



PHOTOGRAPHICA DIGEST

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Exploring the Vex in Univex

by Jerry Day

WPHS president Bob Suomala presented to club members and guests a professionally done slide talk on the Universal Camera Corporation or Univex at our May meeting. As a child growing up, he used Kodak equipment for picture taking. Although at a young age, he longed for the Mercury II Univex camera because of the 1/1000 second shutter speed, but the \$85 price tag was beyond his means. Now retired, Bob has fulfilled a boyhood dream by exploring the Mercury II camera inside and out as well as other products made by Univex.

Bob began his program by plugging *The Univex Story* by Cynthia A. Repinski. This publication came out in 1991 and is still available for \$29.95 plus shipping from Centennial Photo Service. According to Bob this book covers probably everything you wish to know about the Univex saga.

The Universal Camera Corporation was the brainchild of two businessmen, Otto Githens and Jacob Shapiro, who opened the business in 1932 and it continued until 1964. In 1933 they introduced their first camera. It was called The Univex Model 'A' Camera and sold for 39 cents. Bob dissected one of the cameras and found the shutter consisted of three parts that functioned up and down. The Univex film size was listed as No.00 and cost 10 cents a roll.

In 1935 the company hired George Kende as Chief Design Engineer, and he remained with them until 1948. According to Bob, there is a family connection with the chief engineer. If you are interested, see Bob for details.

Next Bob covered some of the other cameras such as Univex AF, Univex cine models, projectors, Mercury Model CC, Iris, Zenith, and Corsair. During the war years the company made optical equipment (mostly binoculars) for the military and very few cameras. By 1946, Bob's Mercury II arrived on the market. It was promoted as being especially designed for color. Bob then showed about six photographs of buildings taken in downtown Tucson with the Mercury II camera. After many years, Bob has fulfilled his childhood dream of firing that fast shutter Mercury.

Bob concluded his talk by reporting some of the successes and failures with the Universal Camera

Company. This company did a wonderful job of advertising new cameras and equipment. They also were first in developing an optical viewfinder and a hot shoe for cameras. However, in contrast, the company was plagued by poor management decisions. For example, they abandoned an SLR camera design that would have been another first, but decided to go in another direction. They also would not standardize film sizes nor utilize sizes developed by the Kodak Company and others.

After the slide show, members were able to view a display of items manufactured by the Company. This included over 50 different cameras, projectors, binoculars, and dissected cameras.

Thank you, Bob, for your excellent, in depth, presentation on the Univex story. We hope you have another camera company in mind that may have a family connection that deserves your exploration.

Revisiting India With Terry Coleman

Terry Coleman will share his intimate knowledge and contacts in India with other WPHS members at the June 1st regular meeting. Terry lived in India as a Peace Corps volunteer from 1966-1968 and returned two years ago on a nostalgic visit. He visited the old village where he served and even found the old house where he lived.

"I have always been a photographer and used the return trip to India to photograph the fisherman I used to work with many years ago." Terry, a WPHS member, is anxious to share the images and memories of his three years in India forty years ago. He has selected 43 digital slides to present along with his lively discussion on the highlights of his Peace Corps service and, perhaps, some 'fish stories' of the life in a small community on the other side of the world.

Terry has exhibited his pictures at the gallery in the JCC in Tucson and can be reached in Tucson at 520-881-887 or presenttc3@hotmail.com for further information.

President's Zone

by Bob Suomala

The WPHS Scholarships for 2006 have been awarded. The process of selecting the recipients has been working very well thanks in large part to the diligence of the selection committee, Liz Whitaker, Cheryl Soloway,

and Ron Kuykendall. Judging any kind of art is quite difficult when a consensus is required. David Vestal, my favorite photographer/philosopher, writing in his column "Vestal At Large" in the May/June 2006 issue of PHOTO Techniques magazine <phototechmag.com> described the difficulty inherent in making these consensus judgments.

"Your choice is the right one whether or not it's the same as mine." "Trust yourself, first and last."

Fortunately we have Bob Johnson's 10 points for judging art as to sorting things out. These bear repeating here:

1. Originality
2. Personal style.
3. Use of color or tonality.
4. Technical quality.
5. Composition.
6. Use of elements and principles of design.
7. Impact.
8. Form and content.
9. Did photographer accomplish aims?
10. Do I wish I had taken this photograph?

Using these points, the selection committee members were able to agree on the ranking of the applicants.

