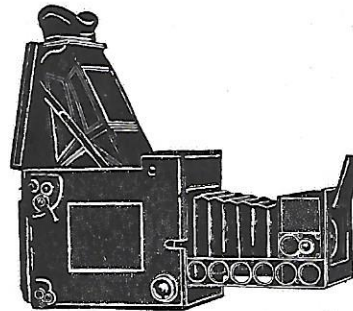


GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY



VOLUME 8 ISSUE 4

FOURTH QUARTER 2003

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A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE DARKROOM!

[Ed. After writing a column for ten years about the experiences of professional photographers in Canada, Margaret Lansdale assembled their anecdotes into an entertaining book. We sample here a few memories by Graflex-equipped press photographers.]

MAURICE J. (SLIM) BENT

Slim Bent of Toronto, Ont., had a hair raising experience with flash powder, to say the least. "The device I had to fire it with," says Slim, "was a little tray on a handle with a lighted wax match at one end and a quantity of powder located at the other end. The trick was to tip the tray forward to run the powder into the flame of the match. I held it over my head and tried it out but nothing happened. I shook it well still nothing happened. I brought it down to the level of my face to see what was the problem and that was when it went off... AND SO DID MY EYEBROWS!"

"Now you'd think once would be enough, but on another occasion I picked up a Speed Graphic camera with its flash gun and an extension flash, both of which were loaded with flash bulbs. I tried to gather up everything with one hand and must have pressed the trigger, because suddenly two

#22 flashbulbs went off into my face. For the next half hour I was wandering around blind as a bat."

Slim had the task to photograph 400 banquet guests at a large Toronto hotel. "I had the 8x10 camera set up and ready. It took ten of the big #50 flashbulbs, well spaced out, to light the ballroom. I coaxed the crowd into a pose and fired the shot; then, to my horror, saw that I had forgotten to pull the dark slide from the film holder. The photo was ruined so I quickly yelled, 'Hold everything I want to take another.' Luckily we had enough extra bulbs so my assistant and I ran around madly replacing a full set of ten bulbs; I made darn sure that the slide was out for the second shot. In those days that is what you called a 'back-up' when you went out on a job with 20 big flash bulbs and two sheets of film."

A photographer who worked with Slim was photographing a large banquet and chose to pre-wire his flashbulbs into the ballroom chandeliers. Each bulb had a black paper placed behind it so that the light would not flare back into the camera lens. Unfortunately, the photographer left no space between paper and bulb; so when he took the exposure the papers caught fire from the intense heat and showered the guests with flaming debris. It didn't go well with the formally dressed guests who scattered to get out of the way!

STEPHEN BISS

Steve Biss of Toronto, Ont., remembers the first assignment he was sent out on his own. "My boss sent me to photograph children crossing a road for a safety league brochure. I had a 4x5 Graflex at that time, equipped with a magazine that held 12 films. I photographed the whole darn eleven pictures on the first sheet of film. No one had explained to me that I must pull the exposed film

through to the back of the magazine before taking my next shot.

Steve continues, "At Brigdens, as was my habit when I loaded film, I would enter the darkroom with my hands full of empty holders then reach back with my foot and kick the door closed behind me. Well, on this particular day I reached the point where I must have done it once too often. I entered the room, kicked the door, closed my eyes as I turned out the lights and loaded a dozen 8 x 10 film holders. When I finished I turned around and saw, much to my horror, the door WIDE OPEN and light flooding in. A box had fallen to the floor and got in the way of the door, so it had opened again and I didn't know it! That 8x10 colour film, the whole box of it, was expensive to throw away."

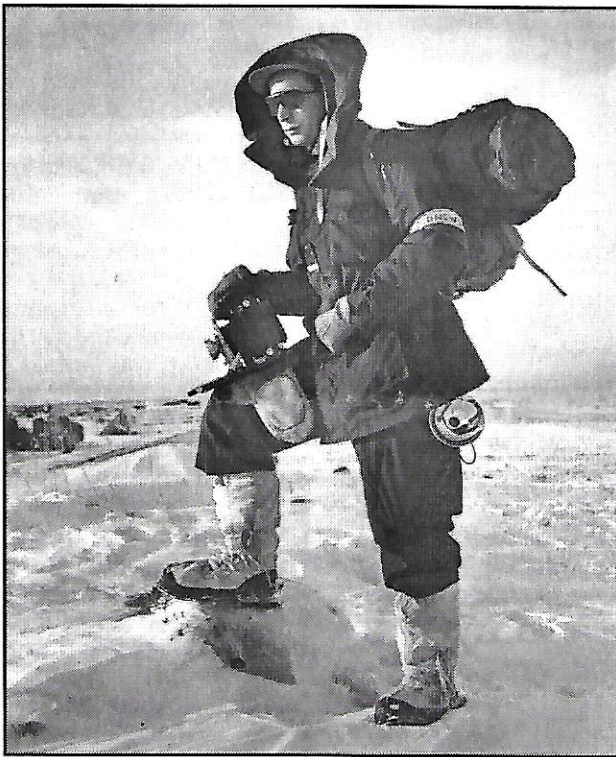
"I nearly fell off the top of a building trying to get a photo with my 4x5 Graflex. You looked down onto a mirror-image much like the Hasselblad. The image was reversed in direction and made it difficult to maintain balance while looking into the viewing hood. There was a man fixing telephone poles up in the air and I was required to get a picture. I compensated in the wrong direction and almost fell off the darn edge of the roof. The same thing came up again while photographing on a rolling boat. I compensated the wrong way and I fell into the water. That Graflex was completely wrecked!"

