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29

'7th' ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!!
THE NIKON  JOURNAL



IN THIS ISSUE..

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PG.9--A 500mm "AERO-NIKKOR"
PG.13--THE "ATOMIC NIKKOR"!!

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EDITORIAL

Seven years is not a long time when compared to the history of photography (150 years) or the birth of organized camera collecting (probably 30 years by now) or the beginnings of Nippon Kogaku (rapidly approaching 75 years). But this issue marks the 7th Anniversary of our Nikon Historical Society, a fact which is hard for this editor to sometimes comprehend. Although the last seven years have gone by rapidly and have witnessed massive changes in Nikon collecting throughout the world, I sometimes relish looking back at the early issues of The Nikon Journal to regain a sense of perspective, and to see just how far we have come. "NHS-1" had a cover date of September 1983 and was printed on 60# uncoated paper and ran 20 pages. Checking my receipts confirmed a press run of "60" copies, and why not, since the list of members totaled 40 plus myself! By the way, 31 of those original charter members are still with us today! Now, however, their names appear on a list that numbers well over 200! That first issue was done completely with my old portable typewriter left over from my college years (no computer back then), including the titles. The photos, though done on metal plates then as now, did not reproduce as well on the uncoated paper, but, as is still the case today, ours was an "illustrated" magazine and that first issue had 33 photos inside. Today's Journal differs in many ways, with coated paper (now 80# weight), 24 pages, text laid out in more readable type and in columns, larger more striking titles (with new ones for this issue!), and more features. The articles are longer and more detailed and we've added coverage of the Nikon F as well as regular features such as John Baird's historical columns. Yet many aspects of The Journal have remained constant. The cover, the Odds n' Ends feature, free ads for members and the rear cover reserved for a special ad or, more recently, an original Tony Hurst creation! Over 260 people have been members over the years and we have been able to retain (with this issue) nearly 220, so we must be doing something right. I will keep trying to improve the Journal and to make it more informative and enjoyable and, yes, someday I'll be able to afford that laser printer (and really spice up the layout!). In the meantime we keep growing (witness the 13 new members this issue), and I am looking forward to writing the Editorial for our 8th Anniversary issue one short year from now!

By pure chance I was thinking of doing an article on the seldom encountered Nikon Prism Microflex Unit when I received a stunning photograph of one from Tony Hurst. Since it seemed like a good idea to tie in the main article with Tony's exquisite rear cover shot, the Microflex became the center-piece for this issue of The Journal. An interesting aside to this item is that while photographing units for the article I noticed that I did not have 2 versions as I once thought. In actuality I have 3...which did not become apparent until all 3 were sitting in front of me at one time, something I hadn't done before with this item. I guess this proves the point that one should examine and fondle one's collection once in awhile, just as a reminder of what you really have!? Sometimes the result is a pleasant surprise!

The remaining three articles this issue are the work of other members. Mike Symons, who seems to have developed a habit of finding unusual lenses, writes about yet another one! This time it is a pre-war or wartime 500mm/f5.6 R-Aero-Nikkor of gargantuan proportions! Not only is this lens unusual from a physical point of view, but it also possesses a serial number that is, at the least, interesting. Turn to page 9 for photos and information.

When I received Fred Krughoff's contribution I started to wonder if this issue was going to be devoted to "weird & unusual" lenses, because Fred has come up with what can only be called... "The Atomic Nikkor"! Starting on page 13 is a detailed article on a specially modified 500mm/f5.0 Nikkor that was used by the American "Defense Atomic Support Agency" (DASA) to record atomic test blasts! Painted white with a modified lens mount and tripod cradle, it has to rank as one of the most unusual Nikkors out there!

To top this issue off is yet another Nikkor that is within the realm of the "strange". On page 16 is our regular F-Spot feature and this time around we have two photographs of a really "weird" reflex Nikkor. These were taken at a famous London photo shop by member Peter Lownds, and show a unique Nikkor! It is an 85-250mm/f4 Zoom-Nikkor in a direct Leica Visoflex mount!! It has been rumored to exist for years, but this is the first to surface. Check it out on page 16.

We again have a great column from John Baird which details the history of one of the smaller optical companies that became part of the merger that formed Nippon Kogaku in 1917!

Finally, a report on the NHS jewelry that was announced in issue #28. It has been a great success!! Very few sets remain, but there is an ample supply of lapel pins. If enough interest remains we may have more sets made up. So keep those orders coming! You've all found a brochure in this issue. No, it is not an original, but it sure looks like one! Member Peter Lownds has gone to great lengths to produce this item for the Society. I have seen an original and this is as close as you can get! For those of you who seldom see literature from the RF era, believe me it is difficult to find (this particular item has gone for as much as \$200)! Peter thought that he would try this and asked me to insert them as an offer to the members. It is yours to keep. If you wish to send a few dollars it is strictly voluntary! Costs ran about \$3.50 each and if this proves a success we may do more. Write me and tell me what you think of it! Do you welcome such items and feel they add to your collection? Is this a good side-benefit for the members? Does it not fit in with our role as a historical society? Are they worth a few dollars to you as collectors? Your response will determine future projects, so let me know!

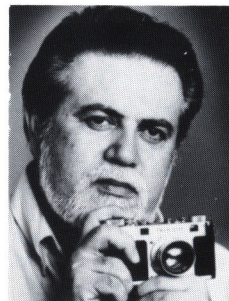


Photo: Tony Hurst

ROBERT ROTOLONI
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

THE NIKON MICROFLEX!

by Robert J. Rotoloni ●

Nippon Kogaku has always strived to provide a complete accessory system for their various camera models as far back as the Nikon "M" era. Most of their literature has concentrated on this "system" approach to 35mm photography, which was pioneered by Leitz as early as the 1930s'. In the early years their system consisted largely of the accessory lens line and those items associated with the lenses, such as finders, shades, filters and cases. However, in addition to these basics were other ancillary items such as specialized finders, flash equipment, all types of leather cases and, beginning in January 1951, a reflex housing and its associated optics. By 1952 they had what could be considered a rather adequate accessory system considering their recent arrival on the world photographic scene. Naturally they, and no one else for that matter, could hold a candle to Leitz, but the Germans had a twenty year lead with their system. In comparison, the Nikon "system" of 1952 provided the user of their camera a useful selection of lenses from 28mm to 250mm, all the necessary finders, and a good flash system. However, at about the time of the arrival of the Nikon S2 in late 1954, Nippon Kogaku began to supplement this basically solid, but pedestrian, system with more imaginative and special purpose (and interesting!) items. So it was that probably as early as January 1955 a new very special purpose accessory was added to the growing Nikon rangefinder system of photography: the Nikon Microflex Prism Reflex Attachment.

The basic idea for this limited use item was not a new one...Leitz had produced a similar item since before the war. However, as is often the case when designers can benefit from the experience of others, the Nikon product proved to be a well thought out modern design that remained a viable product all the way through the early Nikon F era, where the exact same item, now fitted with a Nikon F adapter, was available up to at least 1964! The fact that the Microflex was designed with interchangeable adapters from the beginning supports the statement that it was a very well thought out design that required very little modification during its production run of nearly a decade. It is a characteristic of Nikon (as it is with most quality manufacturers) that so much time and thoughtful design work would be spent on an item that could only be considered a special purpose product with a limited market that would obviously sell in only small numbers. But it is such items that make for great systems. This philosophy of making available all type of unusual and special purpose low production items would allow Nikon to develop a "system" for 35mm photography that, by the late 1960s and to this very day, ranks as the largest and most comprehensive available in the world!!

The Nikon Microflex appears to have been made in three basic variations, all of which are illustrated in this article. However, there is the possibility that a fourth, and earlier, type might exist. However, to date the only evidence supporting this earliest version consists of a few vague photographs in some early literature. These show a unit with a much less massive shutter housing and a different overall configuration as well. It is possible that this unit, pictured in literature dating back to 1952, was merely a prototype and never serially produced. None have yet to be reported to this author (but keep in mind that to date I have only recorded "4" units like those pictured here!), but the Microflex is such a low production item that a few pieces of the earlier type just might exist. Time will tell if any will show up. Therefore, until an actual earlier unit does surface, and since the first listing of the Microflex in price sheets known to the author is early 1955, we can assume that the first units available to the public are the three known variations pictured here. In the price list dated May 1955, the first known to include the Microflex, a unit identical to those illustrated here is shown, supporting the theory that the earlier unit was probably a prototype.

The Nikon Microflex consists of the following parts...the basic shutter and prism housing; camera adapter ring; focusing-viewing eyepiece; contrast filters; cable release; hardwood case. These parts make up a complete Microflex system yet not all were supplied as standard equipment, and those that were varied with time. Starting with the May 1955 listing, for the price of \$108.00, the customer would receive the basic unit, one adapter ring, one focusing-viewing eyepiece (2 types were made), a cable release and the hardwood case. The set of 3 contrast filters (for which space was available in the case) was a \$21.00 option. Extra adapters (only those for Nikon/Contax bayonet and Leica screw were made at this time) were \$12.50. A third option, which would eventually become part of the standard package (at a higher price!), was a second viewer consisting of a large fine grain screen, sold for \$16.50. Because of the fact that Nikon chose to sell the Microflex in "pieces" at first, and made the filters an option throughout the entire run, it is possible to find units with parts missing! However, they may not have been actually lost, just never purchased in the first place! This is especially true of the filter set. Storage slots are present in the case, but almost always they are empty! It seems that buyers decided against investing nearly 20% more for a set of small, rimless glass filters at \$7 each! The fine-grain ocular, for which space was also allowed, was a relative bargain, and a more popular item.



LEFT... Pictured here is the basic Microflex outfit with camera mounted. This would then be attached to the draw tube of any standard microscope (including any from the very extensive line made by Nippon Kogaku themselves). For this illustration the larger fine grain focusing eyepiece is mounted to the prism/shutter housing. The item on the far right is the "standard" eyepiece that was issued with every Microflex sold. The smaller object next to it is the 7x focusing magnifier that was used for critical focus when using the fine grain eyepiece.

R. Rotoloni.

RIGHT... The Nikon Prism Microflex with the optional fine grain focusing eyepiece. This accessory screen, which is nearly three inches across, made it possible for more than one person at a time to view the image. This feature could be very helpful in a teaching environment or for demonstration purposes. Originally an option, it was eventually made part of the standard package, albeit at a slightly higher price.

