

Fried-Louis Studio Commercial Photography

A Yonkers Success Story for Over Fifty Years



A Personal History by Michael S. Goldfarb

It all began in 1946, when World War II veterans Sidney **Louis** Goldfarb and Fred **Fried** decided to open a photography business in Yonkers. After becoming friends in the Army, the two budding professional photographers had searched for a storefront in Manhattan, but rentals at the time were few and expensive. Fred had family in Yonkers, and he had heard that there were plenty of stores available right on South Broadway.



Sidney and Fred exhibiting their portrait work while still in the Army, 1945

Prehistory



Sgt. Sidney Goldfarb, US Army Air Corps

Sidney had grown up in Manhattan, working in his parents' candy store in the East 60s. Always interested in theater and the arts, he began to study photography at a WPA-sponsored course given at the 92nd Street Y in the late 1930s. He was immediately bitten by the photo bug. Along with his friend Jack Menkren, he became a dedicated amateur photographer and participated in various camera and darkroom clubs around New York City.



Late 1930s photo by Sidney of his father Morris in the family candy store

Sidney was at loose ends after high school. Knowing that America would eventually enter the war in Europe, he enlisted in the Army a few months before Pearl Harbor. Although he started out in the Army Air Corps as a mechanic, he soon gravitated to photographic work. He spent the last portion of his war service running an Army darkroom (staffed by civilian women) in Gulfport, Mississippi. In

his free time, he was also a regular visitor to the arts scene in New Orleans, and even had a gallery exhibition of his work there - street photography of *View Carre*.

Fred Fried had been born in Germany. He had to come to America in the mid-1930s when his parents fled Hitler's regime, settling with wealthy relatives whose forbears had come to New York during the first influx of German Jews in the 1800s. Fred has also been bitten early by the photography bug, and when he met Sidney in the Army they immediately hit it off. As their skills became more accomplished and the end of their time in the service loomed, they planned to go into the photography business together.



Sgt. Theodora Ruderman, US Marines

Theodora "Teddy" Ruderman entered the picture shortly after Sidney and Fred came to Yonkers. Sidney vividly recalls their first meeting: "I was playing pool with my buddies at the Jewish Community Center on South Broadway when a beautiful woman in a Marine uniform stuck her head in the door and shouted, 'Hey, what do you guys do for excitement in this town?!'"

Teddy had grown up in Brooklyn and Elmsford, a feisty only child who had been a "liberated woman" right from the start. Her prewar experiences included playing lead trumpet in a jazz band called The Melodears, teaching music on several instruments, doing clerical work at Reader's Digest in Chappaqua, and riding her very own motorcycle. She had spent her war service at El Toro Marine base in southern California working her way up to sergeant, and having assorted wild adventures on the West Coast.

Sidney and Teddy hit it off at once, and they were engaged within a few months. They married in 1948. Although she was a frequent presence in the Studio, it was initially just Sidney and Fred's business. Teddy had begun going to NYU on the G.I. Bill.



Engagement party, 1947 (photo by Fred)

The Early Days

The Studio's first location was on the second floor of the Davis Building, on the east side of South Broadway just north of the intersection with McLean Avenue. It would remain there for four years. There wasn't very much paying work at first, but there was lots of time for learning the realities of the business world, and for practicing and perfecting their photographic skills. Sidney also attended the School of Modern Photography in Manhattan during this period. (He's often said, "Out of my whole graduating class, I'm probably the only one who went on to a lifetime career in photography.")



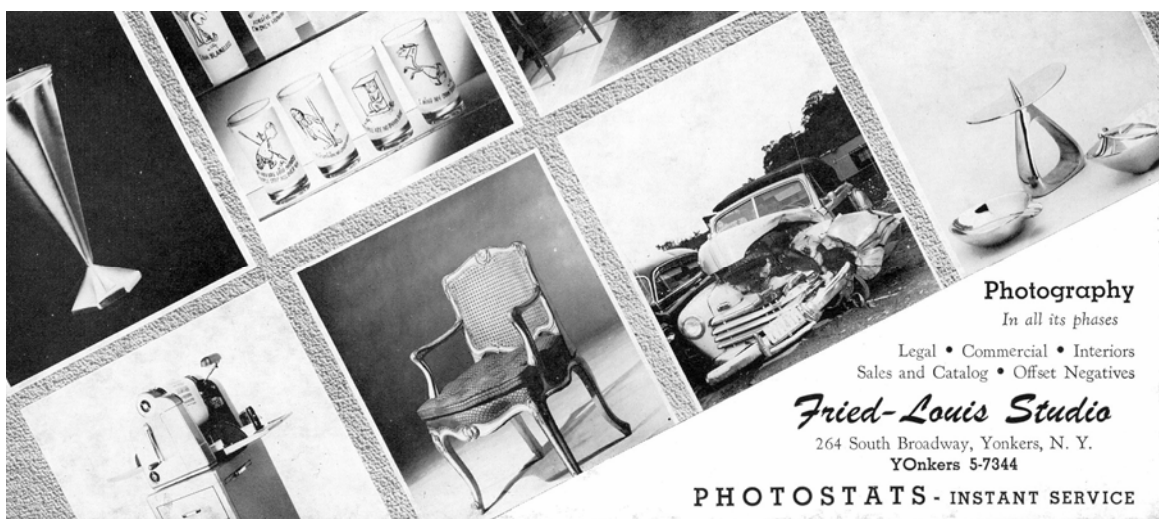
Dramatic self-portrait by a newly pro photographer: Sidney in the late 1940s

At first, Sidney and Fred took on any assignment they could find. The source of the Studio's eventual focus on commercial work came when Ralph Miele, who imported furniture under the business name Cassard-Romano, showed up needing some chair samples photographed. It was on this job that they learned many of the rudiments of angles and positioning commercial product shots, and Sidney credits it as their first regular commercial client. (They would continue photographing chairs regularly for

catalogs for nearly twenty years.) Other early customers included Burkhart, who manufactured novelty plates and other porcelain products. There were soon other new customers too: Sidney credits their one-eighth-page Yellow Pages ad proclaiming “Photography In All Its Phases” as the source of many significant customers over the years.

