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**SEPT. 30, 2006**

**NHS-93**

**23rd. ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!!!!**

**NIKON JOURNAL**



**THIS ISSUE  
SPECIAL ENLARGED 24 PAGE  
ISSUE FEATURING THE  
NIKON F3!!**

**ROBERT J. ROTOLONI  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER**





# THE NIKON JOURNAL

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### **NHS-94 DEADLINE!**

The deadline for the next issue of our **NIKON JOURNAL, NHS-94**, is **NOVEMBER 15, 2006**. Please get all correspondence and articles to me by then so I can get our Journal to you on schedule during the Holidays. Thank you. **RJR.**

## **EDITORIAL**

Another year, another Anniversary! We have now hit 23 years of continuous publication. Can you believe it? I guess that means I am getting old. Could be.

I hope our Anniversary issue is a special one. It was hard to follow up the Convention issue with something that would stand out but I think we may have done it. Peter Lownds and Tony Hurst have been working on a special Nikon F3 issue for quite some time. We talked in Vienna and targeted the Anniversary issue but as the project grew it became obvious we needed more pages. To prevent a two-part series I decided to add 4 pages as we did once in the past when Peter and Tony put together the awesome issue on the 50mm/f1.1 Nikkor! So enjoy Peter's writing and Tony's photos in our special enlarged 23<sup>rd</sup>. Anniversary issue!

Wes Loder has done a fine obituary for a man that was 'extremely' important at the very beginning of Nikon's efforts to enter the American market. After reading it you will certainly realize that Adolph Gasser was just as important as Joe Ehrenreich in leading Nikon along the proper path to eventual success.

I was able to squeeze in a one-pager on the very unique and beautiful gift that was given to all that attended NHS-Con10 in Vienna. Hans & Uli came up with a winner and, as promised in NHS-92, I've given it some coverage. However, my photos do not do it justice for you have to see it to really appreciate it.

Check out the 'Odds n' Ends' page for Paul Bonner's 'NHS-R2S' body. On his own Paul has done what I had hoped we would be able to do with the R2S but never materialized. A nice looking item.

I want to thank Tom Abrahamsson for a really nice 'plug' in the current issue of 'Viewfinder', published by the Leica Historical Society of America. Tom talks in great detail about our Convention and how he spent the month of May in Europe traveling thousands of miles with only Nikon RFs to shoot with. No Leicas! And you know what? He survived it quite well! Thanks, Tom.

Another NHS and LHS member is Ed Schwartzreich who was running around Vienna with as many as 4 cameras around his neck including an S2 and a straight prism F! Ed recently did a detailed comparison between the Leitz Summilux 50/1.4 Aspheric and the newly issued 50/1.4 Nikkor Olympic Millennium. You can read it in its entirety on the net at <http://www.imagere.com/edsarticles/fast50shootout.htm>. Check it out!

Uli Koch recently emailed me to inform us all of new lower US prices for his Nikon F Trilogy. The complete set is now \$119 as opposed to \$179 and single volumes are reduced from \$79.90 to \$49.90. Here is your chance to get the very best book that will ever be produced on the Nikon F for an even better price! Contact Uli at [uli\\_koch@t-online.de](mailto:uli_koch@t-online.de) to purchase yours.

On page 23 I ask for your feedback concerning the next Convention. Two possible venues are Brussels, Belgium or Victoria, Canada. I need to hear from you ASAP! Which would you like? Let me know so we can begin planning things! We can never begin the process too soon so try to get back to me before November if you can! Thank you.



# THE 'F3'... THE FIRST AUTOMATIC NIKON...

BY PETER LOWNDS WITH PHOTOS BY TONY HURST

I remember in 1980 going with my wife and friends to Germany to see the King Tut exhibition. I gazed in wonder at his death mask, a truly awe inspiring experience. After spending a few memorable hours it was time for lunch and a few glasses of that fantastic German beer and sauerkraut. It was a sunny day and as we sat in the shade watching those very efficient Germans

going about their daily lives (people watching is a great continental pastime) we spent about an hour reflecting on what we had seen. We sat asking each other what was your favorite item in the collection when a Japanese gentleman sat down at the next table. He then placed a deep red-Bordeaux colored camera case on the table with that magical word on the front—NIKON. I was wearing my full Nikon F2 body armor that was so heavy that it would give lesser mortals a bad back. I waved my F2AS with motor drive and aperture control unit around, but I could not make eye contact. Curiosity was getting the better of me as the Japanese gentleman enjoyed a cup of coffee. Bep, my wife, could read me like a book and knew I was dying to see what he had in that oddly colored case. I finally summoned up the courage and asked him in English which Nikon he had. He carefully removed the top half of the case and, bloody hell, it was not just any old Nikon but the yet to be released NIKON F3! King Tut took second place that day!

Photokina was about 3 weeks away and he was working the Nikon booth. Looking back in hindsight I should have made a notation of the body serial number, his inside leg measurements, his birthday and his hat size! He could very well be a Nikon god by now. I had read about the new F3 in quite a few magazines, but no one yet knew what it would look like. And here I was in the privileged position to have one in my hands to play with for a few minutes. What a day that was. What a day!

The F3 was a quantum leap forward in camera technology. Twenty-five years ago it

was at the cutting edge but comparing its specifications to the new F6, it's nothing. But at the time it was a nice bit of kit!

## The Design Team..

There is an old saying—ask a committee to design a racehorse and you end up with a camel. Nikon formed a design team that would end up with a Formula One racehorse with twin turbo shoes and an automatic 3-speed hay box!

The team was headed up by four senior engineers who had worked on a number of smaller projects and who have now moved onto greater things inside the Nikon Corporation. I remember at the first NHS Convention in Tokyo in 1996 we hand carried from Holland two Rollie slide projectors for Tony Hurst's slide show. We decided to set them up during the lunch break but they would just not work correctly. After 45 minutes of frustration Mr. Yoshiyuki Nakano, now head of the design department at Nikon, went down to the repair department and came back with a finger full of special light grease. A little rub on the rails with his magic grease and everything worked perfectly.

Besides Mr. Nakano the other 3 members of the F3 design team were Akihito Sato, Toru Fukuhara and Tetsuro Goto. Their goal was to design a system that would meet the very critical standards set by professional photographers as we entered the eighties. After 5 years the F2 was getting a little long in the tooth. Some of the new requirements were;

- Complete modular interchangeable system
- Automatic exposure
- Automatic TTL flash exposure
- Lighter weight than the F/F2 systems
- Able to fire at 7 frames per second
- Able to function at minus 30° C to plus 50° C
- Able to have limited function without batteries
- Both look and feel good while being hand held







### Models....

**F3 Prototypes..**At the Tokyo convention we were invited by Mr. Nakano to inspect a selection of various Nikon prototypes, both cameras & lenses. Two of the prototypes on display were F3 look-a-likes and one was an F2 with auto exposure & TTL flash. I recall Mr. Nakano returning the prototypes to a cardboard box by simply dropping them into the box without any protection! Makes me cringe just thinking about it even now.

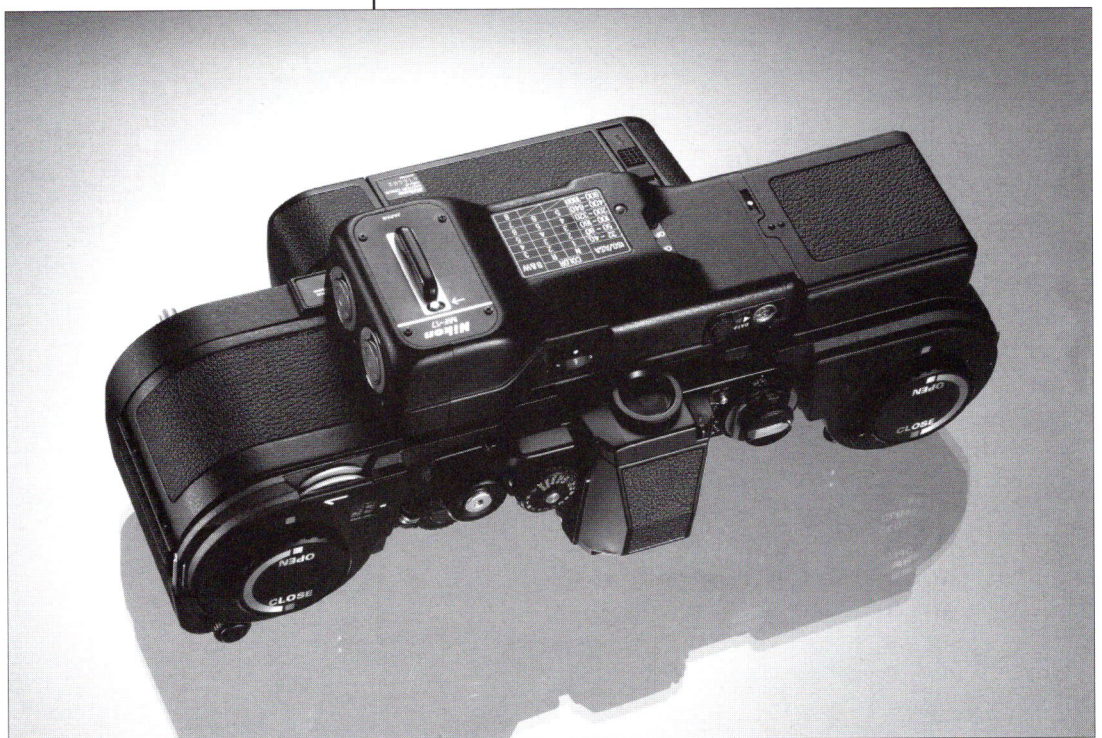
One of the cameras had the serial number '110000'. The second prototype we saw was based on a FE with interchangeable viewfinder and built in motor drive.

