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# **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY; TALKING ABOUT BUILDING IT YOURSELF**

**FROM THE [jbhphoto.com](http://jbhphoto.com) BLOG**

**Collection #06-A  
10/2013**

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**MUSINGS, OPINIONS, COMMENTARY,  
HOW-TO AND GENERAL DISCUSSION  
ABOUT TRADITIONAL WET DARKROOM  
PHOTOGRAPHY TAKEN FROM THE PAGES  
OF THE [jbhphoto.com](http://jbhphoto.com) BLOG.**

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# ZONE VI DEVELOPING TIMER PROBE BRACKET

This entry was posted on April 30, 2013.



I am a firm believer that necessity is the mother of invention. Let's face it, most people do not design and build just for the enjoyment of designing and building. . . at least I don't. Many years ago I decided to purchase the Zone VI Compensating Developing Timer and I have used it ever since. This is a great darkroom tool, and I would not process film nor paper without it.

The biggest problem I had when I first got my timer was trying to come up with a way to mount the sensor to my trays. Since by this time in my photographic career I was tray processing sheet film, I had no use for



tanks and what was sorely missing was some sort of bracket to hold the sensor in the tray. I tried tape and even a plastic close pin. Nothing seemed to work, so it was off to think a bit. I do my best thinking while taking a nap.

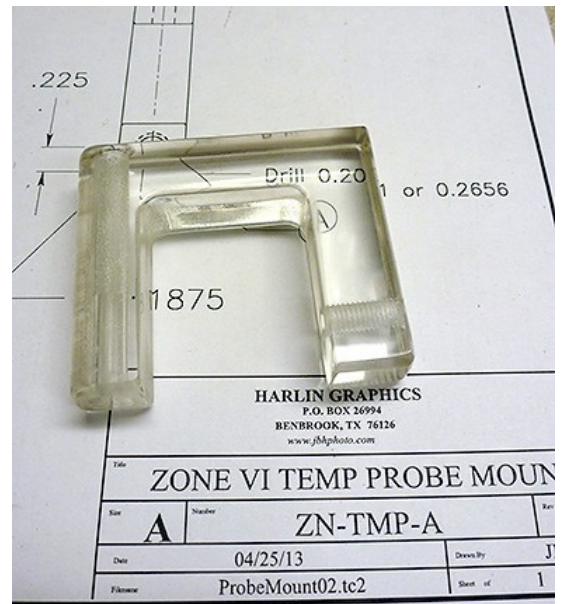


After some time contemplating the situation, I finally visualized a clamping device that could be attached to the lip of a tray. I decided that it needed to be made of a tough material that wasn't affected by chemistry and would be easy to keep clean. So I chose to make my clamp from a chunk of Acrylic.

I dug out an old hunk of scrap Acrylic from the junk box and began working it into shape with a band saw and vertical mill. What I eventually came up with was a prototype temperature clamp that I have been using for over ten years now. Take a look at the

accompanying photos and you will see a very well used piece of darkroom equipment.

I have always wanted to improve a little more on my original design, but just never got around to it, until now. Though my prototype shows no signs of degradation, it is well stained from the Amidol days and my biggest concern is that there might come a time when the Acrylic would fail. You know how nothing ever fails except when you really need it. I could envision this thing breaking in the middle of



**a printing session or even worse, in total darkness during a film run. Though from careful examination of the original, I can see no signs of failure. Still, I always like having a spare on hand.**

**So, having decided I need a spare clamp it was time to do a little redesign and then off to the shop to cut up some Acrylic. I beefed up the clamp a little and reworked it so it could be drilled for both sizes of probes that came with the original timer. Yes, we do have a spare timer also. The only thing is the spare is the newer unit and uses the larger probe. My original Zone VI Compensating Developing Timer came with a probe with an OD of 0.1875 inches, while the newer model has a probe diameter of 0.250 inches.**

**As with most projects of this type, it is just as easy to make several as it is to make one. I cut up all of the Acrylic that I had on hand and made a handful of Probe Brackets. I still have some hardware on order, but I already feel better knowing I have spare parts on hand.**

**JB**

# DON'T LAY IT ON THE GROUND

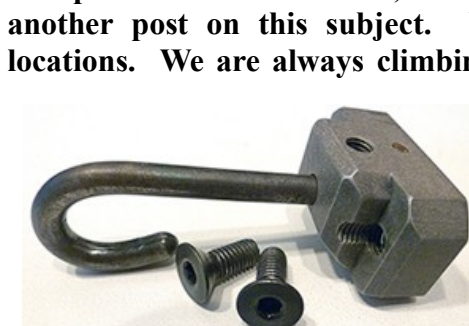
This entry was posted on February 22, 2012.



