

## The Workshop

[WorkShop]

*This really isn't work, but more like a labor of love. I can think of no other time of year that is so wrapped in tradition and memories. I know you have enough to do this season, but I would like to add another project to your list.*

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**Wedding Albums**

It's been a while since Gayle and I were married, and I've been sorting through some of the photographs that didn't make it into our album and scrapbook, and even some of those that did make it into the book. (I've been following some of my own advice!) While I don't need the photographs to remind me it turned out to be a gorgeous day in May for an outdoor wedding, in spite of the rain we had that morning and the near freezing temperatures that night (important to know when you spend the night on a boat anchored in the marina that hasn't had it's heat hooked up). Nor do I need the pictures to remind me that the bride was beautiful and everyone seemed to be having a good time. What I do find myself puzzling over is the names of everyone in the photographs - and I invited them! I think we had a guestbook, and if everybody signed it, we might be able to match names with faces. But, I'm thinking many of them will remain nameless for the future generations that inherit our photos. And, if I can't name them, I also won't be able to tell my children why they were at our wedding, other than they were co-workers, or friends of co-workers, or friends of the family.

For those of you who are already married - how long has it been since you pulled out your wedding album and looked through it? Has it been 5 years? 10 years? 25 years? More?! Even if it hasn't been that long, are you able to identify all the people in the photographs? Have your children seen your wedding album?

Here's a couple of exercises to get started on:

- Before you get your album out, make a short list of people you distinctly remember attending your wedding. Not just people in the wedding party, but other invited guests, too.
- By each name, put a note about who invited that person (if they were invited!), and what do you remember about them?
- Now, get out your photos, and find some photos of each person on your list. Devise a way to match people with photos (page number and photo position: "upper left", for example). Record this on your list of names, listing as many photographs for each person as you can.
- Get out another sheet of paper and begin to go through your album, one page at a time. List the page and photo (again use "upper left" photo or whatever method you used in the first portion of the project) and then list the names of the people in each photo.
- In addition to identifying all the people in each photo, each time you come across a new name, add it to your first list (list of names), along with the photo information. Each time you find a person previously listed, make sure to add the reference to their name.

You've now begun 2 lists (indexes) for your wedding album - one list sorted by name, and another sorted by photograph. One interesting variation is to have each person (the bride and the groom) do this separately, then compare and combine the results later!

Where you go from here has many possibilities -

- Start to write the story each page contains. How are the people in the different pictures related? What is the common theme of the photos on the page?
- Write captions for each of the photos (be careful about adding anything to a delicate album - perhaps just insert them as a separate page, or make copies of the pages and write the captions on the copy. Please **DO NOT** take apart any photo albums without carefully considering the damage that could be done to the photos.

- Rekindle the old friendships captured in the photos. Call or write to some of the people who attended your wedding, even send them a copy of the photo for their albums.
- Send a copy of the photo to the families of the people in the photo. Tell them about your relationship with that person and the occasion for the photograph.
- Get philosophical and write down some advice you would give to a couple just getting married. Add it to the back of the album for future generations to find.

After looking at all those photographs and capturing many of the other details not recorded in them, write up a few paragraphs about the courtship and wedding, in general. What do you remember about the day? Who took the photographs? Was it a church wedding? What about the honeymoon - was there one? Where did you go? How did you get there? Where did you first live after you were married?

Well, how was it? As easy (or, as hard) as you thought it would be? Do you think you could do the same exercises for any other wedding? Next, try moving on to weddings you've attended (siblings, cousins, friends) and see what you can come up with. Then you might be ready for a bigger challenge - try this on a wedding you haven't attended: your parents (usually) or your grandparents. You might be amazed how much you can find out by doing this.

Enjoy!

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Who can forget being the first to cross an open field of fresh snow - sparkling in the sunlight and crunching underfoot? Or, laying on your back and making angels? Who remembers the smell of Grandma's house while she was baking Christmas goodies by the roomful? How about the crack of the wood in the fireplace and the sound of carols and hymns coming from the radio or record player?

