

Baer Charlton

Living the Creative Life in NE PDX

By Meg Cotner
Photography by David Vigil

We're back in Beaumont-Wilshire this month, and are happy to introduce you to Baer Charlton, who's lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years. He makes his living as a creative person – writing, speaking, and running the local picture framing business Americana Frame, located on bustling NE Fremont. Baer has a great story to tell, and we're happy to share it.

Baer and Diane's Early Years Together

Baer and his wife, Diane – a Portland native – have lived in Beaumont-Wilshire since 1996, but he originally hails from California where he lived in communities up and down the state, due to his father's job as a forest ranger (his dad also served with the Army Corp of Engineers during World War II). When we asked him where he is from originally, he responded with humor, "Extreme down-state... also known as CA." He also attended college in California, at UC Irvine where he got a BA degree in Social Anthropology. After school, he worked as a photojournalist, which took him to myriad places. Writing came before and after that, while picture framing was of constant interest; more on that later in the article.

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Courtesy of Baer Charlton.



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He and Diane dated in the early 1990s, and the connection between them was strong from the start. "I married my banker on Oct. 20th, 1991 at 37,000 feet between Miami and San Juan," Baer recalls. "Capt. Robert Block did the deed, and all 78 passengers and crew signed the wedding scroll. Our first date was 60 days prior." They still love to travel, too. "It doesn't matter where we go," Baer explains. "It could be Paris for dinner overlooking the back of Notre Dame; to Singapore for Chinese New Year and Singapore's 50th birthday; to Wisconsin for a pumpkin festival with friends; or just down state to play Canasta with friends for a weekend. Travel is travel and possibilities are just around the next corner."

Writing and Framing from an Early Age

As for his work as a writer and a picture framer, both were early interests for Baer. Regarding picture framing, he is an internationally recognized authority on the history of picture frames and framing, and has won numerous awards for his work. "As a picture framer, I started in 1966 at the ripe age of 13," explains Baer. "So, this last summer I celebrated (quietly) 50 years as a picture framer. Along the way I got my Certified Picture Framer certification from the Professional Picture Framers Association, as well as a Journeyman and Master from a European guild."

His passion and dedication to the art and craft of picture framing was one of the reasons he purchased Americana Frame in 2015, where he had worked for the previous owners for over a decade. He believes this business is vital to the neighborhood, and draws people to the shop from all over Portland. In his words, "I just couldn't stand the thought of the neighborhood without a

great frame shop." Now Baer will be able to continue to help folks in Portland tell their stories through his award-winning skill of framing beloved documents, objects, and memories.

More About the Writing

As a writer, Baer started writing at a young age, creating stories with his mother, who was a big supporter of her son's storytelling talent. It was with her encouragement – both in time and posthumously – that Baer moved to pursue publishing his stories. His work has been featured in a variety of magazines over the years, and he has authored a number of books, the first title being the YA story, *The*



Courtesy of Baer Charlton.

Very Littlest Dragon, released in 2011. Its main character is a little dragon who works in a custom picture frame shop.

Baer's book, *Stoneheart*, was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize Nominee. Its protagonist, Gunnery Sergeant Percival Stone, is a career military guy who is medically discharged after almost four decades in the Marines, due to vision problems arising from PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury. Baer is no stranger to such things, as he and a number of his relatives served this country – his uncles are Navy and Marine Corps veterans, and his oldest brother was a soldier in the Army in Vietnam.

Baer himself is disabled due to various intense physical experiences throughout his life, which has given him a unique perspective on the world. He doesn't let it limit him, either – whether it was driving his beloved motorcycles, traveling, or speaking in front of crowds about his work. He welcomes the opportunities he's been given to better understand the human condition – conventional or altered.

