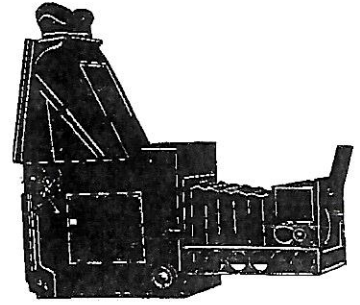


# GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY



**VOLUME 3 ISSUE 3**

**THIRD QUARTER 1998**

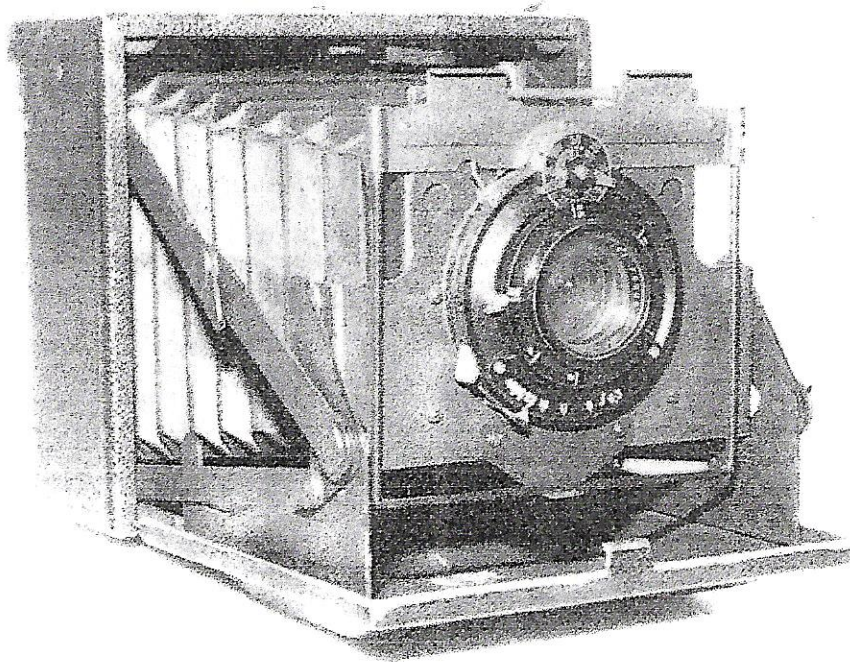
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*DOES YOUR ADDRESS LABEL HAVE A RED*

**R**

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Is this a Graflex? Story on page 2

**Graflex Treasures  
Uncarthed at George Eastman  
House**  
by Mike Hanemann

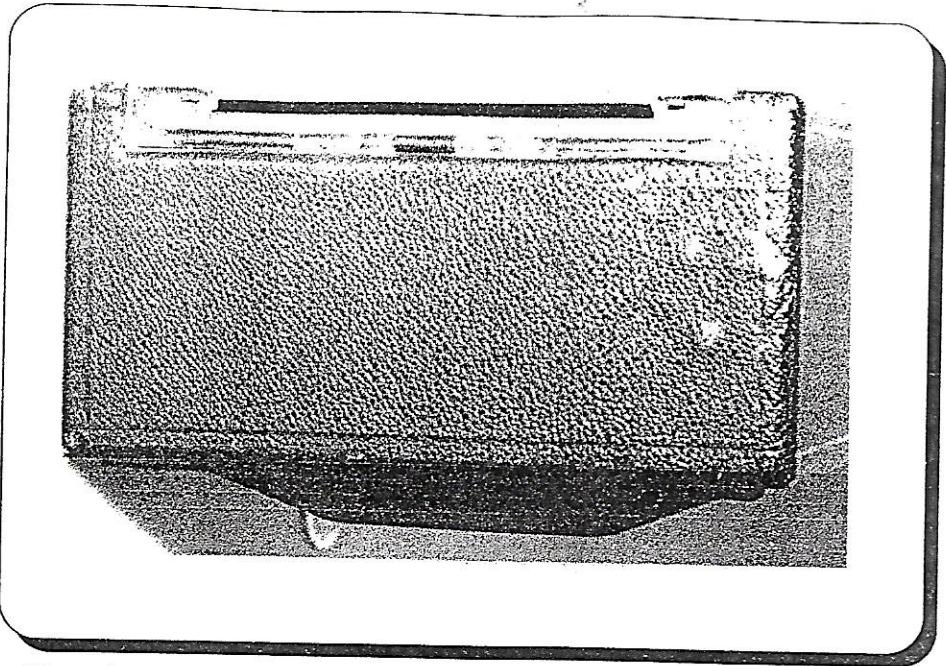
INSTALLMENT 2

A very interesting group at the GEH is the one of a kind engineering models that were built to show an idea. One ongoing goal was to minimize the size of cameras to make them easier to handle and use.

