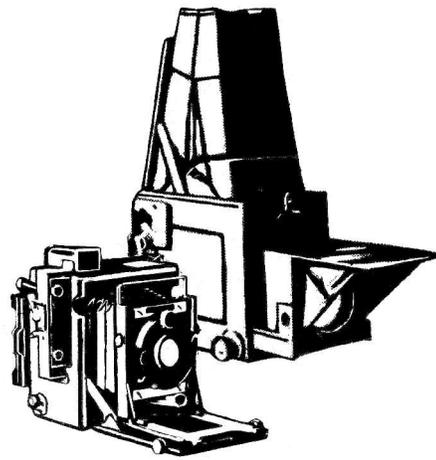


GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY

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Fair Ride - Peter Liepke Copyright 2008

The Graflex Super D in the Hands of a Fine Art Photographer

By Jim Flack

In the hands of a fine art photographer, the Graflex SLR reveals itself to be a virtuoso's instrument – a “Stradivarius” among cameras. From its

inception, the Graflex SLR was designed for professional photographers, not for the rapidly emerging horde of snap-shooters who contented themselves with simple Kodaks or bicycle cameras of the day.

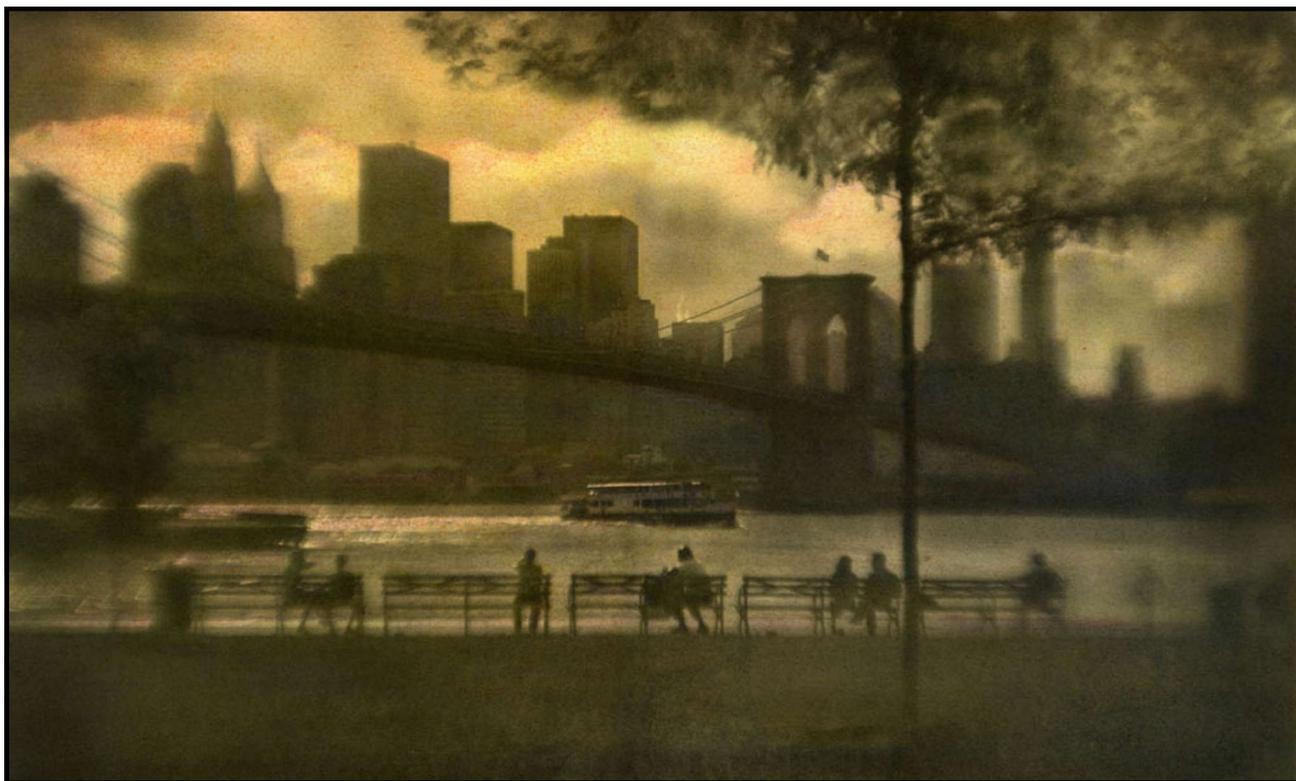
The Graflex SLR was the camera chosen by professional photographers whose livelihoods depended upon the quality and reliability of their photographic equipment. Its versatility and portability made it a favorite, especially among commercial and news photographers who shot on-location under difficult and demanding conditions. The Graflex SLR proved to be invaluable to newspaper photographers assigned to the “sports beat.” They could capture the scene at the peak of action by viewing through their camera and follow-focusing on the subject right up to the instant they released the shutter.

