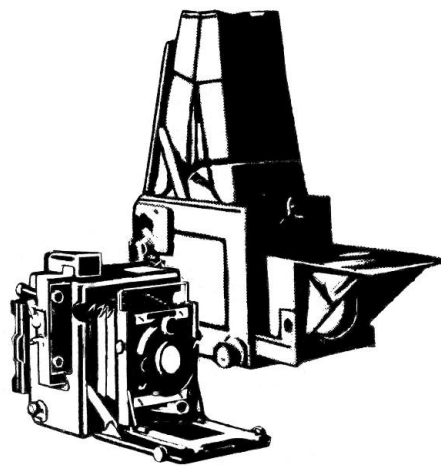


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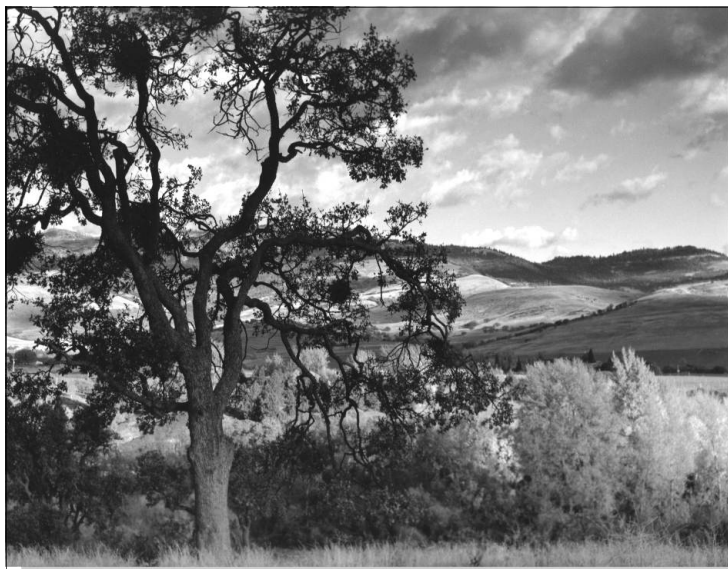


VOLUME 15 ISSUE 2

SECOND QUARTER 2010

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My First Speed Graphic

By Jim Chesky
Vancouver, Washington

I bought it online, eBay of course, in the spring of 2002. I could say it was on impulse, but that would not be true. I had been thinking for a long time about doing something in large or medium format. Not that I disliked my 35mm Nikon. It's just that I had become trigger-happy, and one day I looked through a roll of 36 shots, and there was nothing good. Not one good shot. My

photography had become a matter of shooting without thinking. I knew a camera that would require of me purposeful steps (compose, focus, load film, set f/stop, set shutter, cock shutter, pull dark slide, trigger shutter, return dark slide), would force me to slow down, and just maybe, to think about what I was shooting.

When it arrived, I unwrapped my first 2¼ x 3¼ Speed Graphic. It was dusty, dirty, and the lens, a 101mm 4.5 Kodak, was filthy and took long, careful cleaning. The focal plane shutter didn't work, and the roll film back it came with, a Graphic 23, was mounted on the old style back, not the newer Graflok back found on newer models of all Graphics. Even if I wanted to take the time to unscrew the roll film back, there was no ground glass. The rangefinder was also faded and dirty, but usable. Barely. It was interesting that none of that kept me from looking forward to shooting that first roll of film. I spent the rest of the day cleaning the camera.

I had planned to drive down to see friends in Ashland, Oregon, and saw an opportunity to try out my "new" 1946 Speed Graphic. I visited with friends until late afternoon and watched as clouds rolled across a blue sky and over distant hills. I was missing my best shots. I just knew it. Sit down, they said. Relax. You know how long it has been since we talked? They were right. I did need to slow down, relax... still my eyes wandered to those clouds, those perfect, puffy clouds.