Strange how many questions we get about what we do, why we do it, and always how do you do certain things. I never mind answering questions. This is how one learns, and I feel that sharing what you know is very important. We have no secrets. . . no secret methods. . . secret places. . . secret formulas. . . or anything that is in any way secret.

Funny how after our last trip, and sending out our [Utah Snapshot Album](#), I received several questions about our camera packs. One that came up several times was how do you hang the pack from your tripod? We are pretty picky about our camera gear. It is imperative when you are a film photographer

to keep any and all foreign materials as far from your gear as possible. I just could never set my backpack down in the dirt, let alone the mud, or snow. [HERE](#) is another post on this subject. We tend to photograph in remote locations. We are always climbing over rocks, and are knee deep in mud or snow. One of the first packs I used was a really well-made and versatile Art Wolfe design that was perfect for a 4x5. The pack had a small webbing loop at the top and I soon found myself hooking it to one of the



knobs on my Zone VI tripod. Worked great!



Things were fine until we moved up to larger cameras and larger packs from f64. They say necessity is the mother of invention. So we modified the larger f64 backpacks with a hanging strap similar to the Art Wolfe design, since it was not a standard option from them. Later when we designed and built our own packs the hanging loop was a standard, must have, feature. As our packs got larger and heavier we eventually changed over to Ries tripods and suddenly there was another problem. . . no good place to hook the pack. This was a challenge. When I need to think about something, I usually take a nap. I do my best thinking when asleep.



I dreamed up a simple modification to the Ries tripod head that allowed me to add a hook to the under side of the crown. I fabricated a small aluminum block and a hook made of 3/16 steel rod. The rod has to be heated and bent into shape, then quenched to harden the metal. The block uses a 6-32 set screw and a press-fit pin to hold the

**hook firmly in place. The hook assembly is attached using two 8-32 flat head machine screws drilled through the tripod crown.**

**I have added this modification to both our ‘J’ and ‘A’ model Ries tripods and they have performed flawlessly for years. Ries tripods are extremely well-made and will support well beyond their factory weight ratings. I have hung a 45 plus-pound pack from my ‘A’ model for years now and never had any issues. . . except sometimes heaving that heavy pack onto the hook when in a difficult position.**

**Take a look at the photos to get a better idea of how I made this modification. I just did a complete rebuild of my 40 year old Ries ‘A’ model and it now has a new coat of paint and the legs have been refinished. It will not stay this nice looking for long. A tripod takes a beating in the field.**



**The running story around here is that we don’t own much of anything that hasn’t been taken apart and modified in some way. If you work with LF and ULF, you soon learn that there are very few off-the-shelf options available. If you need something, it is probably not made and you will either have to improvise, modify, or build it yourself.**

**This is how we solved the problem of keeping our pack off the ground. There are those times you just have to make a few modifications.**

**JB**

# NOT THE KITCHEN SINK

This entry was posted on April 11, 2009.

## BUILDING A DARKROOM SINK



In the fall of 2002 we made the reluctant decision that we needed a larger darkroom sink. This sparked a month long project of designing a new 3 1/2×10 1/2 foot sink. The new, larger sink was to be modeled after the current, smaller sink. The same basic idea was to be employed. The sink height would be the same. The depth would be greater and it would be as long as the room would allow, about 10.5 feet.

Cabinets for storage would be constructed at each end of the sink with slots for trays in between. There would be space in the right hand end for the water chiller and racks for chemical storage at each end. The backsplash would be a copy of the old one, only larger, and would contain the same plumbing, including filters, two mixing faucets and temperature control unit.

Having determined the necessary measurements it was just a matter of gathering the materials and getting to work. It took about three weeks to complete and install the new sink. Construction was my usual battle ship, massive over kill, design, using plenty of nails, screws, lag bolts, caulk and paint.

For those that are interested in seeing what is involved in building a wooden sink, click [HERE](#) to visit our snapshot album chronicling that little undertaking. This is not your typical kitchen sink!

# DON'T SCRATCH YOUR SINK

This entry was posted on April 2, 2010.



If you build your own darkroom sink or use a commercially available unit, you need something to protect the floor of the sink from scratches and abrasions. It has been a common practice to construct wooden Duck Boards for the bottom of the darkroom sink. These work well, they protect the sink, and allow water to drain, but wood is hard to waterproof and keep from warping.

I have heard of people using plastic lighting grids or plastic rods in the sink, but I have never tried them. I have constructed and used the usual wooden Duck Boards for years. Then I found something even better.

