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EDITORIAL

By the time most of you sit down to read this issue of The Journal, the second Convention of the Nikon Historical Society will be history. At the time of this writing (March 5th), it appears that at least 25 and possibly as many as 50 members of the NHS will make the trip to Chicago! Considering the fact that only a small percentage of our overall membership lives in the Chicago area, and that the vast majority of those who will attend have to travel great distances, a turnout approaching 50 is quite extraordinary. From comments made by those who attended the first Convention two years ago (many of whom are returning again!), and those looking forward to their first time, there is a great deal of enthusiasm for such a meeting. From a personal point of view I am still overwhelmed by the turnout two years ago and how much of an effort many people made to attend. Besides those who came from all over the United States and Canada, we had three members from Europe attend (it appears that as many as six will cross the Atlantic for this second Convention)! The time and expense required of everyone who attended tells me that we have a very healthy organization that continues to grow, with 12 new members this issue! There will be ample coverage of the Convention in NHS-28 for those who cannot make it. My hope is that I will be able to report on another successful Convention.

As mentioned we have 12 new members this time around as the NHS continues to grow at a steady pace. Naturally a great deal of apprehension accompanied my announcement in NHS-26 of a dues increase. It was my hope that all would understand the reasons behind it and that it would not stifle the continued growth of the Society. To date it appears that the vast majority of the membership has accepted the increase in the spirit that it will help assure the survival of the Society, and that the Journal is well worth the price. We have always had a renewal rate in the 80-90% range, and this is still the case. In addition, the 12 new members illustrate the fact that the small increase has not prevented the influx of "new blood" into our ranks. Hopefully we can now leave this hurdle behind us and continue on into the 90s learning more about Nikons. (The US postal service just announced a probable rate increase by 1991 of at least 20%! Such is life! But not to worry, I plan on absorbing it as I have in the past!) Speaking of the membership, with this issue we have reached the level of 190 confirmed members! Now if we could just hit the magical number 200! (I remember how grateful I was when we hit 100!) Looking on page 794 of the latest McKeown guide, I see that only a few organizations specific to one make of camera exceed our numbers! And who are they? Why the Leica groups of course! But I can't help but wonder if they might be looking over their shoulders once in awhile at those crazy Nikon collectors and trying to figure out where we came from!

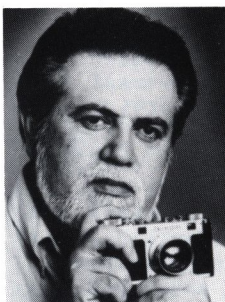
We have a full issue this time with an unusual feature new to the Journal. Member Peter Lownds was fortunate enough to meet Mr. Jun Miki and to obtain an interview with him as well. Mr. Miki was visiting Holland at the time of the meeting. For those of you who are not aware of who Jun Miki is, you might remember the story of how the Nikkor optics were "discovered" by the Western world. It occurred in early post-war Japan and had to do with a rather famous Life photographer by the name of David Douglas Duncan. The story goes that a young Japanese photographer took "DDD"'s photo with a locally made camera and lens that so impressed him that he visited the factory and outfitted his Leicas with an entire series of these "unknown" lenses and proceeded to shoot the Korean War with them. The lenses were, of course, NIKKORS! The young Japanese photographer was.....Mr. Jun Miki! Learn the whole story on page 13.

The lead article this issue is on the 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor which was not only the fastest wideangle made for the RF system, but also one of the sharpest and most modern optics in the line. The only wideangles more sought after today are the 21 & 25mm lenses, with the f1.8 acknowledged to be a superb lens for its time. See page 2 for a detailed article on this fine optic.

For only the second time since the beginning of the Journal, you will find an article on a non-Nikon made item! You may wonder what could be so interesting to warrant an extensive article, when it wasn't even made by Nikon. The answer is on page 8 where you will find words and pictures detailing the "Jacobson Powercon". The what? A cordless battery pack for the S36 motor, an item never made by Nikon, and quite hard to find today.

On page 16 & 17 you will find reviews of two new books from Japan of interest to Nikon collectors. One is on the RF Nikons and the other on the early Canons which used only Nikkor lenses.

For those of you who have asked, I finally have a FAX number! If you wish to use it to speed up correspondence please do. The number is...(708) 895-0796...This is a FAX service so you must list my name and home number on all transmissions so they will notify me. My home number is...(708) 895-5319. Don't forget the number and name on all transmissions!



ROBERT ROTOLONI
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Photo: Tony Hurst

THE FASTEST "RF" WIDEANGLE NIKKOR

BY ROBERT ROTOLONI

By January 1956 Nippon Kogaku had completed the research and development of what would prove to be the fastest wideangle lens produced for their system, and one of the sharpest ever made for an interchangeable lens 35mm RF camera. By September 1956 it was ready and the first announcements were made for the all new 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor!

The optical construction of this new lens was made possible by modern research and the use of rare earth "lanthanum" glass. It consisted of seven elements including an overly large rear group and a front element large enough to cover f1.4! This resulted in a lens with very little vignetting and a high degree of evenness of illumination for the period. It also provided an unusually flat field and excellent correction despite its fast speed. By all standards of the time, the 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor was a very modern lens, and undeniably the best wideangle Nippon Kogaku made during the rangefinder era.

Besides its modern optical formula, this lens also heralded a new type of barrel design for the rangefinder Nikkors. It was released in a light weight black painted aluminum mount with a pronounced "hill & dale" type knurling for the focusing ring. The black barrel itself was not new for Nikon, since the 85/f1.5, 105 f2.5, some early f1.4s and the long Nikkors used on the reflex housing, were already being made in black. What was new was that the f1.8 was the first of the shorter lenses to come in this more modern finish and predated the general switch over to black by Nikon that occurred by the end of 1957, when nearly every lens was being produced in black. The real improvement was the focusing mount itself. The new knurling style, although derived from that used on the 180/f2.5 where weight mandated a very gripable ring, was a vast improvement over every other RF Nikkor between 25mm and 135mm, save the 50mm/f1.1, which was under development at the same time. Why Nippon Kogaku did not adapt this much easier to use focusing ring design to their other lenses is a mystery to me. Surely the telephotos such as the 85s, the 105 and the 135 would have benefited from such a ring. Nikon would later redesign both the 85s and the 135 barrels, but gave them rings similar to the 105/f2.5 and not the 35/f1.8! The other wideangles as well as the normals would be converted to black shortly, yet their rings remained unchanged. Even a lens that would not be released for three more years, the 21mm/f4, was produced with a finely knurled ring instead of the much easier to grip type found on this lens. The only other

lens that would benefit from the new design would be the last version of the 35mm/f2.5, which even looks like the f1.8 right down to the same diaphragm ring! Whatever the reason, Nippon Kogaku chose not to use this more modern design for the remainder of the RF era. However, by 1959 they obviously had changed their minds, for all the Auto-Nikkors that were released with the Nikon F used this new focusing ring!

The serial numbers for the 35/f1.8 began at #351801. It is obvious that instead of using the date to start the number, Nippon Kogaku chose to use the focal length (35) and the speed (18) to come up with "3518xx" for this lens. Since they usually started their numbers with "01" and not "00", the first lens would be, and was, #351801. To date numbers up to 360079 have been reported for a possible production of 8,000 plus units.

There are two distinct variations available, although the difference is only in the barrel. When this lens was first released it came in a completely black barrel, save for the mounting ring at the rear. Even the unique diaphragm ring (more later) was painted black on this first version, which is the one pictured in most of the literature produced by Nikon. To date these all black lenses have been reported between the first lens, #351801, and #351859, or 58 units! Lens #351875 has been verified to have a chrome ring and no lenses with black rings have been reported after #351875. Therefore, it is probable that less than 75 all black 35mm/f1.8 lenses were made! Although it is a handsome design in all black, it may have become obvious quite early that it was not durable. The ring appears to be simply black painted brass, and some surviving examples show that it wore off easily. Whatever the reason, by lens #75 they changed it to a brightly finished chrome that was toned down a bit as time passed. The earlier bright ring may have been prone to flare, which the black ring never would have caused.

The configuration of the diaphragm ring was unique to this lens (until it was adopted for the later redesigned 35/f2.5), although a similar style was used on the 21mm three years later. This lens took the same 43mm filters as most lenses in the line. However, it took a 48mm cap which used threads on the inner surface of the diaphragm ring and not the threads used for the filters. It also required its own 48mm snap-on shade that fits no other wide angle Nikkor. Because of its deep-set rear element, it used the same "WW" rear cap as the 25mm Nikkor.



The top photos illustrate the two basic variations found in the 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor. On the left is an example of the very first production run of which probably less than 75 units were ever made! Beginning with the first lens, #351801, this type has been verified up through lens #351859, or 58 pieces! The rather obvious difference is the black painted diaphragm ring, which was unique to this lens until the release of the 21mm/f4 and the re-designed 35mm/f2.5. The lens on the right is also quite early, but it now has the more familiar chrome diaphragm ring found on all lenses reported after #351875. Note that, save for some slight engraving differences, these two lenses are identical.

