred to it as a "dammed good camera." The three of us, Harry, Harriet and I, were the total photo staff for the paper for several years. Working with Harry was always fun and interesting, but he really did not become a "legend" until years later. However, I learned a lot of Harry's tricks on taking hard-to-get pictures of difficult subjects and people. For the several years we worked together, it was kind of a family affair.

My photographic career started about the age of twelve or thirteen, when I bought a folding Univex camera with my first paycheck from cleaning a clothing store on Saturdays.

I played around with it and learned to develop and print pictures in a darkroom setup in my parents' basement. As time went on, I graduated to an Argus 35mm camera and to making pictures of a Boy Scout Circus. At this Scout event, I met a profes-

sional photographer with a Speed Graphic. He agreed to teach me how to use one if I would build him a police adapter for his car radio, as I had learned to build radios in the Boy Scouts and in a radio class at school.

From that day on, I always wanted a Graphic, which at that time ran about $125. During high school summer vacation, I was able to get a job at Colorado General Hospital washing dishes. I received $65 a month, including meals and laundry. As soon as I got enough money to buy my Speed Graphic, I quit.

When I got my drivers license, my dad let me use his car on a limited basis, so I installed a police radio in his car and used to chase police calls and take pictures of accidents and other events that took place, freelancing them to the two local papers. Many times I got there before the newspaper photographers, and they began to hate me. At this point, the camera was making me, a high school kid, a good living.

Graduating in 1941, the war started, and I enlisted in the Army Air Corps, wanting to be a photographer; however, the Air Corps thought differently and sent me to pilot training, which proved to be a plus when I got out. During flight training, I was short of money, so I had my dad ship my Graphic, and I supplemented my Army pay taking pictures of the student pilots with their airplanes.

When the war was over, I started freelancing with my trusty Graphic. Soon after selling photos to both papers, the Rocky Mountain News asked me if I would like to work there; however, the salary would be less than I was making freelancing. A bit later, they called again and upped the salary offer, and I took the job. In those days, to quote the city editor, "Either get the picture or you're fired." I never fooled around with a rangefinder on my Speed Graphic, but cut notches in the camera so I could estimate distances, even in the dark, and I could feel with my thumb where to adjust the range.

One hairy experience was covering a prison break. The warden took pity on me and my reporter, as the two of us were working against eight reporters and photographers for the rival paper, so he suggested we go with a group of prison guards who knew where the escaped convicts were holed up. He said to go with caution and take his 45 revolver just in case we ran into trouble. We separated from the guards and were to meet them at a deserted trailer where the convicts were. We arrived at the trailer just as the guards approached from the opposite side. All of a sudden, gunfire began, and we dived under our car.

On one assignment, I had to cover an elderly female who was living beside an area where the state was starting to build a highway that would take in the spot where her shack was located, and she was shooting a 30.06 rifle at the bulldozer blades the workmen were using. The reporter and I made contact with her, but she held us at bay because she didn't want her picture taken. Finally, the reporter got her to talk to us. I took the flashgun off the camera and threaded the cord through my raincoat pocket to the other side of my coat. It was still hooked up to the camera. So I let the Graphic hang down at my side and was able to still trip the shutter without pointing the camera at her. After each shot, I turned away, changed film holders and turned back to make a few more exposures. The 4x5 had a wide enough field to cover the area where she was standing, so I got some great shots without her knowing it, and we got out of there with no trouble.

