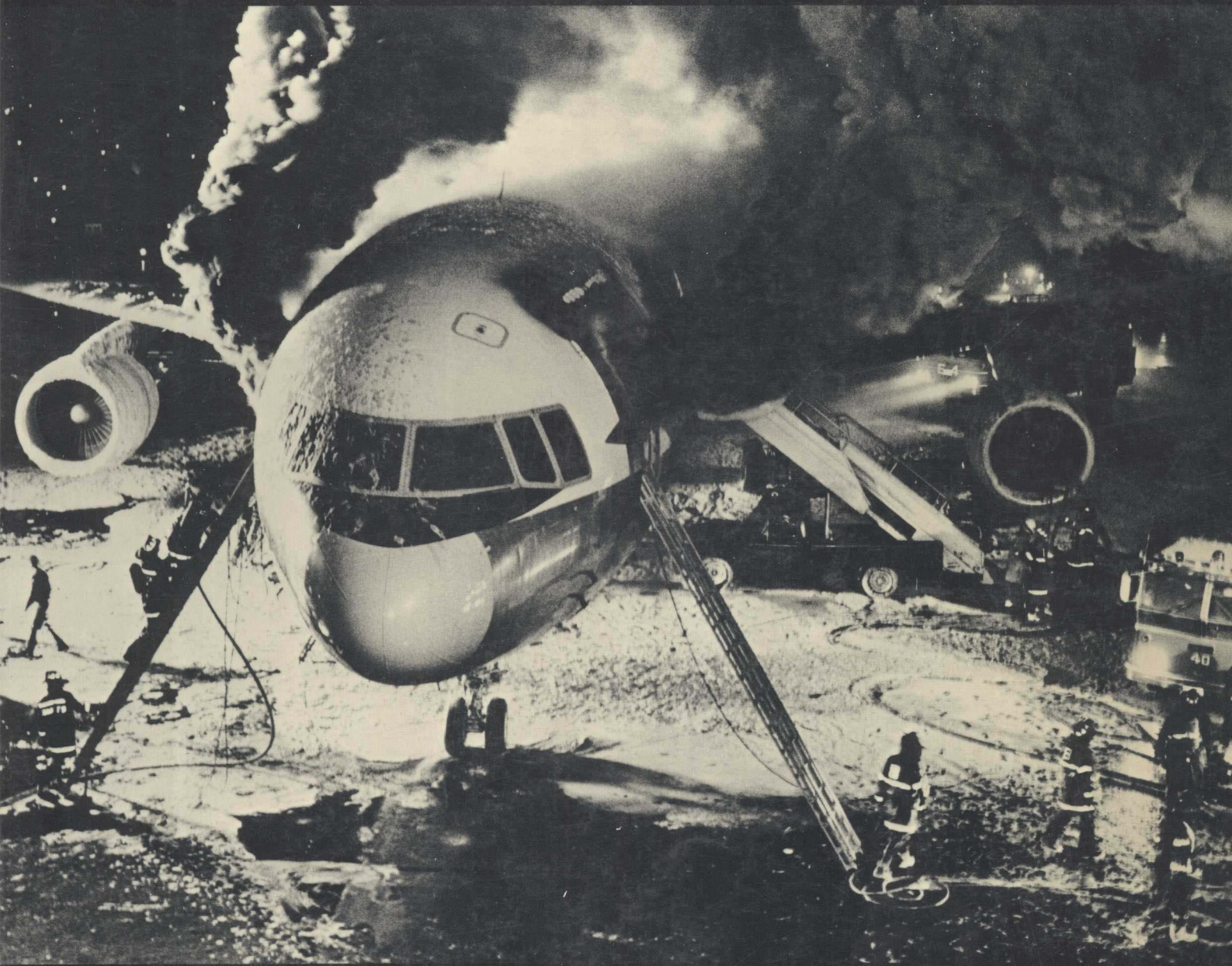


Photojournalism

The Professionals' Approach



Kenneth Kobre

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PREFACE

Today's newspapers and magazines publish more pictures than ever before. This explosion in picture usage is partly because of the growing number of new periodicals. Along with the rebirth of *Life* magazine, many special interest magazines are hitting the newsstands. Home-delivered suburban newspapers also are multiplying; because of their use of offset printing, these papers are running better and bigger photographs. The result of this mushrooming growth in printed picture display means more opportunities for employment of free-lance and staff photojournalists, photographers who can tell a story with their cameras.

