

level of convenience is assured by using a battery check function so that as the remaining battery power becomes lower than a predetermined level, the display mode in FIG. 5 is automatically switched to the display mode shown in FIG. 6 or FIG. 7. Alternatively, the camera may adopt a structure that allows the user to switch the display mode by performing a specific operation.

[0140] (Power OFF State)

[0141] In order to minimize power consumption, once a camera enters the power OFF state (including the auto power OFF state), the power supply to the display device is cut off and thus no display is provided at the camera in the related art. However, the camera achieved in the embodiment is capable of sustaining the display continuously via the character display module 20, without consuming power except when updating the display. In other words, the display is continuously provided via the character display module 20 even in the power OFF state. Namely, as the power switch 91 is turned off or as the length of time matching the auto power off wait time elapses, the CPU 331 automatically switches to the display mode shown in FIG. 6 to bring up display contents set-in advance and then turns off the power. As a result, since information that cannot be read without turning on the power in the related art, can be checked in the power OFF state, the operability of the camera improves.

[0142] As the camera in the power OFF state reenters the power ON state, it is automatically switched to the power on display mode explained earlier.

[0143] Next, examples of displays that may be brought up in the power OFF state are explained in reference to FIGS. 19 through 25.

[0144] FIG. 19 presents an example of a display indicating the current date and time brought up via the character display module 20 in the power OFF state. Since the clock 335 remains operating even in the power OFF state, the time point display can be provided based upon the information originating from the clock 335. In the case of an hour/minute display, such as that shown in the figure, power must be supplied to the character display module 20 every minute to update the display once a minute. However, power does not need to be used otherwise and thus the quantity of power consumed by the display can be kept at a minimum. In addition, a text message indicating the power OFF state is displayed at the bottom of the screen in this example. While a date screen or the like on display tends to mislead the user to think that the camera is in the power ON state, this text message indicating the power OFF state reduces the likelihood of such a misconception. A text message such as "Turn on power before taking a picture" may be displayed, instead.

[0145] FIG. 20 presents an example of a display indicating the photographing history brought up via the character display module 20 in the power OFF state. In this example, the file names of image files having been generated and recorded through photographing operations, the corresponding photographing dates and times are displayed in a table format as history information. Information corresponding to the most recent image files among a plurality of image files is displayed. The information four more recent files may be presented at higher positions in this display. Since the history information does not change until the next photo-

graphing operation, substantially no power is needed to provide this display provided in the power OFF state. It is to be noted that the icons displayed in the lower right corner of the screen prompt the user to turn on the power (indicate that the camera is currently in the power OFF state).

[0146] FIG. 21 presents an example of a display indicating the current photographing condition settings and the remaining battery power, brought up via the character display module 20 in the power OFF state. The photographing condition settings, such as the current image quality mode, the current photographing mode, the speed light information, the current photo metering mode and the number of frames of images that can be photographed, are indicated by using characters and icons in this example. In addition to these photographing condition settings, the aperture setting, the shutter speed setting and the like may be indicated as well. Since this information, too, remains unchanged in the power OFF state, substantially no power is required to provide the display in the power OFF state. It is to be noted that since the number of frames of images that can be photographed may change as the memory card is replaced, the corresponding display contents may be updated at the time of memory card replacement.

[0147] FIG. 22 presents an example of a display indicating various menus, brought up via the character display module 20 in the power OFF state. The menus include a reproduction menu related to image reproduction, an image edit menu related to image editing and a Help menu. A specific menu, selected in advance by the user, may be displayed or a plurality of menu items may be displayed as shown in the figure so as to allow the user to select one item among them. In addition, schedule information, memos or the like, input by the user in advance, may be displayed. Such a display can be provided without using any power except when updating the display contents or scrolling the display.

[0148] FIGS. 23 and 24 present examples of displays of previously photographed images, brought up on display via the character display module 20 in the power OFF state, with FIG. 23 presenting an example of a single image display and FIG. 24 presenting an example of a thumbnail display showing four images. In either case, a recently photographed image (or recently photographed images) is displayed to allow the user to ascertain the previous photographing contents, photographing location and the like without having to turn on the power and thus, better user convenience is assured. It is to be noted that while the character display module 20, which provides monochromatic display and does not achieve rich tonal expression as explained earlier, is not ideal for image display, the user only needs to be able to check the past photographic subjects and thus, the character display module is sufficient.

[0149] A display containing some of the display contents described above in combination may be provided. For instance, the screen may be split into three separate areas with a recently photographed image and the corresponding photographing date and time displayed in one area, the photographing history displayed in another area and information indicating the camera settings displayed in the third area, as shown in FIG. 25. A display containing display contents in another combination may be provided instead.

[0150] In addition, the camera may have an Electronic Book function (Electronic Book viewing mode). As the