

WCPHA Newsletter Dec 2017



Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday December 6th in the Hillcrest Centre. Earlier than usual we will meet in the Curling Club Last Draw Lounge 6:30--7:30 for seasonal cheer, then to room MP320 until 9PM Bring any items you have for sale plus items for show and tell. Note food and drink is not permitted in this room.

From the Secretary

Traditionally the December meeting is our annual dinner. When this came up at the last meeting three people (me including) were opposed to the usual Alpen Club—I'm unenthused about the food and still feel stiffed at the Association being thrown out three years ago by insisting we all become paying members then pay \$200 a month for the room! There is still thought of an annual dinner next month. Any ideas for a restaurant? Let Miles know. Ideally a private room for 20-30 people is preferable. Many years ago we used a Chinese restaurant for two years. The shared dishes were a problem, as was dividing the bill afterwards. Some members resented sharing the more expensive dishes and having to pony up for other's drinks.

Viewfinders

On a recent (rare) sunny day, with the sun low, I was squinting at a barely visible LED screen and thinking of the viewfinders I had used over more than half a century. Many were poor, even inaccurate, and this has been going on for almost two centuries—with the exception of the move to 35mm SLRs in the 1960s—even some of those were on the dim side and many showed an incomplete view—90% coverage was common—to keep the size, weight and cost of the pentaprism down.

The very first cameras used by Daguerre and Talbot (and the first 'Kodak's) had no viewfinders—you just approximately aimed. Sort of a vintage point and shoot—except, early on, shoot meant an exposure of several minutes. Then for over a century viewing and focusing used a ground glass back. Dim and very dim, requiring a black cloth thrown over the photographer's head—as per our logo at the top right.



The common waist level or 'Watson' viewfinders used a small mirror to give a pokey reversed image. You often had to flip this 90° if you wanted a vertical shot. On the common box cameras two such would be provided—unless it was square format. The early frame viewfinders you could put your eye were simple as this illustration—but with a great advantage. You could view with both eyes open and so see objects outside the frame—ideal for moving subjects.

A development of the eye level frame finder was the Newton finder, with a single, negative power lens in the front frame, and a targeting aid near the user's eye. The negative lens gives a reduced-size view of the scene, allowing the front frame to be smaller. These were difficult for users with long sight.

Reverse Galilean finders then became common. often found as just a pair of lenses in collapsible frames but more often integrated into the camera top housing. Combining a 'rangefinder spot' became common from the mid-1950s, particularly in 35mm cameras.

In some reverse Galilean finders, the rear face of the front lens is half-silvered, to reflect an image of a set of frame-lines. This is an Albada viewfinder (after the Dutch military officer and optical designer Lieuwe Evert Willem van Albada, who invented this and other optical systems). This method worked less well when viewfinders were fully enclosed as there was often not enough light to illuminate the frame lines. Bright frame (or reflected frame) finders were the solution to this problem and became ubiquitous. Even better were those with parallax correction and the addition of frame lines that could be adjusted for different focal lengths, particularly if these changed automatically, as on the Leica M3 (1953) and a few others. I have often thought that these were one of the reasons the Japanese camera industry overtook that of the Germans. Most Japanese 35mm cameras had parallax correction, few German ones did.

The ultimate was a large 100% Bright frame viewfinder with parallax correction where you could keep both eyes open and see objects and movement outside the frame. These were rare except for some of the external viewfinders—but these lost automatic parallax correction but might have manual adjustments. TEP

The Collector

Voigtländer



Vitessa

The Vitessa was an innovative 35mm folding rangefinder camera made by Voigtländer in the 1950s. The folding bed was replaced by a barn-door assembly, the focusing was operated by the user's right thumb via a wheel on the back of the top plate, with a distance dial (and depth-of-field scale) set into the top plate. The film advance and shutter cocking were operated with a large plunger rod pointing out of the top plate, that could be retracted when the camera was folded.

It suffered a number of small variations during its production. The very first models did not have strap lugs nor automatic parallax correction. The most expensive models had a 50mm f/2 Ultron lens, the others a 50mm f/3.5 or f/2.8 Color-Skopar. They all had a Compur-Rapid or Synchro Compur shutter to 1/500. The later models had an uncoupled selenium meter.

Vitessa shows a superb, almost Leica M3 quality fit and finish, uses Exposure Value settings, a system popular in the 1950's. Its design and mechanics are unique in its class, like Voigtländer Prominent's unique design. Voigtländer Vitessa L is the most elegant 35mm Folder camera. The Vitessa range has several versions and models. There are several nicknames of Vitessa, eg. in German it was called the Leuchtturm, means The Lighthouse named after the unique plunger rod.

The unique front covers are usually referred to as the "barn-doors". At the end of the 1960s, Zeiss Ikon / Voigtländer produced a series of compact 35mm cameras called the Vitessa 500, and some 126 film cameras called the Vitessa 126.

A model of this camera will be brought for discussion at the next WCPHA Meeting