Photojournalists report with cameras; their job is to search out the news, recording it in a visual form. As a photojournalist, with your scanner radio tuned to the emergency frequencies, you must be ready to head for a three-car pile-up or a shoot-out in the fifth ward.

But photojournalists do not limit their photo coverage to tragedies. You might start your morning off looking for a way to pictorialize a government story about rising taxes. By mid-afternoon, you might change gears sufficiently to find a funny feature about a bird that smokes. You must be as adept at shooting the fast action at a football game as you are at handling the social lights at the garden club awards banquet. You might have to find time, between assignments, to work out a picture story on a crippled child learning to walk for the first time. Then, by the end of the day, you must develop and print your pictures before the 10 P.M. deadline.

Today's news photographers must combine the skills of an investigative reporter and the determination of a beat reporter with the flair of a feature writer. The resulting pictures do not merely supplement the news stories of the day as tangential illustrations or serve as ornaments to break up the gray type on the page. Today's photos represent the best means available to report human events concisely and effectively.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Dr. and Mrs. Sidney Kobre. Without their advice and guidance I would never have written this book. My father, who has been a reporter, editor, and professor of journalism for many years, helped to give the book a clear journalistic focus. My mother, who writes fiction, suggested many ways to improve the prose style of the manuscript.

Many people have read the manuscript and offered cogent suggestions; I greatly appreciate their time and effort: Don Black, photo editor of the *San Bernardino Sun-Telegram*; Carolyn Dow Dykhouse, graduate student at Michigan State University; John Faber, historian for the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA); Jim Gordon, editor of *Press Photographer*, the monthly magazine of NPPA; Don Holt, associate professor of photojournalism at Kansas State University; Frank Hoy, associate professor of photojournalism at Arizona State University; Robert Kerns, associate professor of photojournalism at University of South Florida; Thomas Richards, Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University; Ted Stanton, editor of the *Idahonian*; Joe Swan, professor of photojournalism at San Jose State University; Bela Ugrin, chief photographer of the *Houston Post*; Kirby Upjohn, assistant professor of communications at Boston University; J.B. Woodson, Language Arts Department, West Valley College, Saratoga, California.

Photographers from across the country contributed photos to this book. The visual variety in the text would be absent without their generosity. Many pictures also came from present and former students, whose constant interest in the project and contribution of photos have proved invaluable. Sandy Shriver, Phyllis Graber-Jensen, and Michael Maher helped make some of the enlargements for the book.

Ken Harwood, Dean of the School of Communication, and Campbell Titchener, executive officer of the Department of Journalism at the University of Houston, provided the necessary release time to finish the manuscript. Typing of the manuscript extended over several years, from the original transcribed interviews to the final draft. Typing help came from: Renée DeKona, Joy Lucos, Virginia Marciano, Charlotte Rogers, Karyl Scott, Annita Suarez, and Etta Walsh. Special thanks to Christine Womack and Margi Fleishman for their many hours of work. Mary Pettibone, Boston University reference librarian, helped check the factual information in the text.

My editor, Barbara London, has taken the time and patience to smooth out my writing when the technical sections became less than clear. My production editor at Curtin & London, Nancy Benjamin, has survived many changes in the layout to produce a strong visual book. The book owes its clean design to Katy Homans. Dennis Curtin's enthusiasm and encouragement helped make this book possible.

