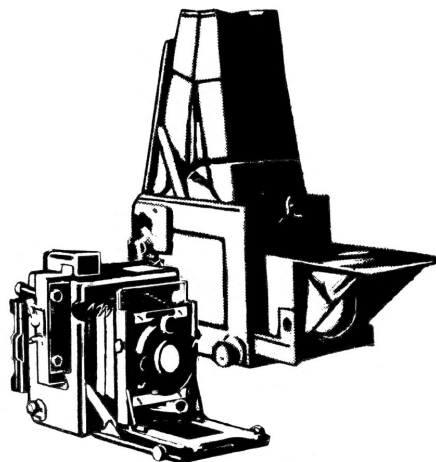


GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY

Since 1996



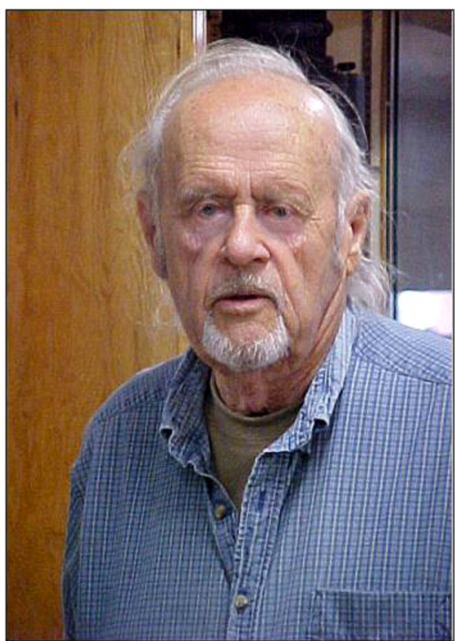
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 4

FOURTH QUARTER 2012

Gene Miller - Collector by Karin Clark.....	1
George Hunter of Canada.....	3
Adapting the 4x5 Kodak No. 4A Film Holder for Tray Processing by Paul S. Lewis.....	6
Empirical Engineers.....	7

GENE MILLER - COLLECTOR

By Karin Clark



Gene's first experience with a professional Graflex was in the Kansas Air National Guard in 1949, where he was assigned to the photo unit in Wichita. His duties included running the projector for new recruits on Venereal Diseases and loading film magazines for the aircraft gun cameras. While at Casper Army Base in Casper, Wyoming, Gene was assigned to photographing aircraft, and he learned how to process film.

After the Korean War, Gene worked at Cessna Aircraft in Administrative Engineering, filling in wherever he was needed, including the photo lab. When work began on the T-37 aircraft, Gene began the process of establishing the photo and reproduction area. After five years with Cessna, the T-37 contract expired, and there were many layoffs. Gene then went to work at Lawrence Photo Supply as an outside salesman covering eastern Kansas and Oklahoma. He worked with graphic arts installations such as newspapers, school and commercial photographers. It was during this time he met Frank A. Wesley.

Frank A. Wesely was born in 1877 in Czechoslovakia. He established his first photography business at Holyrood, Kansas, in 1898. He moved to Wichita in 1919 and purchased the business of one of Wichita's pioneer photographers, Alden W. Harden. The location of that studio was 204 East Douglas Avenue.*



Gene found himself escorting Mr. Wesely to the Professional Photographers annual meetings at the Broadview Hotel. He and Mr. Wesely developed a friendship, and Gene began to check on Mr. Wesely to ensure his welfare, often bringing him a Nu-way burger, which was one of Frank's favorite things.

Wesely subsequently moved his studio to 1105 West Douglas where he worked until he died in 1965. At the time of his death, the Wichita Eagle reported that he was the oldest professional photographer in Kansas.*

It was during the 1980s that Gene had the opportunity to purchase 100-150 8x10 Frank Wesely negatives from a fellow collector. Of those negatives, approximately 30 to 40 were glass. At a later date, Gene also was presented with the opportunity to purchase Frank's camera, a Home Portrait



Graflex 5x7 circa 1916-1920, serial number 95464.