It was coming toward sunset when I walked out the door saying good night. Was there still time? I had only 100 ASA black and white film loaded into the old Graphic 23 roll film back. I drove, following streets that rose higher along the hillside of Ashland, looking for a viewpoint where I could see those wonderful rolling hills of southern Oregon.

When I found the spot, I had to move quickly in the fading light. I was not prepared to use the faded rangefinder in such dim light. I almost could not tell if it worked or not. Making note that I would need a ground glass and a good loop if I was to do this, I fiddled with the light meter in the fading light, set the shutter and f/stop. As I did all this, I felt the pressure to hurry up, the irony that I had purchased this camera to slow down my shooting was not lost.

Finally, I was ready. I had composed what I thought would be a good shot, focused as best I could in the light, the roll film back was loaded with 100 ASA B&W Fuji, the f/stop and shutter set, dark slide pulled, and I looked up at my shot. I was delighted to see the sun give the scene a sudden brightening of its last light. I smiled and plunged the shutter release cable.

The shot was not that bad and came out better than I deserved. I took other shots on the same roll that next day in full sunlight. No puffy clouds, though. Not that it mattered, since I forgot to pull the dark slide a couple times and advanced the blank frame, double exposed several more. All in all, a lousy roll, right? No. Something I noticed about myself that night and the following day, and for many days since. That was that I was smiling the entire time. Photography was fun again. Yes, a learning curve was required, patience even, but I was having fun again taking pictures.

I have since had the back of my first mini-speed converted, so I use a ground glass and quickly load the roll film back after viewing. The focal-plane shutter was repaired, leading to the discovery of the wonderful world of barrel lenses. Yes, if you should see me today, with any of my Speed or Crown Graphics, you will see a smile on my face. I am still having fun taking pictures.



TRAINING MANUAL No. 2170-5

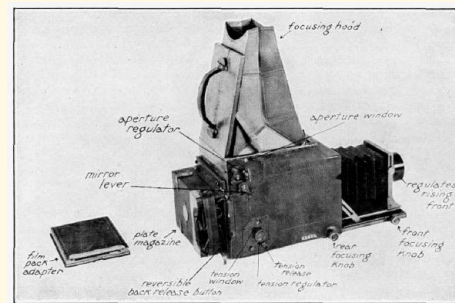
**ARMY AIR CORPS
BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY
March 1, 1930**

“Purpose. This manual prescribes standard laboratory methods and practices in basic photography, and the operation of ground photographic equipment and apparatus in use by organizations of the United States Army.

- 4. Economy in the use of materials.** - Progress in the practical work involved in photographic training is not measured by the amount of material used, but by the amount of instruction extracted from each piece of material.
- 5. Value of self-criticism.** - At all times the progressive photogra-

pher must be the severest critic of his work. Perfection in photography is reached only in the minds of the lazy and conceited, and the mere existence of such a mental attitude is a bar to their further progress.

40. The graflex-camera outfit. - The graflex [sic]-camera outfit as used in the Army consists of a graflex camera with lens and focusing panel, cut-film magazine, film-pack adapter, and carrying case for the camera. The type of graflex generally used is known as the revolving-back autograflex [sic]. The camera is similar in construction to other models of the graflex and consists essentially of a box with a movable front. However, in the case of a revolving-back autograflex, the front is let down and forms a bed upon which an extra amount of bellows gives considerable focal capacity, the advantage of which is the accommodation of lenses of longer focal length and a consequent increase in the size of the image when a photograph is made at a distance from the subject.



47. Repair of a graflex camera. - c. Tears in the curtain. - It is not advisable to patch the curtain on a graflex camera, because it operates so close to the camera body that a patch may cause the curtain to jam. Old curtains, however, constitute good material for patching the camera bellows.

