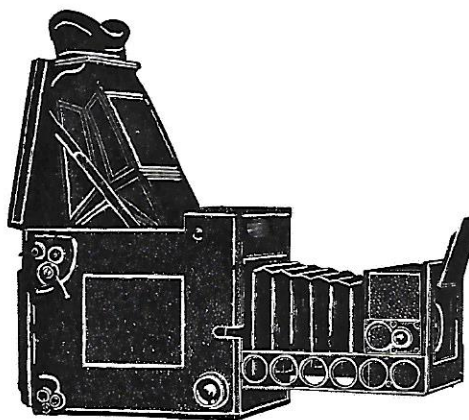


GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY



VOLUME 9 ISSUE 3

THIRD QUARTER 2004

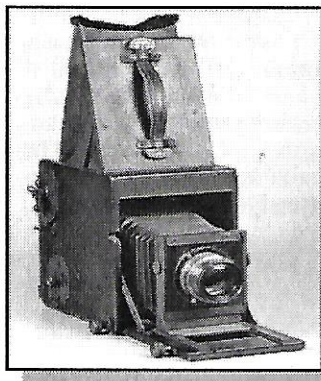
FEATURES

Pictorialism and the Graflex by Jim Flack.....1
 Development, Dominance, Decline and Disappearance
 of the Large Press Camera - The 4x5 Graphic, Part 2,
 by T.T. Holden.....4
 A National Graflex Mystery by Jerry Spiegel6
 Ask Tim Holden.....7
 Go Figure! - Who Invented the Speed Graphic?8

Pictorialism and the Graflex

By Jim Flack

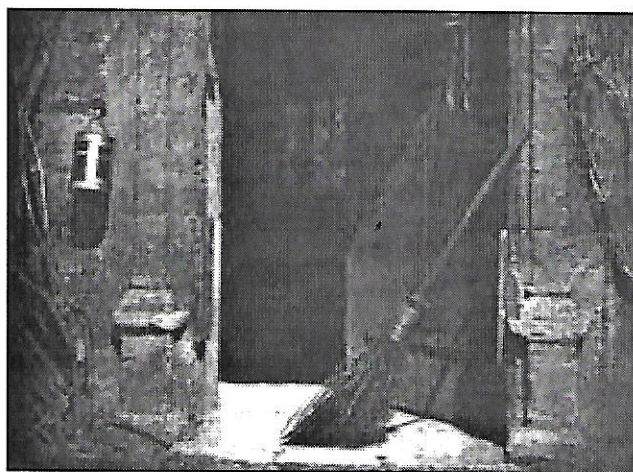
Graflex SLR cameras often were the preferred instrument used by well-known pictorialist photographers in the early 20th Century and are still preferred by many photo-pictorialists today. This is so surprising since the design features of Graflex SLRs and the market Folmer & Schwing intended for these cameras were virtually the antithesis of pictorial photography's artistic style and philosophy. The design of the Graflex SLR was intended primarily for professional photographers who required high quality, reliable photographic equipment. These were the tools professionals used to earn their livelihood. The Graflex SLR was especially well-suited for news photographers and commercial photographers who needed to get their equipment on location, set up quickly and get their shot, often while the subject in the scene was in action. The Graflex SLR proved itself invaluable for newspaper sports photographers, because they could view the action through their camera and follow-focus on the subject right up to the instant the shutter was released.



Alfred Stieglitz's personal
Auto Graflex

Pictorial photographers of the early 20th Century referred to themselves as amateur photographers, from the Latin word, *amare*, meaning "to love." They considered themselves "artists" and disdained those who earned their living by photography. How can the Graflex SLR, designed for professional use in action and news photography, become such a favorite among pictorial photographers as well? Let's look first into the history and philosophy of pictorial photography.

William Henry Fox Talbot's inspiration for the invention of photography came from his attempts at plein air painting during country outings with his artistic wife. Trained as a scientist, Fox Talbot's frustration with his attempts to reproduce the image he saw with his camera lucida motivated him to imagine a chemical means to capture the image optically focused on paper. Thus, photography was born with the artistic intent of Fox Talbot to create pictorial images. The simple beauty and composition of Fox Talbot's experiments in the 1840s clearly show his aesthetic intentions for photography.