Gene maintains a fully equipped darkroom for printing negatives up to 8x10, which has proven very helpful in his work with the Wesely negatives.

Gene has amassed an extensive collection that represents some of the finest Wichita area historical photographs as well as one of the nation's largest collections of rare Graflex single-lens cameras, and their competitors.



Gene and part of his Graflex collection.

Future articles will present cameras from Gene's collection, highlighting the previously undocumented evolution of various Graflex models.

*Wichita Historical Society.



Holyrod Cornet Band, Holyrod, Kansas, circa 1900-1915.



Dague Business University, Wichita, Kansas.



He recently had an Art Showing of Historical Wichita Photography, above, which was well-attended.



GEORGE HUNTER OF CANADA

George Hunter has been involved with photography for over 75 years. He is a great storyteller, and a report about Mr. Hunter was published on the Photo Historical Society of Canada's web site. It can be viewed at <http://phsc.ca/hunter.html>. Additional information can be obtained from <http://georgehunterphotography.com>, Mr. Hunter's own web site. We are grateful to Bob Lansdale, editor of the PHSC's Photographic Canadiana, for bringing us together.

Noted for his scenic aerial photography and industrial images, many of his illustrations can be seen as corporate reports, calendars, magazine illustrations and Canadian bank notes. He continues to work with his stock photography business.

Presented here are a number of images of Mr. Hunter and his Graflex cameras, with captions prepared for us by him.

New Graflex Camera, Manitoba, ca. 1946

Out in Winnipeg in Canada's western prairie, I was a kid at the end of the 1930s, getting very attached to photography. I don't remember if someone encouraged me to buy a Speed Graphic, but I noticed that the press photographers were using them, so I picked up one that was in mint condition. I carried out freelance work for the Winnipeg newspapers and construction companies, until the Winnipeg Tribune hired me full-time 24/7.

That was in wartime, with minimum staff, and I learned a lot, including "If you don't make the shot the editor asked for, don't bother to return to the office – save the embarrassment." I put my Speed Graphic through some hairy places, one of which still comes to mind. A convicted killer, Albert Westgate (a very athletic type), was to be sentenced – death by hanging, and I had to make a portrait of him that day. As he was being ushered into the courthouse, I jumped up from hiding behind my car fender and made a full-face portrait. Westgate's leg shot up, almost kicking the Graphic out of my hands and knocking my head off.

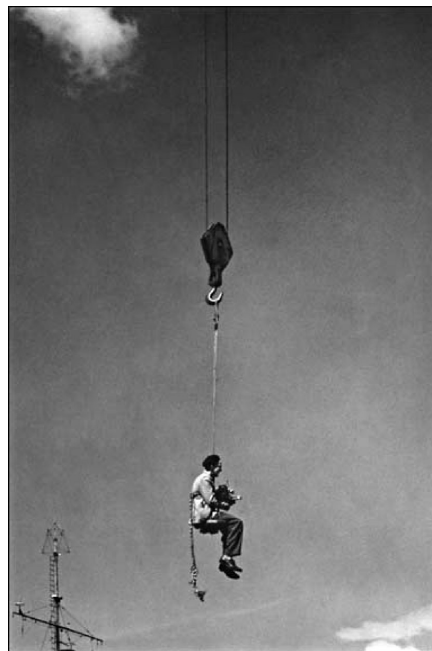
I purchased a second Speed Graphic as I was making my mind up to retire from the National Film Board, which I did May 1950, to start my own business. My first expenditure was for a small aircraft to serve as transportation back and forth across Canada, and a platform for aerial photographs. The first bank manager I approached for a loan had the staff usher me out onto Sparks Street in Ottawa. A friendlier bank manager further down the street was more amenable to my idea and provided the funds to purchase a used Piper PA-16 Clipper that I had my eye on. I had engineers refit the right-hand door to slide open in flight. The Speed Graphic with its wire frame view-finder made an excellent camera for aerial photography.



Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1947

In order to make really low-level aerial views of the Royal Canadian Navy's shipyard in Halifax, and the inability to get a helicopter at that particular time, they hooked me into a boson's chair. With no cell phones in those days, positioning for the photographs was all by hand signals. Everything went very well, until I gave the signal to lower me back onto the dock. The crane operator brought me down over the water, and I began to wonder when he would bring me in toward the dock. "Is he going to drown me, or what?" I was beginning to think. I pulled my legs up as my feet got to within an inch of water,

when the lowering stopped. Only seconds before my legs tired out and having to let them drop into the water, the mischievous crane operator raised me up a couple of feet and set me down on the dock as gently as setting me on a feather bed. Are all crane operators as mischievous as he was?



Photo, courtesy Bob Lansdale



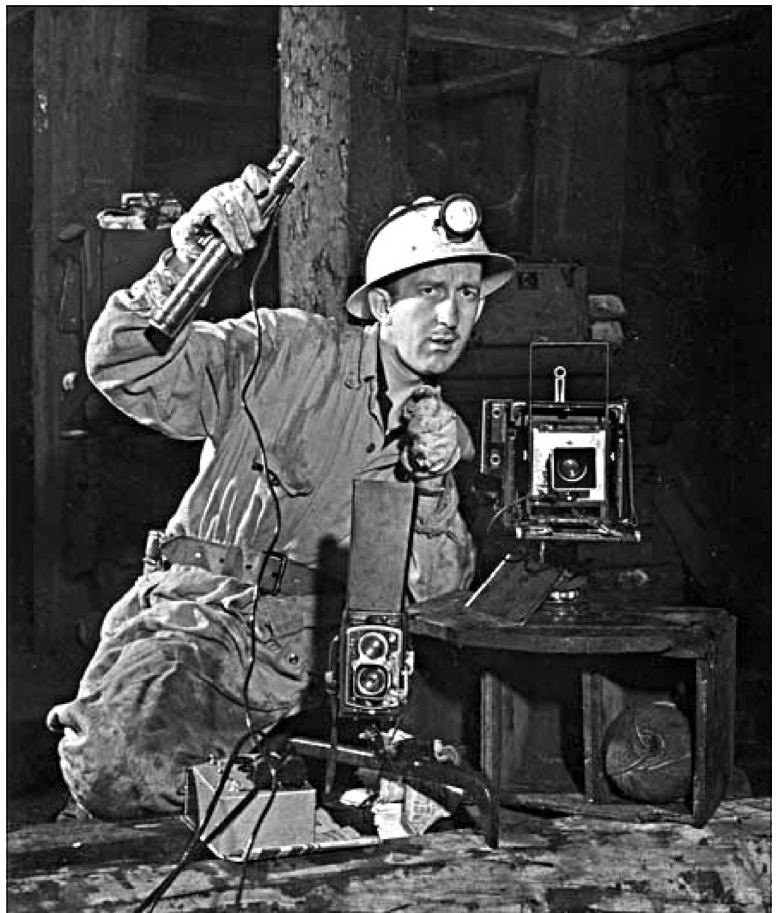
Niagara Falls, Ontario, 1948
(birthday 2012 photo, courtesy Bob Lansdale)

George with lifetime buddy, Patricia Stevenson, at Niagara Falls. Patricia was the press liaison officer for the Canadian Government Ministry of Mines. Although I worked out of Ottawa until 1955, when I moved to Toronto, and it became a long-distance romance. Pat had a lenient boss, so she was able to accompany me on trips across Canada, to Europe and Hawaii often, and a trip around the world. In the late 1970s, Pat moved to Toronto, and we pooled our resources to buy a lot and build a house/ studio/ lab/ office. We celebrated Pat's 102nd birthday in August (2012) with a BBQ in our spacious yard adjacent to a conservation area.



