

# THE BELLOWS

28th GREAT YEAR

November 16, 2006

Puget Sound Photographic Collector's Society, Inc.

Vol. XXVIII No. 3

WHAT	NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF PSPCS
WHERE	DES MOINES MASONIC TEMPLE 2208 S. 223rd St. (Take Midway exit #149 west off I-5...go to first stop light west of Pacific Hwy. South...Turn right.)
WHEN	Thursday, November 16th 7:00 p.m. till 10:00 p.m. (Doors open about 6:00 p.m.)
WHY	A short business meeting..Show & Tell..Auction (one item lot per member please)..Door prize..Member's trade and sell tables (free to members, please cover during business meeting) <u>Program:</u> Long time member <u>Art Pfalzer</u> will discuss the special 70mm Bell & Howell military movie camera. Also, Darrel requests you bring your most unusual photograph to show.

## THE BELLOWS GETS FATTER BEFORE THANKSGIVING:

As you will have noticed your November Bellows has a special insert article from the Michigan Photographic Historical Society's November-December newsletter, The Photogram, on Argus Cine equipment authored by one Robert E. Kelly. This, it turns out, is the PSPCS member we know simply as Bob Kelly...who has chosen to publish in a more high-tone, larger Circulation newsletter than ours. We congratulate Bob (Robert E.) on his article and can only hope he will give us a "heads up" when his book is published.

## AND SPEAKING OF BOB KELLY:

As you remember Bob is chairman of the club's venue search committee. He again requests that any of you who know of a venue site in which you feel we could better hold our future Spring Camera Sale, Swap & Show contact him so his committee can check it out. His e-mail address is: myvmvm@comcast.net. Lets be sure all the bushes have been shaken and rocks looked under before a decision is called for.

## A ONE PERSON VIEW OF THE RECENT PORTLAND SHOW:

The Mt. Hood community College Photography Department held their (the only) Annual Fall Camera Swap Meet on Saturday, October 28th. Here are some observations in no particular order of importance. The show opened at 6 a.m. for dealers which is a bit early for people driving in from out of town...or even for people in town for that matter. The weather could not have been better..Fall along the Columbia at it's best. To my surprise there were enough dealers, even without Gary Sivertsen and several other PSPCS members who use to regularly attend this Fall Show. I saw at least six PSPCS members selling and or buying. I was informed that Chairmanship of the Show changes each year..I gathered it is sort of like a Dept. project for their students. This may explain why there may have been a lack of advertising as there were hardly more than a 100 buyers through the door. Even more disturbing was the fact..pointed out to me by several PSPCS members..that there were NO out of the area buyers, we have come to expect, in attendance. Not Faith..not Tak's replacement..no one showed. There were very very few old "collectible" items for sale but several "finds" were scored by alert lookers. Everyone was friendly and helpful and off loading was easy. The lunch wagon did not show up this year. I left at two p.m. and was one of the last to leave. Will they put on a Show next Fall? We shall have to wait and see.

**\*\*BACKSIDE INFORMATION\*\***

The October 19th meeting of the Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society came to order at 7:00 p.m. There were 29 members and guests in attendance. The minutes of the September meeting were approved as read. Treasurer, Shirley, reported Dues were due and coming in to keep us in the black.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Bob Kelly sent word he would give a venue search report at our November meeting. Bill Kimber reported..as past Show Chairman..that he had provided Bob with the information requested concerning our current Show location and basic needs at any new venue.

Bill passed around a signup sheet for the 2007 Show Committee after outlining the perks given to Show Committee volunteers. Eighteen members signed up..including several first timers. Thank you all. Their first meeting was held on November 7th. There will be four more meetings from January to April. Meetings are usually held on the Tuesday a week before the regular third Thursday Club meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**SHOW & TELL:**

Three members had interesting Show & Tell items. Thank you all.

**PROGRAM:**

The program was your "Favorite Twin Lens Reflex Cameras". Members, Curry, Raddatz, Kimber, Womack and Adams brought their favorites to show. Thank you all for a nice presentation.