Thanks Bob. You made our task much less daunting. Maybe you can expound on the subject in a future issue of Photographica Digest.

2006 WPHS Scholarship Winners

by Robert Suomala

The Scholarship Committee consisting of Liz Whitaker, Cheryl Soloway, and Ron Kuykendall met on April 27, 2006.

The final selection of the recipients for the WPHS 2005 scholarship awards has been completed. There were a total of seven applicants from the following schools.

University of Arizona, 3 applicants.

Arizona State University, 2 applicants.

Prescott College, 2 applicants.

It is with great pleasure that the WPHS makes the following awards.

Emily Fitzgerald, Prescott College, \$2000

Tomo Kobayashi, Arizona State University, \$2000

Marie Zubinski, Prescott College, \$2000

The scholarship committee was impressed with the quality of the work submitted and the commitment of the applicants. Applicants who did not receive a scholarship in 2006 are encouraged to apply in 2007.

Gordon Parks Photo Stolen

by Mike Henry

A couple of months ago I wrote an article about one of my favorite photographers Gordon Parks. Parks passed a way recently at the age of 93. We both called Fort Scott, Kansas "home" and over the past twenty years we became friends and he had a profound affect on my photographic career.

Although he left Fort Scott at an early age, racism, bigotry, and hatred left an indelible mark on the sensitive young man. It was a wound that would take many years to heal.

In the years before he passed away, Gordon had forgiven Fort Scott for its transgressions. In 2004, as a token of his esteem and affection for his home town, he donated fifty of his most famous photographs to the newly built hospital. The photos were hung in the lobby and continued downstairs to a meeting area. He returned to Fort Scott for their official unveiling and dedicated the exhibit to his mother and father, Sarah and Andrew Parks.

I had seen the exhibit but my wife had not, so on a recent trip to Fort Scott we went to the hospital one evening so she could admire his work. It was around eight o'clock and the lobby area was deserted with the exception of a maintenance worker running a

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Article submissions from members are welcomed. Deadline for submissions is the First Thursday of the month. Please e-mail your submission to <mhenry26@cox.net>. Articles submitted should be no more than 500 words. Accompanying photographs and illustrations must be at least 300 ppi with captions.

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Snapshots

Attention: August Auction preparations notice!

Now is the time to start ferreting out your material to liquidate at our annual auction. Last year we had so many entries we had to field it in two segments. Only the August date has been scheduled at this point. Gerry Whitaker will have the blank item sheets for you to fill out for your offerings at the meetings. This annual fund raiser is designed to aid our Scholarship Fund and help you liquidate unused and outdated ownership of photographic stuff. Join in the fun!

Wanted: Graflex Ser. D 4X5 Bodies, parts and lenses. Working or not. Also 4X5 Graflock Backs. Mike Henry, <mhenry26@cox.net>.

Buy-Sell-Trade Classified Advertising: This service is free to WPHS members. Please no more than 30 words, photographic & related items only. E-mail your ad to <mhenry26@cox.net> with caption "WPHS Advertising." Deadline 1st Thursday monthly.

Article Submission for *Photographica Journal* from WPHS members welcomed. Deadline: 1st Thursday. Please e-mail to <mhenry26@cox.net> Articles 600 words or less. Photos and illustrations 300 ppi with captions.

vacuum cleaner downstairs. It was perfect because we could wander around without interruption or distraction. It was like being in a gallery viewing your favorite photographs—Alone. After ten or fifteen minutes the situation dawned on us and we looked at each other almost simultaneously. There was no security for a collection of photographs that, by modest estimation, was worth in excess of a quarter of a million dollars! (His "newer" work is currently selling in the five to six thousand dollar range.) At this point I'm sure you're saying, "But the frames were locked to the wall, weren't they?" My wife answered that question immediately when she tested one of the frames only to find they were apparently secured to the wall with Velcro.

We had dinner the following evening with old friends and expressed our dismay at the lack of security and they too were surprised that there wasn't better planning.

Some weeks had passed since our visit to Kansas

when I received an e-mail from my aforementioned friends. Yes, indeed, someone had taken one of the prints off the wall. Although there are security cameras throughout the hospital, local law enforcement doesn't have a suspect and, as of this writing, the print has not been recovered.