The Good Life in Beaumont-Wilshire and Greater Portland

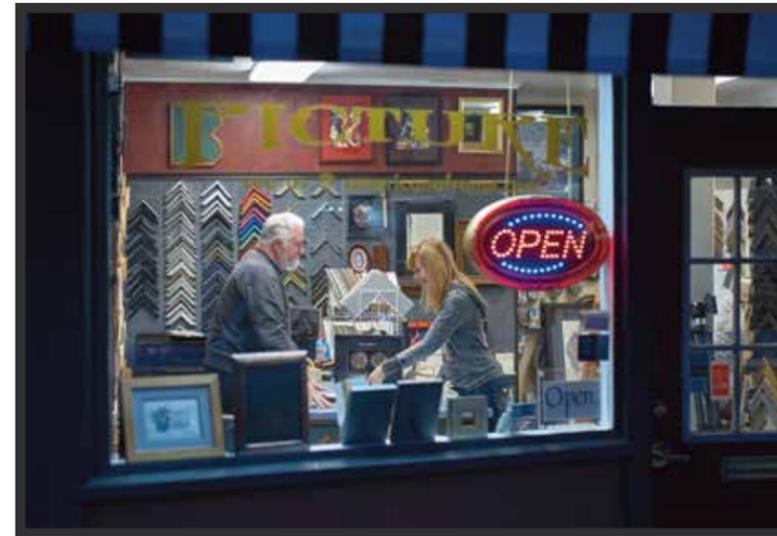
Aside from their work, Baer and Diane love living in Beaumont-Wilshire, and live in a home with a lot of memories. "In 1996, I brought my wife back to the house she was born in," explains Baer. "We love Beaumont-Wilshire. Diane was on the local board and I was the editor of the newsletter for many years. The neighborhood and our block are like family."

Along with his writing, their love of animals is also important and takes them out of their neighborhood at times. "Like most families, we have interests outside of the block," says Baer. "I belong to the Northwest Independent Writers Association. Diane is on the board of the Cat Adoption Team, and we are very active supporters of the Oregon Humane Society. In October, I fill Americana Frame's windows with photos of dog available for adoption at OHS. We also put up a 20' tent for Fremont Fest and bring in writers who have books for children or family."

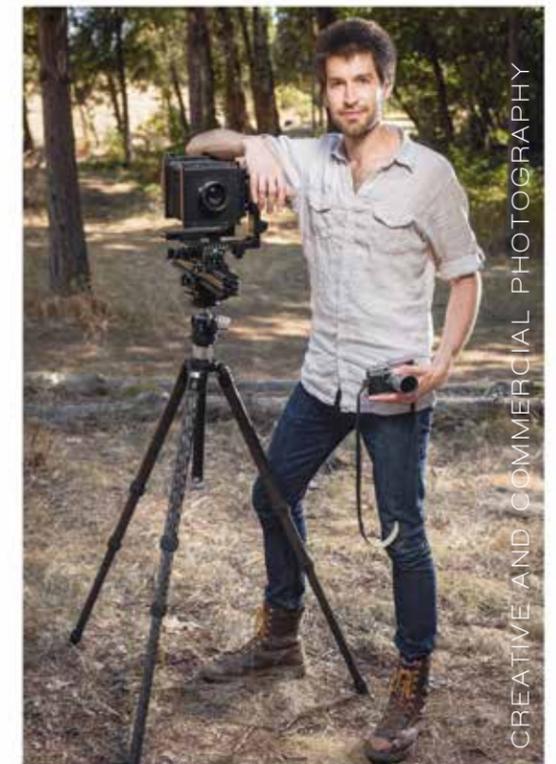
Baer and Diane are also keen supporters and fan of Seahawks and college football.

His writing will often intersect their love of travel (you might consider their family motto to be, "time to travel") to benefit his career. "Our last trip was to the Big Island," says Baer. "I was doing research for my upcoming book, *Pirate's Patch*. It's a science fiction story about a band of immortals who are cleaning up the Pacific Garbage Patch, as they plot to kill one of their own."

Baer and Diane are proud cat parents and their furry family members Brandy, Boo, and Pattie keep them on their toes – or at least try to occupy their laps on a regular basis. That said, they are like a lot of cats and prefer to be out of the spotlight. "The cats are fun, but they don't leave the house and are camera shy," says Baer. Thanks for sharing a bit about your lives, Baer and Diane! If you'd like to stop by and say hello to Baer and even have something of yours framed, Americana Frame – now in business for 39 years – is located at 4223 NE Fremont Street. ■



Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at mcotner@bestversionmedia.com



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