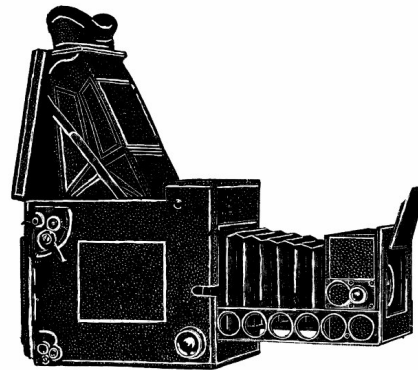


# GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY

**VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1**



**FIRST QUARTER 2006**

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Clarissa St. building in the 1920s and 1930s.

## Working at Graflex - Part I

By Tim Holden

I started working for the Folmer Graflex Corporation in 1935 at 154 Clarissa St. (formerly called 12-14 Caledonia Av.) in Rochester, which was several miles from Kodak Park, which was “in the country.” After we moved to Pittsford, we gave the Caledonia buildings to RIT for financial reasons. Later this building was demolished to make way for an expressway.

As a little background on our facilities, when Eastman Kodak purchased Graflex in 1905, they brought us to Rochester and inserted us into the three-story Century Camera building. Two additional stories were added to the building before I arrived. According to Fred Brehm, whom I knew and who worked there at the time (and later was a foun-

der of the company that made the Cirkut camera), because of the similarity of Century cameras to our Cycle Graphics, they tried to use the people and machinery of the Century company, but there was a good deal of friction among the people at Century and those coming in from Folmer & Schwing.

Due to increased sales during WWI, Kodak put up a new building (initially called the “new building” by the employees) that was attached to our building. Like our building, it was five stories high and, like ours, had a shallow basement, because we were close to the Erie Canal and could not go down below the water level. Because of this need to keep the buildings high, we walked up six or eight steps to the first floor and down only about six or eight steps into the basement. Because the two buildings were covered with similar brick, they looked like one building. Common walls were removed so we could go all the way through both buildings on the same floors.

Graflex was a good small company and a good place to work. A lot of this was due to N.L. Whitaker, a benevolent dictator, who promoted a “Graflex family” atmosphere, which led to loyalty to the company and thus good quality work. We also had a very good pension plan. “N.L.” knew absolutely nothing about photography, but he knew how to hire people who did know something about photography, and he knew how to get the information out of them.

When I arrived at the company, there were about 150 employees, and they all (even the president) punched in. Our hours were 8:00-5:00 for office and factory workers alike. For a short time, the “new building” was unoccupied until we took over one floor for a lunch room, which initially served soup and sandwiches, but expanded to a full-service facility. This was also a meeting room for our Graflex Recreation Club and other gatherings. The Recreation Club was the company organization that sponsored basketball and baseball games, bowling, etc. We never had company-wide meetings except for the Christmas party, where, among other things, bonuses were announced, although they were given out later. I think they did not give out the money for

fear that people would drink too much. Unlike many companies, we had to tell our employees in public because Kodak was promoting their bonuses, and we had to show we were also doing well for our employees. Finally, the industry got Kodak to play down their bonuses.

The Clarissa St. building had a very small parking lot, but most people used public transportation, as we were downtown and close to good transportation. Running from Clarissa St. and right next to the building was a brick paved driveway that on an old map was called "Poco Alley," which was the camera made by an earlier tenant, the Rochester Camera Company. When Lend Lease expanded our production, we leased some land across the street for more parking. The building was of typical 19<sup>th</sup> century construction with brick on the outside and 12-inch square supporting timbers on the inside. With a 3-inch underlayment, it was a substantial building. The executives were on the first floor, which later had wainscoted, white-painted offices for N.L. Whitaker, Clarence H. Harper (In practice, he was the general manager and came to Graflex from Kodak. Without him nothing would have happened.), G.C. Whitaker and Hod Schumacher. At that time, I worked on the same floor. I dictated letters to one of two G.C. secretaries or to one of the Accounting Department secretaries. Later, I moved to the "new building," where I was dictating up to 50 letters a day. The secretaries used shorthand, which I also had taken, and even though my shorthand was not very good, I could review their writing. Soon we took over the rest of the first floor of the new building. Shown in some pictures is a small building in the parking lot. It originally was an art supply store, which we purchased during WWII to use as additional office space.