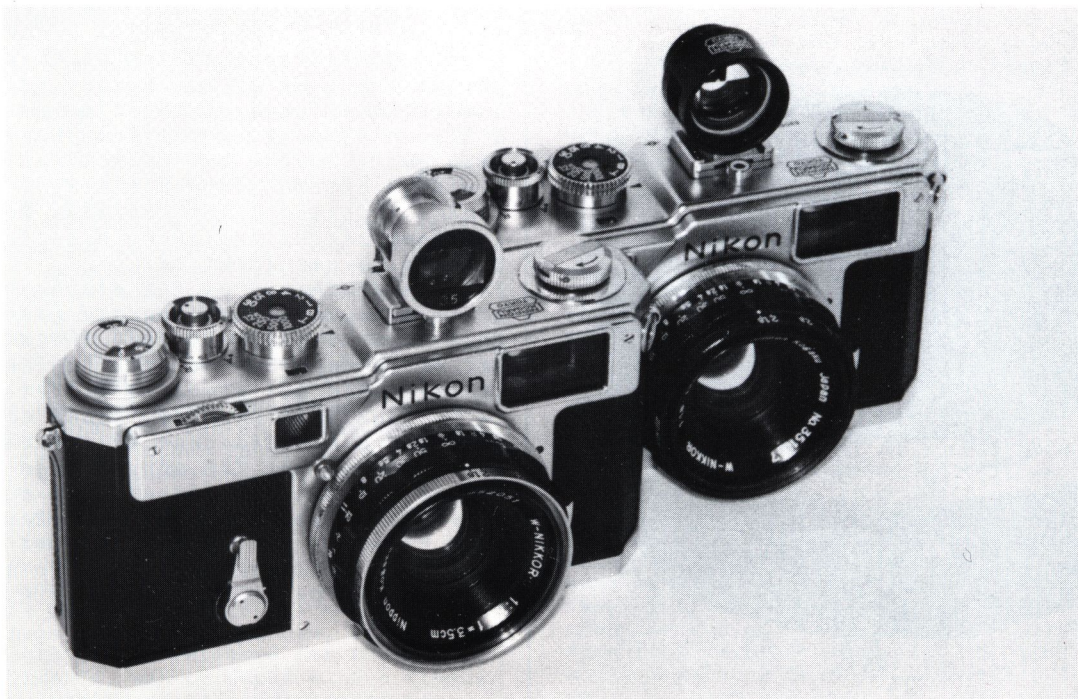
The inside thread of the diaphragm ring measures 48mm, and the standard front cap for this lens attaches to this thread. A second set of threads can be seen, which measure 43mm and are used for mounting filters. However, it is obvious that any 43mm front cap would also fit, but Nikon designed this lens to use the 48mm threads for the cap. Why go through this trouble? Your guess is as good as mine!

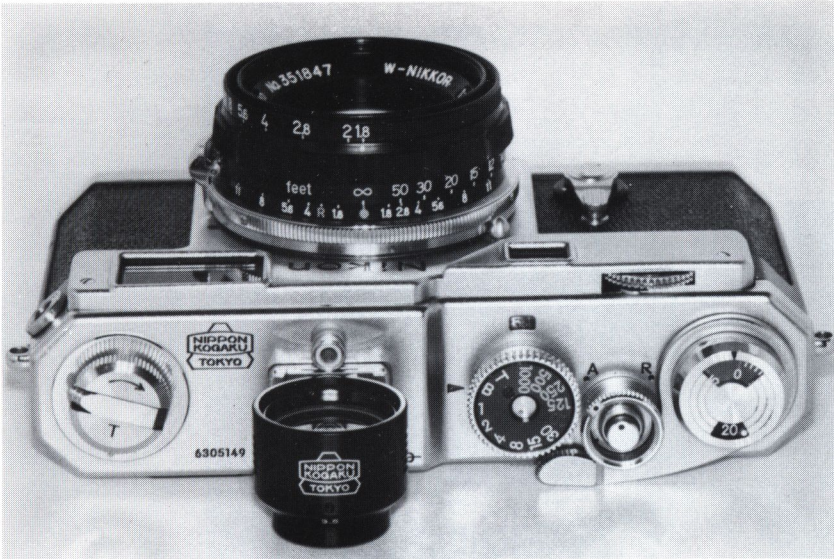
The optical formula shows the large front and rear elements of this design. At left is a rear view illustrating the deep set rear group found on this lens. (R. Rotoloni)



In this author's opinion the black ringed version is more handsome than the chrome type, and easier to read under most lighting conditions. Would not Nippon Kogaku shortly change most of their lens line to more modern black barrels which, although lighter, were also hailed as easier to read than the older black lettering on chrome? However, from a practical point of view, it may have been that the painted ring would not hold up with use and was discarded.

For its speed, the 35mm/f1.8 was not an overly large or heavy lens. When mounted it was not much larger than its slower f3.5 and f2.5 siblings, and added very little bulk over the standard 50mm/f1.4 lens. It could easily be left on the camera permanently and, as a matter of fact, the cameras were sometimes advertised with this lens as a substitute for the normals. This was during the period of time when many people used a 35mm in place of a 50, & this lens was fast enough! (R. Rotoloni)

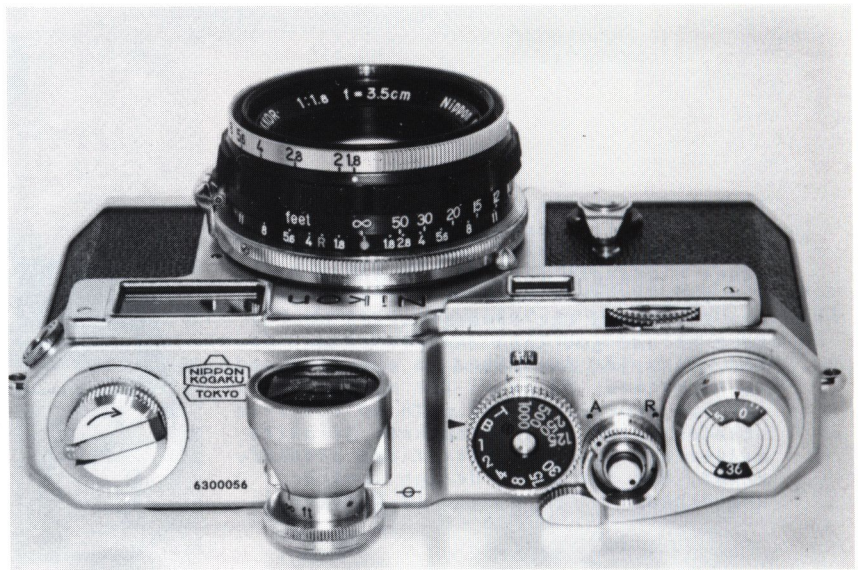


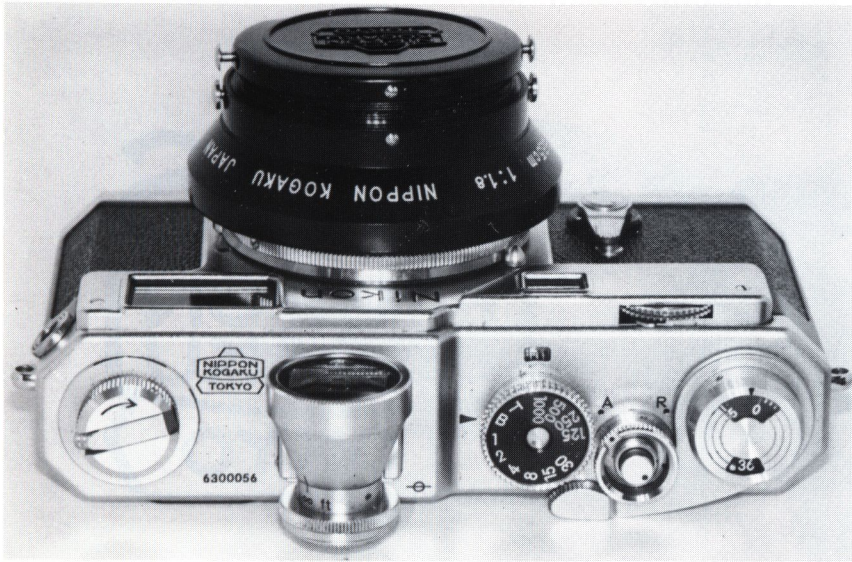


NHS
 NIPPON
 KOGAKU
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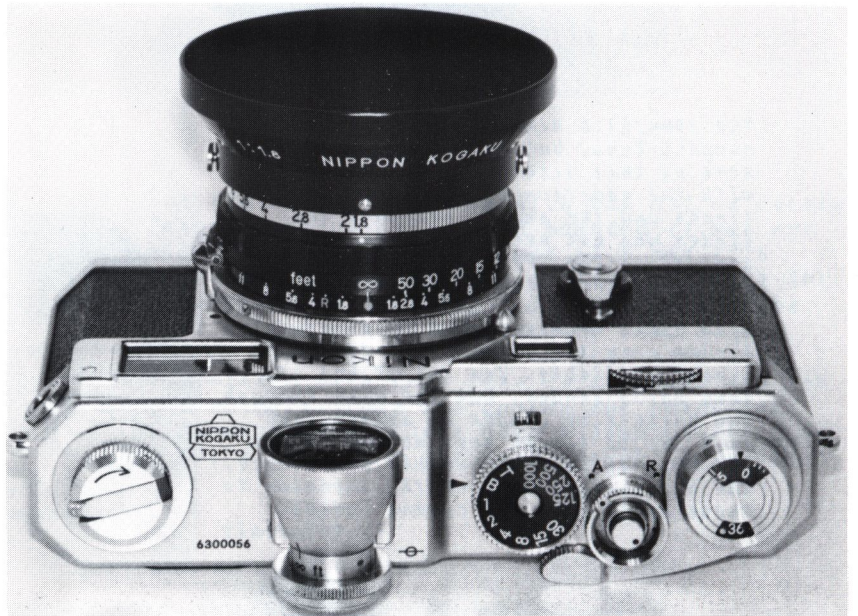
The 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor is an inherently compact lens, but it is obvious that some of this size advantage was lost with the addition of the auxiliary finder and the shade. Although the finder was not necessary after the arrival of the SP/S3 type cameras, it was needed by users of the S2 and earlier cameras. Also, it is possible that many users reverted back to a separate finder once the black brite-line type became available. Yes the SP has its tiny 28/35 finder, but the view through the brite-line finder is superb, and even the S3 finder does not match up! For ease of use and overall brilliance, the brite-lines were vastly superior to those built into the camera bodies.

(R. Rotoloni)





The shade for the 35mm/f1.8 Nikkor is unique to this lens! Because of its 48mm attachment size, it will fit no other wideangle lens in the Nikon line. The only other Nikkor with a 48mm filter thread is the 85mm/f2 which would have no use for this shallow shade. So the shade for this lens is specific and is so marked. It is of the modern black snap-on reversing type, with no screw-in version known to this author. Slightly different engraving variations probably exist, but the basic design remained unchanged. (R. Rotoloni)





Because of its deep set rear group, the 35mm f/1.8 Nikkor requires the same rear cap used on the 25mm lens! Both the 28mm and the other 35s take a shallower cap. It was made in two types with the earlier being black metal and the later molded black plastic.