R. Rotoloni.



LEFT... This is the standard configuration. With this eyepiece attached only one person at a time could use the Microflex. However, with its built-in diopter correction and superior optics, it provided a much brighter and sharper image than the fine grain screen. An interesting sidelight to this eyepiece is that those used on most of Nikon's binoculars from the same period appear to be identical right down to the same knurling and diopter scale!

R. Rotoloni.

A description of the Microflex must begin with the shutter/prism module, of which three variations will be illustrated in this article. The earliest unit known to the author is number 30111 and, naturally, we'll call it Type One (I am assuming the item in the early literature to be prototypical). The differences that produce the three variations are found on this basic unit and not the accessory pieces. The actual shape and configuration of this housing is the same for all three types, with the differences occurring in the shutter & controls. The two distinguishing characteristics for Type One are a top shutter speed of only 1/200sec. and the control knob for the prism. The succeeding two types have shutter speeds up to 1/300sec. and do not even have the 1/200sec. setting. I have not been able to find anything in the literature announcing this change as yet, but it might be just another case of Nikon upgrading an item without calling it new or improved, which is something they did, and still do, often. Since the starting serial numbers for the Microflex are unknown we can only surmise, but the number on this unit, 30111, suggests that this series could have begun at 30001 making this the 110th made. Hopefully more numbers will come to my attention and maybe answer this question. The second feature is the prism control knob. For viewing the prism must be in the light path where it diverts the image to the side mounted ocular. Upon depressing the cable release this prism pivots out of the light path and then the shutter fires. The user then pulls the prism control knob and the prism flips back into the light path for viewing. Therefore, it is not a continuous viewing system but more like the old reflex cameras where the mirror returns after cocking the shutter. On Type One units this knob has a rounded shape and a simple "pull" action with no locking mechanism of any kind. Besides these two features this unit is cosmetically the same as the next two versions.

Type Two is represented by unit #30652. This unit differs from Type One in that it now has a shutter with a top speed of 1/300sec. and a very different prism control knob. Besides the higher speed and a slight change in the speed setting lever, the shutters appear to be the same. It is probable that this newer shutter is simply an improvement and was used to upgrade the product. This could be the 651st unit made so it would only be 551 units later, but where the newer shutter was added is anyone's guess! The prism control knob not only has a decidedly different shape, but action as well. It could still be used in the simple "pull" position to return the prism or it could be set so that the prism would return automatically after each exposure! So now the user had a choice.....manual return or instant return! By pulling the knob and rotating it a small screw head would catch on a ridge & remain extended, allowing the prism to return to the viewing position immediately after exposure. It is obvious that Nikon was still putting some time and thought into this low production addition to their system. Besides these two improvements a Type Two unit appears identical in all respects to a Type One.

We now come to unit #31323. Up to a few months ago I always thought that this unit and #30652 were identical and that only two versions existed. However, as is often the case, while cleaning all three units I noticed that #31323 had an additional feature which, though small in size, would be significant in operation. It still has the same 1/300sec. shutter and the identical prism control knob. But only by having it and #30652 side by side did another feature become evident. Just to the left of the cocking lever and below the 1/300sec. setting, a small piece of the housing has been machined out to allow for the addition of a "PC" socket. So this Type Three unit has flash synch! Nikon just keeps making things better! Again I can find nothing in the literature announcing this improvement, but now we have a legitimate third type Microflex.

By the May 1956 price sheet the Microflex listing had changed slightly. It now read...

MF800-Microflex, basic unit, for Nikon...	\$108.00
MF801-Microflex, basic unit, for Leica...	\$108.00
MF803-Microflex, complete w/ground glass screen and magnifier, for Nikon.....	\$124.50
MF804-Same as above, for Leica.....	\$124.50

As you can see they have decided to sell the unit complete with the larger fine-grain ocular (along with a small 7x magnifier to aid in focusing) but for no bargain. They just added the \$16.50 to the \$108.00 to get \$124.50! What a deal! Whatever the reasoning, it appears that they realized that the fine-grain ocular was proving popular enough to include as standard, yet the filters were still an additional \$21.00! By the May 1958 listing the units lacking the fine-grain ocular are no longer listed and only the complete unit is available. Finally in the August 1960 price list an adapter ring for the Nikon F is shown for the same price of \$12.50 as the Leica ring. Even though the Microflex supplied with the F adapter would be shown in Nikon F lists as early as October 1961, the adapter was available at least as early as August 1960, for the Microflex unit itself was the exact same item later sold for the "F"! It would continue to be listed in its rangefinder configuration up to at least April 1964 (now at the higher price of \$179.50, with the filters still an option!). In this same 1964 listing the unit for the Nikon F is still the venerable Microflex first available in 1955! It is probable that RF Microflex units remained in inventory after 1964. However, it is also probable that at some point Ehrenreich would simply have switched the adapter rings and sold the last remaining units with Nikon F rings, for it was with the arrival of the reflex Nikons that their close-up and macro/micro photography systems really took off, enjoying a popularity unheard of during the rangefinder era. Only after the arrival of the Nikon F did the Microflex become what can be considered a popular accessory (eventually evolving into very complex units with built-in automatic exposure control and twin camera mounts!). Those produced during the rangefinder era would years later become a very scarce item indeed!



As mentioned in the text, there are three basic variations found in the Nikon Microflex Unit. One of the main points of distinction has to do with the type of shutter and the presence, or lack of, flash synch.

Microflex Type 1 (#30111) at the left possesses a shutter with speeds T,B,1,2,5,10,25,50,100 & 200. There is no flash synch present.

Microflex Type 2 (#30652) at the lower left is now equipped with a different shutter having speeds of T,B,1,2,5,10,25,50,100 & 300 (with no 200 speed at all!).

Microflex Type 3 (#31323) in the lower right hand photo has the same shutter speed progression as does Type 2. However, note that a small part of the housing just below the "300" setting and to the left of the shutter cocking arm has been machined out to allow room for a new feature, a "PC" flash synch socket! Besides this one difference, Types 2 & 3 appear to be identical in all respects.

R. Rotoloni.

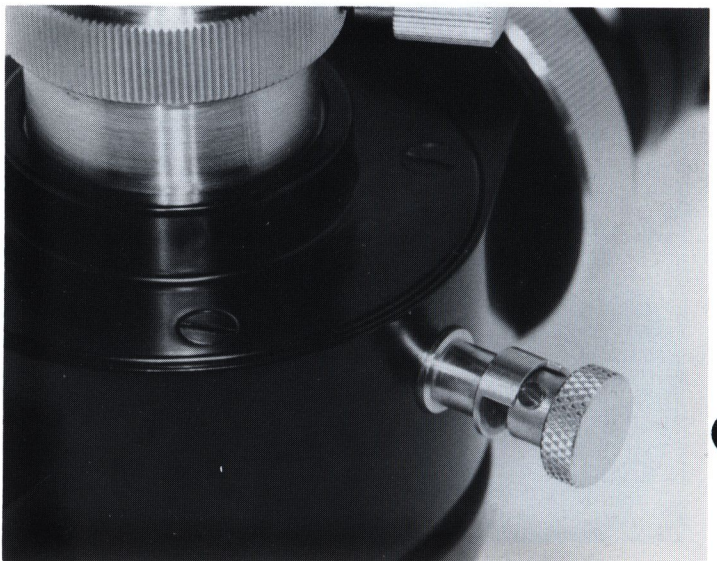
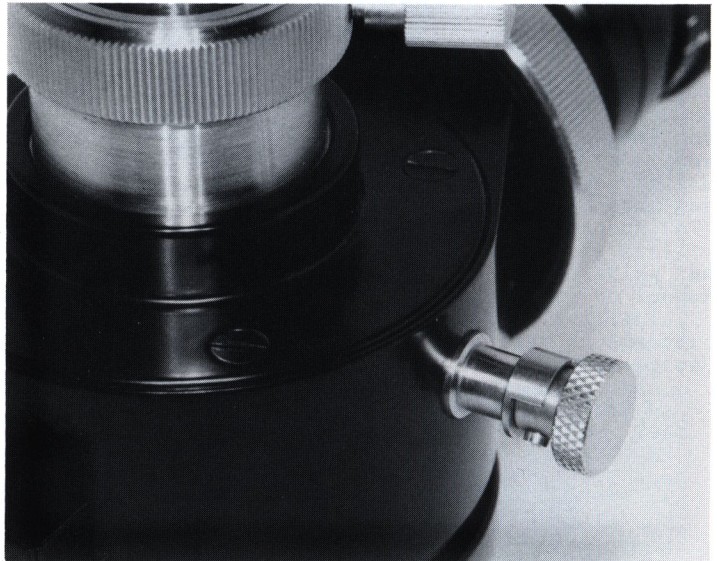
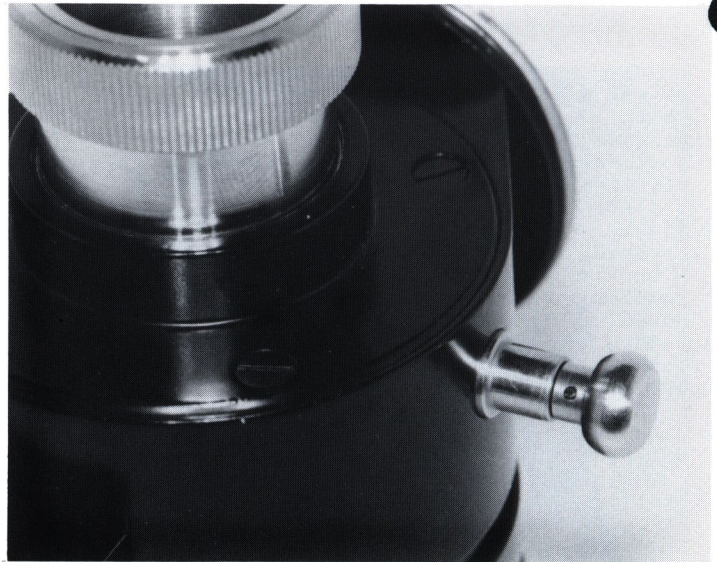