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND EDITORS INTERVIEWED

- Eddie Adams** Associated Press, Pulitzer Prize winner, Photographer of the Year
Jim Atherton *Washington Post*, Political photographer
Bruce Bauman *San Jose Mercury*, Photo editor
Hal Buell Associated Press, Assistant General Manager for News Pictures
Timothy Cohane Emeritus Professor of Journalism, Boston University
Gordon Converse *Christian Science Monitor*, Chief photographer
E. Joseph Deering *Houston Chronicle*, Photographer
John Dominis *Sports Illustrated*, Photo editor
Ted Dully *Boston Globe*, Feature photographer
John Durniak Formerly with *Time* magazine, Photo editor
Harold Edgerton Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Developer of the electronic strobe
John Faber National Press Photographers Association, Historian
Ed Farber Formerly with the *Milwaukee Journal*, perfected the electronic strobe
Marty Forscher Professional Camera Repair Service, President
Ron Galella Paparazzo
Arthur Grace Sygma, Free-lancer
J. Walter Green Associated Press, Bureau chief
Russ Hamilton Cornell University, Public relations photographer
C. Thomas Hardin *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times*, Director of photography
Frank Hoy Associate Professor of Photojournalism, Arizona State University
Bob Kerns Associate Professor of Photojournalism, University of South Florida
David Krathwohl *Boston Phoenix*, Photographer
Chip Maury Associated Press, Photographer
Frank O'Brien *Boston Globe*, Sports photographer
Michael O'Brien *Miami News*, Photographer
George Reilly United Press International, Photographer
George Rizer *Boston Globe*, Spot news photographer
Don Robinson United Press International, Photographer
Frank J. Scherschel Formerly with the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Life* magazine
Pam Schuyler Author of *Through the Hoop: A Season with the Celtics*, Free-lancer
Rich Shulman *Everett (Washington) Herald*, Photo editor
Tom Smith *National Geographic*, Illustrations editor
W. Eugene Smith Photographer
George Tames *New York Times*, Washington Bureau photographer
Richard E. Thompson NASA, Chief of Photographic Technology Division
George Tiedemann Free-lancer, Sports specialist
Harry Trask Formerly with the *Boston Herald*, Pulitzer Prize winner
Bela Ugrin *Houston Post*, Chief photographer
Robert Wahls *New York Daily News*, Photo editor
Ulrike Welsch *Boston Globe*, Feature photographer
Dave Wurzel United Press International, Bureau chief

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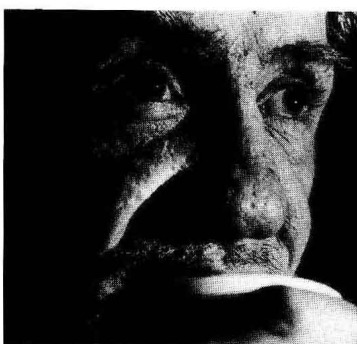
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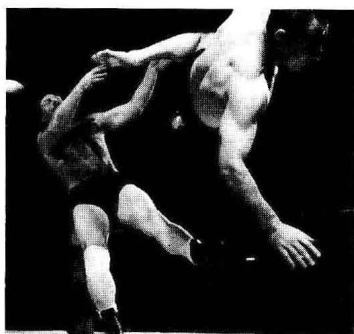
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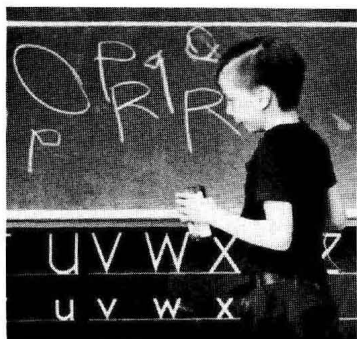
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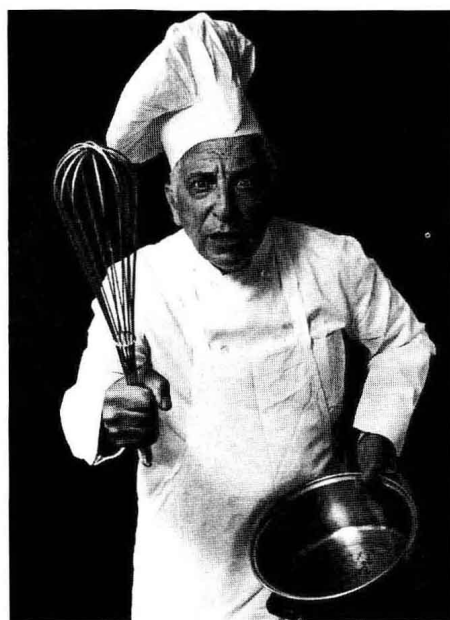
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Kenneth Kobre