Dri-Dek® is sold as an anti-fatigue flooring for use in commercial work areas such as industrial manufacturing or commercial kitchens. It comes in 12" interlocking squares or rolls. This is a soft, flexible Vinyl that is perfect for the floor of a darkroom sink.

It



We installed Dri-Dek® in our sink two years ago and it has been an excellent investment. Water easily runs through and under the lattice work, it protects the sink floor, and it provides a soft, yet firm surface on which to work. Note, that the Vinyl does stain when exposed to some chemicals, like Amidol and Pyro, but it has remained flexible and I would not

hesitate to recommend it to replace those old, warped wooden Duck Boards.

For more information about Dri-Dek® click [HERE](#).

JB



## VIEW CAMERA LUBE

This entry was posted on April 19, 2011.



It is important that your view camera work and work smoothly without glitches in the field. Nothing is worse than having some issue when you are out working. I spend a lot of time maintaining our cameras. I feel it is better to do this before we go out, than to have problems that require work in the field. Nothing is worse than wasting time on repairs when you are out.

A high-quality Microcrystalline Wax is one of your best friends when it comes to keeping your view camera clean and working smoothly. See my previous post titled "[Wax On... Wax Off](#)" for more information about waxing the camera.

But, waxing the camera is only part of keeping it functioning smoothly. You need lubrication for the metal parts. Metal rails, guides, and locking knobs need lubrication to keep them working freely. Nothing is worse than having a threaded part to seize up in the field. The best lubrication for metal parts is a dry lubricant. One that goes on wet but dries leaving a slick lubricant that does not get on your hands and possibly on your lenses or film. A dry lubricant also does not attract dust and dirt.

One of the best lubricants I have found is a product made for lubricating bicycles. Pedro's Ice Wax 2.0 is a natural wax-based dry lube for use on bicycle chains. It is also an excellent choice for the metal-to-metal parts of the view camera. It works on brass, steel, and aluminum surfaces equally well. The manufacturer says it is a Hydrophobic wax coating that repels water and provides protection from wear and contaminants. It goes on wet and dries leaving a lubricating film that keeps parts moving freely.

Just a drop or two worked into the metal-on-metal surfaces is all you need. And it lasts for a longtime. It is also good for all threaded locking knobs to keep them free and to prevent them from seizing up. A little Microcrystalline Wax plus some Ice Wax, and you should be good to go. . . go to the field that is, without any glitches to slow you down.

JB

## WAX ON... WAX OFF

This entry was posted on June 16, 2010.



Well. . . that was a cheap shot, but maybe it got your attention. Care and maintenance of your photo equipment is something that is important. Take care of your equipment, and it will take care of you. We use a lot of gear that is made of wood. We spend a lot of time outside in harsh environments. But, all of our equipment needs protection from the elements. We wax everything. Wood, metal, plastic. . . they all get a generous application of wax.

Wax keeps moving parts moving smoothly and a well waxed surface is easier to keep clean. Dirt and contaminants do not stick to a waxed surface. A slick, waxed surface is easier to keep clean. Also moisture is not as much a problem. I can say that we wax most everything except the lenses.

So, what kind of wax should you use on your expensive equipment? We use only the highest quality Microcrystalline waxes on our gear.

Microcrystalline waxes are far and away, the finest wax you can use.

They offer excellent resistance to moisture, food acids, alcohols, moderate temperatures and are pH neutral naturally. Another benefit is that they will not show fingerprints on treated surfaces. Microcrystalline waxes also dry crystal clear, never yellow, leave no chalky residue and resist dust as well!

What brand of Microcrystalline wax do we use? RENAISSANCE WAX-POLISH has been the #1 choice of museums, art galleries and institutions for the preservation of precious items for over forty years. Professional conservators, retailers, restorers and private individuals throughout the world depend on RENAISSANCE WAX to protect their collections and for in home use.

All I can say is, this stuff is great and highly recommended. It is SAFE to protect all of these Materials: Wood; raw & finished. Leather, Parchment & Paper. Metal; Silver, Silver Plate, Gold, Copper & Copper Alloys (Bronze, Brass, Tin, Zinc, German Silver, Nickel), Lead & Pewter, Iron & Iron Alloys, Tin & Tin Alloys. Damascus; Stone, Marble, Onyx, Limestone, Granite, Brick, Tile, Terrazzo, Obsidian, Alabaster; Gems, Glass, Porcelain, Holloware, Bone, Ivory, Horn, Shell & Mother-of-Pearl, Gutta Percha. Dammars; Gilding & Gold Leaf, Patinas. Enamel, Lacquer, Japanning, Cloute, Pose d'Or, Pique Point, Varnish, Marbleizing, Stains & Artificial Graining. Plastics, Formicas, Paints, Polyvinyl Acetates, Esters of Polymethacrylic, Polycyclohexanones, Fiberglass Epoxy Resins, and much more!