When the F3 was announced, the heavy automation sent cold shivers down the spines of many purist photographers. I can still recall that the price of a discontinued fully mechanical Nikon F2AS was higher than the retail price of the all new all singing, all dancing F3 during those early months following its introduction. But the design and ease of use soon changed the minds of even the most hardy 'stick in the mud' purists and the F2 moved back into second place very quickly, while the F3 had nothing but praise from its new found friends.

The F3 took from the drawing boards to the final product 5 years to complete. This is quite a long gestation period. Even the mighty elephant is only pregnant for 22 months! But I must say it was well worth the wait. Final assembly took place by hand at the famed Ohi factory in Shinagawa. We did

visit Ohi during the 1996 convention but never saw any signs of camera or lens production as it was only now used for R&D work. But it was nice to see all those photocopiers instead.

For the F3, Nikon engaged the creative talents of the famous Italian designer Giorgetto Giugiaro, with the goal of restyling the aging F2 with its round corners. The F2 needed a fresh modern look and feel. The first design mockup began life as a tree in Italy! This is the easiest way of testing a shape. With only a few bits of wood and glue a shape can be changed very quickly. The vertical 'red line' on the front of the camera body has now become a distinctive hallmark on all modern Nikon cameras. The 'red line' has evolved in many forms on Nikons since but it was the F3 where it first appeared. This was the first Nikon that de-





parted from conventional Japanese body design. (Any F3 collector must also have 2 other models, part of the same design project as the F3, and done by Mr. Giugiaro. The Nikon EM and the small point & shoot 35AF. Close observation will show they were part of the same stable. A closer look at the eye-level finders of an F3..the DE2 & DW2..will show a very similar design to the end of the hatch-back door on a Volkswagen Golf, another Giugiaro project!)

In Rotterdam in 1982, there was an exposition of Giorgetto Giugiaro's work. A Fiat Panda, VW Golf, 3 other expensive cars & ...6 mockups of the Nikon F3! I took loads of pictures but after 28 years I haven't a clue as to where they are!

**F3HP (High Point)..**In the spring of 1983 came a godsend for eyeglass wearers and a great improvement on the standard prism. The new DE3 could be purchased separately or as a set (F3HP). At the same time Nikon introduced a screen and eyepiece tester. It was sold, at a horrendous price, to only major dealers and in small numbers. I have seen only 6 for sale in all these years, and production may be as low as 150 units, making it a very interesting item for the F3 collector.

**F3AF..**Introduced in 1983, it was a milestone in more ways than one. It was the first auto-focus camera with interchangeable finders and lenses. (Nikon had an auto focus lens on display at the Chicago Camera show in 1973. It was a huge lens that required so much power that the lights of Chicago dimmed whenever it was turned on! (Your editor was at the show and I remember staring at it behind glass. In size it reminds me of the 200-400mm Zoom Nikkor from the nineties. RJR)) The F3AF was a well-engineered camera but any technical problems meant it had to be sent back to Tokyo for repair. The complete set consisted of the F3AF body & special finder, 80/f2 & 200/f3.5 AF-Nikkors, a special tele-converter which allowed any manual lens faster than f2.8 to work in auto focus mode, and the hardest item to find today, the DB4 battery holder. The DB4 is a very small item but from a collector's point of view, worth its weight in gold. The entire set listed for \$5,000 in 1983! The 2 lenses had silent wave motors (years before Canon) and they work like a dream, if a little slow in comparison to modern lenses. But they are fantastically sharp.

**F3 Titanium Champagne Limited Edition..**Also in 1983 Nikon released a special run of 300 pieces of a Champagne colored Titanium F3 with a matching serial number on both the body and lens (a 50mm/f1.4) for the American market. It came in a beautiful walnut presentation display case. The champagne finish was



fantastic looking but the coating applied to the titanium was overly prone to scratching with only very light use reducing it from a desirable collectible to an everyday work horse very quickly. Having said that, they can still be found in mint condition. I have never seen a carton or shipping box for the wooden presentation case, nor have I seen a photo of one, but I am sure that as soon as this article comes out a member will cry out loud for the world to hear..I have one! (It was possible to have the top, bottom and back covers replaced by Nikon Japan. It is said that Nikon melted down the old plates and reused the titanium. Clever.)

**F3 Black Titanium..**This model was introduced following requests of professional photographers. But the application of the black coating was never a great success. The engineers worked in close cooperation with various paint and powdered coating companies trying to get the coating to stick to titanium. It is almost impossible

to get anything to stick to titanium. It is very hard to find a mint or near mint F3 black Titanium today.

**F3 Parts Display Case..**Only 10 of these display cases were made for large photo shows around the world. Each one cost about \$20,000 to make. Totally useless but great if you have an understanding wife who would allow you to have this

in your collection. Makes a great coffee table! The F3 is assembled out of 1620 parts. Subassemblies were contracted out. Shutters, mirror box, integrated circuit and the final assembly

took about 34 minutes, not including calibrations & testing. Don't try this at home!

**F3 Limited..**The Nikkor Club in Japan (started in 1954 by Jun Miki) has a huge active membership (20,000!) that goes out on weekends taking pictures (I didn't know you could do that with cameras?). They produce loads of books and calendars. The F3 Limited was produced for the Nikkor Club and only sold in Japan. Estimated production of 2500 pieces. It has the nicest packaging of any special edition commemorative camera. A beautiful black box.

**Nikon F3P..**At the 1984 Olympics Nikon had a large stock of cameras and lenses as





part of an exchange service offered to all professional photographers covering the games. There was also a team from Japan who had with them a new variation of the F3. These Nikon F3P bodies were not engraved 'P' but the Nikon development team had listened to the suggestions from the pros on how to improve the F3. Quite a few changes were made: function knobs had been enlarged and others removed; the self timer and double exposure features were removed; a normal flash shoe was fitted to the prism with TTL connections; a much larger shutter speed dial was fitted. Internally the camera was sealed with silicone to protect it better from the harsh climatic conditions of the winter Olympics. These cameras were offered to the press core for evaluation. Thirty were loaned out and the user reports filled in but not one camera was returned to Nikon! They all said, you keep the normal F3 and we will keep the F3P! Who could blame them?

**F3/250 NASA..**In 1981 Nikon were invited to tender a bid for a 35mm camera needed by NASA for future space flights. After long negotiations with NASA setting critical standards for such a 35mm system, Nikon were awarded the contract. I have a picture, which I cannot for the life of me locate, with both parties signing the contract to produce 18 Nikon F3 250 shot cameras to NASA requirements at a cost of \$2,800,00.00! And also 10 Dummies for shuttle crew training purposes, a practice still done today. All space shuttle flight crews are trained in a deepwater tank at Marshall Space Flight Center. This prepares the crew for the weightlessness and zero gravity of outer space. The NASA F3/250 was, and still is, an incredible piece of engineering. The F250 back can be removed by inserting a very complicated dark slide into the upper part of the back. The NASA F3/250 was used to register the dials and meters of the space shuttle from launch to 10 minutes into the flight. The shuttle was designed in the late 1960s' and has the computing power of a small digital watch. The memory needed to record all the instrumentation in the cockpit electronically would have made the shuttle 300kg (660 pounds) heavier per launch. The cost to lift each kilogram of weight is \$22,000 so at 300kg it comes to \$6,600,00.00! The NASA F3/250 was used for recording other data as well.

**F3 Digital..the 'Original'..**The Kodak Professional Digital Camera System (DCS) was introduced to enable photojournalists to take electronic pictures with a Nikon F3 equipped by Kodak with a 1.3 megapixel sensor. The total kit came in a fitted case and weighed nearly 50kg (110 pounds)! A man walked into my Nikon museum one Saturday about 3 years ago with a huge gray case on wheels. I've got something that will interest you and would be great for your Nikon museum. Have you ever seen a Nikon F3 Digital camera?



No, only in pictures. Well I had in front of me a complete F3 Digital set with two bodies in like new condition. We all stopped work to open the case on the floor and wondered in disbelief at how much kit and documentation was needed to run a circa 1990 state of the art digital camera. To use this in the field would need the strength of 2 seasoned Sherpas. Seventeen years later we have 20 times the chip size and 1/40<sup>th</sup> the weight!