Steve Biss was in the Armed Services during WWII and was stationed in Ottawa. "They sent stuff into our section for printing that required 16x20 display prints for an exhibition. This time it was prints of flying bombers and when finished I turned them over to my spotter for retouching. She was very meticulous at her job and I instructed her to spot them carefully which on this job she did most thoroughly. Later, I got an irate phone call from a Squadron Leader chiding me, "You took out all the *** flak!"

"We just thought it had been a lousy negative with big dirt spots all over it."

ROBERT E. LANSDALE

A beer store clerk had been killed during a robbery in Toronto and the papers played the story for some time. It appeared to the police that it might have been an accidental shooting with a ricocheting bullet hitting the victim. The papers appealed to the gunman to give himself up. Phil Jones, reporter for the Globe & Mail, received an anonymous tip that the killer would meet him on a specific evening at Dufferin and St. Clair Avenue. Bob recalls, "At the appointed hour Phil, in his regulation reporter's raincoat, was waiting discreetly by the specified lamp-post. But mysteri-



In wintry Churchill, Manitoba, subscriber Robert Lansdale while shooting for Federal Newsphotos in the 1950s.

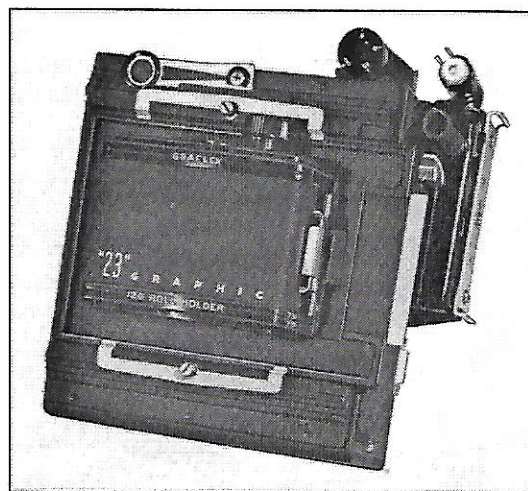
ously, the tip had been leaked to all the other papers and parading in the passing crowd were at least half a dozen of Toronto's recognizable press photographers. All were carrying shopping bags with their Speed Graphics and flash equipment hidden inside. I was determined to record this scenario somehow, so I hid my camera in a cardboard box and carried it to a vantage point on a streetcar safety island. I set the box on the ground, ostensibly to tie my shoelace, but uncovered a false panel and grabbed a time-exposure. Well, it turned out to be a false alarm and was, more likely, a prank by a fellow reporter. After several hours waiting and parading, we all adjourned to a restaurant to lower our disguises. That's when Phil admitted

he enjoyed watching the antics of his fellow pressmen trying to be invisible. We all tripped back to the scene to restage and photograph our memorable adventure as under cover agents."

RAY McFADDEN

At times being a press photographer can require putting your life on the line. Ray relates a story from the late 1940's when a drug store was robbed one evening. "A citizen reported two men with guns running through a cemetery so I rushed to the scene for pictures. On arriving, a posse of police, strung out in a line, was systematically

combing through the grave stones. It was an eerie scene, everything black except for the flashlight beams. The police with their guns drawn were slowly moving forward probing each darkened crevice. That's when I had a brilliant idea to position myself well out in front of the advancing line. I could already see the photo making the front page. I waited 'til a cluster of lights neared my position then took aim and fired my flash bulb. The gloom of the night instantly gave way to the brilliance of the bulb and therein I knew I had made an error. In that instance of light, I could see ten startled policemen swinging their guns in my direction. As the blackness returned I fully expected a hail of bullets to come whizzing towards me. I was quickly surrounded by a horde of policemen and berated by a tough sergeant for nearly getting my head blown off. He was right, it exemplified a news-photographer ignoring his own safety in the heat of a story. The search quickly switched to another location with a report one of the robbers had fired at a policeman. The gunman had missed but it sure scared a smooching couple when the bullet struck the side of their parked car. I think myself lucky as I might have stumbled into that very robber while roving ahead of the police."



