

The International Ihagee/Exakta Convention, Dresden April 2012 (2)

by Mark Stuecheli (most illustrations are photos taken by the author; a few are mine HR)

Afternoon, Day Three: Opening Presentations



After Hugo dropped us off near our hotel, Jim and I grabbed a quick lunch and headed to the Technical Museum for the first round of presentations. They were held in the Technical Museum in a large meeting room just below the Pentacon Tower. A balcony outside the room provided some nice views of the adjoining districts.

Hugo Ruys had set up a very large display of a wide range of Ihagee and Exakta material – cameras, accessories, manuals

and oddities. Those items were placed in display cabinets around the edges of the meeting room. Other attendees displayed miscellaneous items of general interest. I have included in the Photo Gallery several shots of the meeting room and the displays.



Over 70 people attended the meeting. They came from as far away as New Zealand and included Exaktaphiles from Great Britain, France, The Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia, Austria, Denmark, a very large contingent from Germany (not surprisingly) and, of course, us two Yanks from the U.S.

As I mentioned earlier, this was a bilingual meeting. Typically, a short portion of the discussions took place in German first, followed by a translation into English, and then the process was repeated. Klaus Rademaker and Olaf Nattenberg took on the extremely difficult and stressful task of translating the German presentations into English. In some cases the presenter spoke for a short while and then gave the translators an opportunity to translate. In other situations, the presenter kept speaking and speaking... resulting in the translator having a herculean task to repeat all that had been said.



Herbert Blumtritt began the presentations with a detailed description of the history of Ihagee. He is a Dresden resident and the former head of the Department of Information and Documentation at the VEB Kamera-und Kinowerke Dresden. He has produced an extensive document titled “Pictures and Documents from the Ihagee Camera Factory in Dresden” and offered a few copies for sale at the meeting. It is written in German and includes his history

of Ihagee and a collection of several interesting documents and photographs.

Next up was Dr. Wilfent Dalicho, who donated the Nüchterlein plaque and spoke a few words of welcome. His talk was followed by a break, during which we were able to stretch our legs and get some fresh air on the balcony, take a closer look at Hugo’s extensive and wide-ranging displays, and hobnob with the other Exakta lovers in the room.



The final presentation was delivered by Hartmut Thiele, an expert on the German camera industry. He has written several books on German lenses that include extremely comprehensive lists of serial numbers and production dates. He has accomplished that by being granted exclusive access to the archives of those manufacturers, sometimes after years



of pleading and cajoling. He published a special book just for the 100th Anniversary celebration of Ihagee entitled “100 Years of Ihagee 1912-2012 – Exakta Lenses”. It includes over 100 pages of information, written in German, beginning with short discussions of each of the major German manufacturers. The majority of the book consists of a listing of each of the lenses that were produced by each manufacturer, in many cases their dates of manufacture, the number of lenses produced in each production run, and serial number ranges. He covers lenses made for not just the Kine Exakta, but also the VP Exakta, and the pre-

war and post-war Exakta 66. I purchased a copy, as did several others, and was lucky enough to have Hartmut inscribe mine. Even though it is written in German, I can follow most of the it because the majority of the book consists of tables listing serial numbers, dates, etc. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, it and many of his other books are available at the Lindemanns website: <http://www.lindemanns.de/shop/photobookshop/uusuch5011f9644d291.php>.

Later that day, we attended the opening ceremony for the special Ihagee exhibit in the lower level of the museum. It is entitled “Exakta Throughout the World: the Dresden Camera Work Ihagee” and runs through November 4. The speakers included Roland Schwarz, the Director of the Museum; Dr. Andreas Krase, the curator who put together the exhibit; and Arend Dijkers, the head of the Steenbergen Foundation. Because we know very little German, for us it was a matter of listening to a lot of speeches with limited comprehension. So we were happy to head back to our hotel relatively early and counted on visiting the exhibits the following day when the crowds were gone.



Mr Schwarz, director of the Museum



Mr. Krase, museum custodian & Mr Dijkers, Steenbergen Foundation

Morning, Day Four: Camera Fair

Early on Saturday morning we were excited to see what types of special gems we could locate at the Camera Fair that was set up at the Museum of Transportation in the City Center. It's in an historic building located in the middle of a collection of several other historic structures, including the famous Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady). We had hoped to get in early, based on our connection to the Ihagee Convention. Unfortunately, the staff had not received that word and were extremely efficient at enforcing the 10:00 a.m. start time, despite the best efforts of Alan Hopwood to convince them otherwise. We spent our unexpected free time chatting with our fellow conventioners at a sidewalk café.



I ambled over to the adjoining Frauenkirche and took a few photos. As I mentioned in an earlier post, it was rebuilt after having been a pile of rubble for over 50 years. Special care was taken to catalogue every piece that was recovered and, if possible, reuse it in the reconstruction. The original stones can be identified by their black color - an indication of their patina from hundreds of years of exposure to the elements, but also, perhaps to a certain extent, due to discoloration from the firebombing. It makes for a

very unique appearance of the building. I regret not having had the time to go inside, which I'm sure would be very impressive.