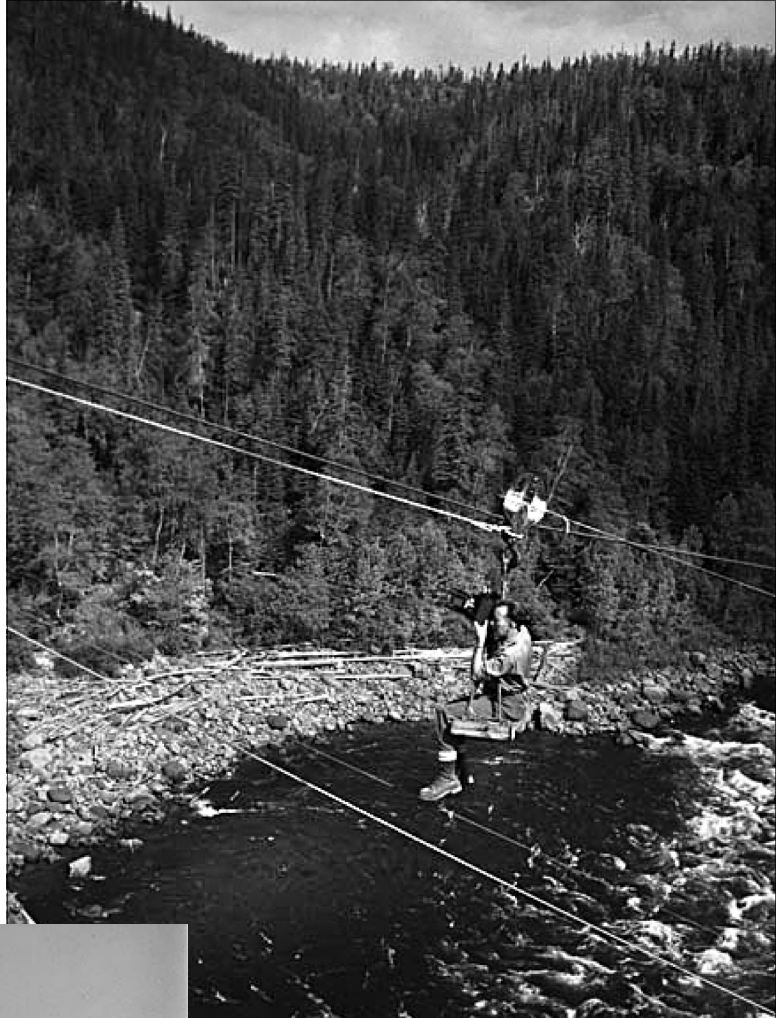
Bell River, Newfoundland, 1949

With my job as Stills Photographer with N.F.B. in Ottawa, I was assigned to do a documentary on Newfoundland, a British colony that was joining Canada in 1949. One of the industrial venues on my list to cover was Wabana Iron Mines on Bell Island. There they were still using horses underground, and as I would likely never get back there, I double shot everything, using my Speed Graphic as the principal camera and a Rolleiflex for backup. With some subjects, and to save my supply of flashbulbs, I synchronized the Graphic and Rolleiflex to fire at the same time. During my five years at N.F.B., one of my Graphics accompanied me on all of my many trips back and forth across the country and into the Canadian High Arctic for a couple of months. The Speed Graphic was my only camera that didn't freeze up in the temperatures I faced, running down to -40 F.