"The Open Door" by Fox Talbot, circa 1843

The technology of photography continued to advance, and photography's ability to capture an enormous amount of detail from actual scenes that no painter's hand could capture soon became the primary motivation for photography's commercial suc-

cess. Travel guides and armchair tourist books were illustrated with gravures from photographs of famous buildings and locales, and were published in large numbers. The increasing popularity of stereo photographs on view-cards from the 1870s through the 1890s also emphasized photography's ability to capture the realism and detail of scenes from far-away places. And, itinerate portrait photographers traveling from town to town would capture the photographic likeness of anyone who could afford their modest fee. Then, with the introduction of roll film by Kodak for low-cost cameras and the bicycle craze of the gay '90s, every Tom, Dick and Harriet became a snap-shooter at the picnic. The artists' sensibility and the early photographers' knowledge and skill with cameras and photochemistry were all but forgotten. They just pushed the button, Kodak did the rest.

However, some experienced photographers continued to pursue photography as their means of artistic expression. These pictorialists did not emphasize photography's ability to capture details of a scene as a photographic record. Their images emphasized mood, composition and tonal range, much like the other artists of their day. English landscape painters, such as Constable and Turner, had brought a new style of painting that was seen as more natural and expressive of the imagination and character of the artist himself. The French Impressionist painters explored the interplay between light and human perception. Composition was carefully crafted. Not everything was represented in sharp detail. The pictorial photographer felt kinship with these other artists and estranged from the mainstream of popular photography.



From Stieglitz's emotional series "Equivalents"

As early as 1887, pictorial photography was being exhibited along with paintings, etchings and other artwork in galleries in Europe. Alfred Stieglitz, an American who studied photography and photochemistry under the famous scientist, Dr. Vogel in Germany, returned to New York as a skilled and gifted photographer himself and with a passion to see photography accepted as a fine art. There was a lot of resistance to the idea of photography as a fine art, primarily because

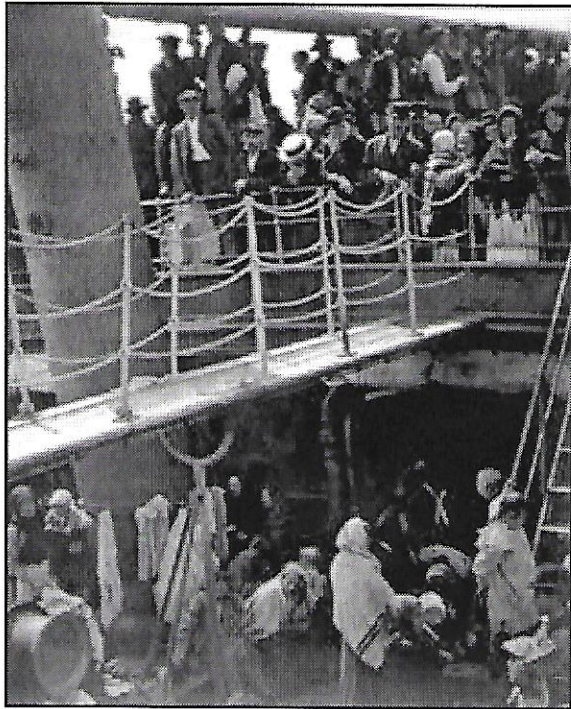
of the common belief that it is the camera that makes the photograph, and the photographer's role is limited to pointing, focusing and pushing the button on the camera.

To counter this resistance, several accomplished pictorial photographers in Europe formed a group called the Linked Ring, and shortly thereafter, Alfred Stieglitz formed a similar group of American pictorial photographers who called themselves the Photo-Secession. The term, *Photo-Secession*, was intended to imply that they were seceding from the mainstream of commonplace photographers of their day. The Linked Ring and the Photo-Secession groups established their own exhibitions of photographic work and produced their own publications about photography and its potential among the fine arts. They emphasized the pictorial qualities of composition, tone and mood, just as in fine art painting, and affirmed pictorial photography as a fine art.