Picture research by Bonnie Gangelhoff



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COVERING A FIRE: 1877–1980

**HALFTONE SCREEN
REPRODUCES PHOTOS**

**THE MAINE BLEW UP AND
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THE PHOTO ESSAY

PHOTOGRAPHERS ORGANIZE

**DISTRIBUTING PICTURES
ACROSS THE LAND**

**Chapter 1 by Ken Kobre and Julie
Levinson**



FROM FLASH POWDER TO ELECTRONIC FLASH: The Development of Photojournalism



Previous page: In 1948 a "portable" strobe was perfected and manufactured by Edward A. Farber for members of the Milwaukee Journal photo staff.
(George Koshollek, Milwaukee Journal)

COVERING A FIRE: 1877–1980

Photos into Drawings

On a balmy April day in 1877 the staff of the *New York Daily Graphic*, the first illustrated daily newspaper in the United States, conducts business as usual. Reporters labor to complete their copy in time for the morning deadline. Artists put the finishing touches on their drawings, which will comprise three and a half of the tabloid's eight pages.

In a makeshift darkroom, where a janitor stores mops and brooms, a lone photographer places 5" x 7" precoated, glass, dry plates into light-tight holders.

THE DAILY GRAPHIC

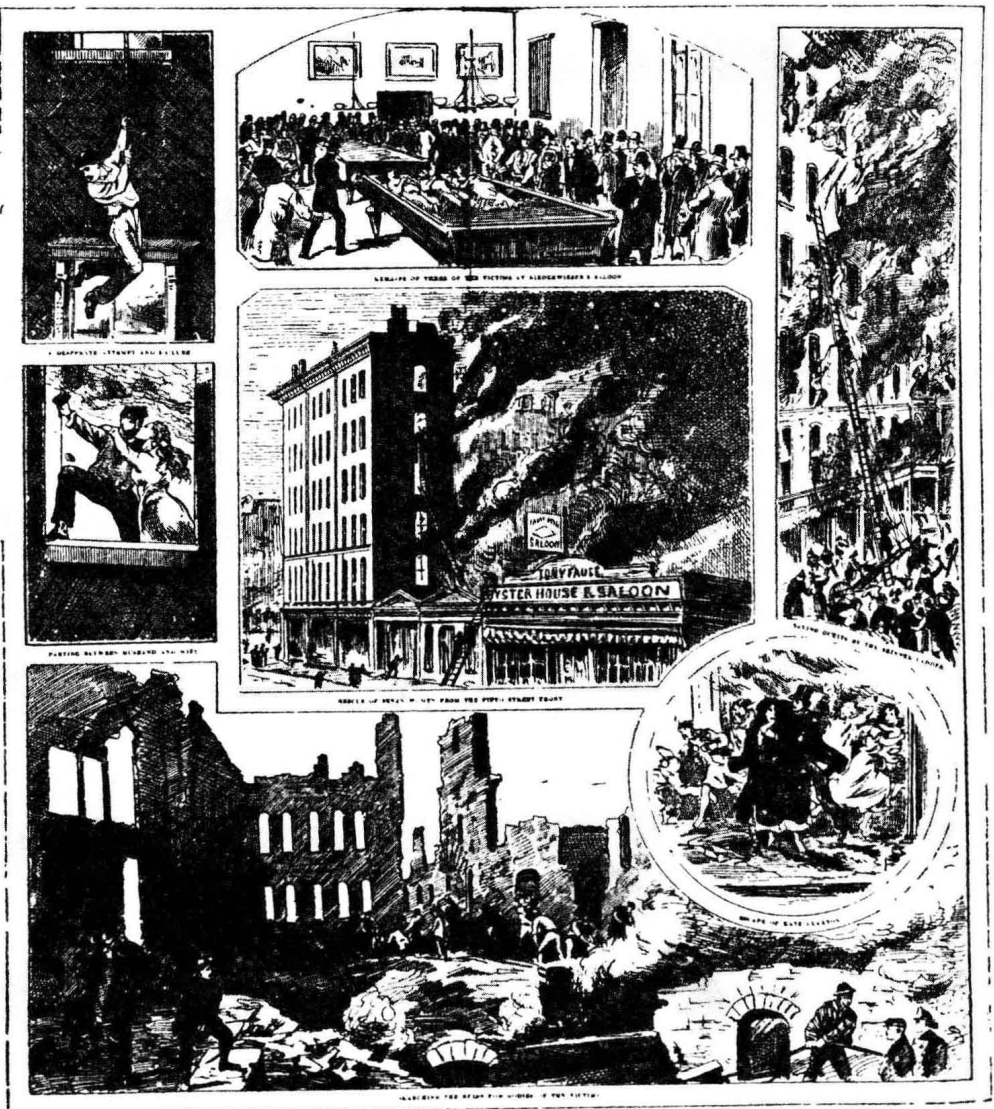
AN ILLUSTRATED EVENING NEWSPAPER

39 & 41 PARK PLACE

VOL. XVIII All the News
That's Worth Daily 1

NEW YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 16, 1877

112 For Year in Advance
Single Copies Five Cents NO. 1275



In 1877, the *New York Daily Graphic*, America's first illustrated daily newspaper, devoted an entire front page to five fire pictures. The *Graphic*'s hand-drawn sketches were often based on photographs taken at the news scene.

(New York Public Library)

The photographer is so engrossed in the delicate operation that he barely hears the sudden commotion in the newsroom. The cause of this commotion is a passing fire engine. For the staff of the *Daily Graphic*, whose every sense is attuned to such signals, the fire engine's clanging bell tolls news.

Several reporters drop what they are doing, grab pencil and paper, and dash out to cover the late-breaking story. Someone remembers to inform the photographer about the fire alarm; he, too, puts aside his work and carefully balances his cumbersome view camera and tripod on one arm and a case, containing twelve previously prepared glass plates, in the other arm. The *Graphic* cameraman sets off with his unwieldy load.