The 48mm snap-on black plastic front cap was also made in two versions. The earlier type has the N-K triangular logo in the middle as do all the lenses from the same vintage. Later the design was modernized and the logo was replaced with large letters spelling "NIKKOR".





THE "CORDLESS" S36 MOTOR DRIVE!?

BY ROBERT ROTOLONI

You will seldom see a non-Nikon made product in the pages of The Journal unless it is unique or special or fulfills a need that was not addressed by Nippon Kogaku. Such an item is the subject of this article. It is, as far as I can tell, unique to just one manufacturer and is surely special in that it is an accessory that Nikon never made for the rangefinder system. It was made by "Jacobson Photographic Instruments of Hollywood, California", and was called the "Powercon". Now those of you who are users of the venerable Nikon F system, as I am, will no doubt recognize this product by both its name and configuration, for this is the same item that put the motorized Nikon F into the hands of thousands of photographers and helped make Nikon the leader in motorized 35mm photography till this day. The Jacobson Powercon was the first "cordless" battery pack for the F36 Motor Drive! Not only did it free the user from the tangle of cords needed to operate the separate Nikon-made battery pack, it also improved the motor's reliability. Before the advent of the cordless pack the F36 motor was prone to failure due to the rather insecure method for connecting the power cord, which was basically a "PC" style fitting that depended a great deal on a friction-fit to maintain electrical contact, a notoriously poor method. With the dawn of the cordless battery pack this problem was eliminated and the result was a one piece integrated system that became a huge success. So successful, as a matter of fact, that Nikon eventually responded with their own version that actually wrested the market away from independent makers such as Jacobson (there was a second pack made for the F series called the "Remopak" that was also a marketing success before the arrival of the Nikon product). All of this is probably familiar to many of you, but what is virtually unknown is that Jacobson also made a Powercon for the Nikon S36 rangefinder motor!

Pictured here is one of only two that I am aware of at this time. It possesses the serial number "877", which I doubt is an actual measure of the number produced, as the two 7s are stamped with a completely different die than the "8" (could this mean it is really #77?).

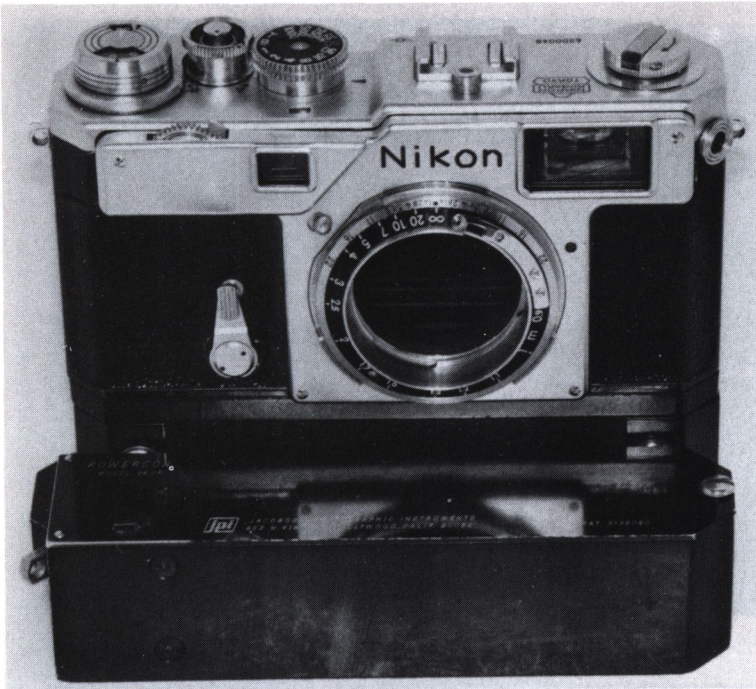
At this time I do not know the serial number of the other unit, but I have included, for comparison, an "F" version of the Powercon which appears to be quite early and is numbered "928". The reason I say it appears to be early is that it is, except for the location of the power terminal prong and the fact that it takes two extra batteries (more later), it is identical to the RF version. Also, if the serial numbers are any indication of production, the less than 60 unit spread in numbers points to this unit being early. If the SP version preceded the F type (a logical assumption but not necessarily true), then #928 is

an early example. Until more numbers are discovered all of this is conjecture.

There are two basic differences in these units caused by design variations between the S36 and F36 motors. The most obvious is the location of the power terminal. On the S36 motors this oversized "PC" style socket is located on the front surface near the right edge of the housing. On the F36 the terminal was moved slightly to the right and positioned on the leading beveled edge of the housing in the same orientation as the "PC" flash socket on the camera itself. Therefore, on the Nikon F both of these sockets line up and face the same direction. Because of this change the connecting prong between the pack and motor is in a different location from the SP to the F type packs. The pack housings are identical &, as a matter of fact, the prong on this F pack is obviously an add-on and not yet integrated into the design! Therefore, despite the fact that their shapes are identical, these packs are not interchangeable between the SP and F motors. The second difference is only obvious after opening up the units. Remember that the SP motor only required 9 volts of power. When the F36 was released it was designed around a 12 volt system. Why? According to Nikon the extra 3 volts were needed to compensate for the extra forces required to operate the mirror mechanism of the F, give better cold weather performance, and faster framing rates. The interior of the F pack has room for eight "penlight" batteries totally 12V. In the SP version the interior is identical except that a "dummy" insert is present to occupy the area of two batteries resulting in only six being used to run the motor, giving the required 9V! One other tiny difference can be seen at the rear of the pack where the selection switch for continuous or single operation is mounted. On the SP pack its marked with a "C" & a ".", which was the practice at that time. On the F pack a "C" & "S" are used, which was the way the F36 motors were marked.

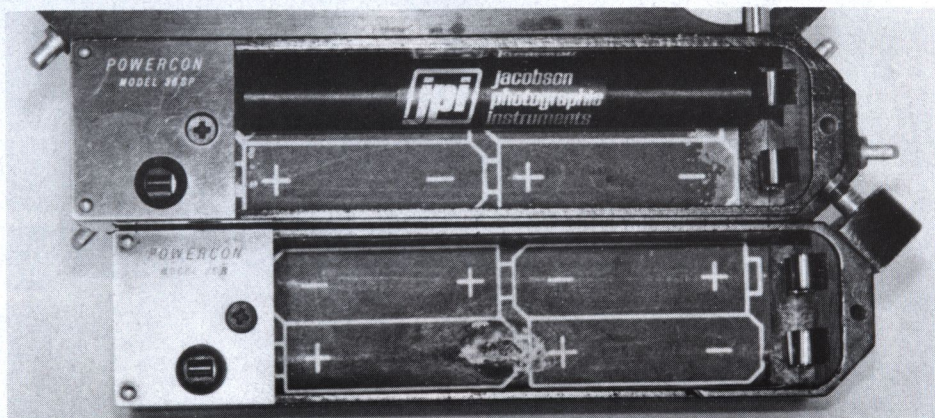
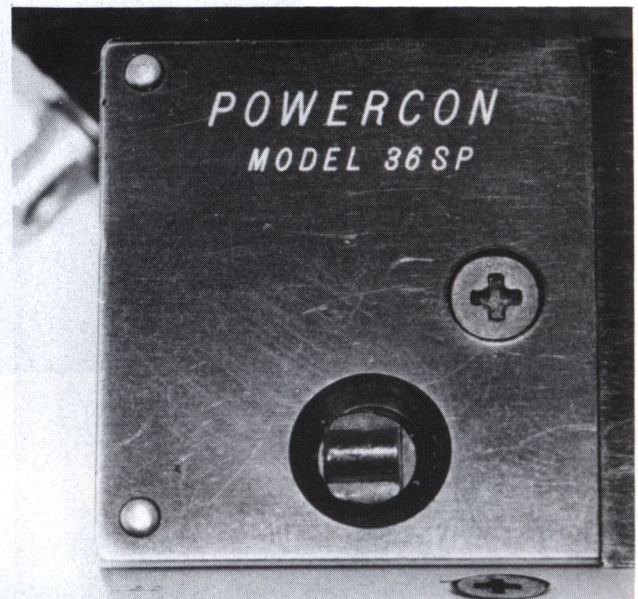
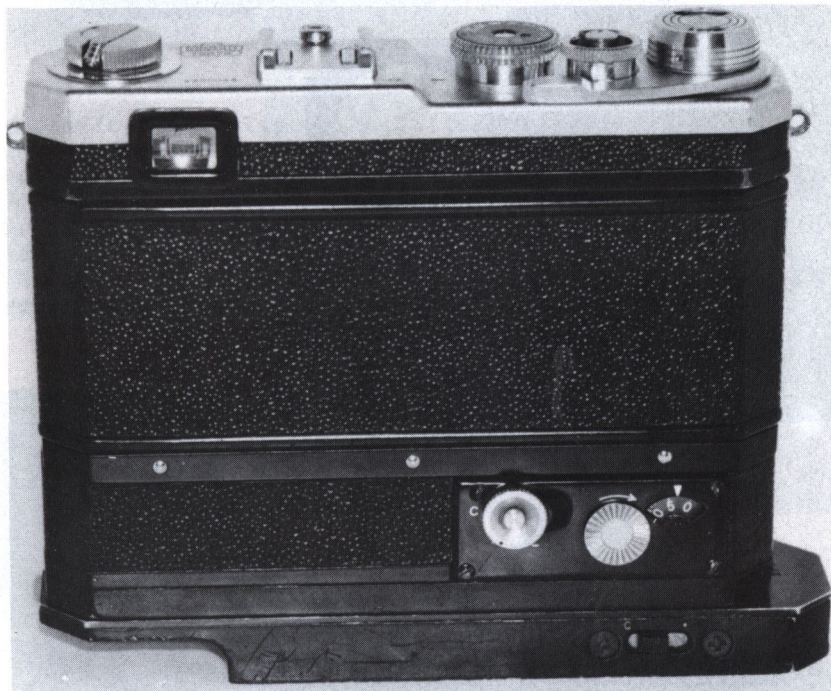
The Powercon for the rangefinder motors is clearly marked "MODEL 36SP" while the one for the F is marked "MODEL 35S"! Strange that the RF version is correctly identified while the reflex version uses an "S" instead of an "F"! I have seen a version made for the F250 shot motor that is marked "MODEL 250F" so possibly later versions of this F pack have the letter changed. Again this points to #928 as being rather early.