Morey Engle

We developed all of our negatives and printed them wet. We mixed up DK-60, a developer for the negatives, and mixed up our own print developer from a formula, which happened to be written on the wall of the darkroom. What it was, I don't remember (old age). The film I used early on was Super Pan Press, which had a speed of about 50. Later, we went to Tri-X, as it was faster. An average exposure was about 125th second at f11.
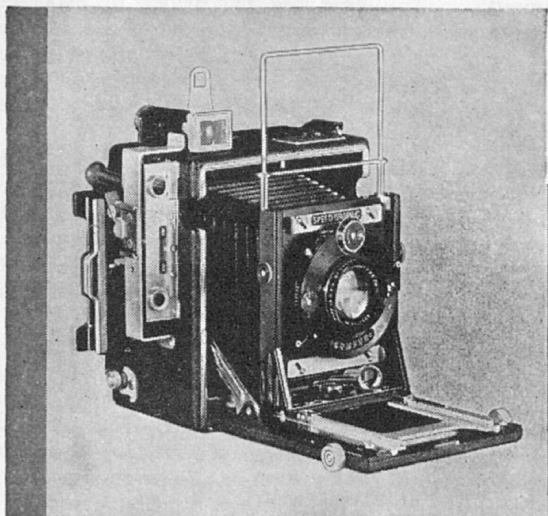
I guess the personality I was most impressed with was President Harry Truman. He was a delight to photograph. On one occasion, we were late to the photo assignment to shoot him. When we arrived, I stepped out of the group to make a shot, and the Secret Service grabbed me. Truman turned to them and said, "Put him down." He turned to me and asked "What would you like, son?." (I was young at the time.).
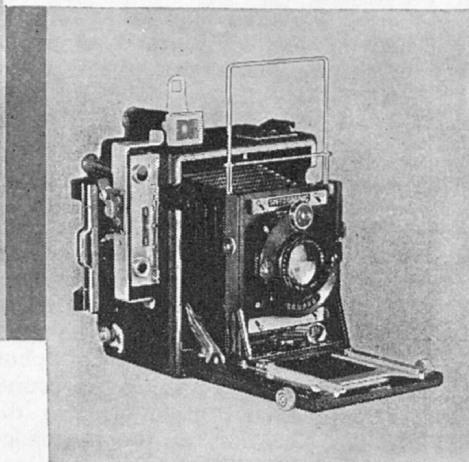
[Ed. This article, by Mr. Engle, is derived from his recollections and two books, Denver's Man with a Camera, The Photographs of Harry Rhoads, and Denver Comes of Age, edited and authored by Mr. Engle.]
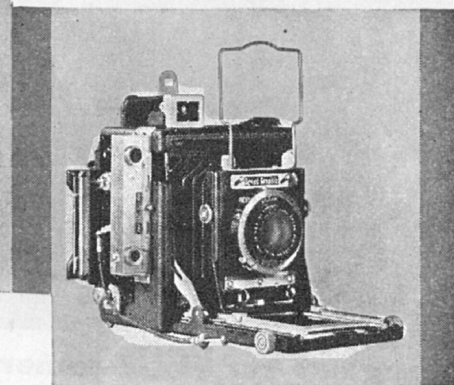
Jim Chasse sent the <u>Quarterly</u> this ad from the March 1940 issue of <u>Popular Photography</u>. He noticed an error and wonders who else will see it. The first person contacting Ken at the <u>Quarterly</u> with the correct answer will receive an Instoscope light meter, which was sold by Graflex in 1933 and 1934. A handicap of three days will be applied to emails and phone calls.

Detail from World War II Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Graphic Viewfinders

By Ken Metcalf

From the start, if you purchased a hand-held, non-reflex Graflex camera (and most other similar cameras), there was some form of finder that provided a view of the subject without the need for seeing the image at the film plane. It was either a box-shaped finder attached to the camera (usually masked to show vertical and horizontal views), or two finders for horizontal and vertical viewing. With reversing and revolving backed models, the box-shaped finder moved 90 degrees to give horizontal and vertical views. This latter finder was used on the Revolving Back Cycle Graphic until the camera was discontinued in 1923.
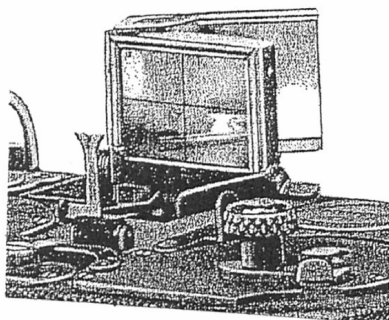

Figure 1. Sight Finder viewed from the front of the camera.