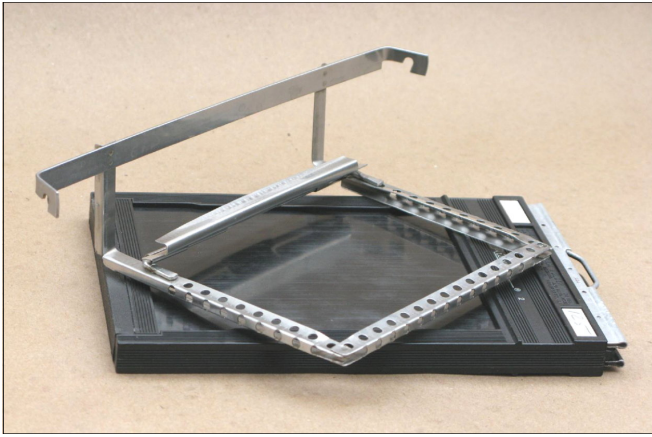
Moisie, Quebec, 1951

There were several discoveries of iron ore in Northern Quebec and close by in Labrador. A consortium of the mining companies decided to build a railway from Seven Islands on the St. Lawrence, 400 km north to the Labrador frontier. It was named "Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway." I was assigned to carry out photographic coverage of the railroad construction, and the most interesting aspect on the initial visit to the area was the building of the bridge crossing the Moisie River. I found the best spot for an overall view would be at mid-river, so I had them suspend me from the line used to haul cement buckets. All went well until I completed my shot at mid-river with my faithful Graphic. I gave the hand signal to haul me back (no cell phones in those days). For a few heart-rending minutes, or likely it was several seconds, I thought the photographs I had just made were the last I would ever make. Instead of being pulled up to the side of the canyon that I started from, I started speeding down toward the opposite bank. Sudden death was a second or two away when I came to a jolting stop, a few feet from the rocky stonewall of the cliff. I will never know whether it was the case of a worker losing control of the rope, or being an "anglais" among French Canadians, that were having fun in scaring the hell out of me. It all ended well, and my Speed Graphic shots felt no effect from the unscheduled high wire treatment.



Hong Kong, 1962

I can't understand why I was dressed so formally while standing on the rooftop of the Hong Kong Post Office Building in Kowloon to make photographs of the central part of the colony on Victoria Island across the harbour. With a few years in between visits and passing through Hong Kong, there were so many changes, it looked like a new destination on each occasion. Because most of my travel shots were to supply my stock photo agencies, I found that the larger format had a higher sales potential. That is why I made many subjects with the Speed Graphic to provide 4x5" transparencies.



Adapting the 4X5 Kodak No. 4A Film Holder for Tray Processing

By Paul S. Lewis

I have been collecting and enjoying Graflex cameras for about ten years. There is nothing I do not like about these old cameras. Well, that is until it comes to processing the beautiful 4x5 negatives.

The big frustration for me is two-fold. First, I just keep quart size processing chemistry for day tank developing my 35mm and medium format film. Second, tray processing 4x5 negatives can scratch the negative during processing.

Really, I do not shoot a lot of film when I take the 4x5s out. I usually take one or two holders and try to get what I am after within as few shots as possible. So I usually end up with 2-4 negatives to process, and I may only do this a few times a year.

Early on, I was really frustrated by the tray developing process. I really did not have a need for the large, gallon size, tank and film holders the old press guys used to gang process a large group of negatives. So I tried processing my negatives in my trays within the limits of the chemistry in the quart size containers. That worked okay. But some got scratched, and it was kind of annoying to try to keep two negatives from gravitating together and fishing for them in the dark.

Well, I had seen pictures of the Kodak film holders and thought I could just lay one or two flat in the tray. That would keep the film separated and off the bottom of the tray.

So I found a set of four on eBay and won the auction.

Clearly beautifully designed, exactly right for processing and well-made, the Kodak No. 4A holder solved my problems with just one exception. Two of them, in an 11x14 tray, were

