

Photographer reminisces

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Paul Wolfe leaned back in his chair, his face a picture of contentment as he began to talk.

"You know, I used to photograph Lionel Barrymore," the 73-year-old Burbank photographer said. "He wanted it done just a certain way. He'd have me put a mirror up and he would look into the mirror and pose.

"When he wanted his picture taken, he'd snap his fingers and I'd take the picture," Wolfe said. "Then he'd turn another way, look into a mirror and snap his fingers and I'd take a picture."

Wolfe, who has photographed some of the world's most famous faces, including Debbie Reynolds, Dorothy L'Amour, John Travolta and Telly Savalas, remembers them all, but admits that perhaps his most famous work was as White House staff photographer during the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Wolfe began his photography career with a Washington, D.C., studio called Harrison & Ewing. His first duties were sweeping and mopping the floors. After becoming a full-fledged photographer, he eventually won the position of official White House photographer in his early 20s.

"One day, President Roosevelt said 'Paul, you don't look well.'"

"I told him that I didn't feel well, so he had his own personal physician take a look at me," Wolfe said.

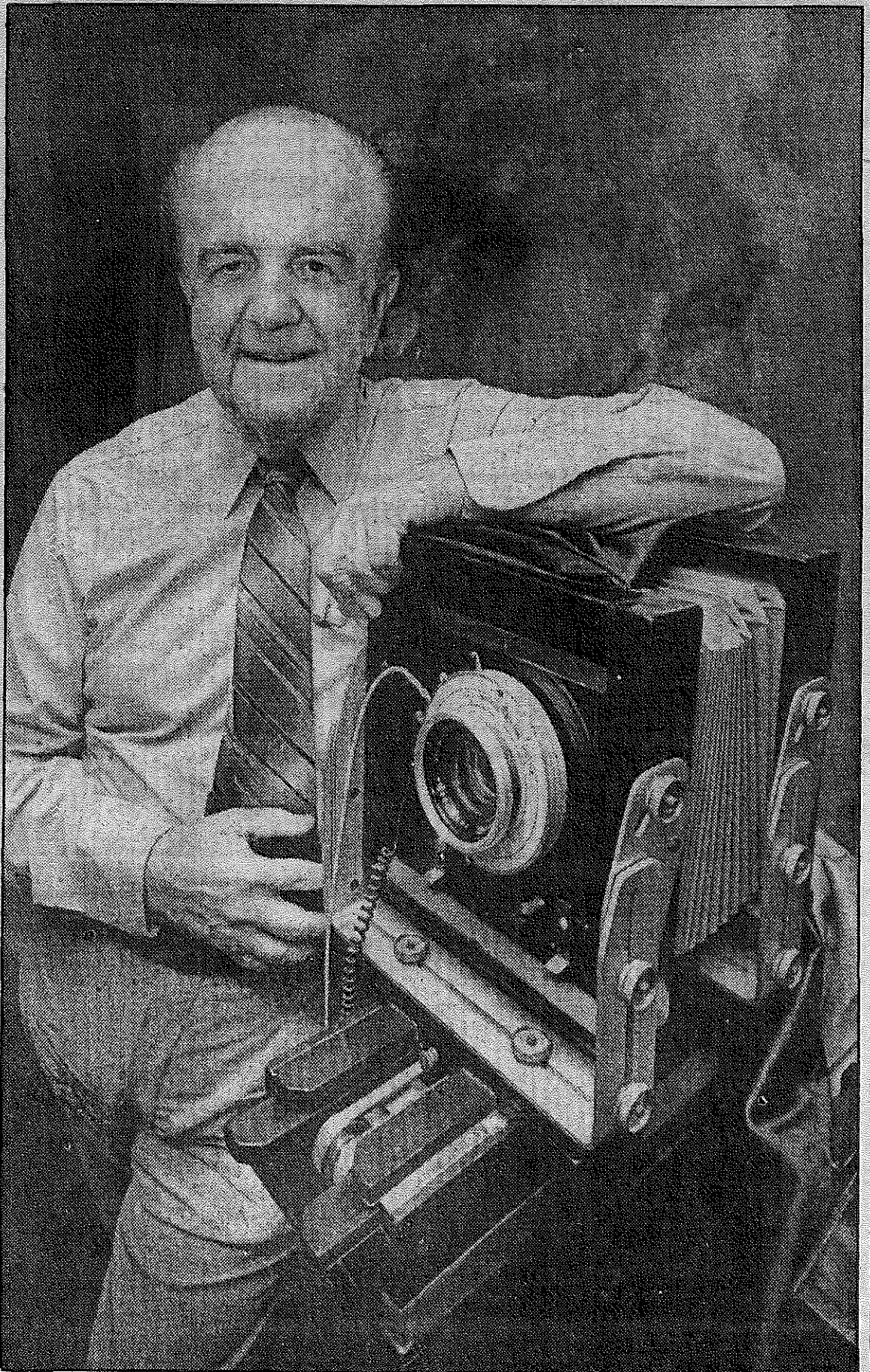
From that examination, Wolfe found that he suffered from severe sinus problems. His choices were to have an operation or move west to a drier climate.

"The doctor told me he would have to drill two holes, one in each eyebrow to relieve the pressure. I didn't want anyone drilling a hole in my head.

"I chose to move myself and my bride, Elizabeth, out west," he said.

It was 1936 and the couple decided to settle in Burbank.

Please see **WOLFE** Pg. 3



Burbank photographer Paul Wolfe shows off a camera built around the turn of the century.

Wolfe was official White House photographer for President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Photographer looks at life through camera

WOLFE from Pg. 1

"Back then, the airport consisted of one tiny metal building," Wolfe said. "City hall, the police department and jail were all in one building."

Wolfe said that while he had aspirations to become a Presbyterian minister, he kept on with his photography work. He first went to work at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, and then set up the photography department at

Lockheed Corp. during World War II.

"I finally decided it was time to go into my own business," Wolfe said. "I went to the City Council and told them that I would give them all the free photography they needed if they would make me the official city photographer."

Wolfe said that appointment led to further duties as official police photographer, complete

with a car with a red light and siren. That, in turn, led to a thriving photography business. Wolfe continued with his business but also managed to work as a staff medical photographer for St. Joseph Medical Center from 1947 to 1954.

During his time with the hospital, Wolfe bought and donated the huge, lighted cross that stands near the entrance to the hospital on Alameda and Buena Vista avenues.

Wolfe, who is far from the point of retiring, now runs his photography business with a partner, Thomas Brown. The two, while working out of the tiny studio on Victory Boulevard, are in the process of planning a project that Wolfe has dreamed about for 20 years.

"It will be called Camelot," Wolfe said. Plans for the estimated \$50 million project call for a huge complex of offices, cathe-

drals, condominiums and hotel to be built on 300 acres of land in Carpinteria. Wolfe said construction could begin as early as this fall.

"It would be a complete wedding service," Wolfe said. "We would offer everything from a small hospital for the blood tests to stores for the wedding ensemble to cathedrals and reception areas for the wedding to hotels for the honeymoon."