By the time he reaches the site of the blaze, it is raging full force. He sets up his tripod and camera as quickly as possible, points his lens at the action and takes his first exposure. Normally, he would take only one exposure, or perhaps two, of a given event. Because this is such a huge fire, however, he decides to expose several of his glass plates. He has only one lens, so, if he is to get different perspectives on the action, he must change his position, pick up his bulky equipment, lug it to the new spot and take the time to set up. He then covers his head and the back of the camera with a black focusing cloth. Next he opens, focuses, closes and sets the lens. Following this he loads the plate holder into the rear of the camera body and removes the dark-slide. Finally he takes the picture.

Before he can make the next photo he must replace the dark-slide and put back the holder into his case carefully. If he accidentally knocks the holder too hard, the glass plates will shatter. Unfortunately, the crowd continually jostles him as he works.

He attracts much attention because a news photographer is still a curiosity. But the *Graphic* photographer doesn't mind; he is particularly excited about the challenge posed by this event. Usually his assignments limit him to photographing portraits of famous people or carefully posed tableaux. Because of the technical limitations of his slow film (effective index E.I. 24), he can photograph only under optimum conditions, with bright light and minimal subject movement. On this day he is able to get some action shots by carefully panning his camera with the movement of a late arriving horse-drawn fire engine.

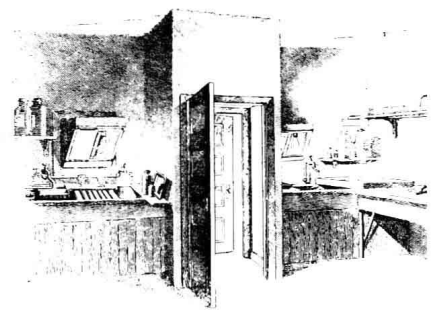
After several hours, the *Daily Graphic* photographer finishes making his twelve exposures, and by the time he packs his case, camera, and tripod, the firemen finally have the blaze under control. But as the photographer heads back to the newspaper office, weary from his physical exertion, his own ordeal has just begun. Now he must develop his pictures in chemicals he mixes from a formula that he got out of a copy of the *Philadelphia Photographer*, one of the first photo magazines.

Enlargers are not used commonly. The negative, a 5" x 7", is of sufficient size for reproduction when it is just contacted on photographic paper. More than an hour after he returned from the fire, the photographer had his first picture.

After all that work, however, the photo can't be printed in the newspaper.

The photographer now hands his pictures over to an artist, who draws replicas of them. Unfortunately, the artist often changes details from the original if he thinks the new variations improve the picture. The artist, in turn, gives his drawings to an engraver, who reproduces them onto a zinc plate. The plate is then printed on a Hoe rotary press.

