MINOX MEMO

The Journal Of The Minox Historical Society

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Photo by Peter D. Zimmerman -- Bonn, Germany, circa 1970, Agfa CT-17 Minox film.

President's Message

Peter D. Zimmerman

Dear fellow Minox Historians!

2002 was an extraordinary year for the Minox Historical Society which saw it grow from a few enthusiasts intent on preserving as much Minox history as possible to an organization recognized world-wide, most especially by MINOX GmbH which has been our strongest supporter. We've turned the corner from becoming a "virtual community" to become a real organization. This has meant some serious and painful changes that none of us wanted to make, but which became unavoidable. It has also resulted in some real benefits to the membership.

The biggest benefit, of course, was the MINOX company's agreement to produce a special edition of the Minox EC camera just for our members, and to assemble a package containing not only the camera but an attractive wooden display case, an extremely useful belt case, the special videotape of Walter Zapp's life, and a Minox display mat. Then, to make the package nicer, they brought it in at a price most of us can afford. As I write this more than half of the special edition has been sold. If you want one of these sets, or more than one, it is really time to speak up. This is the first special edition camera MINOX has ever made honoring a camera club – and most experienced Minoxers believe that the EC is one of the most elegant designs the factory ever came up with.

The next benefit, to be distributed shortly, will be a "welcome kit" courtesy of our two major corporate sponsors, Minox Processing Labs and MINOX GmbH. The kit includes some Member only specials from M.P.L., a souvenir folder of the Walter Zapp/Minox commemorative stamp issued by Latvia (these have been going for as much as $20 on eBay), and a copy of the book Classic Camera Collection by Günther Kadlubek (published by Rudolf Hillebrand Verlag) which is a brief history of Minox and Leica and an extensive study of the Minox "classic" series of reproductions of historic cameras with lots of good photographs. Normally it sells for over $30. All told the welcome kit for 2003 is worth well in excess of the MHS dues and will be available at no charge to the first 100 members who pay dues for 2003, including those who have already paid. Can't promise to equal this next year, but we already have something up our collective sleeves.

I mentioned the word "dues" in the last paragraph. The decision to charge dues to belong to MHS and receive the quarterly Memo, the Minox Flash , and to participate in the discussion list (as well as to be able to buy the special edition EC) was very hard. The Executive Committee debated it for several months. But the fact is we've become a "real" organization, with members on every continent, with some real expenses and the ambition to do a lot more. We have predictable expenses such as web hosting which the officers have been funding out of their own pockets. We also had an unpleasant surprise: a demand for our tax identification number from CafePress because we had sold so much merchandise (thank you!), it appeared likely we would have to pay federal taxes.

Moving to a dues structure was a shock to some of the charter members, and they let us know it. The executive committee refused to leave them in the lurch, so we are making the following arrangements: anybody who signed up before December 31, 2002 will continue to get first access to the Memo on-line for the first two issues of 2003; thereafter we will be password protecting current issues and only posting short excerpts of articles on the public space of the website. The charter members will also receive the Minox Flash through the end of 2003 and will also have discussion list privileges until the end of the year. On January 1, 2004 we will have to transition completely to a self-supporting organization.

What else would we like to do? How about a special tour of the Minox and Leica plants in Wetzlar and Solms just for MHS members? This year, 2003, is not a Photokina year, so we hope to arrange a real meeting in Wetzlar in the fall so you can meet the folks who make (and made) the cameras. We'll schedule this one, if everything goes through ok, after airline fares drop for the winter season. I can tell you now that Thorsten Kortemeier of Minox and Hanns-Peter Cohn of Leica are delighted to host us, will show us the Minox and Leica factories, and even lay on a special cruise on the Rhein River.

In this Minox Memo

We would also like to run a real get-acquainted meeting on the East Coast at Minox Processing Labs and another farther west, perhaps in Utah or Nevada. Not all of this will happen in 2003, but we're planning ahead.

We've attacked the tax problem by incorporating as a 501(c)3 charitable corporation in Utah where V-P John Watson lives. That makes us exempt from taxes. We've done away with the position of Treasurer and turned the management of the bank account over to an accounting firm in Salt Lake City which has offered to do the job pro bono. They'll keep the records, and provide accounting info that the IRS may demand. Expenditures will still require the approval of the president, vice-president or secretary (still Scott Young).

John Watson continues as V-P and has the Memo as his primary responsibility. Board member Larry Feldman has taken over the task of technology manager and webmaster.

As I said, 2002 was a big year for MHS. This year is likely to bring change, exciting articles in the Memo, perhaps a special trip, and a lot of the usual tips, helps, and advice given on the discussion list. Your executive committee and officers are looking forward to 2003, and hope you are too!

Best,

MHS

Growing to Love a Small Camera

Mike Levy

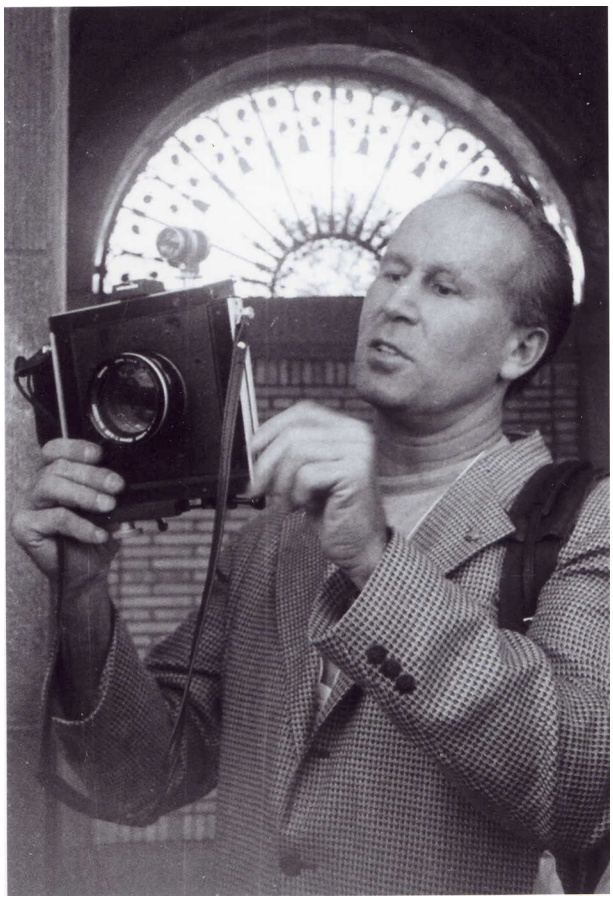
I am captivated by the Minox, but take very few really good Minox images. In fact, I'd say 2/3 of what I've shot with these tiny cameras, so far, is really bad and the rest barely acceptable. I do much better with rangefinder, single lens reflex or twin lens reflexes.