By floor, the new and old buildings were used as follows (This, of course, changed over time.):

**Basement** - rough work, storage, kiln for drying wood, a "sticker" machine that made five dimension cuts. I talked to an employee who told me he purchased the sticker when he came to the company, and he found a buyer for it while he was still with the company. Plating was also done on that floor.

**First floor** - offices, shipping and receiving, and finished product storage.

**Second floor** - the engineering department, making of leather carrying cases, staining of tripod and other wood parts.

**Third floor** - Wood room, where rough cut and stained wood was reformed into pieces for cameras and accessories.

**Fourth floor** - Machining. By the time I arrived, all machines had their own motors.

**Fifth floor** - Final assembly, inspection and repair. There were elevators in both buildings.

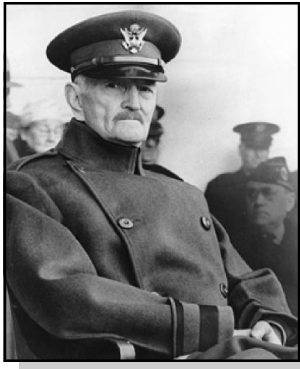
Initially, we used a bell system to let employees in the factory know there was a telephone call for them. I was 12, and as I recall, Mr. Harper was 13 rings. 13 was one ring, a pause, and then three rings. When Harper was heading for the manufacturing floors, his secretary would punch in 31 (a code for him) to let them know that he was on his way for an inspection. I am not sure if he ever found out! A bell was also used to indicate the start and end of the workday. If the bell kept ringing, it was a fire.

Part II will cover WWII and later.



**Further Research:** I have done further research into my statement that "...the National Graflex ... was essentially a waist-level 2¼-inch square roll film camera." In fact, the format was advertised as being 2¼ x 2½ (and later 2-1/8 x 2½).

Tim Holden adds that, although he did not hear it from Graflex's management (The camera was introduced in 1933, and Tim joined the company in 1935.), he believes 1. That the camera was introduced to counter foreign competition from 2¼-inch square single and twin-lens reflex cameras. He remembers the Korelle reflex, a Zeiss camera and the Rolleiflex; 2. That Graflex believed their single-lens reflex was superior in design to the twin-lens reflex; 3. That they also believed the closeness of the focal plane shutter to the film plane was superior to the between-the-lens shutter; and 4. That the National's format proportions were close to the 8x10 proportions, thus there was less unused image area in printing. KM



## Send No More Kodaks!

By Ken Metcalf

**Q**uarterly subscriber and Graflex collector, Jerry Laderberg, sent us copies of some very interesting letters from the National Archives relating to the purchase of photographic equipment during WWI. This material has caused me to try to put together, in a series of articles, material on Graflex military cameras.... a project I am beginning to regret!

As an example of the nature of the task, some Graflex military cameras were designed and produced by Graflex, some were designed by others and manufactured by Graflex, and, in some cases, others designed the cameras, and Graflex made parts for them. In addition, each branch of the service had a different name for the same camera, and not all military cameras had a military identification plate. To complete my venting, few examples remain of the early cameras.

In a visit to the U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum at Fort Gordon, Georgia, I talked with Mike Rodgers (Exhibits) and Delores Oplinger (Collections) about the Signal Corps system of camera designation. According to them, no specific records on how early cameras were identified have survived, but they speculated that a system may have evolved from a purchase by "subject" system, to a system that assigned specifications to alpha-numeric designations. One of the earliest Graflex cameras, the 5x7 ordnance camera, was given the designation PH-6.<sup>1</sup>

According to Jerry's material, General Pershing, on April 16, 1918, issued a letter demanding that they "Send no more 3-A kodaks," as they are "unsuited to conditions here." The General went on to say, "Each still camera should have as additional equipment one 10 to 12 inch lens also one telephoto lens should be sent for each speed graphic. Send 6 additional speed graphics with 150 plate-holders also 100 plate holders for 4 by 5 graflex and 50 are for 6 1/2 by 8 1/2 cycle graphic camera." As equipment lists show 3A Graflex and 3A Kodak cameras, it is reasonable to assume that the banned camera was of Kodak, not Graflex, manufacture.

