

# Chamberlain recorded local history on film

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they were told there was no means of transportation to get them back home. 21 of the men committed suicide. "They just couldn't handle it," said Chamberlain. "There was 21 of them and they all had to be photographed. Each one."

While the Marines trained him to take photographs and shoot film, the photography bug first bit when he was a teenager. "I started getting into pictures in the late thirties, early forties, in high school," Chamberlain said. Both of his grandfathers were amateur photographers, taking pictures as a hobby, but it was his mother's father who passed to Chamberlain his interest in photography. Access to his grandfather Colin's darkroom was the teenager's delight. "This goes back to the wet plate time. They didn't have film back then," he explained. "It was glass plates and they had to flow the emulsion onto those plates and then expose them. They had to be processed almost immediately."

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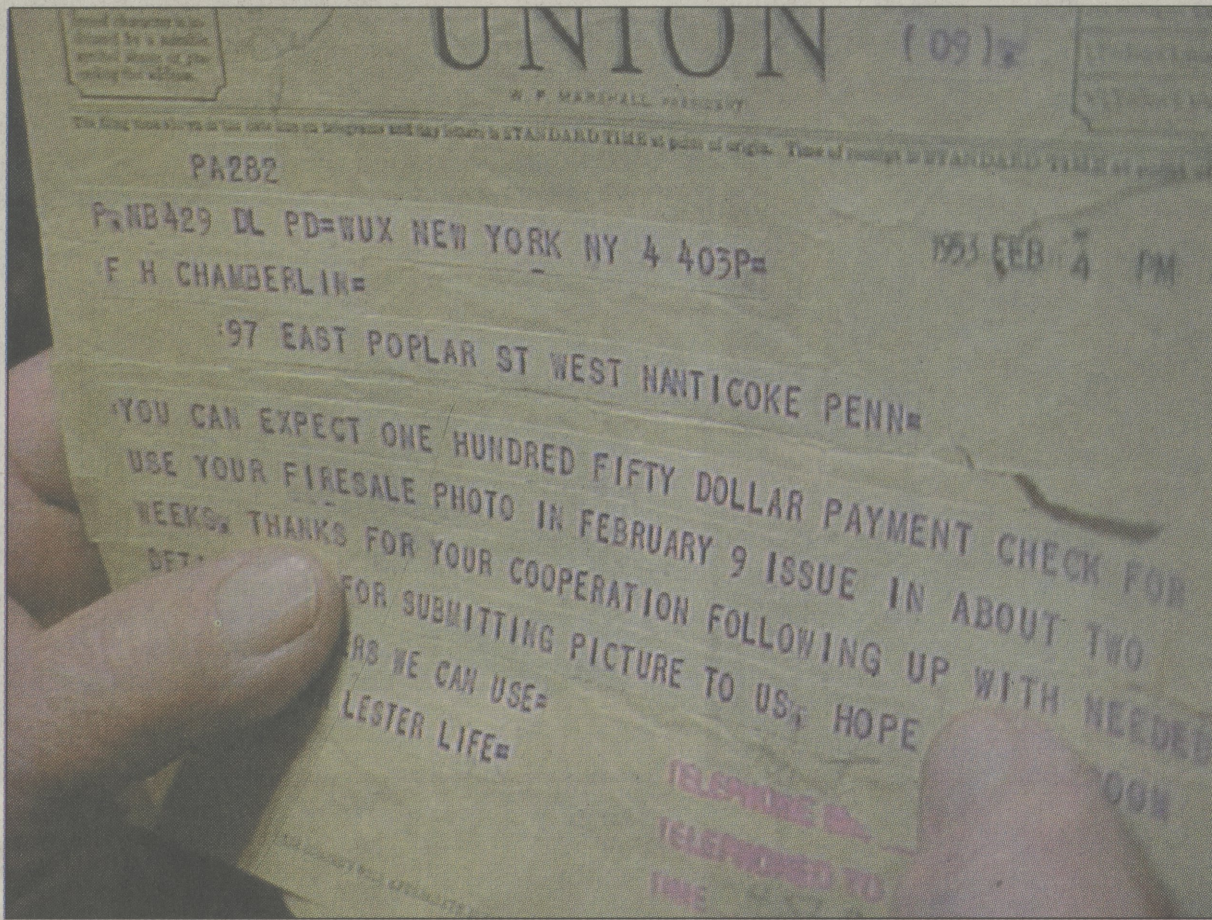
**"Fritz" Chamberlain**  
Lehman

After he was discharged from the Marines, Chamberlain returned home to Pennsylvania and worked for a few years in portrait studios and then as a photo engraver. While he was working at the engraving shop, a friend, Andy Kotch, told him of a job at a local television station. "Channel 28 came after Andy because they needed an artist and he came to me and said, 'Hey, you have to come over. They need a photographer.' So I got an offer from them and jumped on it."

Chamberlain started working for Channel 28, WBRE, in 1952 and stayed for the next 34 years. He and his sound man would go out in the field and cover news stories. When he first began, the film cameras were large and bulky and unlike the video cameras used today, sound was not integrated into the film track. A large and heavy amplifier had to be carried along if sound was required. "I think my job could have been filled by a mule, it would have been easier," Chamberlain mused. "We didn't do sound-on-film because it was a cumbersome situation. If it could be covered without sound and narrated over then that is the route they would generally take."