And of course the new digital cameras make it easy to erase mistakes before anyone else has to glimpse them.

Still, the demands of a tiny format supported by none but the most perverse hobbyists has provided a fascinating camera hobby while it has improved my photography with every other camera type. The Minox forces one to really see through the camera's eye, which is learning to see in an entirely different way.

It is almost a given that, in today's essentially point and shoot world, "classic photography" -- that is, judging each exposure, each point of focus and setting the cameras for each shot -- will train any photographer's "eye". That's why photography schools still start with a manually-adjustable camera.

But an unspoken corollary to that is that different types of cameras seem to make you "see" differently, and also seem to be suited to different types of photography. Yes, you can use every type of camera for every type



of photography, sometimes of necessity because that's all you have in hand.

Each kind of camera tends to be "ideal" for certain types of camera work: The twin lens reflex is ideal for portraiture (it does not "blink" like the SLR) and even landscapes. Add auxiliary close-up lenses and a Rolleiflex becomes quite a good image maker for wildflowers or boletes (mushrooms) -- something the Minox is wonderful at doing -- except I don't have to lie prone but only kneel when I am using my TLR!

Contaxes, Retinas and Leica rangefinders are adept at "candid" photography, especially with wider lenses, and my Nikkormat outfit gets pulled out of I want to take telephoto shots. It is true that SLRs are the most versatile of all camera designs. With all those lenses they can do just about anything.

So what, except for novelty and truly pocketable size does the Minox offer today?

Like any rangefinder camera it is fine for "candid" work, but it suggests a whole new way of seeing and imposes a certain rigorous discipline to your photography. This is probably a very good thing for most of us to experience. Plus, of course, the Minox is a totally fascinating handful of history, mechanical precision and charm.

Three years ago, late in the process of completing a book on usable classic cameras, I found a bargain Minox B on eBay. It seemed a neat idea: Meter built in, tiny size, Minox chronometer-like quality. I bid, it came, and I bought the last roll of Minox film available in Buffalo -- 400 speed Agfacolor. The photo of the leaves and berries is my very first Minox image.

Minox photography has been downhill from there.

The meter was erratic, so I decided to buy a IIIs -- no meter, a size more in keeping with the original Riga, but with a better lens. I bought a C, too, because the idea of auto-exposure appealed when I messed up too many exposures. Plus, it seemed silly to carry a light meter twice the size of the camera!

Even with a meter in hand, I often forgot (still forget!) to set the focus correctly. And despite the much-vaunted depth of field of the 15 mm lens, correct focus does make a difference. Frankly, I feel even the "snapshot setting" between 6 feet and infinity (2 meters and inf.) is not always a smart compromise. The 8x11 negative is a very small amount of film on which to record an image, so correct point focus is extremely critical.

Over the last two years I also have owned a TLX, (a much nicer camera than the C to hold) several more B's and IIIs and a couple of ECs as well.

In some ways the EC is a good "box camera" with auto exposure and a fairly decent lens, but I miss the ability to screw up the focus point on my own. I especially miss the ability for ultra close work, which, of course, the classic Minox was designed to do.

I don't for a minute buy the idea that Walter Zapp "never" envisioned his creation as a "spy" camera, despite his postwar protestations.

It is true that tiny cameras have always been of interest: Some of the earliest daguerrian and calotype cameras were tiny, and by the turn of the 19th/20th century -- are all photographers voyeurs?-- we had such marvels as the "Ticka," the size of a pocket watch, and the Ben Akiba, hidden in the head of a walking stick. Indeed, today's most successful digital cameras are being sold for their tiny size.

The fact is, it is perfectly sensible to carry a Minox in your pocket so to have a camera in your hand whenever you want one. You cannot do that quite as easily with a thread mount Leica of the same vintage, even if the lens is collapsed. And the EC is so light it can be worn around the neck on a whistle lanyard -- and often is.

So what is it about the Minox that can help you become a better photographer?

First, with the manually adjustable models, you DO have to pay attention to both focus and shutter setting (or at least to distance even with the BL, C and TLX). With all Minox you must work within the confines of the frame, which is a pleasing proportion to most people, (I prefer it as a vertical rather than a horizontal).

Finally you MUST work full frame, because cropping that tiny negative is suicidal due to the potential loss of image quality. I have never tried to go beyond 4x6 or 5x7 with Minox negatives, and don't see the small, postcard size prints from Minox Labs any problem, either. They are in keeping with the scale of the camera. But imagine trying to blow up one-third of a Minox negative to, say 8x11 inches! I'm sure it is possible, but doubt I'll ever have the darkroom skills with Tech Pan and secret developers to accomplish that.

In short, you have to work to produce good images, you can't just fire away and expect fine results. That's discipline; a discipline that should carry over to any other camera or format you'd care to name. Including, dare I say it, the new DIGITAL Minoxes!

Michael Levy is a veteran newspaperman who likes to play with classic cameras. He currently owns two IIIs, one EC and just acquired a Riga.

"Minox 8x11s are the best cameras to collect," he says, "because they can be squirreled away so easily. After I hit eight Rolleiflexes, my wife began to notice I had a LOT of old cameras. She never notices the tray of Minox stuff." MHS

A Collectors View

Ed Etzold

Ed Etzold has been a longtime member of the prestigious Leica Historical Society, as well as a former director of the LHS. Last summer he joined the Minox Historical Society, and almost immediately mailed me a packet of information and fascinating photographs which he offered for use in an article for the Minox Memo. Having finally purchased a scanner that can do these photographs justice, I submit them and Ed's comments for your enjoyment. -- D. Scott Young

I have been a collector and user of Minox and Leica cameras and accessories since 1965. I came across the attached article in a Minox Memo, a magazine published for Minox owners by the Minox processing laboratories 1956 to 1972. This article appeared in the 1963 winter issue.