The Studio turned out to be the perfect place for evening parties for Fred and the Goldfarbs’ circle of friends, most of whom were returning servicemen who congregated at the Jewish Community Center, and then were later active in the Jewish War Veterans (where Sidney served a term as president a bit later on.) Almost all of them were living in tiny apartments, but the Studio boasted enough space to nosh and dance. The parties began humbly as Saturday afternoon get-togethers where friends would drop by to visit and listen to ballgame on the radio: someone would run out to get some cold cuts. But these eventually escalated into well-attended evenings.

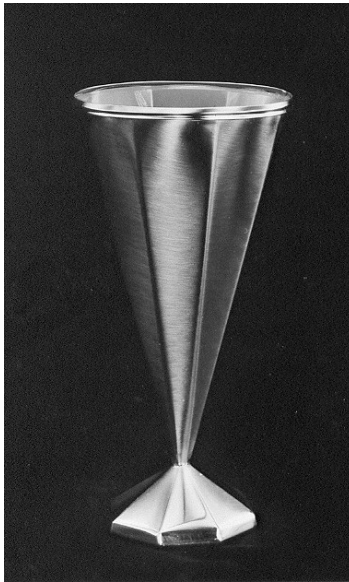
Money was scarce, but energy and excitement ran high. Many of the Goldfarbs’ best friends date to these times, including Abe and Judy Geisner, Buddy and Mina Baron, and Harold and Helen Freitag. (Other classic Goldfarb friends like the Perris and Meretzky’s wouldn’t come along until the late 1950s, when everyone had babies.) In fact, as these couples (aside from the Geisners, who were a bit older and had married before the war) got married, they turned to the Studio for their wedding pictures - and later on, for baby pictures. The fact that the Studio was Jewish-run marked it as different from the other established photographers in town, and word got out among the Jewish community, soon bringing an influx of customers.



Business-envelope-sized stiffener card, early 1950s (address of the Studio’s second location)

At first, the Studio did all kinds of photography - portraits, weddings and bar mitzvahs, baby photos, product shots, insurance-case evidence photos, state liquor license documentation, publicity portraits, and whatever else came along. While Yonkers had several other working portrait and wedding photographers during these years, nobody else was doing the commercial product-shot work. This gradually became the main focus of the business.

(A notable sideline that also developed was graphic arts photography – litho negatives and halftone veloxes used to create offset printing plates, or silk screens, in the case of the Excelsior Transparent Bag company. Several print shops in South Yonkers came to depend on the Studio for their litho negs, as did the local community of commercial artists who often needed their type and paste-ups resized.)



4x5 product shot, early 1950s

New Partner

Fred Fried decided to leave Yonkers in 1950 and join relatives in his own photofinishing business in Albany (which was ultimately extremely successful.) Teddy quit going to NYU and shifted over to the School of Modern Photography, and she was soon Sidney's full-time partner at work as well as at home. One of her specialties was negative retouching and print spotting: this was difficult and exacting work done with fine brushes. With her background in clerical work and college experience, all the billing and bookkeeping was also exclusively her province from this point onwards.

Since the business was finally beginning to establish a name for itself, Sidney and Teddy decided to retain the Fried-Louis name, rather than modify it to "Sidney Louis Photography" or "Gold Photography." (Of course, this led to *countless* instances of having to explain the origin of the unusual name in the years to come!)

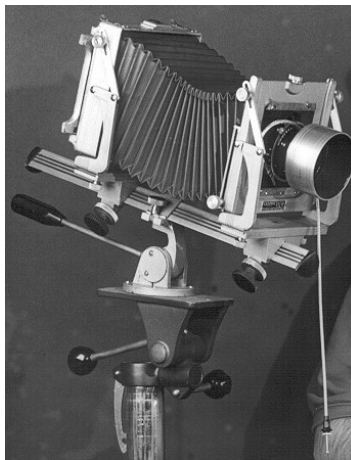


4x5 product shot, late 1960s/early 1970s

At about the same time, the Studio moved to its second location, 264 South Broadway - on the same side of the street, but several blocks north, almost directly across from Highland Avenue. As with the first location, this would last for about four years.

Tools of the Trade

In terms of the photo equipment used, American-made 4x5 sheet-film cameras were the order of the day. At first, Graflex SLR and Crown Graphic press cameras. Eventually, the primary camera used for nearly everything was a Graphic View II purchased in the early 1950s (and still in very usable condition today!) This workhorse view camera was used daily for over forty years, and produced countless b/w images of great detail, as well as gorgeous color transparencies. It was also a beautiful piece of 1940s art deco industrial design, and very ruggedly built out of aluminum, brass, and steel. The ground glass had to be replaced once, and some of the interchangeable lenses have occasionally developed shutter problems, but apart from that, it never failed.



Graphic View II 4x5 camera - the workhorse foundation of the business, 2000

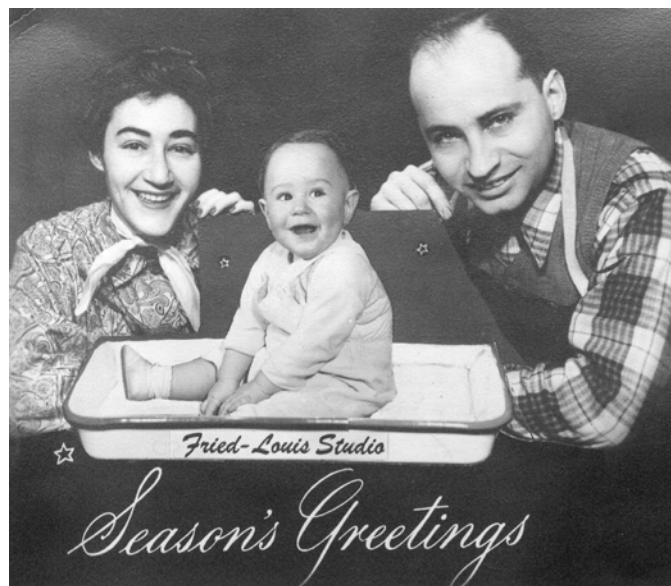
From early on, a rather unique lighting approach to b/w product shots was one of the Studio's hallmarks: multiple fluorescent lights created a crisp, clean look. These banks of fluorescents were bought in the late 1940s as army surplus; they were originally used to illuminate aircraft runways. (Like much of the Studio equipment, these were extremely well made, intended to survive rough conditions: they still function today.) A variety of "hot lights" - huge "mogul base" bulbs, 500-watt photoflood bulbs in reflectors, and assorted theatrical spotlights - were also used when greater overall illumination or a more dramatic presentation was required. Flashbulbs were rarely used after the wedding business ended, though starting in the 1960s, electronic flashes would be used when necessary.

