

# Jack Hannes.....and a couple of Box Cameras.

Roger Burrows.

The tall poppy syndrome is alive and well, even in the photographic collecting game. I'll wager very few of us have much in the way of Hanimex branded items in our collections but we should, even if only as a token gesture to a quite remarkable man.

Jack Dieter Hannes was born in the year 1923 on April 12 in Berlin. From 1934 he attended Buxton College in Derbyshire England until 1939 when he and his family fled Germany and travelled to Australia arriving here at the age of 16. He enrolled at Sydney University where he studied mechanical and electrical engineering graduating with degrees in both. He worked for a couple of years for STC (Standard Telephone Company). He went back to University and studied economics while lecturing in physics. From this snapshot of his life it can be seen he was a very disciplined and driven person, one who was going to succeed.



Jack Hannes. 1982.



Durst Duca.

Jack developed an interest in photography and researched the various European companies who were starting to get their act together after the war and soon started an importing arrangement with an Italian Company. He imported sun glasses, Duca cameras and Durst enlargers, the Duca (apparently derived from **DURst CAmera**) being the first 35mm camera imported to Australia after the war. It used the Agfa Karat film system. Seeing the potential and also liking the industry Jack incorporated a company and with a staff of three set up business above a newsagency in Sydney. He called it Hanimex. The name being derived from **HAN**nes **IM**port and **EX**port. When creating a brand name it is very important to make it simple and easy to say. When George Eastman was looking for his brand name he researched many languages to make sure that the name was

inoffensive and easy to say in all of them and not even similar to any other word in that language. Looking at the word Hanimex I dare say it would have filled most of George Eastman's criteria. In the first year and at the age of only 24 the turnover of the company was £25,000.



Some of the early Hanimex product range.

Jack was having trouble getting people to sell his product because there were very few retailers and Kodak had tied most of them up forbidding other brands to be stocked in their shops. Needing more capital he persuaded a friend, John Howie, to invest £20,000 in the company and become a partner in the business. In 1952 he took a trip to Europe and secured the agencies for Finetta, Iloca, and Futura

in Germany and Praktica from East Germany. He also opened his first overseas branch in New Zealand. He next started to import the consumables, flash globes from Wotan and projector globes from Osram.

In 1954 he went to Japan, one of the first Australians in the photographic industry to do so and secured dozens of agencies including Nikon. In 1956 after the government introduced import restrictions it limited the stock he was able to get and one of the answers was to build Argus projectors under licence. Jack travelled to Ann Arbor in the USA the headquarters of Argus to get a deal to assemble Argus projectors in Australia. He came away with the Argus Agency for Australasia and the dies for making the Argus 75 camera. This was duly produced and proudly bore the label 'Made in Australia'. All this was done on the shake of a hand, a sign of the man and a sign of the times. In 1957 the company Hanimex Corporation was listed on the Sydney and Melbourne stock exchanges.



*Projection Lamps branded Hanimec.*



*Argus Seventy-Five.*

In 1958 he convinced Boots Chemists in England to buy 10,000 projectors and in 1960 Dixons placed an order and within 3 years had sold 40,000 units. During the 1960s Hanimex established factories in Ireland, the USA, Hong Kong and Japan and established offices all over Europe and was listed on the London stock exchange. By the 1970s Hanimex was the second largest manufacturer of projectors in the world and employed over 2,000 people. The brand was sold in more than 70 countries. By the mid-1960s Hanimex had its own design department and had achieved 24 patents.



*The Jerry Arnott designed 110, opened.*

Though mostly relating to projectors, one related to a 110 camera. This camera had push pull advance and cocking system like the Minox. A later



*The VEF 110 and flash.*



*Fuji film and x-ray products quickly became top sellers.*



model also incorporated electronic flash with a tele and wide angle lens built in.

Jerry Arnott was the designer and he was also responsible for the Reflex 35. This was a fixed lens 35mm reflex with built in flash and was also another first.

One of the important agencies that Jack brought back to Australia in 1954 was that of Fujifilm and this turned out one the most enduring and profitable of his many deals. He received many awards in his lifetime, the Queen's medal for services to Australian industry and membership of the Japanese Photo Industry Association, the only non-Japanese to do so. Jack resigned from the company in 1982 having managed it for 35 years and growing it at a cumulative rate of 20% per year. Jack resigned because the main share-holder at the time, Burns Philp and Co. stacked the board against him and he

was unable to run the company as he wished. In 1989 Gestetner Corp. bought the company and in 1996 it was Ricoh. In 2004 Fujifilm stepped in and bought the company as a wholly owned subsidiary and owns the rights to the Hanimex name. Kind of fitting really.

Jack died of a heart attack in a restaurant in Zurich on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2005 surrounded by his family. Here we have the life of a very interesting man who influenced photography not only in this country but all over the world and we hardly give him shelf-space. Hanimex is a brand that made a difference and would have, via its various products, started a lot of Australians along the road to the enjoyment that is photography.



*Who wouldn't remember (or have used) these Hanimex branded items?*



*Small, simple and fast turnover.*

The next part of this story is about two makers of cameras that featured in the beginning of Hanimex. We all know the Duca but there was a camera made by Fototecnica of Turin and another by Vredborch of Germany.

**Ed.'s Note:** *During my years as a technical sales rep, I spent a number of them with Hanimex in Port Melbourne. One story I well recall was when they were setting up to manufacture La Ronde projectors in Ireland. The Paddy in charge of the injection moulding machine for the rotary slide trays was fitting the master mould, (worth a squillion and the only one they had) into the machine when he dropped it, shattering it into a thousand pieces!*



*The La Ronde Rotary Slide Tray.*

*Fujifilm product was a rep's dream. For years Kodak had monopolised the market in both X-ray and the D&P (photo processing) fields, taking the attitude, "we're the only band in town, you'll dance to our tune!" All I did with the former was walk in to see the radiologist at a given hospital, give them a sample packet of Fuji x-ray film and when I came back they were rapt! Here was a product with far better contrast and much better coating, not one sheet in the entire pack required a repeat. Result: One new client for myself and Hanimex.*



*Eiki 16mm Projector.*

*Another winner was the Eiki 16mm projector. Education Department approved, auto threading (which worked), this was a solid and wonderfully reliable machine. To go against the competition of the time with one of these was a 'no brainer'. The Eiki won hands down every time.*

*On the D&P scene, one of the worst things for a processing lab is printer downtime. When a paper roll runs out and a new batch has to be started, that printer is out of production while the new paper emulsion is tested and balanced. And that is a serious loss of production revenue when these printers would be knocking out prints at the rate of many thousands per hour. What I was able to offer with Fuji paper, over and above Kodak, was not only a top quality product but a unique service. When paper is*

*manufactured, it is coated on to a 50-inch (127cm) wide roll, 7,218 feet (2,200 mtrs) long. These rolls are referred to as Jumbos. From these, the various roll sizes, 3½", 5" etc. are cut down in slitting machines. For a Fuji client, Brookvale would devote an entire Jumbo (or more) to them, slit to their requirements! Held in the freezers at Brookvale and shipped as needed. No more rebalancing printers for around 6-months to a year! All I needed to do was say....."Just sign here please."* Ah yes, them were the days!

**Ian Carron. Ed.**