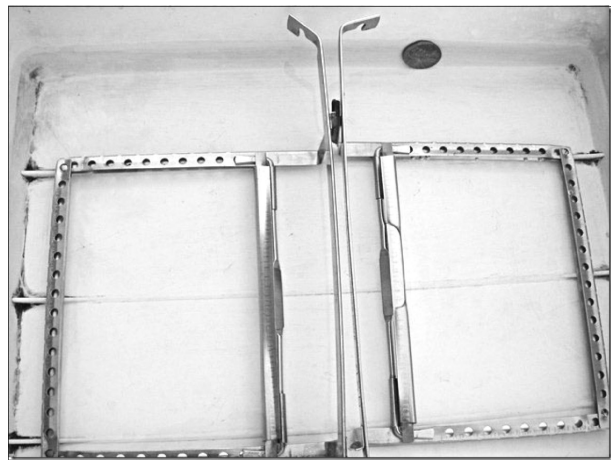
a bit crowded. I managed a few processing events and then realized that if I could just bend the hanger up, I could make a handle. Then both hangers would lie flat, and I could easily move the holders from tray to tray, wash and hang the negatives to dry. Perfect!

This is easy to do and takes only one small cut on each side of the frame to allow the bend to be made.

I used a Dremel tool to make the cut and grind a small radius to finish the edges. I am sure a file or hack saw will get the job done, too.



Four of these are all I really need and have been a huge benefit making processing easier, faster, inexpensive and produces a damage-free negative.



Two modified film holders in a large tray.



Modified film holder drying on shower curtain rod.



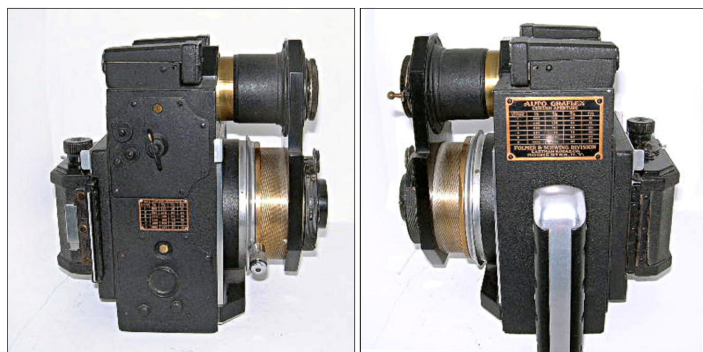
Empirical Engineers

By at least 1899, the Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Company was selling a twin-lens Graphic, and an additional model by 1901. Shortly after the company was purchased by George Eastman, they both were discontinued. Not until 1951 (GHQ, Volume 9, Issue 2) did Graflex introduce a twin-lens reflex camera, but even then it was based on purchasing the design, tools and dies from the Ciro Company of Delaware, Ohio. Had Graflex given up, or were they not coming up with a good product from their engineers? Although not strictly a twin-lens reflex camera because of the prism, here is a possible lead from the collection of Jim Chasse. First, some information about Jim's camera:

- According to a prior owner, it came from the estate of a Folmer Graflex technician in Rochester, New York. Also, according to a family member of the owner, this technician was permitted to use his lunch and free time to develop new products and ideas for the company, and was able to use any of their leftover supplies and equipment for this purpose.
- The camera takes 2¼ x 3¼ Graflex-style accessories, has a revolving back, is focused with a bronze helical mount, has a focal plane and leaf shutters, and horizontal and vertical view finders (probably Watson finders made by Burke & James), two Graflex shutter speed tables, and longer than normal 150mm lenses. The viewing lens is a sunk-mount Carl Zeiss Tessar, probably taken from a European reflex camera.
- It is about 7 inches tall and is heavy. Dating the camera is difficult, but it may have been created pre-WWII, although the viewfinders are postwar.
- If you look at the camera from the side, the eye level finder is not centered on the viewing lens - it's raised about an inch or more. So light coming in from the viewing lens is bounced up and then straightened to exit at the eyepiece, all this with one or more prisms or mirrors. There is no framing through this finder. Unfortunately, this feature no longer works.
- As pictured, there was a roll film holder attached to the back, but it is no longer with the camera.
- According to a knowledgeable Graflex historian, "Graflex had a factory full of 'empirical engineers.' They encouraged their people to come up with ideas, but especially ideas that could use parts or materials from existing products for cost savings. There are many Graflex products that reflect this, and many of the ideas came from

customers who talked to someone from the company, and a product was attempted. I have no doubt that it's perfectly possible this camera came from a former technician working at the plant, but to me it reflects more of a person just trying out an idea of their own rather than a serious attempt to come up with a new product. One of the biggest reasons I think so is the fact that this camera is very crude and not reflective of the quality with which Graflex made their products. All of the prototype and/or proposed cameras from Graflex I ever saw were quality done. Even the things that weren't finished or didn't work were done well and looked as though they came from Graflex." Here are a few pros and cons about the camera:

