

## Everybody Has a Story to Tell

Wherever men have lived  
there is a story to be told.  
-Henry David Thoreau, Journal-

I myself, I am not a character  
in this novel: I am the novel.  
-Philip K. Dick, A Scanner Darkly-

You may not realize it but your life is an incredible, page-turning story. To those who love you most – and to generations yet to be born – it is a spellbinding bestseller. It began when you entered this world and it is still being written. The visual images are there, they are the photographs stuffed away in a shoebox under your bed. The words are there, they are the stories you tell your friends, your deepest thoughts, your dreams. They just haven't made it onto paper in an accessible, easy-to-read, and enjoyable format. In a scrapbook photo album. This isn't just any photo album, and you aren't just any storyteller. You- and only you- hold the keys to thousands of stories and details that will make your memories come alive. You and your family could be enjoying the strengthened relationships, richer communication, increased self-esteem, and feelings of thankfulness and belonging that album making has brought to thousands of lives. And it's easier to do than you may think.

You have heard the question before, “What would you be sure to get out of your house if your house caught on fire?” Most of us answer something like “my children, pets, and my photos”. Yet those same photos that you would save from the flames are generally stashed, and forgotten in boxes. *If photographs are that important to us, why aren't we enjoying them while we have them?*

For many of us disorganization compounds the problem. Of course some photos do make it into albums. Yet often, even these are not safely preserved. In fact, many albums actually do more harm than good. This is because chemicals used to make them not only cause the photo to yellow but greatly increase their rate of deterioration.

Every family can benefit from the tradition of preserving photos in safe, *meaningful* family albums. All traditions have to start somewhere, and this one is no exception. If your family is going to enjoy the benefits of completed albums, someone has to take the first step.

**BUT....** Of course we all have reasons why we think we can't put our photos into keepsake photo albums. The most commonly encountered obstacles are: time, handwriting, space and creativity.

**Time** – who has enough of it? However, if an activity is important enough we will *find* the time. If you consistently work on your albums, you will get them done. Here are a few hints

1. Commit – Set aside fifteen minutes a day, an hour a week, or three hours a month to work on your albums. Schedule this time on your calendar.

2. Do Double-Duty –crop photos while you watch TV. Lay out pages during your child’s music/dance/sports lessons. Mount photos while you wait at the dentist. Invest in a good bag that will allow you to take your supplies anywhere.
3. Journal for sweet dreams –Document the photos in your album for a few minutes before you go to bed every night.

**Have you seen my handwriting?** –Another common protest. The irony is that our loved ones aren’t worried in the slightest about neatness. Sometimes messiness is half the fun! They simply love to see our words, written in sharp chicken scratches or curly loops by our very own hands. Your writing is like a fingerprint. You are writing for yourself and those you love not for your third grade teacher, so don’t let neatness and grammar hold you back. Write down your feelings, and those who read your album will come to know you better. Many people are hooked on the computer. But don’t let that keep you from getting your handwriting in your albums as well.

**Space** –But I don’t have enough space! Album making doesn’t require massive amounts of space. You can share album-making space with a friend. Keep all your album-making materials in a portable bag and work on your pages at workshops or in your home.

**Creativity** –But I’m not creative. I hear this a lot. We are all creative. You are creative. No matter how you put together your albums, they will be a reflection of the distinctive person that is you. You can’t help but create albums that are personalized. The personalization is what makes them creative. You are “creative. You might even find that the motivation to do something with your photos brings out an artistic side you didn’t even know you had.

**Keep your eye on the prize** The bottom line, I am committed to helping you get your pictures into albums. This requires a balance between the craft/decorative focus and the commitment to complete albums. Both aspects are important. But I believe people are more interested in completing their albums than in focusing precious time and effort on the decorative side. There are just too many photos waiting for an album home to be obsessed with the “creative” angle. That’s not to say you can’t be creative with your pages or that you should not spend the extra time on the creativity. That is all a matter of personal preference. A number of people love to create artistic, complex pages. It is Creative Memories experience that people who focus on the craft side burn out and quit more often than those who focus simply on completing their albums. Those who possess finished albums they can share and enjoy are much more likely to become photo historians for life. *Keep your eye on the goal, completed albums.* Scrapbooking as a craft may be a retail trend, but the tradition of making heirloom photo albums can span generations. *That is why Creative Memories advocates simple pages, completed albums.*

## Photo Safety

**Storing Your Photos** Creative Memories photo-safe albums will keep your photos safe for generations and should be the only photo-safe product you choose. Any other type of container you use to store your photos should be viewed as temporary storage. Ideal album features for long term storage include: acid free, lignin free, buffered, reinforced page edges, full album lays flat when opened, accommodates photos of various sizes, journaling and memorabilia. Page protectors are also important. They protect your photos and memorabilia from dust, air pollution, fingerprints and accidents. ALL Creative Memories products meet the above criteria and the highest photo safety standards.