Spring Kit

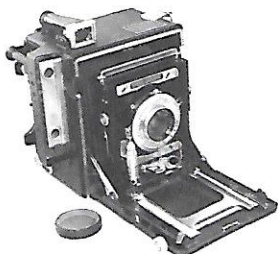
In response to the popularity and economy of 120 roll film, Graflex, in 1949, introduced an all-new 2¼ x 3¼ roll film back for their Century, Pacemaker and Crown Graphic cameras. Also in 1949, they introduced the Graflok back, which could be purchased with new cameras or added to pre-Anniversary and Anniversary models. For those interested in using the roll film back and unwilling to upgrade to a Graflok back, they offered an "economical spring kit," which could be used to "convert Graphic Backs to accept" the new roll holder.

The above illustration from a 1951 Graflex brochure, Want to Use Roll Film on Your Graphic or Graflex?, shows clips attached to a Pacemaker Speed Graphic. The spring kits were offered in two sizes (No. 9295 "23" for 2¼ x 3¼ and No. 9296 "Large" for 3¼ x 4¼ and 4x5) starting in 1949 and 1950 respectively, and discontinued in 1958. Though illustrated here in white, the actual springs have a black crackle finish. The kit consists of two spring clips and two large knurled headed machine screws (or ¼" round headed machine screws with the smaller kit), and were both priced at \$1.55.

Instructions for the smaller kit said the clips can be used for Graphic Film Pack Adapters; however, they cautioned that: "Although it is not intended to be readily interchangeable when those spring clips are used, the Graphic Roll Holder can be removed and the film pack adapter used interchangeably with it." As noted in the instructions, the springs could be used on backs with non-machine screws, but "frequent removal" was not recommended.

Experimentation suggests that exchanging the roll holder and the regular back is time consuming and, probably, not practical. It still is, however, a good way of converting a spring back camera to a 120 roll film camera.

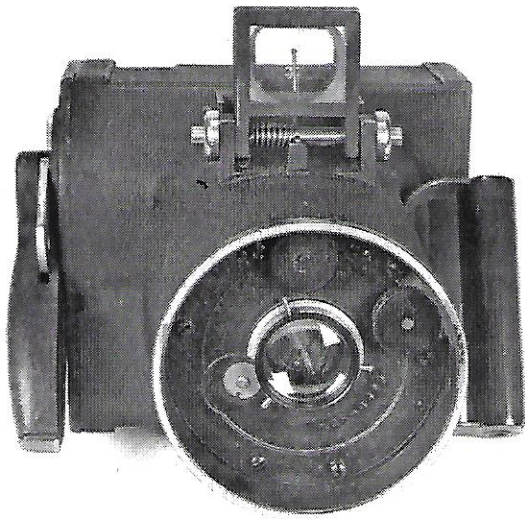
KM



SALE

3¼ x 4¼ Anniversary Speed Graphic (no. 299945), 127mm f4.7 Ektar, coated, in Supermatic X shutter, Kalart range-finder, Graphic back, all in good working order. Excellent appearance. \$125 plus postage.

Richard Paine, 3408 Hawthorne Road,
Fredericksburg, VA 22407
540-786-6410



U.S. Army Air Corps. K-20

By subscriber Ronn Tuttle

"I think this thing is bullet-proof," says the antiques dealer. Normally I am very skeptical of any information about cameras coming from antiques mall dealers, but this time he may have been right. I am accustomed to finding an occasional Speed or Graflex SLR in these haunts, but today was different there in all its radiant beauty was a Folmer Graflex U.S. Army Air Corps. Camera Aircraft Type K-20.

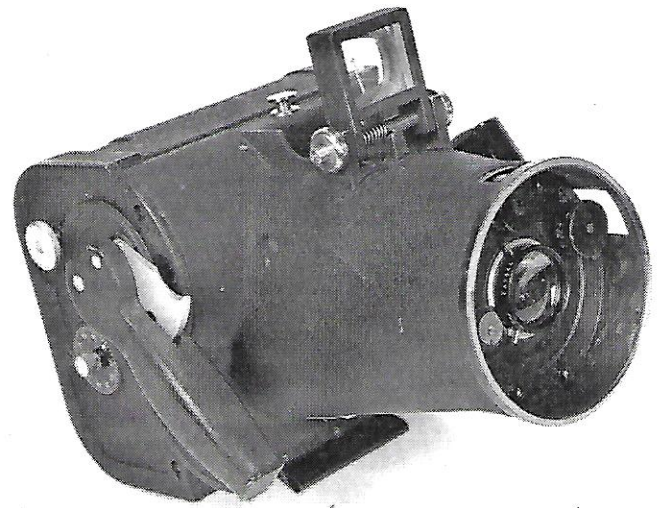
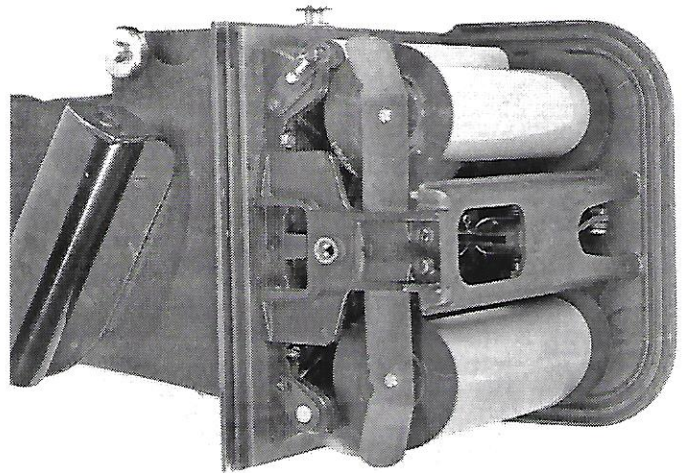
This would make a great addition to my Graflex shelf, so taking advice from a good friend, Sam, I just took "a few dollars from the grocery money" and the K-20 was mine.

