

of forensics: Bill Baluk

COLBORNE CHRONICLE JAN 27/00

CONTINUED FROM
PAGE 10

His photographic skills were also required at post mortem, taking photos as coroners required. In the northern detachments, post mortem facilities were pretty primitive and unpleasant. In Belleville, things were palatial by comparison, he recalls, and he had high regard for the expertise and professionalism of the pathologist there.

"I would take all the evidence to the Crime Lab in Toronto. That's where all the evidence had to be catalogued and stored. I had to be able to say I had taken these photographs, that they weren't altered, that I had developed them and delivered them to Toronto. In Toronto, they would take possession of them there and then lock up all the evidence. and second"

It wasn't until 1954 Bill actually was assigned his own vehicle. Up till then, Bill would complete his scheduled shift and then, on his own time, make his way to the detachment of police force that requested his photo services.

"It was nothing to transfer three times from one detachment or police force to the next to get where you were supposed to go," he recalls.

As time went on, the photos of traffic accidents and accident scenes expanded to include autopsy and fingerprint photos.

"In 1952, the OPP sent me for a short course in Toronto on identification of all kinds with Dr. Ward Smith, head of the crime lab, and a Professor Rogers. We also learned how to neutralize explosives, how to gather evidence."

Blowing safes open with nitro-



PHOTO BY BILL BALUK
Self-portrait of Constable Bill Baluk in the 1950s. He holds the bulb to fire the camera's shutter in his left hand.

glycerin was a common method of thieves in search of cash. The young Bill Baluk would be called in to take photos of the crime scene - and neutralize the explosive material left behind.

"Nitroglycerin is extremely unstable and explosive," he recalls. "There were three ways to neutralize it: bang it with a hammer, and the hammer would fly up with the force; you could neutralize it with other chemicals, or burn it."

The use of nitroglycerine for robberies waned by the late 1950s. Bill thinks the criminals with the chemical expertise died or moved on with no one to take their place.

When Bill retired from the OPP April 330, 1980, he requested his work diaries be returned. Several months later, his request was granted. Today, Bill can leaf