**AUCTION & DOOR PRIZE:**

Nine items were up for auction. Five received no opening bids. Three brought in \$89.00 for their old owners. One item was auctioned off for \$1.00 which was donated to the Club.

Art Pfalzer won the door prize of a nice photography book from Darrel's collection.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 for more chatting, selling and nummie munching.

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**THIS MONTH'S MYSTERY QUESTION:**

**Answer at end of Newsletter**

**With thanks to the Western Photographic Historical Society:**

What camera company (still in business today) made 19 different models of a compact camera from the 1950's to the 1980's?

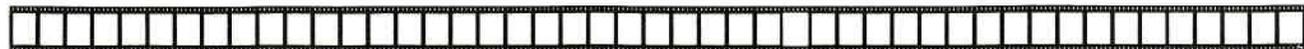


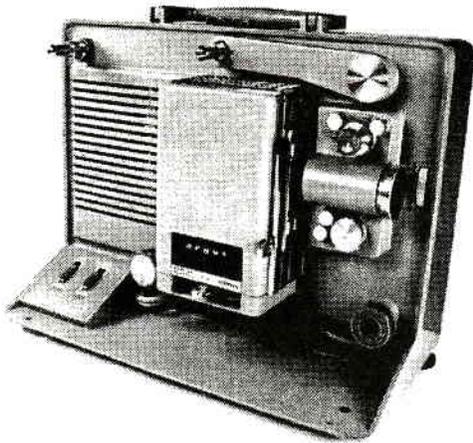
**THE BELLOWS** Newsletter is published 10 times per year by Puget Sound Photographic Collector's Society, Inc. Information for The Bellows should be sent to Bill Kimber 1413 Weathervane Dr., Tacoma, WA 98466-5712 (253) 564-4046, billkimber@webtv.net

The P.S.P.C.S. internet address is [www.pspcs.org](http://www.pspcs.org)

Dues are \$20.00 per year and should be sent to Secretary/Treasurer Shirley Sparrow, 300 Pease Road, Cle Elum, WA 98922 (509) 674-1916, sesparrow9@msn.com P.S.P.C.S. members receive first notification of our 4th Saturday in April yearly show.

**PRESIDENT: DARREL WOMACK (206) 244-6831 [DARRELCAM@COMCAST.NET](mailto:DARRELCAM@COMCAST.NET)**





ARGUS M500 PROJECTOR. The first Argus cine product was the M500 8mm projector in 1958. Its low-slung, streamlined, horizontal appearance impressed the trade media and the innovative 150-watt TruFlector lamp provided screen brightness equal that of a 500-watt lamp, pleasing consumers.

## ARGUS ENTERS THE CINE FIELD

Robert E. Kelly

Argus, pioneers in introducing 35mm still cameras in North America, did not enter the 8mm movie market until 1958, twenty-six years after the market started. The market was dominated by large established companies, was highly competitive, and was being influenced by foreign production. The Argus cine business strategy was designed to leverage its well recognized brand name in the still-camera market to the cine field.

However, the traditional Argus attitude of “employees are family” and their approach of “made in the USA” ran into the reality of business mergers, slow design and expensive production methods, worldwide economic downturn, and increasing foreign competition. After starting off with a unique compact 8mm projector and two 8mm cameras recognized by the industry for their design, Argus was unable to respond with additional innovation.

Interviews with past Argus employees show that early work on movie cameras was happening around 1955. These interviews also reveal that the Argus 8mm business plan had four simple steps: purchase a basic design for a camera or projector, massively redesign to form the new product, integrate components from various suppliers for assembly in Ann Arbor, and use the marketing power of their brand name to influence the buying public.

It is clear from research and interviews that the potential look and feel of the cine products generated considerable study and construction of models. Reviewing examples of surviving prototype models clearly shows evolution by professional designers toward finished products. For example, the M3 Matchmatic was considered as a camera with a single lens and in a vertical format, in addition to the three-lens turret version released. There also is evidence that production was planned for several cameras that did not materialize. Other cameras and projectors such as the never-issued M8 had mock-ups developed considering various combinations of trim, texture, vertical or horizontal format, size and eye-appealing design.