Unlike their contemporary button pushers, pictorial photographers were careful and deliberate photographers who mastered their camera. Understanding and facility with the camera's controls were essential to producing pictorial photographs. The features of the Graflex SLR camera are excellent for the pictorial photographer. In any picture, whether painting or photograph, composition is of paramount importance. For the painter, this is a matter of organization on his canvas, and when painting from nature, it is also a matter of what to include and what to leave out of the painting. For the pictorial photographer, composition is controlled by the selection of lens and then, ultimately, by the placement of the camera. The range of lenses available for the Graflex SLR and, more importantly, its self-contained portability and ease of set-up are of great advantage. Pictorial photographers often use a longer-than-normal lens for a variety of reasons, including the ability to be more selective in composition around a subject. Of course, with a long lens, camera placement has a much greater effect on composition than if using a wide-angle lens. It is not unusual to see a pictorial photographer wandering for several minutes seeking the correct vantage point for his pictorial composition.

The right-side-up through-the-lens image in the viewfinder of the Graflex SLR is a wonderful feature for the pictorial photographer who is intent on critical composition. The right-side-up view makes it easy to quickly check the composition as the camera is moved from point to point until the perfect location for pictorial composition is selected.

The through-the-lens view is also important. A pictorial photographer is intentionally selective about focus and depth-of-field. The sharpness of focus and depth-of-field have an important influence on the emphasis and mood of a pictorial photograph. The pictorialist will want the principle subject to be focused precisely to the degree of sharpness that best conveys the meaning or mood of the photograph, and no sharper. The pictorialist may also want details surrounding the subject to be subordinated by softer focus through control of depth-of-field.



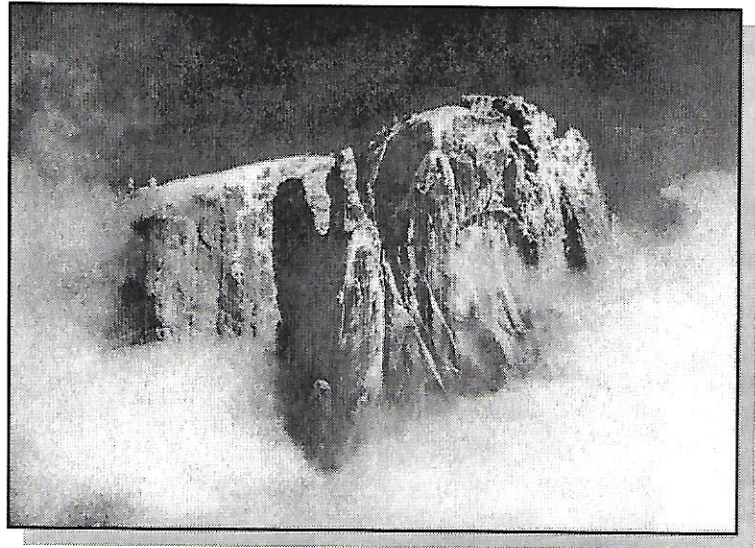
Stieglitz's "Steerage" emphasizes composition.

The Graflex SLR allows the pictorial photographer to view his composition on the ground glass and adjust focus and depth-of-field carefully and precisely before making his image. The technique is called selective focus. Because optical depth-of-field diminishes as the image plane and the lens focal length are increased, the Graflex SLR offers a range of pictorial control by selective focus that cannot be matched by smaller 35mm SLR cameras.

From the 1890s until the 1930s, pictorialism dominated the photographic art world. So many famous names in photography, including Stieglitz, White, Strand, Steichen, Coburn, Cameron, Day, Demachy and Missonne, are associated with the emergence of photography as a fine art through pictorialism, that it obscures the fact that literally thousands of photographers the world-over were deeply involved in this style of personal photographic expression called pictorialism. The American Salon movement of the 1920s and 1930s brought enthusiasm for pictorial photography to virtually every camera club in every town in America. Unfortunately, under the cloud of conflict during World War II, the romantic, poetic spirit of pictorial photography lost its bloom.