The first important change was on the No. 0 Graphic which was introduced in 1909. Figure 1. Based, I believe, on a modified version of Folmer's patent number 989,240 (applied for in 1908 and granted in 1911), this finder (called a Sight Finder) was a departure from earlier devices in that it collapsed, and "Horizontal and vertical centering lines, engraved on the lens, make it possible to exactly center the object…" It was different from later finders in two interesting ways. First, the finder was mounted with the lens on the backside and the y-shaped "vertical sight bar" on the front of the bed plate. Second, "A small metal-bound reflecting mirror … is supplied with each camera, and by adjusting the mirror in position on the finder, the outfit is converted into a **deceptive angle camera** [The bold font is mine.], permitting photographs to be taken at right angles to the line of vision." This finder was used until the camera was discontinued in 1924. It was also used in this form on the F&S Aero Camera Model A II.
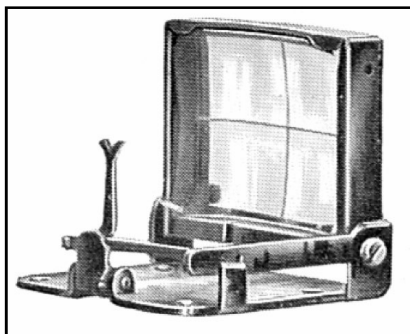

Figure 2.
Direct View Finder.

The first Speed Graphic was introduced in 1912, and it had a similar finder (called a Direct View Finder) but with the mirror removed and the unit turned around. Figure 2. I placed the two finders side-by-side and saw no real advantage to either arrangement. In 1915 the Speed Graphic finder (like the No. 0) was renamed a Sight Finder - It's the Graflex Way! It was now sold as an accessory and priced from $2.75 to $3.25. It was used until 1939 on the Speed Graphic.

The 1939 Sight Finder was put to an interesting (I am being kind.) use with the National Graflex, which was essentially a waist-level 2¼-inch square roll film camera. The finder was fitted with a felt bottom and tripod screw, and it was attached to the tripod socket on the bottom of the camera. According to Graflex, this allowed a waist-level camera to be used as an eye-level camera!
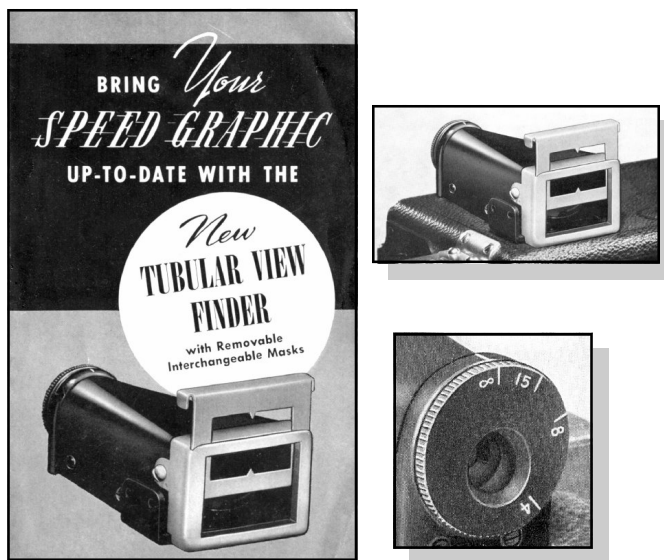

Figure 3. Tubular View Finder.

