

snap shots

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Reluctant RPPC Collector, Sunday, June 1st, 7:30 P.M., via Zoom

Cynthia Motzenbecker, will be the featured speaker at PHSNE's June meeting. She is a long-time past president (18 years) and treasurer (20 years) of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society (MiPHS), a current board member, a long-time member and current board member of the Daguerrian society, and also a long-time member of PHSNE.

Motzenbecker will talk about her collection of real photo postcards (RPPCs). An RPPC is defined as a "continuous-tone photographic image printed on postcard stock. The term recognizes a distinction between the real photo process and the lithographic or offset printing processes employed in the manufacture of most postcard images" (<https://tinyurl.com/3bmjr45y>).

She writes, "This presentation will be of a relatively new kind of collection for me, after collecting since the late 1980's, as I never, ever, would look at RPPCs because I thought of them as a 'time hole.' Well, they have turned into a 'money pit' as I have discovered the massive variety within them. I



RPPC Arcade gun boat little person April 25

do enjoy the consistent size of them as I also collect board mounts and they are a 'size disaster.' I love the RPPC's ability to show intricate and detailed scenes."

The collection features occupationals—store interiors and exteriors, anything technical, plus social history. Motzenbecker states, "I originally started collecting occupationals as I worked as an electrical engineering technician before computers took everything over. I knew all the contractors and practical laborers at work so I could ask them about anything I didn't understand. I learned a lot from them and enjoyed my job. I miss the fork truck the most; it taught me to think in 3-D.

Having a 'collecting gene,' I had to decide to col-

lect cameras or images. I couldn't afford many cameras and images were flat plus readily available at the local flea markets and antique shows. Estate sales were always of interest too; I was also looking for vintage jewelry. Once, after sizing up a large table of



RPPC Niagara Falls
Pail Family April 25

unsorted cabinet cards for jewelry within, I found similar jewelry in the same photographer's images. That settled the 'hardware vs image' debate for me. Now it is more like a hoarding issue and I thank the fates I have a very tolerant spouse.

Born in the 1950's in rural Wisconsin, my family soon landed in a suburb of Detroit that had a great school system. By junior high, there were three dark-rooms within our 'nerdy' neighborhood block. In high school, I became the 'mother of the darkroom,' and was a photographer for the high school paper and yearbook."

Please Take Note

There are no PHSNE meetings in July and August, and *snap shots* is not published for those summer months. The next issue will be September, 2025 which will be mailed in mid-August.

We are lining up the next round of speakers and would love to hear from members who can present or suggest a program. Speakers receive an honorarium plus a one year paid membership.

Articles from members are also welcome. Write about a camera, collection, or favorite piece of photographic ephemera. What do you have of interest? How did you acquire it? Send a photo!

Please email snapshots@phsne.org to suggest a program or submit your ideas.

Behind the Scenes

As with so many endeavors, publication of *snap shots* relies on people whose contributions often remain hidden. The newsletter relies heavily on the its proofreaders. Ron Polito and Joe Walters have been lending their expertise and attention to detail for many years. They have fact-checked every issue, added cogent comments and important information, and looked for and found many pesky typos.

Joe is now retiring to South Carolina, and I want to thank him for his valuable contributions to every issue of *snap shots*. His feedback will be missed. Going forward, PHSNE board member Larry Woods will be working with Ron on the monthly proofreading task.

I also wish to thank those who help with the mailing—stuffing, labeling, stamping hundreds of copies every month. The crew varies, but the “regulars” include Sid Chatterjee, Vladimir Khazan, Paul Roberts, Larry Woods, Lew Regelman, and Joe Walters.

~Beverly Regelman, Editor, snap shots

Brief Photographica Update

Photographica 92 took place on April 26th. Early feedback indicates that 133 teachers and students attended and five new members joined PHSNE. Thanks to all current members who worked at the show and auction as well as those in the Donation Committee who toiled throughout the year to sort, catalog, and repair cameras to prepare for the PHSNE auction that followed the show.