Those memories need to be nourished and preserved so that we may continue to be connected to each other and to ourselves. We cannot continue the journey of life without knowing where we have been or where we came from. The world was adrift, lost and without purpose until hope arrived. That is the message of Christmas - hope. Hope was brought back into the world when Christ was born. Now, through our families and faith, we have direction and meaning in our lives. Share the splendor and wonder of God's creation.

This Christmas share yourself and your memories with your family. They are gifts that cannot be outgrown, worn out, taken away or exchanged. Do your children know where their traditions have come from? Do they know what part of their Christmas was a part of your Christmas growing up? Think of all the things you do out of habit - habits formed a lifetime ago. Examine your routines and give them meaning. It has been a marvelous experience listening to the traditions of my parents and how they blended together to become the Christmas I knew. I remember the special times with my grandparents, and I hope that I can be remembered as well as they are.

Think of what you know of the history of your traditions, and then talk about them this year. (Or even better yet, write them down - begin a journal or scrapbook of your celebrations) What traditions do you still wonder about? What signaled Christmas was coming? Was it music in the stores, snow on the ground, or finding a Christmas tree? What were the patterns you had on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day?

- Do you remember a special Christmas, or received a gift you still remember?
- Where did you spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day? Who did you spend them with?
- What foods did you eat? Who did the cooking?
- How did your traditions change as your family changed? Were there people you saw at Christmas that you didn't see any other time of year?
  - What part did the Christmas story play in your celebrations? How significant was Santa Claus?
  - Break out the old photo albums and look at the Christmas pictures - what other memories do they spark?
  - Look at your list of Christmas cookies - which ones come from your mother's traditions and which ones from your father's?
  - How did you decorate your home? Did you have a real or artificial tree? What ornaments do you remember? Did you decorate your yard?
  - Think about your first Christmas away from home. What did you miss the most? What did you do to try and recreate Christmas for yourself?

There are a lot of emotions involved in this time of year, and none of them are meant to be experienced alone. Along with all the food and gifts and love you share this Christmas, share some of your heritage with your family, too.

***Merry Christmas!***

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Looking at old photographs can be lots of fun - it can also remind you of how much has changed over the years. The best photographs to look at are the ones with people in them. When I first started taking pictures, I took a lot of photographs of landscapes, plants, flowers, and sunsets, not very many people. I did take pictures at Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving when we were all together, but I still notice that I have more than enough pictures of the Christmas tree, the place settings at the table, and faceless hands opening gifts.

Above my desk, I have several photographs of family - one of Gayle, the kids school pictures, and one of our 2 grandsons. Some of them are a bit outdated, but the new ones are tucked into the frames, waiting to take their place of prominence. I haven't taken to carrying pictures of them in my wallet and I don't have any at my desk at work, but the images are still with me.

Every time I look at those photographs, I catch myself remembering that particular time of their lives and my relationship with them. And, then I catch up with myself and think about the people they have become. They are special to me, and I only hope that I am making sure they know this.



When I started taking pictures I mostly took pictures of things, not people. When I did take pictures of people, it was at special events - holidays, birthdays, and during vacations. Or, I would sneak a picture from a distance. Taking pictures of people was risky for me - it required too much of a commitment to getting to know them, something I wasn't much good at. Instead of being able to hide behind my camera, I was the one being exposed to my subjects. So, I avoided it. As our children were born, I found it easy and fun to capture everything they were doing on film, and we even bought a video camera to get the movement and sound recorded, too. Then, the kids started getting older and aware they were having their picture taken, and the photos stopped being candid and real. That reduced the number of times I got my camera out, and the number of photographs I took dwindled to almost nothing. Maybe I would get a few a Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, but that was about it. This means there are fewer pictures of the younger kids than there are of the older ones, something I can't go back and change.



What I can do is to work on the relationships I have with those people in the pictures over my desk. And, maybe I can pass on some of our heritage while I do that. Here's how I plan to do it.