Dating from 1941, this is a very well-built and designed piece of photographic history. Weighing 11¼ pounds, it makes 50 4x5 exposures on 5¼-inch wide roll film. Its features include a retractable pressure plate and a vacuum piston to hold the film flat, a 161mm, F4.5-22 Kodak lens focused at infinity, shutter speeds of 1/125, 1/250, and 1/500, exposure counter, and a data recorder that, in use, is much like the Graflex or Kodak autographic back. It is a devise that looks like a short dark slide with a transparent section on the end that records hand-written data on the negative edge. The camera has handgrips on each side with the one on the right serving as a shutter cocking and film advance lever.

Sure would be neat to find film for this beast, but then I would have to figure out how to process nearly 20 feet of film if only I had the Ver-

samat film processor we scrapped at work back in '88...

[Ed. Ronn took the accompanying pictures with his 2¼ x 3¼ Speed Graflex, fitted with an f4.5 101mm Ektar.]



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Rapid sequence pix on 4x5 neg. Manual action. With 6 3/8" f4.5 lens, shutter speeds to 1/500th. Used. Case 5.95

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Air Photo Supply Corp. ad from November 1957 issue of Popular Photography.

William Folmer Letter

By Ken Metcalf

Here is a three-page typewritten letter to George Eastman, signed by W. F. Folmer, from the archives of the George Eastman House.

THE FOLMER & SCHWING MFG. CO.
407 Broome Street
New York

7/14/05

Mr. George Eastman, Pres., Eastman Kodak Co.,
Rochester, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

We have completed our experimental models of the 4x5 & 5x7 "AUTO-GRAFLEX" Shutters, which will enable us to put on the market the "AUTO-GRAFLEX" Cameras in the 4x5 and 5x7 sizes, and we intend to substitute this style of camera for the Tourist model, just as soon as we dispose of the Tourist cameras in process of construction in our factory. These we will complete before moving.

We have also completed our models of Stereo Graflex, and regular Folding Stereo Graphic incorporating the new "AUTO" Focal Plane Shutter. As this shutter can be produced at much less than the regular Graphic Focal Plane Shutters, it will enable us to save considerable on the production of these cameras, and furthermore, this shutter is very popular with the users and it will greatly increase the sale of these cameras.

We have laid out a 4x5 Reversible Back Graflex incorporating the "AUTO" Focal Plane Shutter, which will greatly reduce the cost of this type of camera, as well as reduce its weight.

We propose to substitute this new model in 4x5 & 5x7 sizes for our present reversible back Graflex Cameras, as these models sell very well, the only objection to them being their weight.

MOVING:

As soon as the Century building is vacated by these White Metal Goods manufacturers, I think it advisable that the writer visit Rochester with our foreman, and lay out the position that our machinery is to occupy in the new factory, as I believe it quite essential that we keep our entire plant intact; in fact do all of our work on our own premises in order to insure accuracy and maintain our high standard of quality, but where parts can be made by the Century or any of the other branch factories at a lower cost than we can produce them ourselves, we could have such parts made outside.

I am afraid that if we attempt to have the bulk of the work done by the other factories, that we will have considerable trouble in assembling goods with any degree of perfection.

Your other factories, undoubtedly, have surplus milling and similar machines, which they could turn over to our branch, and thus avoid the necessity of purchasing any new machinery.

Regarding floor space, I do not recall how many floors these White Metal Goods people occupy in the Century building. I think we should have at least two floors, and possible part of another.

Yours very truly,

(W. F. Folmer)

After completing the sale of Folmer & Schwing Manufacturing to Eastman Kodak in April 1905, but before their move to Rochester in late August, William Folmer wrote several letters to George Eastman about patents, personal bonds, a certificate of organization, accounting, selling policies, new cameras and the setup of the new plant. This letter, I believe, has three interesting elements: camera production, moving and attitude.

For existing camera samples (and lack of samples) and ad illustrations, it appears that F&S Mfg. introduced the accordion hood Auto Graflex in 1905, in only the 3¼ x 4¼ size, which was the first time this size reflex-style camera was produced. According to the letter, it was next to be produced in 4x5 and 5x7 sizes, to replace the Tourist model. Interestingly, Folmer gives cost, and later weight, as the reasons for using the new shutter, but avoids his older shutter's mechanical problems.