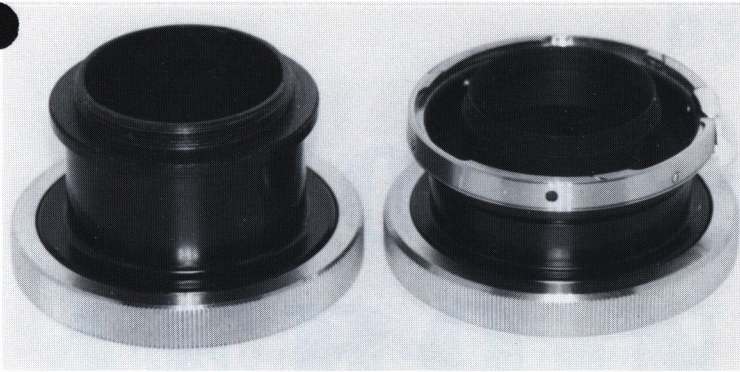
The accessories made for the Microflex consists of three types of camera adapters, two focusing/viewing oculars, a focusing magnifier, a standard cable release, and the set of 3 contrast filters. Of these items the filters are probably the hardest to find (except for maybe the Leica adapter, but demand is much lower for it and everyone wants the filters). As mentioned they were always an option and, at \$21.00, rather expensive, so not all units were sold with them. Most units were sold with the Nikon/Contax adapter, although one unit that I was able to purchase had both the Nikon and Leica adapters. The Nikon F adapter came out very late and was probably sold only with units intended for the "F". In the beginning all units were sold with the standard focusing eyepiece that resembles a 7X loupe made by Nikon. The larger fine-grain ground glass viewer was first an option but later included. This second viewer allowed more than one person to see the image. It was supplied with a small 7X magnifier for critical focusing. There is room in the hardwood case for both the fine-grain viewer and its special magnifier as well! The case is well made and most items will remain in position when it is closed. However, why they used a simple friction latch to close it I'll never know. A standard suitcase type latch would have only been pennies back then and would have looked much more elegant. In addition, a very small increase in size and a slight change in layout would have allowed room to leave a body mounted to the unit while in the case. It would have been more convenient.

The special purpose Microflex probably never sold in any real numbers during the rangefinder era. Serial numbers could be misleading. Just the three examples shown here would suggest over 1300 units! Impossible to say the least. What could have happened was a new starting point was used for each type or batch. Type Ones could have started at #30001 and unit #30111 would suggest over 100 made (or did they start at #30101??). For the Type Twos Nikon might have used #30501 or #30601 to start and then when they added flash synch started that batch at #31001 or #31101! We may never know for sure, but I really doubt that 1300 were made! I'd be surprised if 300 were ever produced! For those who might wonder about such things, the dealer costs on the Microflex was as follows...Microflex unit complete w/fine-grain ocular=\$80.92!...Filter set=\$13.65!...Camera adapters=\$8.13! Can you imagine at what prices dealers must have closed them out in the late 60s' and early 70s'!!

The second feature that differentiates the early and late Microflex units is the prism control knob. On the Type 1 unit (top photo), the knob is a simple "pull" type mechanism that returns the prism to the viewing position but has no further function. On the Type 2 & 3 units (bottom two photos), this knob has been completely redesigned. Not only have its contours been changed (it is now more angular with a serrated gripping edge), but it has an additional function: In the middle photo it is in a position where it functions exactly like that in the top photo. Just give it a pull and the prism returns to the light path. However, note the small screw head and the cut-away in the collar. In the bottom photo the knob has been pulled out and slightly rotated to allow the screw head to catch on the edge of the collar. In this position the prism returns to the light path automatically after each exposure! So the user could have it either way.

R. Rotoloni.





Accessories for the Microflex...In the top left photo are the camera adapters. For most of its existence during the rangefinder era only 2 types were made...Leica (left) & Nikon/Contax (right). A third type for the Nikon F was made much later. Middle left...The optional fine grain viewing screen which a storage space for which a 7x focusing magnifier was provided.

Lower left...The two types of viewing oculars. Eventually both types were supplied as standard equipment even though space for the fine grain screen was designed right into the hardwood case. Above...Microflex with fine grain screen and the set of three optional filters. These filters, which were always an option and sold for \$21.00, came in red, yellow and green. Three slots for their storage were built into the hardwood case, but in most cases they are empty!

R. Rotoloni

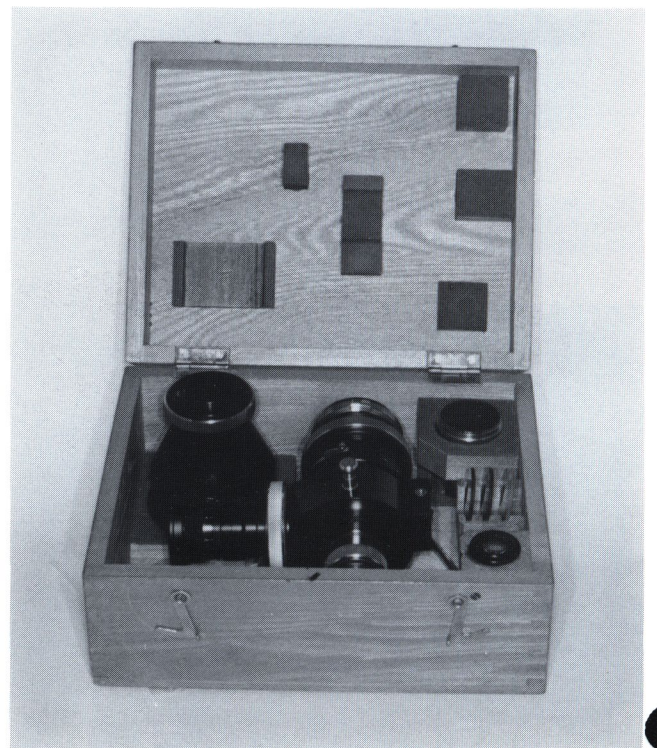


The Microflex was fired by means of a cable release, which controlled the sequence of the prism moving out of the lightpath and the shutter releasing. In the left photo can be seen the small housing that contains the cable socket as well as the unit's serial number.

Bottom left...The Microflex could be ordered with a Leica/type screw adapter instead of the Nikon bayonet type. In this case it could be used with any body that featured a Leica/type screw thread, such as the Nicca pictured here.

Bottom...The Nikon Microflex was supplied in a fitted hardwood case befitting a fine instrument. Space was provided for both oculars, one camera adapter (mounted), the 7x magnifier for the fine grain screen and the set of filters. Note the two angled metal latches which kept this case closed with a simple friction fit. Why a more suitable locking latch was not used is a mystery!

R. Rotoloni



by Mike H. Symons

A 500mm. AERO-NIKKOR!!

As collectors of Nikon equipment, and more specifically Nikon rangefinder equipment, we sometimes lose sight of the fact that the company, Nippon Kogaku, has been in existence for more than 73 years. To put this in a more meaningful perspective, the landmark Nikon I was introduced when the company was 31 years old. With the company being 73 years old this year (1917-1990), Nippon Kogaku had already lived 42% of its life when it introduced the Nikon I. By the same basis of comparison, Nippon Kogaku was 40 years old when the famous Nikon SP was introduced in November 1957, and 42 years old when the historic Nikon F was announced on July 1, 1959. Many people still think that Nippon Kogaku was formed either during, or immediately after, the war, as sort of a reclamation project to restore the Japanese economy. This certainly wasn't the case, and in fact, the company had its early beginnings developing and manufacturing military products, in particular for the Japanese Navy. Types of items produced were ship's rangefinders, gun sights, binoculars and submarine periscopes.

This serves to lead into a discussion about a very interesting and meaningful lens which was found at the recent Seattle/Kent camera show in April. As can be seen in the photographs, this historic lens, produced by Nippon Kogaku, is an aerial photography lens which appears to date to the war years (1939-45). It could have served its life attached to the wing or undercarriage of a Japanese surveillance/reconnaissance fighter or bomber aircraft. Naturally the exact history is untraceable, but the item remains mostly intact after approximately 50 years. How it came to America, one can only speculate.

DESCRIPTION:

The lens, which measure 4.5 inches in diameter, is seated in a cast aluminum housing that measures 9 inches across. For a size comparison Fig. 2 shows the unit in relation to a Nikon S2 camera. Fig. 5 shows a side view, and measures 5 inches from front cap to rear cap. The assembly mounting posts are also visible in this shot. Here are the particulars ..

- (a) 50cm/f5.6 (fixed aperture) R-Aero-Nikkor, serial #38352328. (Fig. 4)
- (b) Lens appears to be a 4 element uncoated Tessar-type formula.
- (c) The red "R" could be an indication that this lens was used for infrared photography.
- (d) Between-the-lens shutter comprised of five large black painted metal blades.

- (e) The use of Japanese characters in the Nippon Kogaku logo, and the use of "NIKKO", Fig. 4, a product name used by Nippon Kogaku until early into the Occupation (1946 or 47), at which time it was changed to the now famous "NIKON". This date also saw the use of the Japanese characters being replaced with "Nippon Kogaku", as the scope of their business broadened into worldwide markets.
- (f) Both front and rear caps are made of thin pressed black painted metal, each with a Nippon Kogaku decal logo. (Figs. 1 & 5)
- (g) The front cap bayonets around three posts (1 is missing) like the early Nikkor 105/f2.5 "post" version. The rear cap simply pushes on. (Posts visible in Figs. 4 & 6)

MARKINGS:

Some casting engravings are evident, especially on the top side of the lens. Most of these are visible in Fig. 6. The "body" number seems to be "1628", but the number "66" appears more than once, in addition to being scratched on the metal housing in a few places. (Figs. 3 & 4 show these scratchings). Also visible are the letters "TK" (encircled), followed by the number "04". To the right of the number "1628" is the only indication of Japanese writing, these being two characters in a circle. Perhaps one of our Japanese members could translate these characters for us? Also evident on the top side is a small star (above, and in between the "04" and "1628" markings in Fig. 6).

On the rear of the housing (or underside), the number "66" appears again, in addition to the number "99" with "XX" engraved over it. Obviously this was an error that Nippon Kogaku was attempting to obliterate...the engraver stamping "99" instead of "66", and correcting his mistake.

SERIAL NUMBER:

The serial number of this lens (38352328) raises some questions, mainly due to its length. We are all aware of Nippon Kogaku's practice of using 3 or 4 digit number blocks at the beginning of the serial number to indicate dates of either development or production...eg. "609" indicating September 1946; "801" for January 1948; "5005" for May 1950, etc.

