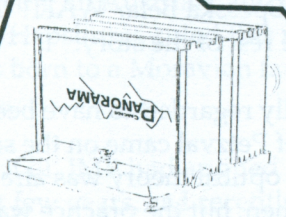
CASCADE PANORAMA



CASCADE PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Portland, Oregon • Founded 1974
Ralph London - Editor • Charlie Kamerman - Desktop Publisher

October 2001

Next Meeting: Instrument Sales and Service, 33 NE 6th Avenue, Wednesday, October 31st, 7:30 pm. Doors open at 7:00.

October 31st Program —

Mike Hanemann, Videotape of his Graflex Collection with live look at one or two of his rare items.

Socializing After the Portland Show

After the Portland Show on November 10, we will socialize in a local eatery. Non-members are encouraged to join us. Plan to gather about 3 pm at the Best Western Hillsboro, 3500 NE Cornell, which is next to the Fairplex, the site of the show.

CPHS Calendar

Meetings — November 28 (the Wednesday after Thanksgiving) and January 30

As the Glue Sets

Notes From The Old Country

by Milan Zahorcak

(Written on location in Slovakia)

A few of my readers, mostly old friends, know that my name is actually traditional Slovak and not just a bad hand in Scrabble. And while not exactly common even in Slovakia, where I was born, over here it is still just another name that doesn't raise any eyebrows.

As I write this article, I am sitting at the dining table of my Uncle Jan Matta, in Michalovce, Slovakia, 53 years to the day since my family fled this country, then part of Czechoslovakia, in 1948. This is my first time back.

A few kilometers east of here is Sobrance, the still small village where I was born. Sobrance sits at the far eastern end of the country, for all practical purposes, the last town in Slovakia. A couple of kilometers farther east lies the border of Ukraine and the Uz River. And just beyond that, the Carpathian Mountains that lie to the north of here, but then curve south through western Ukraine and into Hungary and Romania.

The local arm of those mountains, the Vyhorlatske Range, forms the horizon in these parts and gives meaning to my name, for in Slovak, "Zahorcak" means "behind the mountain" and refers to someone who came from somewhere else, from beyond those mountains, most likely from further east, from?

Out here, Zahorcak is just another family name and at this far distant end of a small country in central Europe, I may look a little out of place in my Dockers and New Balance shoes, but no one has any problems saying my name.

I'm here on a tour that started a couple of weeks ago in Prague and worked its way east through the Czech and Slovak Republics. While in Prague, however, I broke away for an afternoon at the Noradni Technicke Muzeum, the National Technical Museum. While relatively unknown to most collectors in the west, the museum houses one of the great collections of

Deadline for material for November - December issue — November 7

Cascade Photographic Historical Society members receive the *Cascade Panorama* about 8 times per year. Our calendar year dues are $15. Visitors and prospective members are welcome at our informal meetings. Society information day or evening: 503-692-9108, 503-654-7424 or 503-292-9714.

technology in Europe and within it can be found one of the truly outstanding photographic collections on public display anywhere in the world.

The collection is housed on two floors of the museum and is nicely organized, grouped and arrayed, with each grouping in chronological order. There is little in the way of exotic or outrageous gear, no twin-dragon dags, no gold filigree ivory-bound one-of-a-kinds. It's pretty much just working gear from throughout the years.

Most of the gear is European with relatively little of the English and American stuff so "common" in the states. However, the coverage, both in depth and breadth, is remarkable. The really classy older equipment tends to be upstairs and includes a very nice display of lenses, new and old. Incredibly, the cine collection dwarfs the camera collection and is just astonishing.

The museum is a bargain; 40 Czech Kronas, about $1.10, gets you in. When I was there on a Tuesday, the place was deserted and for the better part of three hours, I wandered the vast and echoing galleries alone. Unfortunately, I fear that the economic realities facing the country affect local attendance and the support that it deserves. Even worse, there appears to be no budget for expansion or education, and only just enough for maintenance and upkeep.

Sadly, even the promotional aspects are seriously lacking. The gift shop didn't have a single card, brochure or any token of the vast riches that were on display. Nothing. Not one word. At one time, the museum published a superb catalog of its photographic collection, entitled *Camera Obscuras: Photographic Cameras 1840-1940*. It is now long out of print and no one at the museum, not even the curator had any knowledge that such a book ever existed. Those of you who have a copy should treasure it.