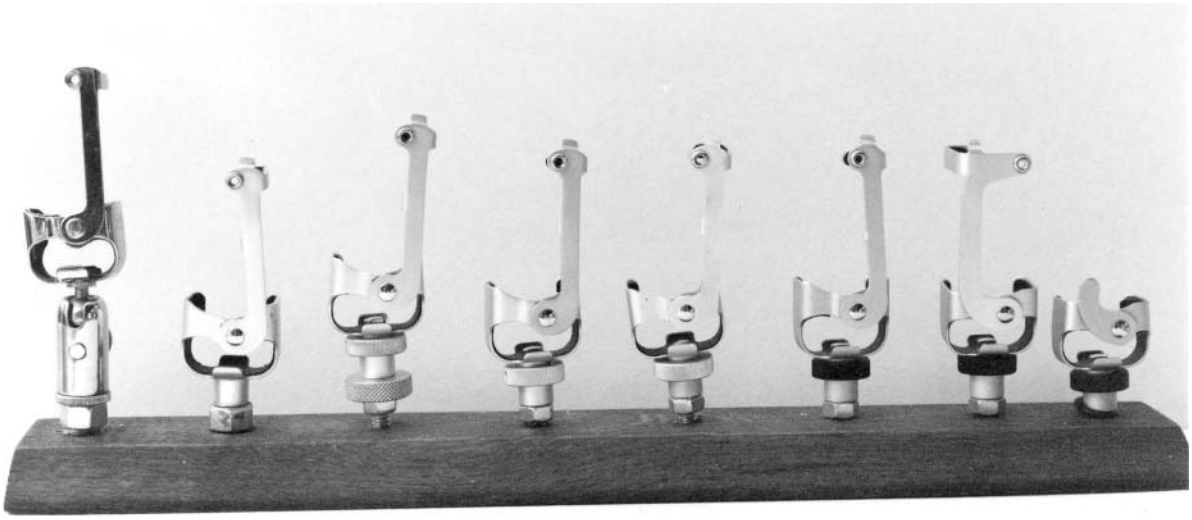


Figure 1

the minox memo WINTER/196

LEICA LEAGUE FORMED

The Barnack Leica League International, a new photography club named for the inventor of the Leica camera, the "Cadillac" of quality in cameras, has been formed.

Mr. Jim Forsyth, club founder, tells us that because a great many Leica photographers use a Minox for their second camera, Minox owners will gladly be accepted as members. We might also mention that the Minox was the only other camera featured in the club newsletter, "Leica Lore," and it will continue to be because Leica owners "leica" the precision engineering of our favorite ultra-miniature camera.

Perhaps the best way to summarize what Mr. Forsyth and "Leica Lore" have told us about the new club is to quote the founder's words, "It is a clear invitation to venturesome photography."

You may obtain additional information by writing to: Barnack Leica League, P. O. Box 275, Jacksonville, Florida.

Regarding Tripod Head Adapters, Ed offers the following comment, photos and detailed chart on the wide range of variants produced over the years:

The progression of manufacture of tripod head adapters is shown in Figure 1. Starting from left to right are the Riga to the most current model.

Figures 2 and 3 show the last one shown on Figure 1. Perhaps someone can identify what use this modified tripod head adapter has, since it appears that it was made by Minox. What was the adapter used for since it has no locking lever?

Figure 2

Figure 3

I was surprised to learn from Ed about the following variations in Minox Pocket Tripods:

When you find an early Minox pocket tripod that does not have provision for a cable release, it is not a manufacturing defect. Evidently, the first run of the tripod did not have a threaded leg to accommodate a cable release. Figure 4 shows the threaded and unthreaded leg.

Figure 4

Figure 5 shows a cable release inserted in a later tripod leg.

Figure 5

Figure 6 shows comparison of early and later tripods, I found this leg at a flea market. The non-threaded leg was given to me as an after thought, since it was in the bottom of a junk box. HAPPY HUNTING!

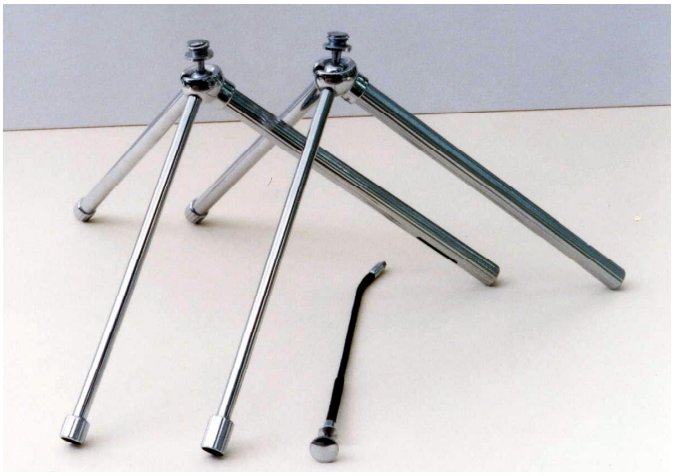


Figure 6

Ed had some fascinating information to reveal about the first commercially produced underwater housing for Minox Cameras:

The Gray Underwater Case was invented and manufactured by Walter Gray of Hollywood, Florida. It was marketed in 1957 for use with the Minox IIIs. The unit was made of Plexiglas, and it was not a commercial success. The unit was withdrawn from the market after several years. Attached brochure describes the unit.

Ed then reveals a little known secret regarding a second underwater housing, and in the process, perhaps unknowingly, provides the first photographic confirmation of a long rumoured display case of multi-coloured EC model cameras!

A second underwater housing made of metal was shown at the 1990 Photokina, and it was marketed by Microtec Industries of California (Editors note: Microtec Industries went out of business in the 90s).

Once you've enjoyed the view of the unique metal underwater housing, look closely at the Model EC cameras in the display case. The various tonal differences in each model strongly indicate that these

MINOX CAMERA
IN AN
UNDERWATER CASING

A thrilling lifetime experience showing as many as 50 exciting pictures taken at one time underwater.

You can take the Camera down into any depth of water a human being will go . . . in short, you can add to your Minox, the smallest and most fabulous underwater camera casing.

The case is made of the finest optical plastic, and all parts are made of non-corroding material. It also has two brackets to which you can attach a cord or a line for carrying purposes.

Experience shows most pictures can be taken with ASA 50 film at 1/100 sec. and ASA 25 film at 1/50 sec. at the setting of infinitive.