There were also always some twin-lens reflex cameras that used 120 roll film in the Studio's arsenal. First, an American made Ciro-Flex, and then starting in the early 1960s, a series of medium format cameras from the respected Japanese manufacturer Mamiya. The first was a used late-1950s Mamiyaflex C (bought from Sidney's old buddy Jack Menkren when he returned to the USA after living in Australia for many years), then in the late 1960s, a more sophisticated C330, and in then the early 1970s, an RB-67. The RB-67 was a somewhat different kind of medium-format camera, a single-lens reflex producing rectangular (as opposed to square) negatives. These medium-format cameras were mostly used for things like catalog work - when lots of pictures would only reproduced at very small sizes, not requiring the detailed resolution of a 4x5 negative.

There were other cameras on hand too: several rarely used larger 8x10 and 5x7 view cameras, and a British 4x5 Linhof knockoff called a Lloyd. One of the 8x10s was a huge circa-1910 Ansco which was ultimately fitted with a reduction back for shooting ID pictures on 2-1/4 x 3-1/4 sheet film. But the only 35mm cameras in evidence before the 1960s were stereo cameras for making 3D slides - and these were purely for fun: just family and vacation pictures.

Goldfarbs: The Next Generation

Son Michael (the author!) came along in 1955, dead-center in the postwar baby boom. Theodora went back to work nearly full-time relatively quickly, as her mother was living with them then and could handle much of the daytime child care. Since everyone was having kids at that point - and many were also in struggling businesses - this was really not too unusual, despite our TV-family perceptions of the 1950s today.



1956 holiday card - Teddy, Michael, and Sidney

Growing up in the Studio was a *unique* experience. There was all kinds of fascinating machinery to play with, not to mention an ongoing parade of unusual products to be photographed to examine, and an always interesting array of people passing through. But it wasn't just fun: the seriousness of running a family business seeped in early. Michael was assisting after school almost every day by the 7th grade - loading 4x5 film holders, developing film, making prints, working the print dryer, holding lights or reflectors, being a hand model... It was actually very convenient: from Hawthorne Jr. High School, it was a shorter walk to the Studio than to the house.



*The author at play, circa 1958
(note the huge Ansco 8x10 sheet-film camera, and copying frame with flat lighting, behind)*

Daughter Linda was born in late 1957, and she was also eventually put to work. Though she never took to it to the extent that Michael did, she helped with plenty of negative retouching, print developing, reflector holding, hand modeling, etc. Linda later had a distinguished career in book publishing, notably as a senior production manager for Random House. She credits her graphic arts work at the Studio as important pragmatic and inspirational background that served her extremely well in her years in publishing.

A Yonkers Institution

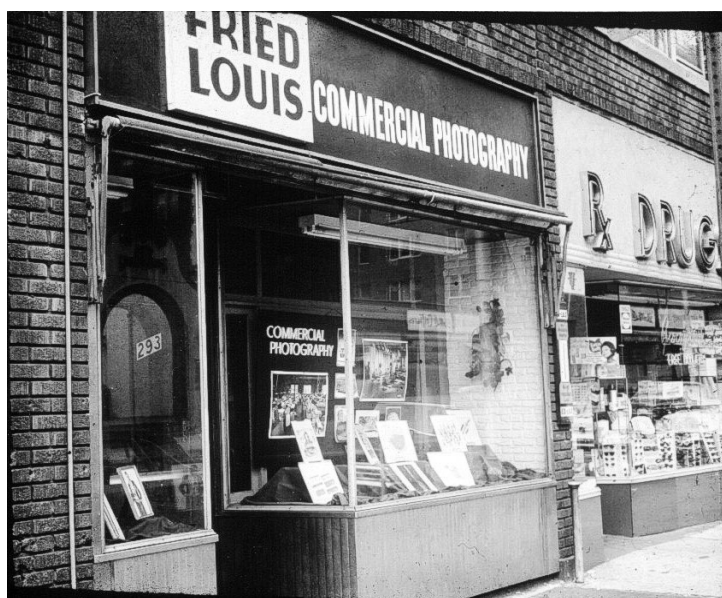
By 1955, after almost ten years in business, the Studio had moved to its longest-lasting location, 293 South Broadway, on the west side of the street just north of Ludlow Street. It was situated between Gigi's Italian restaurant (later China Inn Chinese/Spanish restaurant) and Marcioni's drugstore. The Studio would remain here for 28 years. This was the *classic* Studio!

— **Fried-Louis Studio** —

— **"photography in all its phases"** —

293 SOUTH BROADWAY • YONKERS, NEW YORK 10705 • YOnkers 5-7344

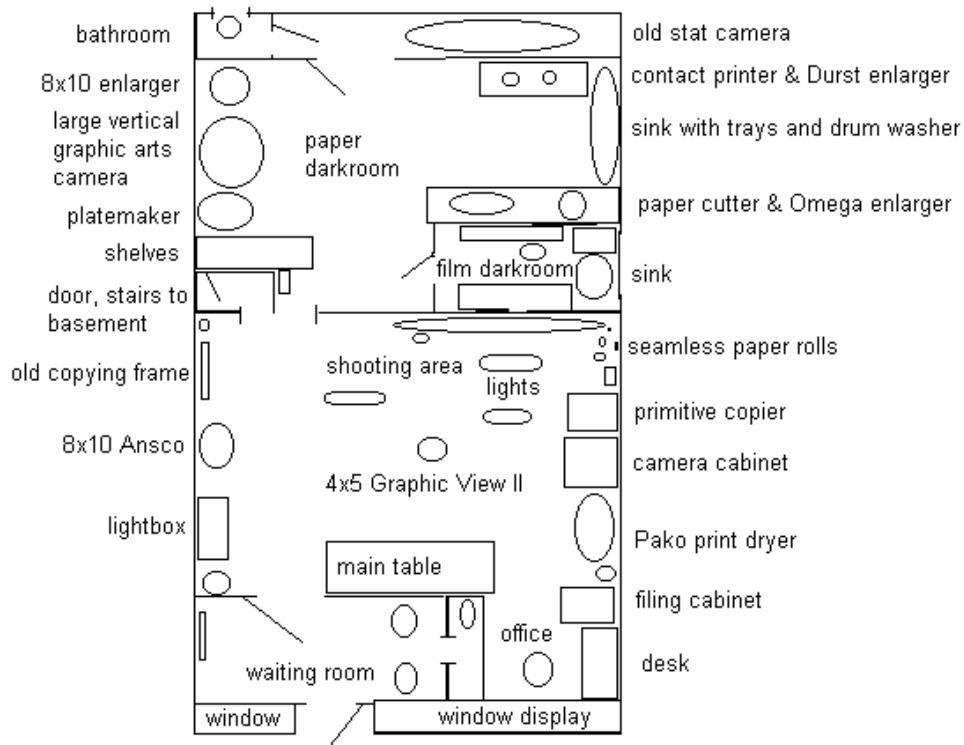
Return address logo printed on 9x12 kraft mailing envelopes