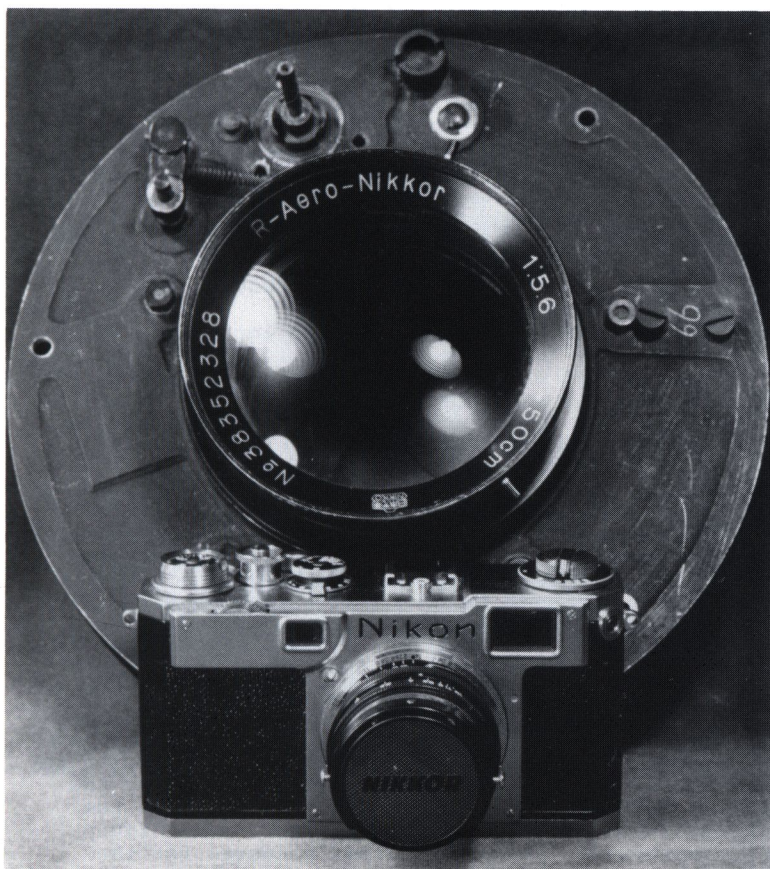
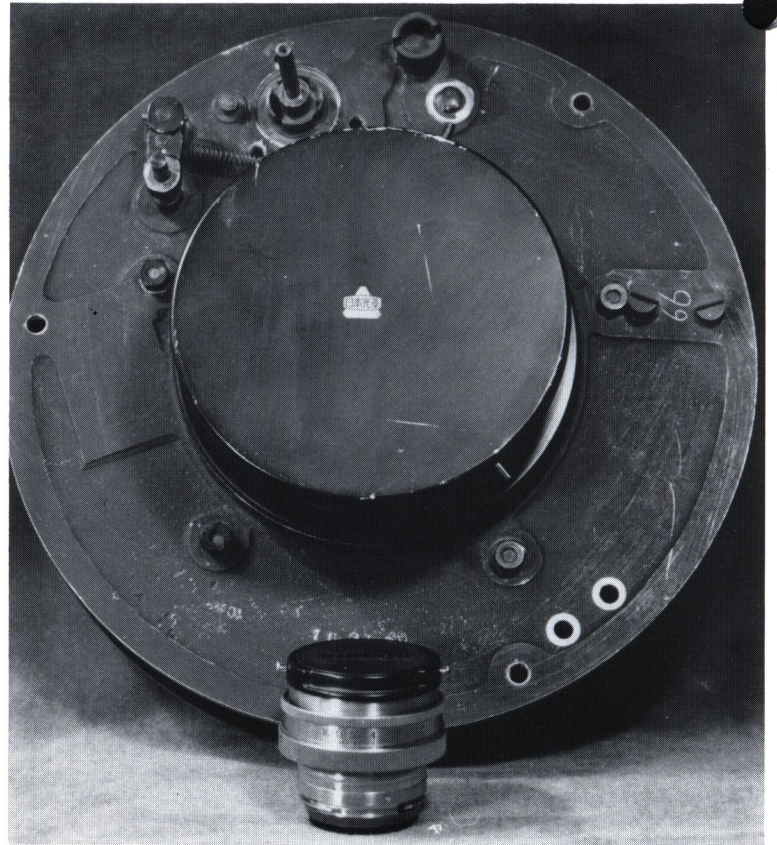
The serial number on this lens doesn't seem to follow this logical pattern. If one were to break down this number into definable blocks, can it be argued that the first three digits comprise the date... "383" for March 1938? This being the case, would it also indicate that this was the 52,328th such lens produced? That seems highly improbable. Perhaps on items produced for the

military a completely different numbering system was used, one that we, as collectors, are not familiar with. Another possibility is the serial number can be broken into 3 different segments, such as....

383-date identification (March 1938)
52-product identification code (50cm/f5.6)
328-number of units made

Naturally, all this is mere speculation, but I'm sure if records were ever found, some logical numbering scheme would be evident.

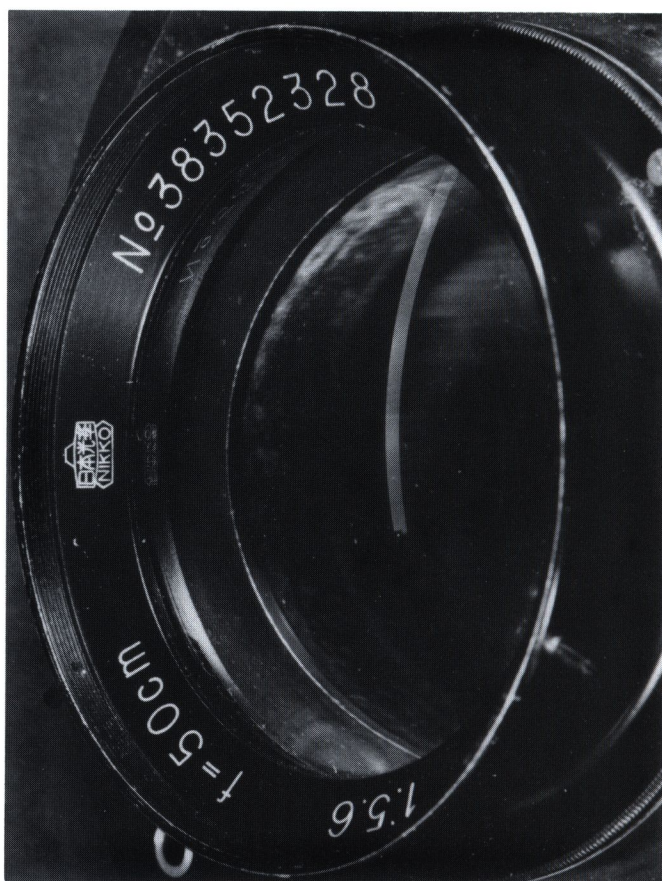
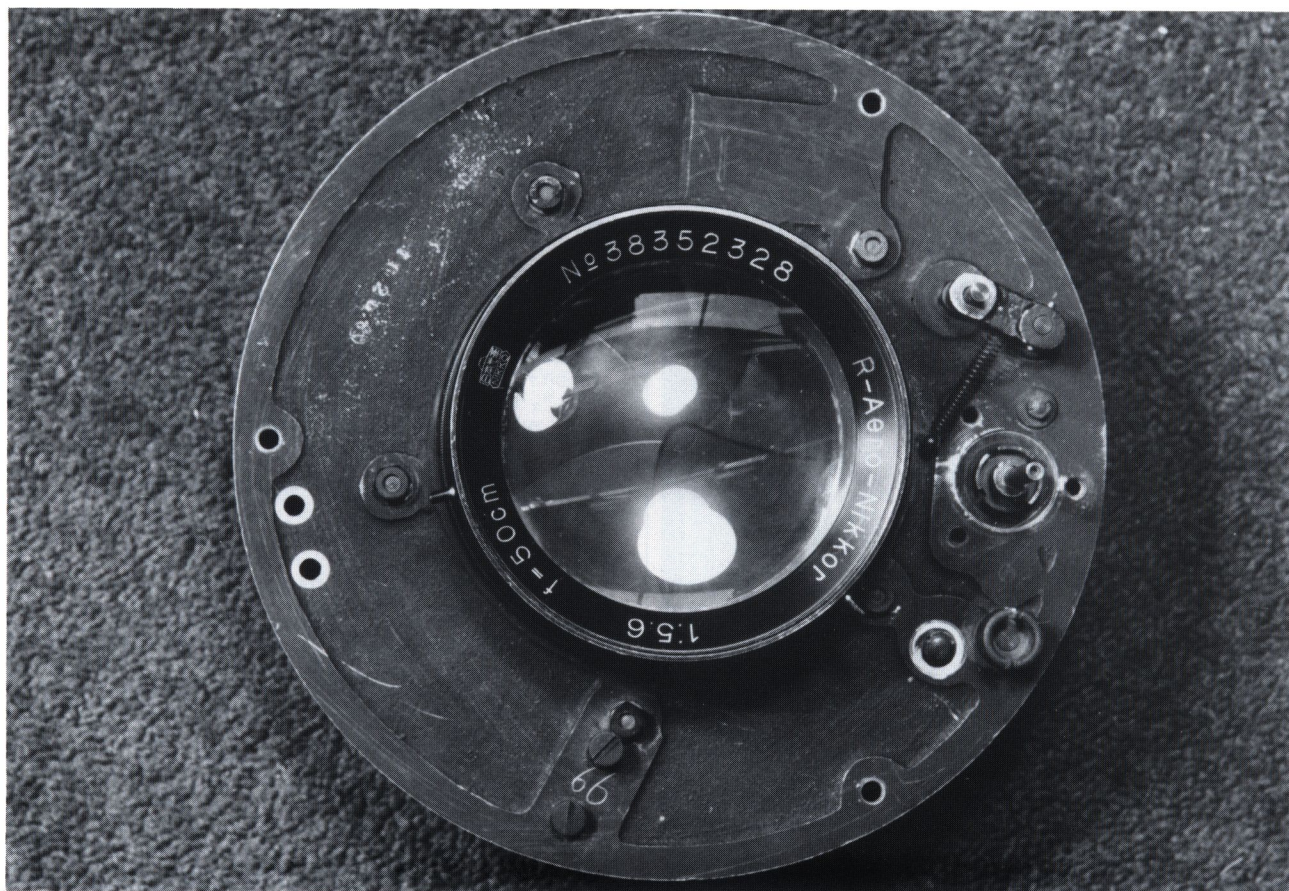
If any of the members has seen or heard of similar lenses, or can shed some further light on its probable application, in addition to unravelling the mystery surrounding the seemingly large serial number, please contact the author. It is fascinating items such as these that make collecting so intriguing, and casts you into the role of a historical sleuth.