144. The speed graphic camera. - a. While embodying many of the valuable features of the graflex camera, the speed graphic [sic] camera is built more along the lines of a hand camera. In its present form it is used in the photography of moving objects, for newspaper work in general, and in many cases for general photographic work. This camera is equipped with a base, fitted with a tripod screw socket, a lens bracket base with sliding arms, fitted with ratchet gears for focusing, and a fixed focusing scale accurately adjusted for the lens with which the camera is equipped. These cameras are usually fitted with a lens 'in barrel,' or without a lens shutter.

145. Operation of the speed graphic. - a. Exposure is made in the regular manner, the shutter being tripped by pressure of the small lever on the side of the camera at the opportune moment. The dark slide must be immediately replaced in the plate or film holder following exposure, for *if the shutter is reset while the slide is out the exposed plate of film will be exposed to light and ruined.* This condition may be obviated by equipping the camera with a 'between-the-lens' shutter, which renders the camera infinitely more valuable for general photographic work than with its regular equipment of lens only. Equipped in this manner the camera may be used as a kodak and focused by means of the view finder exclusively.”

[Ed. A little grousing in print about the need for a front shutter!]



Graflex and the Kalart Micromatic Speed Flash

By Ken Metcalf

This article concludes my series on the 3¼ x 4¼ pre-Anniversary Speed Graphic of 1935-1939. Although other flash equipment was fitted to this camera, I believe the Kalart Micromatic unit was the first practical synchronizer used on a Speed Graphic.

Graflex and Kalart enjoyed a long and friendly relationship, even after Graflex introduced their own flash gun and later their own rangefinder. Flashbulbs for the American market were introduced in 1930, and, for several years, the open flash technique was used, while photographers (mainly in the press) experimented with methods to synchronize the new bulbs with shutters. Initial experimentation with synchronization was done with leaf shutters, as the duration of early flashbulbs was too short (at 20/1,000 of a second), while it took 26/1,000 of a second for the curtain of a 3¼ x 4¼ to travel across the film. Three types of synchronizers were developed: first, the electric or magnetic type (represented by the then popular Mendelsohn Speedgun); second, the mechanical type (represented by Kalart); and, third, the Jacobson synchronizer that used an electro-magnetic type on Speed Graphics and the mechanical type on Leica and Contax.¹ Graflex introduced their solenoid-based flash system in 1941.²

For those few readers who are still interested, it appears from a letter from Kalart co-founder Morris Schwartz (“Origin of name KALART: Father’s name KALman SchwARTz.”) that the Speed Flash preceded their popular rangefinder, and that “six prototypes of [the] rangefinder... were used at the 1936 Democratic Convention.”³ Soon after the con-



Figure 1

vention, Kalart and Graflex received orders for this new device. When the Speed Flash was introduced is less well documented. Several patents were issued (most notably 1,996,592 and 2,117,509) which show application dates from 1931 through 1934 and issuance dates from 1935 to 1938. In my opinion, the sequence was, first, the Micromatic Synchronizer (Figure 1), then various battery case-synchronizer combinations, starting with the Standard Speed Flash (box-style Standard case and Micromatic Synchronizer, top of previous column), then the Master Speed Flash (tubular Master battery case and Micromatic or Automatic Synchronizer, (Figure 2). Later, the Automatic Synchronizer Unit (Figure 3) was introduced which, unlike the Micromatic type, had to be reset after each exposure, used a metal plunger that did not require resetting, and, finally, a 9-volt battery case was produced (Figure 4).⁴



Figure 2



Figure 3

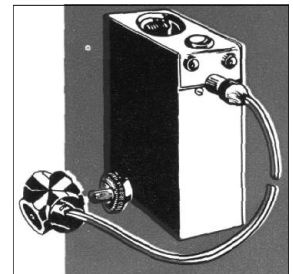


Figure 4

Mendelsohn and Kalart synchronizers were first listed in the 1937 Graflex price list, with the following Kalart listings: Speed Flash

Model A (with bakelite battery case and 6" chrome reflector)

Model A (with metal battery case and 7" chrome reflector).