I'm not surprised that someone stole one of the photographs. They were accessible and unprotected and this appears to be a crime of convenience. What I am surprised at is the apparent lack of respect for such a valuable gift. Maybe Gordon Parks was right after all, but at least someone out there realizes what his photographs are worth to the rest of the world.

The Detrola Corporation

by Rick Soloway (An ex-Detroiter)

Anyone who has lived in Detroit, sometime or another has worked for the automotive industry, and that includes the founder of the Detrola Corporation, John J. Ross. Ross was a tool and die maker for the Ford Motor Company, but left Ford to start the Detrola Radio Corporation in 1931. And make radios they did until 1948, many of them sought after and considered highly collectible in today's antique market.

But for two brief years (1938-1940) Detrola made cameras as well. Detrola chose to use the 127 film format (3x4 cm) for all of their candid-type cameras, including models A, B, D, E, G, GW, H, HW, K, KW (W = Wollensak). These camera bodies were made of mostly bakelite (black plastic) with brushed aluminum accents, all (except the model A) had telescoping lens mounts. The rear of the camera is all metal with raised deco ribs and black painted recesses. The lens surround plate varies from model to model, and the lens manufacturer would be either Ilex, Wollensak, or Detrola Anastigmat f4.5.

While these cameras were superficially attractive, they were plagued with inferior materials that caused the plastic around the viewfinders to sag and appear melted (the signature defect of a Detrola). Problems were not limited to the plastic used in the viewfinder alone, the bakelite bodies were also prone to warping and bending out of shape. When considering acquiring a Detrola camera, always inspect the plastic features for damage and deterioration, and expect to see it.

Then in 1940, in a final grab for glory, Detrola built the Detrola 400, a Leica-inspired 35mm rangefinder with interchangeable (non-Leica 38mm screw mount) lenses, a focal plane shutter up to 1500, and synchronized hot shoe. But the camera was plagued with materials problems, in particular the adhesive used

on the rangefinder mirror failed in the summer heat, and a deluge of returned cameras in July and August of that year caused the company to withdraw from the camera business.

Parts were ordered to make 1000 Detrola 400s, but only 800 or so were actually built, making this particular Detrola VERY collectible and in the several hundred dollar range for the lucky collector who even sees one.

Photo courtesy Rick Soloway



"The Hitherto Impossible in Photography is Our Specialty"

by Ria Ryne

One hundred years ago this month some of the most famous aerial photographs of post-earthquake San Francisco were taken by a photographer from Chicago, using a camera suspended from a string of kites.

George Lawrence (1869-1938) was born in Illinois, one of six children of a farmer. By the time he was in his twenties, working for the Chicago Wagon Factory, he had already demonstrated a flair for innovation and invention, which would serve him well in attempting the "hitherto impossible."

In 1891 Lawrence left the wagon factory to go into the crayon enlargement business with a partner. Quite popular in the late 1800's, crayon enlargements were photographic originals, frequently portraits, which were enhanced by the use of charcoal and pastel colors. In 1893 his partner left Chicago and Lawrence found himself the sole proprietor of the George R. Lawrence Company. He soon learned how to develop negatives and he turned his talent for innovation to solving various photographic problems of the day.

For instance, how do you take a photograph of

a large indoor banquet? Easy. You develop a new flash powder that creates more light and less smoke than that which had hitherto been available and you develop a system using multiple flashes for one image.

How do you take a really impressive photograph of the brand new train owned by the Chicago and Alton Railroad? Easy. You design and build a 1400 pound camera that takes a 4 1/2 X 8 foot glass plate negative and requires a team of 14 operators.

And when you become intrigued by aerial photography—you build bigger and bigger ladders and taller and taller towers. When those methods finally are not enough, you start using captive balloons to go hundreds of feet up in the air to get your photo. Then a balloon malfunction drops you and you start thinking, "Maybe there's a better (safer) way. Maybe I should just send the camera up in the air while I remain on terra firma."

It was at about this time that Lawrence became acquainted with a kite-designer named Conyne. In the early 1900's, aerial banners were a popular method of advertising in metropolitan areas and kites were the preferred method of hauling these banners aloft. Conyne had designed a very effective kite for use in this advertising, a sort of box kite set within a hexagonal kite. Lawrence received permission from Conyne to build some of these kites for use in his aerial photography.

In 1906, when news of the San Francisco earthquake reached Lawrence, he immediately began making plans to go to California to document the devastation.