These two views provide a very graphic size comparison between this unusual aerial lens and some items we are all a little more familiar with. The top photo (Fig. 1) uses a 50mm/f2.0 Nikkor lens to accentuate the massiveness of this assembly. Note the push on front cap in this photo. At its center is a very tiny rendition of the Nippon Kogaku triangular logo with only Japanese ideograms used. This more or less dates this lens to at least war time if not pre-war vintage.

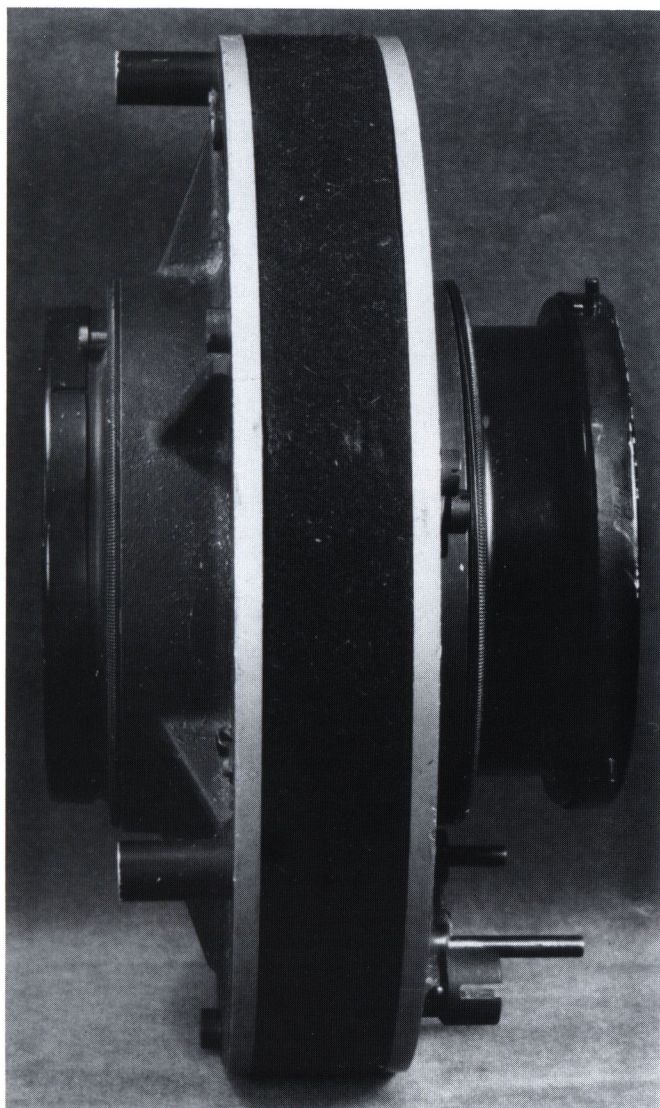
In Fig. 2 a Nikon S2 with f/2.0 Nikkor is used for comparison. Even this entire camera is dwarfed by this lens! The front element is nearly as broad as the S2 body! One can't help but wonder what the camera that this lens was attached to must have looked like.

Photos by Mike Symons.



An interesting aspect of this lens is the presence of the Nippon Kogaku triangular logo engraved on the lens identification ring. This was possible because of the massive size of this lens, but it is something I have not seen before. Note that the logo has both the word "NIKKO" and the Japanese characters. This is quite common on items made during and just before the war. I have seen similar logos on binoculars, gun sights and periscopes, all dating from the war years. Another unusual feature of this lens is its serial number. Nippon Kogaku would generally follow some sort of pattern when assigning serial numbers, especially in the early years and up to about 1955. They would either use a date code or one appropriate to the focal length and/or speed of an optic to arrive at a starting serial number. This resulted in "most" items beginning with relatively short numbers ranging from as few as 3 digits, but more commonly, 4 or 5 digits. Where they ever got this number is beyond our knowledge at this time. It obviously cannot be construed as a measure of quantity produced. Nor does it seem related to focal length or speed in any way. Lastly, a date code does not seem to be evident either. Taking into account the types of numbers seen on many Nippon Kogaku products from the early years, this is a very unusual serial number!

Photos by Mike Symons.



In Fig. 5 we have a side view with the front of the lens facing right. Note the mounting posts on the rear of the housing and the push on caps for both the front and rear, which are nearly five inches apart! Also the thickness of the shutter housing itself is evident in this photo.

In the bottom photo (Fig. 6) we have a close-up of the area where most of the markings can be found. Starting at the upper left are the letters "TK" within a circle and next to it the numbers "04". A little further along are the very clear numbers "1628". Between these numbers and the "04" can barely be seen a small five pointed star stamped in the metal. To the right of "1628" is another circle with a Japanese character within it. (Can any of our Japanese members determine what it means?) At the very bottom right hand corner can be seen the numbers "66", which are repeated on the rear of the housing as well. Could this be housing #4, or 66 or 1628? That is anyone's guess!

Photos by Mike Symons.



THE "ATOMIC" NIKKOR!!

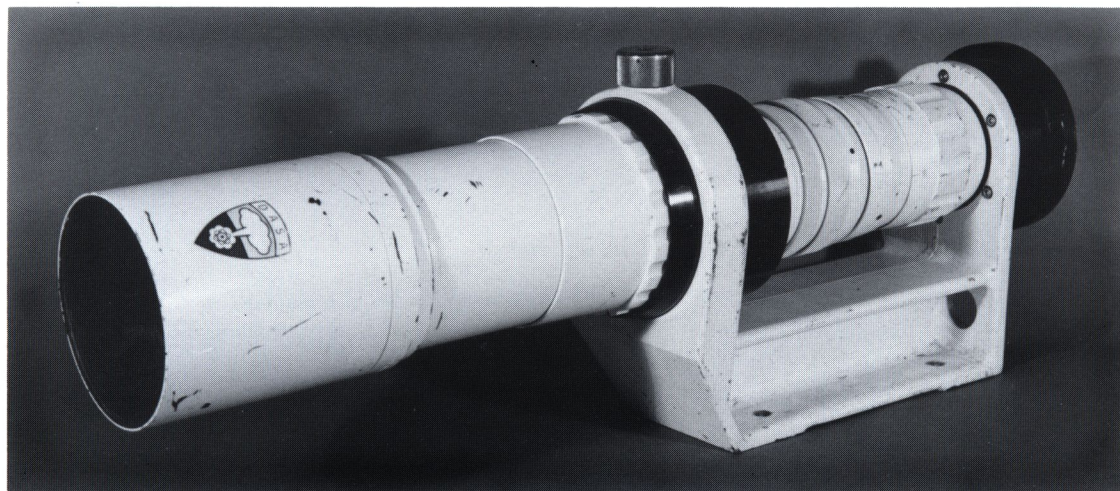
by Fred Krughoff

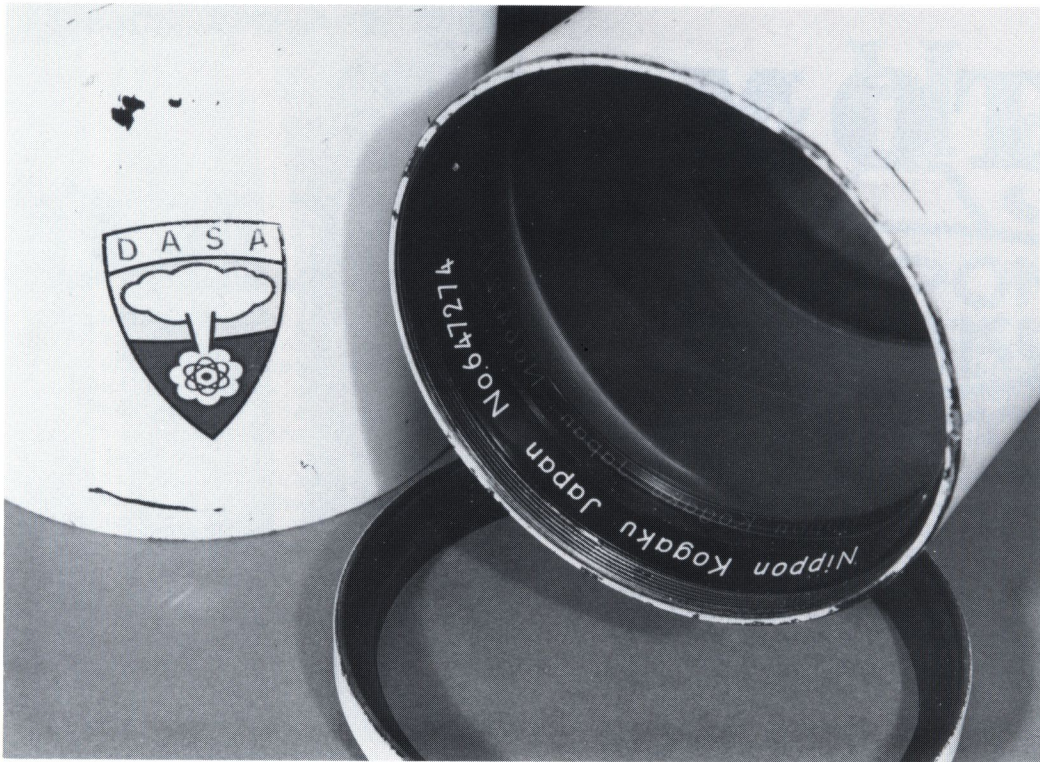
It is ironic that after suffering the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a Japanese company would provide telephoto lenses for the United States "Defense Atomic Support Agency"! Still in existence but now simply called the "Defense Nuclear Agency" (since 1971), the DASA's activities were research and testing of the effects of nuclear weapons. They conducted all of the above-ground and under-ground testing, and were involved in developing systems which would harden materials, structures and soldiers against blasts, thermal radiation and nuclear radiation. The DASA was the primary agency for all nuclear weapons testing and also managed all stockpiles of nuclear weapons. While the present DNA has no active test sites, it still maintains the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific for possible future tests.

The DASA/Nikkor lens, #647274, started out as a standard 500mm black lens. It has, however, been modified especially for its use in recording nuclear blasts. The most obvious modification is the addition of a massive mount which replaces the tripod mount of the standard 500mm lens. Also the camera mount has been changed. In talking to the public affairs office of the DNA, I found out that it was most likely used with a camera such as the Mitchell High Speed HS-16-E4 (600 F.P.S) model. This camera weighs in excess of 50 pounds, so this explains why the tripod mount was replaced. However, it was not just a simple replacement but caused a major change in the focusing action of the lens. As supplied by Nikon, the front of this lens remains stationary while the camera body moves with the rear of the lens. With the DASA/Nikkor the camera and rear of the lens are held stationary, while the entire front of the barrel slides through the cradle, which is supplied with a large locking screw.

