

Photojournalists are an amazing breed. The ability to catch a moment in time - perfectly - on film - is an incredible skill. For the photographer, it's all about being in the right place at the right time - and yes, timing (and location!) IS everything. Photojournalism - or photography in general - is always something I have held in very high esteem. The ability to compose an image in the space of the viewfinder, and to do it "on the fly" (or perhaps under intense pressure or extreme circumstances) - now that is a skill to behold.

This was almost my chosen profession.

I had a camera in my hands from my earliest memories. My father was a photographer - a hobbyist, and certainly not a photojournalist - but he exposed me to the world of photography at an early age. I can remember my first Instamatic ... and then my first 35mm camera (an Olympus OM-10 that my father had won in a contest). I was hooked. Eventually, I took photos for the school yearbook. I developed an admiration of the skill required to take a good photo ... and the difference between a good photo and a great one.

Sports have always played a big role in my world. While I was in high school, I covered football games for the yearbook. Everyone in my family loved auto racing (and no, I am not talking NASCAR here!) so we would travel to see a race or two or three every summer. I remember my parents pulling me out of school to go to the US and Canadian grands prix every September and October. It was at these times that my photography skills evolved, and my appreciation for knowing the subject and being in the right place at the right time grew. During the same time, I discovered Sports Illustrated - and a sports photographer by the name of Neil Leifer. This was a man doing some stunning work - on the cover of this great sports magazine. That was something I wanted to do.

As I approached my final year of high school, I had a decision to make - what would I study at university? The long-term goal was simple - either I was going to work with athletes (via physical therapy) or I was going to photograph them (and be a sports photojournalist). After much thought, I realized that I could be working with athletes almost as soon as I graduated from my physiotherapy program - but in order to be photographing the world's sports greats, it would take time, effort and luck.

I became a physiotherapist.

Written by Allan Besselink
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My experiences behind the lens pre-date my musical experiences - but they are very similar. There is a creative element that never seems to depart from my world - and it's usually been associated with great periods of personal discovery for me. Photography, music, writing - different - but the same in what they have taught me and inspired in me.

I still have that ability to see life through the viewfinder. Now, instead of taking 100 photos to get one good image on film, you just delete the images on your memory card - my how times have changed! But the love of the creative element still (and always will) exist. I still keep my hands in it and try to keep my eye sharp. Every so often I will rummage through the years and years of photos that I have and think of how time stands still in every image.

I read an article today in the newspaper about photojournalist Dirck Halstead. The name wasn't familiar to me - but the images were. The most amazing thing is just that - the photos, the images, the emotions evoked - were very familiar. And it reminded me of how wonderful it is, how powerful it is, to see life through the viewfinder.