The item featured this week is a 4x5 camera that is self erecting! It is very much like the Polaroid Reporter camera in size and opening.

The lens is front element focusing and not interchangeable. It is a 6.5 inch Ilex lens in an Acme shutter. The overall size is quite small for the film size. The camera itself is 5-3/4" high by 6 wide by 8" deep when opened. When closed it is 3.5 inches thick.

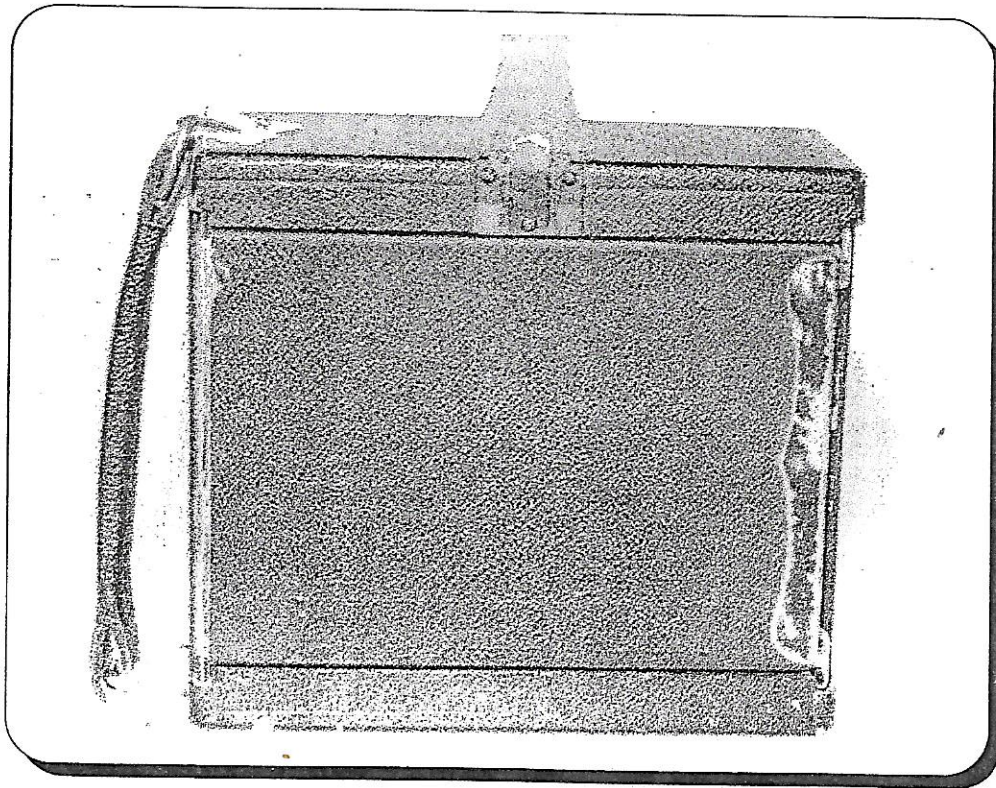
The finish is pure Graflex, and the strap and rear finder are from a 1940 Anniversary model. The front wire finder is like others, folding down to store the camera. However the front finder hinge device is like no other Graflex press type.



*Prototype: set up only for film packs*

The camera has a built in film pack adapter and will not accept film or roll holders.

It is a lighter and faster erecting press camera than the then-popular 4x5 Speed Graphic. Next installment will feature a heavy, hard to erect but smaller 3x4 SLR!



**"Pig Skin Graphic"**  
**Recovering a Pre-Anniversary Graphic**  
by Bill Baker

I bought sight unseen a Pre-Anniversary 3 1/4" X 4 1/4" which really was in bad shape. The leather had been reattached on the body in several places and was loose on the bed. The original leather covering was not in restorable condition. The side curtains on the spring back and the ground glass was missing. Generally this camera should have gone in the junk pile.

