

Paul Klingenstein, 88, Seller Of Photographic Equipment

By CLAUDIA H. DEUTSCHJAN. 12, 2003

Paul Klingenstein, who turned a childhood picture-taking hobby into a company that sold cameras and photographic equipment, died last Sunday at his winter home in Longboat Key, Fla. He was 88, and lived in Longboat Key and Scarsdale, N.Y.

In 1934, with the Nazis in power, Mr. Klingenstein, then 19, fled Germany to New York, with \$30 and the Voigtländer Avus camera he had received on his bar mitzvah. He became a stock boy at a textile company, and supplemented his \$15 weekly wage by photographing weddings and bar mitzvahs. He soon realized that selling photographic equipment could be more lucrative. In 1938, Mr. Klingenstein became a technician at a photography lab. Two years later, he joined the Peerless Camera Stores as a sales clerk and soon became the chief buyer. When the war ended, Mr. Klingenstein decided, correctly, that Americans would again want high-quality German camera equipment. He founded the Kling Photo Corporation, returned to Germany and negotiated the rights to sell Linhof studio cameras, Arriflex motion picture cameras, Minox "spy" cameras, Rodenstock lenses and Gossen light meters in the United States. In 1961, he sold Kling Photo to Berkey Photo; he retired from Berkey in 1976. After leaving Berkey, Mr. Klingenstein helped start a photography store in Sarasota, Fla., where he and his wife, Selma, were spending their winters. A few years later he sold

his interest and became involved in many Jewish charities. The Klingensteins also supported interfaith projects in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Venice, Fla. In addition to his wife, Mr. Klingenstein is survived by a son, Dr. R. James Klingenstein of Newton, Mass.; a daughter, Irene Hess of Pittsford, N.Y.; and four grandchildren. His grandson David Hess said that Mr. Klingenstein gave cameras to his children and grandchildren, but never resumed taking pictures.

In 1988, he and Henry Froelich, who succeeded him at Berkey, became the American distributors for Mamiya cameras. Mr. Klingenstein was chairman of the Mamiya America Corporation when he died.