Shortly before we entered the Museum, Jim took a shot of me next to a large banner that advertised the Camera Fair. And while we were waiting in line, I took another photo of an advertising sign for the Fair. Both of those pictures are in the Photo Gallery.



The wait was worth it. Once we paid our admission fee (which included the right to tour the museum), we headed to the Camera Fair on an upper level. As we started into the tables we spotted one very interesting sight – the famous Exakta Diamant prototype in a case by itself. I understand that QF Photo had recently purchased it at an auction and offered it for sale at a very high price (10,000 euros) - supposedly so that it would not sell. As you may recall, the Diamant was Ihagee's early attempt at designing an eye-level finder. It is one-of-a-kind, therefore explaining its high value.

Among the normal selection of various collectable cameras was the largest display of Ihagee and Exakta cameras offered for sale that I have ever seen in one location. Of course, several of the exhibitors were attendees at the Exakta Convention, so that should not have been a surprise. We browsed the stock, and Jim made several purchases, including a sweet stereo attachment outfit. I just looked and didn't buy - maybe not wanting to have to haul my purchases around for several days afterwards. After a couple of hours of "fairing"

we took a tram back to our hotel.

Before we headed to the afternoon sessions we took an opportunity to view the special Ihagee exhibit at the Technical Museum. It included several display cases of Ihagee products and related equipment and material. The most noteworthy items included a prototype Elbina Super



and a unique and artfully presented scrapbook from Ihagee's heyday showing various shots of the employees at play. Some of the photos included Werner Wurst, the longtime head of marketing for Ihagee and the author of several publications on the Exakta.

The exhibits were assembled from various sources. At least one of the Convention attendees contributed (Klaus Rademaker), as shown in one

of the photos in the Photo Gallery.

Dr. Gerhard Jehmlich, former head of the Pentacon R&D department, wrote an article on the history of Ihagee (in German) for the 100th Anniversary celebration. Michael Spencer has translated that paper into English, which is available on Hugo's website at <http://www.ihagee.org/Dresden2012/jehmlich.pdf>

Day Four - Afternoon and Evening.

That afternoon we attended the final round of presentations. The first presentation was made by Lothar Quaas on the steps in the assembly of an Exakta (ably translated by Klaus



Rademaker). Lothar began working for Ihagee as an apprentice in 1941 and stayed with the company for decades, so was a first-hand witness to much of the history of Ihagee.



He began his presentation by noting that each apprentice started their career with Ihagee by constructing their own personal tools. He displayed his own tools. Lothar used a partially disassembled body to demonstrate in great detail each of the steps in the assembly process of an Exakta VX11a. In addition to the photo of his tools, I've

included a shot of his prototype Exa Varex, which he brought to the meeting. It had been machined out of brass and as a consequence was extremely hefty. I've also inserted two historical photos from the Ihagee factory that were passed around during the presentation.



Because the larger meeting room was much too bright for any type of presentation involving a projector, for the last two presentations we relocated to the cinema room where the lighting could be controlled.



Olaf Nattenberg's presentation on Ihagee West included quite interesting original company documents and photos of the factory floor. He presented a timeline of the short life of the company and reviewed the various reasons why it failed. As noted in Exakta Times Number 85, his presentation can be viewed on his website: www.exaktapages.com.

Hugo Ruys' wrap-up session was on the life of Johan Steenbergen. It began with Johan's childhood in the Netherlands and proceeded through his final days. He included several photos that I had not previously seen - including one that showed Hugo's father meeting with Johan in the 1960's! He also showed a home movie of consul Johan taken in Emden and an audio clip of Johan speaking - another first for me.

As we headed out from our hotel on our way to the closing banquet, we ran into another Convention attendee, Gerhard Deubel, a German, who was uncertain as to the way to the banquet. Despite the fact that none of us spoke the other's language, we put our heads together, determined the correct tram line and travelled together to the restaurant. The banquet was held at a restaurant in the downtown area that revolved around an historical theme, complete with servers in period costumes, and was a quite unexpected treat. The Steenbergen Foundation covered the cost of the buffet meal, which included a suckling pig. Once again, it was an opportunity for us to converse with other collectors about a wide range



of topics. We even saw one of the Exa girls, who had been included in one of the promotional flyers for the Exa IIb.

Arend Dijkers from the Steenbergen Foundation closed out the evening by thanking all of us for coming to the Convention. We have very fond memories of that night and the rest of the Convention.



The next morning I took a train to Winterthur, Switzerland to visit my relatives and Jim stayed in Dresden for a few more days. We later got together for a short stay with Michael Spencer in Scotland and then headed back to the U.S.