Staff Photo

"Staff Photo" pictures are available to readers at this office following publication each week. Glossy prints are obtainable in two sizes.

Photo Story on Photos

Free Press Enlarges Photo Dept.

New 'Scan-A-Graver' Added All Processes Now in Plant

Introduction to this newspaper of a Scan-A-Graver -- a photo electronic device which reproduces a photograph on a thin sheet of plastic for printing—now confines all technical phases of photo-news presentation in the plant

This week the pictures on this page, a page graphically tracing the processes, people and products involved in week-to-week photo coverage, are produced in the plant — from editorial idea, to photographers' record on film, to darkroom operator's transferrance as a positive print, to the Scan-A-Graver operator's reproduction on a plastic plate, then to the compositors and pressmen who mount the plate, lock it in a form which goes to the press minutes before the week's edition "goes to press".

To news column readers, to advertisers and to printing clients, the photography and engraving facilities now available to attest this growth mean a broader and better service.

Idea to Camera

Before the pictures of people, events, accidents or achievements ever reach the readers, and even before those pictures undergo their varied technical processes, they've been weighed and recognized for their news value. This is done in the editorial department of the paper. Then the photographer takes over.

For this newspaper photographers here are Jim Dills, upper left, John Black upper right, and Roy Downs, circle at right. They're trained to use expensive, high speed press cameras. Nearly $1,000 in camera equipment alone is handled each week by these photographers to take the pictures that appear in the publication each week.

The Darkroom Technician

Once the photographer's plates or films are exposed, the darkroom operator takes over. In our plant, Derek Milnes, shown at left, is a skilled operator who develops the film, then prints the pictures to a high glossy finish as is required in news photography. He works with chemicals, time clocks, trays and tanks, racks and hangers -and in semi-darkness, if not total darkness. His skill can soften or highlight, enlarge or reduce, alter or improve the prints he works with. Once the picture becomes a positive print, it's washed, and electrically dried. If speed is needed, it's possible to have a picture developed, printed and dried within minutes after it's been taken.

Scan-A-Graver Photo-Electric Eye 'Reads' Picture onto Plastic

The finished print moves from the darkroom to the Scan-A-Graver. In the photo below Dave Dills has just completed 'scanning' a photograph and is checking it for 'color'. His machine, after being set, works automatically. As can be seen, there are two cylinders. The photograph is around the cylinder at right and a sheet of plastic around the left cylinder. Over the cylinder with the photograph is a photo-electric cell which 'reads' the light and dark areas of the picture as the cylinder turns. Over the other cylinder holding the plastic is a motor with a hot steel tool which burns out craters in the plastic. The size and depth of these craters, as decided by the photo-electric cell, determines the size of the dots which will carry the ink. These dots, as anyone examining a newspaper picture closely would see, make up the entire picture—in areas that are white or gray there appear hundreds of small black dots; in the darker areas the black dots get larger until there are white dots the same size between them; in the blackest areas there are very small white dots, or none at all. In this way the photo color is 'broken up' in dots of various sizes which give the illusion of several shades of gray. In printers' lingo this type of plate is called a 'half-tone'. The Scan-A-graver, developed by the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation of New York, has only come into use since World War II although its conception dates back to 1899. It has gained wide acceptance, particularly among newspapermen. Cost of plate production for newspapers is far below the expense involved in having plates made by former photo-engraving methods used. The Scan-A-Graver is leased by the Fairchild corporation to newspapers buying the service. Because it is basically an electronic machine, it requires periodic expert attention and modifications in order to keep it up to date. Under lease arrangement, Fairchild supplies these services and others, enabling smaller newspapers to compete in picture coverage with larger dailies without making a large capital investment.

File System Retains All Films and Plates

All pictures that have appeared in the paper are kept on file. The prints are not necessarily retained, but all negatives are filed and indexed. In a few moments, any negative of a print, although printed five years ago, can be found and reprinted for reproduction or sale. Above Kay Dills places negatives of prints in last week's paper in a file drawer. Also retained are the plastic plates, taken off wood bases and filed in an envelope. They are light and easy to handle, often with a whole week's plates weighing no more than a few ounces and taking less space than two sheets of the newspaper folded three times. Any pictures which have appeared are available at the office in two sizes, 5x7 or 8x10. Pictures are printed on glossy finish paper and usual delivery is within a week of ordering. All negatives are the property of this newspaper.