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**Making of the Photo Scribe**

by Denis Ledoux

**About the making of the *Photo Scribe: A Writing Guide / How to Write Stories into Photo Albums***

One day in 1996, I read an article in a local newspaper about a scrapbook workshop called *Creative Memories* that was about to be presented. There was something about the tone of the article that led me to believe the woman offering the program and [Creative Memories](http://thememoirnetwork.com/creative-memories-memoir-network/) were not one and the same. My sense was that she was working at someone else’s program; she was a presenter and not an originator.

Nothing wrong with that, but at the time, I was in the process of developing a network of teachers to lead my Turning Memories Into Memoirs™ workshops. Was this local woman who was presenting a Creative Memories workshop the analog of those teachers who had already begun to present my Turning Memories workshop?

Out of curiosity to see if my intuition was correct and to chat with someone who may have precious information to help me grow my own company, I called the 800 operator—this was 1996 after all—and learned that there was an 800 Creative Memories number in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Thinking it might be wise to call Creative Memories to chat about how this networking program of theirs was working, I connected with the marketing director, Susan Iida, and you can imagine my surprise when I learned that Creative Memories had over 4,000 teachers at the time and…

Here I was with my 20 or so teachers! Susan, the marketing director, was gracious and very generous with information and we talked about expanding my own company not only on that call but on several subsequent ones.

**The Upshot**

Because I had shared my own work helping people preserve memoirs in writing—which was after all the Creative Memories mission, she asked me if I would be willing to come to St. Cloud to be a breakout speak to a yearly convention of Creative Memories consultants.

Of course, I said *yes!*

At the time, I did not have any material specific to preserving stories via photo albums, but I did have my book [*Turning Memories Into Memoirs / A Handbook for Writing Lifestories*](http://thememoirnetwork.com/shop/turning-memories-into-memoirs/). I did what any reasonable businessman would do I brought copies of my book with me. I shipped 500 copies to St, Cloud, and during the weekend, I sold sold-out.

I was, of course, overjoyed—the income from the sales far exceeded my honorarium!

Apparently I was a critical success because Susan immediately asked me to come back the next year not as a breakout speaker but as the keynote speaker!

I asked her if it would be a good idea for me to fashion a book on specific scrapbooking techniques for preserving lifestories. In short, I was volunteering to create a book that would use photos and short texts rather than lengthy writing as the core of memory preservation.

***The* *Photo Scribe* is born**

The ensuing winter (‘96-‘97) was spent creating the book The *Photo Scribe, A Writing Guide / How to Write Stories Behind Your Photographs*. What I did was to incorporate that gist of my *Turning Memories Into Memoirs / A Handbook for Writing Lifestories* program into the new *Photo Scribe* line.

The book that resulted was a fine book. When I brought it to the Creative Memories convention—this time it was held in Minneapolis because Creative Memories now had gone from over 4,000 to almost 8,000 consultants—the book was well received. Incredibly, I had brought a thousand copies of The *Photo Scribe* and equal numbers of *Turning Memories Into Memoirs / A Handbook for Writing Lifestories* and of the recently-recorded audio.

During the weekend, the consultants were often 10 to 12 abreast and the same number deep. Martha and I were selling the books and we could hardly keep up. Several kind ladies stepped up and said, “You guys need help!” Then, they began taking payments and handing out books. We were ever so grateful for their help.

In all, we sold $29,000 of books and tapes that weekend! Need I mention that this far exceeded my honorarium?

**Why was *The Photo Scribe* so well received?**

There are probably several reasons for its success:

* It emphasizes very short written texts—usually less than 100 words. We call these cameo narratives. Cameo narratives are intense and are meant to transmit the gist of an experience. When combined with a photo, cameo narratives give a much more complete take on an experience.
* At the center of the captured memory is both a photo and a written text—each completing what the other alone cannot.
* Cameo narratives excel at the times when you have no photos or for which photos cannot be used. While you may have a photo of your children’s birthday parties, it is not likely that your photos would indicate that this was the time your marriage was falling apart. In a photoscribed album, it is possible to write in text to provide depth to do what a photo cannot.
* A memoir requires a narrative arc to retain the interest of the reader while the photoscribed album does not. In that sense, a photoscribed photo album resembles the journal much more than it does a polished memoir.

There are those who protest that photo albums are public books—and of course they are. Should one get so personal in an album? It is a personal call, of course, but I say a photo album need not be any more private than a memoir is—a memoir that you share with family, friends and conceivably the world.

**And now the the *EPhoto Scribe***

We have now added to our *Photo Scribe* line an eversion of the hard-copy book. This makes it easy to take the book with you as you travel and want to be reminded of the best ways to preserve the memory of your trip. It is also convenient since your ereader does not to take up space on your bookshelves—if that is important to you.

**For a limited time**

We are offering the hardcopy of [*The* *Photo Scribe, A Writing Guide / How to Write Stories Behind Your Photographs*](http://thememoirnetwork.com/shop/the-photo-scribe/) book and the ebook at a special price. You’ll get both the hardcopy—with no S&H fee—and an ebook version of your choice for the price of the hardcopy alone: $19.95. A savings of $10 that wouldn’t be available for long.

To receive both for this special price, [click here.](http://thememoirnetwork.com/shop/photo-scribe-books/)

The eversion is also available alone for $4.95. To order the ebook click here: http//thememoirnetwork.com/shop/photo-scribe-ebook/

Good luck to you as you both write your memoirs and perhaps begin to photoscribe your albums. To help you with the task we are including here a link to articles on the blog on photoscribing.

But before you do that though, gift yourself with a copy of both versions of *The* *Photo Scribe, A Writing Guide / How to Write Stories Behind Your Photographs.*

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