I'm going to start by writing down what each of those pictures over my desk brings to mind. Using the questions in our [PreservingPhotos](#) article, and my best Sgt. Joe Friday frame of mind, I'll begin recording 'just the facts'. Who is in the photo, when was the photo taken, where was it taken, who took it, and why. Here's an example: I took this picture of Kristen while we were living at our old house in White Bear Lake, MN. I was home that day and doing some work down in the basement, when I noticed it was pretty quiet upstairs. When I went up to see what was, or wasn't, going on, I found her sleeping in the hallway. Now, I'll admit that watching my kids sleep was special for me, especially if they fell asleep while I was holding them. To me it was the ultimate expression of trust - they felt safe enough to fall asleep. I'm still reaching back to try a piece together more details for that day, but this will be a picture and a memory that will stay with me for a long time. And, just to show you where she gets her stamina from, I've included another photo of someone closely related.

Here's a couple of challenges for you - think of the person closest to you (physically or emotionally), and then see how long it takes you to find a photograph of them. Now, find a recent photograph of them. Once you have those photographs, take out a clean sheet of paper and begin to make some notes about the picture and the person. Then share those discoveries with someone else - pass it on.

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## Preserving Family Photographs

Most of us have photos tucked away somewhere, I know we do. Some are in albums, some are in boxes, some are yet to be developed. One of the boxes we had got left in an area that wasn't completely weatherproof, ruining most of the photographs, and damaging many of the negatives. Since I have a scanner for my computer that has an attachment for negatives and slides, I have begun to scan each strip of negatives into my computer, then create a proof page to help me identify the roll of film. You don't need a scanner, or even a computer for this project - the essential element for this project is to make sure the photos your family has are properly stored and identified for future generations.

I'm going to leave the topic of preserving photos and proper storage materials for another day, but I will give you some basics.

- Unless the album is damaging your photographs, don't dismantle the albums. The arrangement of the photos is just as important as the individual photos. It puts together the stories, and helps you identify people, places and events. If you want to pass on some of the photographs to other family members, have copies made of the photos, or even copies of the entire page.

- In many cases, the photograph is the original. With early photographic methods, the image was made directly on the final print. If the image is showing signs of deterioration, have a copy made. Current technologies can also enhance the image quality, improving brightness, contrast, color balance and sharpness. Scratches and imperfections can also be removed. Use your copies for viewing and displaying, protecting the original in a cool, dry, dark place. If you have the negative for the photo, have new prints made from it, storing the negative in a cool, dry, dark place. In either case, have copies made that are as true to the original as possible. If you want to manipulate the image - adding color to a black and white photograph, removing or adding people or objects from the picture - feel free to do so, but identify the image as such, maybe even display it with the originals that were used to make the composite.

Always treat your photographs with care - use clean hands, remove potentially damaging materials (especially food) from the work area, handle photographs and negatives only by the edges, and be organized.

Now that we have that out of the way, let's really get started.

1. Gather the photographs you'll be working with
2. Set aside time with other family members to go through the photographs
3. Select the photographs you'll identify - some may be duplicates or retakes of the same subject
4. Identify as much as you can about the photograph - who took it (if it is from a professional photographer, include their name, the name of the studio, and where it was located), when it was taken, where it was taken, the subject of the photograph, and why it was taken
5. If you can, include information about the camera used to take the photograph, or at least some information about the type of photograph - is it a Polaroid, a black & white print from a negative, a color print from a negative, print from a color slide, or a color slide?
6. After the general information about the photograph is recorded (and you have a way to match this with the photograph later - *don't* write this information on the photograph, use a separate sheet of paper), look at the details of the subject - what clothes are they wearing? What jewelry are they wearing? What other things



were included in the picture? What's in the background?

7. Now that you've looked at the individual photograph, what photos were taken before and after? Look for a sequence of events or theme. Begin to talk about and write down what you remember about that time, if you were there. If you weren't there, try to find someone who was and talk to them about that event. Record any memories you may have gotten from previously talking to someone who was there.

8. Be sure to note the sources of all information you record about the photograph

9. You may want to create a timeline of photographs, noting significant times with photographs. Another type of project is to select an image to represent a time - what would best capture the essence of that event/day/week/month/year/decade?