Also, Folmer writes about the introduction of the 4x5 reversible back Auto Graflex, with no mention of the revolving back, which would replace the reversible back within a year. In addition, the letter states that a 5x7 reversible back Auto Graflex was in the works, but it was never produced.

The "moving" part of the letter is interesting because of the details that are given about the planning process.

To me, the third element of the letter, attitude, is as interesting as the rest of the letter. According to Reese Jenkins in *Images & Enterprise*, George Eastman wanted to "institutionalize technological innovation" and wanted Folmer (and others) "to play increasingly important roles in camera and production design and development." Thus, in addition to the purchase of the newly developed reflex camera, Eastman wanted to "purchase" Folmer. Several observations:

1. There is no indication in the letter that it was typed by someone other than Mr. Folmer. There are several strikeovers and misspellings. If I were writing the president of Eastman Kodak, I would have proofed and retyped the letter!

2. In the "moving" section, Folmer suggests that the Century or other factories could make parts, but forcefully states that "perfection," could be better attained by F&S doing all the work. In one paragraph he asks Eastman for donation of spare milling machines, to avoid the need to purchase new machinery. Obviously, he had made up his mind that that was preferable to making parts in other factories.

As with any item of this nature, different conclusions can be drawn and are welcome. Comments will be published in the next issue of the Quarterly.

Lenses - Everyone Has An Opinion

By J.C. Welch

Part 2

Lenses - everyone has an opinion! Photographers tend to debate lens quality as much as drivers argue about cars: Tessar versus Ektar, Ford versus Chevrolet - the controversy goes on. As usual, the factors getting more complex do not diminish the simplicity of the viewpoint.

For starters, there are several major issues that get in the way of appreciating actual lens quality, so the whole argument may be spurious. Camera shake is one of the first things to interfere with picture sharpness. It affects everyone from the parent holding a point-and-shoot to the pro gripping a Hasselblad. The standard admonition to put the equipment on a tripod can't always be followed; the largest group of Graflex users was newspaper photographers who seldom were able to take the time to steady their shots.

Getting things in exact focus has always been a challenge, especially since many pictures have objects in different planes. Modern autofocus cameras have not solved this problem, and the use of wide apertures only increases it. With manually set Graflexes, exposure also affected picture outcome, and if too far from optimum, it really degraded even the best optic's image.

Furthermore, the intended use of a photograph changes the whole issue; if a newspaper is going to print most images in original size (such as 4x5" from a 4x5" negative), lens quality is moot. At that point, even a meniscus lens is fine! Then too, what is important in the image: will it be well-toned sharpness and good composition, or maybe just the fact that a vital moment in time has been captured?

And finally we have to admit that lens choices are subjective. It may be that important issues such as resolution and various design flaws (such as astigmatism, chromatic aberration, and distortion) can be measured. But certainly different users have different standards as to what they find acceptable. A high degree of sharpness is valued by most users, but portrait photographers may even want to defeat this quality. Pros of the 1980s and 1990s valued contrast in lenses, because it printed well in magazines. Landscape artists often shunned the same equipment in favor of older optics rich in middle tones.

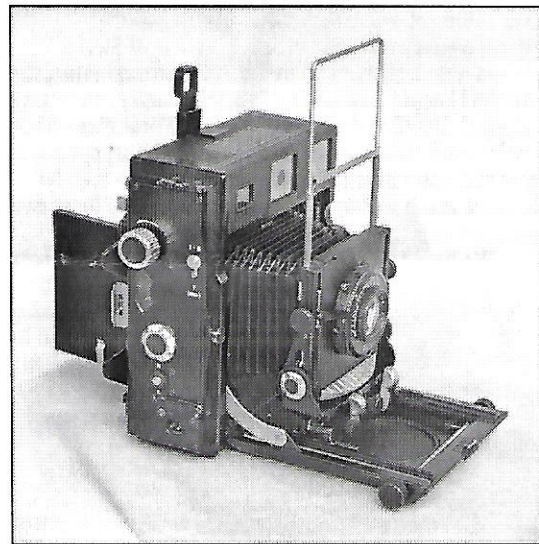
Having shown that judging lenses can be confusing, I'd like to put forth that certain factors - in

general - rise to the top of the list of important attributes. In upcoming discussions of various optics, I suggest that sharpness and freedom from optical defects are important because of this: you may not always need them, but sometimes you most definitely want them. To continue the auto analogy, such qualities might be compared to speed and quick handling. This becomes apparent when passing a truck on a two-lane road.

Is this series of articles going to come up with a "Best lens for a Graflex?" No, but it will give the reader some good suggestions.

Next time: Naming names; the good, bad, and ugly

Letters to the Editor...