**F3 Pin Register camera.**This is an interesting variation of the F3 and the only reason I have included it here is because Nikon Europe authorized, and actively supported, the modification of F3 bodies to Pin Register. I have letters between Nikon Europe and Japan complimenting Beths Leerdam (the one who did the actual modification) on the standard of workmanship. The Beths Pin Register is, as far as I know, the only one able to use a mo-



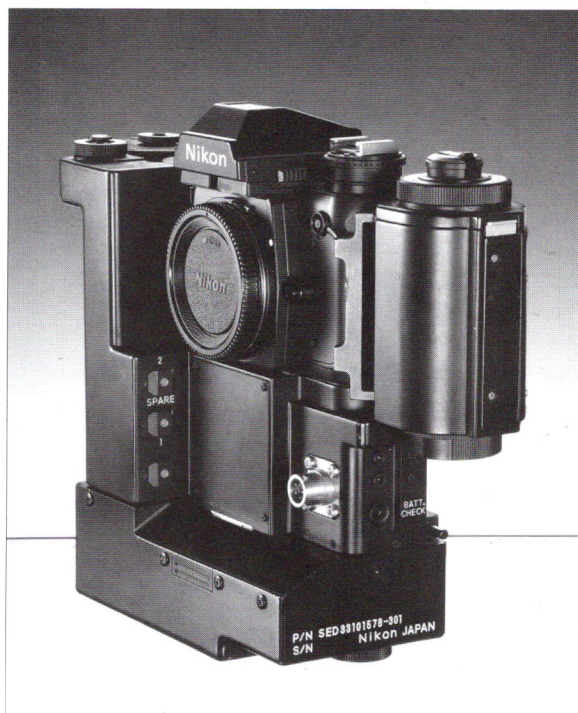


tor drive. A light green brochure was specially printed by Nikon Europe and the retail price was about \$7000 for the body, motor drive and a special finder screen. For those who do not know what a pin register camera does should you be called upon to make an audio visual presentation using more than one slide projector, the slides must be correctly positioned in the projector. The perforations in the film are used as reference points both in taking and projecting the film. The perforations are aligned in the camera back, and the same perforations are used in the slide to be projected. This allows for perfect dissolves and trick shots.

**F3 High Speed..**The Nikon F3 High Speed was the last production variation of the F3. Only about 200 or so were produced. It was a special order item only. I received a call from the Nikon importer asking if I wanted to buy an F3HS! I quickly phoned around to all my friends (yes, I do have friends!) and I placed an order for 10 sets. Four months later they arrived. There are stories as to why Nikon would make the F3HS. What I heard it was at the request of professional sports photographers who used long lenses, like the 300mm/f2, at the finish line at major sporting events. Shooting 13-14 frames per second would give them 8 or 9 saleable photos. More sales, more money, but by this time the F5 with fantastic silent wave lenses proved just as good, or better. Even to the old die hards, the days of the F3 were numbered. It would take another 3 years to sell off all the stock &, in April 2003, Nikon would stop production, or just not fill any more orders.

There are many minor F3 variations and improvements not included above. Some are unique to the USA because it is only a matter of an engraving: US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, etc. There was also the 'F3 Classic', which consists of a Nikon F3 Titanium with a stick on nameplate. I have only seen a photo of one with a 50mm/f1.2 lens #5000012. I have never seen one for sale nor do I know where it came from or for whom it was made. If anyone has more info it would be appreciated.

About 6 months after the introduction of the F3, the design team was sent on a world tour to gain as much feedback from professionals and repairmen as possible. They listened with open ears to all suggestions made to them. In 1981



a series of small modifications to fine-tune the F3 was begun.

#### 1981 improved model..

- Main circuit board received better protection from water
- Front & back covers were improved with more foam strips
- Improved design of the flash shoe
- Improved motor drive coupling
- Improved on/off power switch on the shutter speed selector
- Improved rubber rings on the mirror lock-up button
- Bottom cover protected internally with oil barrier coating
- Strengthened camera back lock lever
- Multiple exposure lever reduced in size

- Rewind button slightly enlarged

#### 1982 improved model..

- 'O' ring added to shutter speed selector to block moisture
- New battery holder for one 3V instead of two 1.5V cells

#### 1983 improved model..

- Memory lock button improved & held in place with a small clip inside the mirror box (button now metal & not plastic)

#### MD4 Motor Drive improvements (started at #100021)

Sept. 1980..Early models recalled for battery clip button renewal

Dec. 1980...Noise reduction improvement

May 1983...Improved water resistance and protection

July 1984...Improvements to the integrated circuit

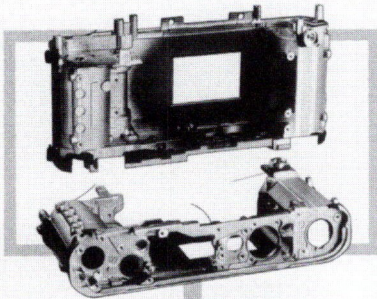
As far as we can ascertain, no more modifications or improvements were made or needed. The F3 had reached pure perfection. Well, almost. Four points that I think should have been redesigned are:

- That little red display illuminator button that rarely works
- The LCD display could have been better
- The motor connection that allowed light to fog the film if the motor was removed with film loaded
- The tripod mount on the motor was way off to one side

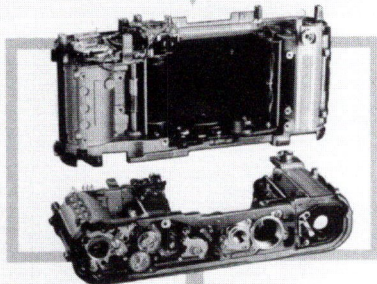
One point I need to address is the flash sync. Why did the Nikon F3 only ever have a sync speed of 1/80<sup>th</sup> sec? The FM2 had a sync speed of 1/250<sup>th</sup>



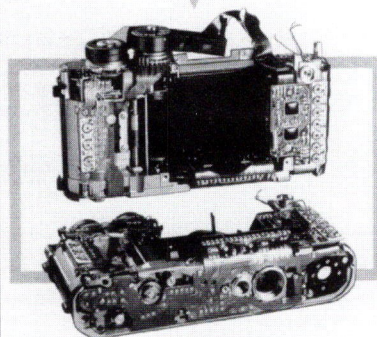
## Step-by-Step Assembly Process



1. The first step in the assembly process begins with the main body casting.



2. Next the connecting shaft, winding gears, and shutter mechanism are installed.



3. Then the flexible printed circuit board, plus the winding lever and shutter speed dial are added.



6. The completed Nikon F3 camera body with standard Eyelevel Finder DE-2 attached.



5. With the addition of the hot shoe, rewind knob, top covers and baseplate, plus grip and simulated leather covering, the F3 is near completion.



4. The mirror box, front body casting as well as the lens mount go on next.

plode. This was hell and back for the Nikon F3, and it lived to work another day. Over 26 years later stories of 1,000,000 exposures on F3s have become quite common. That's 28,000 rolls of film, or 182 kilometers!

Now is a good time to put together an F3 collection. They have never been so cheap as now. The F3 has a feel of quality, something which has disappeared to a great extent today. That old saying 'they don't mak'em like that anymore' is true. I hope Tony and I have given you all a little insight into the various F3 models and perhaps stimulated a few of you to start an F3 collection. Enjoy collecting the F3 and please share any information that you have with us.

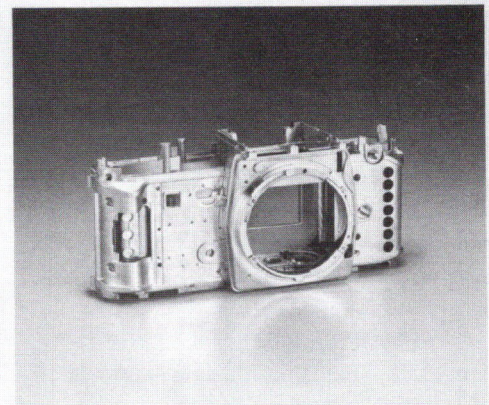
*On this page two items from the literature. At left is a capsule explanation of the assembly process for the F3. Why would Nikon do this? Because the F3 was a complete departure from the previous methods used plus they were trying to show the lengths they went to to protect all the electronics in this new body. Below a second item that shows another prototype different from those on the next page. Nikon does not often illustrate prototypes in their literature.*

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One of the F3 mock-ups



F3 die-cast body

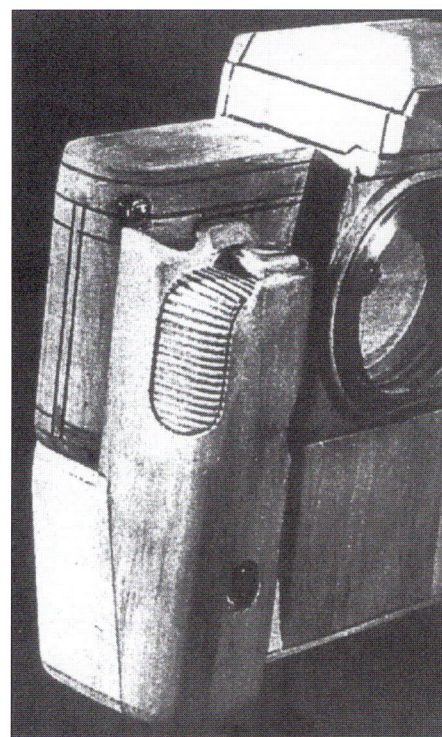
so why did Nikon not upgrade the F3? It must have lost them sales to arch rival Canon.