Three weeks later Lawrence stood on the deck of a boat watching his 49-pound camera rise slowly into the air suspended by a string of kites. The day was rainy, which caused some delays getting the electrical signal to go up the kite string to trip the shutter. Finally, as the sun began its descent to the horizon, the shutter tripped, the lens made its semi-circular journey, the 18"X48" piece of film was exposed and the little paper parachute that indicated the end of the exposure wafted its way to sea level.

Concerned that shooting into the sun might have ruined his shot, Lawrence processed the film that night. He discovered that, far from ruining his image, the position of the sun made it far more dramatic than his original documentary intention.

Lawrence eventually earned around \$15,000 from that one photo and secured his footnote in photographic history as one of America's premier panoramic photographers.

For more information on George Lawrence and to see his images check out:

<<http://robroy.dyndns.info/lawrence/>>
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/panoramic_photo/>

“VOICES”

by Ron Kuykendall

Student Support Committee and WPHS members met with 20 members of the “VOICES” program at their offices on May 3rd to explore what WPHS may be able to do to help set up a photography program with their organization.

“VOICES” is a uniquely Tucson non profit organization working with low income and at-risk youth using the tools of literary and photo journalism, personal essay and poetry. In eight years “Voices” has involved five hundred youth writers in five award winning publications: *Snapped on The Street*, *Don't Look at me Different*, *They Opened Their Hearts*, and five issues of *110°* magazine <<http://azstarnet.com/sn/110degrees/>> published by Arizona Daily Star each June.

Kristen Suagee-Beaudry, Asst. Editor has contacted WPHS for assistance with future photo journalism instruction. The 20+ youths 14 to 21 years old are planning to initiate a darkroom lab program in the basement of their building when remodeling is completed. Plans are for two enlarger stations and paper and film processing areas. WPHS, through the Student Support Committee, will be considering how and to what extent we may be able to assist their efforts. If you have an interest in assisting with this program, please contact Ron Kuykendall at <rlkuykens@comcast.net> or 520-887-8142.

CCP Happenings

The Center for Creative Photography will present *Robert Adams: Turning Back, A Photographic Journal of Re-exploration* from May 19 to August 6, 2006. Inspired by the bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition (1804-06), American photographer Robert Adams' most recent project offers a new and unsparing look at the territory the explorers opened for development. His pictures are also a clear-eyed meditation on hope.

Organized by Sandra S. Phillips, senior curator of photography at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, *Roger Adams: Turning Back* features 164 black-and-white gelatin silver prints. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 234-page catalogue, co-published by Frankel Gallery, San Francisco, and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. Titled *Turning Back*, the book's 164 tritone images reveal environmental degradation but

leave viewers with unmistakable notes of celebration and hope.

Further information: 520-621-7968 or <<http://creativephotography.org/>>

Gallery Hours: Mo-Fr 9 am to 5 pm, weekends noon to 5 pm with free admission.

Burke and James “Watson” 5x7 View Camera

by Bob Suomala

Assigned the task of collecting the funds from successful bidders at the WPHS 2005 July auction, I was not really intending to bid on anything, showing great restraint. However, the sad, bedraggled lens-less B&J Watson 5X7 view camera that had been kicking around for sale at several meetings somehow got to me. This poor specimen had been abused. The bellows were shot. It had a lens mounting flange but no lens. There was evidence of water damage. In a fit of empathy for this sad specimen I bid the reserve price of \$75. There were no other bidders so I won (?).

So

Q & A by Jerry Day

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

Answer:

It was the Olympus Camera Company. For over 20 years, they produced the popular Pen Half-

Frame. According to McKeown's, the first Pen came out in 1959 but was produced by a subcontractor. Olympus began producing them in their Suwa plant in 1960. Prices for the Pens range from \$40 to \$400.



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

And Now

What c1938 camera was made out of cast-metal, has a telescoping front lens element, and named after a familiar plant currently blooming in Tucson?



FIGURE 1

The camera has a basic Packard No. 5 shutter with only “Time” and “Bulb” functions. The shutter had been mounted to the lens board by a real hacker. To set the shutter back from the lens board to clear the rear element of the now missing lens, a piece of corrugated cardboard was used as a spacer. The shutter was about 10 degrees out of plumb relative to the edges of the lens board. Someone had put some wood screws in the bottom of the bed without drilling pilot holes. The very hard maple developed some cracks at these points but none that weakened the structure. All things easily correctable.