Some of the most gifted and famous pictorial photographers used a Graflex SLR camera. Alfred Stieglitz, considered the founding father of pictorial photography in America, used an Auto Graflex for his emotional series of cloud photographs that he called "Equivalents," as well as his most famous photograph entitled "Steerage." Much later in the 20th Century, the founders of The New Pictorialist Society, such as Edward H. Romney, re-discovered the Graflex SLR to be a fine instrument for pictorial

photography. In addition to his pictorial photography, Ed Romney wrote extensively about the Graflex SLR to encourage its practical use today.



"Peeking Over Clouds" - Bromoil by Jim Flack made using a Graflex SLR and telephoto lens

The New Pictorialist Society was formed in 1969 to serve as a catalyst to rejuvenate interest in the aesthetic style and philosophy of pictorial photography. Photographers today are re-discovering photography as an artist's tool to express a range of perceptions and emotions not limited by the catechism of straight photography. The original pictorialists often employed "control techniques" such as platinum, gum bichromate, carbon or bromoil printing because they offered a high degree of control and personal expression in the creation of the final image. Pictorialists of the 21st Century often employ these same techniques for the very same reason, control and personal expression, although today all of these techniques are called "alternative" photographic processes.

The New Pictorialist Society just completed its Spring 2004 exhibition entitled "Expressive Images - Intimate Photography." A few of the images in that exhibit were made using the pictorial photographer's favorite Graflex SLR. Designed as a high quality tool for professional and news photographers at the beginning of the last century, the Graflex SLR also has been proven for over a hundred years to be an invaluable instrument in the hands of the pictorial photographer.

For more information about the New Pictorialist Society, see their website at www.pictorialist.org, or contact their executive director, Jim Flack, at pictorialist@pacbell.net.

Copyright 2004 - James F. Flack

Development, Dominance, Decline and Disappearance of the Large Press Camera - The 4x5 Graphic

Part 2

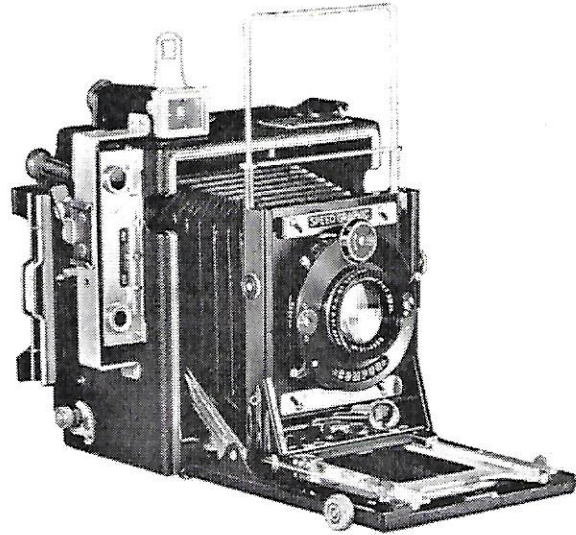
By T.T. Holden

Although the coupled rangefinder was introduced in 1938, it should be noted that, originally, all photographers had to rely on the ground glass focusing screen at the back of the camera for proper focus and composition (except those using the Graflex camera). To be sure, cameras were fitted with a focusing scale matching the lens fitted to the camera and attached to the front bed. However, many continued to prefer to check the ground glass, just to make sure.

Many followed this tradition with the Speed Graphics. Since this slowed down the taking of action pictures resulting in lost opportunities, it was known that the chief of photographers at one newspaper deliberately broke the ground glass in all of the staff's cameras, insisting that the men learn to estimate distances accurately and set the lens according to the focusing scale. It was indeed amazing how accurate these photographers could be! Hence, when the coupled rangefinder became available, it is understandable that many photographers were reluctant to use, or admit that they used, it. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the new news photographers who were quite vocal about their disregard for the rangefinder would show up at the Graflex New York Service Department to have the rangefinder checked for accuracy before going out on an important assignment.