PHSNE Membership

New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$30 for students, \$50 for individuals and institutions, and \$55 for a family; foreign membership is \$60. Join or renew online at <https://phsne.org/join> or <https://phsne.org/renew>, or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to PHSNE Membership Chair, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453, email membership-chair@phsne.org, or use the Web form at <https://phsne.org/application>.

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Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome. Send to snapshots@phsne.org. Authors retain copyright to their original articles; however upon written application to the *snap shots* editor, PHSNE may grant non-profit societies with similar aims and interests a one-time right to reproduce a *snap shots* article as long as the author and source are credited and a complimentary copy of the publication is sent to PHSNE.

Athenaeum Exhibit Features Wild Flowers

The Boston Athenaeum is hosting *Wild Flowers of New England* featuring images by Massachusetts-based photographer Edwin Hale Lincoln. His efforts over more than thirty years were dedicated to documenting and preserving the native plants.

“Lincoln explored the forests around his Berkshire home, studying the lives of native wildflowers, and photographing the plants in his studio. Lincoln created a unique photographic language, blending scientific specificity and artistic expression, producing portraits that celebrate the ephemeral beauty of native plants” (<https://tinyurl.com/uvrsnchc>).



Edwin Hale Lincoln, 109. *Lilium canadense*, meadow, or wild yellow lily, 1905, Platinum print (courtesy of the Boston Athenaeum)

According to the press release, the exhibit “contextualizes his practice within larger preservationist movements. Through Lincoln’s lens, visitors will see the timeless allure of New England’s wildflowers and the enduring power of botanical artistry.”

Lincoln was quoted as saying, “There is no record so true as the good photographic study; as we see the conditions of plant life eternally changing everywhere, the value of these permanent authentic records to future generations cannot be overestimated.”

Topcon RE / Super D SLR — the Best Camera to Never Make It
Excerpted from article by Chuck Fehl, *The Photogram*, Volume 52 No 1, Spring 2024
Courtesy of Michigan Photographic Historic Society

One of my all time favorite 35mm SLR film cameras is the Topcon Super D and its variants. It was manufactured by Tokyo Kogaku (Tokyo, Japan) between the years of 1963 and 1978 and distributed by Beseler in the US until inventories were depleted in the early 1980s. This camera was originally known as the Topcon RE Super, but Beseler had a different nomenclature for its Topcon models (A,B,C,D).



In the United States the RE was the Super D and blessed with many unique professional features given its 1963 introduction. It was the first SLR with true through the lens coupled metering, which was quite innovative. It was based on a super sensitive CDS meter cell behind a precisely scored mirror surface, which leaked light to the meter in a center weighted pattern (sort of). It worked beautifully and only cost about 10% light loss to the prism (or waist level) viewfinder—hardly noticeable.

There were two main Super D models, the original from 1963 and the improved version from 1971. The later one had mirror lock up and a plastic tipped advance lever. Topcons are not lightweights—tipping the scales at 26oz (D) and 36oz (Dm) with lenses attached. This is old school brass, glass, and chrome construction. It also had interchangeable viewfinders to accommodate the eye-level prism, optional waist-level and magnifying viewfinders. It could be ordered in satin chrome or black paint finishes that professionals preferred. The U.S. Navy bought several thousand Super Ds in the black finish for U.S. Marine Corps use during the Vietnam War era.

Another unique feature that got my attention was the “plug and play” (motor) drive linkage on its base plate. You could attach a Topcon motor drive direct-

ly to the camera without any internal adjustment or modification (like Nikon) or base plate removal (like Canon). The only bad thing was its cost—nearly as much as the camera! Those few out there were “driven” to death or suffered in other ways. To better scratch that itch, there was a Topcon model that came with a film winder attached—the Topcon Super Dm (1973–78) which is available in decent quantities. It was basically a further improved Super D with lens aperture now visible in the viewfinder.