**What is Acid-Free?** Does Acid-Free also mean photo safe? The two phrases are related but different. Not all acid-free products are photo safe. Acid free is only one aspect of being photo safe. For example, cooking oil is acid-free, but it is not considered photo safe. Terms to know:

Photo-Safe: The product will not harm your photos.

Acid-Free: The pH level will not harm your photos.

Lignin Free: The paper will maintain its durability and resist yellowing.

To protect your memories, purchase high quality, photo-safe albums. Stay away from magnetic albums, and pocket page albums. Look for an album with acid-free paper and a binding that allows the pages to lie flat. This will make both reading and writing-which you're going to do a lot of -much easier.

Other important tips to keep in mind:

- Do not leave your film, camera, photo albums, or supplies in your car. Temperatures can reach up to 160 degrees in some places.
- When moving, pack your albums in an upright position. This ensures that all the weight hands directly on the albums binding system, so photos and memorabilia do not become damaged from excess weight on them. Do not cover the box with plastic; it can trap heat and humidity. Make sure no heavy objects are packed on top of your box of albums. Keep the box with you so you can monitor the temperature.
- Keep your albums away from ultraviolet light, excess humidity, and temperature extremes. These factors will accelerate photo deterioration. You might find these conditions in an attic, basement or garage.
- At airports, keep unprocessed film in your carry-on to avoid the new baggage scanning technology, which may fog film.
- Put an index card with your name, address, and phone number in your camera case, and use the first photo of every roll to take a picture of that card. Then, if your film gets separated from its envelop during processing

## Getting Organized

1. **Collect** First and foremost, gather all your photos and memorabilia in one place. You do not need a scrapbook room or elaborate organization system. Your task is to find everything and bring it all together. Soon, you'll be putting completed albums on shelves instead of boxes of photos back in closets.
2. **Decide** Next, decide what type of album(s) to make. You can begin this step while you are collecting your photos. Ask yourself what the main themes in your photo collection are. If it helps, make a list of different themes, such as family, friends, vacations, celebrations. See the attached list of album ideas.
3. **Sort** Once you've decided on a specific album project, sorting will be easier than you think. You might choose to sort everything you have, or simply sort what you need for your first project. Sorting your photos and memorabilia will be a unique and personal project. I suggest you sort your collection based on the type of albums you wish to create. Below are four sorting techniques to get your started. You may want to use more than one of these techniques to sort our photos and memorabilia.

**A. Big Events** Any even that is monumental in your life can be considered a "big event" for example a European vacation, a wedding, family reunion or experience. This is one of the best ways to begin your first scrapbook project. The best sorting technique for themed albums is the use of subcategories to separate your photos. Any subject matter comprising at least four or five rolls of film can be combined to complete an album.

1. Make sure you have all the photos and memorabilia from the event.
2. Separate photos into categories, such as events during the celebration or activities during a vacation. If you were sorting wedding photos you might have categories such as; dating, engagement, bridal showers, preparations, ceremony, reception, honeymoon, our new home etc.
3. Put your photos in sequence. Use a "photo labeling pencil" on the back of your photos to number them.
4. Add journaling notes or reminders.

**B. Chronology** Definitely one of the easiest sorting techniques, chronological order is achieved by simply identifying the approximate date of the photos or memorabilia, documenting them and placing them in order. Start your album with a roll or two of current photos, and make the commitment to keep that album current. Then, set a goal for completing an additional album, starting no more than five years back.

1. Separate photos by year using index cards.
2. Put your photos in a chronological sequence for each year. Use a "photo labeling pencil" on the back of your photos to date and number them.
3. List the events in each group of photos on the index card.
4. Add journaling notes or reminders on index cards.