Those same design features of the Graflex SLR, essential to the professional news and commercial photographers, were also advantages prized by a small, but influential, group of artistic photographers, known as “Pictorialists.” Those early photographic pictorialists were passionate about pursuing photography, not as a documentary medium, but as a fine art. They challenged the notion that photography was merely a mechanical process and that the images produced by photography could never express the passion of the photographer.

Alfred Stieglitz was one of the leading proponents of photography as a fine art. Finding that photography was being excluded from art galleries and exhibitions, Stieglitz and a small number of like-minded photographers formed a group they called the Photo-Secession and established their own exhibitions for artistic photography. Stieglitz, himself, established an art gallery in New York City devoted to fine art photography.

If Alfred Stieglitz chaired “first violin” in orchestrating photography’s acceptance as a fine art, then the Auto Graflex was his personal Stradivarius. Shooting on-location in and around New York, Stieglitz’s images reveal his skill in composition and the power of his personal vision. “The Hand of Man,” “Steerage,” “The Terminal,” and “City of Ambition” all exhibit strong composition without being “pretty,” and all convey powerful emotion without being sentimental. These images and images from other members of the Photo-Secession definitively secured photography’s acceptance among the fine arts.

Those members of the Photo-Secession who have used the Graflex camera, in addition to Stieglitz of course, include: Clarence White, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Edward Steichen, and F. Holland Day. Through the years, many other well-known photographers have discovered or re-discovered the features of the Graflex SLR that are so



Promenade - Peter Liepke Copyright 2008

well adapted to helping them capture their aesthetic vision. Later pictorialists who used a Graflex through the middle of the 20th century include: L. Paul Anderson, Ralph A. Davis and Ed Romney, the founder of The New Pictorialist Society in 1969.

It was not just the photo-pictorialists who appreciated the virtues of a Graflex SLR in their work. Some of Dorothea Lange's most influential images documenting living conditions of the poor during the Great Depression were captured on film using her Graflex SLR. Nothing suited those difficult shooting situations better than her Graflex.

For over 100 years, the Graflex SLR has been a steadfast and reliable tool for photographers with creative vision. Throughout all that time, many diverse and often competing photographic styles have come along. Photographic pictorialism, abstract-modernism, photo-journalism, post-modernism, Anseladams'ism (Ansel Adams' hyper-realistic landscape style) and contemporary realism are some of the "isms" that have established themselves among the genres of the photographic arts. Technology, too, has continued to evolve, opening new possibilities for the creative photographer. Already, in the first few years of the 21st century, the new digital technologies have established themselves as the dominant direction for all forms of photography. Where does the Graflex SLR fit into the future of photography?



Dorothea Lange with her Graflex - 1936

Perhaps the future of the Graflex SLR relies on those unique design features and characteristics that have made it an invaluable tool for crea-

tive photographers over the last 100 years. Yes, there are millions of digital cameras being sold today, just as there were millions of Brownies and Pocos being sold at the beginning of the last century. The Graflex SLR never appealed to the snap-shooters back then, and it won't appeal to them today. But to some creative photographers, the Graflex SLR offers as much aesthetic inspiration today as it ever did, perhaps even more so now as it reminds us of the pure magic of chemical photography that is absent in the digital realm.

Peter Liepke is one fine art photographer today who uses his Graflex SLR with great skill and grace. Peter's use of the Graflex is not out of a sense of nostalgia but from an appreciation of the special features that the Graflex SLR offers the photographer. Peter says, "For me, shooting with the Super D is never about getting 'old timey' looking photographs. I enjoy using the Super D for many reasons. It is, in fact, the primary camera that I use today."