The bellows were another matter. Repair was considered but the camera had been stored with the front frame not aligned with the rear frame so the bellows being quite stiff were sort of permanently off set. Also, some of the rear folds had become unglued and torn. There are several web sites that describe how to make bellows, but the decision was made to save time and frustration and buy new. The old bellows, complete with the front and rear frame, was sent to the Camera Bellows company in the UK¹.

Camera Bellows has been making bellows for the photographic industry since 1895 and the founder’s family is still connected with the company. The service was not cheap (\$200+) but it was prompt and quite satisfactory. They can make both synthetic (Hypalon) and leather bellows but in the size required, they could only supply synthetic. Leather is probably more expensive anyway. Camera Bellows mounted the bellows on the frames for about \$10 additional (well worth it). Your best bet is to directly contact Ms. Veronica Haynes

<veronica@camerabellows.com>. Ms. Haynes is very patient with us colonists and will provide you with instructions on how to avoid UK customs tie-ups on repair parts (IPR Suspension). Camera Bellows accepts major credit cards. You will need to provide some of the information requested on their three-page web order form. Response from the submitted web order form was not forthcoming so Ms. Haynes was contacted directly. It cost about \$7 by USPS (4-7days) to ship the old bellows from this end.

This camera, described by B&J as a “Portrait Camera,” has a fixed location front standard with a tailboard fold-up bed and a movable rear standard to accomplish focusing. The movement of the rear standard is controlled using pinion gears and rack gears.

In its unrestored condition, one of the rack gears was engaged with its mating pinion several gear teeth out of sync with the other pinion/rack resulting in a cocked rear standard. The focusing control was rough and bound up in several areas. After trying several options to fix this condition it was determined that the whole tailboard was ever so slightly warped even though it was not visually apparent. The grooves that located the rack gears were deepened by .005 inches. This allowed the rack gears to be shimmed up to the correct height. Either the original assembler or some later repairman tried to alleviate the problem by elongating one of the bearing holes for the pinion gear shaft. The focusing was now greatly improved but you must remember this is not a Deardorf or Wisner product. It was made to be adequate for a price (\$27.50 less lens and shutter in 1941) but not elegant.

The focusing action was also less than smooth when the locking knob was fully loosened. When the locking knob was not fully released and was tightened to add some friction, the focusing action was much smoother. Unfortunately this was a transient condition since the lock tended to tighten or loosen when focusing. It was apparent that adding some consistent friction in the unlocked state would help. The modification was complicated by the fact that the threaded end of the focusing shaft was headed over to prevent the focusing knob from being removed and lost. Once the camera hardware was disassembled, the locking knob could be run down on the threads enough to allow a 1/4-20 threading die to be run on the shaft far enough to re-cut the deformed threads. A new shorter tubular stainless steel spacer was fabricated (the old spacer was saved so restoration to original would be possible). Adding a bowed spring washer between two stainless steel flat washers and a stainless steel acorn nut (would you believe from the local hardware store?) and a short

piece of 3/16 diameter aluminum rod to limit the nut's engagement to 2-3 threads provided the desired friction to the focusing control. Figures 2 and 3 show the parts and the assembly. Still not a Deardorff but certainly much improved.



FIGURE 2

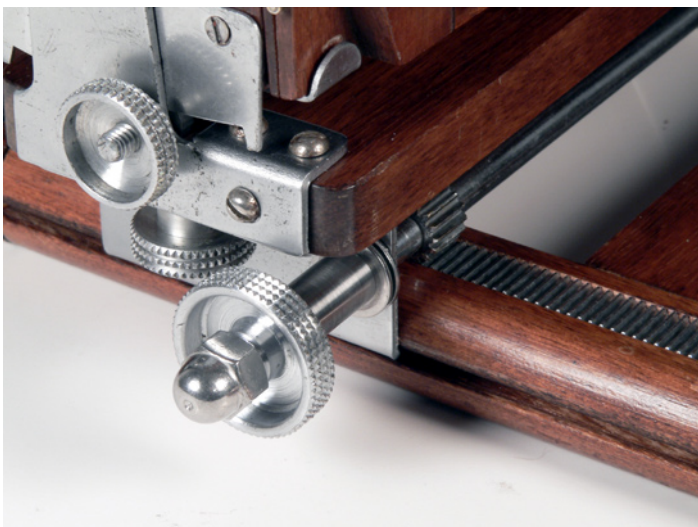


FIGURE 3

The entire camera was disassembled and cleaned up. The wood surfaces were given a very light rub with Birchwood Casey's Linspeed Oil which is intended to be used for refinishing gun stocks and is available at most gun shops. This fills in most imperfections in the finish without detectable build up. The fit of some of the wood screws was iffy due to wood shrinkage so the holes were filled with Carpenter's Wood Filler from Elmer's Products, Inc. A round tooth pick was then inserted to help remove all of the filler except that in the actual threads.