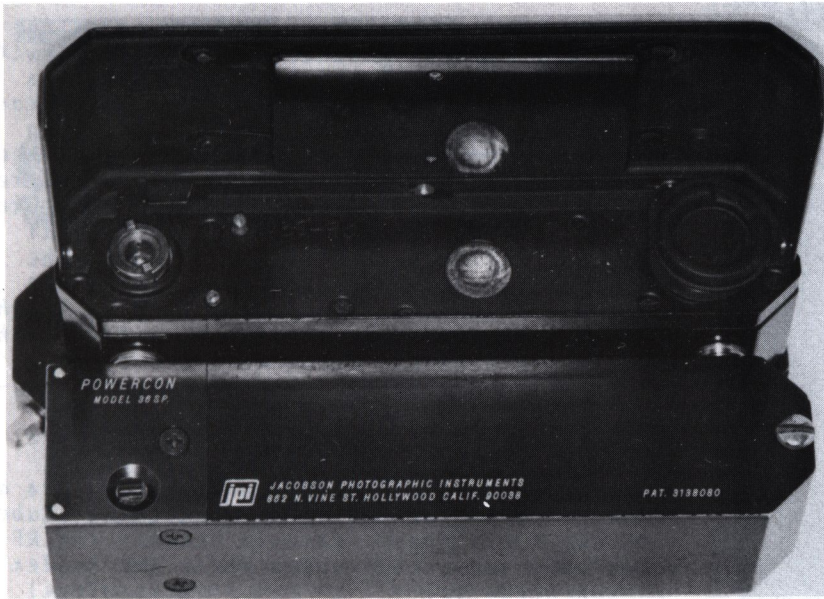
The Jacobson "Powercon" is a well designed accessory that fills a real gap in the Nikon rangefinder system that was ignored by Nippon Kogaku. It improves the performance, feel and reliability of the S36 motor and, at the same time, is a very uncommon piece. If you find one try it out. It is really a handy item that makes a motorized RF Nikon a joy to use!



On the left are a front and rear view of the Jacobson "Powercon" mounted on a Nikon S3 with the S36 motor drive. The housing that holds the batteries comes well forward of the motor, which makes for a much deeper base allowing this rig to stand up with almost any RF Nikkor mounted, save the long lenses made for the reflex housing. It is actually more stable than the one made by Nikon for the "F". The rear shows how little height this pack adds. The Nikon version slung the batteries under the motor which added an additional inch of height over this design. Note the "C." switch on the rear of the housing. Below is a close-up of the logo & model number. The rectangular surface within the circular depression is the motor release. The bottom photo illustrates the interior of the SP & F versions of the Powercon. Note that the SP unit (upper) has a "dummy" insert for two of the batteries (tube with the "JPI" logo). This is because the RF motor only requires 9 volts while the reflex version needs 12!

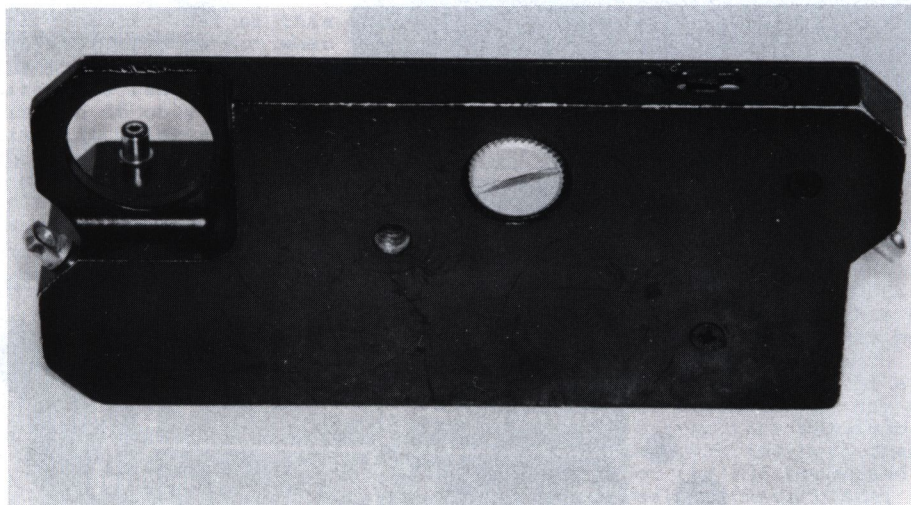
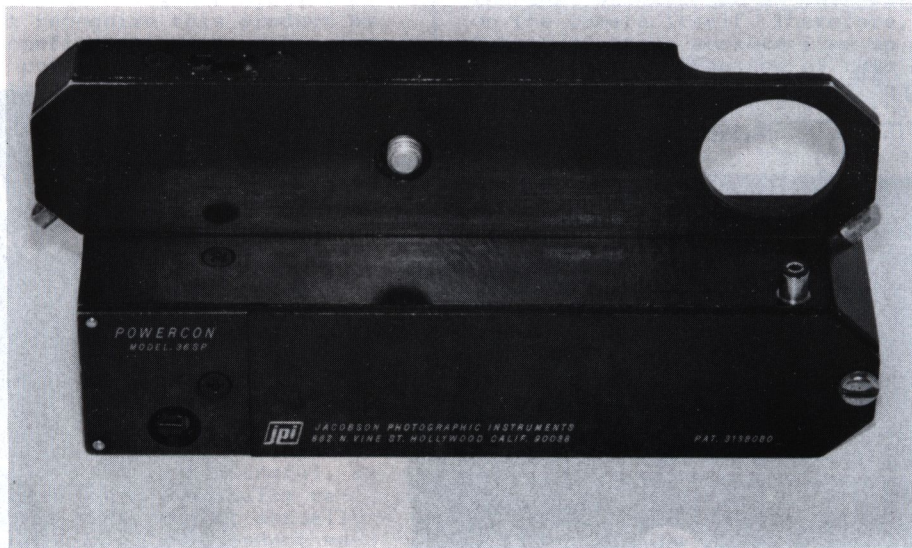
(R. Rotoloni)

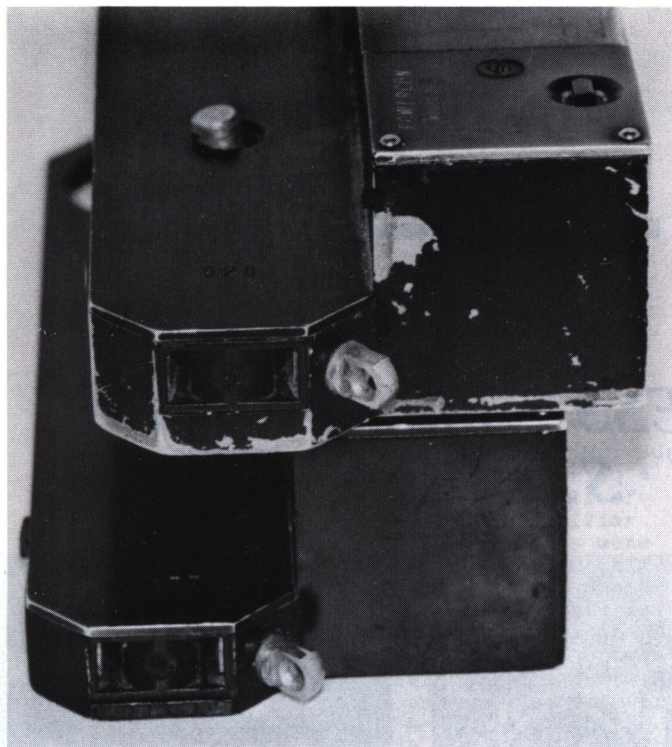




At the left is a photo of motor and pack with the camera body removed. Note how deep this outfit is. Its actual measurement is 2 & 1/2 inches, making for a very stable configuration. The middle photo shows a top view of the Powercon. Note the power plug near the right end, the motor release below the name at the left end and the chrome screw at the far right. This screw is loosened to remove the plate with the "JPI" name and address to get to the batteries. The lower photo illustrates the bottom of the Powercon. Note the mounting screw, tripod fitting, and the location of the strap lugs. The large hole seen in these two photos is where the release key for the motor back would be when mounted. This hole allows access to the key for loading and unloading the camera.

(R. Rotoloni)



