



# Meet Charlie Berch, Owner of CBerch Photo

## **Describe your business:**

Photography for all walks of life. I specialize primarily in sports photography, but also senior high school photos, weddings, advertising photography, and pretty much anything that anybody could possibly need that has an image on it! I've been shooting for 33 years, but only started CBerch Photo a couple years ago, and have been a freelance photographer since 1987. The bulk of my work is news and editorial magazine work. I have been published in practically every daily and weekly publication within an approximate 3 hour radius of Schuylers County during those 33 years.

## **Tell us your story:**

Basically I started photographing at the local dirt track in Dundee in 1987, responding to an ad in a newly formed racing paper founded that year, seeking photographers, and while there was no pay, this opportunity gave me a foot in the door. The paper only lasted a year. All 33 years of my career has involved me meeting people in the right place, at the right time, and taking advantage of those opportunities. My next gig was at the Dundee Observer, but I quickly realized that I wanted to do more, and more varied photography, than that publication needed. So with a couple local buddies, we started our own quarterly sports and racing newspaper. We laid it out in a room in the back of my parent's house, supported by many businesses in the Dundee and Watkins Glen area. I was also working for my parents at the time, who had a magazine distribution business that covered from Lake Ontario down to the PA border, so I had an outlet for this new publication we created. We did this for about 5 years, releasing approximately 20 issues, and that opened the doors for us to go to just about all the bigger race tracks, enabling me to meet so many great people in that industry, and that really sparked my career. I was lucky to have a few good photos at key moments that really opened up doors. We started having issues with the equipment we had for the newspaper, and we lacked the finances to buy bigger and newer equipment. So instead I gave my personal paper up and started shooting for the publication NASCAR Scene, based out of Charlotte, NC. They were a huge nationwide weekly publication. I shot photos for them for about 15 years, to about 2007. I was the Sports Photographer at the Chronicle Express in Penn Yan from 1998-2006. In 2003 I had a situation where I met the AP Bureau Chief at WGI, and he saw a photo of a crash I took, and that piqued his interest, causing him to invite me to join the AP photo crew at WGI, which then led to me becoming an AP photographer in general, which also then enabled me to be a part of the AP photo crew at Super Bowls 39-44, which was a huge, huge thrill. Since then I went from being a stringer for the AP, and now I work as a freelancer for the Daily Review in Tonawanda, PA covering high school and professional sports. I also do side work for WETM's sport department.

## **What has helped you succeed and gain experience:**

I kind of did this in an unorthodox way. I didn't go to college. It was always learning as I went, and meeting the right people at the right time. Everybody who knows me knows I'm pretty tenacious. And that has always served me well. It has been an extremely rewarding career.

## **What inspires me?**

People willing to try new things definitely inspires me. Looking outside the box. Not doing what everybody else does, but trying to get a unique perspective on, let's say, the same subject matter. Trying to provide that image that has that "wow" factor to it.

**What keeps me up at night? What are my challenges?**

My challenges definitely began in earnest when photography went digital. It was almost a double edged sword. It changed the landscape, because one could shoot endlessly with no financial limits, because the photos don't have to be developed and printed. But on the other side, photography isn't taken as seriously as a trade these days as a result of digital photography and cell phones with cameras, so everybody thinks they're a professional photographer. So it is an ongoing challenge to convince people to hire me as their wedding photographer, for example, when they think their cousin with an iPhone can do it for them. It is also always a challenge to find outlets to purchase or license my photos, for all those same reasons. My biggest selling point is my years of experience and hard work that has gotten me to this point today. Much of that experience you can't put a price on.

**What is my favorite local activity?**

Basically any kind of sporting event I truly love. I love movies. My girlfriend and I recently got kayaks, and we have so many fun experiences kayaking and all the other great outdoor experiences our state has to offer. Another favorite activity of mine is seeking out new challenges.

**Is there anything else we should know about me?**

One thing I would like somebody that might want to hire me to know, is that I strive to keep my costs low, so virtually anybody that needs my photographic services can afford to hire me. I am also extremely efficient, typically shooting, processing, and delivering a client's finished photos if not the same day, than within just a few days after the initial shoot. I hope these two attributes will be appreciated by my future customers. I've been published in USA Today, Sports Illustrated, the New York Times, newspapers and magazines worldwide, and have also been in five books.

**CBerch Photo • 607-331-5960 • cberch71@yahoo.com • <http://www.cberchphoto.com>**