Peter went on to say, "The first reason obviously, I suppose, is working with the large 4x5 format. There is no better feeling than holding up a developed sheet of 4x5 film to the light-box and knowing that you got the shot."

A commercial photographer in Los Angeles and New York for many years, Peter Liepke gained prominence and earned his living with his 4x5 Sinar P view camera. When stymied by the view camera's limited mobility and awkward tripod, Peter relied on 35mm cameras. "The spontaneity is terrific. Being able to move about quickly, hand hold and bracket the shots, was a wonderful way to capture different angles of the same image," Peter acknowledges. "Combining a motor drive accessory into the mix made it (the 35mm camera) the polar opposite of shooting 4x5 with my Sinar P," he adds.

"So for many years I shot 35mm. The format is very small, however, and it was never as exciting as seeing the huge sheet of 4x5 on the light-box. For a long time, I suppose, I seemed to be yearning for the best of both worlds. I would try to compensate for the small 35mm format by making

enlarged paper negatives, but still...it was never the same as actually shooting 4x5.”

“Then by chance one day,” Peter describes, “I was shopping at the Lens & Repro store in NYC, and a salesman there showed me my first glimpse of a Graflex Super D. I’d heard of the Graflex name for many years, but, honestly, I was not at all familiar with the Graflex Super D. The salesman handed it to me from behind the counter, and the very first time I looked through the camera’s view finder, I was amazed by how bright and sharp the image was that I saw on the ground glass. Finally, I felt that I was holding in my hands the best of both worlds. For me, at that moment, the mobility of 35mm met the huge format of 4x5. So, that day in 2002, I purchased my Graflex Super D from Lens & Repro in NYC.”

Peter’s “new” Graflex Super D was equipped with the standard Graflex Ektar 190mm auto-diaphragming lens and outfitted with a custom Beattie screen and a Graflok back. At the same time, Peter also purchased an 8–inch Dallmeyer f2.9 lens to use with the camera.

“The Dallmeyer lens is so huge,” reports Peter, “that Lens & Repro also made a minor custom modification to the Graflex body so the Dallmeyer lens would fit the front of the camera. A few years ago,” Peter continued, “the folks at Cooke optics were kind enough to loan me their beautiful Cooke P38 soft focus lens that was made famous by Alvin Langdon Coburn. That Cooke lens is one of the most beautiful lenses I have ever used. The variety of classic barrel lenses that can be used with the Graflex SLR because of its large focal plane shutter, or even using a pin-hole for the lens, is great! The added mobility, because a tripod is not



Family BBQ - Peter Liepke Copyright 2008

needed, gives the Graflex the unique flexibility of being practical for street photography, landscapes, and portraits.”

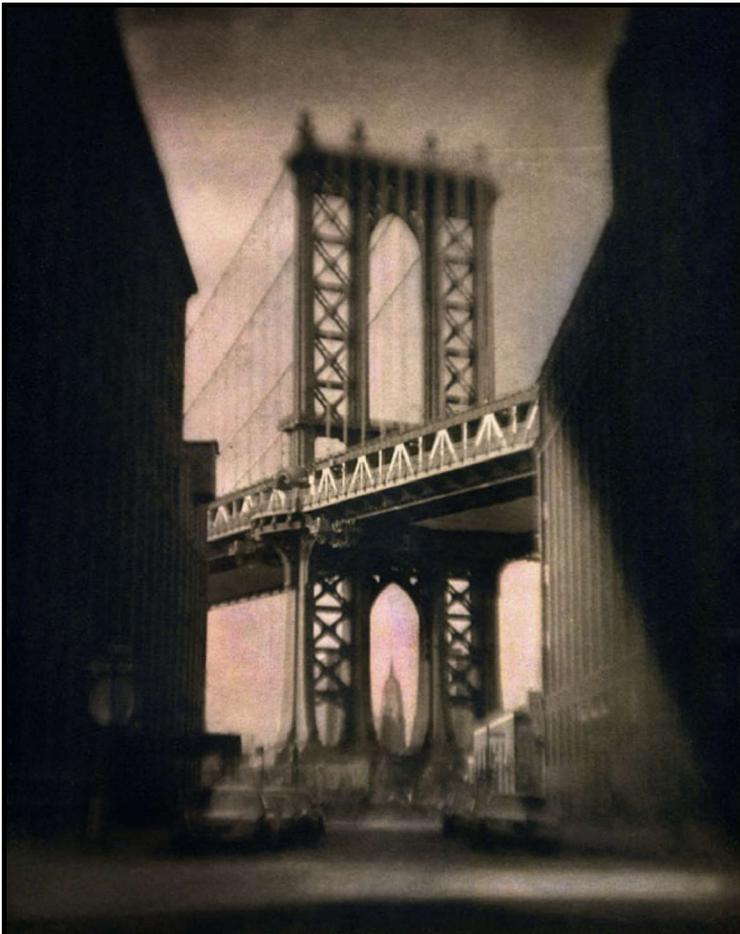
“The most important aspect of using a Graflex Super D, although it didn’t occur to me at the time I purchased the camera, was that even though the Super D is extremely mobile, almost like shooting 35mm, the psychological aspect of shooting with the Graflex Super D makes me want to slow down and really study an image before I photograph it. Using the Super D is a way of studying the composition even more closely, how the light falls on the subject, and simply waiting for the right moment to make sure that the image really matters before clicking the shutter, because often times you only have one chance before the image is gone forever,” Peter concludes.