Guess you can say that we are sold on Microcrystalline RENAISSANCE WAX. You can find it at most woodworking supply stores and on line. A quick Google search will turn up a lot more information. Well worth the cost and time it takes to apply. A little "Wax On. . . Wax Off" and you are good to go most anywhere.

JB

## WEIGHT BAGS FOR MOUNTING PHOTOGRAPHS

This entry was posted on May 17, 2013.



Like most everything I do when it comes to photography, I am not the source of the technique, idea or clever device. I would say that 95% of what I do is something I learned from someone else. I may add my own twist, but I cannot take credit for the idea.

Mounting photographs is a tedious and time-consuming task that we all must master if we want to display our photographs. Dry mounting is our chosen method of print presentation. Anyone that has dry mounted photos knows what is involved. You tack dry mount tissue to the back of the photo, trim the edges, then align the image on the mount. It is, at best, a nerve racking chore and one slip then you

have just ruined a print.

It is imperative that you get the photograph aligned properly on the mount. This is a tedious process of measuring and measuring again. . . and. . . maybe you should measure again! Nothing is more frustrating than when you get everything just right, you bump the print and have to start again. What you need is something to hold the print in place while you do the final tacking to the mount. This is where a weight bag comes into play. For a small print only one small weight bag should be enough. With larger prints a larger weight bag might be better, or possibly two smaller ones would be better to hold things in place. Either way, a good weight bag is a big help.

So, now that we have solved the problem of what to do, we need to look at how we can construct a suitable weight bag. For me, simple is always better. . . inexpensive is even better than simple. So here is how I solved the mounting weight bag predicament.

A weight bag for mounting photographs must be made of some very soft material so as not to damage the print surface. The perfect material is a synthetic Naugahyde-type material that lens bags are made from. A good place to look



for lens bags is your local camera show. There is nearly always a box under some table full of such things that range from really cheap to even free. What you are looking for are the bags that are made of very soft, supple material. A lot of the bags are made of very stiff, rough material that will damage a print. I have several size bags ranging from those that were intended to carry large, long, lenses, to those that would hold a small normal lens. See if you can find several large bags and a couple of the smaller ones.

Once you have the bags it is only a matter of stuffing them with a suitable weight material. I have heard suggestions from sand to marbles. I would suggest using Aquarium Gravel from the local pet supply as a great weight material. Any of these items should work well, but I did something completely different. First, I just don't like the idea of rocks, sand or gravel in or around my work area. Second, I did not have that many marbles (some say I lost all of my marbles years ago). There was one thing I did have an abundance of and that was pennies. I had several large jars filled with pennies in the back of a closet. Why not use them, since they are heavy and should work well for my purpose.

No matter what material you choose for filler, I would highly recommend that you first load your weight material into a heavy plastic bag. I would even further suggest that you double bag your weight material, just in case. You will have to adjust the amount of filler needed to fill the lens bag and still allow you to close the drawstring end closed. Once you have the correct amount of filler in a plastic bag, close them securely with twist ties, or use a heat sealer. Note: Do not stuff the inner bags too full. You want them to be about 90-95% full.

All that is left to do is stuff the bagged weight material into the lens bag and close the draw strings. I tie the drawstrings off then cut off the excess.

I have had my weight bags, stuffed with pennies, for years and they have served me well. I use them for print mounting and for weight when flattening prints under a sheet of 1/4 inch glass. Weight bags are a handy tool to have around. The next time you are at your local camera store or a camera show, look for used lens bags. Pick up a few soft bags and make your own weight bags.

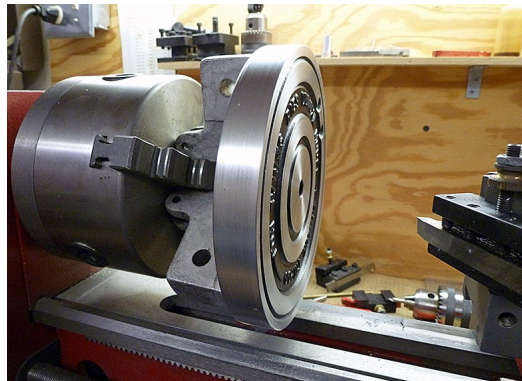
**JB**

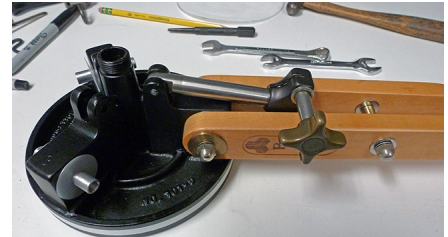
# REWORKING MY RIES 'A' MODEL

This entry was posted on February 18, 2012.