As may be imagined, a good deal of time elapses between the hour of the fire and the moment when these line-drawn renderings of the photographs appear in the newspaper. Yet the drawings receive front-page play.



In this typical darkroom of the 1880s, negatives were contact-printed in the frames mounted to the wall on either side of the door.

Today's Photographer Captures the Human Side

One hundred years later, the great-grandson of the *Daily Graphic* photographer carries on in the family profession, but the profession has come a long way since the days of his ancestor.

As a photojournalist for a large metropolitan newspaper, our photographer's great-grandson keeps abreast of the news by listening to the emergency channels of a multiple-scanner radio. On another April day, this one in 1980, this photographer is tuned into the fire department channel while driving to work when he hears news of a two-alarm fire which has broken out in a residential neighborhood of the city. Immediately, the photographer calls his office on his two-way radio to say that he is on his way to the fire.

The photographer carries with him an accessory bag, which contains three lightweight, preloaded camera bodies, lenses ranging from 24mm to 300mm, and fifteen rolls of film, enough for 540 pictures—both black-and-white and color. Both types of film are fast, rated at ASA 400. His cameras have automatic exposure meters, so he is free to move quickly from dark to light areas without adjusting the f-stop ring. The motorized cameras allow him to take a rapid series of pictures, one after another. With a press of the button, the camera's aperture closes, the shutter opens and closes, the film advances and the aperture reopens, ready for the next shot. With his array of lenses, the photographer can stand in one place and shoot first the flaming building and then from the same position catch the expression on the face of a person climbing from a top-story window. Because of the versatility and portability of his equipment, the photographer can blend into the crowd unobtrusively and can capture different angles with an ease of movement that would have been inconceivable to his great-grandfather. Today, rather than being at the mercy of his equipment, the photographer is master of it, and he uses its technological capabilities to tell his story with accuracy and sensitivity.

Today's photographer focuses on the human side of the story. He photographs the onlooker's reactions to the fire, the physical and emotional strain of the firefighter's job, and the drama of a child being rescued. He presents both an overview of the building as well as those human vignettes that make a story memorable.

When the photographer returns to his office, he takes his rolls of film and feeds them into a Kodak Versamat Film Processor, which develops, fixes, washes, and dries the film automatically in 5½ minutes. He chooses a few shots and then enlarges and prints them on resin-coated photographic paper. In little more than 10 minutes from the time he walked into the darkroom, he delivers a finished print to the managing editor's desk.

The photo then goes to the engraver, who reshoots the picture through a halftone screen. Finally, the photograph is put onto a plate and reproduced on a high-speed offset press, printing copies of the newspaper at a rate of more than 40,000 an hour. The final newspaper image is a true facsimile of the original photograph and the original scene. Even though the fire occurred at 9 A.M., the picture can still appear in the afternoon edition of that same day's newspaper. If the event is newsworthy enough, the Associated Press, a news-gathering and distributing service, might buy the photo and send it all over the world via the AP wire service.

Evolution of the Camera Reporter

How did the photographer of 1877 evolve into the photojournalist—the reporter with a camera—of 1977? Two major factors contributed to this development. First, the technical innovations: the invention of roll film, smaller cameras, and faster lenses, and the introduction of portable light sources, enabled the photographer to shoot pictures more easily and get better results. The invention of the halftone process for reproducing photos and the improvement of printing

presses led to better reproduction of images. Meanwhile, with expansion of the wire services and the development of picture-transmission devices, photos could be sent across the nation and the world almost instantaneously.

The technological leaps made in photography in the past hundred years enable today's resourceful photographer to reach virtually any action anywhere and bring home a picture to the newspaper- and magazine-reading public. Because of these scientific and engineering discoveries, photographers can capture events previously impossible to shoot on film: night pictures, fast action, and successive motion now can all be recorded with the camera.

But technological strides are only half the answer to this evolutionary question. Photographers broadened the scope of news pictures by introducing to the newspaper feature and sports pictures. Photographers sought candid photos that revealed natural moments, rather than the posed, frozen images typical of early photo reportage. Photographers today do more than just record the news. They have become visual interpreters of the scene using their camera and lenses, sensitivity to light, and keen observational skills to bring to the reader a feeling of what the event was really like.