This article is illustrated with some of the images Peter Liepke made, using his Graflex Super D. Peter’s command of the photographic arts also includes mastery of a number of what are, today, called alternative processes. Peter’s fine art images are produced in platinum, gum bichromate, gum over platinum and bromoil processes, each requiring the skills of an accomplished photographer and artist. You can see many more of the wonderful images from Peter Liepke on his web site at www.peter-liepke.com.

The author wishes to thank Peter Liepke for allowing us to profile his fine art photography with the Graflex SLR as an inspiration to other photographers to discover the creative possibilities of photography through the lens of a Graflex.

Copyright 2008 – James F. Flack

[Jim Flack is a pictorial photographer and Executive Director of the New Pictorialist Society. Jim's email is pictorialist@tampabay.rr.com]



Manhattan Bridge at Sunset - Peter Liepke Copyright 2008



The ReNEWal Plan

Copyright 2008 Les Newcomer

Starting in 1942, the United States moved from a civilian, product-based economy to a full-fledged military economy in a little more than 12 months. Factories shifted from making coffins to gliders, and automobiles to bombers. While Graflex's conversion wasn't nearly as radical--they still made cameras--their marketing of cameras and services followed the prevailing slogan of the time-- "Use it up, make it do, or do without."

With new production going toward the war effort, Graflex needed something on the civilian front, and that something was The Graflex Customized reNEWal Plan. The idea was to tap an unused resource: old cameras--fix them up and get them back into use.

Implementation of this program was swift, less than a month after Pearl Harbor; the January 1942 edition of Graflex Trade Notes announced the program in a separate 4-page brochure. For a Customized reNEWal, Graflex would,

"...Put the camera into as fine condition, mechanically and in appearance, as can be done. Worn or defective parts will be replaced; finishes will be renewed or replaced; alignment and position of the various elements will be checked and corrected where necessary; operation of all moving parts will be checked and made right; and the camera as a whole will be toned up and made as pleasing to the eye as to the hand."

Those cameras that got the full treatment received a gold seal. Most cameras were eligible:

"We would like to be able to offer this service for any camera made, from the 1890 Graphic down to the latest cameras, but certain requisite parts for certain of the earlier models are no longer available--although even these cameras can, in most instances, be restored to good working order by our staffs. Hence the Customized reNEWal Plan is available for the following specific Graflex-made cameras: the Crown View, Graphic View, Century Universal, National Graflex, Series B, RB Series B, C, D and Auto and Home Portrait Graflex and the Anniversary Speed Graphic. To a lesser extent the

plan was available to the Graphic No. 0, Stereo and RB Cycle; The Pre-Anniversary from 1930-1939. On the Graflex side limited repairs were available for the 1A, 3A, RB Jr., Compact, Stereo Auto, Naturalists', Press, RB Tele, and the old style Auto Graflex."

As a footnote, they said that most repairs could be made to pre-1930 Speed Graphics. It's interesting to note that the term "Top Handle Speed" had yet to be coined.

So how did Graflex implement this program so quickly? Did their pre-war government contracts, and moreover *contacts*, give them some inside information as to what was coming? Was Graflex in on the secret conspiracy to bring the U.S. into World War II??!