In a letter from 1918, from the War Department, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, to the Equipment Division, Major Bert Underwood stated that "This office requests that you purchase and place in stock as quickly as possible complete photographic equipment for 75 photographic units [still and motion picture], as per 'Photographic Unit Equipment List No. 1,' attached. It is also requested that you purchase complete equipment for 75 additional photographic units as per 'Photographic Unit Equipment List No. 1,' attached, and ship in bulk to the Chief Signal Officer, A. E. F. The first lot of 75 equipments will take care of our needs in equipping units sailing from this country. The second lot of 75 equipments will take care, for several months, of the need of the Chief Signal Officer, A.E.F., in supplying special units and replacement in the field."... "It is requested that your office instruct your warehouse Supply Officer to pack separately...one 4 x5 graphic camera outfit complete, these [including a motion picture outfit] to be taken by the Officer in Charge of a photographic unit as hand baggage, to be used en route overseas in case of emergency." An excess baggage allowance of 800 pounds was requested, but "Still casual officer en route overseas will take with him only still photographic equipment."<sup>2</sup>

"List No. 1" shows the following still component of a "unit":

- 2 Cameras, 4x5 Speed Graphic
- 2 Lenses - 6½-inch focal lengths F4.5 fitted in shutters
- 1 Lens - telephoto interchangeable - 4x5 Graphics or 4x5 Graflex
- 26 Plate holders for 4x5 Graphic Camera (Speed Graphic)
- 2 Adapters - 4x5 Film Pack
- 2 Cases, carrying, each to hold 4x5 Speed Graphic Camera, 1 Holder, 1 Film Pack Adapter and Film Packs (Standard)
- 2 Finders - 2 inch, for 4x5 Speed Graphic Camera (Extra)
- 1 Camera - 4x5 Telescopic Revolving Back, Auto Graflex
- 1 Lens, 8¼ inch, focal length F4.5
- 1 Lens, 9 to 12 inch, focal length F4.5
- 1 Case, carrying, to hold Graflex Camera 4 x 5 (Standard)
- 4 - 4x5 Plate Magazines
- 1 Camera - Cycle Graphic 6½ x 8½
- 1 Lens, (6½x8½) F 4.5 fitted in shutter
- 1 Lens, (6½x8½) Wide Angle
- 12 Plate Holders - 6½x8½
- 1 Case, carrying, for 6½x8½ Cycle Graphic Camera (Standard)
- 2 Cases, carrying, each for 6 Plate Holders - 6½x8½
- Added for Emergency en route overseas - 15 doz. - 4x5 Graflex plates.

If this is an accurate list of what was actually sent, it is interesting to note that the Speed Graphics were to be equipped with lenses fitted with shutters, which were not listed in catalogs of the time.

Camera equipment was the same on list 2; however, an extensive list of darkroom equipment was included as well.

As of August 16, 1918, here is a selection of Graflex cameras ordered:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Description of Order.</u>
PH	26	50 3A Graflex, B&L Lens, OD finish 50 Graflex Cameras, 4x5, OD finish, B&L Lens 4 Cameras, Cirkut #10 with Turner-Reich Lens
PH	50	3 2 Cameras, 3A Graflex, B&L Lens
PH	77	25 Cameras, Cycle Graphic 6½x8½, B&L Lens, wide-angle convertible and wide angle, OD finish
PH	97	1 Camera, Folmer & Schwing, Enlarging, 8x10
PH	178	1 Camera, F & S Aviation Model, 4x5 1 Camera, F&S, Copying, 8x10, B&L Lens
PH	189	20 Cameras, R.B. Cycle, Graphic, 6½x8½ fitted with Turner-Reich Lens 14 Cameras, 4x5, B&L Lens
PH	268	1 Camera, Cycle Graphic, 6½x8½, B&L Series 7A Lens
PH	330	1 Camera, Graflex, Telescopic, 4x5
PH	333	1 Camera, Stereo, Graphic
PH	607	6 Cameras, Speed Graphic, 5x7
LP	176	10 Cameras, Telescopic, R.B. Graflex 4x5
LP	261	1 Camera, Finger Print Camera
LP	520	25 Cameras, Speed Graphic, 5x7, complete