Regarding Tim Holden's answer to the question about the Beseler connection, camera repair specialist Ken Toda sent this picture of his military 4x5 press Beseler, which was mentioned in Tim's article. In a future article, Ken will compare this camera to the Pacemaker Speed Graphic.

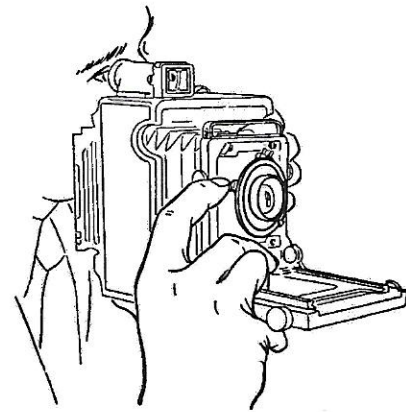
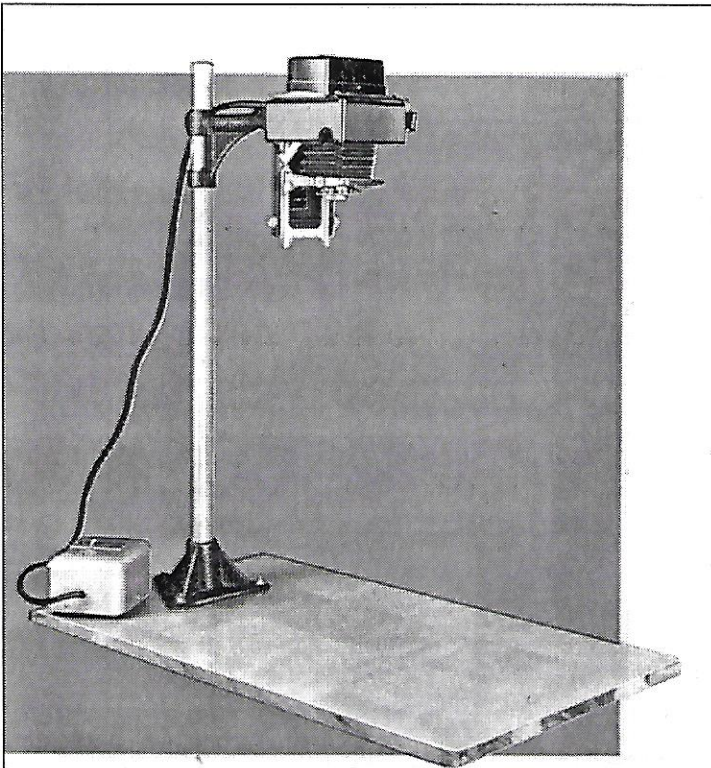
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GRAFLEX graphics.

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1954 brochure.

The salesman who makes the most convincing demonstration from the opening to the close is usually the one that ends up with the sale. He is the one who knows the product intimately and makes the demonstration of each feature natural and simple.

The illustration shows the correct manner of holding the Century Graphic when demonstrating and shooting. It is convenient and natural; an important part of your Century Graphic demonstration. The bed of the camera is hooked under the thumb and little finger, the fore-finger trips the shutter while the other two fingers brace the camera.

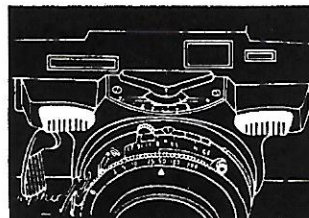
If you are using a different method than this, try this method. You'll find it both natural and convincing, helping to carry you smoothly through each demonstration.