It is really great to be able to fix, repair, and restore your equipment yourself. I have always been a doer. . . I like to maintain and work on my own equipment when I can. On our last trip to Utah I noticed that my very old and trusty Ries 'A' Model tripod was beginning to show signs of use. I have no idea how old this one is, but I would guess it was manufactured in the late 1970's or so. I have had it for years and it was no where new when I purchased it. The legs have taken a beating, needed a little work and a refinish. The top crown paint was chipped and peeling and the previous owner had not used a friction washer between the head and the crown, so the crown top was pretty scared up and needed some attention also.

What I had in mind was a complete strip down of every part of the tripod, remove all old paint and finish, repair dings and dents as best as possible, refinish everything, then reassemble. It's not that hard to disassemble a Ries tripod. Take care not to damage anything and maybe take a few quick snapshots before you start, just in case you don't remember exactly how it all fits back together.





**I completely disassembled the legs, removing all of the hardware so I could sand and refinish the wooden legs. The most difficult things to remove are the drive pins that hold the leg locking rods to the underside of the crown and leg swivel guides. An appropriate size punch makes short work of the pins and an arbor press takes care of the guides.**

**At this point I have the entire tripod completely disassembled. With the application of a little elbow grease, I completely sanded down all of the wooden leg parts, smoothed over the dings, scrapes, and dents, and shot three coats of spar varnish on all six upper and three lower legs. Next I stripped the old paint from the tripod crown. Took a few tries and some scrubbing with a brush, but soon I had nothing but bare aluminum. Since the crown top surface was scored, I chucked the head in the lathe and resurfaced the top. Next came a fresh coat of black self-etching primer and a bake in the sun for a day. There is nothing like a day or two in the Texas sun to really cure paint. . . even in winter.**

**The leg swivel guides did not fare well being removed from the crown, so I machined a new set. Once I had the new guides pressed into the crown I also made a new set of friction washers.**

**At this point it was just a matter of cleaning up a few odd parts and reassembly of the entire tripod. I did not need to do any work on the A250 head since it is much newer than the legs so it was only a matter of adjusting the leg tension and my tripod was ready for action.**

**That is the entire process in a nutshell. The tripod, though it will never look factory new, is now ready for another trip.**

**JB**

# KEEPING NOTES

This entry was posted on August 9, 2010.



I have written quite a bit about LF and ULF photography here on the jbhphoto BLOG since we started back in January of 2009. A lot of it is my rambling about this or that, and sometimes I tend to repeat myself. Oh well, must be old age??? One thing that I do not remember writing about is keeping notes. We are both meticulous about keeping records of our travels and detailed notes on the film we shoot.

We do several things when we go out on an extended trip. One is to make a lot of



snapshots. They are an excellent way to keep track of the places we visit and are used to plan future trips and serve as a visual reminder of the places and things we discover. We also keep a daily diary/travel log of what, when, and where we were on a particular day. I have to admit that Susan is better at the diary than me, but at the end of every day before we drop off to la-la land, we try to type a few paragraphs. We keep this on a laptop computer and entries continue till the trip is over. It is a great resource, along with the snapshots, later when trying to come up with exactly what happened on any particular adventure.

But, the most important notes are those that pertain to the film we shoot. I experimented for some time when I first started shooting sheet film and eventually came up with a record keeping scheme that works. We have both used this method for many years and it has given us detailed records that, when needed, are invaluable.

When I first began seriously trying to keep film notes I started off with a small notebook. For me though, having to fumble with pen and paper was just not working. So I came up with the bright idea of using a small voice recorder. This worked great! I would record one entry for each exposure and later transcribe the information into a notebook. We both used a micro-cassette recorder for years, until mine just flat quit working. It was worn out and had to be retired.

N = 8:30  
 N = 7:00  
 N = 10:00

**8x10 Film**  
**December Trip Southern Utah**  
 12/12/2009 to 01/10/2010  
 (Continued from 2009)  
 HPS+ PYROCAT HD

78  
 Negatives  
 This Trip

EIGHTEENTH DAY OUT... Fri 01/01/2010... Arches NP... New Year's Day...  
Balanced Rock parking lot... 15° slight breeze... heavy fog, more ice fog everywhere...