Note: It is not stated whether these items were to be shipped overseas.

Though somewhat tedious (There are 81 orders in this letter.), this listing shows the breadth of equipment ordered from Graflex. Although too long to list, the government gave alternative lenses that could be supplied with camera orders. As an example, regarding the No. 10 Cirkut camera: "Turner Reich lenses of about 12 inch focal length are usually fitted to this style camera. This particular lens is unavailable at the present time. It is believed that the contractor will secure lenses needed from outside sources, for in-

stance, through purchase from individual owners, etc." If interested, a copy of the complete set of letters can be purchased from the Quarterly at cost.

Here is a list of costs to the government and in the retail catalog.

<u>Camera</u>	<u>Government \$ Cost</u>	<u>Catalog \$ Cost</u>
Stereo Graphic	48.00	139.00
Finger Print	22.00	33.00
Cycle Graphics	45.00	66.00
R.B. Tele, 4x5	67.00	141.50

Finally, PH (subject) requests were sent to Kodak, Chas. Willoughby, Burke & James, Bausch & Lomb, and others.

Future articles will cover the Signal Corps, Navy cameras and aerial cameras.

<sup>1</sup> Interesting background information on the Signal Corps can be obtained from Getting the Message Through by Rebecca Raines, a copy of which was given to the Quarterly by the Signal Corps Museum director, Robert Anzuoni.

<sup>2</sup> Capitalization and punctuation are shown as they were used in the original letters.



Signal Corps photographers holding, left to right, 3-A Graflex, Kodak ?, and R.B. Tele Graflex. Les pointed out that the soldier on the right would have a hard time taking a picture with the lens cap on!



## A GRAFLEX QUARTET IN THE FIELD

By James Maxon & Barbara Smith  
Canon City, Colorado

**W**E ARE PROUD TO BE GRAFLEX ADDICTS. As with many of the Quarterly readers, I have used a variety of cameras over the years, including Graphics, Rolleis, Leicas, etc. My girlfriend Barbara was intent on using her point-and-shoot camera, but I've finally captured her imagination with the big Graflex cameras. (She has convinced me that her digital camera can take the place of a Polaroid back for previewing.) We currently have four Graflexes and enjoy the unique qualities of each of these amazing machines. We have two Revolving Back Series Bs - a post-war 2¼x3¼ and a later 3¼x4¼ (probably 1939-40) and two Super Ds (one in each size), both dating about 1948-49.

All four cameras are "users." Each one is in good working condition, showing signs of use but not abuse. The nice post-war 2¼x3¼ model has click stops and a coated Ektar lens. In addition to the standard film holders, we have a roll film holder. The 3¼x4¼ RB is in good shape, but as is often the case, one of the top leather straps that secures the handle was broken when we acquired the camera. We replaced the broken strap with a ½" conduit pipe painted black. It lines up well with the original rivet holes and is secured with small machine screws and nuts. It's a secure, if inelegant, solution. Some day we will replace it with a proper leather strap. The 3¼x4¼ Super D is cosmetically the cleanest of the four cameras. It has a coated f/4.5 Kodak Anastigmat and the simplified shutter. We have several standard film holders and two cut film magazines ("bag mags") that we interchange between the two 3x4s.