Unlike today's news teams, in Chamberlain's time, the film had to be processed and edited. "Breaking news was different then. When you shot it, that wasn't it. Then you had to go back and process it and prepare it and edit it. I figured the minimum time to do a film was half an hour at least, for a one minute film. Now they just do a video and pop it in and go. If it's a hot story, they probably won't even edit it. They will just run it as it is with all the bloopers and blips in it. Garbage!" he exclaims.

In his time with Channel 28, Chamberlain covered numerous gubernatorial inaugurations, including Governors Leader,



Above, Chamberlain holds the telegram he received from Life magazine informing him his photograph will be appearing in the publication. The photograph below, was of a furniture store on Main Street in Wilkes-Barre that burned and caught fire again during the fire sale.



Lawrence and Scranton. "One time I went down there (Harrisburg) and didn't have a room. I went to the local Democratic chairman, Dr. Doris from Nanticoke, and said to him, 'Dr. Doris, I don't have a room here tonight.' He reached in his pocket and said 'Here's the key.'"

In the early 1960s, Chamberlain covered the Senate Labor Rackets Committee hearings in Washington, D.C. relating to labor union disputes and labor rackets in which Jimmy Hoffa was questioned and convicted. Bobby and John F. Kennedy were on the committee. "Every morning the hearings would start generally around 10 or 11 o'clock," Chamberlain said with a smile. "There'd be much commotion and so on and so forth. Then the Kennedys would come in—and I mean, there wouldn't be a sound."

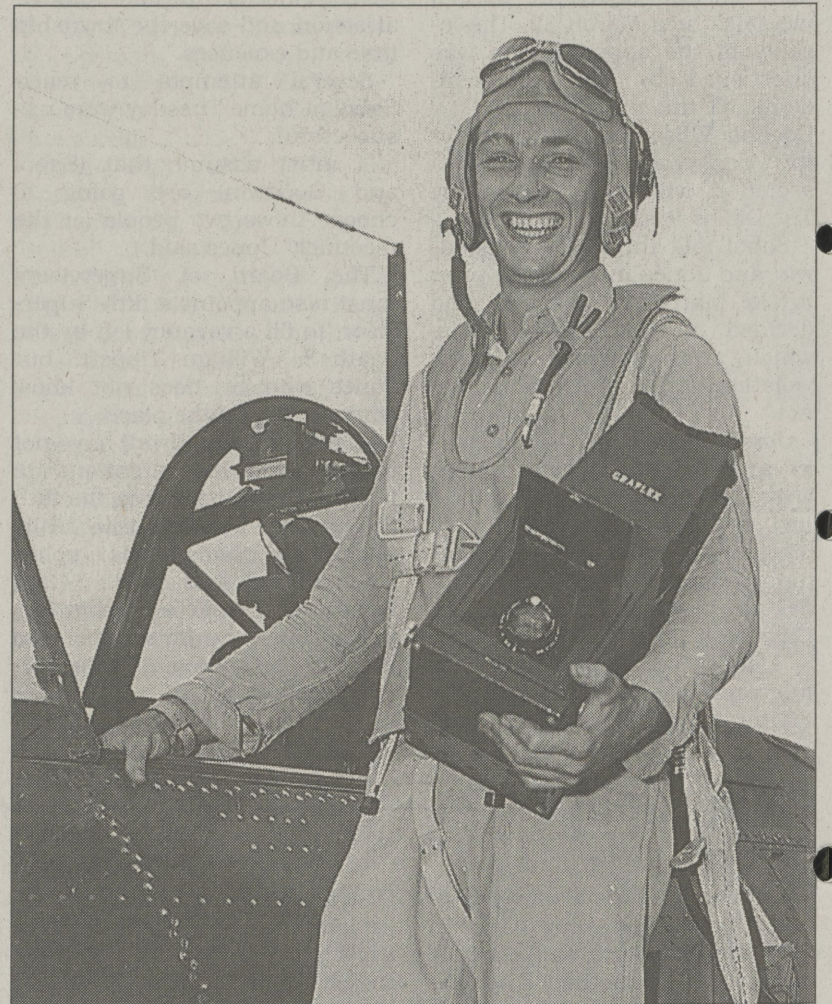
"I was always fascinated by the politics behind the scenes, the part the public never sees," he adds. "It's always been there and always will be."

When the Conyngham farm

was donated to Penn State, Chamberlain participated in making a half hour program on the Conyngham home which is now the administration building. "If you had guests you took them to the Hayfield farm," Chamberlain said. "They had longhorns steers, horses, donkeys, mountain burros. The story was Mr. Conyngham insisted they use 40 Clydesdale horses to excavate the basements of the main house. It was a huge house, really something to see."

Chamberlain can tell a tale

and enjoys passing on a good story. He loves his home in the Back Mountain and its history. "The unfortunate part of it is, there is so much history that is lost in a community, just a small community like this. There's stuff that not too many years down the road, they'll be saying, 'Who lived there? What was his name?'" Thanks to Mr. Chamberlain some of that history will be preserved and last just a bit longer in his collection of newspaper clippings and photographs.



PFC Francis Chamberlain poses next to a fighter plane with his camera during the WWII Pacific Island Campaigns, 1944.



Fritz Chamberlain at his home in Lehman.

POST PHOTO/  
ELIZABETH ANDERSON



Evil Knievel makes one of his famous jumps — this one over the Stegmaier Brewery trucks.



Chamberlain and his crew cover a fire in Wilkes-Barre for Channel 28 in the 1960s.



Chamberlain snapped this photo of the Lake-Lehman Marching Band parading in Nanticoke in the 1960s.