293 South Broadway, circa 1968

The layout of the Studio was as follows:

- Just behind the display windows and front door was a customer waiting room with a couple of chairs and a mirror, and a door to keep folks from wandering into the shooting area. To the right was a tiny office area with a pass-over window open to the waiting room. A desk and filing cabinet, some shelving, and the cash register from the old Goldfarb candy store were somehow squeezed into this small space.
- Behind this was the large shooting area. The outer edges of this open room were ringed with other work stations used for retouching negatives, drying prints, making copies (with a series of Xerox-machine knockoffs), storing equipment and backgrounds, and packaging finished work. There were also shelves and boxes loaded with already photographed objects that had never been picked up by their owners: a female mannequin head, a bottle of Moxie soda, lots of metal grids, odd-shaped pieces of Styrofoam, books, and all kinds of small decorative pieces and gadgets. At the back left corner, a curtained doorway led to the darkrooms, and a locked stairway down to the scary basement.
- Through this doorway and immediately to the right was a small darkroom just for film developing, and directly behind it, a larger darkroom for printing. The print darkroom included three enlargers, two contact printers (one actually an offset printing plate-maker), two vertical graphic arts cameras, and a large sink with a drum washer that held hundreds of prints. A massive paper cutter, dozens of boxes of photographic paper, enlarger lenses, chemistry storage, etc., took up all the free space.
- At the very back was a tiny narrow room with an old, rarely used stat camera, and a small, dingy bathroom. The bathroom included a fascinating fungus on the wall that grew, changed colors, and otherwise mutated over the course of several years.



Layout of 293 South Broadway Studio (not to scale)

We Need Assistants!

By 1954, with Fred gone and Teddy pregnant, Sidney realized that he would need to take on an assistant to handle the growing workload. The first assistant was a woman named Renee Saluppo, who worked part-time for several years.

Renee was succeeded by Ronny Frehm, a teenager whose father had approached Sidney at a Jewish War Veterans meeting saying that his son was graduating from high school, but was at loose ends and not really college material. Ronny subsequently worked at the Studio for several years, developing his own photographic skills and an interest in newspaper photojournalism. He had always wanted to be a fireman, but was too physically slight to be considered. Following this interest as he became a better photographer, he got a radio tuned to the emergency band, and made a practice of running out to photograph fires as they were fought - especially dramatic night fires. Soon he was a stringer for the Herald Statesman; eventually, he parlayed his skill into a full-time position with the Associated Press.

By the time that Ronny left, the author was of an age to begin helping around the Studio. Michael ultimately worked after school and during school vacations for over a decade. (Beginning at \$5 a day for a couple of hours of after-school work, and ending at \$250 a week the final summer.) When Michael got his first full-time job in Manhattan in late 1978, the Studio was again without an assistant.

For a couple of years, a woman named Barbara Rohrlich worked as an assistant part-time. She did it to learn from Sidney and Teddy's many years of experience and took no salary, as her husband was very successful, owning several of the first Athlete's Foot sneaker franchises in Westchester. By the time that Barbara stopped working in the Studio, it was 1980. The kids were through with college and working, and between the reduced financial strain and the Studio's workload beginning to slow slightly, an assistant was no longer required.

The Passing Parade

The Studio always boasted a fascinating collection of *characters* coming and going. All the local commercial artists came in to get their type resized and position prints made for their paste-ups. Some of these people were bohemians or borderline beatniks: virtually all of them were interesting and unique. Goldfarb friends who worked nearby also dropped by constantly, and regular customers were always coming by to drop off work, pick up work, or just hang out and schmooze.

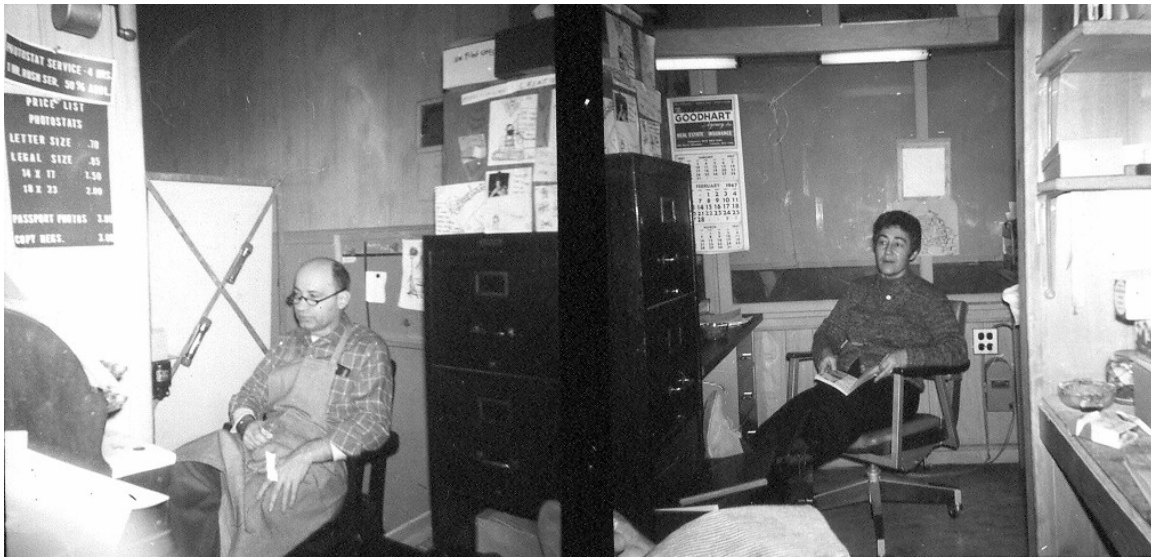


*Eastchester-based commercial artist Arthur Wise, 1968
(note print dryer behind and takeout coffee from Bloom's Luncheonette)*