I decided to try my hand at a recovering job just to see what I was able to accomplish. To begin I disassembled the camera completely putting all of the parts in plastic bags. You might even make notes as to what the screws go to as well as the parts. Make labels and put in the plastic bags with the parts as the camera is going to be parts until the new leather is in place. Put parts associated with the bed in separate bags and then all of the bags in a larger bag. Do this with each section you disassemble. I mean remove every screw all the metal parts, the bellows, bed, back and focal plane shutter. When you finish there will be a leather covered wooden body.

Next I had to remove the old leather from the wood. Start at the bottom as the leather is applied in three separate pieces. Remove the center panel on the bottom first by wetting the leather with wet paper towels or a sponge. Wet the leather you are able to pull up from the wood. The glue Graflex used was "Hide Glue" and is water soluble. Keep wetting and pulling. You don't have to soak the leather just wet the junction and pull. Remove the leather from the sides and top the same way. Sponge the wood after the leather is removed to get rid of some of the remaining glue. Do not leave any water on the wood as you might end up with some unwanted parts you can't put together again. Let the body dry and then plug all the holes you won't reuse. Fill all of the damaged wood with wood filler and apply masking tape to the out side of the body. Sand the wood filler and then repaint the inside of the body with semi-flat black spray paint. When you are satisfied with the paint job remove the tape. Get some typewriter paper and make some templates of the sides, top and bottom using a pencil to punch the holes where you will replace the parts (screw holes). Mark what side it is. You might have found 4 brass pieces attached to the top and bottom that hold the back on. Some models of this era had the back attached with wood screws. Remove these and clean in ammonia and replace. Do not reattach the bed hinge at this time.

I had previously bought some Morocco Leather from Tandy Leather Company. The kind I bought was made of "Pig Skin" and a little gaudy but I decided to use it as I had it on hand (I will use something else in the future). To begin recovering the body measure the top and two sides and make the width about 1" wider than the body depth. Make it long enough to turn under on the bottom, about 3/4" on each side. The seams will be at the edge of the front hinge. Cut one side as straight as possible using a straight edge. Use this for the back edge. We will begin gluing the leather on the top. Divide the leather up on both sides to make it approximately even. Right now we need

extra leather in front and on the bottom. We will trim it after the leather is glued to the top and both sides. Be sure the Bed Release Button is in its hole. Dampen the leather before gluing (right now the top only). For now get your bottle of Yellow Carpenters Glue (you could use "Pliobond" to do this applying to both the leather and wood) and apply a sufficient amount to the wood on the top only and put the leather in contact with the wood. Do not apply any glue to the rounded surface on the front as we will do this later. I use a carpenters vise and some pieces of carpet (carpet pile to the leather as a cushion) and pieces of plywood about the size of the side. Make sure the back edge is straight and tighten the vise to hold the leather and wood in contact. This should dry for about an hour before going on. Apply glue to the next side after wetting the leather. Pull the leather tight on that side around the curved part of the body and align the back edge. Put it back in the vise and hold it for another hour. Do the same thing on the other side and then the short ends on each side of the bottom. Only glue about 5/16" on each side of the bottom as you will put a separate piece on the bottom. If you managed to over glue at this point do worry you can pull the leather up after you make the cut to square up the edge. Glue only one side at a time. When the three sides are all glued then cut a piece of leather the same width and a length that will fit between the squared off ends. The piece on the bottom will be the length of the Bed Hinge. We want to hide the seams on each side so make it as close as possible. Make sure the leather is square on the back edge. You do not want to have to trim at that edge. When you glue it wet the leather and put it in place and work it with your fingers to force the edges to mate. Only put glue on the wood behind the hinge cutout as we will put the Bed Hinge in place and eventually use "Pliobond" to glue it down. Now comes a little problem gluing the front edge down. Start by making a cut at each of the two top corners one half way on the radius. Fold the cut ends around the front radius and hold so the previously cut ends overlap and using a very sharp knife (Exacto or Testors Model Knife with new blade) make a cut at 45 degrees so that you cut both pieces at the same time. When glued down they hide the seam. Do this to both sides and then we are ready to glue all three sides down. Don't worry about the cutout where the focusing knob goes now as we will attack that after the glue has set. Put glue on the wood and have on hand some 3 1/2" X 1/4" rubber bands which you will need a box of as you will have to put them on the body from left to right and top to bottom. Enough of them to hold the leather in contact with the wooden body while the glue sets. When the glue has had sufficient time to set then remove the rubber bands and with the same sharp knife trim the leather back to the inside edge of the camera box. Trim the leather back around the focusing knob cutout so that it is flush and then we will cut a small piece of leather and bevel its edge where it mates to the out side edge. When it is glued in place it blends in without having a noticeable seam. Make this piece larger than the finished piece as we can trim it later on the inside. Glue the piece in and hold with your fingers until it will stay by itself molding the beveled edge to hide the edge on the outside.