The modification was done here in the US, as all of the screws are in "US" threads and most of the assembly uses allen heads, something Nikon never used! The work is of the highest quality. The cradle is an aluminum sand-casting, and the slide tube is machined to very close tolerances. The entire lens is painted white with all the lettering carefully filled in with black. The front glass element shows some of the effects of rough use but a 500mm lens on a 16MM camera would allow the placement of the entire assembly far from the blast site (it would have an effective focal length in excess of 2000mm!).

Considering the Japanese involvement with atomic weapons, this lens is perhaps one of the most important historical collectibles to ever surface, and I am sure one of the most expensive modifications ever done on any RF Nikkor!



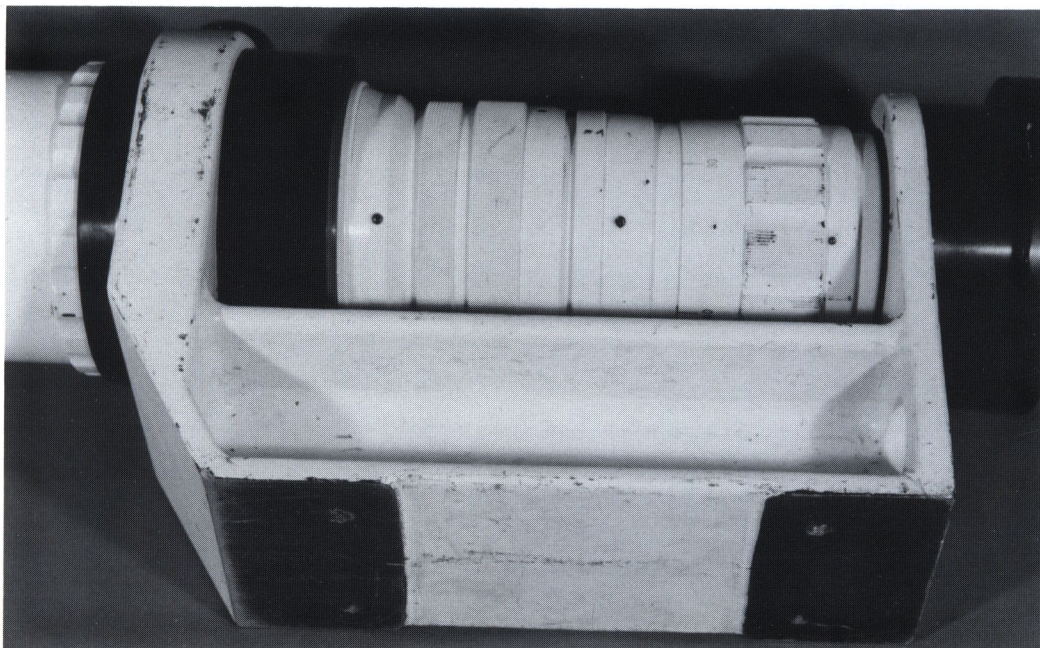


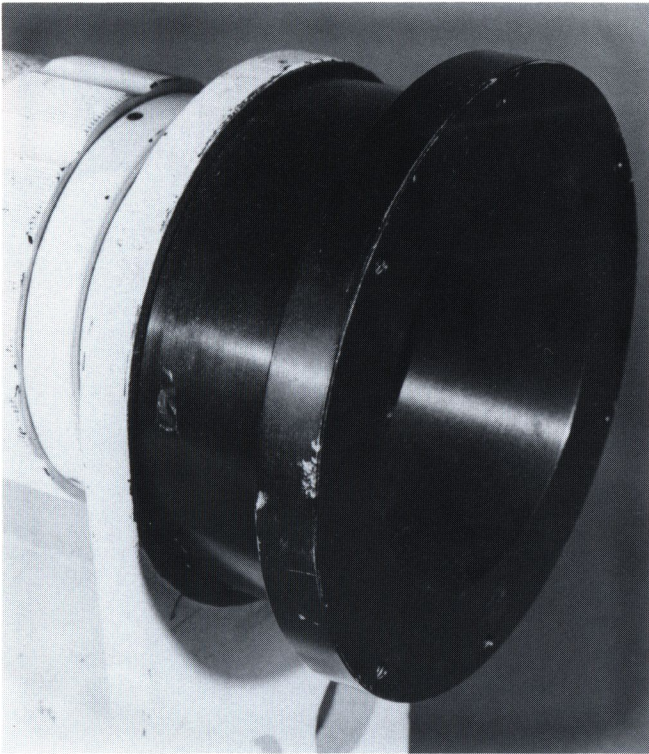
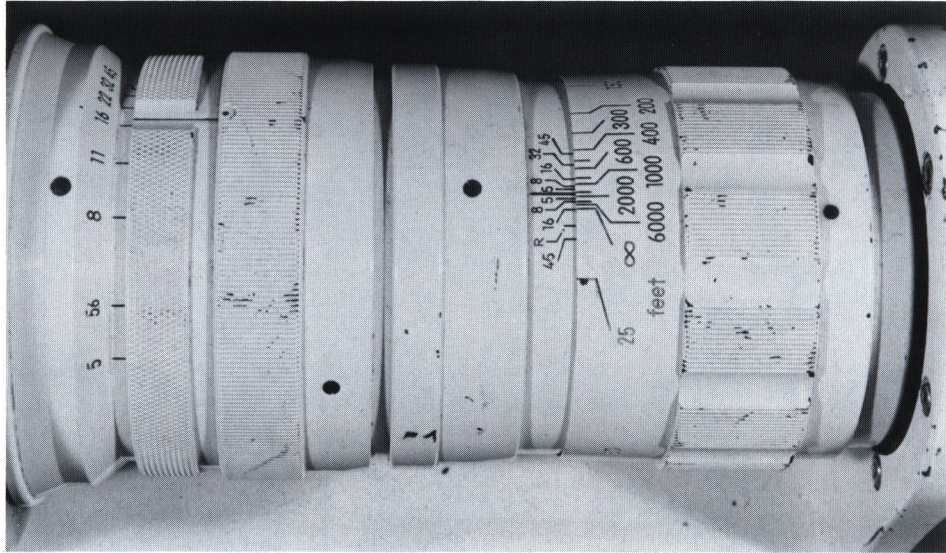
On the previous page the upper photo is a close-up of the "DASA" symbol found on the lens shade. Note the universally used "atom" symbol below a stylized representation of a nuclear mushroom cloud! The lower photo is an overall view of this highly modified 500mm/f5.0 Nikkor. Besides the obvious white paint (very important since nuclear testing was done in extremely hot desert locations which could effect the focus of the regular all black Nikkor!), note the massive cradle mentioned in the text.

Fred Krughoff.

The top photo illustrates the lens shade with the "DASA" symbol and the identification ring. The serial number, 647274, is a rather late number, but at this time there is no way to determine when this lens was actually purchased by DASA nor used for its intended purpose, although most of our above-ground testing was done in the fifties and early sixties. There is also evidence that DASA may have owned as many as five of these specially modified Nikkors!

Fred Krughoff.

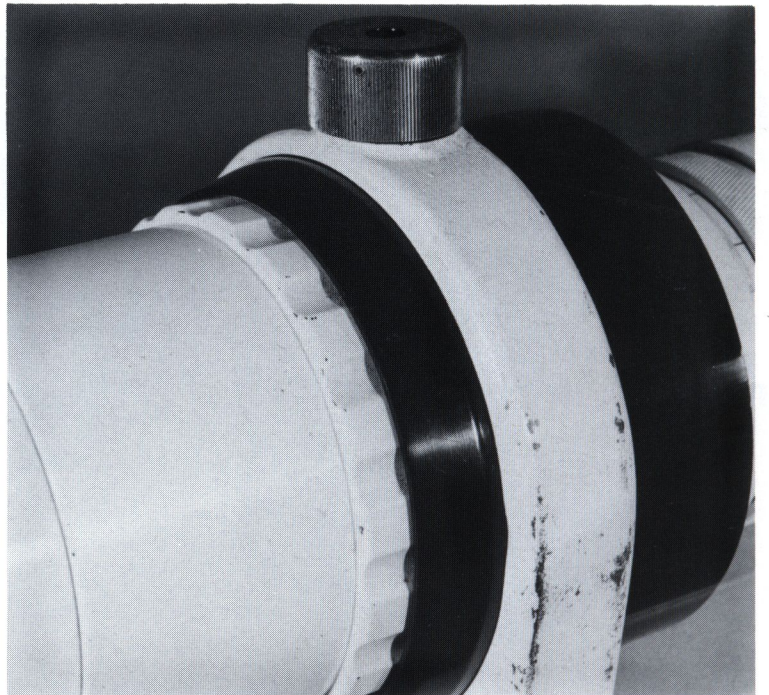




Top photo...After painting the lens white DASA filled in all the scales and numbers in black. Left...The special mount attached to this lens appears to be for a Mitchell High Speed 16MM camera. Note how massive this mount is. This was necessary, since the Mitchell weighed nearly fifty pounds!

Bottom...The special finely machined sleeve through which the front part of this lens would move as it was focused. This is just the opposite from the regular 500mm Nikkor. Also note the locking clamp, which mimics that found on the regular production lenses.

Fred Krughoff.