Sorry to burst your bubble, but it was none of the above. The Graflex Customized reNEWal Plan was nothing more than Graflex's standard repair practices done up in a nice and effective marketing campaign.

A 1940 Trade Notes article on decreasing camera repair turnaround time said the Service Department, besides accessory installation, had "... the usual amount of well-worn cameras that have seen years of service being returned for overhauling and rebuilding..." Further along the article stated, "In cases where your customer should wish two estimates--one for most essential repair only and another for complete repairs--we shall be pleased to oblige by submitting two such quotations." It was the same service as the reNEWal plan, but without the emphasis on customization, odd capitalization, and gold seals. It's easy to quickly implement a program that you've been doing for years.

The program was mentioned again in Trade Notes in the February/March 1942 issue. It stressed, "*Our advertising in all magazines, since the announcement of the reNEWal Plan, has plugged this new service to the limit. All three service centers are seeing a steady increase and are able to handle an even heavier load.*" It also added that stores with used Graflex-made cameras could sell them at a higher price if they had the Gold Seal.

The last comment about the plan in Trade Notes was in June/July of 1942 with the availability of line-art based ads (mats) that could be ordered by the store for local advertising of not only the reNEWal plan but of rentals of Speed Graphic cameras.

Exactly how long the reNEWal campaign lasted is contentious. Ads with the reNEWal plan as its main subject lasted until mid-1942 while other ads, at least through the fall of 1943, merely mention the program. It's possible by then placards in stores and local advertising carried the program until the end of the war.

So how does this affect today's Graflex collector? I think most photographers at the time listened to the "make it do"

part of the slogan and opted for minimal repair, either that or the glue on those gold seals was substandard, as I have yet to see one on a camera. So finding a true reNEWed camera is difficult. The reNEWal plan effect can be seen on the Pre-Anniversary and Top Handle Speeds, and probably accounts for most of the cameras you see on eBay with odd or anachronistic accessories.

I suspect a great number of reNEWed cameras had nothing more than a new shutter curtain and a rangefinder either added or adjusted, while other times, a more radical face-lift was undertaken. Posts for the top handles were cut off flush with the top, occasionally new leather was applied over the stumps, tubular viewfinders replaced folding finders as fast as side handles replaced the top handles. Quite a few of those dormant 3¼ x 5½ Speed Graphic cameras were given a new life with a 4x5 back and probably a new shutter. I've seen at least one Top Handle Speed with painted Pre-Anniversary shutter hardware.

Whether the reNEWal program was a blessing or a curse depends on your viewpoint. These reNEWed cameras can certainly make purist collectors cringe. A more broad-minded collector may see these as an interesting subcategory to collect, and yet, without the gold seal, it would be difficult to separate a reNEWed camera from an overhauled camera done before or after the program. But to the photographer/collector, a sympathetically reNEWed camera can turn a shelf queen into a very able shooter. Nearly all of my original Pre-Anniversary cameras have dead shutters, but the one with a 1940s style shutter is a favorite user of mine.

Here is a possible reNEWal camera:



This camera showed up on eBay some time ago, and at first glance you could easily think this is a Pre-Anniversary Speed from the mid-30s. But the tapered bellows begs a closer look.

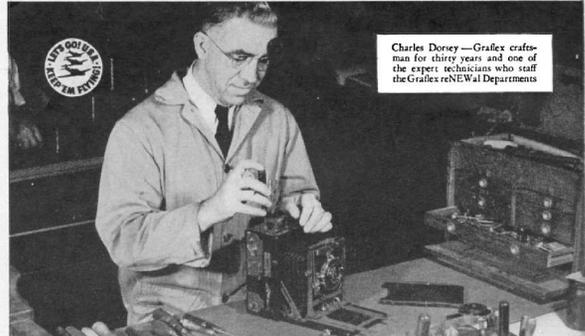
A close-up of the top showing the post hole just to the left of the viewfinder (the other is under the side handle mounting hardware). The screws at top left probably held a rear peep sight, which is odd, since there aren't any holes in the front standard for the wire



Even more gray painted hardware, and they even replaced/refinished the bed struts! Note the Anniversary style infinity stops and focus scale (coded X14 and designed for a lens of 159.7mm). The bright aluminum focus scale is home-made.