The 4x5 Super D is contemporary with the smaller Super D and shows the most use, probably from a professional studio. It has the standard Graflex back. We have regular film holders, a Grafmatic and three bag mags for it. The original ground glass has been replaced, and an extra bipole sync outlet has been installed next to the factory outlet. (Where do we find an original ground glass?) We also have an accessory ground glass back for it. We have a wonderful 15"

f/5.6 Wollensak tele lens for the 4x5. Readers who are familiar with these big lenses know that when mounted, the diaphragm rings are difficult to read and adjust. The previous owner partially solved this problem by attaching a short lever to the diaphragm ring that protrudes beyond the bottom of the lens box. We added a strip of tape with f/stops marked to correspond with the lever positions so that the openings can be easily set with the lens in position. The lens shade is not original, and it is borrowed from a 400mm Telemegor lens for an Exakta. A note of caution - the rear barrel of the big lens protrudes into the body and will interfere with the movement of the mirror unless the lens standard is racked out to at least the infinity position. The mirror needs to be up in order to rack the lens standard all of the way in with the big lens in place.

The 4x5 is king, but its sheer size and weight can be daunting in the field. The camera, telephoto lens, film holders, filters, etc., in a soft-sided, padded bag weighs in at 18 lbs! We have come to many of the same conclusions that Jim Flack has described in his recent article in the Quarterly. The three smaller cameras are often selected, particularly when we are carrying the cameras any distance from the car. With the 2x3, the 120 roll film holder is obviously handy, but there are times when only two or three exposures are needed. We still have a pretty good stash of 2¼x3¼ cut film.

Which brings us to the question of availability of film. Freestyle's online catalog ([www.freestylephoto.biz](http://www.freestylephoto.biz)) has several Ilford films, although we have not ordered any recently. Most adjustable cut film tanks will handle the smaller film sheets. We have modified one of the inexpensive plastic adjustable roll film tanks by filing an extra notch in the reel core to match the width of the small sheets. The individual sheets can be slid into the reel with the advantage of using less solution in the tank.

We don't have a roll film holder for the 3¼x4¼s, but the good news is that 3¼x4¼ cut film is once again available. JandC Photo ([www.jandcphoto.com](http://www.jandcphoto.com)) in Overland Park, Kansas, is currently marketing the film under the old "Adox" name. We believe there may be other suppliers as well. The "Adox" film also comes out of Eastern Europe and is a very good ISOS 100 product. It comes packaged in interleaved fifty-sheet boxes and is reasonably priced. Before we became aware of the 3¼x4¼ film, we made a simple jig to trim 4x5 film to the smaller format. We fastened two scrap pieces of flat molding to the cutting surface of an inexpensive paper trimmer to allow for a 3¼" and a 4¼" cut. A sheet of 4x5 film is placed first against the stop to make the long cut, then against the other stop for the short cut, making sure to save the edge with the code notches. We load the cut film directly into the film holders to minimize handling and the possibility of scratching, etc. It sounds fussy, but after a few sheets, the process goes quite easily.

The two 3x4s are perhaps our favorite field cameras (at least right now). Their size and weight are more manageable than the 4x5, and negatives are almost as big and forgiving. For processing we have a Yankee adjustable sheet tank and have just acquired an HP Combi-Plan T tank. While it holds only six sheets as compared to 12 in the Yankee, it is easier to load, uses less solution, and is easier to manage. It is also adjustable for various sheet film sizes. For enlarging we have made a "glassless" negative carrier using two tape-hinged pieces of mat board with the right size opening and trimmed to fit our 4x5 enlarger.

In terms of picture quality, we see little difference between the two 3x4s, as both have the same lenses, albeit the Super D lens is coated. We routinely use filters (and a sunshade on the RB). Admittedly, the Super D with the automatic diaphragm is easier to use in low light conditions or in very bright situations such as a sunlit day with snow. The RB is fun when one realizes that it was the staple of the Graflex line in the 1920s and 1930s and was featured in many Graflex ads of the period.