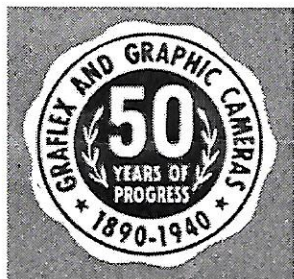
Over the years, the Speed Graphic cameras came to be adopted by not only the press photographers, but also by those engaged in varying forms of professional and commercial photography. Indeed, as late as the 1960s, it could be truthfully stated that anyone interested in good photography was using, or had at some time used, a Speed Graphic camera. The sight of a Speed Graphic in hand lent credence to one's devotion to good photography, and it was not unusual for an owner of either size camera to merely raise the camera over his head and gain entrance to a sporting event or other activity otherwise requiring scarce tickets for admission.

As a result of such extended use, it became evident that the Speed Graphic needed redesign. This was started in 1930 and was carried on to a greater extent in 1940.



The 1940 model included a number of features which had been built into the 2¼x3¼ Miniature Speed Graphic, introduced in 1939, which achieved almost instant popularity in the non-professional marketplace. This was the first Speed Graphic with a focal plane shutter synchronized for flash photography. The shutter had a shorter curtain travel, which allowed the use of quite a number of shutter speeds with the various long peak bulbs available. This aroused interest in the possible use of the #31 bulbs with a limited number of shutter speeds in the larger models. Mendelsohn and Kalart made such devices. Graflex responded by making special parts for the back of the camera and a special curtain. This was on a special order basis, applying to new as well as customers' cameras. If the user gave special attention to the setting of the shutter curtain, the #31 bulbs could be used very well with a limited number of top speeds. One problem with the early synchronizers for the front shutter was the size of the device, which had to be attached to or fitted to the front shutter. Most had to be removed, and the rest were just large enough to introduce the possibility of forcing the front standard, with lens out of proper alignment when the front bed was closed. In 1940 Graflex developed its own make of synchronizer with a solenoid for tripping the shutter, small enough to be left in place without danger of damage. However, by that time materials were becoming scarce, since although we were not officially at war, Lend Lease was the order of the day. Consequently, the Graflex synchronizers were fitted to cameras going out on military orders, and few if any were available for the news photographers or the general public.

The 1940 model of the 4x5, and 3¼x4¼ size which was used by many advanced amateurs and a very few newspapers, were given the name "Anniversary," since at the time, the earliest known date of camera activity for the Folmer & Schwing Manufacturing Co. was believed to be 1890 (Later, evidence surfaced showing the company's involvement in cameras at least as early as 1887.). The new model included a much sturdier front standard with the open frame finder telescoping instead of folding down over the lens and shutter, as in earlier models. The front track on the bed was linked to a sliding track in the camera body, allowing easier use of wide-angle lenses. A dual control helical rack-and-pinion focusing track was borrowed from the Miniature Speed Graphic. Internal construction was strengthened, allowing for the heavy-duty use these cameras were getting. Many of the metal parts, such as the open frame finder and lensboard slide locks, were given a bright finish, instead of the traditional gray paint. A bright trim was added to the front of the body to enhance its appearance, since chrome finish was the order of the day.



This response to visual appeal soon gave way to all black, which included the face plate of front shutters, since the 4x5 Speed Graphic became the standard issue for the photo departments of all of the countries allied with the U.S. in World War II. Bright finish and reflecting parts were deemed a hazard.

During the War years, production facilities all over were dedicated to the needs of the military, and Graflex was included. Production of the 4x5 Anniversary models leaped from a few thousand per year to production orders of 3,000 and 4,000 six to eight weeks apart, and the factory was in operation 24 hours a day.

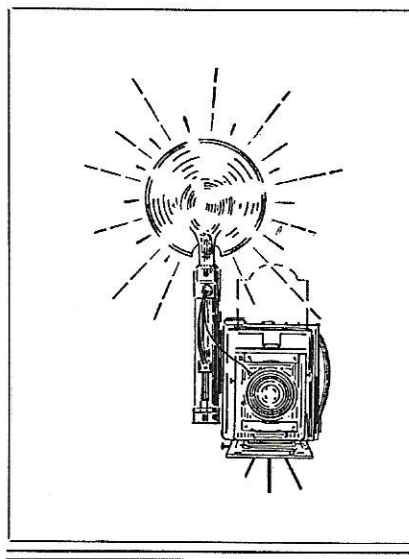
Since the very popular German-made Zeiss Tessar was no longer available, American manufacturers rose to the occasion, and Graflex used lenses and shutters made principally by Kodak, Ilex and Wollensak, the latter bearing the names Optar for the lenses and Graphex for the shutters.