The sample camera for this article, serial number 226085 (1937), was purchased as shown. In my opinion, it is best to buy a camera this way, that is, in a carrying case with accessories. It has been my experience that, because Graflex cameras can easily be altered, in some cases the alterations are not from the time the camera was manufactured and fitted, or were not done with period components. I have been guilty of switching items on cameras in an attempt to make them look better and not documenting the changes. As the objective of different collectors varies, it is, in my opinion, not wrong to switch things around, but it can be misleading to those who try to make accurate statements about various models.

It appears, from documentation, that after some initial changes, the Micromatic Speed Flash, as shown on the camera, became the standard, until the Master Speed Flash became more popular. For the collector, I think the following items should be included:

1. A Permanent Shutter Adapter fitted to the Compur or Com-

pound shutter (Figure 5). Also, the proper adapter from the synchronizer to the shutter.

2. A mounting shoe on the camera, although the unit could be mounted in the side tripod socket (Figure 6).

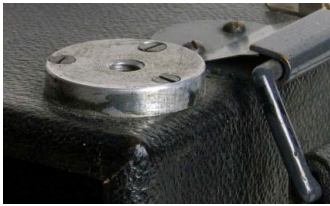


Figure 6

3. A reflector clip, used for smaller bulbs, to center the bulb in the reflector (Figure 7).



Figure 5

4. A connecting cord.
5. An instruction booklet.



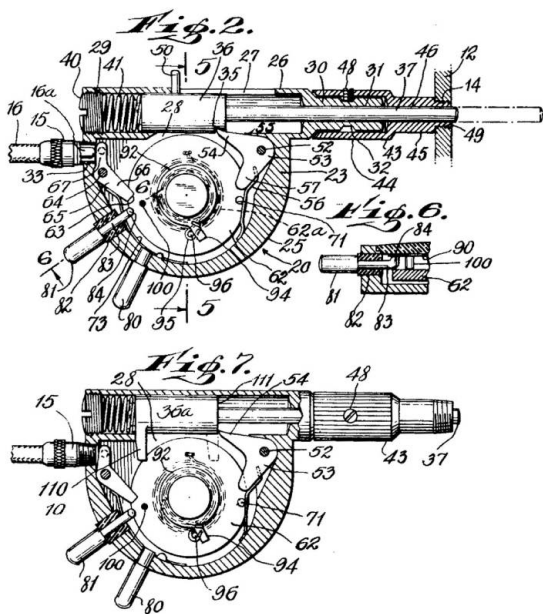
Figure 7

¹The primary source for these statements is Synchroflash Photography, by Willard D. Morgan, published in 1939. Morgan, along with co-author Henry Lester, published the long-running Graphic Graflex Photography starting in 1940.

²See GHQ Volume 11, Issue 4 for Bill Inman's article on the Graflex flashing unit of 1941-1948.

³Letters to John Manser, dated April 28, 1993, July 6, 1993, and August 18, 1993, from Morris Schwartz ("92 years of age").

⁴Graphic Graflex Photography, by Willard Morgan and Henry Lester, 1940, first edition, page 302.



Patent 1,996,592 issued in 1935 to Morris Schwartz.

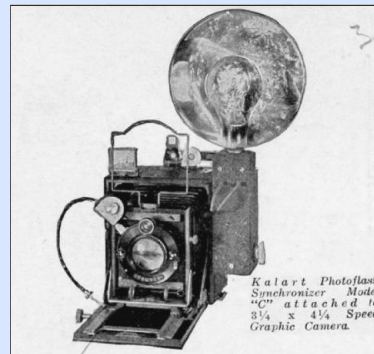
Kalart Synchronizer

The Kalart flash outfit pictured in the accompanying article was sold from 1936 or 1937 through at least 1941. The synchronizer and battery case found in Todd Gustavson's essential photography book, Camera, published by and available from the George Eastman House, may be the earliest version of the unit produced by Kalart.