The ingenuity and inventiveness of the individual photographers in taking the photos also laid the foundations of modern photojournalism. From the days of the *Daily Graphic* to the present, photographers first have to figure out a way to get to the news event no matter where it is located, skyscraper or coal mine. Then they often have to work around obstacles, both physical and human. Once photographers have the picture, they face the pressure of the deadline. They have to get the picture to the darkroom and develop it in time for the next edition. The daring and cleverness of the early photojournalists represent the kind of personality traits that successful photographers have exhibited throughout the history of photojournalism.

Thus, technical advances and the imagination and resourcefulness of the photographer have gone hand in hand. The two have had complementary developments, each contributing to the gradual evolution of reportorial photography.

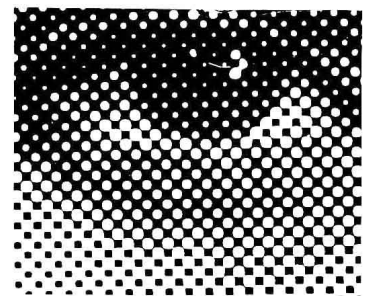
HALFTONE SCREEN REPRODUCES PHOTOS

Screen's First Use—1880

In 1877, our *Daily Graphic* photographer had little way of knowing that he stood on the threshold of a new age in photography. The next twenty years would see several rapid technological advances that would revolutionize the field of pictorial journalism, including light hand-held cameras, faster lenses, improved shutter mechanisms, and roll films. But perhaps the most momentous technological occurrence in the history of photojournalism was the development of the halftone printing process.

Before the introduction of the halftone process, there was no practical way to transfer the photograph directly onto the printed page. An ordinary press could print only blacks and whites—full tones—and was incapable of rendering the intermediate shades of gray, the halftones. As such, newspaper illustrations, based on artist's original sketches or photographs, consisted of black-and-white line drawings, hand-carved on wood blocks or engraved on zinc plates.

After years of experimentation, a method was found that could reproduce the full tonal range of photographic images. Still employed today, this process involves the use of a screen with an ordered dot pattern. This screen is held rigidly against a sensitized film in the engraver's camera. The engraver's camera copies the original photo through the screen, which breaks up the continuous tones of the photo into a series of tiny dots of varying sizes. The darkest areas of



Enlargement of halftone dot pattern, showing an eye.

The first photograph reproduced on a printing press. On March 4, 1880, this photograph of Shantytown dwellings appeared in the New York Daily Graphic.
(Henry J. Newton, New York Daily Graphic, courtesy of the New York Historical Society, New York City)

the original photo translate into a series of large dots. As the tones in the picture change from black to gradations of gray and white, the dots get progressively smaller. The engraver develops the film and contact prints it on a metal plate. The pattern of dots is chemically transferred onto this printing plate. On the press, the dots transfer the ink onto the paper; where they are largest and closest together, the image is darkest, and where they are smallest and farthest apart, the image is lightest. Thus, the resulting printed image duplicates the shadings of the original photograph. How much pictorial detail can be reproduced depends upon the fineness of the screen and the quality of the paper. By holding a magnifying glass up to any newspaper picture, you can easily see the tiny dot pattern of the halftone screen.

The *Daily Graphic* published the first halftone on March 4, 1880: a picture of Shantytown, a squatter's camp in New York City. Stephen H. Horgan, the photographer in charge of the *Graphic's* engraving equipment, produced the halftone. Although Horgan had been perfecting this process for several years, his successful experiment in 1880 did not immediately affect the look of the daily newspaper. His halftone invention, however, did encourage further experimentation.



Opposition to Photos

In 1893, four years after the demise of the *Daily Graphic*, Horgan was working as art editor for the *New York Herald* when he again recommended the use of halftones to James Gordon Bennett, the owner of the paper. After a brief consultation with his pressmen, Bennett pronounced the idea implausible.

Similarly, Joseph Pulitzer, who had been publisher of the *New York World* since 1883, also initially expressed reluctance to print halftones. In fact, Pulitzer feared that widespread use of any pictures, including line drawings, would lower the paper's dignity, so he tried to cut down on the extensive use of woodcuts, which had already made his paper famous. When circulation fell as a result, Pulitzer reconsidered his decision and reinstated the drawings.