In 1983, 2 years into production, Nikon introduced two new items. The 250 shot back, an afterthought, which we covered in a previous Journal. Secondly, the firing rate converter, MK1. In the design of the MD4, Nikon had chosen not to integrate a firing rate selector but after many requests the MK1 was produced. It allows four speeds in the continuous mode and also has a great improvement in the tripod mount, which is now located in the center instead of off to one side.

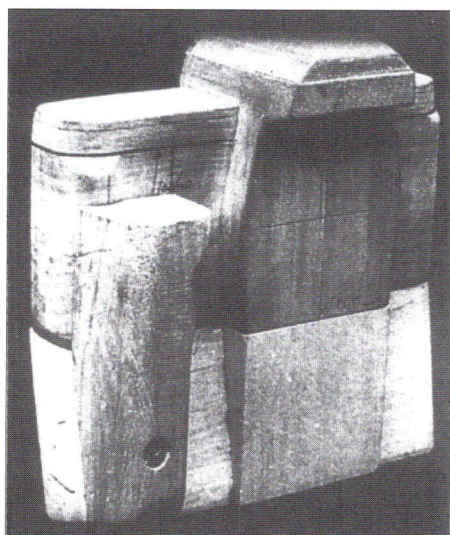
To insure the durability of the F3 under actual working conditions, a random selection of cameras was taken from the production line and tested to almost destruction with 150,000 shutter firings! Bodies were placed on a vibration shaker plate with no protective packaging and vibrated for 1 hour at various frequencies to see if screws would vibrate loose, or if it would ex-

thickness of the casting's walls is never less than 1.4mm, while the portion that attaches to the bayonet mount is 2mm thick. Moreover, the body is then treated with alumite and coated with black paint for additional corrosion resistance. The camera back is made of brass as are both the top covers and baseplate. Since there are no microelectronics in the camera's pentaprism, there is less chance of camera malfunction even if the finder receives a sharp blow as is often the case when the photographer works with more than one camera around his neck. Because of its sophisticated design, the Nikon F3 was selected by the U.S.A.'s National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for use in the Space Shuttle Program. In the past, Nikon cameras have flown into space on every manned flight since the APOLLO program. This includes SKYLAB and the joint venture, APOLLO-SOYUZ. However, to meet the unique environmental conditions encountered in space flight, various modifications were made to the Nikon F3. From drawing board to final production, the Nikon F3 took more than 5 years to create and is the perfect marriage of innovative mechanical design with the most advanced electronics available at the present time.





*Two of Giugiaro's wood design studies mentioned in the text. Also on this page are 3 actual F3 prototypes that were part of a slide presentation at NHS-Con9 in Tokyo in 2004 that have appeared in these pages before. Note how the F3 was very FE like in its early stages. The item below was one of those we saw in person at the meeting.*







## THE NIKON F3/T TITANIUM

The F3/T Titanium was produced in three variations I am aware of. There was the standard black version and the special 'Champagne' finish that was made as both a regular production item and in a special limited edition version. Packaged in a walnut presentation case, both the body and f1.4 Nikkor in a walnut presentation case, both the body and f1.4 Nikkor had the same serial number and therefore a matched set. Only 300 such sets were said to have been produced and if you pursue this item make sure it is complete with the box and correctly numbered Nikkor. Many Titaniums were purchased not for use but for show, thus mint examples are out there. It is best to try for the cleanest example you can find. The black unit in the right photo has the special MK-1 firing rate converter mounted on the base of its MD-4 motor. This interesting accessory is mentioned in the text.





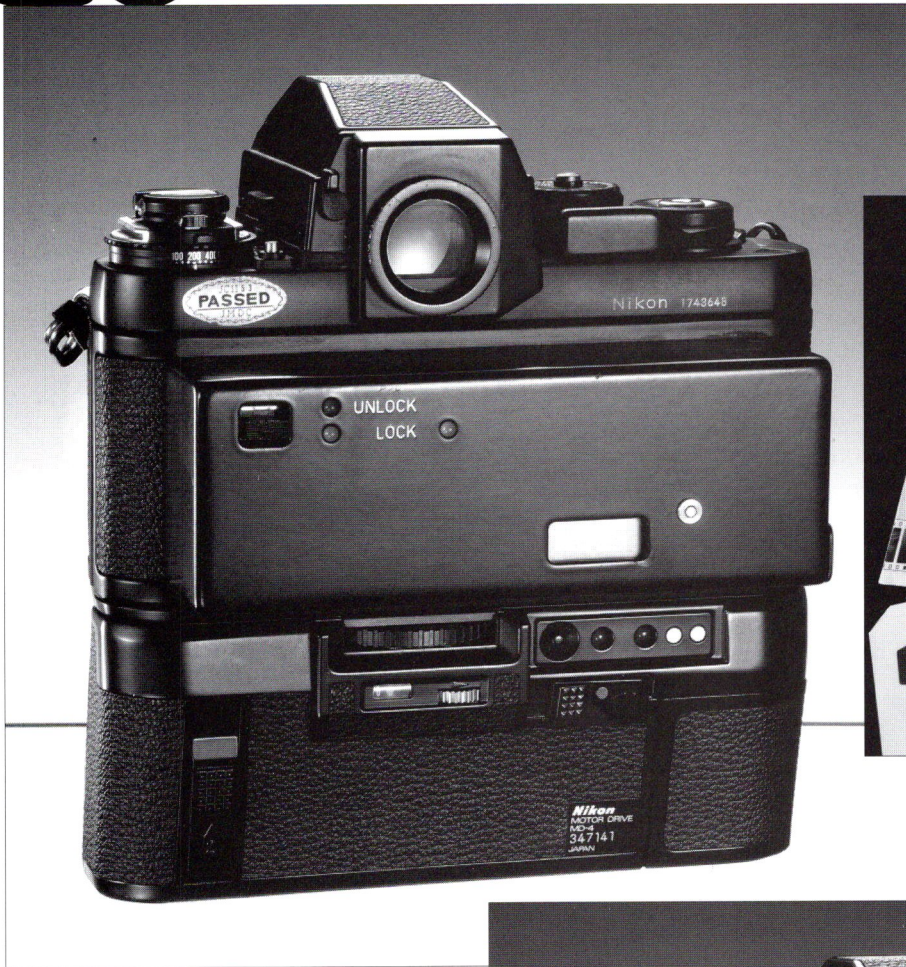


## THE NIKON F3AF

*Ah, the awesome F3AF! Sure it is way behind the current technology curve but for a first effort it was simply a 'tour de force'. I once owned a complete set brand new in its boxes. A simply beautiful piece of equipment that actually worked very well. The lenses were first rate and the build quality was top drawer. Sure it is large and heavy but built like a tank and finished like a jewel. Not easy to find today in mint condition.*

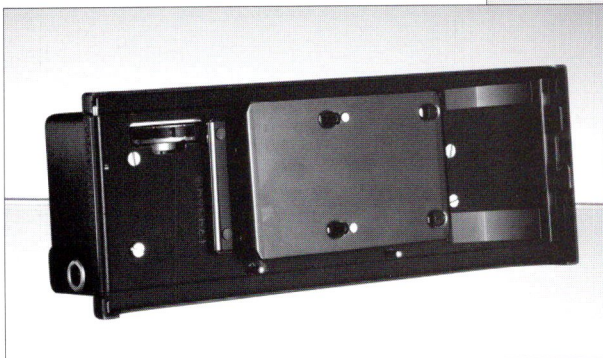






## F3 'PIN REGISTER'

*The 'pin register' F3 is a very uncommon camera indeed. As mentioned in the text, this model was done 'after market' by Nikon Europe but approved by Nikon Japan! Note the special back shown on and off camera. Also, the actual modification work can be seen in the photo at right. In the upper right corner is a photo of the actual brochure that Nikon Europe supplied with this special camera. This is probably the only 'pin register' Nikon that is usable with a motor drive. The entire outfit sold for about \$7,000 in eighties!*