Trade Notes, January 1958

Thousands are buying the only camera with

PUSH-BUTTON FOCUSING

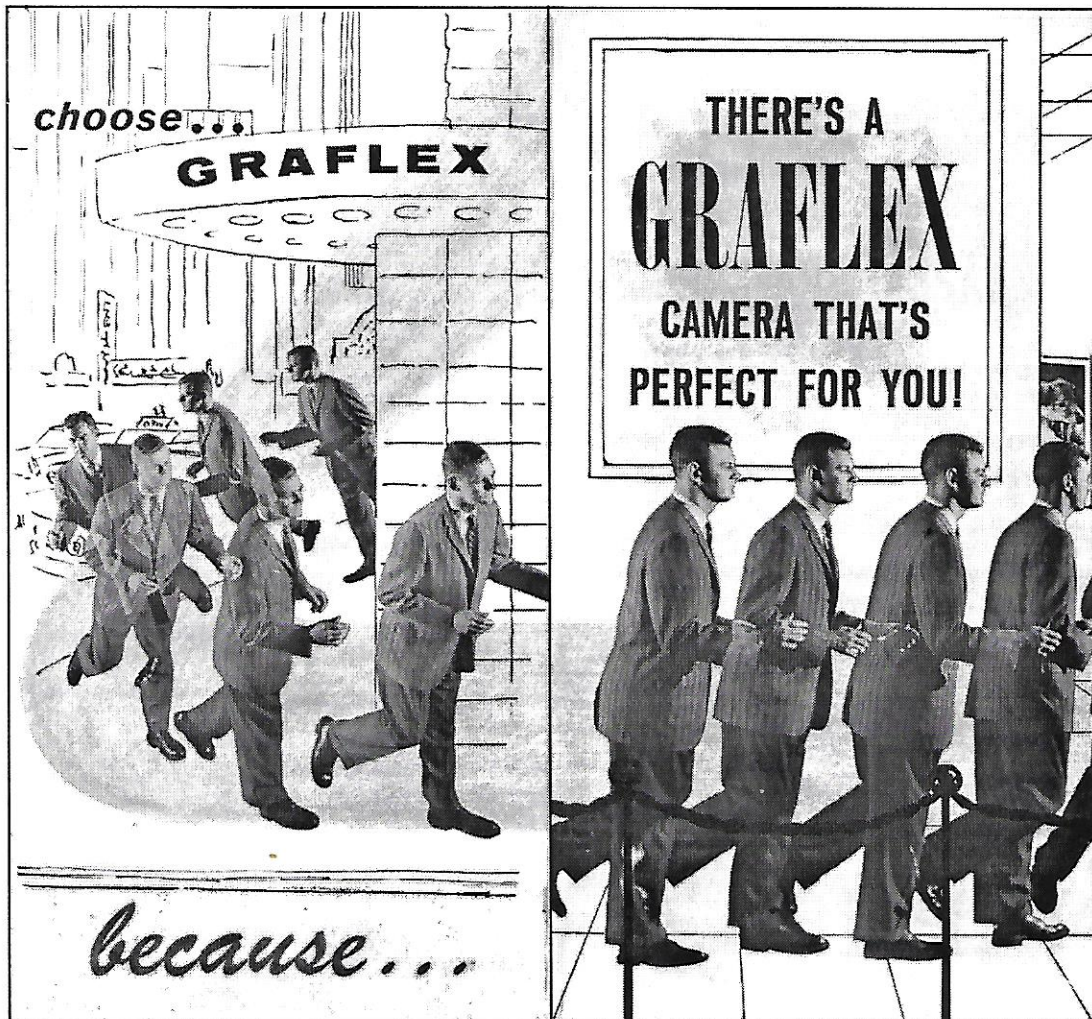
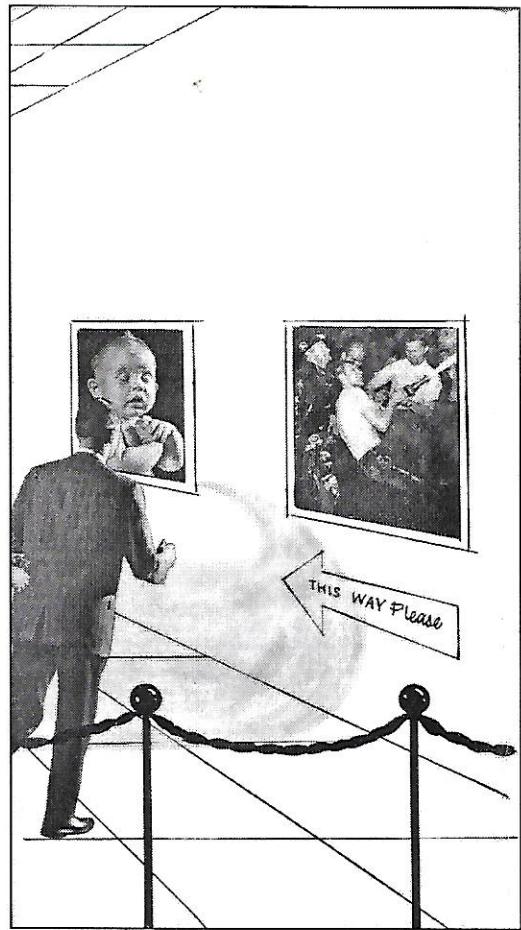
THE GRAPHIC® 35



October 1955
U.S. Camera

**THERE'S A
GRAFLEX
CAMERA
IN HERE
THAT'S
JUST RIGHT
FOR YOU**

1962 mail brochure that opens with graphics shown clockwise from above.





Ask Tim Holden....

You were involved with the military in the development of the Graphic "70" camera.

Could you tell us some stories about your dealings with the military?

I can't tell you very much about that. That was in the military end of the Engineering Department. I had no direct connection with it. It was under G. C. Whitaker's direction, along with Vernon Whitman, who was hired from Carl Zeiss of New York City just as the war broke out. They went out of business, and he came to Rochester. He had two or three degrees and was a PhD. He was married to a German woman and spoke German fluently. As a matter of fact, right after the war, when American photographic industries were sending people to Europe to go through the remains of various photographic plants in Germany to see what they could grab, Whitman was the one that Graflex sent. He was very careful to not let his knowledge of German be known, so that when he went through the plants and the people working there were making comments, he was able to understand what was going on, which made for quite a different report in the evening.