When all the leather is glued in place on the body except for the bed hinge, cut out the areas where the Focal Plane Shutter hardware will be reattached and the two tripod holes using the very sharp knife. You can use a leather punch for the

tripod holes only with hand pressure. Do not use a hammer as you might break the wood. Sharpen the punch edge and use the knife too as the leather is tough.

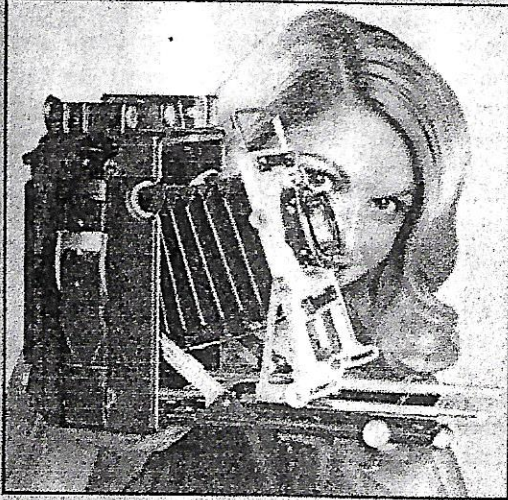
I did not try and recover the back as there are a lot of areas with curves and such that I didn't think I could handle. The best thing to do is remove the leather if its loose (99 times out of a 100 it is). Pry up the edge and remove the wood screws that hold the wooden parts to the aluminum base. Clean the leather and the metal and use "Pliobond" to reattach the leather to the metal. Do not try and remove the wooden pieces from the leather unless they have separated by themselves. Be careful as there are fragile pieces of leather that might break. If they do don't worry we are going to glue them down and hide the breaks. Apply the "Pliobond" to the leather and aluminum base and let dry a little then put the leather on the metal base, smooth down the leather and reinstall the wood screws. If you had a problem

with any of the leather close to where the film holder is inserted just be sure to have enough glue there and press it down and hold it for a little while. This is a very small strip of leather and will give you a little trouble.

I have covered restoration of the front bed under another section that will be attached to the finished information.

When the bed has been repaired and you are ready to reassemble the camera with all those parts you removed you should begin by replacing the bed hinge. Once you have put it in place and screwed it down you can glue the remaining loose leather using "Pliobond". I cut the edge so that it was the proper size before applying any glue. This finishes the application of new leather. The rest is the reassembly. I will cover focal plane shutter in another section along with the reinstallation of the bellows and front standard.