10. Finally, see what other documents record the events in the photographs - wedding invitations, birthday cards, birth certificates, enlistment records, programs, letters, postcards, newspaper clippings (photocopy these - they contain chemicals that will damage photographs), yearbooks, or announcements. Also, does anyone have any of the items in the photographs?

Along with the new album or journal you have started, you will also be rewarded by the process - photographs were taken to be shared later, and you have done just that. Remember to continue to take photographs and then to share them with someone else. You may even be surprised how your perspective changes with time (your memory certainly does!). Reflect on how that photograph of that event fits into your life now. Then write it down!

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## Other Resources

- [Cyndi's List - Photographs & Memories](#)
- [Your Family Legacy - Heritage Scrapbook Article Downloads](#)
- [My History is America's History: Saving Your Family Treasures](#)
- [Preservation Links & Resources from Ancestry.com](#)

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**(Living This Year on Purpose)**January, for some, is a time to look back at the last 12 months and wonder - "How'd I do?" For others, the questions are more along the lines of - "How'd I get here?" Either way, we need to ask ourselves - "What's next?"

Having made our way through all the activities presented during December, we're about ready for that long winter's nap. But, instead of that or staring stupidly at the TV or computer screen we'll rejuvenate ourselves in other ways.

I usually spend time in December remembering the traditions and time we spent together around Christmas and the role that played in our lives then and now. This year, we were more deliberate with our observance of Christmas, sharing more of the traditions with our children and involving them more in the process of making our holiday memorable. It actually worked! Now we have momentum and we plan to carry this through the next 12 months. Christmas is not just an annual event, it is the basis for our lives all year long. And, we are a family all year long. We will continue to share our traditions and values with each other.

[100.00 0 0 67.00 28.35 455.99 cm /14 Do Q](#)

Same

[100.00 0 0 71.00 28.35 352.39 cm /15 Do Q](#)

Year?

[100.00 0 0 71.00 28.35 248.79 cm /16 Do Q](#)

Year?

[100.00 0 0 66.00 28.35 150.19 cm /17 Do Q](#)

2002

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Now, to the project part. Part of our preparations for this year was getting out all the Christmas photos I could find. This is part of our ongoing project to get all of our photographs organized, identified and properly stored for the future. We all took turns looking at those Christmas photos and tried to narrow down which year they came from. We've found we'll need some help from other parts of the family to pinpoint the exact years by matching with their photographs. Once we've identified the pictures we DO have, we'll also know which ones we DON'T have. Again, we'll count on family to fill in the gaps for us. All of this was quite deliberate on our part (except the part where we lost track of all our photos and this project became necessary.)

I suggest a similar process for each of you - start with Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, or any family gathering - create a photo timeline for your family. Chronicle the life of your family year by year. Once you have completed an album, move on to the next. In fact, you could have a very busy year if you were determined to complete the cycle this year. But, I recommend just starting the process this year, and making it part of every family gathering. You will have ongoing projects and scrapbooks that will continue to grow over the years, and the time spent creating them will be more precious than the holiday.

Now you know how this project connects with its title - spending time together passing on traditions, remembering your life as a family and those that contributed to you family is your legacy. It takes resolve and determination to keep the family together, and it takes a plan. It doesn't happen by accident. "Live, Love, Learn, and Leave a Legacy."

Steps for success:

- Choose an annual family gathering to highlight
- Gather all the photographs you have for that event
- Identify any photos not identified
- Sort by year
- Contact extended family to fill in any gaps (missing years) and help identify any you can't
- Put them all together in an album - make copies for other family members (they may have missing photos, too)
- Write captions or notes for the photographs. Make sure everyone participates in this
- Add other notes about the event that makes it special for your family - traditions, recipes, pictures of heirlooms - so someone can recreate the holiday from your album. You can include letters, cards, or poems from other family members, too.
- If someone has some technical ability, you may have them capture the album electronically, even adding sound, music and digital video to your album. It's the latest in home movies!

Here are some other resources:

- [The Center for Life Stories Preservation](#)
- [The Legacy Project](#)

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