The serial number of this camera is 53425, which puts it around 1916 in the "thick bodied, straight-handle" era of the Top Handle Speed Graphics. Originally this would have had patinated silver plated hardware, a folding wind key, and no rangefinder. Instead, this camera has typical war-time black wrinkle finished film holder springs, gray painted hardware and an E series rangefinder.





Charles Dorsey—Graflex craftsman for thirty years and one of the expert technicians who staff the Graflex reNEWal Departments

GRAFLEX *Customized* reNEWal PLAN

Gives Graflex and Speed Graphic Owners Lifetime Service

With the increasing obligations of Graflex to the United States Armed Forces under the Defense Program, Graflex and Speed Graphic Cameras are being called to the colors. With new cameras thus less freely available for replacement purposes, present owners should be particularly interested in the many advantages of the Graflex Customized reNEWal Plan.

The satisfaction obtained from using Graflex and Speed Graphic American-made Cameras has been based on an established tradition—years of desirable performance in catching top-notch pictures. Although seldom needed, the Graflex reNEWal Department will keep these cameras in peak operating condition—at moderate cost.

If your Graflex or Speed Graphic needs servicing of any kind, take it to your Graflex Dealer and ask him to send it to us for inspection. Under our Customized Service, it will be carefully examined and our detailed recommendations, together with the estimated cost of reNEWing it, will be forwarded to your Dealer. Given the "go-ahead," the work will be done promptly and your camera will be returned bearing our stamp of approval—the *Graflex Gold Seal*.

In the interest of National Defense, get every bit of use out of your present Graflex or Speed Graphic. Have it reNEWed now. Graflex Customized reNEWal Departments are located in New York City, Rochester, N.Y. and Los Angeles.



FOLMER GRAFLEX CORPORATION, ROCHESTER, N. Y., U. S. A.

GRAFACTS

Strobo Research/Graflex Accessories for Strobflash Units

Copyright by William E. Inman, Sr.

The Strobflash/Graflex electronic flash units were rugged and reliable professional equipment. The units had a number of accessories that helped make them versatile as well as reliable. These units, with the accessories added, were actually a “system,” although they were not promoted that way.



1. The first of these accessories was the **SR Battery Booster** (catalog number 2095). It had a number of features:

a. The SR Battery Booster was not a charger, but a device to help obtain the maximum energy from the batteries. It actually

“depolarized” the batteries to bring them back to normal operation, keeping the recycling period to a minimum. If the Battery Booster was used properly, it could double the number of flashes received from the battery.

b. The Strobflash Units could be used with the Battery Booster connected, using the 20-foot Extension Cord, while the batteries were being used, minimizing battery drain.

c. The Battery Booster could be used to re-form the Strobflash Units’ capacitors. Electrolytic capacitors could become de-formed if a unit was idle for several months, minimizing battery drain as well.

2. The next important accessory was the **SR Battery Analyzer** (catalog number 2096). The Analyzer was used to determine the operating condition of the batteries and capacitors in all the Strobflash Power Packs. The Battery Analyzer provided five tests, allowing the user to determine the Power Pack status and the condition of the batteries:



and the condition of the batteries:

- a. battery voltage test,
- b. battery load test,
- c. capacitor test,
- d. recycle time test, and

e. an individual battery power test.

Note: For b. and c. testing, a 20-foot Extension Cord was necessary.

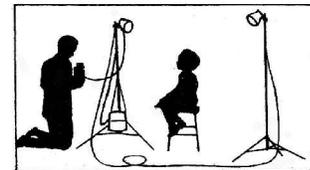
3. The **SR 20-foot Extension Cord** (catalog number 2050) was very useful in a number of ways:



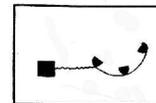
a. As mentioned earlier, it was used with both the Battery Booster and the Battery Analyzer.

b. The Extension Cord could provide multiple lamp operation using a second or even a third lamphead from a single Power Pack for in-studio operation (I would suggest a second lamphead for a Strobflash II Power Pack and a third, if necessary, for the Strobflash III & IV.). This could be accomplished in two ways: First, one or two extension cords connected in parallel. Second, two or three extension cords in a Y connection.