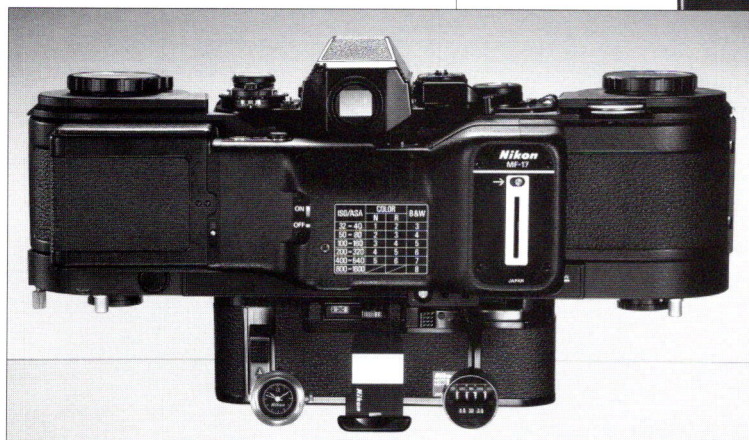
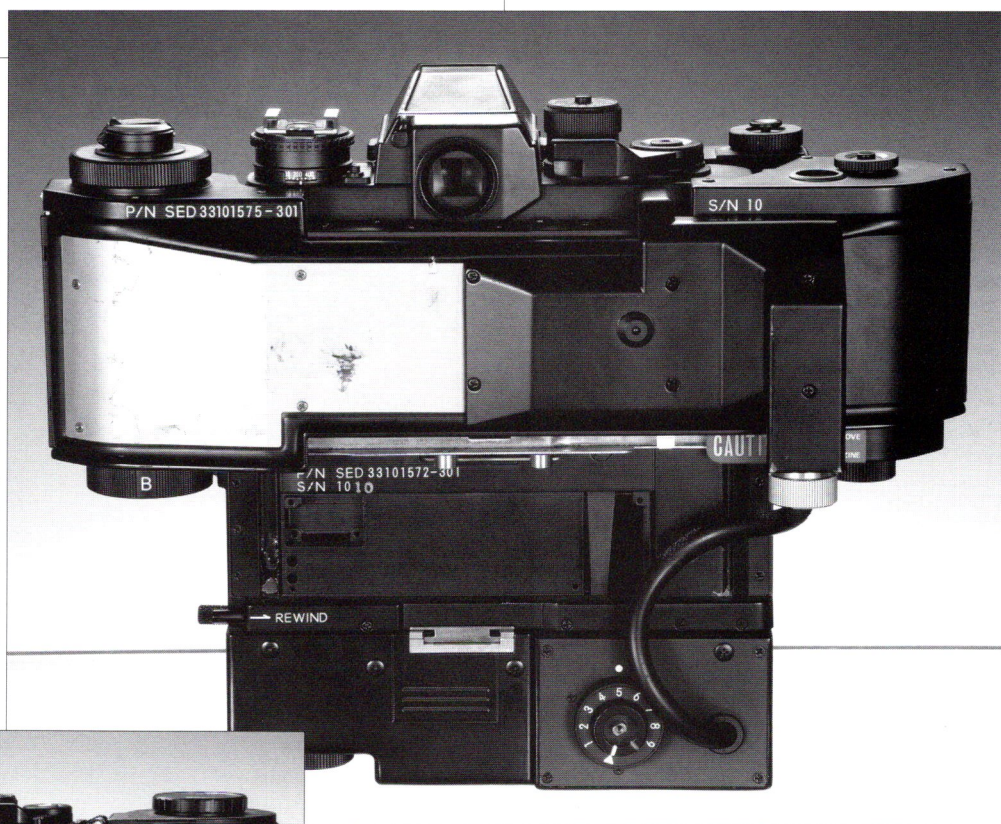




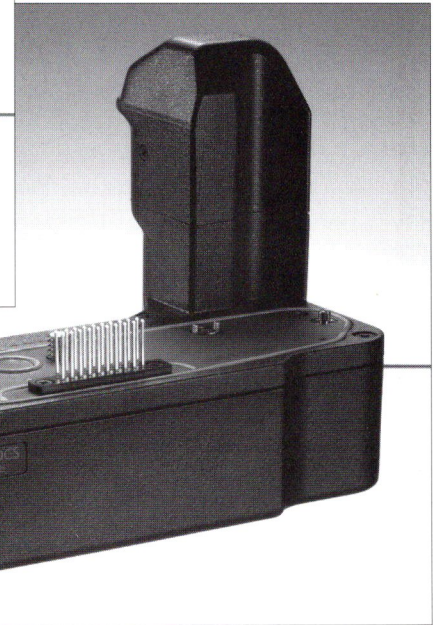


## 'NASA' NIKON F3

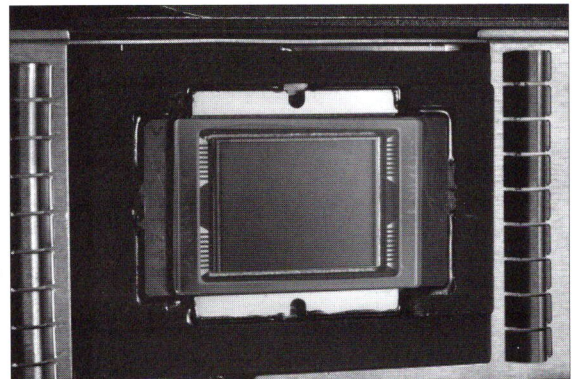
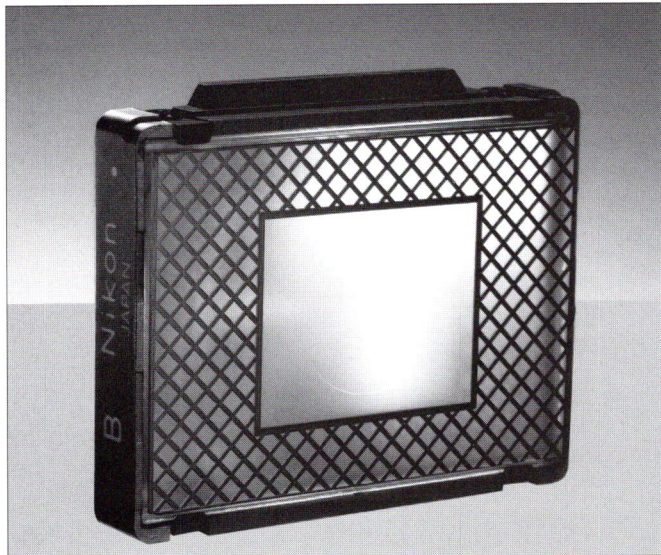
The "NASA" F3 has been covered in the *Journal* before in very great detail. Here we have it again. Please see page 5 for three additional photos. Only 18 Nikon F3 'NASA' 250 sets are said to have been produced plus 10 'Dummy' sets for training purposes. The prices were simply 'out of this world' (no pun intended!). It is not known if all have survived or if any are still in use today, but you can imagine how rare they must be. Below is a photo of a 'garden variety' F3 250 for comparison. However, this 'earth bound' example has the special MF-17 data back mounted, a rather rare item in its own right!







**NIKON F3 'DIGITAL'....** Here is the virtually unknown 'Digital F3' that came out about 1990 during the infancy of the digital age. Looking at today's technology makes one almost want to laugh at what was necessary back then to produce a digital image. But it all had to start somewhere! An awesome camera system.





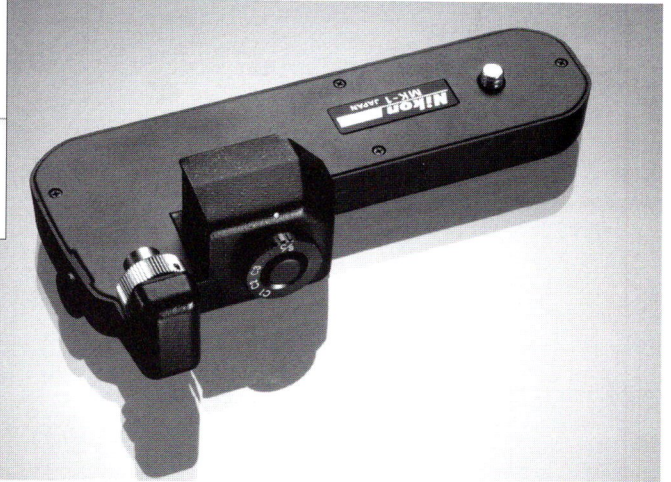


## THE NIKON F3H 'HIGH SPEED'

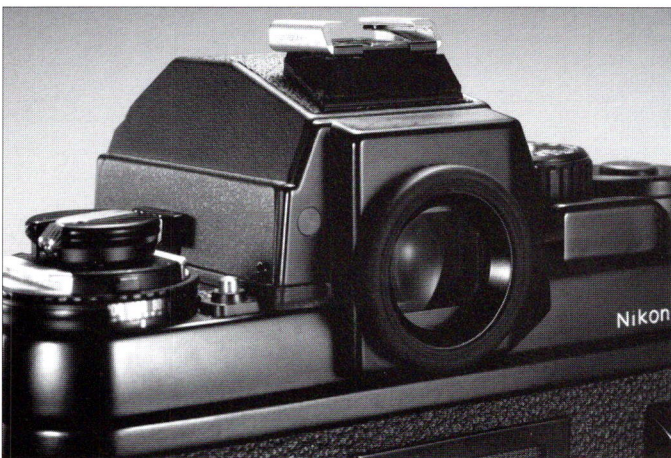
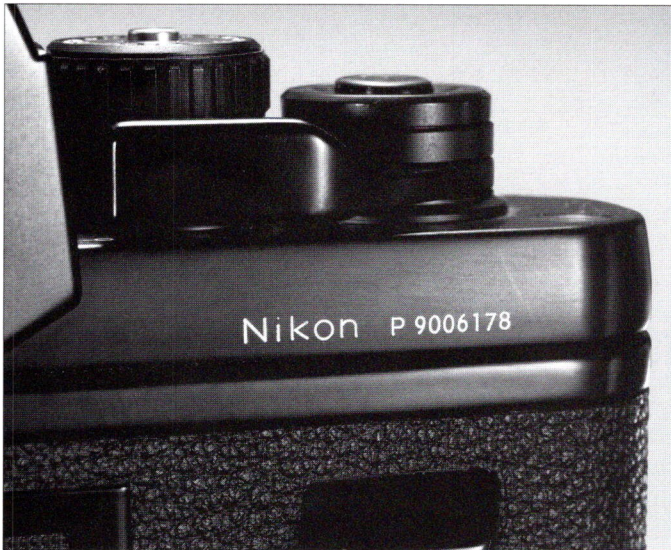
*Nikon first entered the world of 'high speed' camera production with the original Nikon F, making it in both 7fps and 9fps versions. They were made in very small numbers and offered primarily to professional sports photographers covering events such as the Olympics. During the F2 era they continued the practice producing the legendary F2H, a 10fps model, in at least two versions. Dealer cost was only \$2000. A lot of money in the early 70s' but almost laughable today. With the arrival of the F3 everyone wondered when a high speed model would debut, since the F2H had been a very successful item. Finally, Nikon announced the F3HS..sort of. It had to be the 'quietest' announcement 'never heard'. I have seen nothing anywhere promoting this item! Only about 200 were ever made and it was a special order item only. A true collectible.*