16

THE

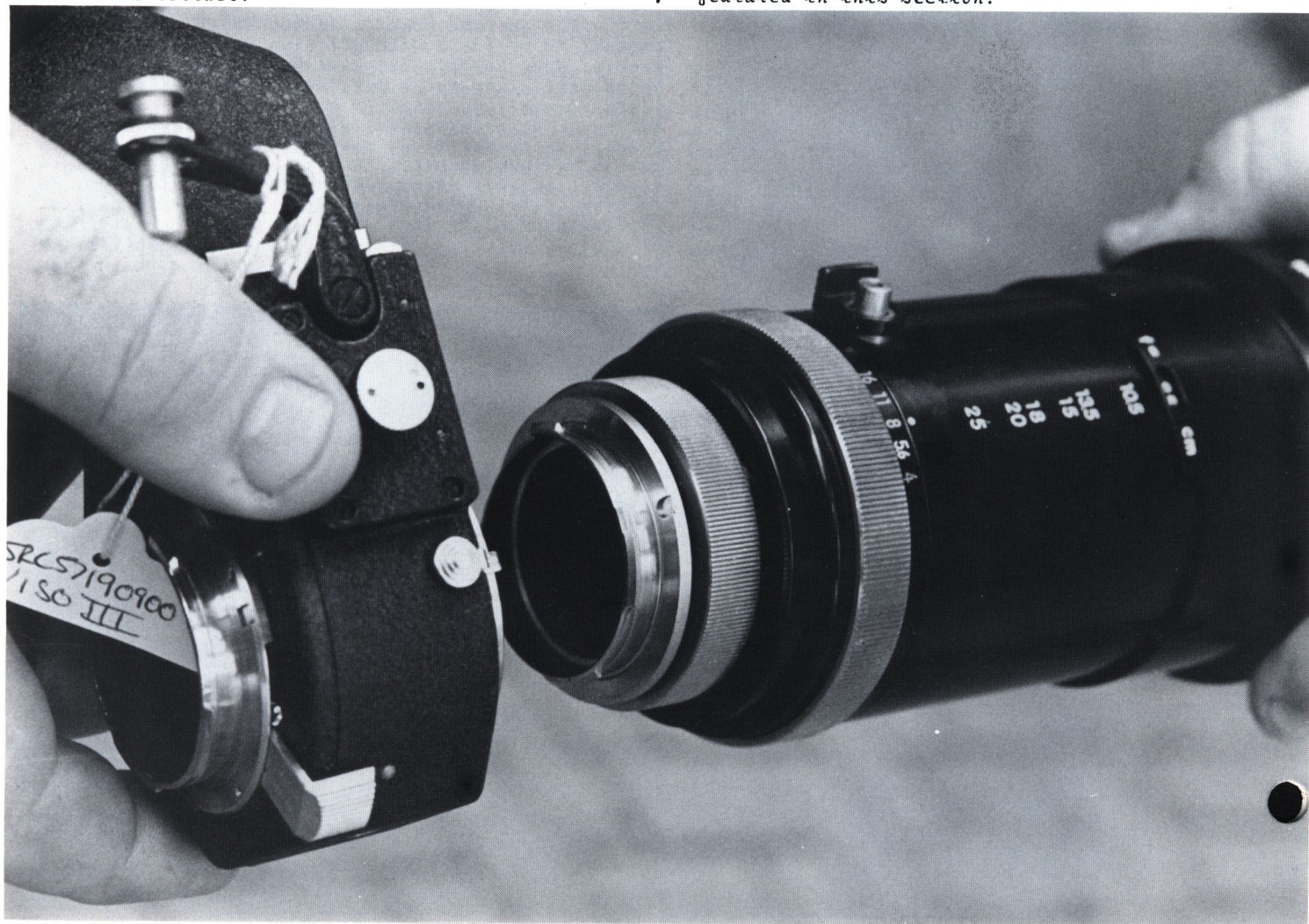
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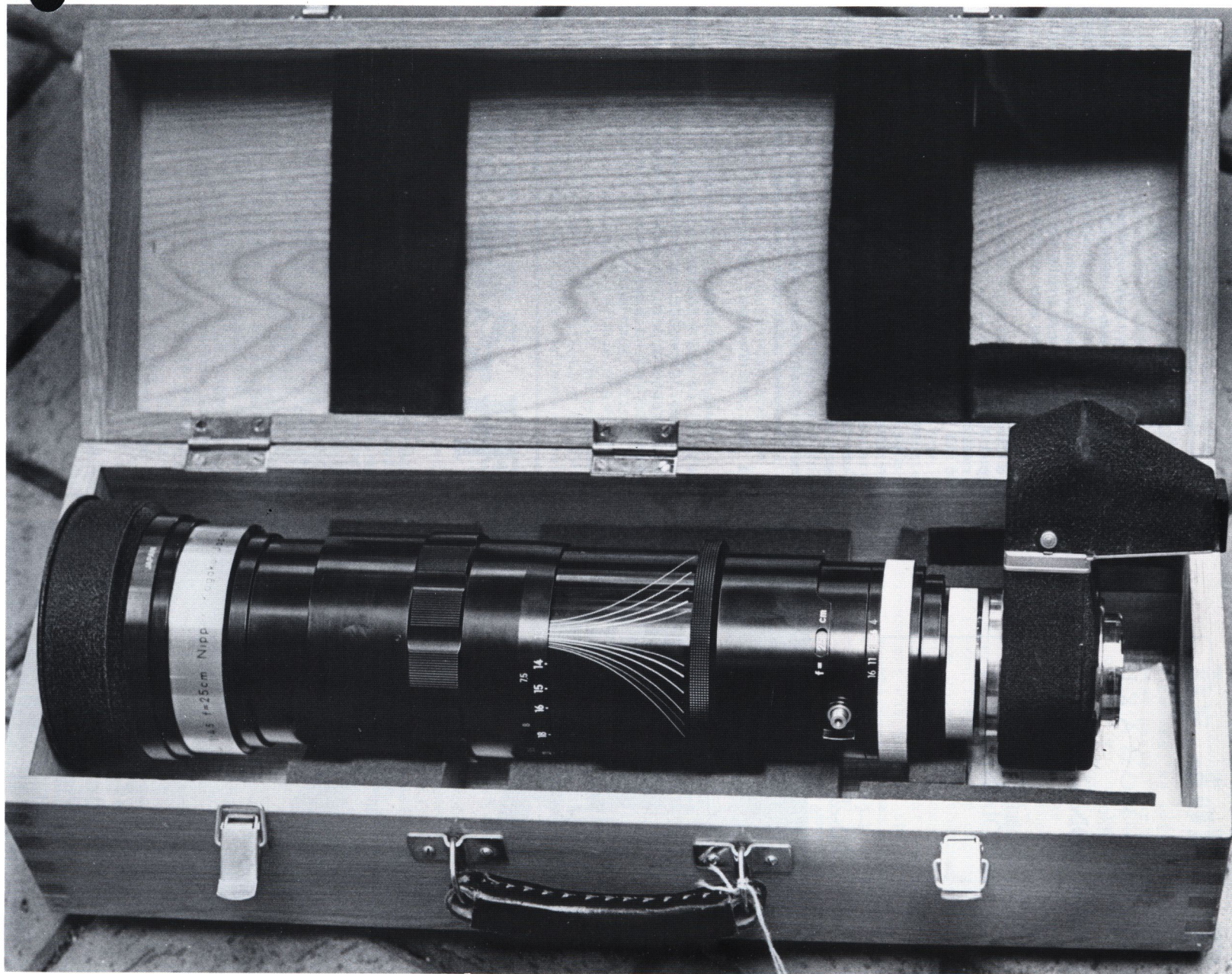
--SPOT!!

AN 85-250 NIKKOR-LEICA ZOOM!?

On this and the following page is a very unusual Nikkor that was made during the reflex era. It is an early version of the famous 85-250/f4-4.5 Zoom Nikkor, which was the first zoom lens made by Nikon and also the first successful zoom for 35mm photography made by anyone. What is unusual about this particular example is its mount. This lens, serial #358009, is in a direct Leica Visoflex mount and not a Nikon bayonet! It has been rumored that a few such lenses were made and this is the first that has been reported to me. Member Peter Lownds took these shots in Europe where this lens resides.

From the aperture ring (larger chrome ring at rear) forward it is nearly identical to the "F" version, except for the presence of a small button or cable release socket just forward of the aperture scale. This was used to operate a semi-automatic diaphragm mechanism, since the auto system found on the Nikon version is no longer present! Even the collar that bore the meter fork is gone! From the chrome aperture collar back is an entirely new mount very different from that on the reflex version. As a matter of fact these two chrome rings are very similar to those found on the manual 300mm/f2.8 lens with interchangeable mounts previously featured in this section!





This example came in a custom wood case designed to hold not only the lens but the attached Visoflex housing. Note again that just forward of the larger rear chrome ring is what appears to be a cable release socket/button combination that would be used to stop down the diaphragm of his lens. Just below the button is a small guard formed by an outcrop of metal to help prevent an accidental release.

THE HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE CAMERA MONOGRAPH COLLECTION

NIPPON KOGAKU
AND
THE NIKON CAMERA

— ROBERT —
ROTOLONI

HCP
HISTORICAL CAMERA PUBLICATIONS



“NHS” PRODUCTS

I am happy to announce that the official NHS jewelry announced in NHS-28 is a real hit! I have sold quite a few sets and my supply is shrinking. However, by the time you read this there should still be some remaining inventory. If you wish to order the prices are as follows...

Tie Clasp & Cuff Link Set.....\$15 ppd in US.
Lapel Pin.....\$5 ppd in US.
Airmail shipment to Europe and the Pacific please add \$3 per order.

In addition there is still remaining copies of the Nikon SP repair manual and my Monograph on the updated history of Nippon Kogaku available...

Nikon SP repair manual...\$10 US...\$12 overseas.
Nikon Monograph (signed)...\$10 US...\$12 overseas.

Some NHS T-shirts remain but only in medium size. If interested that are available for..

\$11 US...\$13 Europe...\$15 Japan.

I wish to thank all who have supported this project, as all profits are used to supplement the costs of producing the Journal and our Conventions. Hopefully more items will be made available in the near future.

PLEASE NOTE

Japanese member Tsuyoshi Konno has a special offer for the members of the "NHS". It concerns the official Nikon calendar which I can attest is a beautifully printed item that is not easily obtained in the U.S. and Europe. Please note!

Available...THE 1991 NIKON CALENDAR!...The 1991 original Japanese Nikon calendar with twelve photos selected from the Nikon International Photo Contest is now available. I can supply these to NHS members only at one per member. The latest order date is late December 1990. The price for members, including packing and airmail postage is as follows.....

Europe.....\$22.00 US
US & Canada...\$20.00 US
Asia.....\$19.00 US

By seamount it is \$18.00 US anywhere in the world!

Please make your payment in either cash (sent by registered mail!), or postal money orders. Please do not send bank transfers or personal checks. Address all orders to.....
Mr. Tsuyoshi Konno, 5-17-10-203 Funabashi, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 156, JAPAN.

IN THE SHADOW OF FUJI...