**C. Family Members** Children become great motivators for completing albums. Choosing to make children's albums means you will be sorting your photos and

memorabilia first by child and then by date. Sorting by family members requires the most concentration and planning. You will want to start by dividing your photo collection and ordering duplicates as needed. Next you will want to sort each group of photos chronologically.

1. Create a space for each family member either on a table or in a box or folder.
2. Separate the photos and memorabilia by family member. You may want to start a separate pile of photos to be duplicated for multiple albums.
3. Put your photos in a chronological sequence. Use a “photo labeling pencil” on the back of your photos to number them.
4. Complete early baby pages for each child before moving on to school-age years so that each child will feel special by having an album started and in progress.

**D. Ancestral** Photos of your ancestors call for a unique kind of scrapbook project. If you are fortunate enough to have these keepsakes, you’ll want to make them your preservation priority. You might choose to create a single album detailing your family’s story or, perhaps, create individual tribute albums for family members. Since ancestral photos represent family heritage, a sorting technique that prepares for storytelling is the most idea. Sorting should begin with separating photos and memorabilia by family lineage, for example, you mother’s family and your father’s family. Keep in mind that many old photographs require special handling and mounting methods.

1. Separate photos and memorabilia by family line, e.g., Grandma’s family/Grandpa’s family or Mother’s family/Father’s family.
2. List family units including spouses and children on an index card. Use cards to label folders holding oversized items.
3. Put your photos in a storytelling sequence. Use a “photo labeling pencil” on the back of your photos to number them.
4. Add journaling notes on back of photos or index cards.

**4. Storing your Photos** The next question you might have is what to do you’re your photos once they’re stored and ready for albums. The answer is simple-start putting them in albums. Don’t buy expensive storage containers for your photos. Creative Memories albums will keep your photos safe for generations. Because any other container you use to store your photos should be viewed as temporary, I recommend you use inexpensive items at home and commit to moving your photos into albums as quickly as possibly. Temporary storage can be cardboard boxes, file drawers, desk or dresser drawers, plastic tubs.

**5. What to do with your Negatives** Your photo negatives are important, and you should keep them. Someday you may wish you could find, and print, a special photo taken years before. Creating an organized negative file includes 1) keeping your negatives together, 2) keeping your negatives in some kind of order, 3) labeling them for easy retrieval.

Use a simple, accessible negative storage system that works for you. It is best to store your negatives in a way that is as safe as possible from natural disasters or from accidental damage. Without question, the safest place for your negatives is in a fire- and heat-resistant container. But a file box that can be quickly located in an emergency will probably serve most of us. Keeping your negatives safe can also mean that they are stored someplace other than where you store your scrapbook photo albums. Creative Memories has NegCare envelopes and sleeves for safe negative storage and easy organization.

### **Album Ideas**

Family Album, Vacation Album, Heritage Album, Graduating Child's Album, Christmas Album, Brag Book, Baby Album, School Days Album, Wedding Album, and Tribute Album  
just to name a few.

## **Creating a Page in Four Easy Steps**

1. **Select** your photos and crop them to make them look their best.
2. **Mount** Choose photo mounting paper and mount it to your scrapbook page. Mount your photographs. Be sure to leave room for journaling.
3. **Journal** Meaningful stories aren't about how you write but what you write. You can write your stories in any way you are comfortable. Some options include;
  - a. **Bullet Journaling:** Write about who's in the photos, when and where they were taken.
  - b. **Quick captions and comments:** Reflect on what's happening in a photo, why you took the photo or your feelings about the moment.
  - c. **Storytelling:** Tell the story in paragraphs. Be generous with details to capture the full essence of the moment.

Add a title to the page if appropriate.

4. **Enhance** Add stickers and slip on a page protector.
  - a. **Memorabilia** Bring pages to life with special souvenirs. Try adding a lock of your child's hair next to a photo of his first hair cut, or display color brochures and postcards along with your pictures from a family vacation. As you add paper memorabilia to your album, keep in mind that unless these paper memorabilia are specifically marked as acid-free, they may contain harmful amounts of acid. This acid causes the paper to deteriorate, turn brown, and eventually crumble. The acid in the paper can be harmful to your photos as well. Creative Memories offers a full line of Pocket Pages, Photo Mounting Sleeves, and Page Protectors to safely display newsprint and paper documents in your album.