In 1940 Graflex had coined the term "Prize Win-

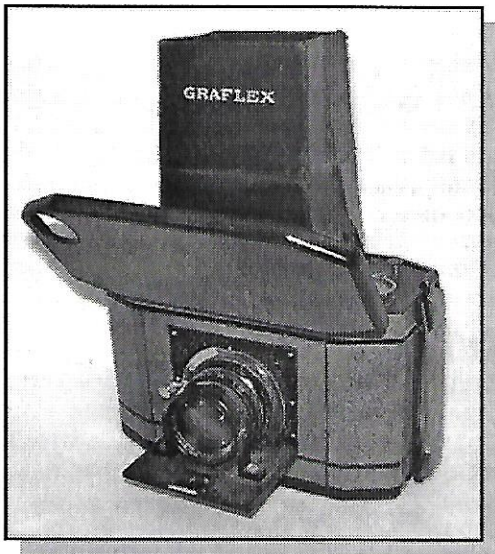
ning Cameras." Actually, it meant prize-winning pictures were made with these cameras. This slogan was based on the fact that all photo contests held by various news organizations, including the fledgling National Press Photographers Association, revealed that most, if not all, of the winning pictures were made with Speed Graphic cameras. In advertising nothing succeeds like success, and Graflex used this idea to the hilt. Coincidentally, Graflex held its own photo contest from which it obtained a wonderful supply of outstanding pictures for display in Graflex dealers' stores and in advertising, as well as the new 400-page book, Graphic Graflex Photography, published by Morgan and Lester. This book went through many editions and printings.

During the years of WW II, advertising by any company was limited to "institutional," rather than specific product promotion. In joint action with the Public Relations Department of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the Navy, Graflex assembled at least two complete sets of outstanding action pictures for use in dealers' stores, and this, of course, was considered to help the war effort. Incidentally, dealers had virtually no products to put in their show windows to attract customers for whatever scarce items were available without "priority rating." Naturally, all of the pictures, except a few aerials used in these displays, were made by Speed Graphic cameras.

When peace was finally declared, thousands of GIs, who had been trained in photography using the 4x5 Speed Graphic, returned wanting to enter photography in one way or another and, of course, wanting to use the camera so familiar to them.



Cover illustration from 1936 Mendelsohn Speedgun Photography brochure



A National Graflex Mystery

By Jerry Spiegel

We are, of course, all familiar with the Series I and Series II Nationals, and the time frames associated with each - Series I (early 1930s) and Series II (mid 1930s). We also know what these cameras looked like - black leather covering with black enamel edges at the top and the bottom, and brushed aluminum feature strips, top and bottom.

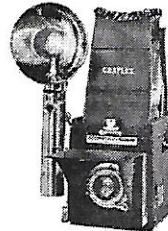
It now appears that there was yet another version of this camera - found at a New England flea market with case and manual a few years ago. This example is not in black leather, but in what appears to be a tan, leather-grained plastic of some type. This covering is die cut and not some form of replacement and includes the end handle. Although the top and bottom black enamel edges are retained, the two brushed aluminum feature strips have been finished in the same black enamel. Actually, quite a handsome body, but by whom, when and why?

Looking further, we see that the little shutter speed plate on the rear of the focusing hood does say "National Graflex Series II," but at the bottom, "Folmer Graflex Corp." has been replaced with "Graflex Inc." - a firm that didn't exist until 1946 - about ten years after the Series II was introduced. Could this hood have been a replacement? Apparently not, because looking through the Series II manual accompanying the camera, we find on page 30, advertising for other Graflex products that didn't appear until the late 1940s. So, we can now assume that this camera was marketed sometime in the late 1940s and sold with new exterior finishes, and by Graflex.