- The helical mount is well-engineered and superior to other parts of the camera.
- The Watson finders probably are later than the original body and not necessary if the builder had access to Graflex finders.
- Having two speed plates seems unnecessary.
- The 150mm lenses are unnecessarily long for the 2¼ x 3¼ format. Better lenses could have been obtained from Graflex. One theory holds that, given the long focal-length lenses and masked viewfinders, it was set up for 4x5 film and later modified for the 2¼ x 3¼ roll holder.
- The roll holder shown appears Graflex-made, but it was never a production model, suggesting the maker of this camera had access to accessories not generally available.



The historian states, "I think this camera was either someone just 'playing around' or maybe someone trying out something, or doing something 'just for the helluvit.' This stuff just doesn't go together. It doesn't make sense. I think it was something that someone cobbled together for some unknown reason. As you well know, Graflex cameras are easily modified and easily adapted to just about anything you can think of, and I believe this camera is another example of that. I remember so many times, at camera shows especially, where someone was trying to pass something off as a rare Graflex prototype and trying to get a fortune and having it turn out to be someone's Graflex Frankenstein monster. I can't believe this camera is anything more than that." In the case of well-conceived products, Graflex wanted to see a patent (which they would pay for) before they gave it serious consideration, and no patent has yet been located.

Or....maybe it was done fairly well, then modified later by a far less gifted person.

This is just one opinion. Please let the Quarterly know if you have a different opinion. Also, if you have a non-production camera or accessory, please let us know, so we can share it with our readers.



Graflex Historic Quarterly

The *Quarterly* is dedicated to enriching the study of the Graflex company, its history, and products. It is published by and for hobbyists/users, and is not a for-profit publication. Other photographic groups may reprint uncopyrighted material provided credit is given *GHQ* and the author. We would appreciate a copy of the reprint.

Editor and publisher: Ken Metcalf
One-year subscription: mail - US\$14 (black & white)
email - Free

[Payable to **Ken Metcalf**]

Contact:

Ken Metcalf
94 White Thorn Dr.
Alexander, NC 28701-9792

E-mail: metcalf537@aol.com

WANT AD POLICY:

Any subscriber wishing to place a want ad or seeking Graflex-related items may send them to the *GHQ* for inclusion at no charge (at this time). The editor reserves final publication decisions.

At the suggestion of Graflex historian and collector Joel Havens, the *Quarterly* is instituting a folder on Box.com for readers to share Graflex items. The internet address is:
<https://www.box.com/s/xjzixd02xsy69cr35oeu>.

If you have material you believe would be of general interest, please upload pictures or scans done at 300dpi, and let me know at metcalf537@aol that an item has been added.

Thanks.

Ken Metcalf



Graflex Trade Notes, December 1957, courtesy Bill Inman.



RESTORATION TIP

Here is a new product John Fleming has just tried. Two-part epoxy mixes up and becomes as aluminum, can be ground, drilled or tapped. I believe this mix will repair any camera or photo gear where castings are broken or need joining. Costs about US\$17 for this sized pack of Part A and Part B tubes. Based on my tests, I believe you can easily "cast" camera and photo equipment parts from this, making a simple mold and pouring the mixed goo in.

Tip courtesy of John Fleming of the prestigious Back Focus journal of the **Australian Photographic Collectors Society (Inc)**, www.apcsociety.com.au.