The housing is designed in such a manner that a flash gun connection can be built in. Speed and focus control can also be added.

INSTRUCTIONS for securing the camera into the housing:

1. Open the case by loosening both clamps.
2. Attach the camera to the tripod adapter same way as attaching the safety chain.
3. Insert the camera into the housing by setting the lens of the camera towards the RED DOTS on the case.
4. Tighten side clamps to fasten upper part of the camera to case, using light pressure. The end of the wing nut is shaped to be used as a screw-driver.
5. Apply medium pressure when tightening wing nuts.
6. Keep the wing nuts loose when not in use.
7. Clean with soap and water and wipe slowly with chamois or soft cloth.

WALTER GRAY PHOTORAMA

Manufacturer & Distributor
UNDERWATER CASE FOR MINOX

2005 HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD
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MINOX

just what I've been looking for!
please send me:

- ☐ underwater housing for camera ... 60.00 ~~75.00~~
- ☐ underwater housing for light meter ... 17.50
- ☐ black and white film—50 exposures per cartridge (2 cartridges per box) ... 2.50
- ☐ minox III-S, in satin chrome with chain and case ... 139.50
- ☐ or for that supreme gesture—minox III-S, gold plated with chain and alligator case ... 299.00

☐ charge to my account ☐ c.o.d. ☐ check enclosed

name_____

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the SMALLEST
the MOST FABULOUS

FOR
Underwater
Photography

cameras were made in different colours. A white model is clearly visible, as is a traditional black one, but the other shades of grey hint at other colours as well. There have been many rumours of a mysterious Minox display case of different coloured ECs, and this one set up for the 1990 Photokina event may very well have been that case. What a great find!

Ed, many thanks from all of us for sharing these fascinating bits of Minox history!

Tribulations of a new Minox User

Arvid Weflen

"Dad, are those Minox pictures you just printed? They look like real pictures!"

"Gosh, kid, you sure know how to hurt someone," I answered, but quickly added that even I had noticed that my Minox pictures were improving.

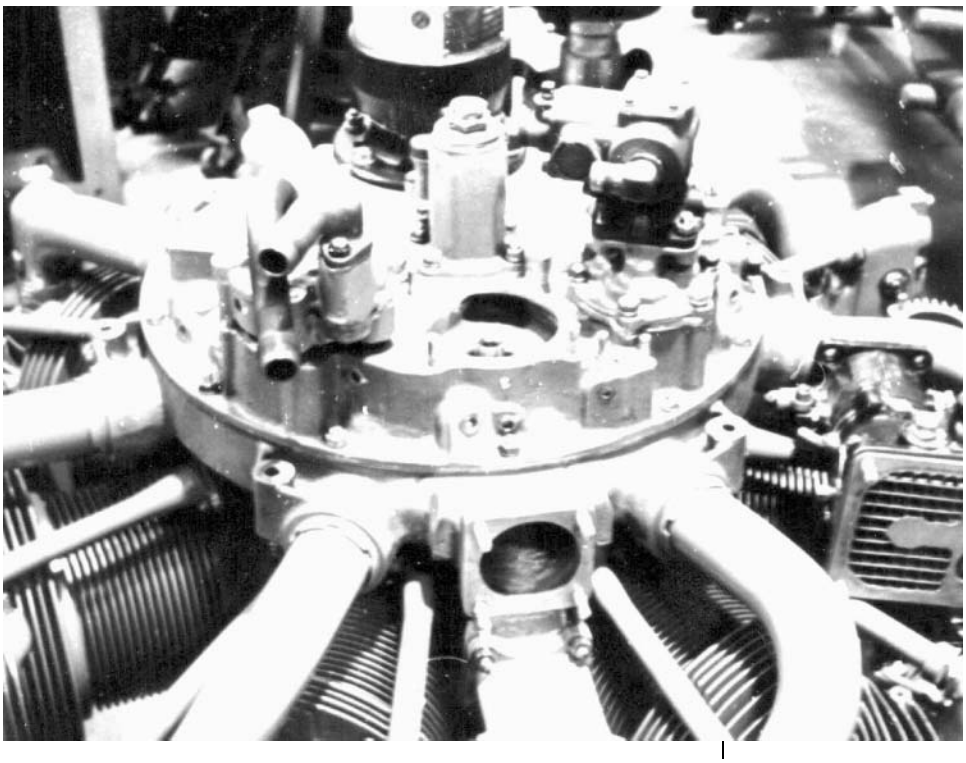
Way back when I was a kid I had wanted a Minox but for one reason or other, had never gotten one. My wife and son bought me one for Christmas two years ago, and I've had a lot of fun since then, to say nothing about how much I've learned about photography. I thought I was pretty good at black and white photography, and that using the small film would be a "piece of cake." As time would tell, I had a lot to learn...

First roll of film - Agfa 400 - what good is a Minox if you can't use it for sneaky indoor pictures without a flash? Oops, forgot about how much more the tiny negative has to be enlarged as compared to a 35 mm negative. Gee, there was a lot of grain on those pictures!

Second roll of film - Agfa 100 - now that should be fine enough grain, shouldn't it? It had enough speed that I could still take a forbidden picture of the theater production (no logical reason, just because photography is not allowed, I suppose) but I still couldn't blow the pictures up to 8 x 10 with any decent quality. Smaller 4 x 5 prints weren't bad, but I could still easily see the grain.

Hmmmm, a comment in one source said that 2 x 3 prints were often common for Minox prints. I see why. So, I made some smaller prints. Yup, they looked okay, but I still like slightly bigger prints. Better do some more experiments.

Third roll of film - Agfa 25 - much better. Now that my eye isn't instantly drawn to the dinner plate sized grain on the pictures, I started noticing the crisp images of dust on the negatives and occasional fine scratches. A guy can get away with somewhat sloppy darkroom technique if you are dealing with large negatives that don't take much enlargement, but those tiny Minox negatives sure take a lot of enlarging to get to the size of print I like. That means that while pretty much unnoticeable dust on a normal sized negative is not always a serious problem, it sure is when dealing with



This radial engine picture was taken in fairly harsh light with Tech pan film, hand held. It looks great at 4x5 and would look good at 8x10 or more, I'm sure, as you can't see the grain at 4x5. My son said this looked good.