That leaves the "why" of it all. Removing the back

Other Graflex Favorites

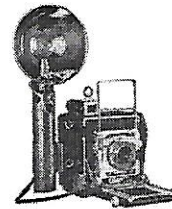
R. B. Series B GRAFLEX, 2¼x3¼.
Reliable, practical, popular. Multi-speed focal plane shutter up to 1/1000 plus Time equipped with 127mm Kodak Ektar f/4.5 lens with coated elements. Uses sheet film and film packs.



R. B. Series D GRAFLEX
Deservedly popular because of its all around utility. GRAFLEX focal plane shutter with full range of speeds. Available with lens in automatic diaphragm and with coated elements. Provision for flash synchronization. Made in sizes 3¼x4¼ and 4x5.

Speed and Crown GRAPHICS

Approved and praised by press, commercial and amateur photographers everywhere. Ground glass focusing with 2 types of viewfinders, double extension bellows, body release, sturdy construction and countless other features. In Speed GRAPHICS, new focal plane shutters with direct readings from 1/30 to 1/1000 plus Time. Sizes 2¼x3¼, 3¼x4¼ and 4x5.



30

of the camera, we can see the serial number "204516" stamped into the cast aluminum base - a number consistent with a mid-1930s origin, not with the late 1940s. So, what we really have here is a camera actually manufactured in the mid-1930s, but not marketed until roughly 12 years later, but with a different finish. My feeling is that Graflex probably had unsold Series II bodies from the mid 1930s and thought they could get rid of them in the post-war era, when they were already obsolete. Obviously, it didn't work, and one then wonders just how many of these refinished bodies they were stuck with and where they are today - great collectibles!

Restoration Tip

Regarding small nicks in glossy natural wood finishes: I have a weird thing that I got years ago, called the Tibet Almond Stick. It is used to blend scratches on furniture. It works AMAZINGLY well by dissolving a small amount of gloss and color, and flowing it into the nick or scratch. It works especially well on the shellacked natural wood finishes on Graphic cameras.

Among other sources, this product can be purchased from Van Dyke's Restorers (www.vandykes.com or 800-558-1234).

JCW



Ask Tim Holden....

[Ed. These questions are based on information in Tim's "Black Books" of technical information about Graflex products.]

You wrote that on the 4x5 and other formats of the Speed Graphic, a "fine ground glass B&L (#24314, etc.) Sept 1940 259067" was installed. Could you tell us about ground glass used at Graflex and about the upgrade to a "fine" ground glass?

Because rays of light from a lens come to focus on a ground glass, an image is produced. It is hard to find the point of sharpest focus, because the finer the ground glass, the more light passes through it. The original glass was too coarse. When you used a magnifier, you saw the grain of the glass and not the image. We increased the fineness of the glass until you could not see anything under magnification. After a lot of testing, we came up with a glass with just the right degree of fineness and developed a standard means of testing. Over the years we used various suppliers for ground glass, but all met our standards. There is no marking on the glass to show the difference in fineness.

Regarding the 4x5 Anniversary, you stated that "Focal plane sync backs -O.O.S. Nov. '53 - no more made." Could you tell us about this back?

O.O.S. is out of stock. Yes, there were special backs with contact points in the curtain and a plug for the synchronizing cords used by the original Graflex flash unit, which could be added to the camera after you changed the curtain, because you had to put contact points on the curtain. This back was a special order item. A plug, similar to that used on the Miniature, was added to a regular back. It was not too difficult to do this. Then metal clips were placed on the focal plane shutter. When these clips passed between the contacts on the plug, a circuit was completed and the flash triggered. It was, however, necessary to "pack" the shutter (That is, set the tension at no. 6 and wind the shutter to the narrowest slit, then trigger the shutter bottom.) several times to get the speed to its highest level.

Also, on this page a reference is made to "body inserts for Kalart." Does this refer to the holes drilled in the body, then covered with leather (to be cut open if a rangefinder was fitted to the camera)?