Features of the Eastman House unit include a tall wood battery case and a dark-finished synchronizer. In the accompanying illustration, the Kalart name is stamped on the flash reflector bracket, suggesting the unit may have been sold, rather than just a prototype. In a 1934 brochure, the battery case is smaller, and the synchronizer has a bright finish. As suggested by Mr. Gustavson, their synchronizer could be fitted only to a top-handle Speed Graphic, and not the then available pre-Anniversary Speed Graphic, because of the side handle mounts. In a 1935 Eastman House brochure (left), a shorter battery case is shown fitted to a pre-Anniversary, although it is unclear how they avoided the top side handle mount.

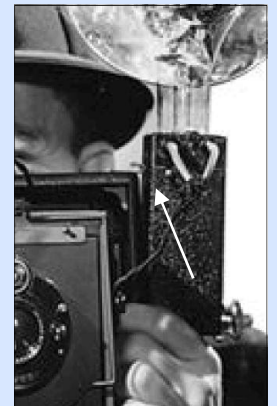


An undated photograph shows how this may have been achieved!



Kalart Photoflash Synchronizer Model "C" attached to 3 1/4 x 4 1/4 Speed Graphic Camera.

The so-called "Improved Model 'C' Synchronizing Outfit" of 1934 differed substantially from the unit in the accompanying article. First, the older unit used two 4 1/2-volt batteries, while the newer unit used one 4 1/2-volt battery. Second, provision was made to allow for horizontal mounting. Third, a "Trio-Socket" with three reflectors and an outlet for an extension flash were eliminated. Finally, a disc on the back of the synchronizer, used to change the timing of the ignition, was changed to a more accessible adjustment knob.



An American (Photographer) in Paris

By Jim Flack

The era when Graflex cameras predominated in all fields of professional photography, from the beginning of the 20th century through the 1930's, coincides with the period when photography gained international acceptance as a form of pictorial art, and a wide variety of novel photographic processes evolved to expand the expressive potential of photography. Serious artistic photographers often used a Graflex because of the advantages it offered, especially for composition and critical focusing.

While button pushers clicked away on their inexpensive cycle cameras and box Kodaks, pictorial photographers involved themselves in every detail of image making. They understood what choice of lens focal length to use on their Graflex to capture their intended perspective and plane of focus for their images. They mastered their camera and printed their own images, leaving nothing to chance. Photographic printing evolved new techniques that enabled the skilled and dedicated few to add an additional element of personal expression into the final image.

Today, there still exists those skilled and dedicated few who continue the craft of hand-made photographic image making. Some, like myself, use classic cameras, such as my faithful Super D, for their advantages in the field. Dispersed around the world, only the Internet allows them to stay in touch on a regular basis. So, when even more than just two or three get together in person, it is an event.

This is not, perhaps, the typical article appearing in the Graflex Historic Quarterly, but I hope it still may be of interest to many Graflex enthusiasts. I am your corresponding reporter beginning this article on the train from Rotterdam to Paris, heading for a two-day immersion in vintage photographic processes and classic cameras. This weekend, June 5 and 6, is both the bi-annual meeting of Eurobrom and the International Photofair in the town of Bievres, just outside of Paris.

This is the fourth bi-annual meeting of Eurobrom in Europe. The participants of Eurobrom 4 are actively involved in using early photographic processes, equipment and techniques to create personal, expressive images. Although it is the early "bromoil" process, developed in 1907 by C. Wellbourne Piper, that is the common link within this group. Many participants practice several other vintage photographic processes including platinum/palladium, carbon, gum bichromate, oil, and I suppose in the year 2010 we could even include silver gelatin as a vintage process, too.