Ten days later, we were in Kosice, the second largest city in Slovakia, and I had the chance to visit the Slovak National Science Museum. Obviously, the Czechs didn't offer to split their holdings when the two countries went their separate ways. The Slovak counterpart was very interesting in local lore, but the photography section was very modest in comparison, except perhaps for the postcard exhibit which was a delight.

BUT! while there looking around I noticed a number of posters promoting several offsite exhibits and one in particular caught my eye – especially the ancient brass lenses in the background. Tracking down one of the curators and pointing to the poster, and through gestures, sign language and my exceeding limited Slovak vocabulary (and a passing German tourist who intervened), I found that most of the museum's photographic collection was actually housed at the Josef M. Petzval Museum in Spesska Bela. WAIT! The what? Where? And here's the rest of the story.

Photography is generally regarded to have been only one year old when Josef Petzval came on the scene and changed history. Basic optical theory was already fairly well established even then, but the practice was more art than science. Microscopes, telescopes and eye-glasses were already in common use, and most photographic lenses were adaptations of some other type of lens used for direct viewing of a subject.

However, the eye is a relatively forgiving instrument and the brain accommodates and compensates for a wide variety of problems. The photographic emulsion, on the other hand, is much more demanding and unforgiving. Up until Petzval, lens making was a trial and error process, done by hand by skilled opticians. Lens evolution involved tinkering with existing designs and the first photographic lenses were adaptations of the front elements in small refracting telescopes.

However, because those lenses were inherently of long focus, they were also very slow. The slow lens combined with a photographic emulsion with an ASA of practically zero resulted in exposures that were measured with a calendar. For outdoor landscape work, the exposure times weren't that much of problems (except for the moving shadows), but until faster emulsions came along, portraiture wasn't really practical and was generally regarded as a form of torture — since the camera didn't blink and neither could you. What was needed was something with a short focus and very large aperture.

Petzval was commissioned by Voigtländer to design just such a lens, one that perhaps would be suitable for portraiture. The rest, as they say, is history. With the assistance of a personal computer in the form of eight artillery officers, skilled at complex computation, who were also assigned to the project, he developed the very first lens to be based on a computed design and essentially built to spec.

Petzval-type portrait lenses dominated the studio scene for the next 80 years and are still in common use today. And, his use of mathematical modeling in lens design caused a rethinking of optical practices. From that point on, many lens designs and applications were redesigned and improved in the years that followed.

Until better types of glass came along in the 1890s, designers were pretty much limited to recomputing lens formulations.

Now, in all the textbooks, Petzval is always referred to as being an Austrian, and at the time, that was true. The Hapsburgs ruled this part of the world and Petzval was born to a Moravian family in the town of Spesska Bela.

But if ol' JMP had applied for a passport renewal in the past few years, as I recently did, the State Department would have required him to list his birthplace where it is located today. Today, he would have written it properly as Spisskej Belej, Slovenska Republika – in western parlance, Spesska Bela, the Slovak Republic.

Josef and I may not be related, but we are fellow countrymen, and his village is about 3 hours by rickety Skoda from mine, a little less by any other means.

The Slovenskeho Technickeho Muzea v Kosiciach maintains most of its modest, but quite respectable collection at the Petzval residence in that little village at the foot of the Tatry Mountains in north central Slovakia. Not much in the way of really early working papers or lenses (those are in the Voigtländer archives in Braunsweig, Germany), but well worth a visit if you are in the neighborhood.

The house is a bit threadbare, but renovation work is under way, and coffee-drinking Americans will be glad to know that his bathroom facilities still work.

Southern Exposure

The Irony of It All

by Mike Kessler

This is a story not unlike the one about the woman who sold her hair to buy her husband a fob for his watch, who sold his watch to buy scarlet ribbons ... well, you've heard it before. This one starts nearly thirty years ago with an Erie, Pennsylvania collector, Alan Lutz. Alan, upon hearing that the Keystone View Company in nearby Meadville was closing and had dumped all their records and office materials into a huge pile in their parking lot, drove down to see what he could salvage. Rummaging through a mountain of paper, including lots of stereo cards, he came across a black, leather covered piece of wood with two holes in it — apparently the front panel from some old stereo camera.

Several years later I commented on the intriguing piece at Alan's house, whereupon I received an explanation. There's a famous Keystone stereo card showing some idiot perched way out on a steel girder overlooking New York, taking a photograph. Obviously one of Keystone's more courageous photographers, he is holding a very unusual stereo camera in his hands — a Triple Lens Stereo Graphic (it's in the 1909 catalogue). Up to that time, some twenty five years ago (and to this day as well), no example has ever surfaced. That flat wooden panel was the only existing fragment of one of the world's rarest cameras. I tried to buy it or swap for it, but no deal. It wasn't for sale.