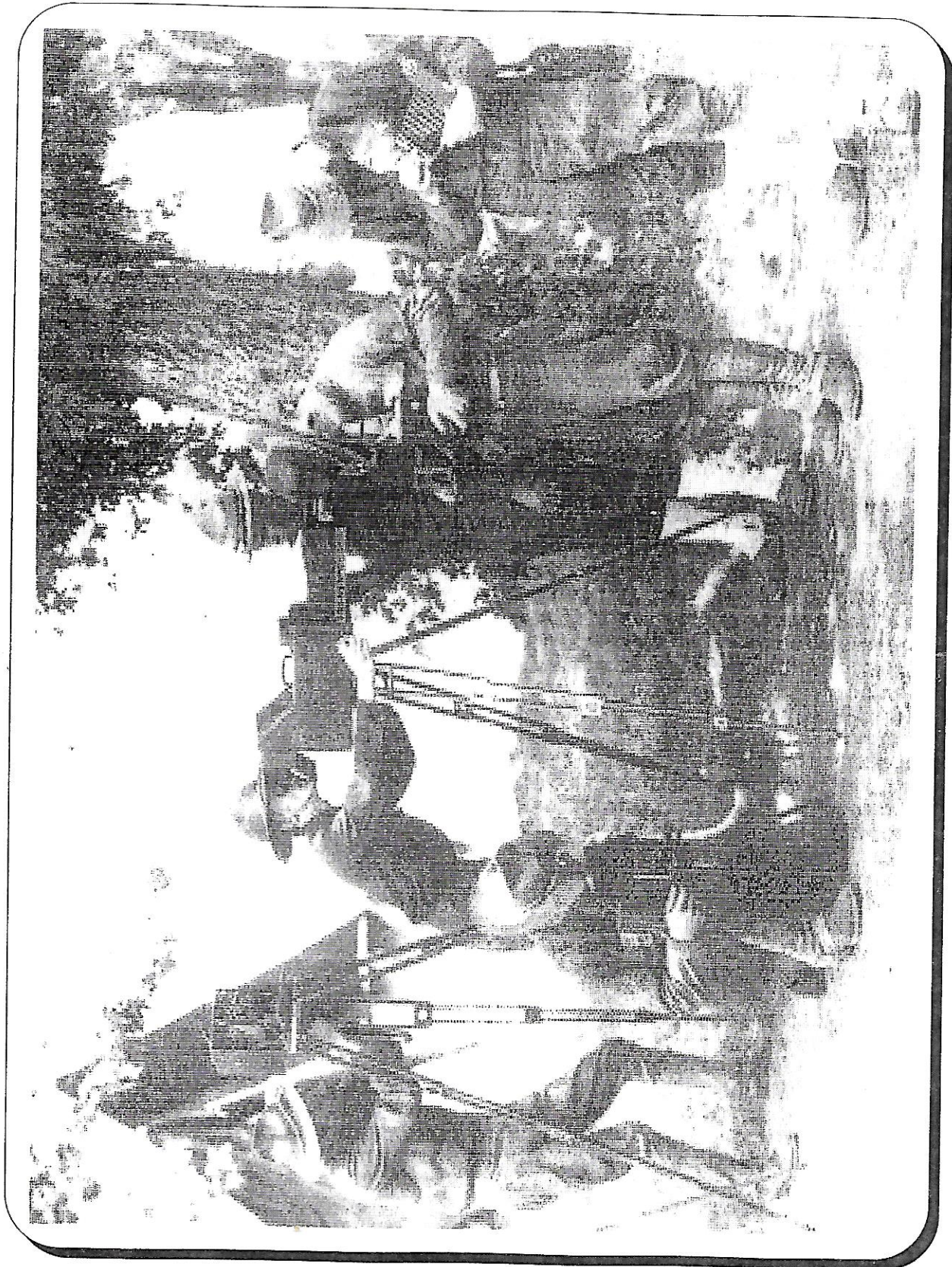
**THE LARGE FORMAT**



**GRAFLEX**

**SINGER**  
GRAFLEX PHOTOGRAPHIC PRODUCTS

1971 Singer ad. See their good-bye letter later this issue



*Taken June 10, 1918 at Engineers School of Photography, Washington Barracks, DC [US Army]*

## LENS FITTING TO GRAPHIC CAMERAS

by Tim Holden

How many people have realized that the Graphic cameras (all of them) when shipped from the factory with a lens have been custom fitted with that lens? In other words, if the lens is changed, the infinity stops may need to be moved, the focusing scale changed and the rangefinder readjusted for the new lens.

First it needs to be understood that all lenses of the same marked focal length may not have the exact same focal length. In order for a lens to produce the best possible image, the lens maker may have to make slight adjustments to the optics to compensate for "tolerances" in production of the individual elements. This may affect the focal length, slightly. Thus compensation needs to be made for proper synchronization with rangefinders and focusing scales.

With improvements in lens design and production, it became possible for lens makers to hold the variation to within +2% of the established focal length for that particular make speed and established focal length for those lenses. This "nominal" focal length is not necessarily the same for different makes of lenses. While it was a major improvement, it still required custom fitting of each camera and lens combination, involving a number of steps:

a) Attachment of the lens to the lensboard and into the front of the camera.

b) Setting the infinity stops. These were set as reference points, a little ahead of what might be considered as "infinity". This is necessary, since there is usually a slight difference in what even trained people consider "the sharpest image." Thus as the camera is opened and the lens drawn out, it will have to be racked forward slightly to match the infinity location.

c) Adjust the rangefinder for that particular -several steps with the Kalart rangefinder, but only the selection of a suitable cam, by number, for the post-1955 Graphic range/viewfinder.

d) Selection and checking at given distances of 1 of 5 scales for that particular make, speed and focal length of lens.

e) Entering onto the registration card the serial number of the camera, and the name, make, speed, focal length, and serial number of that lens. This is also entered onto the factory work order of the shipping ticket for that camera/lens combination. These records were kept on file.

With respect to "c" and "d" above, the allowed range for a given focal length lens was NOT the same for all lens makers. To be sure, the + and - tolerance did produce some overlap at one end or the other of a set of scales, but there had to be a set of 5 pre-marked scales for each make, speed and focal length of lens. This meant 3 sets of 5 scales for the 135mm lenses from Zeiss, Schneider, and Graflex, for example.

