

# snap shots

Volume 13 Number 4

December 2007

## *Two (or Three) Member Programs for December*

*Wrestling with large-format equipment in alligator country and toying with kids' cameras*

Depending on how you count them, two or three of PHSNE's best-known members will be the presenters for the December 2 meeting — Adrian Levesque, the good Bud Midgely, and the bad Bud Midgely.

Adrian will present a video of photographer Clyde Butcher, called "the Ansel Adams of the Everglades," at work.

Butcher, famous for his black-and-white photography of the Florida landscape, creates his images with large-format cameras ranging from 5x7" to 16x20." In the video, up to his waist in alligator-infested waters, The video documentary follows Butcher as he makes large-format images and prints and develops 6-by-20-foot prints from 11x14 negatives.

The good Bud Midgely will reach deep into his unparalleled collection of low-end cameras to substantiate his thesis that "Photography is Child's Play," lining up cameras made for children and children's toys that look like camera.



David DeJean

On the program for December: Adrian Levesque, Bud Midgely, and his evil twin.

And the bad Bud Midgely? He'll undoubtedly reach deep into his unparalleled collection (he calls it a "plethora") of low-end jokes and awful puns.

## **It's Genuine Kodak Equipment — But What Is It?**



David DeJean



It must have had some photographic purpose. But what?

It's about six inches high by four inches in diameter, carefully made from plated sheet brass folded to make 12 segments, rounded at one end. The encircling band is stamped, "Manufactured by Eastman Kodak Co., successor to Rochester Optical Co., Rochester N.Y. U.S.A., Patented Nov. 3, 1908."

It came to PHSNE in a donation from member Warren Patrick. What is it?

## Shows and Exhibitions Around New England

*"Fins, Wings and Other Such Things: Photos from the Polaroid Collection"* is a collaborative project organized by the **National Heritage Museum** that brings together its exhibition and auditorium spaces, the Lexington Symphony, and images from the famed Polaroid Collection shown on a large screen. The combination of music and images was premiered at the Museum Nov. 3, and will be repeated Feb. 9 (with a special children's concert Feb. 10). A companion exhibition features works by photographers including Ansel Adams. (National Heritage Museum, 33 Marrett Rd. Lexington, MA, 781-861-6559, [www.monh.org](http://www.monh.org).)

*"This Is War! Robert Capa At Work"* at the **International Center for Photography** in New York until January 6, 2008 is drawn from the ICP's comprehensive collection of work by one of the greatest 20th-century photo-journalists. The show focuses on six of Capa's greatest images, using vintage prints, contact sheets, caption sheets, handwritten observations, personal letters and original magazine layouts to provide a look at how Capa worked. (ICP, 1133 6th Ave. at 43rd St., New York, 212-857-0000, [www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org).)

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### PHSNE Membership

New members — Brad Herman, Shrewsbury, MA, interests include medium and large format film, classic cameras, and digital SLR photography; Charlotte Lister, Chester, NH, estate sales of cameras, equipment, and books; John Minichiello, Providence RI, 19th C. albumen photographs, real-photo postcards, tintypes.

PHSNE membership is \$30 for an individual, \$36 for a family, and \$40 for foreign membership. Please send checks in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar-denominated international money orders for dues payments.

Current members can read their renewal date from the mailing label on snap shots. For example, "2007.12" means your membership expires in December of 2007. Please check your membership label before sending in your dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to: Adrian Levesque, 4 Sugar Hill Drive, Nashua, NH 03063, or e-mail [ALevesque@aol.com](mailto:ALevesque@aol.com).

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This Megaletoscopio, by Venetian inventor and photographer Carlo Ponti and dating to 1859, was a centerpiece of the Naylor collection.

The Naylor Collection

### Auction Marathon Sells 20 Per Cent Of Jack Naylor's Collection

It took four days and included more than 2,000 lots, but the auction of PHSNE Life Member Thurman F. (Jack) Naylor's collection of cameras and photographica in New York, Oct. 18 to 21, covered only about 20 per cent of the collection, Jack says. "We've got about 80 per cent to go, and it looks like we'll start in again on eBay in about February, or perhaps March."

Bidders participating on the Internet were very active during the auctions, he says, which he had expected. "We had a trial auction in Boston and all the high bidding was done outside the country."

Items sold during the four days included the Ponti Megaletoscopio, a signature piece in Naylor's collection, which went for a bid of about \$50,000, he says.

More information on the sale and an illustrated catalog are available from Guernsey's Auction House, 212-794-2280, or at [www.guernseys.com](http://www.guernseys.com).

### Christie's to Auction Modern Cameras

Christie's will hold an auction of cameras Thursday, Jan. 17, 2008 in the London suburb of South Kensington. It will consist of more than 600 lots ranging from Leica through to subminiature and spy cameras, Nikon, 35mm, Rollei, tropical cameras, photographic novelties and original posters. A catalogue will be available in December, and viewable online at [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). For further information contact Michael Pritchard at +44 (0)20-7752-3279 or [mpritchard@christies.com](mailto:mpritchard@christies.com).

## Gordon Hicks: Pictures From a Life in Progress

At 98, Gordon Hicks is a one-man history lesson. He not only knows 20th-Century photography in New England, he has lived it — from plate cameras to digital, and all the stops in between.

Gordon, a charter member of PHSNE and long-time seller at Photographica, was born 1908 in Charlemont, MA. Interested in photography and music, he came to Boston when he was about 20 to study piano, according to his daughter, Barbara Harting, and in the dark days right after the start of Depression, in 1930 or so, he found a job playing piano at the Joy Yong Chinese restaurant.