Many years later I acquired not one but two excellent examples of this fascinating stereo card. I had wanted to own one ever since the California Museum of Photography, some years ago, had turned it into a huge, classic poster. Sadly the original glass negative, although it still exists in the Keystone/Mast Collection at the CMP, is cracked on one side. The poster had to be made by reproducing the good side twice.

Not long afterwards I decided to sell my extra copy of the view. Having no clue regarding what to ask for it, I shot for the moon ... two hundred dollars. To my complete surprise I sold it at the very next WPCA show. Now jump to the present. A couple of months ago I flew to Buffalo for the annual National Stereoscopic Association Convention. I didn't have a lot to put on my table so, among other things, I took along my one remaining view. After all, I told myself, it's a little late for the collection and I usually only keep photographs, stereo or otherwise, if the camera shown in them is one I own. I was sure it wouldn't sell but, of course, I priced it at two hundred dollars.

At the show my table faced that of Dave Wheeler, a dealer whom I had known for more than thirty years and one of that early bunch of camera gypsies who headquartered at Alan Lutz's between shows. We were exchanging hearty greetings when I glanced down at his table. There, its two empty eyes staring back at me, was the camera front panel. "What are you asking for this piece of junk?" I asked jokingly. "Kessler, you wouldn't believe what I had to pay Alan for that. I'll take a hundred bucks."

Feigning a coughing fit, I went back to my table to think. What a great combination it would make — a shadowbox frame with the panel and the stereo card displayed together. Killer!!! I crossed the aisle. With large, stage gestures, I slowly took a twenty dollar bill out of my wallet and, with a big wink, snapped it in front of Dave's face a couple of times. "Oh, what the hell," moaned Dave, "go ahead and take it, Kessler."

Grinning broadly I took my prize back to my table, just in time to see someone standing there, holding my overpriced stereo card in one hand and two, crisp one hundred dollar bills in the other. Oh ——! What to do? It was one of the toughest decisions I've ever had to make, but I knew what had to be done. If anyone out there has another one of these cards, please let me know at mkessler18@home.com (at least I have the hard part).

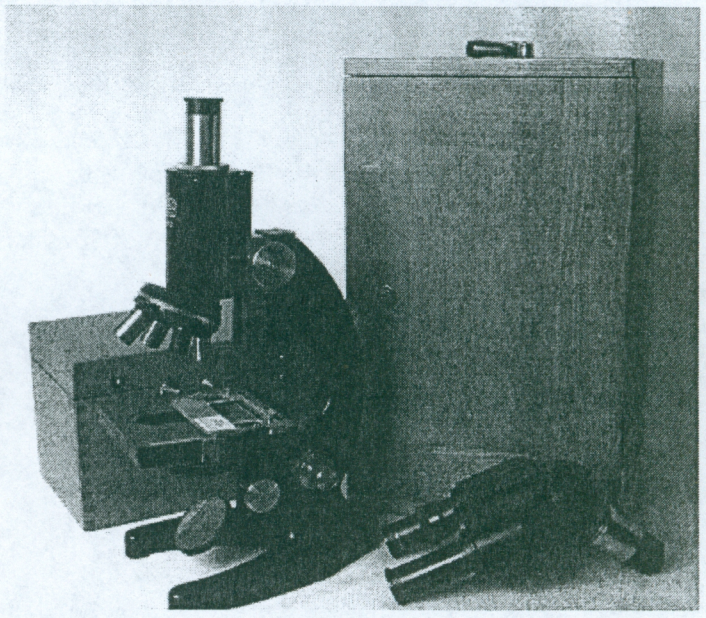
Nikon Notes

Excursions into Restoration I

by Mike H. Symons

Those of you who know me wouldn't think for a moment that I'm a "restoration" type of a guy. Sure, I've had my fill of car maintenance, changing oil, spark plugs, air filters, etc., but even that has gone by the wayside with the newer complicated vehicles. Have I ever taken a screwdriver to a camera or optical instrument? Not seriously anyway. Now I'm sure the likes of Milan Zahorcak, Ben Ehrman and perhaps Ralph London have long experience in restoration and repair of things photographic, but I have tended to shy away from this sort of "science." I usually leave things like that to the camera repair specialists. After all, they are trained in such matters.

