

REGION

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Web project a snap for photographer, tech-head

By MARTIN DeANGELIS
Staff Writer, 609-272-7237

A.C. native combines hobbies to share passion for resort

ATLANTIC CITY — Barry Rich worked for years as a photographer, but he spent his career mainly working with computers.

Now those two professions come together in a consuming hobby for this "project-oriented" guy from Atlantic City High School's class of 1953 — a Web site the 73-year-old calls Digital Atlantic City, A Photographic Essay.

It collects decades worth of pictures from his hometown, everything from the early days at his old high school to the building of the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa and beyond. Its range of moods runs from a section showing the tranquility of morning on the Boardwalk to another detailing the destruction of the hurricane of 1944.

And there's more — way too

much more to even start to describe here, most of it carefully indexed and identified on the site:

barryrich.net/acnj/acnjindex.htm

But there are two main categories: "Old Atlantic City and new Atlantic City," said Rich, who is definitely old Atlantic City himself — he hasn't lived in the city in 55 years, since he went away to college in Ohio. His

home now is in Mount Laurel, Burlington County, but that base of operations lets him and his wife, Mary Ann, visit Atlantic City two or three times most months.

So that explains why "the new Atlantic City is 99 percent my photography," said Rich, whose interest in cameras started with a teenage job in a photo studio in the city's old Breakers Hotel. Later, when he mentioned that

experience to his wedding photographer, the guy offered him a job shooting other weddings — which Rich did on weekends for years.

As for his old Atlantic City pictures, most are from historical collections that other fans of the city he has met gave him access to — and he makes it a point to credit everyone involved as much as possible.

Still, even his new Atlantic City

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On the Web

Check out a gallery of photos from Rich's site at

PressofAtlanticCity.com

Snap

(Continued from B1)

often has shades of the old. Take one of his projects from 2006 — going around 10 square blocks of the city's South Inlet neighborhood and taking pictures of every house that was left from the days when he was growing up just off the Boardwalk on Seaside Avenue, between Vermont and New Hampshire avenues.

"The Inlet Preserved," as it is titled on the site, boils down to page after page and block after block of old houses. And for that long-running labor of love, he deputized his wife as his photographer's assistant and chief archivist.

Mary Ann Rich grew up in Philadelphia, but she used to go to Atlantic City as a girl. Now she likes going back with Barry — mostly for the casinos.

"But we have a deal," her husband explains. "She only gambles at night, and during the day we're out and about."

And when he goes out, he always takes his camera. So anything can be a project — a breakfast at the old Gilchrist Restaurant, a walk around the then-brand-new Pier at Caesars, a collection of skyline shots from the beach.

Still, a lot of his pictures come to him. For instance, he has more pages of house pictures he got from an old real estate office in the city, complete with all the homes' specs listed on the side. (As a longtime New Jersey resident, Rich gets a good laugh from the old property taxes — such as \$456 per year on a beach-block duplex.)

But again, that's not to say that this old Atlantic City boy has eyes only for the old side of town.

"The new Atlantic City is very beautiful to me," he says.

So another project has been documenting some of the construction jobs that have changed the skyline so radically over the years.

When Harrah's Atlantic City was adding its new tower, he took pictures all through the job — and put 43 of them up as "Harrah's New Tower." (It's right above "Harrah's Tower At Night," which includes 27 shots of some of the displays that decorate the building after dark.)



Press file photo

Barry Rich, of Mt. Laurel in Burlington County, shoots photographs in New York City in this November 2006 file photo. Rich combined his love for Atlantic City with his passion for photography and computers and created a Web site loaded with pictures of the resort.

He also has a big construction collection from the under-construction Revel casino — a project he particularly likes because it's in his old neighborhood. He has lots of Revel shots up on the site already, but he's planning a more ambitious project.

"The introduction will show the area the way it was," Rich says, "then when it was torn down, and then the actual construction."

He puts a lot of these images up in slide-show formats, and he often identifies both how he shot them and

the program he used to show them off. That brings us to Rich's other passion: He started working with computers at Philco in 1958. And now, after 50 years of experience, he is such a tech-head that his nickname at his post-retirement job — driving cars at a wholesale auto auction — is "Dot.Com"

"Probably 99 percent of the world doesn't know what the hell I'm talking about," with his tech-specs on the site, Rich admits. "But it makes me feel good."

Still, what he really enjoys,

what keeps him going with all his projects, is hearing from people who enjoy his ever-growing photo essay. Take the guy who found a picture on his site and contacted him about buying it.

"I said, 'Look, I don't do this to make money. If it's not for commercial use, I'll send it to you free,'" Rich says. "When people who lived in Atlantic City or visited look at this, and they're seeing the past — that's my pay."

E-mail Martin DeAngelis:
MDeangelis@pressofac.com