FILE#	F	D	O	f	T	NOTES	FILT	LENS	GPS	DATE
87	N+15	H	64%	1/8		Ice fog on rail next to parking lot...	N/A	6.5"	N 38 42.000 W 109 33.976 Elev 5400'	01/01/10 10:47 am (F0)
88	N+15	V	64%	1/8		Move down lanes... more fog ice detail...	N/A	6.5"		01/01/10 10:59 am (F0)
83	N	V	64	1/4		Tree & snow, Moved across road from parking lot... 10" snow... sun breaking out, power line snow falling 12"	N/A	305mm		01/01/10 11:54 am (F0)
84	N	V	96	1/2		Black tree covered in frost...	N/A	305mm		01/01/10 11:49 am (F0)
25	N+15	V	64%	1/8		Shump in foreground, whippers left of Red Rock to fog in back... sun coming out, snowing... Cold...	N/A	6.5"		01/01/10 11:06 am (F0)

At this point the digital voice recorders were available and they opened up an entirely new way of record keeping. With the digital recorders it is even easier to keep up with the daily notes. We make one entry for each exposure. The digital file is date and time stamped and it is easy to upload them to the laptop computer. This we do every evening along with updating the daily travel log.

Originally we transcribed each film audio entry into a notebook by hand, but starting about three years ago we began typing this information into a computerized form. This form has spaces for Negative Number, Film Holder Number, Development, Image Orientation, f Stop, Shutter Speed, Notes, Filter, Lens, GPS and Date and Time.

**This is a somewhat complex way of keeping film data, but it has proven to be well worth the effort, especially when you need to recall the what, when, or how of a particular photo that you made years back. I can go to my film notes and tell you most anything about a particular negative, including the weather.**

**Keeping notes is also a way to track mistakes. If a particular negative did not turn out as expected, you have all of the information that can provide a clue as to what went wrong. I also record information on my audio entries about location, the light, temperature and anything else that might affect the image, or the photographer. Your notes can be a lifeline to help you track problems.**

**Detailed records of each sheet of film are not hard to keep up with if you are diligent and keep the process current. Next time I will talk a little about keeping notes in the darkroom. . . and. . . yes, we also keep pretty detailed records of the prints we make.**

**JB**



# SHEET FILM NUMBERING

This entry was posted on March 4, 2009.



**How do you identify sheet film? You put unique numbers on the film holder, but how can you identify which sheet of film came from any particular holder? You may be able to identify the film by taking notes and knowing the subject. But, what if you make several exposures of the same scene, say using different filters? How do you know which filter was used on each sheet?**

**We hit this impasse many years ago and I came up with a simple solution that has worked for us for years. All you have to do is file a notch code into the film loading flap. We have used this system to number over one hundred 4x5 holders. Want to learn how to modify your film holders? Take a look at “[A QUICK & EASY SHEET FILM NUMBERING](#)**

**[SYSTEM](#)” for the details.**

**Hope you find this helpful. . .**

**JB**

## WRITING ON THE NEGATIVE EDGE

This entry was posted on September 4, 2011.



I was recently asked what type of writing device we use to mark the catalog number on the edge of our film. I had not given it much thought since we have been using the same pens for marking film for many years. I have heard of people using various mechanical pens and India ink. Some say they use a common Sharpie. There are numerous ways to do this, but the easiest and most effective way I have found is to use a pigment liner pen.

Specifically, I have used a Staedtler pigment liner pen for years. They are clean, easy to use, make very dense letters and numbers that easily show up on proofs, and are filled with permanent black ink. The ink used is lightfast and will not fade. One nice thing about the Staedtler pigment liner pen is it will not dry out. The manufacturer says, “The unique cap-off feature of the ink enables pens to be left uncapped for 18 hours without drying up. Even when left open during long breaks in writing, they remain ready for action without delay.” They also last a long time. We have not had to buy new pens in years.

The Staedtler pigment liner pens are available in nine writing widths from 0.05 mm to 0.8 mm. My favorite sizes are the 0.3, 0.5, 0.7 mm widths. I use the smaller diameter pen for small film where the clear edge is very narrow.



You still get very legible writing along the film edge that prints well on the proofs. I prefer the larger



diameter pen for the really big film. These have worked well for me for over 30 years, and should work well for you also.