It is not surprising that photographers who've studied and practiced vintage photographic processes are also interested in early photographic styles and classic cameras and related equipment. In the GHQ, Volume 13, Issue 3, the New York photographer, Peter Liepke, was profiled. Peter continues to use his 4x5 Graflex Super D in his own creative work and often prints using the bromoil technique. Because of the natural connection between interest in early photographic processes and classic photo-

graphic equipment, it is no coincidence that this year the Eurobrom group chose the same weekend as the 47th Bievres International Photofair so they could both meet together and also go to this major vintage camera fair.



Bievres street scene.

The little town of Bievres is a small, picturesque village far enough outside of Paris to feel like it's in the countryside yet close enough to be reached in less than an hour by train. I had been in Bievres

once before, about 6 years ago, specifically to visit the Musee Francais de la Photographie located there. It should not be surprising that France has a significant museum specifically dedicated to photography. So many important technical milestones in the development of photography were achieved by the French, including Louis Daguerre's precious daguerreotype process and the Lumiere brothers' revolutionary color process called Autochrome. You can get more information about the Musee Francais de la Photographie at <http://www.museedelaphoto.fr/>.

The Eurobrom 4 program is simple. About 40 photographers from around the world, mostly from Europe, but a few from the US and this year one from New Zealand, gather to share their experiences in making oil and bromoil images and sharing the results of their work. I've made a few bromoil images myself, so I understand the process, but there is always much more to learn. Because success in this process is somewhat dependent on characteristics of commercially manufactured photographic paper, any change in a company's production process can affect the way it responds to bromoil techniques. Today, with so many photo paper types being discontinued and companies merging with other companies, one important topic of discussion was which currently produced papers are successful for bromoil. At this meeting, there was some optimism that the newly introduced ADOX Vario Classic paper seemed promising for bromoil, although many bromoilists have been hoarding personal supplies of earlier papers just in case commercial sources dwindle to none.

Demonstrations were also integral to the Eurobrom 4 program. Bromoil is a technique of hand applying lithographers ink on prepared photo paper to create the final photographic image. Most photographers use the traditional method of applying rather stiff ink with a round "stags foot" brush in an up and down motion called "hopping." This technique was demonstrated by Pierre Monnereau from France. An unusual alternative technique using soft artists ink was developed by Rene Smets from Belgium, and Rene was on hand to demonstrate his approach. Rene also talked about alternatives to commercial photo papers using hand-applied sensitized gelatin to pro-



Bromoil print by Rene Smets.

techniques are all related to bromoil. The hand applied gelatin or gum oil techniques do not rely on the characteristics of commercially produced photographic paper. So, even if the commercial resources become scarce, these oil printing techniques will enable photographers to continue this form of hand-made photographic images.

One does not need to know anything about the bromoil process to appreciate the drama and beauty that these photographers create in their images. Many of them, in my opinion, are masters in the league of Demachy or Misonne. It is wonderful to see all their latest work, and it is wonderful to see how supportive and encouraging the members of Eurobrom are toward each other. Most participants know one another only through the Internet, sharing images and commentary much in the same way that the [Graflex Historic Quarterly](#) provides information to all of us via pdf downloads. You can appreciate how special it is for this group of vintage photographic enthusiasts to get together face-to-face.

On Sunday most of the Eurobrom 4 participants made their way by car or RER to Bievres for the International Photofair. In the years before eBay, photo fairs were frequent events in many larger cities in the US and in many other countries as well. I attended them frequently while living in California years ago, and I'd heard about the famous international camera shows in London, Hamburg and Bievres. This was my first opportunity to attend one of them.



Transportation by RER from Paris was quick and easy, and, from the Bievres train station, it is only a short walk to the center of town where hundreds of display booths and thousands of

photo-enthusiasts gather to explore, discover and shop all things photographic. Although there is a genuine mix of languages among the vendors and shoppers (French, German, Polish, Japanese as well as English being heard), shared enthusiasm for classic cameras seems to easily overcome any language barriers.