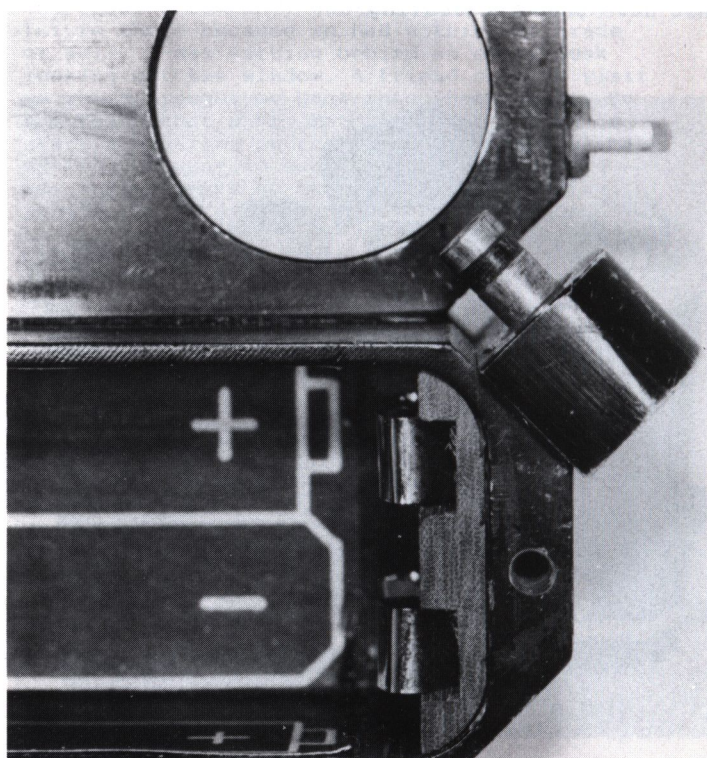
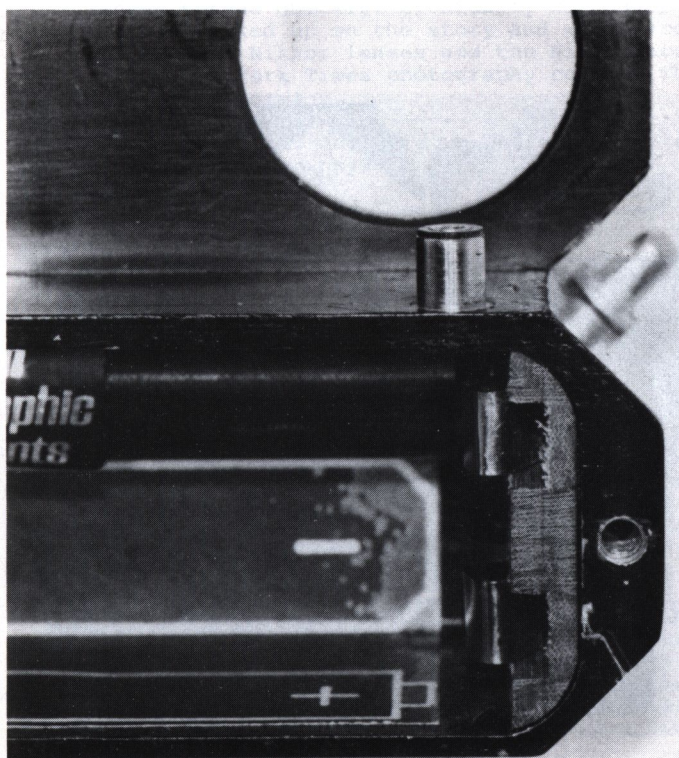


Upper left-Both types are fitted with a home-style plug for a secondary release. The Nikon version would have a similar plug. The "F" Powercon is on top.

Upper right-Because of the difference in the location of the power terminals on the S36 & F36 motors, the "F" type (top) has an angled power prong while the "RF" type points



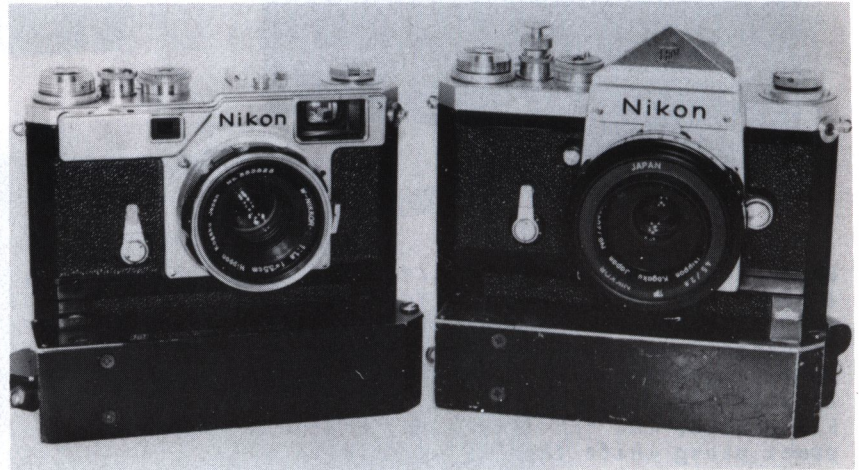
straight back. Note how the F-type prong looks almost like an add-on, and that it has caused the strap lug to be relocated as well!
Lower left-Close-up of the RF-type power plug on the Powercon. Lower right-The F-type has been grafted onto the housing and is not an integrated design at this early stage of development. (R. Rotoloni)



THE RF-SPOT!!

**THE FIRST "CORDLESS" F36 MOTOR!!
JACOBSON STRIKES AGAIN!**

From the photos in the preceding article and those on this page, it is obvious that the RF and reflex versions of the Jacobson "Powercon" were "basically" the same item. What is not so obvious is which model came first? It would be easy to assume that the RF version was marketed initially and followed by the "F" type. But this might not be true. The Nikon Motor Drive did not really become a success until the advent of the "F". This is apparent when one realizes that less than 1,500 RF motors appear to have been made over at least a 5 year run. Not your best selling accessory! However, the F36 sold in the thousands and paralleled the sales success of the "F", which surpassed the SP by a factor of "50"! Whatever the case, the "Powercon" was first with an idea that even Nikon had to admit was a good one, and which they would soon mimic themselves. Although the Nikon version would be better designed in some ways and would eventually take over the entire market for such an accessory, they never retrofitted one for the rangefinders. Now would not that have been interesting?!



MR. JUN MIKI...

AN INTERVIEW

BY PETER LOWNDS

The following is an interview with Mr. Jun Miki, taken by member Peter Lownds, during a visit by Mr. Miki to Holland in the fall of 1989. For those of you who are not familiar with the story of how the Nikkor lenses were first "discovered", the story goes like this. David Douglas Duncan, already a famous photographer even though his Korean epic "This is War" had yet to be published, was in Japan on assignment. One day a young Japanese photographer by the name of Jun Miki took his photo. The next day he was shown an 8x10 and was very impressed by its quality. He asked about the equipment used and was told it was taken with a Japanese made "Nikkor" lens. Duncan, and his fellow Life photographers, were only familiar with German 35mm equipment and had never heard of "Nikkor" lenses. However, after being told that the factory was very near, he went to see for himself. The result was that he chose a set of screw mount Nikkors for his Leica body and preceded to shoot the entire Korean War, and every photo in the book "This is War", through those Nikkors! So impressed were the lab technicians at Life magazine in New York with the negatives he and others were sending back from Korea, that word of the extreme quality of these "unknown" Japanese Nikkor lenses spread quickly. Eventually Mr. Jacob Deschin picked up on the story and wrote about these "new" Nikkor lenses and the Nikon camera in his New York Times photography column. The rest is history!

Lownds-Mr. Miki, when did you first get interested in photography?

Miki-Well I must have been about 12 years old. I remember seeing an advertisement saying that it was possible to put on film what you saw with your own eyes! This fired my imagination, and from that moment I wanted to be a photographer. However, in the Japan of 1927, the hobby of photography was very expensive. Fortunately for me my parents were quite well off and I remember my mother buying me a Kodak folding bellows camera. It had the best lens of the day, a rapid rectilinear. I tried my best to take good photos, but I always failed because I had no lightmeter and I could not read the instruction book! I started to get better as a photographer when I went to junior highschool. This is when I first realized that photography was in my blood. But in Japan at that time a professional photographer was a very low person, so I was elated when I went to the university and made a lot of friends who were playing around with cameras and photography. Some of my fellow students had written books in Japanese on how to use the Contax & Rollie

cameras. This was a good time in my life. While still at university I met a famous Japanese photographer who worked for Life magazine. I think it was 1937. I was allowed to go and work, watch and learn but it wasn't long before war broke out in China and he was sent to take pictures of the Japanese Army in Shanghai. Before he left he made arrangements for me to go and work with a Mr. Kamakura, who was a designer. He was a great influence in my life because he made me look and see pictures. I spent about a year working with him, but he knew what I wanted to be. He knew that he could not teach me the technical side of the art, so I was sent to work with another famous man, Mr. Ken Domo. He was a great man and very well known in Japan, but he was very poor. The only thing he wanted to do in life was make pictures...he was a true artist. I was so impressed how this man lived above money that I also wanted to be such a photographic artist, but my family was against it. My mother got me a job working in the office of a trading company, but it wasn't long before I was called into the Army. I spent about two years in the Army and was sent to China. It was not a happy time in my life and one which I would rather forget. After the War I went back to my job at the trading company, but I couldn't see any future there because we had nothing to trade or sell. I was sitting behind an empty desk looking out the window. A friend came to visit me which brought me back into photography. He had heard that a Mr. Matorie was planning to start a magazine on the lines of Life. During my lunch I went to see who this Mr. Matorie was and see what he had to offer. I got the job! My first assignment was to go and cover the war crimes trial of Yamamoto and Tojo, which was quite an important job for an unknown Japanese photographer. After awhile I moved on to work for the American International News Service, which was in the building next to the Time-Life offices. I got to know some of those Time-Life men and it wasn't long before I was asked by Time to cover the home coming of Japanese P.O.W.s returning from Russia. It was a great honor for me to be working for Time as a staff man in Tokyo. Carl Mydans sent me to Korea to cover the story about a political assassination, which was a great chance for me. I sent all my photos to Time-Life in New York, and after a few days I got a cable saying that Time planned to do a 7 page spread with my photos, for which I received \$500! I remember the first thing I did when I got the money was to go out and buy my good friend Ken Domo a Leica camera.