It appears from sample cameras that in 1939 Graflex again made a major change in its viewfinder by introducing the Tubular View Finder. Figure 3. Features included 1. Parallax adjustment using a ring that was turned to one of four footage settings. 2. Lens matching masks (shown partially inserted in Figure 3). Interestingly, the first tubular finder for the 2¼ x 3¼ had a fixed mask and no parallax correction. 3. The design protected the inner surface of the elements from dirt, dust and moisture. It was first fitted to the Miniature and pre-Anniversary Speed Graphics in early 1939 and was also available as an accessory for any camera or application for $6.50. There is good evidence that, although not standard equipment, it could be ordered for the 5x7 Speed

Graphic from 1939 until the camera was "unavailable from stock" in 1946. Comparisons suggest that all of the viewfinders used the same size tube and lens, while the mask was used to adjust the field-of-view to the format and lens. See accompanying chart. It was used exclusively on the Anniversary Speed Graphic of 1940 until its replacement in 1947, when an evolutionary finder was introduced with the Pacemaker Speed Graphic. When introduced on the pre-Anniversary in 1939 and available for the 5x7 format, the metal parts were painted gray, then satin-chrome on the Miniature and Anniversary (with the 4x5 WWII military version having a black finish). Some viewfinders for the Miniature and 4x5 Anniversary Speed Graphics have red dots engraved on the lens. Possibly they were placed there to indicate parallax correction for cameras sold to the military. Further study is needed in this area.

In 1947 Graflex introduced their Pacemaker Crown and Speed Graphics, along with a new removable Optical Viewfinder with a magnesium housing. Figure 4. The finder was supplied in a short version (2¼ inches, Cat. No. 9131) and a long version (3¼ inches, Cat. No. 9132), depending on the thickness of the camera body. It could also be purchased as an accessory, along with a mounting clip. Other than the changes noted, it was essentially the same as the previous viewfinder. When the 2¼ x 3¼ Century Graphic was introduced in 1949, it was normally fitted with the short Optical Viewfinder (It was available as a promotion for $99.50 without the viewfinder.). Based on field use on the Century and the 2¼ x 3¼ Crown Graphic, some photographers switched to the long finder, so they could get closer to the rear finder lens when a holder or roll film back was being used.
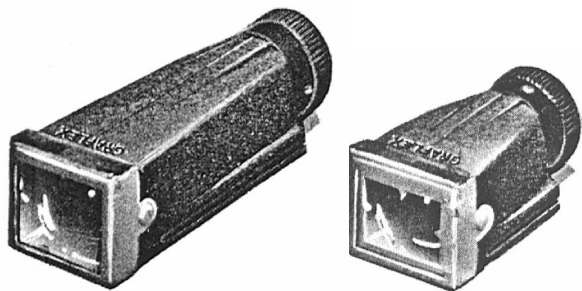

Figure 4. Long and short Optical Viewfinders.

In 1952 a Wide Angle Viewfinder Adapter (Cat. No. 9106) was introduced for the Pacemaker cameras. Viewed on the camera, this viewfinder was the same as the Optical Viewfinder, but internally, a second lens was added. The only quick way to tell the difference is to look at the marking on the bottom, as is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Wide Angle Viewfinder Adapter.

In 1955 Graflex introduced their own rangefinder (on the 4x5 model only), called the Graphic Rangefinder, in which the viewfinder was an integral part of the nylon rangefinder housing. To quote Graflex: "An optical viewfinder with parallax compensation is located in the right side of the rangefinder housing, and coupled to the rangefinder mechanism, in such a way that as focusing is carried out a parallax correction is automatically made." Also, a Wide Angle Viewfinder Adapter was available for the "Graphic and optical Viewfinder" (Cat. No. 3060). Figure 6.
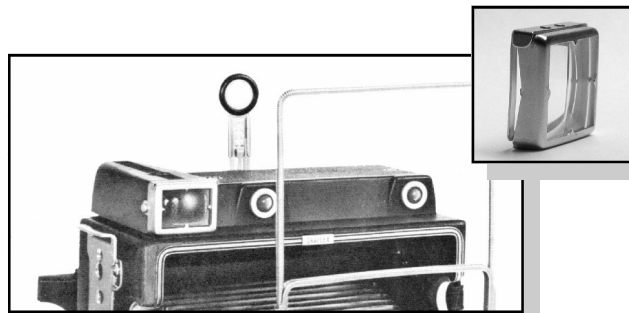

Figure 6. Viewfinder as part of Graphic Rangefinder and Wide Angle Adapter.