About six weeks ago I received an email message from a complete stranger, a woman from Mississippi who was cleaning up her dad's estate and found an old Nikon microscope in two wooden boxes. Apparently she was checking some of my auctions, and saw that I was a collector of Nikon "stuff," including microscopes, and she contacted me first. Would I be interested in purchasing it? She was good enough to table the details: model designation, serial numbers, optics, objectives, etc. Turned out that her old dad had bought it from an Assayer who had worked in Japan both before and after the war. She didn't know if her dad had used it, but it ended up as part of his estate. It turned out to be a very desirable 1951 Nippon Kogaku (Nikon) model "KEG" compound microscope with both a single draw tube, and an optional binocular head (in its own hardwood box) with a quadruple "revolver" head containing 4x, 10x, 40x and 100x (oil) objectives. It had 5x, 10x and 20x monocular eyepiece objectives and matched pairs of 5x, 10x and 15x eyepiece objective for use in the binocular head. When I asked her about the overall condition, she stated that it was in "nice shape but will require some cleaning." We came to agreement on the price, and she shipped it to me FedEx. Due to the weight (over 40 pounds) it cost $165.78 to



The KEG microscope, the binocular headand the wooden boxes (after restoration). Photo by Mike Symons

ship but arrived in less than 48 hours. She declared the huge box as "Microscope being sent for repair and return," and it arrived at my doorstep, duty and tax free. Our agreement was that the price was subject to inspection when it arrived. A very fair arrangement for both of us, although I was 100% responsible for the shipping costs.

With great anticipation I took delivery of this huge and heavy cardboard shipping box. It was beautifully packaged with masses of peanuts and bubble-wrap. I first took out the larger of the boxes, the one containing the actual KEG compound microscope with single draw tube. As soon as I opened the wooden door, my heart dropped, as I could detect evidence of mould or mildew and possible fungus. I was both horrified and disappointed, but then realized that I should have expected this from a microscope that had been in storage for many years in the heat and high humidity of Mississippi. I carefully unscrewed the retaining bolt, and slid the microscope out of the box. The beautiful velvet black painted surface had lost its black satin lustre and was, instead, mottled with a mildew scum-like substance. This was highly evident on the mechanical stage, and I thought for a moment that I was looking at long-term chemical damage. My worst fears were realized when I looked through the eyepiece objectives and the objectives. They were filthy, and I detected my worst nightmare — fungus. Fungus is to lenses like oil is to camera diaphragm blades: tough to clean without an extensive and costly restoration.

When I unpacked and opened the smaller hardwood box which contained the binocular head and spare

eyepiece objectives, I again saw surface grime, mildew and mould. The Mississippi climate had not been kind to these contents either. The two hardwood cases themselves were also damaged. While the exterior finish was "acceptable" on the large box, the top hinge was damaged, and worse still, had caused some cracking of the wooden panel. Perhaps somebody had opened the door too far, thus straining it, and causing the screws to crack the wood. The smaller box had sustained similar hinge damage, and in fact one of the hinges must have sustained some moisture, and the three screws fastening the lid to the base had rotted off with the three screws broken off inside the wooden panel.

Naturally I was disappointed at what I had found so far, but the real shock was to follow. I placed the microscope on my dining room table, cleaned off the mirror (mildew and mould), set up my microscope light, and placed a prepared slide on the adjustable stage. With the 10x objective in the light path, and peering through the 10x eyepiece objective in the monocular tube, I thought I was looking at an Anthrax sample! Other than barely seeing the object on the slide, I was peering into what looked like an alien worm colony — solid evidence of glass fungus. I removed the single draw tube and replaced it with the very dirty binocular device, placing a matched pair of 10x objectives into the 2 tubes. I was faced with a different view of basically the same scene but with a binocular viewpoint. Added to the first viewing scenario was the fact that more interior fungus, mildew and mould damage was evident inside the prism mechanism of the binocular eyepiece.

What to do? I phoned the seller and explained to her exactly what I had discovered, trying to be kind and not to insult her rating expertise. She told me that she just looked briefly at the device, taking only enough time to write down serial and model numbers, and that she knew absolutely nothing about microscopes. We agreed on a much reduced figure, as she didn't want me to have to bear the expensive return shipping cost, plus the fact that she never wanted to see this old Nikon microscope again. I suppose in her mind she had dealt with "dad's old microscope."