Minox photography. Well, that problem wasn't too hard to solve. Just stop being so lazy and keep everything spotlessly clean.

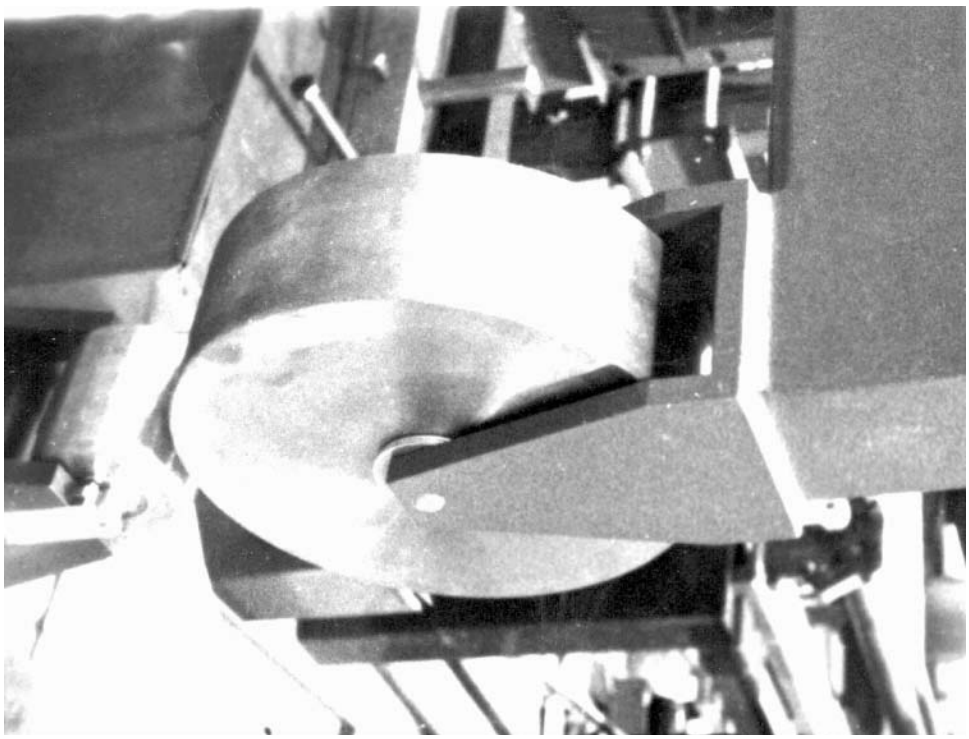
Now that the film I was using was no longer the limiting criteria, I started attacking the enlarger. All I had was a standard 35 mm Omega enlarger. There was nothing wrong with the enlarger, I was just pushing it beyond what was reasonable. Trying to enlarge the Minox negative with that lens was asking too much for maximum quality. I came up with a 35 mm focal length lens. That helped- at least I didn't have to have the enlarger head so far from the easel that I could barely turn the focus knob, although making an 8 x 10 print still required projection onto the floor.

Eventually, I found a 28 mm Rodenstock enlarger lens. The only problem was that even though the lens screwed into the enlarger, the focusing mechanism wouldn't allow the lens to go close enough to the negative to focus properly. The easy solution was to set the lens inside the bellows, on top of the lens board. unorthodox, but it worked.

With this lens, I now was getting closer to optimum performance from my enlarger. The focal length and quality of the lens was much closer to what was needed. Once again it seemed that technique and film were the limiting factors, probably in that order.

More film experiments - this time I thought that I'd do the tests right. I finally got a film slitter so I could load my own films. I loaded up a bunch of cassettes with Tech Pan, T-Max 100 and T-Max 400 films, as well as the usual Agfa factory loads, and proceeded to take a series of pictures with a series of exposures of five different scenes. That way I'd find out what worked for me, what I liked best, the effect of under/over

This winter scene was taken with Agfa 100 - grain visible at 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 - hair and numerous dust spots visible on print (more show on original print than on scanned picture) - even small trees show clearly on this early picture showing promise of good resolution encouraging me to continue with Minox photography.



This photo of an English wheel was taken with Agfa 25 – the grain obviously visible at 4x5, but not objectionable. It was also taken hand held in artificial light. An early picture that I was getting happy with.

exposure, etc.

Gee, was that a great experiment! For the first time I had somewhat controlled conditions that made a realistic comparison between different films possible.

The results were interesting. Without a doubt, for me, the Tech Pan film was the best all around film. Surprisingly, T-Max 100 push processed to ASA 400 was almost as good as Agfa 25. Of course, Agfa 25 had slightly finer grain, but the T-Max 100 was pretty close, certainly close enough that it hardly mattered, especially when you consider the difference between ASA 25 and ASA 400! I had already experimented with a number of different developers, but another controlled series of the same film types with developers might be interesting too.

Oh yes, proper exposure and proper development time is important. Over-exposure is definitely not in your best interest if you are looking for fine grain and good quality. Until you see the results side-by-side, it isn't always so obvious.

My son's comments? Well, we spent part of the summer in Norway this year and took lots of pictures. This fall I printed them up and his comments summarized how they turned out. No, they weren't all good – I made some mistakes. But, I must have been doing something right based on his favorable comments.

What's next? I finally came up with a Minox enlarger. Instantly, I liked it. My old 35 mm enlarger as modified did pretty good, but the Minox is certainly easier to use. I haven't had it long enough to put it to the test to see whether the quality of prints is noticeably better or not though. Digitizing? I'm old enough to be of the old school and like chemical photography. Heck, I don't even have a decent printer for my computer so I couldn't make decent prints from a digital image if I wanted to. At least I have a computer!

Tech Tips

D. Scott Young
Secretary

Editor's Note: Last issue we looked at a selection of film slitters. This time, MHS Secretary Scott Young tackles one of them and survives, barely. Here is his report.

I've reloaded an awful lot of 35mm film, but until now I'd never slit any for use in other cameras. I had recently purchased a pair of John Birkby's "Zipslit" devices, one for Minox and one for 16mm film. My first slitting experience was interesting, to say the least, and I hope that some of what I learned may be useful to other first time users of film slitting devices.

First, the math: it cost me approximately US $1.20 to purchase a plastic Minox film cartridge. Since I anticipate getting about 6 reloads per cartridge before it becomes unusable, this works out to about 20 cents per roll of film for the cartridge itself.