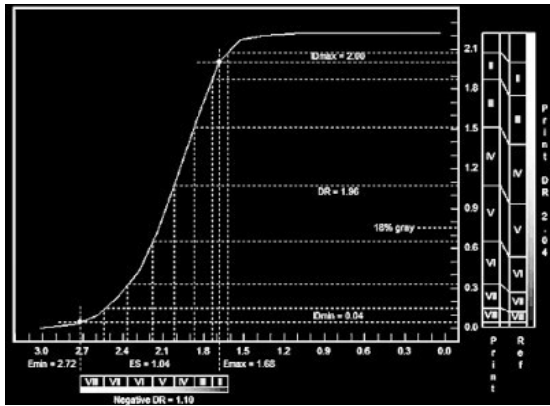
Here are a few things I have learned over the years that may help when using these pens to mark your film. I always mark my negatives on base side opposite the emulsion, this way the file number prints correctly on the edge of prints and proofs. Be sure to let the ink dry thoroughly before you place the film into a storage sleeve. It should only take a minute to dry. I have found that if you make a mistake, you can remove the ink using a cotton swab lightly moistened with acetone. And, one more thing; the biggest mistake you can ever make is not using a filing system for your negatives. If you choose to mark your film on the edge, these markers will do the trick.

If you are interested in learning more about Staedtler pigment liner pens, [HERE](#) is their web site.

JB

# CONTROL IS SIMPLE

This entry was posted on December 18, 2012.



Let me begin by qualifying what I am about to discuss by saying that I am a traditional B&W photographer. I shoot film and print in a wet darkroom using traditional materials and techniques. Whenever I talk about photography, I am talking about traditional B&W. I know little about color photography and even less about digital.

I have often heard the argument that traditional B&W is so complicated. I actually heard that from several old-time wet darkroom color photographers. The truth is, working with traditional B&W, wet darkroom materials is very simple. But, there is sometimes a complex deception in simplicity.

Keep in mind that the most complex machine, or procedure ever devised is little more than a lot of simple things all working together to create a seemingly complex outcome. True, as you add more steps, each step can interact with the others, but if you break each piece of the greater puzzle into less complex, bite-size pieces, it is understandable and controllable.

When it comes to traditional B&W photography, you only have four basic controls to worry about. There are only four simple things that have power over the major aspects of the end product. . . the B&W photograph.

## 1. Film Exposure

## 2. Film Development

## 3. Print Exposure

## 4. Print Development

1. **Film Exposure:** This is the first, and is a very important aspect of photography. You can manipulate how a scene is captured through the way you meter and expose the film. There are numerous manipulations you can employ, including zone placements and filters.

2. **Film Development:** The tonal range captured on the film at the time of exposure can be further manipulated by development. Different developers and times will yield different results, but so far as the film goes, this is all you can do.

3. **Print Exposure:** Next comes the process of printing. You can vary the way in which the paper is exposed. Matters not whether you are enlarging or contact printing. You can further manipulate print exposure by dodging and/or burning, and you can adjust the paper contrast, either by paper grades or by using VC papers.

4. **Print Development:** The only other control you have during printing is the choice of developer, dilution, time, and maybe some additives. But in reality, these are the only two fundamental controls available for making prints.

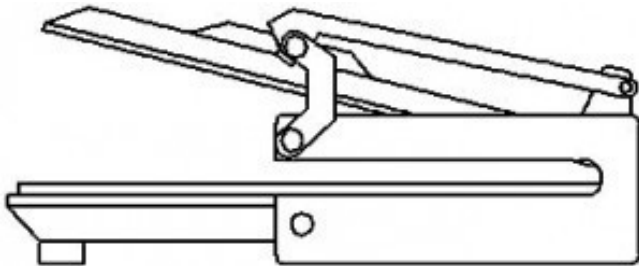
**Certainly there are numerous smaller adjustments and techniques that can be employed in B&W photography, but these four major areas are where you start. Anyone that tells you traditional B&W photography is difficult, simply does not have a good understanding of the process. If you are interested in delving into traditional photography, do not be intimidated. It is not that difficult. What is difficult is learning the subtleties that make the process beautiful.**

**You need to begin with the fundamental steps. You can only learn by doing. Fred Picker said, “you can learn to talk about something by talking about it, but you can only learn to do something by doing it.” These four basic areas are where you start. Then proceed to fine-tune your technique as necessary. You will soon find that you can easily control the basic processes and develop a photographic approach that suits your vision.**

**JB**

# Dry Mounting Photographs

This entry was posted on June 15, 2009.



To dry mount or not. . . that is a question? This debate seems to roll on forever. Sort of like Ford or Chevy? Is there really a correct answer? I have made my choice.

For me there is nothing that comes close to a properly dry mounted photograph. Once I made my choice, all I had to do was learn the process. I worked out a method that gives me what I like, and if you are interested in dry mounting your photos and have never learned the process, I have a little booklet that details my procedure.