David Douglas Duncan had been sent to Japan to do a story about Japanese art after

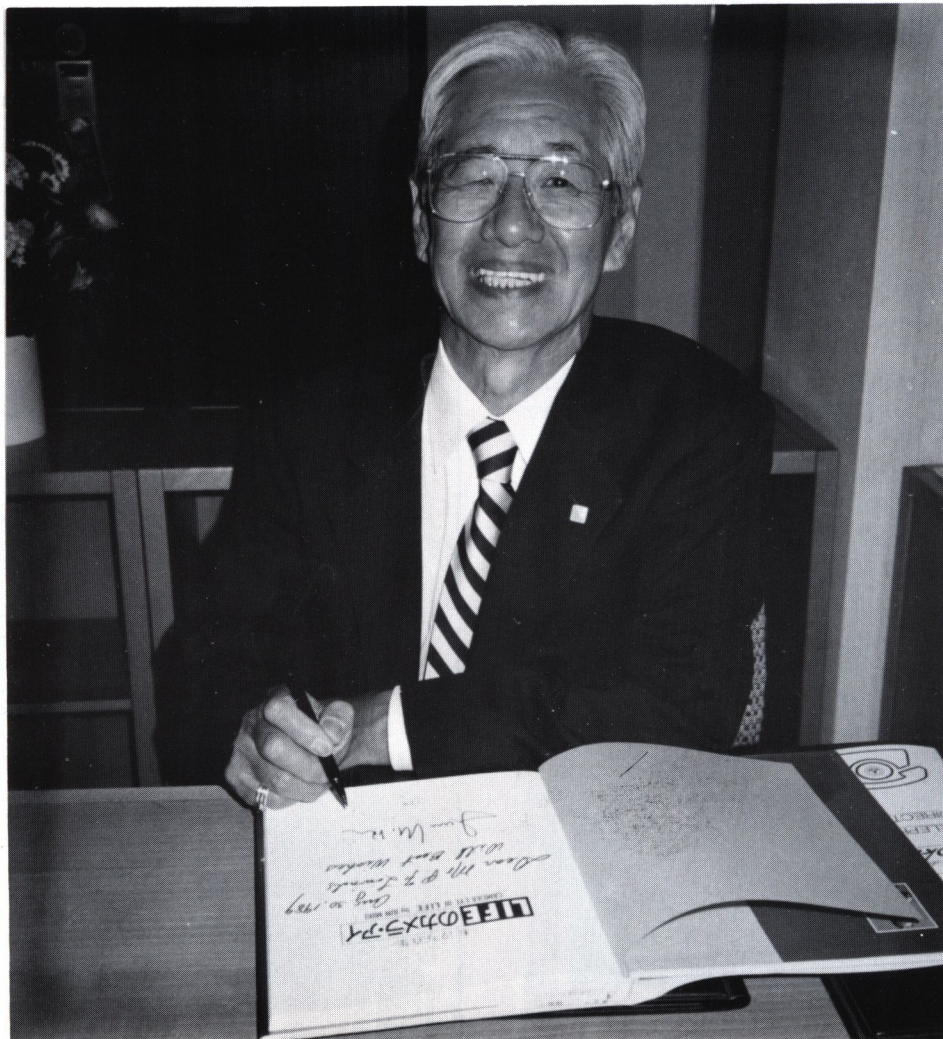
the War, and I was given the job as his assistant! I carried his bag, loaded his cameras & cleaned his lenses. We spent about 4 weeks going all over Japan taking pictures. A friend of mine came to see me one evening and had with him a Nicca camera with a Nikkor 85/f2.0 lens. I remember saying to David-san..look at this lens, it is a Japanese Sonnar lens and he joked saying how could the Japanese make anything like the Germans. So I took about 16 exposures of him as he sat behind his typewriter. The next day I had 8x10 prints to show him and he was very impressed, to say the least, and he started to ask if I knew anything about these "Nikkor" lenses and where were they made. After a few phone calls I located the factory, and David-san wanted to go and see for himself. At that time Nippon Kogaku was just one of many optical companies trying to survive after the War and, like most others, very near bankruptcy, and they made only a small amount of equipment each week. I made an appointment to go the next day to the Nikon factory and David-san started testing lenses...a 35mm/f3.5, 50mm/f1.5, and 85 like the one I had used, a 135mm/f4 and one camera body. We spent about a week doing the tests. Then he bought for his Leicas a complete set of Nikkor lenses. This was on a Friday, and on that Sunday war broke out in Korea!! "DDD" was sent with Gen. MacArthur and upon sending his first photos back to New York, Life sent him a cable asking-why are you using a plate camera? The photos were so sharp that within a few weeks every staff man passing through Tokyo bought for himself a set of Nikkor lenses!

Lownds-What was your first Nikon Camera?

Miki-My first Nikon camera was one with an almost square format. There is a very nice story about Carl Mydans. He didn't like this format so he got someone to file out his camera to 24x36, which he thought was a better size. So somewhere out there is a camera with the wrong frame size! In Korea I remember being in a foxhole with an American soldier taking pictures when I heard a loud bang and the soldier slumped over dead. I knew at that moment that the bullet had my name on it. The Chinese were using my camera to aim at and this was too close for comfort. On my next trip back to Tokyo I paid a call to Nippon Kogaku and had them paint my camera black! I also had them change the wind and rewind knobs to make them larger because it was so cold in Korea that we wore gloves and the small knobs were hard to use.

Lownds-What happened to the black camera?

Miki-It lay around my house in Tokyo for quite awhile and a friend of mine called to see me and wanted to buy the camera. But like myself he did not have much money so we made a swap. He had a very nice Japanese dog which I liked very much and it was a good trade! The dog's name was Letsue.



Lownds-Have you tried all of the cameras and lenses that Nikon ever made and which ones did you like the best?

Miki-The S2 was a very nice camera to use. It had a good feel about it, it was very well made, and the lenses were very sharp. There are quite a few of my ideas in the S2. Nippon Kogaku was always ready to listen to anybody with a good idea on how to make improvements. The next camera to come out was the SP, which was a great step forward. I used the SP for many years and I still have 2 black cameras with motors somewhere at home. I remember in 1959 getting my first Nikon F. That camera set the pace, it was the best of its day and stayed on top for many years.

Lownds-What do you think of the new Nikon F4?

Miki-The F4 is quite some camera! I have two bodies and many lenses. I like them very much and everything works automatically and it feels good. I use a Nikkor 25-50 zoom most of the time and the pictures are very sharp.

Lownds-What do you think the "F5" will be like? Do you think it will use film or will it be still video?

Miki-I don't know, but I think the F4 will be on top 6 or 7 years. I hope I am still around to see it all happen.

Lownds-How do you keep yourself busy now?

Miki-I work for two Universities in Japan where I am a professor of photography. I also work as chairman of the Nikon Club in Japan which takes me away from home 3 or 4 times a year for photo safaris. I also work for Nikon on the layout of a quarterly magazine and I do a lot of work for the Nikon Salon.

Lownds-Do you think that we have become better photographers with all these new auto cameras?

Miki-I enjoy looking at the photos that are sent in for the Nikon photo contest every year. I like people to be different, think for themselves, find their own style, grow as a person and a photographer, and enjoy taking pictures.

Lownds-Do you collect Nikon cameras yourself?

Miki-No, I use them as tools. Its a very good camera and lens. When I first started, as new cameras came on the market I would trade in the old models. I now have 6 Nikkormats and 2 black SPs with motors, and a few older Fs. I also have the very last Nikon F ever made! It was given to me by Nikon and is still sealed in its box. This was one of the few times that I've had a camera given to me. David-san used to say...buy your own cameras and film. This way you stay a free man and can make the pictures you want to make. But I have given away



cameras. I remember not so long ago we had at one of the Universities some Chinese students who were very poor. So I gave five of them a Nikkormat each.

Lownds-Have you heard of Robert Rotoloni, or the Nikon Historical Society of America?

Miki-No this is something quite new to me. I never thought of Nikon as being a collector's camera like the Leica.

Lownds-Did you ever think that when you took the photo of DDD back in 1950, that it would have so much effect on Nippon Kogaku?

Miki-No, not really. It was just a very sharp picture.

Lownds-Are you still in contact with DDD?

Miki-Yes, we are like family and he is like a brother to me. He is a very good friend. Some time ago I was having a show of my pictures for a book I was doing when he phoned me up asking me if I'd like to come to a show of his in Paris? I said to him that it would not be possible because of my show, but he must have phoned from the airport, because within 12hrs he was knocking at my door in Tokyo! It was so nice to see him again that I wanted him to stay as my guest, so I sent my daughter to the hotel where he was staying to make arrangements with the manager for me to pay the bill. After seeing DDD off at the airport I went back to his hotel to pay his bill, but he had already paid it himself. He left a note for me that said...always buy your own cameras and pay your own bills!!

NEW BOOK!

Two new books of interest to Nikon collectors have recently been published in Japan &, I am happy to say, I have been able to acquire review copies in time for this issue. Both are extremely well done and contain a wealth of visual information that offsets the fact that, at this time, they are only available in the Japanese language. One is specifically concerned with the Nikon rangefinder system & I shall begin with it.

 Called simply "NIKON", this 190 page book is the work of Dr. Mikio Kuno who is a member of the Tokyo Nikon Club and a prominent Nikon collector. I was fortunate to meet Dr. Kuno during both my trips to Japan. One of the most significant items I was shown on my first trip was an authentic Nikon S2E, which was brought to the meeting by Dr. Kuno, and plays a prominent role in his book. Another cornerstone of the book is the cover camera, which is a very important Nikon I that I will get back to in a moment, but first a general overview.

The book is extremely well photographed & printed to the high quality common to Japanese publications. It opens with 8 beautiful color plates depicting key elements of the Nikon RF system including a Nikon I (with its original box and manual!); chrome S3M with motor; SP with the Stereo-Nikkor outfit; black Nikon S2 and also the black S2E with motor; a black SP with motor and lastly a like new black S3 with the Olympic 1.4 lens. This is followed by a section on the history of N-K before Dr. Kuno gets into the actual coverage of each camera model and lens. In very high quality photos he covers each model and most versions of the cameras from the Nikon I through the S3M. However, not all body types are illustrated, but descriptions of the various versions might be in the text.

The lens section contains descriptions of each lens type with photos of most along with some of the shades and caps. An interesting feature is the listing of the original price in Yen, which can be converted to dollars by dividing by "360" to get a ballpark figure for comparison purposes. How about a 21mm Nikkor for 33,000 Yen (less than \$100)! Or a Stereo Nikkor for 26,500 Yen (\$73!!). Oh well, those were the days!

In a logical progression the accessory section follows that for the lenses and covers such items as the individual finders, zoom and variframe finders, close-ups, meters, the reflex housing including the 90 degree prism and the copy stands and Microflex unit. In this section is also very detailed coverage of the Stereo-Nikkor with all parts well illustrated. This is followed by the motor drive and its accessories, the panorama head, flash units and even leather cases, boxes and literature. The final section covers the early Nikon F as well as the Calypso/Nikonos series and even the Model H field microscope.