Among this crowd was fellow Yonkers portrait photographer Joe Wiener (whose own studio was a bit down Broadway near Post Street); commercial artists Shirley Liebers, Fred Cassens, Arthur Wise, and Fred and Elaine Streitfeld; family friends Julie Chaiken and Abe Geisner; crazed inventor Dr. Kronstein; fine artist Bogden Grom; writer/artist Peretz Kaminsky; Electronics for Medicine tech writers Perry Benson and George Whalen; Norwalk-based advertising exec George Taube, and many others.

Afternoon Break

About three hours after lunch, Sidney and Teddy (and whoever else was on hand, either for work, or just for kibbitzing) would sit down for a fifteen-minute snack break. Gaucho peanut-butter cookies and potato chips (in huge tins delivered by Charles Chips) were standard fare, often with coffee and fountain sodas from Bloom's Luncheonette down the street. This was also a chance to assess the workload and plan the rest of the afternoon, consider options for dinner, etc.



Two views of afternoon break, 1967 (note that the same filing cabinet appears in both views)

Most often, Teddy would go across the street to the A&P or Meatland for a quick shopping run before she left to go home and make dinner - typically around 4:15 or 4:30. (Linda usually went directly home after school, but Michael spent most afternoons working at the studio during his days at Hawthorne Junior High and the old Yonkers High.) Sidney usually locked up at about 5:30 or 5:45, in order to be home for dinner... which with the Goldfarbs, was *always* at 6:00!

On Location

Location shoots were a standard aspect of the business. These could be as simple as going out with a Nikon to shoot a liquor license photo for some restaurant, or a full-day event that required carrying a huge amount of equipment: the 4x5 camera and its massive tripod, lights, film holders, light meters, a backup camera and lenses, extra batteries and film. Some customers, such as Electronics For Medicine in White Plains, had sufficient work for several visits over the course of a given year.



Sidney shooting on location with the Graphic View II, 1968

Important customers in the 1960s and 1970s included North Yonkers-based pharmaceutical maker Anahyst, Hanco, Sau-Sea Shrimp Cocktails, Decro-Wall, Federal Offset Printing, Louis Adler printing, Radford Press, the Excelsior Transparent Bag Company, Superex headphones, Hodes-Daniel

advertising, Wrona Metal Products, Harvey House publishing in Hastings, North White Plains-based (and later Pleasantville-based) Electronics For Medicine, and the Lillian Vernon catalog and Farberware cookware in Mount Vernon.



4x5 product shot, late 1970s/early 1980s

Enter 35mm

Single-lens reflex 35mm cameras finally entered the picture in a big way in the early 1960s, by which point the Nikon system had established itself as a worthy tool for pro photographers. The first camera purchased was the original “junior” Nikon body, the Nikkorex F, with a 50mm f/2 lens. While mostly used for family pictures at first (primarily color slides), it soon proved optically sophisticated enough for some purposes, like NY State liquor license photos for bars and restaurants, and catalog pictures that would be used at very small sizes. Within a couple of years, a Nikkormat FT - Nikon’s much improved “junior” Nikon, this time including a built-in match-needle light meter - was purchased. Soon there was also an even better Nikkormat FTN, and by the late 1960s a Nikon Photomic FTN.

Eventually, a full series of Nikon lenses complemented these bodies: several 50mm f/1.4 “normal lenses,” 28mm f/3.5 and 35mm f/2 wide angles, the remarkable 45mm GN automatic flash lens, the mega-sharp 55mm macro lens, the magnificent 105mm f/2.5 portrait lens, and the not-very-sharp-but-still-sometimes-useful 43-86mm f/3.5 zoom. (The zoom actually got more use for color sides shot on family vacations, since it was equivalent to carrying a slightly wide angle, normal, and slightly long lens in a single lens.)

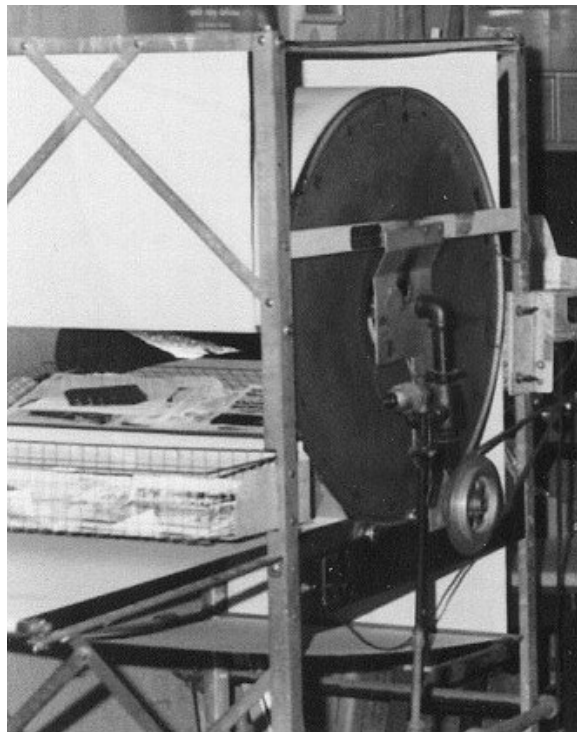
During the early 1970s, the Nikkorex, first Nikon, and older Nikkormat bodies were sold, traded, or damaged. Ultimately, a pair of even better Nikon F2 Photomic bodies replaced them. These cameras still function perfectly today. (A succession of personal 35mm cameras have been used by Goldfarb family members over the years too. Michael’s wonderfully compact Petri Color 35, Michael and Linda’s various Olympus OM SLRs, a couple of Olympus Pen half-frame cameras, and several point-and-shoot cameras by Canon, Nikon, Olympus, Ricoh, etc. Also, a wide range of 35mm cameras were ultimately given to the Goldfarbs by friends cleaning out their basements, including stereo cameras, a classic 1930s Kodak Retina, a German Balda rangefinder, an entire Russian SLR system, etc.)