Now a note on film holders for the 3x4 and the 4x5. As of now, the big cut film magazines are our favorite. In many ways, they are more convenient, faster, and less bulky than the standard film holders. The key to their smooth operation is to keep the interior compartment and the individual septums totally clean. Also, we have found that rubbing the septum ridges that slide against each other with a silicone cloth makes the operation smoother. These "bag mags" show up regularly on eBay. The key is getting one with a leather bag that is pliable and light tight. If anyone would like to try one of these devices, we would be happy to send a Xeroxed© copy of instructions for their care and feeding. They seem a little fussy at first, but the 1920s Graflex technology really does work.

None of our Graflexes has an Ektalite field lens, but we have found that the thin plastic Fresnel lenses, when placed on top of the ground glass, noticeably brighten the image in most situations. They come in several sizes and can be easily trimmed to fit. They are thin enough that they don't interfere with closing the focusing hood. They are available at office supply stores.

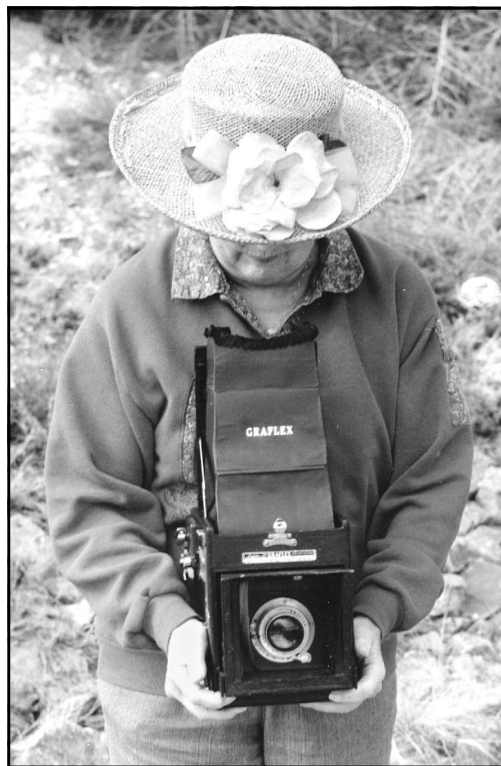
Happily, the 3x4s and the 4x5 have the same size lens barrels. The suitable series 7 adapters and filters can be interchanged at will. The 2x3 is presently set up for series 6 filters. Perhaps some day we'll come across a step-up ring so that we can use the series 7 filters on all four cameras. We've found that the small RB has

enough bellows draw to make use of a Kodak series 6 #1 Telek lens for limited long focus effects.

We use the cameras handheld as they were intended to be used, but for the occasions when a tripod really is desirable, we have a very clean Crown tripod #2 complete with the matching tilt head.

## CONCLUSION

Using these cameras feels a little awkward and fussy at first. For example, what to do with the dark slide when the film holder is in place? We usually place it between the focusing hood strut and the focusing hood. With the revolving back in the vertical position and the hood open, it is difficult to remove dark slides or work the magazines from the top. We found that temporarily rotating the back about 45 degrees from the vertical facilitates pulling dark slides, changing and working the magazines. The other solution for shooting vertically is to rotate the back so the slides can be pulled from the bottom of the camera with the camera cradled flat on the left arm. With a little use, we have come to appreciate the soundness and simplicity of their design. The logic of the placement of the controls becomes apparent. A reading of the original instructions actually helps! Tips such as cradling the camera in the left arm when winding the shutter, etc. really does make handling easier. Barbara and I are beginning a photo project that we call "Recording Old Colorado." We are recording samples of rich history and scenic resources of our state and the surrounding region with conventional black and white and some with color technology.



The four Graflexes are our primary tools. Barb is also pursuing the "ancient art" of tinting to further enhance some of our photos.

The Graflexes are admittedly quirky compared to current cameras, but they are wonderful conversation starters when other people are present. While using the camera, we met an old miner in Creede, Colorado, who later guided us through a gold mine that he had worked. Besides, what is more fun than feeling and hearing the slap of the mirror, and the running of the shutter at the instant that another "Graflex Moment" is captured!