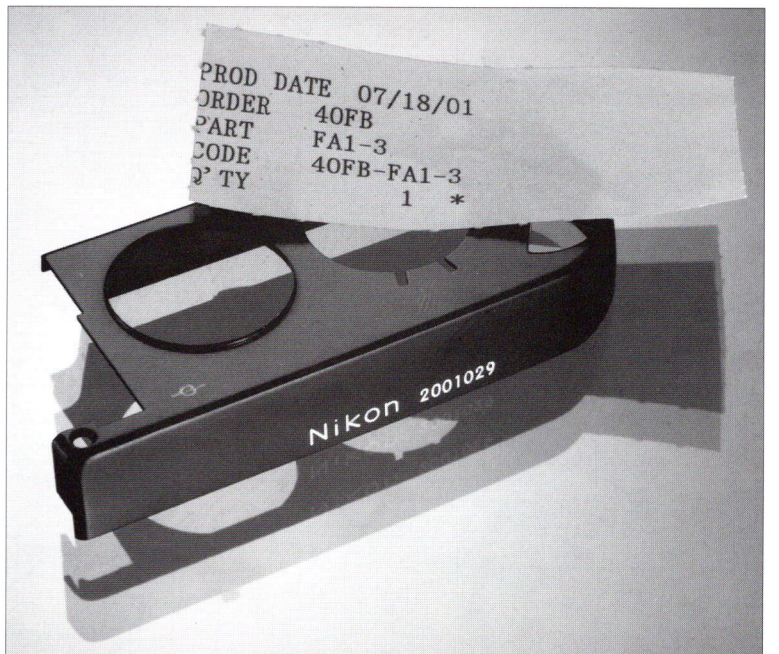




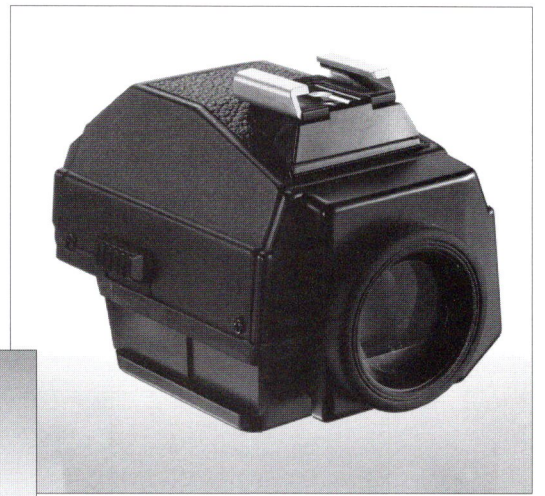
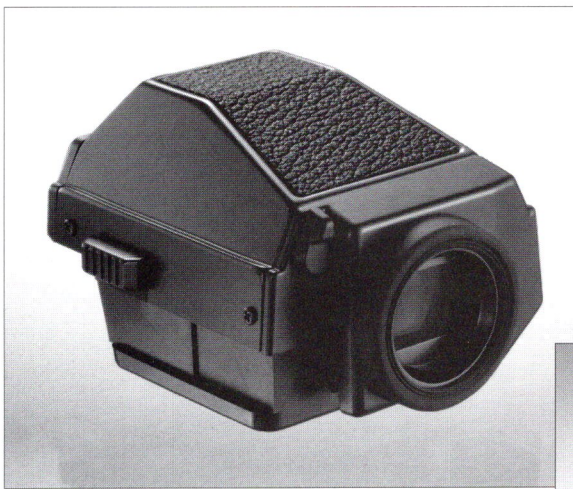
Above..Nikon F3 with its MD-4 motor drive and the special case made to hold the complete set. Right..The MK-1 firing rate selector made for the MD-4 motor. Below..The special Nikon F3P was slightly modified for professionals. Some controls were enlarged or hightened, such as the shutter speed dial and release, while others were eliminated (selftimer and multiple exposure). An accessory shoe was added to the prism. It was better sealed from moisture and given its own serial number sequence.











*Some of the many finder options made for the F3. Clockwise from upper left...First type standard prism; modified High Eyepoint (HP) version; rear view of special finder for the F3P; sportfinder and the special US Navy version (l); sportfinder by itself; rear view of standard prism. In the center the high magnification waist level finder.*







*More finders..waist level and high magnification types. Below is a photo of the quite uncommon finder and screen tester based on the Nikon F3. A very difficult to find item. All photos by Tony Hurst.*





## AT THE BEGINNING OF NIKON IN AMERICA...

# ADOLPH GASSER<sub>1912~2006</sub>

BY MICHAEL WESCOTT LODER

Adolph Gasser of San Francisco, California, died March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. He was 94.

A San Francisco native, Gasser graduated from the Rochambeau Polytechnic High School in 1929. He began work as an apprentice camera repairman at Charman's Camera Works. After two years, he switched and took a job with Charman's rival where he worked another 18 months. He then took a position at Haloid, a company that made photographic paper in competition with Photostat. He left Haloid and started his own camera repair business in 1936.

He enlisted in the US Army Air Forces in 1943, serving as a photographic technician in the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group stationed at Wendover Air Base, Utah, before shipping overseas to Tinian Island in the Marianas. He was the man who prepared and handed the K-20 Aerial camera to the tail gunner of the 'Enola Gay' bomber, the camera that recorded the well-known picture of the mushroom cloud rising over Hiroshima, Japan.

After the war, he returned to General Camera Repair. In 1949, Hans Liholm, manager of the Overseas Finance & Trading Company (OFITRA), asked him to evaluate a new camera his company had been importing from Japan since that February. This was the first model Nikon. That meeting has been well described by others, including John Wolbarst in his pioneering article published in the June 1951 issue of *Modern Photography*. Gasser examined and criticized the new Japanese-made camera, pointing out that its 24x32mm sized negative would not work with Kodak's processing machines. He then outlined what the company could do to fix the problems he found. Within the next year he entered into an informal partnership with Liholm under which he agreed to handle the inspection, repair and much of the marketing of the redesigned camera. In early 1950, he traveled to New York City on Liholm's behalf where he had Nikkor lenses tested and signed up Marty Forscher to act as the East Coast repairman for Nikons. In June 1950, he made a trip to Japan where he spent a month working with NK's engineers, helping them solve the remaining problems the camera had.

When sales of the Nikon took off in early 1951, he continued to work with OFITRA by helping sign up dealers and traveling to trade shows where he promoted the Nikon and Nikkor lenses. His partnership with Liholm came to a sudden end in December 1951 after Liholm became ill and was forced to resign his own position with the company. Gasser then redirected his efforts back to his own business, expanding it into a full-service photographic and hobby store, which, as 'Adolph Gasser Inc.', still exists today.

Gasser was married twice. He is survived by his two children: a son John—who continues to manage the camera store to this day—and a daughter plus four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

These brief facts do not begin to sum up the gracious gentleman who was Adolph Gasser. I first contacted him in July 2003.

We spoke by phone for over 45 minutes. After that, we continued to correspond and talk. I met him once, in October 2005, when he flew east with his son to attend a reunion of the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group in Washington DC.

Adolph worked hard all his life, using his knowledge and skills with cameras to first build the finest camera repair facility on the West Coast, then help build the reputation of the Nikon and Nikkor lenses, and then one of the largest and most successful photographic stores in San Francisco. He continued to keep an office in that store until the end of his life. There he worked on cameras and each day he searched eBay for used cameras and lenses that customers had requested.

He was also a close friend with many prominent West Coast photographers, especially Ansel Adams, to whom he sold a Nikon in May 1951. He designed Adams' darkroom in Carmel and, when Gasser married in 1965, Adams served as his best man for the wedding held in Adams' home.