Black & white 35mm film shot by others, but dropped off for processing and custom printing in the Studio, became a significant part of the business in the 1970s. This included large amounts of work

from local newspaper The Riverdale Press, Covenant House in Manhattan, and the PR offices of assorted local political figures. This continued well into the 1990s, until first color newspapers and one-hour labs, and then digital imaging, began to make 35mm b/w obsolete as the standard journalistic and publicity medium.

A Day at the Studio

Daily work followed a pattern... Most shooting and film developing was done in the morning or early afternoon. Printing was done on and off throughout the day, with the prints (of all sizes and types) eventually sitting in a large water tray. This was in the days before resin-coated photographic paper, when the fiber-based paper used required extensive washing to remove the remaining chemistry. By around the time of the afternoon break, all of the prints made during the day began washing in a large rotating-drum washer. After about an hour of washing, the gas-fired print dryer was flamed on and began turning. The ferrotype steel surface quickly heated to the required temperature.



Gas-fired Pako print dryer, 1978

The prints were transferred to a water tray besides the dryer, where a glossing agent was added to the water to improve the dried results. Prints were put on an angled surface and drained of excess moisture, then placed on the canvas belt of the dryer. Prints requiring a glossy finish were placed face up, touching the smooth ferrotype surface; matte prints were placed face down, away from the glossing ferrotype.

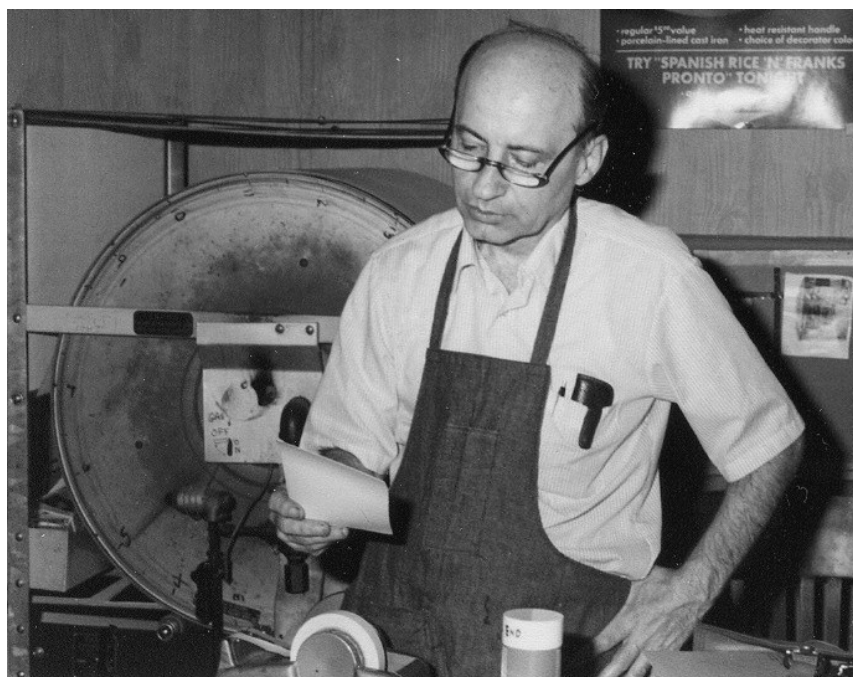


Teddy putting wet prints on the dryer, 1978

(note the product shot of a walker with Sidney as the model taped on the camera cabinet at left: Arthur Wise had found the extra print over a weekend when he was in the Studio printing his own 35mm negatives and taped it up, adding the handwritten caption beneath:

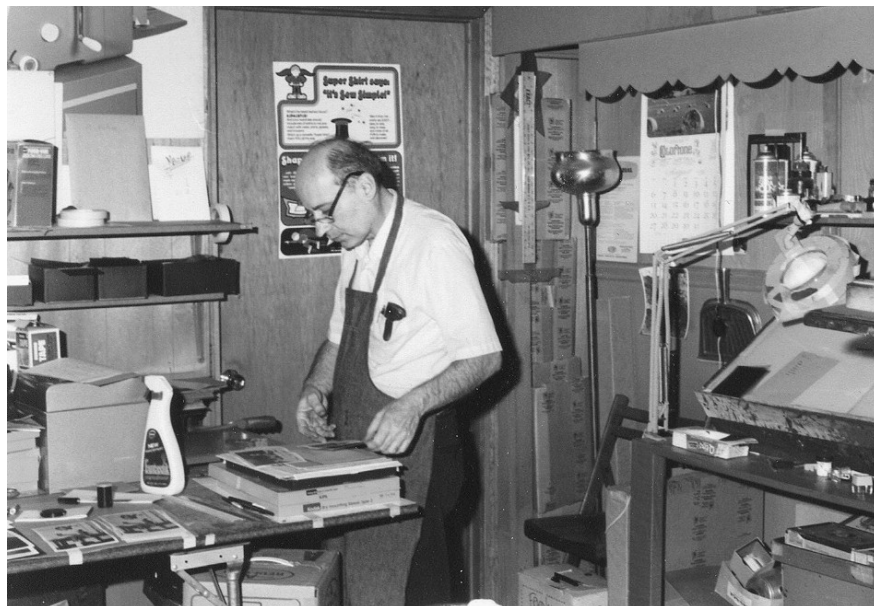
THIS WAS ONCE A WELL MAN!)

As the prints came off the dryer - which was sometimes rough on the fingers, since incompletely dry glossy prints would stick to the hot ferrotype - they were sorted by subject and customer. Usually, many more prints had been made than were necessary, in order to get the optimal image quality in terms of evenness, darkness, and contrast. Prints were then stacked face to face and put under a weight to tame their often intense curling.