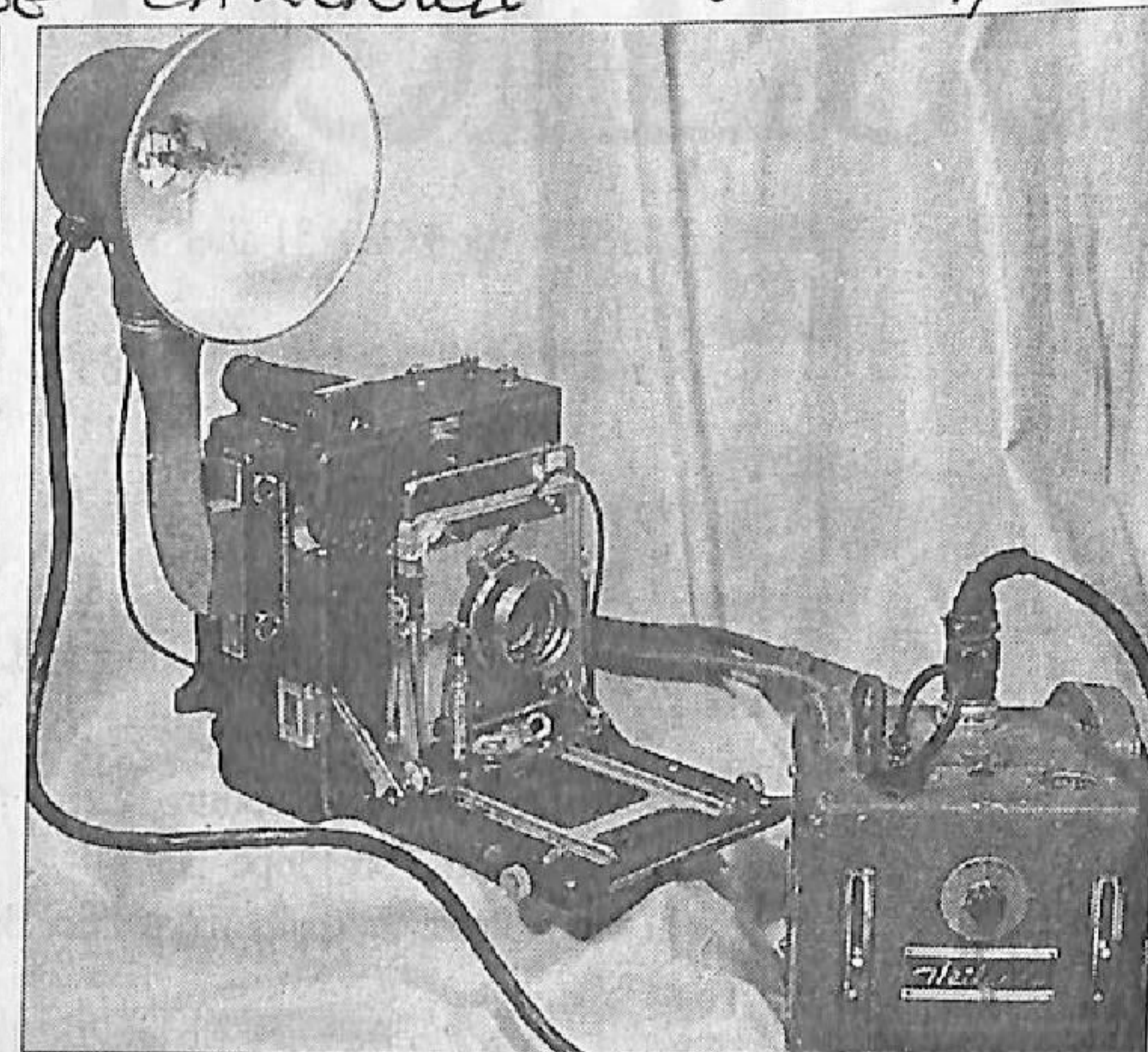


PHOTO BY BILL BALUK

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: OPP Constable Bill Baluk purchased his own Speedgraphic camera and wet cell battery pack to take photographs to assist in the gathering of forensic evidence. Missing from the picture are the large bulks of film, extra flash bulbs, meters and a 240 mm lens. In 1965, he traded the camera for a set of golf clubs.

through the daily calendars by year, jogging his memory, tallying the significant events of his police career.

There have been many memorable events. October 14, 1950, a Roseneath farmer was robbed of a significant amount of cash. The man had sold his farm and taken the proceeds to serve as a self-styled loaning agency in the community.

"In the spring of the year, some men had been in the area changing chimney pots. It was quite a scam, actually, because they overcharged. They charged this man \$600, and he peeled off the money

prisoner. There were five of them, one caught at Lakeport, two at the American border. But, only one man was charged."

Most of the criminals involved with the larger robberies were from out of the area, Bill recalls. In April 1951, he arrested three men passing counterfeit \$10 bills at Wicklow.

"The arrests were made possible because of Ed Barlow who operated a little gas bar in Wicklow. He was handed a \$10 bill, and they were well done, but there was something about the men that made Ed suspicious. He rubbed his finger over the bill and ink came off in his hand. The had stamped the franking marks on the bill. He phoned the OPP in Cobourg.

"The three men involved were just out of jail, one Australian and two from Toronto. They had 34 bogus \$10 on them. I nearly missed them, but I checked one last cigarette package and there they were."

LOOK IN NEXT WEEK'S COLBORNE CHRONICLE FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THIS ARTICLE.

from his roll of cash. Later that fall, they returned and robbed him. It was the first night of the Roseneath Fair, I remember, and they stole over \$8,000. The man wouldn't tell us exactly how much because he was scared of the income tax people.

"We did catch the robbers. I flew out to Winnipeg to bring back one