A single roll of 36 exposure color print film in 35mm size cost me about US $3.50, and will yield four rolls of 36 exposure Minox film, once slit, cut and loaded. This works out to about 88 cents per Minox roll for the cost of the film. So far, I'm at a cost of US $1.08 for a 36 exposure cartridge of Minox film.

The Zipslit device cost me US $38.00, including the shipping and handling fees. I'm going to assume, based on the solid construction of this handy little device, that I can run 25 rolls of 35mm film through it before it has to be disposed of and a replacement purchased (the Zipslit is intended to be an inexpensive, disposable film slitter. The blades are neither interchangeable, nor can they be re-sharpened without a special jig and experience, according to inventor/producer John Birkby). Since I'm getting 4 rolls of 36 exposure Minox film out of each 36 exposure roll of 35mm film, I take 4 x 25 = 100, and divide 100 into the $38.00 cost of the slitter. This works out to be 38 cents, which I then add to the $1.08 cost so far for a roll of film. My total cost for a 36 exposure roll of Minox film comes to $1.46 per roll.

Your actual cost may vary, depending upon the brand and type of 35mm film you chose, but I can't realistically see you having to spend more than $2.00 a roll for home slit Minox film even if you're using fairly exotic film stock. The $1.46 I spend in slitting my own is a huge savings over the $8.00 or so I would pay for commercial Minox film.

The joke in photographic circles is that there are two sorts of people who slit film: Those with fingers, and those without. With the exception of a few, very sophisticated, privately built models that use circular rollers, most commercial and homebuilt designs employ cutting blades of some type or other - read "razor blades".

Bearing in mind that your work with these devices will be done in a darkroom, the possibilities for self mutilation abound, so be very careful, use all due precautions, and NEVER allow children near these devices.

The Zipslit is the smallest, most inexpensive, commercially made "pull through" slitter available, which is why I selected it. Pull through slitters may or may not have replaceable blades, but they do have the advantage of taking up very little table space when working with them. Essentially, you feed the film leader through one side, pull the rest of the film through the slitter to produce two long strips of Minox film which you then trim to the correct length and load into your cartridge.

The Zipslit comes in two pieces, a top cap and a bottom base with the blades embedded. You remove the top cap, lay the 35mm film leader into the base and then replace the top cap. Pressing down on the top cap punctures the film leader, setting it up for slitting the remaining length of film. Figure 1 shows the bottom half of the Zipslit with a bit of film leader positioned. Grasping the leader protruding from the other side after the cap is in place, you simply pull it through to slit the rest of the film. This is a very safe, and idiot proof design, one that has greatly impressed me.

Figure 1

However, as an expert in mucking up idiot proof designs, I promptly proceeded to do just that.

I prepared a simple darkroom by stuffing a blanket around the doors of a walk-in closet. Inside I set up a small folding tray and a folding camp chair. Carefully arrayed on the tray were a pair of scissors, a bottle cap lifter, several disassembled Minox and Minolta cartridges, 2 rolls of 35mm film, two Zipslit devices (one for Minox, and a separate one for Minolta 16mm film), and several small, thin lengths of standard Scotch (c) brand clear adhesive tape. Hanging over each ear was a length of string.

I had previously cut three lengths of string, tying knots in the ends of them so that I could use them as measuring devices once the film had been slit, to determine where to cut the film strips for the amount of exposures I wanted to load in each cartridge. The basic lengths of the string were:

- 12.9 inches/32cm - Minox 15 exposure roll
- 23.2 inches/59cm - Minox 36 exposure roll
- 19 inches 47.5cm - Minolta 18/20 exposure roll (depending on camera model used)

I went through the first roll quickly, loading the film into the Zipslit, grasping it firmly, and quickly pulling it through in one long, powerful motion. It seemed as if there was a bit more resistance than I would have thought there should be, but in the dark I could clearly feel the slit film so I assumed everything was well. Was I wrong?

Let's just say John Birkby's very kind gesture in providing a roll of 35mm film with every Zipslit device for you to practice with before actually going into the darkroom has a very real value to it. I would have done well to listen to him.

With scissors, I cut the film from the Zipslit while holding the other end in my hand. By feel, very carefully, I trimmed off the left and right strips which were the perforations of the 35mm film, and let them fall away onto the floor. I was now left with two lengths of horribly curly film.

I slipped the end of one length between my lips to hold onto while I worked on the other. Taking the Minox 15 exposure length of measuring string off my ear, I pinched the end knot against the end of the strip, carefully fed the strip and string through my fingers until I encountered the other end knot, and trimmed there. This requires a bit of dexterity.

The strips of film I trimmed this way were each stuck between my lips to hold them until I'd trimmed all the lengths I needed, discarding onto the floor the odd bit that remained at the end. Then I rolled the film and loaded it into the feed side of the Minox cartridges, placed the cap over it, and left about 1/4" to a 1/2" hanging out to be taped to the take-up spool.

I turned on the lights and was promptly horrified:

Two cartridges clearly showed lengths of film coming out that had the 35mm perforations in them! My first reaction was to wonder how I'd managed to load the side strips from the slit film, but the answer wasn't as easy as that.

After close examination, and careful thought, I realized that what I had done was to pull the film through the slitter so violently and at such an angle that I had skewed the cutting to where a good length of perforations were in the centre strip.

Clearly I had a lot to learn.

To cut a long story short, I had much, much better results when I applied the following tips:

1. In the dark, use the bottle cap lifter to remove the end cap from the 35mm film and gently remove the entire roll from the film cassette. The film will no longer have to be dragged through the felt lips of the cassette, greatly lowering resistance.

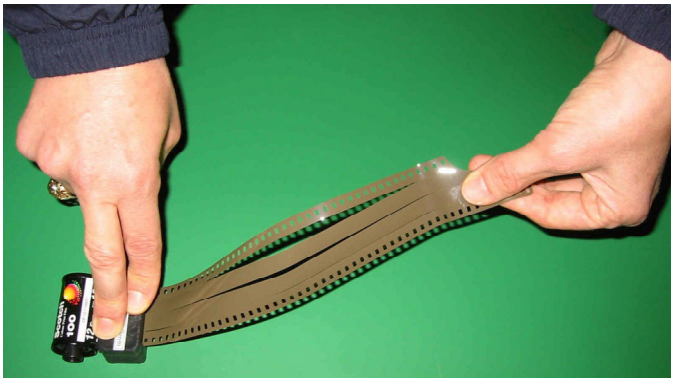


Figure 2

2. Pull through slowly and steadily. This is absolutely critical. Just as critical is pulling straight through, not allowing your arm to pull the film to the left or right, nor allowing it to pull up or down. Simply pull straight through on the same plane and axis as the exit slot of the Zipslit device. I practiced this in daylight with the test film that John Birkby provided, and this makes all the difference in the world. Figure 2 shows the WRONG way to do this, while Figure 3 clearly shows the right way.