So I faced a dilemma. I had just bought a classic and desirable 1950s Nikon Compound microscope which will require hours of restoration and perhaps some expenditure of funds for the completion of this yet unknown project. I knew that even an inexperienced collector and user like me could attempt to clean off the surface dirt and residue from the body of the microscope, but after that I was roaming into unknown territory. What else would I find? The fully mechanical stage had some problems with the "X" and "Y" movements. Were the worm gears corroded or the shafts bent? Was the Abbe condenser and iris diaphragm beyond repair? Actually I failed to mention that the iris diaphragm blades were "sprung," probably the result of somebody (the seller?) trying to jam it open or closed. These twelve thin metal blades would have to be removed and reassembled by carefully fitting them into pre-determined and overlapping slots. I looked at the enormity of the project in front of me and sighed. "What the heck. I'm interested, I'm retired with lots of free time and I want it to work again and look great!" The restoration began!

Next month I will relate my nervous attempts into the unknown territory of serious microscope restoration. Stay tuned. Meanwhile pass the scalpel please.

Humor in the Field, Field Cameras That Is!

The Luck of Always Being Prepared

by Ken Hough

In early October our editor sent out a reminder about the Oct. 10th deadline for our monthly stories. Mine as you've read is a humor column. Boy oh boy, how to be funny after September the 11th? I found out I lost a past customer who was an in-house photographer in the "second tower." I did not know him well. I rebuilt his Deardorff and that was pretty much it. I do not know about you but I saw images that Tuesday that I can't get out of my mind. I was glued to the TV for four days straight. I hope we resolve this soon. Now the funny stuff.

A couple of weeks ago I attended a wedding as a guest. I do not know about you but I get hypercritical of other photographers who are working a wedding where I am a guest. I see them do stuff that I'd never do. I saw this guy arrange the wedding party on a pretty meadow. The problem was that the sun was going through the leaves casting shadows and ultra bright highlights on the white gown and faces. His fill flash might help, but moving forty feet would have put them in complete soft light shadowed by a building. Since it was 4 pm, the sun was low and bright. I was shooting some candids from a little bridge with a Leica IIIc. The photographer finished up and I asked my friends if I could do an "environmental portrait." I pulled out my 1926 8x10 Deardorff. I posed them with a pretty arbor that was covered in blooming flowers, threw the dark cloth over my head and composed the shot. I had B&W film in the

holders. I loaded the camera and made a few exposures. Now I really did not intend to upstage the paid pro photographer. But I noticed something. While he posed everyone it was very noisy and lots of joking was going on. While I set up, not a sound. There was silence. Just me directing them. I got off eight photos of the bride and groom and then the wedding party. They looked great on the ground glass. We then went in to the on-site hall to eat.

While eating the fine meal, the groom asked if the photographer could take a group photo of everyone. He had a 35mm lens that just could not handle it. He said no, he did not think he could. My friend the groom asked me if I could. I said Sure! OK, this is where it gets weird. I went to the car and got my 8x20 Deardorff. I set up on the stage and saw the pro photographer just staring at me. He could not believe it, I'm sure. I do not travel with the 8x20 all the time. But I was on my way to a tractor show the next day where I knew I'd need it. I tilted the lens and checked the focus. It was a typical banquet hall in everything but lights. There were eight chandeliers and they were bright! I composed and did a light reading with my Nikon. 1/2 sec at f 11.

Everything was in focus. Two shots and back to the fried chicken and roast beef! Yum yum.

A week went by and the groom called me saying the pro's camera did not get one shot that was any good. He used fill flash on every shot and did not set his camera to sync with the flash. Half of every photo was dark. Guess what? All mine came out. Using pure 1800s photo technology. I'll try to be funnier next month.

Future Northwest Shows

Saturday, November 10 — D.M. Bash & Associates 13th Annual Portland Metro Fall Camera Swap Meet, Washington County Fairplex, opposite Hillsboro Airport west of Portland. Contact Dwight Bash, P.O. Box 1166, Oregon City, OR 97045, 503-650-8333, Deebash@aol.com.

December 2 - 9523 Cameron St., Burnaby

Sunday, ~~November 25~~ — Vancouver, B. C. Camera Show & Swap Meet, ~~Seaforth Armoury, 1650 Burrard at W. 1st Ave~~. Contact Siggy Rohde 604-941-0300 (phone or fax) or Western Canada Photographic Historical Association, P.O. Box 78082, 2606 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, B. C. V5N 5W1 Canada.

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First Class Mail

Meeting, Oct. 31 with Mike Hanemann, Videotape of his Graflex Collection

Socializing Nov. 10 after the Portland Show — See inside