The last viewfinder produced by Graflex was the 1958 Graphic Optical Viewfinder (Cat. No. 9136), which was basically the same finder as the 1947 Optical Viewfinder, except that it was painted gray and had a two-position mounting plate. It was produced primarily for the Super and Super Speed Graphics. These cameras, committee-designed by Graflex and Peter Muller-Munk Associates (A separate article is being prepared on this topic.), were advertised and sold without being pictured or fitted with a viewfinder as standard equipment. Figure 7.

Probably in recognition of the field use of the long finder on Graphic cameras, the two-position plate allowed the finder to extend over the back of the camera for easier viewing. In practice when the camera back was rotated to the horizontal position and a holder inserted, the finder had to be moved to the forward position. As the finder was

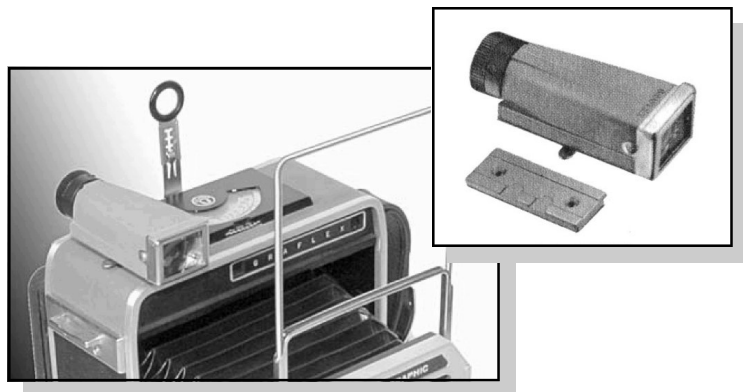basically for horizontal use, many photographers simply set it in the forward position and left it there.

Figure 7. Graphic Optical Viewfinder.

As there are assumptions made based on available examples, readers are encouraged to send in any comments based on their cameras and experiences. Assistance in this article was provided by Les Newcomer. The other viewfinder, the wire frame finder, will be covered in a future article.

Cat. No. 9105 Mask Selection Chart for various film sizes (not camera sizes)					
Mask **Catalog Number**	2¼ x 2¼ Picture Size	2¼ x 2¾ Picture Size	2¼ x 3¼ Picture Size	3¼ x 4¼ Picture Size	4 x 5 Picture Size
	Focal Length of Lenses in Millimeters				
9105-4	—	70- 84	78- 82	114-121	127-149
9105-3	—	86- 90	83- 98	122-133	150-162
9105-2	—	92-105	100-114	135-152	164-168
9105-9	—	110-125	116-127	154-178	170-216
9105-10	—	127-138	129-152	179-203	217-241
9105-11	—	140-162	154-191	205-216	243-267
9105-8	—	164-191	192-197	217-305	268-343
9105-7	—	192-227	198-241	307-352	344-381
9105-6	—	229-267	243-302	354-406	383-429
9105-12	100-114	—	—	—	—
9105-13	243-302	—	—	—	—
9105-14	116-127	—	—	—	—
9105-15	129-152	—	—	—	—
9105-17	154-191	—	—	—	—
9105-20	78- 90	—	—	—	—
3060 W.A. Adapter	—	47- 69	47- 75	—	82- 98

MASKS FOR WIDE ANGLE VIEWFINDERS
Negative Size

W. A. Lens	2¼ x 3¼	3¼ x 4¼	4 x 5
65mm	4	*	**
90mm	**	4	none required
88mm	**	4	none required
80mm	3	4	**
100mm	**	3	4

*There is no mask recommended for the 65mm lens when used with the Crown Graphic "34" Camera, since this lens includes considerably more angle of view than can be seen through the viewfinder with no mask at all.

**Lens indicated not recommended for use with this camera.

Meet the New Contributing Editor …..

Mike and I would like to welcome Les Newcomer as our new Contributing Editor. He has already prepared two fine articles for the GHQ and has provided valuable assistance in editing articles for us.