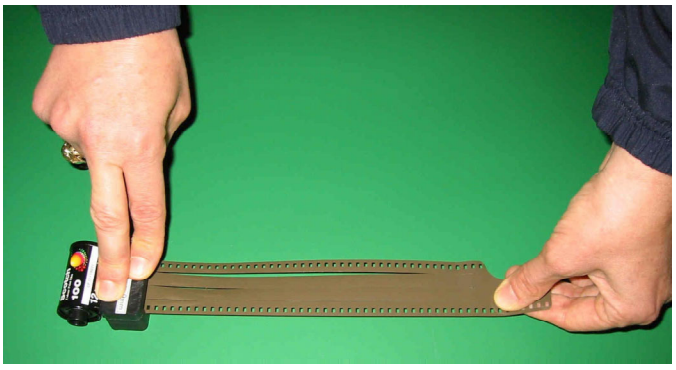


Figure 3

3. Instead of cutting and spooling dozens of cartridges at a time, I will now slit 5 or 6 rolls worth of Minox or Minolta film, but only load two cartridges at a time. The rest of the slit strips are carefully rolled and placed in the old black plastic 35mm containers with the grey lids that

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Kodak packs film in. The lids are taped down to prevent accidentally opening them. It is much easier for me to keep a few pre-slit lengths on hand that can be quickly spooled into a cartridge when needed than to set up the entire operation to slit and load film at one time.

The Zipslit is a remarkably simple, inexpensive, sturdy and very effective device; I'm very impressed with it and it's performance. Film slitting, on the other hand, appears to be deceptively simple, but it requires patience and care in order to get good results. I found it to be extremely simple and fun, as well as very economical...but patience and care is the name of the game.

What is it?

John Watson
Vice President

This part is often seen with early binocular clamps.

Older styles of binoculars often had a thin bar for the hinge between the two halves that hold the optics. This part was designed to clamp onto this bar and support the shutter release plunger, but would only work with binoculars that have individually focused eyepieces, not center-focus. By doing so it placed the plunger in a prime location to allow for easy triggering of the shutter, minimizing the inherent shake created when using the binocular clamp.

In many ways it was a very elegant solution to the problem, as you could trigger the shutter with just one finger, freeing you to focus on keeping the binoculars steady. Without this clamp, binoculars must be placed on a tripod, the shutter release cable must be held fairly awkwardly (increasing shake), or a timed mechanism must be used.

Unfortunately most modern binoculars do not have a means of clamping this part on, and individually focused eyepieces are never seen anymore, so the benefit is lost on current optics. That is also probably one of the reasons they eventually were no longer included with the binocular attachment. Nevertheless, this is one of the finer examples of a Minox engineering solution to a detailed problem.

Editor's Note

Charles Trentelman
Editor in Chief

I'm sitting here surrounded by the great wasteland that is post-Christmas. My desk contains no fewer than four undeveloped rolls of Minox film, the presence of which explains why I wimped out big time and did all the holiday shooting with an automatic 35mm camera and a screwmount Leica. I could get the 60-minute lab to do the pictures now instead of next August, which is when I'll get around to my own stuff, probably.

It's been a good year for accumulating toys for members of the MHS, however. Everyone who wanted one got the special-edition MHS Minox EC outfit, which is a joy and a wonder. That it cost half what the same thing would have cost retail doesn't hurt a bit, either. There are still some left, by the way. They make great stocking stuffers for those of you celebrating the Russian Orthodox Christmas.

Getting the special edition EC is a kind of marker for the MHS entering a new phase, one of paid membership, which has been a heck of a jump. It means there will be fewer of us but, hopefully, more involved members.

This is a good thing. Serious people can keep better in mind that this is, really, just a hobby. We're not trying to prove anything with anyone, certainly not with each other. The bickering and cheap-shots that litter lists such as the LUG don't need to bother us.

Oh sure, we can get into an outraged catfight over the benefits of XTOL vs. Microdol-X, or whether the lens of the BL is superior to the B, or a IIIs with a serial number under 500000 is equal to the TLX in terms of edge sharpness, but that's the sort of thing one expects. We know that everyone here is serious only about the hobby and, hopefully, can keep in mind that it is just a hobby. I will never forget the time a question on the LUG descended, rather rapidly, into a discussion of the Holocaust and American policies towards the Indians, and have rarely been back since..

Because we are a more select group, I would hope everyone will take an active role in the society. If you have historical information about the Minox camera or company, please let us know. Tips or new techniques for shooting? We need them.

Knock out a few paragraphs about it, scan a picture or mail us one, and we'll feature it in the Memo. Don't be afraid or think your work is not good enough -- everyone's is good enough if mine is, trust me on this.

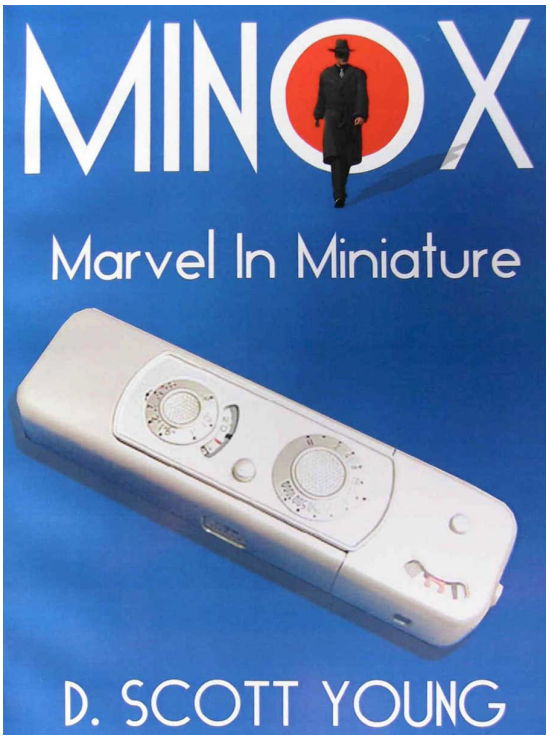
We even urge anyone who wants to get involved as an officer of the society to jump up and say so. The people grunting away at it now work for free and would welcome any and all assistance, ideas, advice, and so on. If you do want to suggest something be done, be prepared to be given the job of doing it, however. How do you think we got stuck with our jobs?