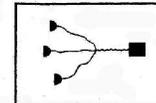
c. By adding one or more extra lampheads, there was a slight loss of light... three lampheads, approximately ½-stop of the total light output. The light was divided as follows: 50% to the normal heads, 30% to the second lamphead, and 20% to the third lamphead. With just two lampheads, it was 60% and 40% with no appreciable loss of light.



Strobflash multiple flash using one extension light.



Strobflash multiple flash using two 20' extension cords, three lampheads in multiple in-line arrangement.



Strobflash multiple flash using three 20' extension cords and three lampheads in a “Y” arrangement.

4. The **Phototube Assembly** (catalog number 2147) for slave operation. It simply plugged into the triggering outlet on the head, and you rotated the concave surface of the tube head in the direction of the triggering light. It had the following features:

a. The Phototube permitted perfect synchronization up to 200 feet on a second or more units without trip leads.



b. Multiple SR Strobflash Units (one or more) could be set up using a Phototube in each unit’s lamphead and be triggered by the main electronic flash unit on the camera. The Strobflash units could also be triggered by a flash bulb from the camera position.



5. The **SR Universal Quick Change Clamp Kit** (catalog number 2075).

This accessory provided a number of methods for mounting the SR Strobflash lampheads to various items.

The complete kit included:
a. Permanent Camera Mount Adapter.

- b. Adapter for Pic Stands.
- c. Universal Quick Change Clamp.
- d. Adjustable swivel and camera flange, which is used on all the adapters.

6. The **Circular Light Unit** for the Strobflash Units (catalog number 2027). This was not an original SR accessory, but was introduced by Graflex in 1957. It was mounted directly to the camera lens with a Series 6 adapter ring. It was ideal for close-up photography of small objects such as stamps, coins, insects, small machine parts for catalogs and the like. Also, other applications were industrial, medical, dental, police and fire photography.



7. The **Nicad-AC Converter** (with battery, catalog number 2089) for the power tops of the Strobflash II, III, and IV was introduced by Graflex in 1956.

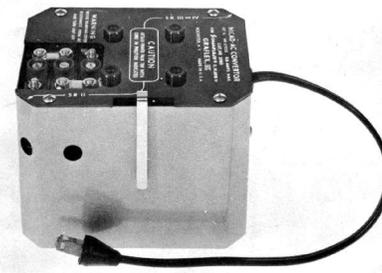
a. The unit acted as an AC adapter, as well as a charger, for its nickel-cadmium battery.

b. The Nicad battery was made for Graflex by Sonotone and had an indefinite shelf life and a useful life of 15 years. It would take in excess of 1,000 complete charges.

c. The Nicad unit weighed less than 4¼ pounds and could replace the two lead zinc 225-volt dry cell batteries.

d. Recycle time for the Strobflash III & IV at full power was approximately 20 seconds; and with the Strobflash II, approximately 10 seconds.

e. It gave approximately 80 flashes per charged battery at 200-watt-seconds, and its charge time was 12 hours. There were three wet cells that had to be checked and topped off with distilled water, when necessary.



8. The **Strobflash I Power Pack Belt Holster** (catalog number 2071) was introduced by Graflex in 1956.

a. It was made of durable brown cowhide with two large 2½-inch spring clips, which slipped over a trouser belt.

b. The Holster doubled as a holster for two 4x5 Grafmatic holders, or three 4x5 Riteway Cut Film Holders, or one 4x5 Roll Film Holder, or one 4x5 Polaroid Holder, or one Kodak Readyload Holder.



9. **Pic Featherlight Stand** (catalog numbers 18" - 4707, 22" - 4709, 26" - 4711). The folding Dura-aluminum stands were very lightweight and portable, using the adjustable swivel and stand adapter to support the lamphead. They were excellent for studio, commercial and industrial work. A case for six stands was also available (catalog number 2049).

10. **SR Right Angle Adapter** (catalog number 2074). This little-known accessory was usually fitted to a Pic Featherlight Stand as a bracket to hang a Strobflash Power Pack by the strap, using the Power Pack as a counter weight for the Pic Stand.