### M500 Projector

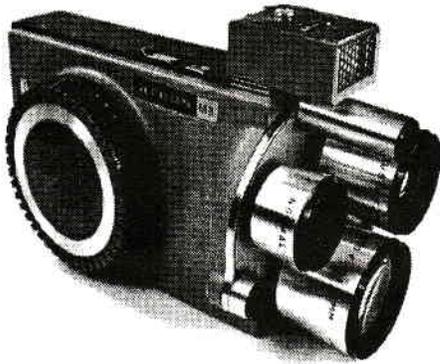
The first Argus cine product was the M500 8mm projector in 1958. *Popular Photography* magazine in June of 1958 called the M500 “a radical departure from traditional projector design . . . with a delightful low-slung streamlined appearance . . . by a newcomer in the cine field.” The projector’s optical and lamp design was influenced by the merger of Argus and Sylvania on January 2, 1957. The projector used a new Sylvania TruFlector lamp that was engineered to aim the light of a 150-watt lamp so accurately that it would rival the output of a 500-watt lamp. Interviews with Argus employees indicate the design of the lamp came from Phillips/Netherlands where Argus bought the conceptual plans for the compact movie projector and a camera. However, the Phillips model was not considered manufacturable so additional work was performed by Argus/Sylvania to refine the design. The nationally advertised price was \$89.95. The magazine went on to say, “The projector that was demonstrated . . . performed quite noisily; company officials assured us that the regular M500 wouldn’t be so noisy.” This projector was intended to be the first important move to a leadership position in the cine photography business for the Argus Division of Sylvania.

The “noisy” observation turned out to be a hint that there would be quality problems with the product. Much like the first introduction of a still projector twenty years earlier, the quality problems with the M500 were substantial. One quality inspector is said to have been terminated for “red tagging” too many projectors and refusing to ship them. They were shipped anyway. Several years later the quality problems of the M500 would come up in notes from employee meetings. It was clear

that Argus employees prided themselves in creating high quality products and the new rush to production to meet competition was causing the Argus production system to stress. The Argus "family" was feeling the stress, too.

#### The Ann Arbor Movie Cameras

In early 1959 the first Argus 8mm cameras were moving through the production line in Ann Arbor. The M3 Matchmatic movie camera and its partner the M3 Cinetronic camera were introduced just months apart. The designs were referred to by *Popular Photography* as the "most stylized, sleekest, streamlined combination of vinyl covered die-cast metal and satin chrome" we have ever seen. From a marketing point of view the new movie camera names are similar to the existing 35mm still cameras, the C3 Matchmatic and the Argus Autronic. Argus was clearly following their strategy of leveraging the brand into the cine field. For the first time in 8mm, these cameras both incorporated a horizontal body format and a three-lens turret with each lens's viewfinder also on the turret. The roots of this design can be seen in 16mm cameras from the early 1950s.

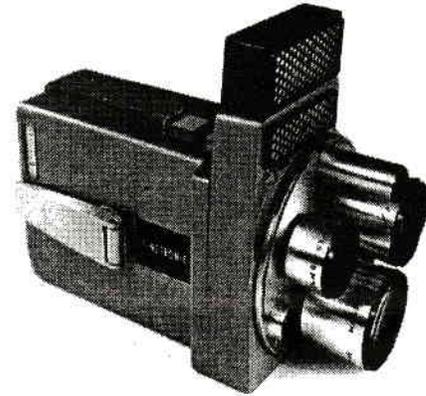


**MATCHMATIC M3 MOVIE CAMERA.** Only the first two movie cameras issued under the Argus brand name were fully designed and produced by the heritage company. Other design efforts underway in Ann Arbor were overtaken by the use of foreign manufactured cameras that carried the Argus name.