History and "old things" have been a part of Les Newcomer's life since he can remember. "Growing up, our vacation car was my dad's 1912 Buick roadster. I learned to polish brass by age six. My family traveled across the country three times and went on numerous smaller tours. The camera of choice? An Argus C3. Packing for three people for six weeks in one trunk doesn't leave room for a Mini-Speed."

During high school Les moved on to bigger projects….houses. "There was a group of people in town trying to save what few 19th century farm houses still existed. They originally wanted me to draw up the existing plans, but I soon found myself on a ladder, glazing a 2nd story window of a general store during a snowstorm. From then on, I was hooked. I eventually became a two-term President and lifetime member of the Livonia Historical Society for two years."

These were also known as his "Mustang years." "Dad allowed me to get a '66 Mustang convertible, because he knew it would keep me broke and at home. Restoring the car led me to Mustang Monthly Magazine. It was a great 'how to' magazine but lacked any kind of articles on how the Mustang came to be. I filled the void with articles on how to find the history of your car and a ground-breaking article about the prototype show car: The Mustang I."

"I was working at The Henry Ford Museum as a Conservation Technician and could touch what others couldn't---including the Mustang I. It was a lot of fun to work there, if not a lot of pay. This was where photography started to look good as a profession, as I illustrated all of my articles."

"But college loomed…okay, maybe not loomed. I was on the decelerated plan… I managed to cram a four-year degree into just under eight years. I maintained an undecided major for three years at my local two-year college. But photography finally called me to the Rochester Institute of Technology. It was there that I fell in love with large format photography and wanted a point and shoot 4x5 camera. Somebody at the local camera store gave me the phone number of Roger Adams. With his guidance, I bought a Crown Special, which I still use."

So when did Les' association with Graflex.org show up? "In late 1997. I lurked for a long time and finally started answering the questions nobody else did. Things just got out of hand. I was at a swap meet helping RJ Vanderberg with a customer when the customer turned to me and asked, 'Are you some kind of Graflex expert?' RJ quickly replied, 'Les knows more about Graflex than any sane man should.' While I'm still wondering if it was a compliment, it was then I realized I was an expert."

Les currently lives in suburban Detroit with his wife, daughter, and their dog Tipper. "And way too many Graphic cameras."

Ask Tim Holden….

Q *Could you tell us about the introduction of the Pacemaker cameras?*

A The new cameras were introduced to dealers in the February 1947 issue of <u>Trade Notes</u>. The 2¼x3¼, 3¼x4¼, and 4x5, were designated "23," "34," and "45," respectively. New Pacemakers were supplied first in the "23" size primarily to test the market. At the Cleveland Trade Show, in the evening, when the show was open to the public, all of the Pacemaker cameras were removed and replaced with other products and pictures, since we wanted to give dealers ample opportunity to become acquainted with and stock the new cameras before they were made known to the public.

Actually the "34" Pacemaker Speed Graphic was not available until June 1948, because of the demand for the "23" and "45" models.

Q *What was the Graphic "Special"?*

A In May 1956, we introduced a stripped-down version of the Crown Graphic "45" for $199.95. It had a Kalart rangefinder, Schneider Xenar f4.7 lens in a Compur shutter, and a Graflok back, but it did not come with an optical viewfinder (although the bracket was attached) or film holder. Based on the quantity ordered, a maximum 31% dealer discount applied. The following year an Ektalite field lens and a viewfinder were added. Initially, the camera was advertised as a "special promotion kit," with the capitalization of the word "Special" added later to the lensboard.

In 1958 the Crown Special (no. C-904), now equipped with a Graphic Rangefinder, retailed for $235. In 1960 a Graflite Junior gun was added (no. CF-905) and retailed for $289.50. Over the life of the Special, the C-904 package included a 135mm Schneider Xenar lens in a #0 Compur shutter (1958), a 135mm Schneider Xenar lens in a #0 Copal shutter (1968), a 135mm f4.5 Rodenstock Ysarex lens in a #1 Compur shutter (1971), and a 135mm f4.7 Xenar lens in a #0 Copal shutter (1973).