The following is excerpted from the May 1940 issue of TRADE NOTES, the Graflex Dealer publication:

"Originally, the focusing scales for the Pre-Anniversary Speed Graphics were made by focusing out of a window of the fifth floor of the plant at the Kodak tower for infinity with the camera mounted on a tripod (Folmer Compact Stand). A pane of plate glass in the window with cross lines was used for the closer distances with the camera/tripod being slid along the floor using footage markers painted on the floor. Scratch lines were placed on a bakelite strip for the focusing scale and after these had been made the scale was removed from the camera and small hand dies used to stamp into the material the indicator line and the footage distance. Whiting was then rubbed into the recesses thus stamped to form the focusing scale. The index line had previously been stamped into the sliding track."

Reference was also made to the complete full Vernier scales supplied for the miniature Speed Graphic cameras. These were made up in sets of 5 as mentioned above. These scales, incidentally were engraved on a special engraving machine made by Deckel of Germany and represented a distinct advancement. We had a battery of 6 or 8 of those machines going full blast turning out engraved focusing scales matching the lenses used.

To match the scale making a newer, faster and more accurate method was needed for matching the scale to the lens and for adjusting the rangefinders - usually also ordered.

Special focusing "boxes" were developed. Each "box" had well defined targets at actual distances of 15' and 5' and a large reducing lens which allowed the use of the 15' target as the infinity setting. It had been determined that compliance with these positions mean that other distance markings on the focusing scale would indicate the correct setting (focusing) of the lens for those distances.

Thus, if you switch from one 135mm lens to another, (possibly of the same make) the infinity setting, setting of the rangefinder, and focusing scale markings may or may not require changing. The error could be serious or, with luck, inconsequential.

Reference is made above to the recording of lens and camera serial numbers. Sometimes these records lead to some "interesting" situations. Since this is not associated with custom fitting it will be covered in a different story.

### User Tip

The GHQ has published several articles and tips for that ever-present SLR problem, the broken handle-hold-down strap. Perhaps overlooked in these tips is how to actually make a replacement. First, obtain some leather of the approximate thickness, and smooth on one side. Cut to the same thickness of the existing, unbroken hold-down, and round the ends with scissors. Drill for rivets and create the two parallel ridges in it with a leather-roller from Tandy Leather [a chain found in larger cities], or other leather tool outlet. Dye black. Actually not difficult!

January 10, 1974

EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Dear Customer:

We find it necessary to discontinue our production of all major photographic camera and electronic flash products.

Because of the requirements of our broad audiovisual product line, we have been unable to continue to develop our photographic products to the extent necessary to remain fully competitive in this highly technical and rapidly changing field. Our product development priorities in other areas, together with reduced customer support of our photographic equipment, make it necessary for us to withdraw from the photographic business.

The decision to do so was a difficult one. Our name has been prominent in advanced amateur and professional photography for nearly a century, and our warm and cordial relations with photographic suppliers go back many years.

Because we feel a deep sense of responsibility and gratitude to you and to the many users of "Graflex" products, we will continue to manufacture and supply, on a regular basis, those accessories and spare parts that are proprietary in nature and cannot be obtained from other sources. A listing of these items is being prepared and will be mailed to you shortly. We will also continue to offer, for an extended period of time, factory service both in and out of warranty.

Those products which we will no longer manufacture include the following: xl Wide Angle Camera System, xl Rangefinder Camera System, 4x5 Crown Graphic Camera System, Stroboflash IV, and Strobomatic 250, 350 and 500. In addition, the distribution agreement on the Norita 6x6 Camera System has expired and these cameras will no longer be available from us.

As part of our decision to discontinue the manufacture of major photographic products, we must ask that you consider this letter as a notice of cancellation of the current dealer agreement between your firm and ours as of January 31, 1974. However, as I stated above, a program is being worked out whereby

-continued-

**WANT AD POLICY:**

*Any subscribers wishing to place a want ad selling or seeking Graflex-related items may send them to the GHQ for inclusion at no charge (at this time). The editors reserve final publication decisions.*

ALMOST FREE: 10 page list of books on camera collecting that contain images of Graflex products. Compiled by Mike Hanemann. Get a copy for \$1 postpaid to cover copying. See his address ar right side of page.

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**Graflex Historic Quarterly**

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