The 70 millimeter camera was designed by Hubert Nerwin. He was the one who designed the later editions of the Contax cameras. Therefore, the Graphic "70" was known as the giant Contax. Graflex was working to develop a contract with the Signal Corp, or maybe they had a contract to develop this camera which would produce a picture smaller than 4x5 and would be easier to handle and faster to use. The camera was supposed to be relatively inexpensive and used for combat purposes. However, every time we went down to the Signal Corp lab in the mountains of Pennsylvania and showed the camera, they liked it very much but then said, "Now, can you do this? Can you add this? Can you add that?" They had quite a bit of trouble dealing with the military, because every time they saw the camera, they wanted something else. One time the camera was supposed to be made waterproof, so when they got the sample, they took it apart, looked it over, and put it back together. Low and behold, it wasn't waterproof, but it had been before they had messed around with it. We did investigate lenses. The government indicated the focal length they wanted, and we got samples and reviewed them, samples from Kodak, Wollensak, and I think probably Ilex, but I'm not sure. The wide angle lens made by Wollensak was superior to the one made by Kodak, but Kodak's other two lenses, the normal and the telephoto, were slightly superior

to the Wollensak, so they got the contract for all three lenses. The net result is that the camera became more and more elaborate and expensive until finally, around 1952, G. C. and the engineer called a halt to the whole proceedings and said, "You will take it like this or else." According to our serial number book, it appears we made about 500, plus possibly a few overruns which were made in black. Those were the ones we sold. I think there were something like 13, but it might have been 28, but there weren't many of them.

Why was the Miniature Speed Graphic focal plane shutter synchronized for flash and not the 3¼x4¼ and 4x5 Anniversary cameras?

The focal plane shutter traveled vertically at the back of the camera. It took a given length of time for the aperture to clear first the top of the film, and then the bottom of the film. The flash lamps had a very short peak of flash, meaning that there was a steep curve going up and a fairly long curve going down, although both Sylvania and G.E. made long peak flash lamps. These were quite useful and did help in the permitted use of the focal plane shutter for flash photography. The Miniature Speed Graphic camera, having a very short dimension, could use several shutter speeds and if used with the long peak flash lamps, number 31 or 2A, would provide an evenly exposed negative or at least sufficiently evenly exposed. The 4x5 and 3¼x4¼ cameras had a greater distance to cover. To do so, you had to wind the shutter to a top speed and then let it run down two positions, then wind it up again, and repeat that six times until the shutter was "packed." Then when you tripped it, you had a reasonable expectation that when the curtain came down, it would synchronize satisfactorily with the peak of the long peak flash lamps. They could use and expose film with the other shutter speeds, but they would not be evenly or satisfactorily exposed. Incidentally, the only interest in the camera other than the 2¼x3¼ was the 4x5, since the 3¼x4¼ camera lost favor during the war, when only 4x5 cameras were used. Consequently no parts were made to permit synchronizing the 3¼ x 4¼ size.

Could you tell us something about the tooling on the leather of Graflex cameras?

Tooling on cameras (bellows and the camera covering) was all done by hand by a group of skilled women using tools made of bone. Moroccan leather was the easiest to work. During the war, due to shortage of this leather, the company experimented with kid leather, which proved unsatisfactory. Later, synthetic covering could not be tooled.

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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FOR SALE -- GRAPHIC/GRAFLEX GRAB BAG

- (1) Graflex 3-1/4 x 4-1/4 Sheet Film Magazine, EX
- (2) Graflex 4 x 5 Sheet Film Magazines, FAIR (Outside rough, but complete & working -- One has holes in leather bag)
- (1) 4 x 5 Graphic Polaroid Roll Film Back (no focusing spacer), EX
- (1) Graphic Optical Tubular Viewfinder, w/parallax correction (no mounting clip), EX
- (1) Graflite 3-cell battery case with clamps & 5-inch adjustable reflector, EX
- (1) Extra Graflite 5-inch adjustable reflector head with hinged plastic safety shield, VG
- (1) Extra Pair of Graflite battery case mounting clamps, EX
- (1) Extra Graflite battery case tube (painted black, no inside parts or cap), AS-IS
- (3) Graflite extensions (short case 'top end' w/bulb & cord sockets), EX+ to LN
- (2) Cat. 2805 Short Jumper Cords (90°AC plug to 90°AC plug), LN in orig. pkg.
- (2) 15 Ft. Long Jumper Cords (90°AC plug to 90°AC plug), LN
- (3) 3 Ft. Coiled Sync Cords (ASA Bi-post to 90°AC plug), EX to LN, (1 in orig. pkg.)
- (1) 6 Ft. 2/C Strobomatic power cord with combo connectors (1 pin & 1 socket) on ea. end, LN
- (1) 20 Ft. Strobomatic Y-cord as above to connect two heads from one power pack, LN
- (1) Graphic (not Graflite) Spring back frame w/ rear sight & aux. spring kit (no panel), VG

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