Sidney inspecting dry prints, 1978

If delivery or pick up was not until the next day, the prints would be left to flatten overnight. If they were needed immediately, they were put into envelopes with a handwritten bill (of which a carbon copy was kept). Late-day pickups were very common, as were drop-offs around South Yonkers and Riverdale on the drive home.



Sidney assembling customer packages, 1978

(note the large homemade light box to the right, primarily used for retouching litho negatives)

The Advantages of Having Your Own Photo Studio

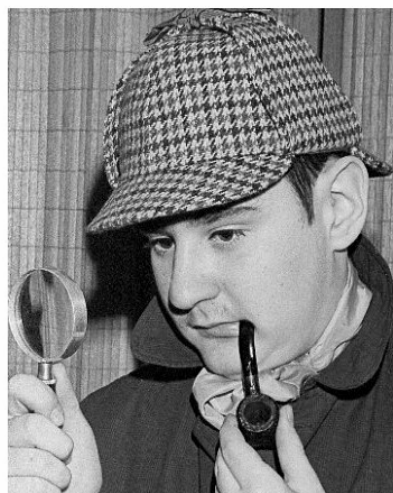
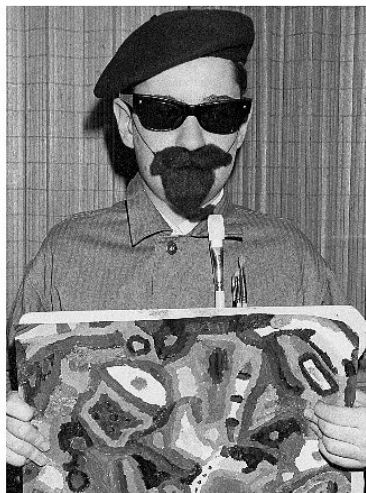
Though it may be hard to understand now, when digital cameras, computers, and high-res printers are ubiquitous, having access to the Studio's sophisticated image- and type-processing facilities represented a significant advantage for all kinds of personal uses. From science fair projects (a working pinhole camera made from a coffee can) to junior high school elections (8x10 photo posters for "David Klein – OUR MAN!"), from magic acts (ads for "Michael the Magnificent") to classy titles in Super 8 movies (*The Dupe*, *Success Story*, etc.), the Studio continually proved very useful.

For starters, what bar mitzvah gift would a photographically involved 13-year-old boy want in 1967, right at the height of the James Bond film/*The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* TV show/etc. spy craze? Why, a Minox "spy camera", of course! And so, the author had one of these little marvels. It was traded for a compact 35mm camera after a couple of years, but other Minoxes would come along later in the 1990s. (The special Minox-format developing tank and enlarger negative carrier having been retained back in 1969 for this possible future eventuality.)



One of Michael's tiny Minox "spy cameras" - a 35mm product shot for his Web article about Minox cameras, with Sidney as the hand model, 1998

And, if you're doing an oral report in 8th grade about the history, manufacture of, and various kinds of hats, how better to dramatize the differences – and add a few laughs – than to have photos of oneself turned out in different costumes featuring hats from one's own collection? Sidney brought home a Nikkormat, a roll of Tri-X, and an electronic flash one night, and knocked out nearly a dozen:



35mm photos by Sidney for Michael's 8th grade school report about hats, 1968

When the author took up magic and began performing at kids birthday parties (mostly to generate cash to buy more magic equipment and books!), putting together advertising materials was a snap. Sidney's training in old-school portrait lighting was put to good use, and those friendly commercial artists who were stopping by the Studio every day were very happy to provide the needed type, piggybacking it onto their other work ordered from a type house. Hence, "Michael the Magnificent":



*The Glamorous Linda and Michael the Magnificent - publicity photos by Sidney, 1971
(35 years later, these look amazingly like vaudeville press book clippings from a hundred years ago!)*

With everything that came along – Teddy’s welded sculptures, Michael’s Super 8 and 16mm filmmaking, the SF fanzine *Cerebrum* that Michael and his friends published, Linda’s involvement in the temple youth group and WFTY, many other projects for Temple Emanu-el, etc. – the Studio’s ability to produce great images always came in very handy.



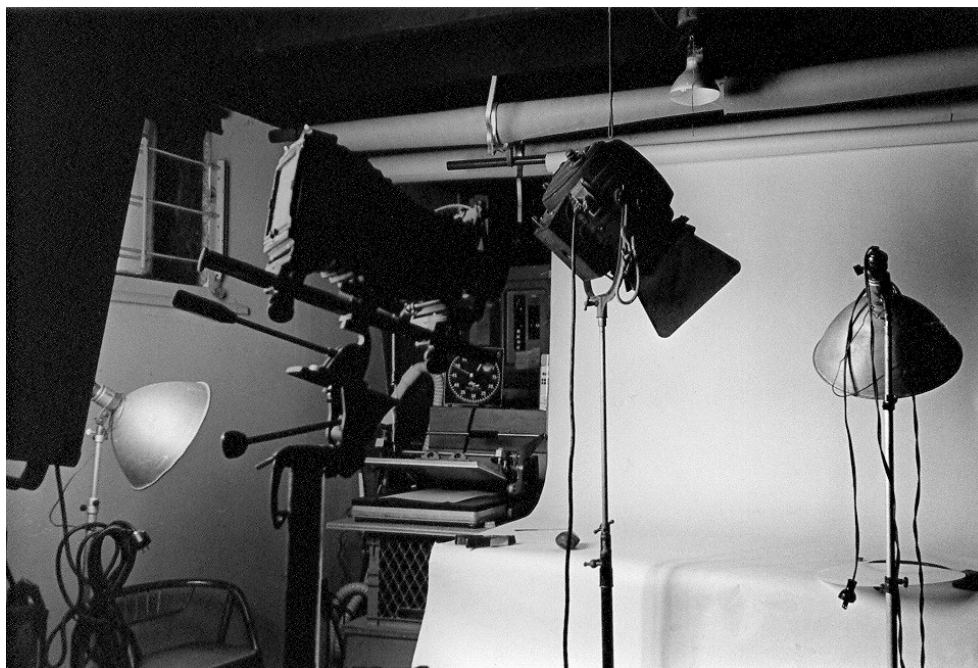
*Shooting the 16mm horror film **Revenge of Blood** in the garage of 2 Sunnyside Drive, 1974
(photo by Jack Roth - the author is operating the movie camera; actors are [L-R] Tom Wrona, Ken Bornstein, Mark Meretzky, and Howie Schwartz; all the lighting equipment was borrowed from the Studio)*

And in the late 1980s, when the younger Goldfarbs were in job positions where they could suggest vendor photographers, the Studio did some work for Linda at Random House, and Michael at BASYS

Newsroom Computer Systems. The Studio was always cheaper, and often better, than other available photographers. So, why not keep it in the family?