The advertised price was \$99.95 for the Matchmatic and \$149.95 for the Cinetronic; however, discounting started immediately. In the Montgomery Ward 1959 camera catalog both cameras were featured on the same page as a "Ward Extra" with reduced introductory prices. The Matchmatic was \$89.95 and the Cinetronic was \$134.95. Inside the back cover, the same catalog featured a kit with the Matchmatic camera, an M500 projector, a screen and several more accessories for \$194.50.

The 1959 production plans for the new 8mm cameras and projectors seem to have been cut back at mid-year when Sylvania merged with General Telephone forming General Telephone and Equipment (GTE). One hint of the production cut is shown on the Argus Assembly Production Schedule, dated January 9,

1959. The "M3S single lens" was scheduled for production start in July with 600 units, increasing to 4000 units in November. Photographs of prototype M3S cameras exist, but production of this camera was never started. It turned out that the consumer products of the Argus Division of Sylvania were clearly outside the long-term business plan of the new GTE.



**CINETRONIC M3 MOVIE CAMERA.** Good old American mechanical ingenuity is revealed by inspecting the inside of the cameras where a little glue, paper, tape and putty are found. The simple electro-mechanical automatic aperture mechanism in the Cinetronic looks like a cross between a 12th grade science project and high tech from the 1960s.

In July of 1959, *Popular Photography* also identified a major trend in camera marketing that was occurring. Their article, "Big Trend in 59: The Zoom Lens," pointed out that the zoom lens for movie cameras had become the standard for all modern cameras. The Argus designs did not incorporate a zoom lens.

#### Foreign Competition

Even with the unique design of the new products released in 1958 and 1959, it was recorded in the notes from an Argus employee meeting in March of 1960 that Argus executive, Clint Harris said, "Our movie cameras are not as competitive as they should be. We are working to find a solution to this difficult problem." He went on to say, "At the present we feel that we must limit our distribution in order to reduce the extensive price cutting of Argus products." It was very clear to Argus management that intense competition, both domestic and foreign, was damaging the entire cine market.

In the fall of 1960 Argus broke ground on a new projector plant in South Carolina. The 100,000 square foot plant was constructed to improve the efficiency of projector manufacturing, to regain some production competitiveness with Japan, and to migrate work toward a less costly labor force. However, the changing marketplace prompted the *Argus News* for January of 1961 to point out "the rapidly growing obsolescence of our movie cameras and projectors." Foreign imports were quickly introducing new technology and continuing to push the price window. Argus also started the process of using Japanese camera production in the early 1960s, resulting in the Zoom 8,

Model 409's introduction in 1962.

### Mansfield Purchase of Argus

In early 1962 it was announced that GTE was considering the sale of the Argus Camera Division to Mansfield Industries of Chicago. The sale was completed in April, making Mansfield the second largest full-line photo equipment manufacturer in the nation, after Kodak. The combined firms announced plans to sell a complete line of 8mm movie cameras, projectors and accessories.

Unlike Argus the Mansfield business model relied on foreign production. Their subsidiary, Atlas Cine Works, Ltd., operated a plant in Tokyo making movie cameras and accessories. The venture capitalists who owned Mansfield trimmed Argus to fit and consolidated many corporate operations. Starting within a year camera production was being discontinued or moved out of Ann Arbor. However, in recognition of the marketing power of the Argus brand name, Mansfield Industries changed its name to Argus Incorporated.

### Selected References:

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**Robert Kelly** has been collecting and researching Argus for over twenty-five years. As a member of the Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society, he has created a formal Argus display for the last twelve years at the club's annual show competition. He is one of the first dozen founding members of the Argus Collectors Group and was their webmaster and online discussion moderator for several years. At the annual May ACG meeting in Martinsville, Virginia, Bob moderated the presentations portion of the program. In addition to a large personal Argus collection, he has also contributed to the Argus Museum in Ann Arbor and assisted the curator with display development. Bob is currently working on a forthcoming book about the history of Argus with three colleagues as co-authors. He may be reached via email at: [mvmvm@gte.net](mailto:mvmvm@gte.net). Bob is a recent member of MiPHS and lives in Renton, Washington.