Getting back to what I feel are the two most significant items, we have the black S2E and the Nikon Model I. Before 1987 the Nikon S2E was a questionable item in my mind since none had been verified with any real certainty. There were a few murky photos in the literature showing a chrome S2 with a motor, but no real information could be gleaned from them. The story surrounding their under the counter demonstration to the press at the 1957 IPEX show was known, but the fate of those two cameras was never determined. In February 1987



at a meeting of the Tokyo Nikon Club Dr. Kuno arrived with the camera shown in his book. It is a black S2 with a motor for which he has the original box emblazoned with both the body and motor numbers, testifying to the fact that this is an original set. Since that time it has been rumored that a total of "32" such S2E sets were manufactured! A truly rare camera (and in nearly mint condition!) that finally destroys the "mythical" status of the S2E and verifies that they do exist! Well friends, we now have another Nikon to search for!

The other item is the Nikon I used as the cover camera as well as to illustrate the section on this model. Dr. Kuno shows both the original box and instruction book for this particular camera, which is significant in itself. However, this very camera finally answers an important question about the Nikon I that has bothered me for years. When I was putting together information for the historical section on both my books, the then current facts pointed to the Nikon I production ending at either camera 609758 or 609759, depending on how things were interpreted. As late as last July as I was re-writing this same history section for my monograph, the same question was brought up. Did the Nikon I stop at 609758 or was it 609759? Until either the last Model I or the first Model M surfaced the question would remain. This is no longer the case! On both the cover and within the pages of Dr. Kuno's new book is pictured Nikon I #609759!! Finally the breaking point between the I & M is fact and no longer conjecture. What I find fascinating is that this last Nikon I remained unmodified, which was the fate of some 220 bodies that remained when the M was begun. Today this camera is one of the most significant Nikons in existence!

I wish to thank member Tsuyoshi Konno for obtaining a copy for me so quickly, which made this review possible. Thank you Konno-san.

NEW BOOK!

Many of you will recall a two part series in NHS-21 & 22 on the earliest Nikkors that dealt with the very first lenses made by Nikon for 35mm cameras, namely those that were standard equipment with the pre-war and very early post-war Canon cameras. Because they were Nikkors and, in many cases, precursors of lenses later made for the Nikon RF series, they are of interest to many who collect Nikons. The fine photos of some of the rarest Canons, and the equally rare Nikkors that graced them, were done by member Hayato Ueyama of Osaka, Japan. On my second trip to Japan we were able to visit Osaka and Ueyama-san and spent a great evening looking at his superb Canon collection and personally inspecting those earliest Nikkors. At that time Ueyama-san verified that he was working on a book about Canon which would, by necessity, contain a great deal of information on the Nikkor lenses that came with them. That evening he showed us copies of some of the actual mechanical and cutaway drawings of these early Nikkors. Now a year later his book is reality, and because so much information on Nikkor lenses is included, it is an important source of information for Nikon collectors as well.

At 192 pages it is almost exactly the same length as Dr. Kuno's book, but this is no coincidence! Both books are published by the same company, have nearly identical cover designs, are the B5 size (7.5x10.5in), the same number of color plates at the beginning and even have consecutive ISBN numbers! Layout is quite similar and the quality of the photo-

graphs and printing are equally high. They have the same 4000 Yen cover price and can be considered sister publications. However, once you get beyond the physical similarities, real differences begin to emerge. This is brought about by the fact that, unlike the Nikon book, which covers the entire system of cameras, lenses and accessories, the Ueyama book deals only with a part of the Canon system. Because Ueyama-san is primarily concerned with the beginnings of Canon, his book covers that period from the designing of the original Kwanon prototypes, through the pre-war Hansa and the "J" and Seiki series up to the post-war SII model. This is narrower than Peter Dechert's fine Canon book, which covered all the models and the X-ray cameras. Since Ueyama-san is only concerned with the early cameras and their accessories, he can in the same number of pages as Dr. Kuno, cover his subject in much greater detail, which he does. The book has a subtitle including the notation "Vol.1", so possibly a second book is planned for the later cameras.

This book also begins with a section of color plates containing beautiful images of a Hansa & Original, a Navy "S", a "JS" & "J", an unusual SII, and two rare prototypes! One is the "JX" (it appears to be a J body with a bayonet lens mount), and the other the "SS" (it is a Canon S with a screw mount instead of a bayonet). These color plates are well done and enhance this book as they do for Dr. Kuno's Nikon publication.

The beginning of the book has an extensive section on the early history of the company with many photos of early buildings and personnel. There are many original drawings of the special Hansa style focussing mount, camera body, lenses and various research papers. The author has access to many technical papers from the early years and goes into great detail in his book. He has also reproduced an amazing selection of early literature including the Hansa instruction book as well as various ads including those that ran for the mythical Kwanon camera. Once he gets into coverage of specific cameras he does so in an extremely detailed way. Not just one Hansa is shown, but a dozen, with each represented by 3-4 photos! Why so many? Because he is showing a progression from the earliest to the latest and describing the differences in each type. Most models are shown disassembled and the same method of multiple examples for each type is maintained throughout. Interspersed are ads and accessories for the various models and all is shown in great detail. However, except for a few accessory lenses, every one of these Canons have mounted some of the rarest surviving Nikkor lenses, and this is where the Nikon collector can become immersed in this book.

Nearly 50 various Nikkor normal lenses are illustrated on the corresponding Canon model. All known types and variations are shown both on and off the cameras. Lens diagrams and original drawings are reproduced as well. At the rear is a set of tables listing a great many bodies from the Hansa through the SII along with the type and serial number of the Nikkor lens it came with! It is amazing how many of these early Canons and their Nikkors have survived. If you have any interest in the study of classic 35mm cameras then you cannot neglect the Canon series. And if you are into Nikon like me, the wealth of visual information of these earliest of Nikkors is a bonus!

I would like to thank Ueyama-san for his gracious gift of a signed copy of his book just weeks after it was published. I am happy to see that his dream of doing such a book has become reality.



IN THE SHADOW OF FUJI...

TALES OF NIPPON KOGAKU!!

BY JOHN BAIRD

'Tis the season for camera books. In the past few weeks I have received copies of two new books published in Japan for camera collectors. Both in Japanese...."CANON" by NHS member Hayato Ueyama deals the Hansa and Seiki Canon cameras. As many of you already know, these fine pre-war cameras sported some of the very first "Nikkor" lenses and a rangefinder system designed by Nippon Kogaku. Another book by Dr. Mikio Kuno, entitled "NIKON", deals with the Nikon rangefinder series of cameras, lenses and accessories. Both of these new books offer new insights into the early history and products of Nippon Kogaku.

In Mr. Ueyama's book the author takes the reader into a fair amount of detailed history behind the establishment of Seiki Kogaku and its first camera, the "Kwanon". Equally important is the account of the development of the 50mm. f3.5 Nikkor lens which was fitted to the first Hansa Canon model in 1935. Ueyama traces the history of these early lenses from test trials of the Tessar based 50mm. f3.5 Nikkor in 1934, through the introduction of the 50mm. f4.5, f2.8 and f2.0 Nikkors in the early pre-war years. In addition, much time is spent looking at the many and varied accessories that were manufactured for the Canons, which most western camera collectors have yet to see.

On a similar note, the new Nikon book from Dr. Kuno looks at those rare and odd pieces of Nikon collectibles that most of us collectors only dream about. Included in this category is a beautiful color photograph of the first motorized Nikon camera, the S2E! On a previous trip to Japan, Robert Rotoloni, John Angle, and I had the opportunity to look at and inspect this model first hand. I must say, that the picture of it in Dr. Kuno's book is just as impressive as seeing it in the flesh, so-to-speak... In addition, like Mr. Ueyama's Canon book, many unusual and rare accessories are shown. Certainly one of the

most important items pictured in the Nikon book must be the cover camera, which is a Nikon Model One. This particular camera bears a most historical serial number...609759... which is believed to be the last production Nikon I made! It is important from the perspective that it does in fact exist, meaning that this camera was not converted to a Nikon M, as some I's were!

As previously mentioned, although both of these books are in Japanese, this does not distract from the many fine black/white and color photographs showing what must be many important and rare cameras. Interestingly enough, one of the most unique aspects of both of these books is that the authors have decided to show the faces of many of the individuals behind the scenes at Nippon Kogaku and Seiki Kogaku. People that were responsible for the design and production of those pieces of brass and glass that we collect today. When Robert Rotoloni asked me to give a brief talk at this year's Nikon Historical Society Convention, I thought that this would make an interesting topic. I have been fortunate to obtain from Mr. Ueyama and from Nikon-Tokyo, many pictures covering the early years at Nippon Kogaku and its products. In addition, with the help of several members of the Nikon Club of Japan, I was able to get my hands on several photographs showing some very unusual Nikon rangefinder models and wartime optical devices. All of these will be featured in a slide presentation for the Convention's morning session, plus will be used in an upcoming book from Historical Camera Publications called "The Japanese Camera".

In addition to pictures of those old Nikon rangefinders, I have a few slides of some unusual pieces of Nikon F gear, including that of an all-black Nikkor F...and perhaps a few shots of Rotoloni-san in action on the Ginza!

LETTERS...LETTERS...LETTERS..

From Thomas DiFiglio...

Please note that I am renewing my membership for three years. It is a vote of confidence in you and the NHS!

Would it be possible to make some comparisons to the early Contax cameras when writing about the RF Nikons? These two cameras were very similar and it would make interesting reading to see how "close" or how "far" apart they really were.

From Javier de Lazaro...

Thank you very much for running my letter in NHS-25. However, you forgot to state the house number in my address on page 20 where you list the new members. It is..Principe de Vergara, 210...Since publication of the ad I have had offers from two NHS members and I've already contacted both of them.

From Richard Keyishian...

As a new member I wish to take this opportunity to tell you how pleased I am with your publication. Your articles are extremely informative and the "F-Stop" portion of the Journal

is a welcome addition to this Nikon collector.

You asked for suggestions from readers as to what items should bear the "NHS" logo. Being in marketing and advertising, here are a few suggestions....

- 1- letter openers
- 2- metal or leather book marks
- 3- belt buckles
- 4- a yearly pocket diary
- 5- a metal business card holder

How about a yearly wall calendar? Each month would have a picture of a Nikon RF camera, lens or accessory and Nikon Fs would be included. This could even replace the "Playboy" calendar to the die-hard Nikon collector!!!