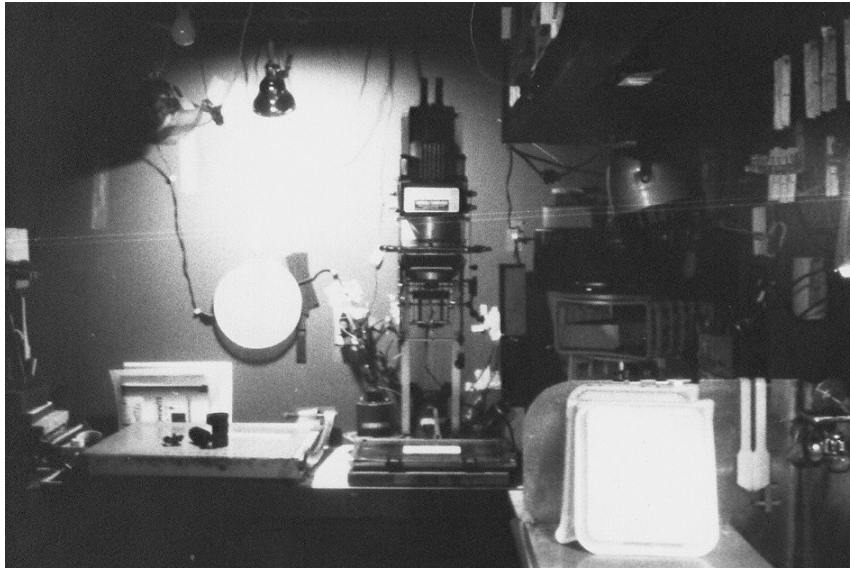
Exodus from South Broadway

In 1983, the Studio's storefront era finally ended, as the business was downsized and moved into half of the Goldfarb home basement on a quiet residential street off of McLean Avenue.



*Home Studio shooting area, 2005
(note soft lighting from the large Army-surplus fluorescent bank on the extreme left)*

This move did not represent even semi-retirement, as a great deal of work was still produced for another fifteen years. Incredibly, despite the smaller area - only one darkroom for both film processing and printing, with only two enlargers and a single contact printer (and the smaller litho copy camera); and a shooting area just big enough for tabletop work and smallish larger compositions - the work went on as always. Even if the Studio's methods were now falling behind the state of the art, the quality of the work produced remained outstanding.



Home Studio darkroom, 2006

(note the over-50-year-old Omega D3 enlarger at center, still an outstanding tool)

Work slowed down in the 1990s as many regular customers retired or closed their businesses. There was no more walk-in business for ID photos (which were now being done at the DMV anyway), though the good old Yellow Pages ad still brought in some occasional new customers. As first color minilabs, then digital imaging, slowed the custom developing and printing aspect of the business, and things quieted down still further. But since there was no rent to pay for the in-home basement Studio, and Michael and Linda were now supporting themselves, financial pressures were also greatly relaxed.

Winding Down



35mm product shot – an antique cookie jar from the old Goldfarb candy store shot for fun, 1999

By the late 1990s, with the rapid spread of desktop publishing, the graphic arts portion of the business was finished. As Sidney entered his eighties, the Studio gradually descended into semi-retirement. Some custom processing/printing of 35mm was still done for Covenant House, and Sidney made thousands of giveaway sample prints for Luminos photo paper before they went out of business as digital photography eclipsed old-school b/w. A few customers still needed tabletop product shots, including some 4x5 color transparencies. But by 2001, there wasn't really enough work for even a half-day spent down in the basement on a daily basis.



Late 1950s Yashica TLR from the Goldfarb Collection, a digital product shot made for fun, 2001

Sidney got his first digital camera early in 2000. The plan was that he was going to photograph stock-certificate art for eBay auctioning by Linda's husband Russell's rare-coin business. A few dozen pieces were done, but the real importance of the digital camera was that it allowed Sidney to take pictures without worrying about film. For fun, he began doing the same kind of tabletop product shots he had done for decades – but just of knick-knacks and art objects lying around the house, and with the digital camera. He eventually filled several albums with high-res color prints of these shots.



Teddy at her surprise 80th birthday party, 2003

So, as the paying work finally ended in the early 2000s, Sidney transitioned to doing photography for its own sake, much as he had started out back in the 1930s.



Sidney in Van Cortlandt Park with his first digital camera, 2004

Retired, Not Finished

As of this writing (2008), Sidney is still shooting with his second digital camera on a regular basis, still reading the photography magazines to which he has had free subscriptions for as long as any of us can remember, and still periodically exercising the shutters and apertures on the carefully stored Nikons. And, whenever I am down in the darkroom printing my latest roll of b/w, he often looks down at the developing tray with an expression of tremendous delight: As the image suddenly begins to appear, he will say, “Even after all this time, I still get a charge out of it. Look... It’s magic!”

Afterward

Obviously, writing this has been a chance to recall a world that’s rapidly receding from human memory, as well as documenting the valiant life of my “greatest generation” parents. It’s been a labor of love, and I’m grateful to my sister Linda and her husband Russell for giving me the necessary push to do it. And it nearly goes without saying that my parents have been a great help in providing details, anecdotes, critiques, and sample images for this document. They have always been, and very much remain, a tremendous inspiration in every regard!

A Note on the Photographs

Virtually all the pictures herein were made at the Studio, and represent a very wide range of cameras and films. Everything from 4x5 sheet film down to tiny Minox subminiature negatives were used, almost all of it originally printed on the trusty Omega or Durst enlargers, or with one of the Studio’s contact printers. Although some of the pictures are over fifty years old, most of the scans were done fairly recently. In some cases, including a couple of the recent digital shots, color images were converted to grayscale to fit better with the (appropriately) overall b/w look of this document.

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