There was no fitting to connect the shutter's pneumatic cylinder to the external hose. An appropriate fitting was fabricated from 3/16-inch diameter brass

tubing. A brass flange was soldered onto the tube allowing the assembly to be attached to the lens board with wood screws.

The springs used for the spring back were mounted so close to the film holder slot that they interfered with the insertion of the film holders. Maybe the older wooden film holders were slightly narrower. The springs were shifted outward slightly by plugging the existing mounting holes and re-drilling them.

Paul Garrett was able to come up with a very clean, uncoated Zeiss 21cm, f/4.5 Tessar barrel lens. A threaded adapter allowed the Tessar to be mounted in the flange that came with the camera. Figure 1 shows the final product with the Tessar installed. Six Lisco Regal 5X7 film holders appeared on Ebay for \$60. These were in excellent condition, never abused as so many seem to have been. Some 5X7 film was purchased from Freestyle Sales. This film is really Ilford FP4 packaged for Freestyle as Arista Professional. Reno Farinelli, owner of the Packard Shutter Company, was able to supply a new pneumatic bulb and hose to operate the shutter. A future article will describe the performance of this camera in more detail.

The camera has the following movements:

Rear tilt = $\pm 8^\circ$.

Rear swing = $\pm 5^\circ$

Front shift = ± 1.5 inches

Front rise = 1.5 inches

Front fall = 0.63 inches

Front swing and tilt limited by bellows.

The bellows extends to 14.13 inches from the film plane to the front of the lens board.

Use old cameras! They are low tech and fun to use.

1. <<http://camerabellows.com/>>

The history of Camera Bellows goes back to 1895, when the company was founded in Birmingham, England by Harry Glanvill, a man who recognized the potential of what was then the fledgling photographic industry.

From the outset, the enterprise was a family affair. Harry ran the company with his wife - Florence - an expert maker of fire bellows, who turned her skills to the photographic trade. The business grew steadily, and as time went by, new applications for bellows - in industrial situations for example - were identified and developed.

In 1934, when Harry Glanvill died, Florence continued to run the business with her son Harry Jr. The Glanvill family connection remains with the company even today.



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UPCOMING SHOWS AND EVENTS

- | | | |
|------------|----------|--|
| JUN | 1 | WPHS MONTHLY MEETING
(Terry Coleman, Visual Presentation on India) |
| | 18 | Bagnall's Camera Expo Carson, CA |
| JUL | 1 | WPHS 3RD QTR. BOARD MTG |
| | 6 | WPHS MONTHLY MEETING
(Scott Weisman, UofA Art Dept.) |
| | 8 | PhotoFair, San Jose, CA |
| | 11-17 | National Stereo Convention, Miami FL |
| | 16 | Bagnall's Camera Expo Carson, CA |
| AUG | 3 | WPHS ANNUAL AUCTION
(Replaces Regular August Meeting) |
| | 20 | Bagnall's Camera Expo Carson, CA |
| SEP | 7 | WPHS MONTHLY MEETING |
| | 10 | Bagnall's Camera Expo Carson, CA |
| OCT | 5 | WPHS MONTHLY MEETING |
| | 8 | WPHS FALL 06 CAMERA SHOW |
| | 15 | Bagnall's Camera Expo Carson, CA |

MONTHLY MEETING

Visitors Always Welcome
(Always the 1st Thursday Monthly)

Thursday, June 1, 2006

Pima County Medical Society Building
5199 E Farness Drive (From Grant Road South
on Rosemont then East on Farness Dr.)

6:00 CONSIGNMENTS PRESENTED, BUY,
SELL, TRADE TABLES!
SOCIAL TIME – REFRESHMENTS.

7:15 ANNOUNCEMENTS
SHOW AND TELL (Bring your latest
collection addition to share.)

7:30 Guest Speaker Terry Coleman (WPHS
member with a Visual Presentation on
India)