I walked all the isles and surveyed the array of cameras displayed in every booth. I found myself returning to examine several booths more than once. There is so much camera history to see, from the earliest sliding box wet-plate cameras from the 1860's to a plethora of 35mm cameras spanning the 1940's through the 1990's. Of course I had my eyes peeled for any Graflex cameras.



My determination to find Graflex cameras among the displays was not satisfied very many times. There were only four or five dealers who had either a Graflex SLR or a Speed or Crown Graphic on their tables. None of these was especially unusual or in fine condition, and the prices seemed to be on the high side, presumably to allow ample room for negotiations. I did notice a nice military Speed Graphic set in green that included the original tripod and carrying case.

Although I cannot reveal the Bievres International Photofair to be the end of the rainbow for those searching for Graflex treasures, there are many other experiences at the Bievres Photofair to treasure. I'd forgotten the camaraderie I enjoyed at photo fairs that I used to attend in California years ago. It's very nice to see a variety of cameras in front of you and to be able to pick one up and examine it closely, simply out of curiosity. Clearly, this is just not possible through an eBay shopping experience. Meeting fellow camera enthusiasts face-to-face and sharing knowledge and experience is how I originally learned about vintage cameras and how I came to recognize the special character of Graflex SLR's that I enjoy so much today.

Thankfully, the website [Graflex.org](#) and the [Graflex Historic Quarterly](#) are providing Internet-based resources for shared knowledge and enthusiasm about all things Graflex. Each of us can connect with the camaraderie of other Graflex enthusiasts by visiting these resources often. It's easier than a trip to Bievres, too. But, if you do have the opportunity to go to a photo fair, in Bievres or perhaps closer to home, there will always be interesting things to see and enthusiastic, knowledgeable people to meet.

Graflex Kids



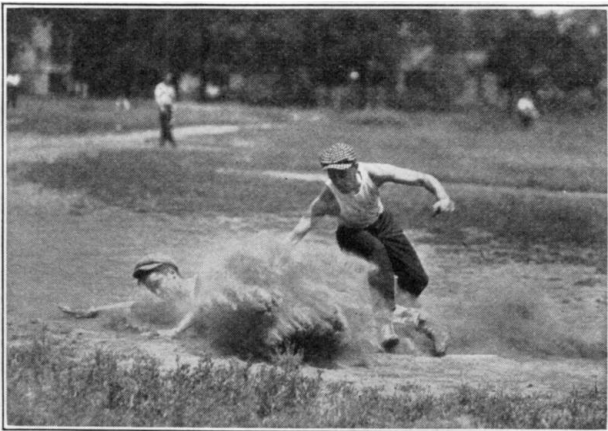
1913

No camera is so good as the *Graflex* for making pictures of children. Indoors or in the shade snapshots may be made fast enough to secure perfect pictures.



1917-1926

FROM A GRAFLEX NEGATIVE



1914

Size of picture made with Auto Graflex Junior



1940



1938

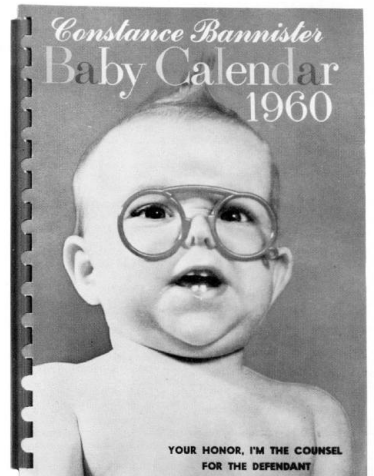
A Graflex-made Picture by Harold M. Lambert



**GIVE
GRAFLEX**



1958



Constance Bannister
Baby Calendar
1960

YOUR HONOR, I'M THE COUNSEL
FOR THE DEFENDANT

Graflex Historic Quarterly

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Bromoil print-making and print by Pierre Monnereau.

Ad from 1901 Photographic Times, courtesy of Bob Lansdale.