"I played there for quite a long while," says Gordon. "We were up on a balcony — there was a violin, a saxophone, and a wild-man drummer who called me Paderewski. We used to play from noon until 1:30, then again at supertime, and after supper."

His interest in photography came to Boston with him, and in 1938 he joined the Boston Camera Club. He exhibited prints in the club's show and salons for the next four decades, and today is still an honorary member of that group.

Gordon's photographic skills led him into several careers. He worked at Ralph Harris Co., one of Boston's biggest camera stores in the years around World War II. He was a staff photographer for the Hearst organization's International News Service newsphoto bureau in Boston, and for years he worked for Allston Studios doing school portraits, and also did wedding and group portraiture work out of his own darkroom, says Barbara.

For INS he shot news and sports — he recalls carrying a "Big Bertha," a 5x7 sheet film camera with a 40-inch lens — up to the roof of Fenway Park to cover games there. He particularly remembers the Coconut Grove fire on November 28, 1942: "we worked right through the night and into the next day. I saw some tough things."

The camera everybody carried in those days was a 4x5 Graphic. "That was the camera of choice then. When I showed up with a Rolleiflex they derided me, but it wasn't long before the boss had me get him a Rollei."

Gordon did a lot to introduce Boston photographers to modern technology during his long career with Ralph Harris Co. "On Saturdays he would always have a bunch of photographers gathered around," says Henry Weisen-



David DeJean

Gordon Hicks and his favorite brand of camera, a Contax. The walls of his home display not only his photographs, like his exhibition portrait of his wife, Myrtle, left, but examples of his skill as a clockmaker, like the pendulum clock visible over his shoulder. Below, an ad for Ralph Harris Co., where he worked for years.



burger, long-time friend and Photographica table-mate, "and they'd be talking and telling jokes. Gordon always had a lot of jokes. And he sold vast amounts of quality equipment — Zeiss, Rollei, movie cameras, Alpa, Kodak." And Speed Graphics and Leicas. And Contax.

"Contax wasn't as popular as Leica, but it was with me," Gordon says. He still has a Contax close at hand, an SLR that, he jokes, "weighs two pounds less than a horse."

With his wife Myrtle, who was also from Charlemont, Gordon Hicks raised four children, and with his wife's brother Aubrey he built beautiful clocks. "Dad did the movements, and he and Uncle Aubrey built the cases together," says Barbara. While none of the Hicks children became photographers — or clockmakers — "we were all immersed in composition and apertures and focal lengths," she says. "Dad would gather us up and say, 'let's go find some good pictures.'" It's a passion that has endured a lifetime.

### Your Chance to Own ‘Home Movies’

PHSNE Charter Member Alan D. Kattelle literally wrote the book on amateur moviemaking, and he is making it possible for PHSNE members to buy a copy at a special price at the December meeting.

Alan has donated 21 copies of his book, “Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897 - 1979,” to PHSNE. They’ll be sold at the December meeting for half the \$50 list price, with the proceeds going to PHSNE. Alan will be at the meeting to autograph the books.

Alan was honored for “Home Movies” and his extensive writing and speaking on amateur filmmaking with the 2005 Silver Light Award from the Association of Moving Image Archivists. One reviewer called the book, “one of the most readable histories of amateur motion picture photography and much of the photographic industry in general.”

### Write for PHSNE’s Journal

The editors of PHSNE's *New England Journal of Photographic History*, Ruth Thomasian (words) and Adrian Levesque (photographs) are looking for articles, and you could be a published author. Please be in touch with the editors of *The Journal* about contributing articles that reveal your special interests, knowledge, and expertise in photo history, whether it be very serious, full of fun, or somewhere in between. Contact Ruth Thomasian (617-923-4542 or 4563, or e-mail archives@projectsave.org) or Adrian Levesque (603-889-4056, e-mail alevesque@aol.com). When emailing, please put “PHSNE Journal” in the subject line.

### PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month September to June at 1:30 p.m. at Waltham High School, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE board at 11:00 a.m.

**Jan. 6** — Greg Stone, “Ultra-large Format”

**Feb. 3** — Annual Auction

**Mar. 2** — Boston Public Library

#### Directions

Waltham High School is at 617 Lexington St., Waltham, MA. The high school is at the top of the hill, behind other school buildings.

**From I-95 (Route 128) Northbound:** Take Exit 27 and follow Totten Pond Rd. 1.2 miles east until it dead-ends into Lexington St. Turn left and go .5 miles north. Turn right into the school complex.

**From I-95 (Route 128) Southbound:** Take Exit 28, Trapelo Rd., east 1.3 miles to Lexington St. Turn right and go south .8 miles to school complex on the left.

**From Boston/Cambridge:** Take Rte. 2 west to Exit 54B, then Lexington St. south 1.7 miles to school complex on the left.

**From Lincoln and West:** Take Route 2 east to Exit 53, Concord Ave. Go east 1 mile, then right onto Lexington St. and 1.3 miles south to school complex on the left.

### PHSNE Online

PHSNE’s Web site is online at [www.phsne.org](http://www.phsne.org). Ralph Johnston is the Webmaster.

Join the PHSNE Forum online discussion: sign up and log in at [www.phsne.net/forum](http://www.phsne.net/forum), moderated by Joe Walters.

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Photographic Historical Society of New England  
Next Meeting: Sunday, December 2:  
“Two (or Three) Member Programs”

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