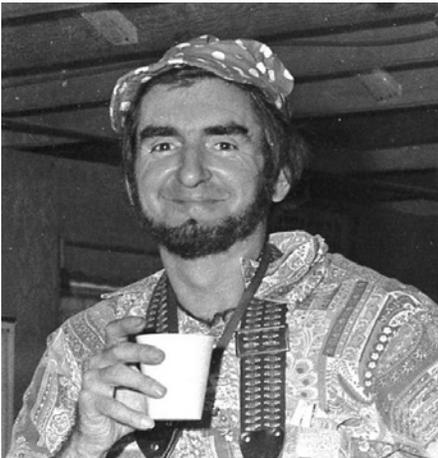


## KEN SOOY

Atlantic City Speedway Track Photographer

By Ken Sooy &  
raycer27



Ken was born in Atlantic City Hospital and raised in Galloway Twp. by his Great Grandparents. As he got older, he was aware that his father had been into photography when *he* was a teenager. This must've planted a seed in his mind that he had to try. He had a Kodak box camera when he was 8 years old and took a few shots here and there, but he still had to get the photos developed and that cost extra money and he decided it was time to invest in some equipment to ease the cost a little bit.

There was a drugstore at Old Turnpike Rd. and Main Street in Pleasantville and in the window display Ken saw a Kodak developing kit that sold for \$8.00, so between allowance and birthday money he scraped up the money and bought it. (You have to realize back in those times \$8.00 was the equivalent of \$30.00 today). So Ken made a small darkroom in his basement and with his Baby Brownie Special camera that he traded one of his toys for, started his hobby which would later develop into a part time career.



Pleasantville high school offered a course in photography in his sophomore year which he immediately signed up for because it was becoming more than just a hobby and he wanted to learn more to develop and fine tune his skills. The Christmas before he received his first 35 mm camera, a Kodak Pony 35, which was a pretty decent camera for it's time and Ken used it for



about 10 years. Ken says the cameras on our cell phones take better pictures than the average cameras from the old days.

Then in 1965 he purchased his first rangefinder camera and soon after that, his first Single Lens Reflex camera. To a few people this may seem interesting and a bit boring, but this was a big deal for Ken, in comparison it was like going from go-karts, to modern stock and then

sportsman class, only this had to do with photography. He saw an ad in the Press for a complete professional darkroom with all the special goodies. It belonged to the guy that did all the publicity photos for Steel Pier. The guy wanted \$1000.00, which was a tremendous amount of cash back then, but Ken saw the value and advantage of owning this equipment and borrowed the money, drove up on the boardwalk to the pier, loaded it up and brought it home, he was a happy camper. Again, by comparison, he had just moved into the modified division of photography!

By this time Ken and his camera were inseparable and took it everywhere he went, then in the late 60's Ken's nephew suggested that they go to the stock car races at P'ville and said he knew some of the modern stock drivers. Ken had been to the track when he was a kid and liked it so off they went. Ken started taking some random pictures of drag racing on Friday nights from the stands and people inquired if Ken's photos were for sale.



He Talked to Ken Butler and landed the job of photographing the drag racing on Friday nights, the following year he was hired as the track photographer and I guess you could say the rest is history. Ken started doing the stock cars on Sunday besides the drag races on

**Fridays. Ken's daughter ran the photo/souvenir part of the concession stand until the track closed in 1979. Ken was also doing the speed garvey races in the Tuckerton, Manahawkin area, the motocross track in Absecon and**



**occasional trips to Wall Stadium and Bridgeport and other tracks, but the majority of race photos had to do with Atlantic City / Pleasantville Speedway.**

**Here are some other interesting facts that you didn't know about our track photographer, Ken drag raced motorcycles at the Vineland Speedway drag strip in the late 50's, a super charged sports car at**

**the Atlantic City Speedway drag strip in the 60's and was the builder and owner of the 3-J modern stock Valiant that ran at Atlantic City in 1975 driven by Dudy Golden.**

**Ken also played guitar for several country bands from 1965 to 1975 and had a group for 7 years, called "The Starlighters", shown here playing at Quail Hill at The Smithville Inn**

**In 1980 he graduated from Stockton State College, with a B.A. in Art, with high honors and program distinction with a concentration in photography. He followed that in 1985, with a B.S. in Environmental Science, with high Honors. From his employment with the FAA he has the equivalent of a B.S. Degree in Computer Sciences. He has been on the Galloway Township Planning Board and Environmental**



**Commission since the early 1980's and is currently the Chairperson of both. He has been a Member of the Atlantic County Parks & Environmental Commission for five years and is the Galloway Township Official Historian.**

**Ken retired from the FAA at Pomona, (NAFEC), in 1999 after 39 years of service in the computer area. He lives at "BITTERSWEET PLANTATION", the remaining 13 acres of a 200 year old Sooy Farm & Homestead where he was raised in Ocean Ville NJ with his wife Elaine and their loving teacup Maltese**

**"Genie". He is a part time farmer raising mostly bedding and vegetable plants for the spring season along with doing some landscaping services. They have four children, 12 grand children and 5 Great Grand Children, (more to come).**

**Here you see Ken and his lovely wife Elaine, relaxing and enjoying life. What is interesting is, if Ken removed his glasses, hung a camera around his neck and wore that signature hat that he used to wear, there wouldn't appear**



**to be that much of a change from then to now. Must be the good life!**

**Photography is still a primary hobby along with computers, hunting & fishing, guns, guitars, R/C aircraft, genealogy & kayaking among others. He has been in three of the "JERSEY DEVIL" documentaries and is disappointed with all of them that have been produced to date.**

**It is a blessing that Ken shot as many photos at our track that he did, we all have benefitted from his talents and others that may have taken photos to preserve the many memories from years past. I know that Tom Flanagan and I are**

**well aware that our websites probably wouldn't have happened without Ken's photos. The best ones are the candid shots that he took, where he caught the person unaware that he or she was being photographed. I have inserted a few of Ken's candid shots in this article which are my favorites and deserve to be displayed.**

**Ken also told me that over the years he has collected over 500 cameras which he still has to this day.**

**I think that I speak for all of us when we say thank you Ken for your dedication and talent at our speedway, because there would've been a lot of memories that would never have been seen if it were not for you.**

**Tom Flanagan of the Atlantic City Speedway website and the team at the Limited Sportsman Racers website thank you for your support of our websites for preserving the memories of years past, it is greatly appreciated.**

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**I know there were other photographers that took pictures and we will do your story too, just contact us by phone or email if you wish to participate.**

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