## Army-Navy Production Award

By Bob Gilbert

On November 10, 1942, at the Eastman Theater in Rochester, a large gathering was present to hear Lt. Col. James McDonnell of the United States Army Air Forces present the Army-Navy Production Award ("E" Award) to the Folmer Graflex Corp. and its employees. This award was presented to manufacturing plants for "great accomplishment in the production of war equipment." In addition to a flag to be flown over the company plant, each employee was given a sterling silver lapel pin. Graflex president, N.L. Whitaker, accepted for the company, and chief inspector Arthur Mildahn accepted the pins for the employees. By 1945 Graflex would receive a total of five "E" awards, thus adding four stars to the original flag.

In an acknowledgement from the employees of Graflex, they stated that they were "proud of our 100% enlistment for War Bonds and that 11.6% of what we earn goes into them. Our jobs as Members of The Graflex Organization are to build cameras and photographic equipment - the best that can be built. Many of us have been with the Company since it was formed and some of us have worked in the same plant for well over a quarter of a century. We made good cameras for our Country in World War I. We are making better ones now because we know how to do a better job."

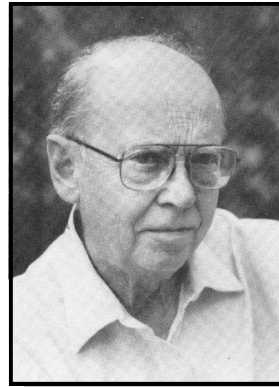
Included in the program was an interesting history of the award. "In 1906 the Navy instituted in the Fleet an award for excellence which has been known ever since as the Navy "E". First awarded for excellence in gunnery, this was later extended to include outstanding performance in engineering and communications.

When the rising tide of war in Europe placed a premium on the production of war equipment, the Navy "E" award was extended to embrace those plants and organizations which showed excellence in producing ships, weapons, and equipment for the Navy.

From that high resolve was born the Army-Navy Production Award - which stands today as our fighting forces' joint recognition of exceptional

performance on the production front."

According to a website on military production awards, the Army started their A-Award in 1941 and combined it with the Navy award in 1942. Also, the pin was made in several sizes and styles and was given to over 40,000 employees. Interestingly, they state that 4,283 plants were honored, but that they represented only 5% of all plants involved in war production.



**Richard P. Paine**

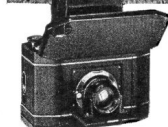
It is with sadness that we must report the passing in March of Mr. Paine. In addition to publishing the only book for Graflex collectors, [The All-American Cameras, a Review of Graflex](#), Mr. Paine was an enthusiastic supporter of Graflex users and collectors. He still retained a few Graflex cameras, including a favorite 2¼x3¼ Century Graphic he was working on. In addition, he maintained a list of cameras and their serial numbers (For several years, it has been updated by the [GHQ.](#)), which is a valuable adjunct to Tim Holden's serial number book.

Dick's interest in Graflex was "born" when he worked during high school at the camera counter of a local department store ( Woodward & Lothrop in Washington, D.C.) . While he worked there, the Miniature Speed was introduced, and he literally fell in love with it - and it remained his favorite. Dick had a B.A. from George Washington University and an M.A. from Columbia University, and served in the Navy during WWII.

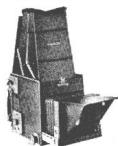
To illustrate the value of his book, Mr. Paine told the story of being offered a strange-looking camera with milled wheels protruding from the side of the camera. Although he was skeptical, he purchased it. When he finally found a copy of a 1906 Graflex catalog ...there it was, a 3¼x4¼ Auto Graflex Jr., listed for only that one year. We are all richer for his efforts.

## Graflex Historic Quarterly

The *Quarterly* is dedicated to enriching the study of the Graflex company, its history, and products. It is published by and for hobbyists, and is not a for-profit publication. Other photographic groups may reprint material provided credit is given *GHQ* and the author. We would appreciate a copy of the reprint.



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Publisher: Mike Hanemann  
Editor and associate publisher: Ken Metcalf  
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One-year subscription: US\$14  
[Payable to and mailed to **Ken Metcalf**]  
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