Tales of Nippon Kogaku!

by **John Baird**

Fujii Lens Seizo Sho, established in 1908 by Ryuzo Fujii, was one of Japan's oldest nonophthalmic optical companies, as well as a predecessor of Nippon Kogaku, being one of the companies used to form N-K in 1917. Ryuzo Fujii was an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy and held a degree in mechanical engineering. During his military service Fujii studied optical design and production methods in Germany for two or three years and returned to Japan in 1901. Seven years later, in 1908, he resigned from the Navy to start his own company to investigate the production of optical instruments.

During the first year it performed optical research. As it happened, Fujii's brother, Kohzo, who had earned a degree in chemistry, became interested and soon left his job to join the new Fujii Lens Seizo Sho company. They had a new plant constructed in the spring of 1909 located on a lot nearly 13,000 square feet in Tokyo's Toshima-ku section. It was a modern two-story building with a total work area of 1279 square feet. To equip their new plant they imported lens grinding and polishing equipment from Europe, and optical measuring instruments made by Carl Zeiss. The first floor featured the metal fabricating & rough lens grinding shop. The final assembly and repair shop, with two lens polishing and one lens element rounding and centering machine, was located on the second floor.

During the first two years Fujii Lens specialized in fixing imported optical instruments for the Japanese Army. In addition to Ryuzo's training in Germany, the company gained much knowledge about construction methods and design from repairing foreign-made optical instruments. It is important to understand that at this time Fujii Lens did not have the equipment or skills necessary for the production of optical glass. Their emphasis was on grinding and polish-

ing lens elements, as well as the fabrication of related metal parts. For projects requiring optical glass, Fujii Lens used glass imported from Germany or made by the Japanese company Kato Kogaku located in Tokyo. In 1910 Fujii Lens designed and made prism binoculars which were placed on the market the following year. Produced in a test run, these binoculars had an 8x20 field and were called "Victor". It is assumed that they were sold to the Japanese military.

There are indications that in the same year Fujii experimented with photographic lenses. As it is now understood, the company never actually manufactured any of these lenses. The probable reason for this was that the demand for domestic binoculars was greater than the need for photographic optics. In Japan at the time photography was not widespread, and besides, any Japanese made lens would have to compete with high quality lenses imported from Germany.

With the successful test run of Victor binoculars, the Fujii brothers decided in 1912 to venture into the mass production of optical instruments. Their production of binoculars was to be increased, and they planned also to begin melting optical glass. The new glass shop was a direct result of the experience and knowledge gained by the company. To house these activities, a much larger second building was constructed.

In 1913, with its increased manufacturing capacity, Fujii Lens brought out a variety of prism and Galileo-type binoculars. These binoculars were called (interestingly enough!), "Nihongo", and had 6x24 and 8x24 fields for the prism models. Later in the same year the company introduced a refractive-type telescope.

LETTERS..LETTERS..LETTERS

From Allan Glenwright...

This is the first opportunity I have had to write and say 'thank you' for your help and hospitality during the Convention in Chicago. Despite my unfortunate loss of voice I enjoyed the occasion, not the least the chance to meet some of the people whose names appear often in the Journal. It certainly proved to be a worthwhile trip as far as I am concerned and I hope than when NHS-Con3 comes around I will be able to again attend. If it is of any help to you in planning a location I speak only for myself when I say that Chicago again would be fine by me... it is a good excuse to visit the US!

From Alan Blake...

I am delighted with the content & quality of the Journal and my only regret is not having known about the Society sooner. The detailed articles and photos are the next best thing to owning those elusive RF gems, which due to escalating prices and even greater rarity on this side of the pond, I cannot hope to buy. I do not know what print run was made of the earlier issues but eventually there will be more members who do not have access to them than do, and this process will gradually progress as time passes. I think it would be a tragedy if the information contained therein became rarer than the Nikon items themselves! Perhaps there could be reprints or omnibus editions of the main articles when there are enough new members to buy them?

One item in my modest collection that has always puzzled me is an example of the exposure meter that has a 7 digit serial number like that illustrated on page 162 of your book. Unlike the 6 digit examples I have, the retaining "pip" for the flip-up light cover is part of a separate insert instead of being integral to the casting. Was this a standard feature of 7 digit meters? It would make some sense if the insert were made of a harder metal as I think a slight weakness of the design was that the "pip" became worn with time preventing the cover from remaining in the closed position.

To add my pennyworth to the debate on the contents of the Journal, I suggest that as a guide Nikon items become legitimate subjects for the Journal when they are 25 or more years old, or sufficiently out of the ordinary. The Nikon FEA certainly qualifies for the latter category!

From Jim Berglund...

I received NHS-28 this afternoon and as usual all else was set aside while I enjoyed it from cover to cover. I would like to add my thanks and congratulations to you for a great NHS-Con2! It was nice to see and talk with people met for the first time at NHS-Con1. I was also glad to have the opportunity to meet with Tony Hurst. The man is a lighting artist, and I have to admit that I kept an eye on him to study his technique while shooting the Convention. Looking forward to NHS-Con3!!

CLASSIFIED

TRADE LIST...I have available many Nikon range-finder items for trading purposes. This listing includes cameras, lenses and accessories. I am interested in many different items. If you are interested in trading please call or write!!
 Fred Krughoff, PO Box 497, Peck Slip Station, New York, NY 10038. Tel. (212) 349-5432.

WANTED...Nikon RF; F2 series (F2A, F2AS, F2T, F2 High Speed, F2AS Data, special editions and dummy models are all wanted. Also want Nikon F and F2 sales manuals, brochures and books. Will pay cash for all of the above.
 Contact; Grays of Westminster, 40 Churton Street, London SW1V 2LP England. Tel. (01)828-4925 and 828-3218. FAX. (01)976-5783.

WANTED/TRADE...I've found a Nikon guarantee card for camera #6109697 w/lens #633839, dated August 17, 1953. Anyone out there with this camera and lens who is interested please call or write. For RFs I am looking for 3.5 & 8.5 briteline finders; 2.8 attachment for Varifocal finder; 2.1cm shade; 2.8cm shade. For F reflex I need 5cm/f2 #52xxxx lens; 2.1cm shade & 2.8cm shade. Steven Ratner, 114 Framingham Rd., Southborough, MA 01772. Tel. (508) 485-2002.

FOR SALE/TRADE...Nikon optical finders-3.5, 8.5, 10.5 in cases; boxed Type 1 Varifocal finder (for Leica); 13.5cm/f4.0 Nikkor Bellows lens #578992, Mint; Wright manual on RFs, dust cover, ext to mint-; assorted front/rear caps; a few shades, plus some other small items too numerous to mention. WANTED...Black Type 7 Variframe finder/cs; Type 1 Varifocal finder(MIOJ); Copy outfits types S/SA/P; Microflex outfit Type 1 or 2; Early "F" bodies; Original RF literature, sales brochures. Mike H. Symons, 3844 Merriman Dr., Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8P 2S9. Tel. (604) 477-1867.

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

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL!

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

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"NEXT ISSUE"

The deadline for the next issue of the NIKON JOURNAL (NHS-30) will be December 1, 1990. Because of the busy holiday season I need to get started on NHS-30 as early as possible, so please get all articles, letters and ads to me by the above date. Thank you!

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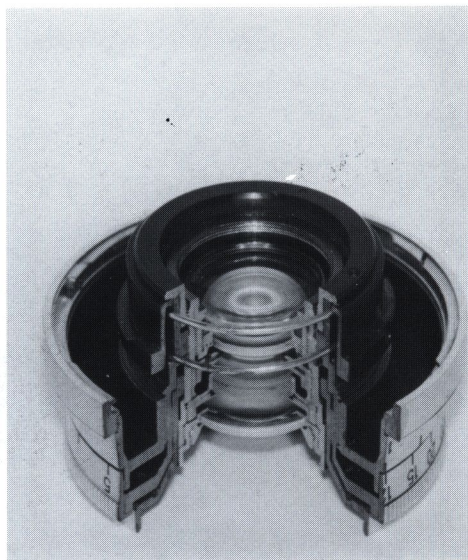
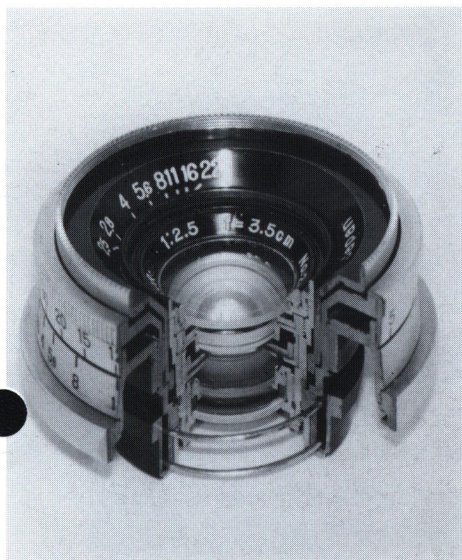
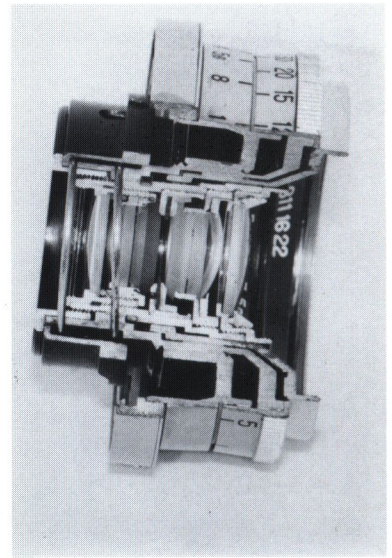
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odds 'n ends

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!

A CUT-A-WAY NIKKOR LENS!!

Most of us have seen various advertisements in which the manufacturer will show display or "cut-a-way" models. These are not as easy to make as one might assume. A great deal of time and effort is required to produce a truly first class cut-a-way. In the case of the item pictured here, a 35mm/f2.5 Nikkor, Nikon went to rather extreme measures with this one. Not only is it a difficult "quarter-cut" (much harder than just simply slicing an item in half!), but the elements have been left whole! Naturally the lens would be disassembled first, precision cut, then reassembled! In this case it is so well done that the all the cuts appear to have been done in one movement! In addition, the spring that controls the focusing cam was left intact (note what appears to be two circular wires at the rear), which allows this lens to be actually mounted on a camera! It locks on like any other lens and even takes a rear cap! It is not known for sure if this item was ever used in an actual Nikon ad (the serial number is mostly gone), but it was obtained from a former Ehrenreich salesman who was with the company from the very beginning. Now if I could just find the ad with this lens.....! (R.Rotoloni)





CREATED FOR THE "NHS" by TONY HURST