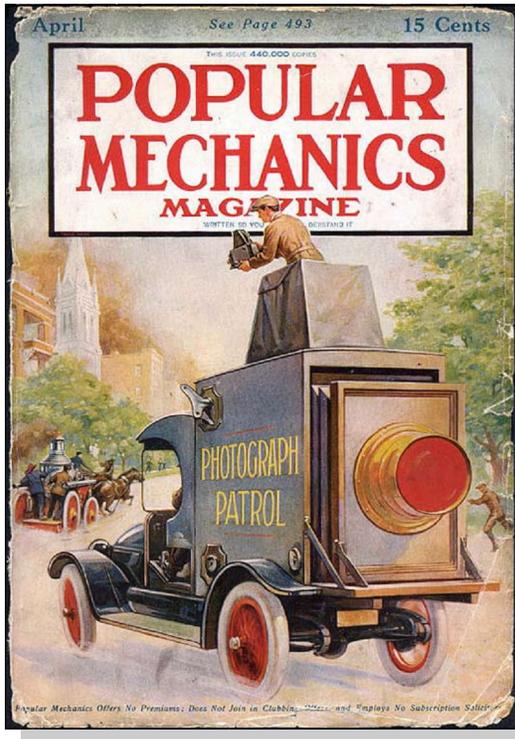
11. **Strobflash Dry Cell Batteries** (catalog number 2092, 225-volt, two required) for the Strobflash II, III, and IV; (catalog number 2093, 240-volt battery) for the Strobflash I. These batteries were the prime source of power for the Strobflash Units, providing a rapid recycling time, especially for news photographers. The recycle time for the Strobflash II was 3-6 seconds, for the Strobflash III it was 4-6 seconds, and for the Strobflash IV it was 3-10 seconds (depending on the 4-way power selector setting). The dry cell battery was generally preferred over the Nicad-A/C converter because of these faster recycling times.

Recycling time, with the dry cell for the Strobflash I, was 3-6 seconds, and it was not adaptable to the Nicad-AC Converter. The number of flashes from the dry cell batteries, depending on the unit, would vary from 1,000 to 2,000 flashes and could be doubled if the Battery Booster was used. Batteries were supplied by Ray-O-Vac, Olin, Eveready, Mallory, Burgess, and Brightstar, many of which are no longer available.

References: Graflex Strobflash instruction manuals and 1956/1957 Graflex Trade Notes.

Graflex Historic Quarterly

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April 1916 Popular Mechanics Magazine cover and front of Eaton Lothrop's note card, a friend of photography and Graflex.

Editors: Ken Metcalf and Les Newcomer

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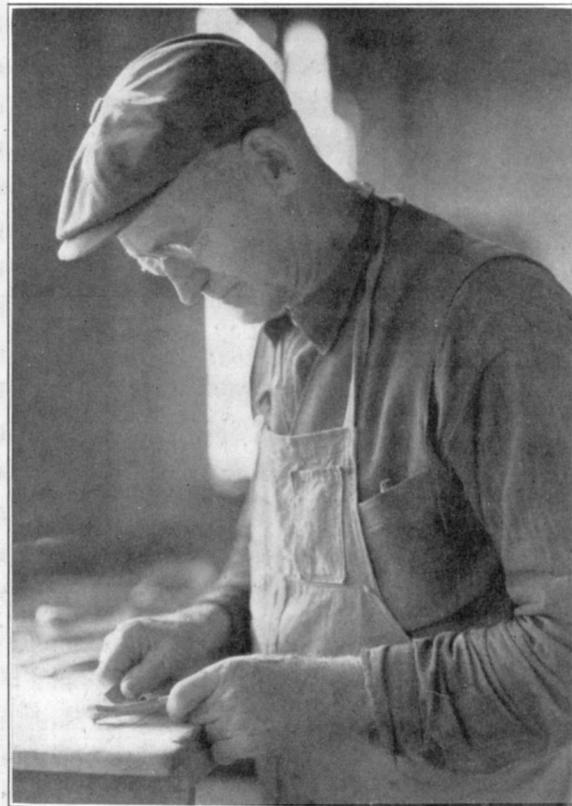
To interest more people in "more interesting pictures."

To publicize the name **GRAFLEX** consistently—not to shout it occasionally.

To obtain worthwhile prospects for our dealers—not just names and addresses.

To help develop these prospects into the kind of customers that are better than any advertisements ever printed.

FOLMER GRAFLEX CORPORATION
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, U. S. A.



John from the Graflex Woodworking Department
The Kodak Magazine, October 1923.

From 1938-1939 Confidential Price List.