Gasser believed in the Nikon from the first day he saw one. He did everything he could to provide Nippon Kogaku with sorely needed expert technical advice. He certainly deserves credit for showing NK engineers how to add simple click stops to their lenses and how to add flash sync. The unique double-post flash terminals were his design. He found them easier to manufacture and wire than PC terminals.

Although his partnership with Hans Liholm (with a 50-50 split of the profits) was never based on a formal agreement, he nevertheless put all his efforts into making the camera a sales success in the 1950-51 period. In 1951, he traveled all over the country, attending trade shows and calling on camera dealers urging them to stock Nikons and Nikkor lenses and other NK products. He personally tested every new camera and lens as they arrived from Japan to insure that everything worked before a dealer or customer got it. He may also have been responsible for the 'Nikon Camera Company' name—suggested as a clearer statement of what was being sold over the rather vague 'Overseas Finance & Trading Company.'

When Liholm left OFITRA in October 1951, Gasser tried to keep the program afloat, but Uno Lindholm, the owner of OFITRA, would not accept such an arrangement. He fired Gasser that December. Gasser sued, received a small settlement and retained bitterness toward Lindholm and some of the men who replaced him in the Nikon Camera Company until he died.

Gasser was the most important American business contributor to the success of the Nikon prior to Joseph Ehrenreich's taking over the marketing and distributorship in 1953-54. He provided the very things that NK and OFITRA needed during the critical first years of the Nikon's existence: technical expertise, marketing wisdom and pragmatic, common sense. He knew where the camera had to be, what market it had to aim for to gain acceptance and what it had to be in order to reach success. I still feel blessed for having known him.





*Above...The Photographic Services Crew of the 509th Composite Group celebrating the surrender of Japan and the end of World War II on Tinian Island. Adolph Gasser is the guy in front just right of center with the lighter hair and open khaki shirt. His boss, Captain Tibbits (the pilot of the Enola Gay) is seated immediately behind and to the right of Gasser at the center of the photo. Below...Adolph Gasser in Japan in May or June 1950. it is possible that he is talking with Nippon Kogaku's chief engineer, K. Mori. The other person might be S. Morita. (Photographers unknown for both photos and used with permission of John Gasser)*





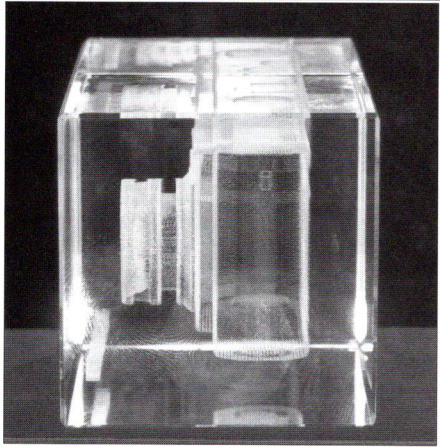


*Above...Adolph Gasser manning the counter at the April, 1951, regional convention of the NPD&FA in San Francisco. The display to the left includes 'an optical collumeter which showed (attendees) the sharpness of the Nikkor lenses and how they did not vary in back or front focus'. The customer at the counter is examining a Nikon camera. In the display case can be seen the case for a Nikon camera, a Variframe finder, the front cap and lens hood for the 85mm Nikkor, a microscope and a construction level. Left...Adolph Gasser and his eight year old son, John, standing in the Nikon booth at the same show. The identity of the other man is uncertain. The enlargements hanging behind Gasser were designed to show off the sharpness of the Nikkor lenses. Below...Wes Loder, flanked by John and Adolph Gasser.*

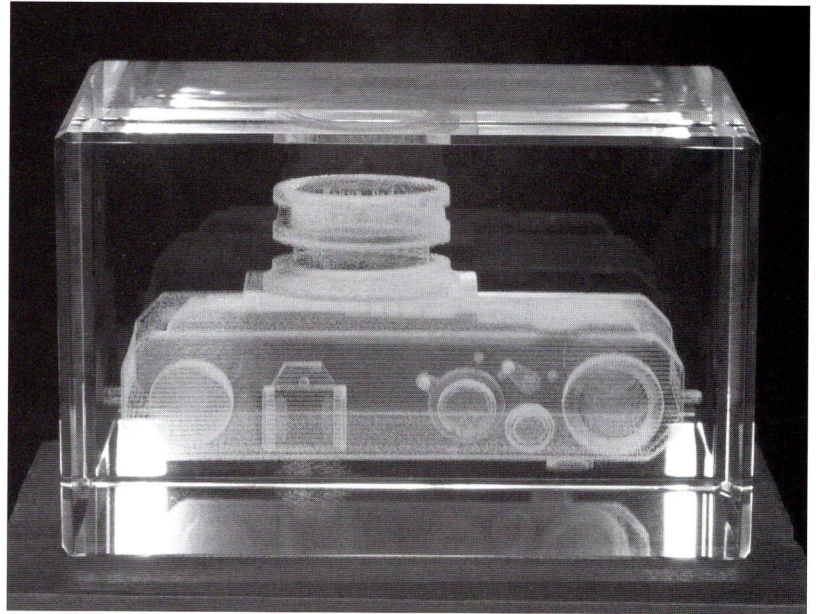




## THE NHS-CON10 'GIFT'.....



As promised in NHS-92, I am running more photos of the very unique gift that Hans and Uli came up with for those who attended the Convention. This glass block, approximately 2x2x3 inches, has the image of an actual Nikon One laser etched within it as well as the date and location of the meeting engraved on the front. I have tried to project light from various angles to demonstrate how it is reflected within the block. You really have to see it in person to observe the actual effect. Those of you in personal contact with a member who was there might want to visit him and 'drool' over his unique possession! Only 80 were produced, making them even rarer than S3M! Each came in its own blue box with the sticker applied that you see in the left photo. Thanks to Hans and Uli for a job well done!!





**Auction**  
November 22

**Viewing**  
November 18-22

**Inquiries**  
Michael Pritchard  
+44 (0)20 7752 3279  
mpritchard@christies.com

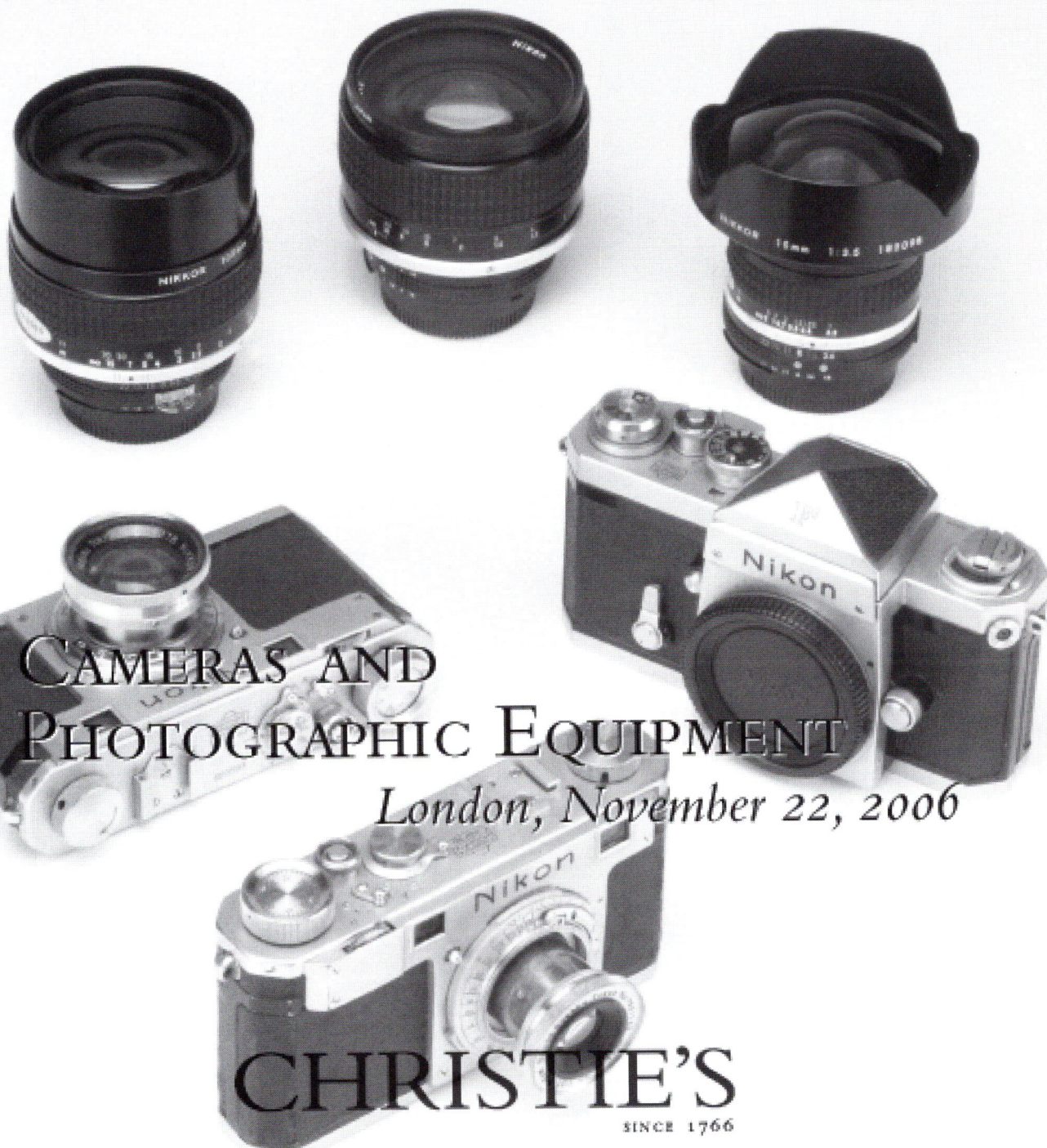
**Catalogues**  
(US) +1 800 395 6300  
(UK) +44 (0)20 7389 2820

South Kensington  
85 Old Brompton Road  
London SW7 3LD

christies.com

The auction includes a range of rare Nikon models, lenses and accessories and a selection of usable Nikon equipment. Further entries are being accepted until mid-September.