If nothing else, as the world and nation spiral down into whatever they are going to in the New Year, the MHS and its activities can serve as a refuge, a place where we can all do something that is just pure fun, totally apolitical, totally meaningless from a societal/sociological/environmental point of view.

When you consider all that, the price of membership is pretty cheap, is it not?

Happy New Year to you all.

Charles Trentelman
Editor in Chief



Large format, soft cover, 193pp, illustrated b&w

Minox - Marvel in Miniature By D. Scott Young

The first new book on Minox cameras in years, this delightful exploration of Walter Zapp's most enduring design triumph, the Minox 8 x 11 camera, shatters forever the myth of the Minox as solely a spy camera. A comprehensive history of the inventor, his cameras and the Minox camera are nicely set against the backdrop of world events, with comparative views of other subminiature cameras to clearly illustrate the place the Minox occupied in history, as well as its impact. Covering every model of Minox subminiature camera and most accessories through to the year 2000, this book will be an invaluable reference to both researcher and collector alike.

A personal interview and correspondence with the inventor himself, as well as reproductions of articles and letters written by Zapp provide the reader with a unique insight into his design philosophy, his motivation and his reaction to his camera earning an international reputation as one of the premier tools of the espionage trade.

New and experienced users of these cameras will relish the user's guide, complete with camera and accessory operating instructions and a primer on beginning photography aimed at new shooters. Every facet of photography, particularly Minox photography, from film selection and loading to darkroom processing and printing is clearly introduced.

The most reasonably priced Minox book to come along in years, **Minox - Marvel in Miniature** can be ordered directly from the publisher for US $15.00, via the Internet at http://www.1stbooks.com/. It can be purchased in any fine book store such as Barnes & Noble, Waldenbooks, B. Dalton and others; simply inquire at the counter if it is not on the shelf. International orders can be handled by Petra Keller at www.camerabooks.com.

ISBN 1-58721-068-1 Released June, 2000

New Product Announcements

Product announcements are taken directly from Minox GmbH's own press releases.

The new LCD video projectors MINOX VB 1300 and MINOX VB 1800!

Following its successful introduction in the digital camera world, MINOX, the optical specialist from Wetzlar, is now, for the first time, launching two LCD video projectors at once.

Featuring 1300 or 1800 ANSI lumens these projectors guarantee optimum light performance at all presentations, even in large conference rooms.

Both video projectors are fitted with LCDs with a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels, awarding them an exceptionally high contrast performance and detail definition. The unique image dynamics always ensures rich colors. These new MINOX LCD video projectors are therefore not only ideal for the presentation of computer graphics, but also for the projection of video/DVD films or TV events. Operating at noise levels of just 35 dB(A) and 38 dB(A) the projectors are so quiet that they do not disturb the concentration of the viewing audience. At the same time, the monitor output permits a viewing of the presentation from a local screen. This makes it possible to keep visual contact with the audience at all times.

The handy size and low weight of just 2.6 kg or 3.6 kg make the video projectors easy to carry around and permit flexible use in many different places.

The menu is designed on a text basis and guarantees convenient and easy operation. All functions can be operated spontaneously and can intelligently anticipate the operator's intentions. Set-up and adjustment are fully automatic. All cables and connections are with color code and attached devices are automatically detected.

Featuring the special MINOX soft-touch lacquer finish, these two video projectors also meet the high aesthetic design standards set by all MINOX products. A full range of accessories complete the equipment making the projectors ready for use at any time, such as remote control, cable and transport case.

Both products will be available from retailers in January.

The new MINOX DC 2122

The extremely compact and feather-weight DC 2122 is yet another digital camera from MINOX in which design and functionality have been optimally combined. Like all other MINOX digital cameras the DC 2122 is extremely convenient to use, also making it ideal for beginners entering the world of digital photography. This new model is easy to operate, even without previous knowledge, and guarantees unlimited photographic fun.

Simple menu guidance and clear and precise symbols enable the user to quickly change between shooting the picture, reproduction and the storage function. After actuating the shutter the user can immediately view the shot in the large TFT display. The automatic white balance ensures optimal exposure, even in difficult light conditions, and provides the user with a natural color rendition and the correct setting of the picture motif every time. With its 2.1 megapixel (1/2.7 inch) CCD and the fast multicoated lens the MINOX DC 2122 offers everything a digital camera needs and guarantees the photographer unforgettable shots.

For uncomplicated transfer of image files to the computer the MINOX DC 2122 features a digital USB interface. The provided software allows the user to touch up the images on the PC and send them directly.

Compact dimensions and easy operation make this lightweight camera (just 120g) an ideal companion for every occasion. The scope of delivery includes a CD-ROM, 2 round cell batteries, a wrist strap, the USB cable and a user manual. The new MINOX DC 2122 will be available from retailers in February 2003.

The new AF-Compact Camera MINOX CD 150

Featuring the well-proven MINOXAR lens that already helped the 35 mm classic MINOX-GT camera range to fame through its high speed and outstanding imaging performance, the MINOX CD 150 now sets new standards in the compact camera sector.

The imposing focal length range of 38-150 mm gives the photographer more creative freedom and flexibility. By tapping the zoom selector button the lens runs through the entire zoom range and is whisper quiet. The lens

system which has been designed using the latest CAD computer systems, has 7 individual lens elements arranged in three groups subjects, the fully automatic flash unit can also be manually controlled. The "red eye" effect is entirely eliminated by an additional preflash feature. The outer body design of the MINOX CD 150 features a special soft-touch lacquer. This awards the camera a distinct elegance and makes it feel good in your hand.

The MINOX CD 150 comes with a practical belt case, neck strap and battery and is the ideal companion for every situation. A databack is also available for the MINOX CD 150 which imprints the date and time. Both cameras will be available from retailers in February 2003.

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