Another interesting aspect to Topcon SLRs was its lens line quality that is regarded by many collectors as at least the equal of Nikkor and Canon. Instead of developing their own unique lens mount (the *raison d’être*), they borrowed Exakta’s 35mm bayonet flange. This might have made sense at first as some Exakta manual lenses could be used directly on the Topcon and vice versa, but the meter coupling cams would not function and [there were] other inconveniences. I give them credit however for not dishing out yet another proprietary (and soon to be obsolete) lens mount design.

The Super D’s continuing claim to fame is its superb Tokyo Kogaku 5.8cm f/1.4 lens—one of the gold standards in usable vintage glass on DSLRs. Just try to find one!



Today, the Topcon is largely a forgotten brand. It could have been better promoted by its distributor Beseler which was basically a supplier of darkroom equipment. Its period reviews were good, but it was noted that it did not have the complete professional system line as Nikon and Canon and the pros weren’t using Topcons. They were basically an also-ran, or a kind of cult camera. The couple of guys I knew using Topcon Super Ds would take off to Nepal or Africa on a six month photo safari where the nearest camera repair shop was 1,000 miles away. They’d shoot all day with these robust instruments and then use them to pound in tent stakes at night! That is how tough they were for the people who used them.”

~Photographs by Chuck Fehl

Lee Miller, Photojournalist and Model

Lee Miller's fascinating career as WW II photojournalist and model is getting some new attention. In January, 2024, *New Yorker* featured a famous photo she and David E. Scherman took of Miller taking a bath in Hitler's bathtub with combat boots visible on the floor (<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/when-lee-miller-took-a-bath-in-hitlers-tub>). A movie starring Kate Winslet about photographer and war correspondent Miller is available on Hulu. And a very detailed biography is available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lee_Miller.



Female war correspondent Lee Miller who covered the U.S. Army in the European Theater during World War II (U.S. Army Center of Military History)
<https://tinyurl.com/4dmf4vfx>

As a top fashion model for *Vogue* and other magazines, Miller was photographed by well-known photographers, Edward Steichen among them.

In 1929, at the age of twenty-two, she moved to Paris to study under and work with Man Ray. *New Yorker* described her as "his muse, his student, and his collaborator."

She and Ray came across solarization quite accidentally; it

has been described as "a perfect surrealist medium in which positive and negative occur simultaneously, as if in a dream." She left Paris and Man Ray in 1932 to open a studio in New York.

During WW II, Miller held the unlikely position of war correspondent and photojournalist for *Vogue*. The bathtub photo was taken after she had visited and photographed Dachau; she also went to Buchenwald and documented the London Blitz and liberation of Paris.

Elizabeth "Lee" Miller, Lady Penrose, was born in 1907 and died in 1977.

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held online on the first Sunday of each month, September to June.

Upcoming meetings:

PHSNE does not meet in July or August. Information about the September program will be mailed in mid-August and will be on the website <https://phsne.org>.

Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE's Web site is online at <https://phsne.org>. See <https://www.facebook.com/PHSNE/> for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit <https://snapshots.phsne.org> for *snap shots* issues Volume 11 (Sept 2005) to Volume 29 (June 2024).

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails and show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>.

For information on all available PHSNE publications, see <https://phsne.magcloud.com>.

Update on Stolen Karsh Portrait

The Roaring Lion, an iconic photograph of Winston Churchill taken by Yousuf Karsh in 1941, was stolen from a hotel in Ottawa sometime in late December 2021 or early January 2022. The portrait was replaced with a fake and not immediately recognized as such. It was finally reported missing in August 2022. The original was a gift to the Chateau Laurier located in downtown Ottawa.

Somehow it made its way to Sotheby's in London



Yousuf Karsh, *The Roaring Lion*, 1941
<https://tinyurl.com/4ucdanxk>

where it was not recognized as stolen property when it was sold to an Italian lawyer at auction. The portrait was recovered in 2024 and returned to Canada in a ceremony at the Canadian Embassy in Rome. In a recent trial (March 2025) Jeffrey Wood pleaded guilty of the theft.