A range of Nikkor lenses from 5mm-400mm. Formerly the property of the film maker Stanley Kubrick; a Nikon F no. 6500000, a Nikon I no. 609593 and a Nikon I no. 60959.



## CAMERAS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT

*London, November 22, 2006*

**CHRISTIE'S**  
SINCE 1766



## THE AUCTION SCENE

As you can see from the ad on the previous page, Christies' has changed the date of the sale mentioned in the last Journal. Originally set for September 5th, the new date is November 22nd. This was done because of the addition of new consignments that would enhance the scope of the sale. Besides the 5-digit Nikon One shown in NHS-92, there is a second 6-digit offering as well as Nikon gear once owned by the famous photographer and movie director, Stanley Kubrick. Contact them for a catalog at [www.christies.com/cameras](http://www.christies.com/cameras) or contact Michael Pritchard.

November 18th will mark the 10th Westlich Auction in Vienna. Peter Coeln has again put together a 900+ offering of all types of photographica. Specifics were not available in time for this issue but the entire catalog can be viewed on line at [www.westlicht-auction.com](http://www.westlicht-auction.com) by mid-October. Nearly 200 lots will include items from the famous S. F. Spira collection going back to the Daguerreotype era! I met his son, Jonathan Spira, last May in Vienna and had a great time talking to him about his father and 'Spiratone', a company everyone in No. America is very familiar with. Check out their website for further information.

## PHOTOHISTORY XIII

The 13th SYMPOSIUM on the HISTORY of PHOTOGRAPHY will again be held at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY. This world famous meeting draws speakers and guests from all over the world and is considered the premier historical conference on photography. It is sponsored by the Photographic Historical Society and will be held this year from Oct. 20-22. Over a dozen speakers are scheduled including Jim McKeown, Eaton Lothrop and Michael Pritchard. The event also includes a trade show on the 22nd. For more information see [www.tphs.org](http://www.tphs.org), or [photohistory13@frontiernet.net](mailto:photohistory13@frontiernet.net) or call 585-288-6359.

## MEMBER DISCOUNT!!

Petra Kellers and Ken Morton are members and the owners of **Petra Kellers Photo/Camera Books**, the largest specialty dealer I am aware of. Their site, [www.camerabooks.com](http://www.camerabooks.com), lists hundreds of in and out of print photographic books of all types. **They are offering a 10% discount on their entire inventory to NHS Members only!** It applies to all new and used books and original instruction manuals as well as DVDs. To receive the NHS discount, please write in the message box during checkout 'NHS Discount', and they will apply it manually! The discount does not apply to shipping costs. Check out their website soon!!

## TRANSPORTATION FOR NHS-CON11??

Maybe we can rent this 'baby' for NHS-Con11, wherever it may be. We could take the group shot in front of it! Anyone have connections at Nikon??



## NHS-CON10 FEEDBACK

**From Paul Bonner (United Kingdom)...**NHS-92 is a triumph! You have captured both the facts and the feel of NHS-Con10 in Vienna perfectly. The picture layout and captioning must have been a hell of a task but they are what provide that sense of being there. And to publish it all so rapidly! I just hope you now get a chance to relax.

\*\*\*\*\*

**From Andy Price (United Kingdom)...**Just a quick message to say NHS-92 arrived safely and what a great effort it is, as usual. I don't know how you find the time and energy to bang these out so fast when you're still holding down a day job. I was very glad I came, even though I couldn't make the whole event. Uli and Hans made a remarkable program, the more so because it was in neither's country. Dietmar's collection was beyond all imagination, and I've bought the Zeiss Ikon he showed us, since the visit – a great camera! I'll certainly keep an eye open for future NHS convention events.

\*\*\*\*\*

**From Kjetil Moen (Norway)...**I received NHS-92 and what prompted me to write you was the very nice thank you letter you had enclosed. You think of everything. Further, I'll say it one more time. It was a very successful convention, and to explain it even further, my girlfriend Tove enjoyed it as much as I did, and she is looking forward to the next convention.

\*\*\*\*\*

**From Wes Loder (USA)...**I have added a page series to my website that covers some of our activities in Vienna and Europe in May. Please, everyone enjoy.

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/m/w/mw12/europe2006/site/europe%20pictures%206006.html>

\*\*\*\*\*

**From Christophe Sap (Belgium)...**In a word...awesome...yes it was but NHS-92 also is awesome. Both my wife and I were especially satisfied to see photos of all the members we met with their names included, because you talk to someone, see their nametag, but afterwards it is difficult to attach a face to a name, so the Journal was a great help.

## AS FOR NHS-CON11??

In order for our next convention to be as well organized as the one in Vienna, we really should start thinking about it now. At this time I have had feedback suggesting two possible venues for NHS-Con11. I would really like to hear back from you as soon as possible concerning your opinions on the following possibilities for the next meeting in the Spring of 2008..

### BRUSSELS, BELGIUM...OR... VICTORIA, CANADA

Please get back to me by email, letter or phone with your opinion on either above site. If possible I would like as much feedback as I can get by November 1st so I can have further discussions with the volunteers. It is essential that we decide between these two superb sites as soon as possible so planning can begin. Both cities are beautiful and offer many sites to see and things to do. **PLEASE LET ME KNOW!!**



# 24

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**WANTING TO TRADE...** An EX+ BLACK paint 'Chrome Dial' Nikon S2 body (#6144454) for a similar condition (or better) Black paint 'Black Dial' Nikon S2 body. Write for JPEG photo layout. Mike Symons (250)383-6456 or [msymons6456@telus.net](mailto:msymons6456@telus.net)

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MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA 94043

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## BLACK & BEAUTIFUL!

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6321906

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PLEASE ADD THE FOLLOWING NIKON F RED DOT BODY SERIAL NUMBERS TO OUR COMPLETE LIST PUBLISHED IN NHS-82.

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***TWO REMINDERS...PLEASE REMEMBER IF PAYING YOUR DUES BY CHECK TO MAKE IT OUT TO EITHER MYSELF OR 'RJR' PUBLISHING. DO NOT USE 'NHS' OR NIKON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OR THE NIKON JOURNAL. THANK YOU.***

***ALSO TRY TO GET BACK TO ME BEFORE NOVEMBER 1ST. WITH YOUR PREFERENCE FOR NHS-CON11. RJR***



# odds 'n ends

## ONE MAN'S 'NHS-R2S'!!

My unique (I think) R2S is a result of my disappointment at having a box that said 'special set for NHS' but nothing on the camera. I had to use the logo because, as you know, in England NHS means National Health Service! It meant 4 months of seeing various engravers who all shook their heads and said 'too small', 'dodgy material', 'too complicated', etc. Finally I turned to the Honorable Company of Goldsmiths in the city of London, for who I once made a film about the design and making of the Crown for Prince Charles' Coronation as Prince of Wales. They put me onto someone who had to have complex heraldic crests engraved on various surfaces. They turned out to be three old men working in an attic in Clerkenwell. They 'ummed' and 'aahed' a lot and finally said leave the camera with them and they'd ring me to say if it was possible. To cut a long story short, they said they would try, if I would be willing to risk the camera surface being damaged. I agreed since I use my R2S to test my rangefinder lenses, so the external condition doesn't concern me very much. It wasn't easy and it wasn't cheap but I think it was worth it to have the camera properly attributed. Paul Bonner.





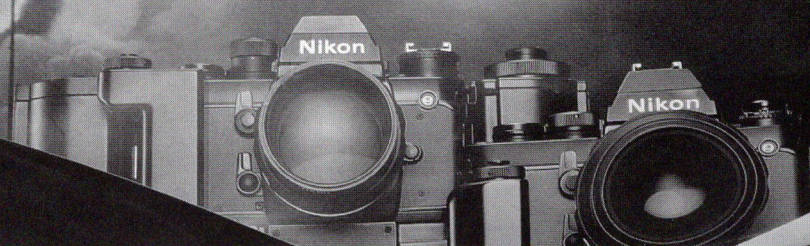
# NASA's Nikon

Singled out for outer space



Space shuttle

Space missions  
1969-1972



Created For The "NHS" By *Jay Hurst*