Yes, metal threaded inserts were placed in the

camera body, so that when machine screws were used to attach the Kalart rangefinder to the camera, and the flash gun was then attached to the housing of the rangefinder, there was solid support. It had been determined that the use of wood screws into the wood did not result in safe support of the camera from the rangefinder housing. That is a reason we supplied rangefinder encircling brackets which could be attached to the top of the rangefinder and on the bottom, using the machine screw inserts. Note from black book: "Body inserts for Kalart R.F. #29883 job 3635, first camera 345630 shipped 7/16/45."

In your notebook you wrote that a "first surface mirror" was added to the 3x4 R.B.B. (and other cameras). Could you explain the advantage of a first surface mirror and the reason for this change at Graflex. Also, how did it affect focusing (including changes needed on earlier cameras if retrofitted)?

When you look at the standard mirror from an angle, you will discover that there are two images, one from the silvered surface of the mirror, at the back, and the other the front surface of the same glass used as a mirror. That isn't too bad ordinarily, but when using a single lens reflex camera, you had trouble determining which was the image that should be in focus. Consequently, the use of a first surface mirror eliminated the duplication of an image. I believe we had to refocus the ground glass at the top.

A memo from C.H. Richards talks about 4x5 R.B. Series D cameras with the wrong speed plate. Could you tell us more about this problem?

In 1945 a number of R.B Series D Graflex cameras were sent to the Naval Supply Depot in Oakland, California (50), and to the Marine Corps. in San Francisco (25), with Super D, not Series D speed plates. The serial number range of these cameras was 346942 through 347992 (with some numbers excluded). Although records do not indicate if the plates were replaced, this error could be misleading to some collectors and interesting to others.

"Graflex" is simply a coined word; it is used by the Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Co., to designate a particular and exclusive camera.

This is a quote from a Graflex camera instruction booklet for the Reversible Back Graflex, circa 1902-1903.

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.

WANT AD POLICY:

Any subscriber wishing to place a want ad 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.

SUBSCRIBER NOTICE:

If anyone did not receive the previous issue of this newsletter, please contact the address below. Sometimes one goes astray!

Go Figure!

Speed Graphic collector and author, Les Newcomer, gave the GHQ a copy of an interesting article from the June 1949 issue of The Camera Magazine. Although we do not know of the magazine or author, W.T. (Doc) Skinner, we are presenting excerpts from his article, "40 yrs. A Newscameraman," for your consideration.

"Every invention that I've turned out, from the first Speed Graphic to my latest experimental work with Speedlites, has been devised for these purposes - to improve the quality of a picture - to make the camera operation simpler - to get pictures that couldn't be made otherwise.

The first Speed Graphic that I designed was built in 1909. Newscameramen in those days used a 4x5 Graflex camera for snapshots, and a 5x7 view camera for setups and interiors. The boxes were bulky and difficult to carry around. I figured out a box 2½ inches thick in regular 4x5 size. Then I sent the specifications to Folmer and Schwing, Graflex Division. Mr. Folmer didn't want to make it up for me at all. It wouldn't be a success, he said.

Finally he agreed to fill the order, for \$75.00. That included nothing but the camera box with lens board and focal plane shutter in back. It has a single track, non-adjustable slits like the pre-war model, and I used a 5-in. f4.5 B&L Tessar in a front shutter. The others used Dagor f6.8, 4¾" (12-cm). When I began using it, the other newscameramen watched. When they realized its advantages, the lack of bulk and other features, they ordered copies. The same camera, changed only by the addition of a larger lens and double track, is the Speed Graphic of today, the most popular camera in news work. My reward was a gift of six cameras - plus the fact that I had a more compact camera that could take better news pictures."

Publisher: Mike Hanemann
Editor: J.C. Welch
Contributing editor: William E. Inman, Sr.
Guest publisher/editor: Ken Metcalf
One-year subscription: \$14
[Payable to Ken Metcalf]
Contact:
Mike Hanemann
2044 SE Maple St.
Milwaukie, OR 97267
E-mail: hanemann@highstream.net

J.C. Welch
1777 Lake Dr.
Eugene, OR 97404
E-mail: staff@equinoxphotographic.com

Ken Metcalf
94 White Thorn Dr.
Alexander, NC 28701
E-mail: metcalf537@aol.com

