

Today's cameras demand craftsmanship

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At a desk surrounded by a bizarre collection of tools (some of them home-made), electronic gadgetry and shelves of cameras of several shapes and sizes, an unusual one-man industry carries on in Halton Hills with the same demanding craftsmanship for which watchmakers are famous.

Late last year, 39-year old Boddie Docker arranged an interesting workshop in the basement of the Halton Camera Exchange on Georgetown's James Street. Now, while veteran photographer Peter Moss lavishes sound advice on customers who have dropped in to poke around his collection of new and used equipment or to pick up prints, unaware to the people upstairs, Mr. Docker is probably getting to the roots of some problem with a faulty camera. He works with the patience and precision of a bomb disposal expert.

An East German native, Mr. Docker told The Herald recently that he has always had a passion for tinkering with the most intricate pieces of photographic equipment. Years ago while boating on a lake, a friend's camera was accidentally dunked in the water and it looked as if a quality Kodak Retina was on its way to the big photographic museum in the sky.

"But I said, 'Give it to me; I'll take it apart and take a look at it,'" Mr. Docker recalled. "So I took it apart and well, it was very rusty. I worked on it for three months, and you know, the camera is still working today."

SITS DOWN
When Mr. Docker sits



While Halton Camera Exchange's Peter Moss tends to customers upstairs, Boddie Docker (above), 39, tacks intricate camera repairs downstairs at the store's James Street, Georgetown, location across from Mackenzie's Bulldozer. Mr. Docker has trained and worked for precision camera makers in Europe and his talents now put to use in Georgetown assure customers

fast repair and a well-tuned second-hand camera inventory. He can fix movie cameras as well as single-frame 35-millimeter and larger format cameras. The shop downstairs also contains several pieces of electronic testing equipment for photographic equipment.

(Herald photo)

down to unravel a mysterious undoing in a camera, he calls upon a wealth of mechanical knowledge picked up when he trained as an apprentice on precision instruments and then worked for several world-renowned camera manufacturers. About 12 years ago, for example, Mr. Docker was the service manager of a Swiss planetarium. Anyone who has visited the Toronto's own McLaughlin Planetarium

can appreciate the skill required to keep the enormous special effects cameras operating. He has worked in a West German Leitz factory and is skilled in repairing "large-format" cameras which use four by five-inch or eight by ten-inch negatives. Returning occasionally to Europe, Mr. Docker has been working in Canada since 1964 and before deciding to move his business to Georgetown, he

was the owner of Precision Camera in Etobicoke. "By doing the work right here in the store, customers save time and money," Mr. Docker said. "Sometimes we can get the camera back in about 24 hours. If we have all the parts we need in the store, there is usually no problem getting the repairs done quickly."

Having a local camera repair shop is a bonus to Halton Hills residents, especially those avid enough to keep their equipment in good shape and those who feel lost if they have to send their cameras in for repairs which, at many other outlets, means a three-week or longer wait. **PART-TIME** Mr. Docker and his three part-time helpers repair precision-35-millimetre single lens reflex (SLR), rangefinders and larger-format equipment, as well as projectors and

movie cameras. Smaller, less technical cameras like Instamatic-126 and 110 formats, he said, should be sent to the manufacturer for repairs and often it may be just as cheap to replace the faulty camera.

Never, he stressed, should an unqualified person attempt to solve a camera problem. This may only cause more expensive damage. Having retained connections with Precision Camera, Mr. Docker said lens trouble or particularly thorny problems with the camera body (which may need custom-made tools) are sent there instead.

The small workshop is authorized to service Copal shutters, Schneider lenses (found on quality movie cameras) and Beaulieu motion picture cameras. In addition to making basic repairs, Mr. Docker can

make custom modifications to equipment, including "winterizing" cameras to perform to specifications even in bitterly cold weather.

Behind his desk, which bristles with an assortment of small tools, are electronic shutter testers, light boxes and synch testers. As a "connoisseur" of cameras, he scoffs at equipment introduced these days which goes "beep beep" and requires little photographic sense from the user. He marvels at the insides of an old, yet still perfectly precise, Leica.

Acknowledging that these electronic cameras are relatively simple to repair (sometimes it's only a matter of replacing a chip) they are "less exciting" than the clockwork

machinations of older, quality cameras. In a nutshell, Mr. Docker complains, "there is so much garbage on the market these days", although some of the "computerized" equipment is getting more people involved with the versatility of shooting with better cameras. Like so many other products which have a bewildering array of models to choose from, cameras require a lot of consideration before a purchase is made. Having just past its first anniversary in Georgetown, Halton Camera Exchange has ensured that customers think before buying and with Boddie's basement workshop, there's added ease of mind knowing that any problems can be serviced quickly.

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