I think the catalog descriptions were not always precise, because they were not sure exactly what lens/shutter combination they would have. As an example, Graflex had a stock of #1 Compur shutters labeled "Graphic," which they sent to Rodenstock for the lenses for sale on the Special. A few big camera dealers bought these cameras in lots of 100, and one New York dealer bought a lot of 1,000.

Q: *Could you tell us about fitting the top-mounted Graphic Rangefinder to earlier Pacemaker cameras?*

A It was introduced in January 1955 for that year's "45" Pacemaker Speed and Crown models. It was our first rangefinder. In developing the new rangefinder, our intent was to make a unit which would fit prior models for the Graphic "45." In mid-1955, Graflex "reluctantly" decided that it was impractical to attempt to fit the rangefinder to earlier cameras. The camera could still be supplied without a rangefinder or with a Kalart or Hugo Meyer product.

**Q** *Could you tell readers about the Excise Tax that was applied to Graflex cameras?*

A This tax, in my opinion, was simply a money making scheme for the government. In simple terms, it was a tax on cameras (and other items) that weighed four pounds or less. The "45" Pacemaker was exempt, because it weighed just over the limit, although Graflex did not deliberately add weight to avoid the tax. In the case of another manufacturer (it may have been Kalart - I am not sure), the camera was shipped with a metal plate attached, which allowed the camera to avoid the tax, but could easily be removed by the buyer.

Q *Was the Pacemaker "34" a successful camera?*

A No. We actually lost money on the camera when you match the cost of tooling and production against sales. As I recall, the Department of Agriculture and a Boston-area newspaper were the only organizations to place sizable orders. Although the pre-war models sold well, the post-war model did not. It is possible that the Excise Tax and the popularity of the 4x5 size during WWII were contributing factors. I believe relatively few of these cameras were produced, especially the Crown model, thus they are sought after by collectors.

Q *Graflex had a tradition of supplying their focal plane shutters as separate units, for use on non-Graflex cameras. Did that continue with the Pacemaker shutter?*

A Yes. In 1951 we introduced a Speed "45" shutter which included a back assembly fitted with a Graflok back. It was priced at $100. Customers used the shutter, fitted with a cone for telephoto lenses, which was branded as a "Howitzer Camera." At the time, for those interested in making one of these cameras, we referred them to George Yates of the Des Moines Register-Tribune. It was also sold for clinical and other uses.
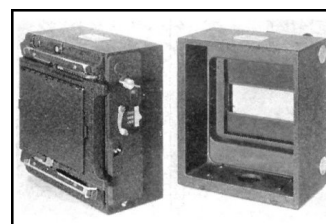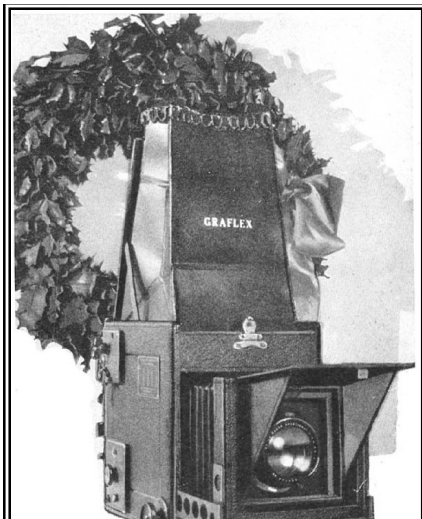
Graflex Historic Quarterly

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GRAFLEX

Contributors Wanted!

Contributors to the Quarterly are wanted. We are always looking for and appreciate articles, illustrations and article ideas. Material can include articles on a favorite camera, a unique camera (or accessory), how you found a camera, technical material on cameras and accessories, repair and restoration techniques, and stories about your experiences using Graflex cameras. In short, almost any topic you believe would be of interest to fellow subscribers.

Material is welcome in finished or rough from , as we have editors available to help.

THE **Christmas Gift** THAT CAPTURES THE WHOLE YEAR'S PLEASURES FOR LIFE!

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