The Argus Building in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is owned by the C-3 Partners, who purchased the W. Donald Wallace collection of Argus cameras and accessories in 1987. Many donations followed, and MiPHS members Gene and George O'Neal became the first curators. The museum is in the original manufacturing building. The items on display recount the history of the Argus company. In June 2005 MiPHS visited the Argus Museum in downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan. Mark O'Brien and Jennifer Wendler, the Argus Museum curator at the time, gave us an informative tour. Everyone was impressed by the extent and quality of the collection. Never been? It's worth a trip.



## Making a Replacement Bellows

by Michael Henry

Every camera collector who has ever picked up a bargain camera will, at some point, have to replace a bellows. It is at that point we are at the crossroads. Do we try to effect a repair, fork out a couple hundred bucks for a custom made bellows, or do we (gulp) try to make our own.

I bought yet another Graflex SLR recently and well, you know the rest of the story. The bellows were full of pinholes. All my efforts to repair and patch the pinholes were to no avail. Even though I was able to make most of the repairs, I'm sure they wouldn't have lasted. The problem is that repairs never fail when you expect them to. It always happens when you least expect it and generally at the most inopportune moment.

If you're willing to take the aforementioned risks, there are a couple of things you can do to fix pinholes. The first comes in the form of liquid electrical tape. It's cheap, easy to use and fast drying. And here's the best part, you can buy it at any hardware store. You'll find it in the electrical section. The best method is to apply the liquid tape to the inside of the bellows so it won't show. You can apply it with a q-tip or pick up some cheap watercolor brushes at the hardware store while you're there. If you opt for the paint brush method, you'll need several brushes due to the fact that the liquid tape dries quickly. I use q-tips 'cause they're cheap. It might take a couple of applications to seal the pinholes.

You can also use spray vinyl which is available at your local hardware store as well. It's a Krylon® product and is available in red or black. With really tiny pinholes, the spray vinyl will fill the holes pretty efficiently, but for larger problems it will need to be used in concert with the liquid electrical tape. The drawback to spray vinyl is that it dries to a glossy sheen.

The next option and most expensive is to have a new bellows made by one of several companies who deal in custom bellows

manufacturing. It's not cheap but it's certainly the easiest. Just get on the Internet and find one of the many companies that specialize in custom made bellows. Remove the old bellows and send it off to have it duplicated. Oh yeah, give them your credit card number.

The third and, for me, the most appealing option is to make your own bellows. This is the option I chose for my Graflex. Now before you get really excited, I need to tell you that I haven't actually made the bellows yet but I've got all the parts. Most everything you need is cheap and readily available. I said "most." You'll need some lightproof fabric and unfortunately they don't sell it at the fabric store. You can buy it from Micro Tools or you can use the fabric from an old changing bag. There are several web sites dedicated to do-it-yourself bellowing construction. From all that I've read so far it looks complicated and time consuming but I'm willing to give it a try. If I'm successful I'm thinking about making my own accordion.

I'll keep you posted.

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What camera company (still in business today) made 19 different models of a compact camera from the 1950's to the 1980's?

**Answer:**  
It was the Olympus Camera Company. For over 20 years, they produced the popular Pen Half-Frame. According to McKeown's, the first Pen came out in 1959 but was produced by a subcontractor. Olympus began producing them in their Suwa plant in 1960. Prices for the Pens range from \$40 to \$400.

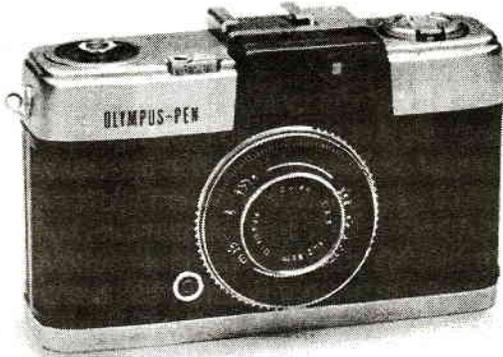


Photo courtesy <<http://www.olympus.co.jp/en/>>