With regard to membership dues, do whatever is necessary to remain solvent. An increase to \$25, \$30 or even \$35 is not out of line. I feel that sending the magazine first class, however, should be maintained.

Richard, I like some of those ideas, but the calendar really struck home. I've been thinking along those lines for a year or two and I wonder how such an item would go over! (RJR)

THE
 HISTORY OF THE
JAPANESE CAMERA
 MONOGRAPH COLLECTION

NIPPON KOGAKU
 AND
THE NIKON CAMERA

— ROBERT —
 ROTOLONI

HCP

HISTORICAL CAMERA PUBLICATIONS

NIKON HISTORICAL MONOGRAPH!!

In NHS-25 I announced the impending publication of a series of historical monographs under the auspices of member John Baird's Historical Camera Publications. This series, entitled "The History of the Japanese Camera" is now reality with the publication of two monographs by member Peter Dechert & one by your editor. John tells me that Peter's are off the press & can be obtained by writing directly to Historical Camera Publications at P.O. Box 90, Gleed Station, Yakima, WA 98904. They are available for \$11.95 + postage.

John has allowed me to make a special purchase of my monograph for those members of the Society who wish to have one. This is a joint

venture of the NHS and Historical Camera Publications and all proceeds will go to benefit the Society. With 30 pages of text and nearly 30 new illustrations, it covers in greater detail the early history of Nippon Kogaku, starting in 1917. It traces their optical development in those early years, their involvement with Seiki Kogaku and their Canon camera, & the events leading up to the release of the Nikon Model I. New serial number information & production figures are discussed & all models are covered in greater detail than in my book. Members can obtain "signed" copies directly from me for \$10 postpaid in the US & \$12 by airmail overseas. Thank you.

CLASSIFIED

WANTED...Nikon Variframe finders Type 3B MIOJ; black Type 7 (w/shoe); black Type 9 (no shoe). Top prices paid. Also require any original Nikon "RF" or very early "F" literature. I will buy or trade, as I have a fair selection of duplicate IBs, early brochures, etc. I also want box for S2 close-up device. Mike Symons, 3844 Merriman Dr., Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8P 2S9- Tel.(604)477-1867 after 6PM PST.

FOR SALE...For NHS members a wonderful and extensive collection of those famous Nikon RF ads from the 1950s & 60s reproduced lifesize as they appeared in such magazines as Popular & Modern Photography. Includes Bob Schwalberg's famous review of the "new" Nikon S2!..\$7 ppd! Wes Taft, P.O. Box 2072, Gearhart, OR 97138. Tel.(503)738-8484.

WANTED...An original copy of the Nikon S2 instruction book. Please state condition and asking price. Craig Swearingen, 8111 Durklyn Ln., Houston, Texas 77070.

FREE catalog of misc. photo merchandise. Send name & address to: BPW Ltd., 1223 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 144, Santa Monica, CA 90403.

WANTED...Nikon RF equipment. New NHS member just starting my collection. Must be Excellent plus or better. Will pay fair prices. Larry Holzman, 1056 Driftwood Court, Wheeling, IL 60090. Tel.(708)459-9207.

WANTED...Clean Nikon Rangefinder. I'll pay 25% more than McKeown's Price Book. Write or phone Peter Lownds, W. de Zwijgerstraat 24, Rotterdam 3043 VD, Holland. Tel.(010)4159136.

FOR SALE...I have found a few BRAND NEW boxed shades for the 105mm/f4.0 Nikkor. These have never been used & are in the original plain white boxes as shipped by Ehrenreich..\$75 ppd. Bob Rotoloni, PO Box 3213, Munster, IN 46321

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

PLEASE ADD THE FOLLOWING SERIAL NUMBERS TO OUR LIST OF BLACK NIKON RANGEFINDER BODIES

6307489

6322274

"NEXT ISSUE"

The deadline for the next issue of the "NIKON JOURNAL", NHS-28, will be June 1, 1990. Plans call for extensive coverage of NHS-CON2 for those unable to attend. In addition there is space reserved for an article on some very interesting prototype equipment made for the Nikon F that have never been published anywhere known to me! If all goes right it will run in NHS-28. If you have anything to submit please get it to me by June 1st. Thank you.

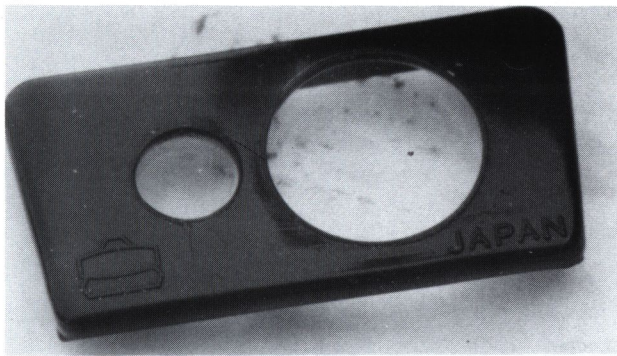
NEW MEMBERS**NEW ADDRESSES!!!**

odds 'n ends

THIS "ODDS N' ENDS" PAGE WILL BE RESERVED IN ALL FUTURE ISSUES OF "THE NIKON JOURNAL" AS A SHOWCASE FOR THE RARE, THE UNUSUAL & OFFBEAT, OR JUST THE OUT OF THE ORDINARY! IF YOU FEEL

THAT YOU POSSESS AN ITEM THAT FULFILLS THESE CRITERIA, PLEASE SEND ME AT LEAST TWO OR MORE VARIED VIEWS OF YOUR ODDITY ALONG WITH ANY INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE OF INTEREST. THANKS!

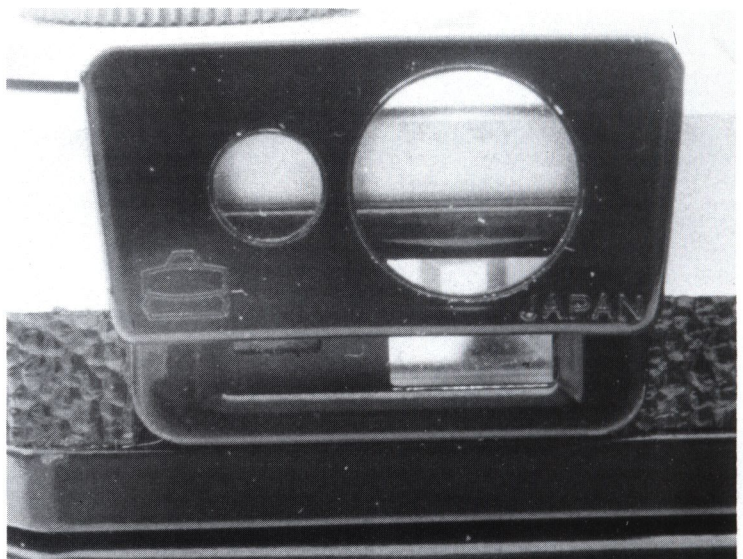
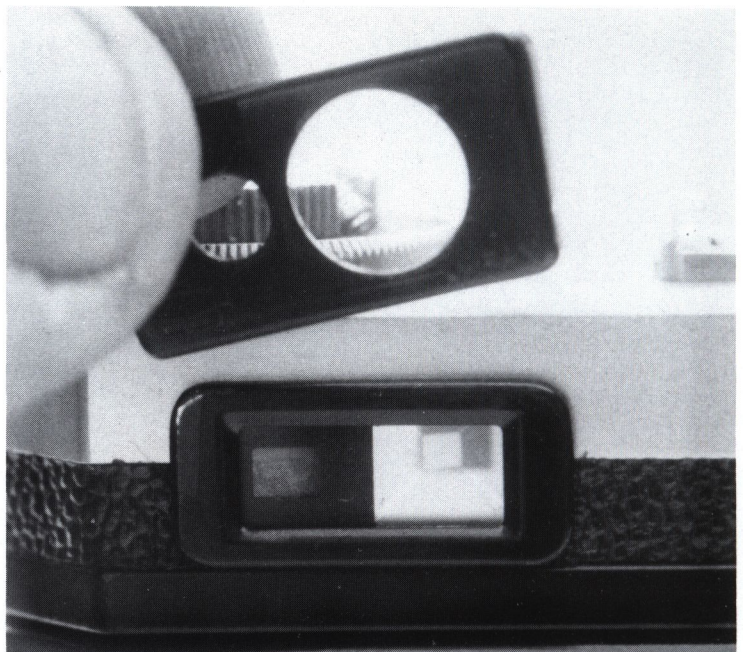
"SP" EYEPIECE CORRECTION LENS



Many times the smaller accessories made for a system as vast as that of the Nikon RFs are the most difficult to find. This is especially true if the item was of limited use or intended for only a small segment of the market, or was very inexpensive, fragile, tiny in size or easily lost. This issue's "Odds n' Ends" item fulfills all of the above.

It was designed for only that part of the market that needed it, it sold for only \$3.50, was made of fragile plastic, and is very small and light weight and easily lost. Today they are extremely hard to locate and may never have been made in any real numbers. What is this limited use item? It is the eyepiece correction lens made specifically for the Nikon SP, and will fit only that model. Those made for the S2 are round and mount by friction fit only. The type made for the S3 are similar to the SP type but not as long and will also fit the S4. As far as is known none were made for the S3M's unique eyepiece frame.

Shown here in photos supplied by member Peter Lownds, is the SP type. It is designed to slide down onto the SP eyepiece frame over a very fine set of rails that many users have probably never noticed were there. It has two separate cutouts each with its own correction lens. One is for the standard eyepiece for the 50-135mm lenses, while the special 28-35mm finder has its own tiny correction lens. So in this design both viewfinders on the SP were corrected, not just that for the lifesize viewfinder. A nice touch! When mounted it was hardly noticeable as it added little or no weight and very little bulk. An entire series ranging from +/-1 to +/-4 was made, with a few sizes omitted. I have seen those on the S2 and the S3 but have never been able to find one for the SP model. I know of one member who found one mounted to an SP he had purchased and did not notice it at first! Happy hunting!





CREATED FOR THE "NHS" by TONY HURST