This is not the only way, it is just my way. . . and. . . if you are interested, it is FREE!!! Take a look [HERE](#) for “DRY MOUNTING PHOTOGRAPHS” pdf download.

## A DIY SENSITOMETER... REALLY???

This entry was posted on July 31, 2013.



Film testing is one of those things that is just a fact of life if you, like me, choose to continue to pursue that art form. I am no fan of any testing, that is for sure. But, there are times you have to test in order to better understand how things will work.

I never thought I would ever need a sensitometer, but never say never. To compare different film developer formulas, I found that I needed to run some tests. In order to make the test I needed to expose numerous sheets of film and expose them all identically. What I needed was a film sensitometer. What I did was build one. This project was not as difficult as I first expected and most everything I needed was laying around, either in the closet, or the junk box.

I wrote about my experience designing and building a DIY Sensitometer back in 2009, then shelved the article where it has remained dormant since. Well finally, I drug the thing out and put it up on our web site. Interested in learning more about building a film sensitometer? Head over to the [ARTICLES & HOW-TO](#) area

of our web site, scroll down the page to the link titled, "BUILDING A FILM SENSITOMETER." You will see how I did it, and you may just want to try it yourself. . . if this is something you have a need for.

JB

# CALUMET SHUTTER SPEED TESTER LF UPGRADE

This entry was posted on December 2, 2011.



If you are lucky enough to own a Calumet Shutter Speed Tester, you know it is not exactly ideal for testing large lenses and shutters. I have owned one of these handy little devices for over ten years. I performed a modification/upgrade near ten years ago that makes the tester much more suited to testing large lenses and shutters.

This modification/upgrade is not difficult, but does require a little ingenuity and proficiency with a soldering iron. With a little planning and a good junk box full of odds and ends you can construct a remote trigger for the tester.

Follow the link [HERE](#) to our main web site which will take you to the ‘[ARTICLES](#)’ area and scroll down the page to download the PDF titled “CALUMET SHUTTER TESTER MODIFICATION: AN UPGRADE FOR THE LF SHOOTER.” This modification/upgrade has served me well over the years. Hopefully you will find this of interest also.

JB

## MAKING A LENS BOARD

This entry was posted on August 23, 2009.



If you own a wooden camera, be it a modern model or an old one, you will eventually need a lens board. The first thing most people do is try to find a suitable lens board from a dealer, off the internet or have one custom manufactured. But, did you know it is not that difficult to make your own. And, if you make it yourself you know it will fit!

Most modern wooden lens boards are made of solid hardwood and require three to four pieces of material to construct. Believe me nothing is more frustrating than to go through the process of fitting machining hardwood pieces to have them warp or crack. Also, nothing looks worse than a piece of birch plywood painted black.



So, what to do? I say make your own using plywood. Correct. . . Plywood. It will not warp or crack and is easily obtainable. All you have to do to make it look decent is to veneer the outside with the same

wood as your camera and finish it. You will not be able to tell the difference from the solid wood boards.



Take a trip to your local woodworking store, or search on line, for some high-laminate birch plywood in the nearest thickness to the lens board that your camera uses. Hobby shops also sell suitable high-grade plywood. You will also need a few pieces of veneer of the correct type. I cross laminate the veneer and it looks just like the multi-piece hardwood boards. Look on the Internet for tips on wood laminating, it is not that hard to do.

Carefully measure an original lens board and using a saw and router duplicate the profile and sand to fit your camera.

The hardest part is drilling the hole for the shutter. Here you will need a Forstner bit that is the closest to the size of the shutter you intend to mount. Remember that most shutters are metric, so choose a drill that is just under the desired size. You can then use a round file and sand paper to adjust the fit.

Once you are satisfied that everything fits, it is time to finish the board. I black the back of my boards along with the light trap offset and edges. I use black India ink which penetrates the wood and dries to a flat, non-reflective finish. Only the veneer front requires a fine finish. I use varnish, you can use spray acrylic if you like. You may have to apply stain to match your camera, experiment on a scrap of veneer first.



It is really easy to make your own high-quality lens boards. The last time I did this I made about six blanks and I still have extra undrilled boards on hand.

JB



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Each volume of **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY** is derived from years of past writing on the [jbhphoto.com](http://jbhphoto.com) **BLOG**. These are short articles about advanced wet darkroom, film and view camera techniques. Each volume contains selected writings about a specific topic.

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This e-book series has been created for those interested in the traditional large format film photography practiced in the wet darkroom.



All four e-books are available for immediate download to your computer. Please visit our Book Store;

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