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The Boulder County BUSINESS REPORT

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Love is ...

Love is the color orange with a yellow outline.
It sounds like a song playing one verse through your head.
It tastes like vanilla ice cream gliding down your throat.
It smells like the Spring, fresh, clean air.
It looks like the picture of the one you love.
It feels warm, content, and happy.

—Erika Johansen, May 1997



COURTESY THE
ELEMENTAL PRESS

Creating a permanent record of one's life using photographs, recollections and thoughts about life and loved ones to pass on to future generations has been taken to the next level, beyond mere scrapbooks. Companies like Lissa Ann Forbes' The Elemental Press in Lafayette, www.TheElementalPress.com, can help people put it all together in their own words. At left is a

page from Erika Johansen's book with her handprint and a poem, and the cover of her book is at right. Above, cover of Joe and Dorothy Pasqua's chronicle of their 50-year marriage that will give future family members insight into their heritage.

Thanks for the memories

BY ELIZABETH GOLD

Business Report Correspondent

Personal history albums preserve life experiences, stories, photos

The times they are a-changin' as children born in the biggest generation to date reach their golden years. As a group that came of age through personal expression, baby boomers are continuing to keep true to their roots.

Their media are changing, however, with many of them wanting to know more about how to create books or albums to capture family histories.

Although a good number of people inter-

ested in getting their stories down are baby boomers, young families are putting time into preserving their memories as well.

Lissa Ann Forbes, owner of The Elemental Press in Lafayette, works with clients to create personal history collections. "Our current elder population has lived through more changes than any other generation, and they have lots to say about it," she said. "The clock

is ticking for them to get it down on paper."

Connie Jackson, a Louisville-based consultant working with St. Cloud, Minn.-based keepsake-album company Creative Memories, attributes the growing interest, in part, to the shock of Sept. 11. "This was the most devastating occurrence during my lifetime, and it hit home about what I have to leave as a legacy to my children," she said.

Robin Gribbon, sole proprietor of Narrative Arts LLC in Boulder, thinks people are "fascinated by the details of an ordinary life when they know a character personally." Younger family members look to the details of their elders to make a deeper connection or to get a better understanding of themselves.

"For example, two daughters of a man who is the subject of an extensive personal history I completed commented that the book helped them to see their father for the first time as a whole person and not just their dad," Gribbon explained. "Once they

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experienced his stories, they could view him as someone who was once a child, a teenager and a young man who went through all of the joys, sorrows, confusion and enlightenment that they did at each phase."

Unlike genealogists, these personal historians don't research and record a person's ancestral family tree. Instead, they help clients record their family's life stories and experiences. Some help individuals create their own collections through classes and some do the work themselves — everything from interviewing to hand binding the books.

In addition to books, the final products can be audiotapes, videotapes or DVDs.

There are many books in print that cover how to start writing a personal history.

The Association of Personal Historians offers suggestions on both books and classes. It also stresses that although many people start out with enthusiasm, completing a personal history project while relying on their own motivation can sometimes be a shot in the foot from the beginning.

What a personal historian offers is motivation, structure, prompting and encouragement.

Guy Lanter of Berthoud currently is working with Forbes to complete a second personal history book. The books are what he refers to as tributes to his sons when they graduate from high school.

Lanter admits that he has held up the process at times but was kept on track by

Forbes. "I had to go through photos I've collected for 18 years and articles on my son's sports," he said. "She asked a lot of questions and made sure I got everything together from baby pictures to input from my son's teachers, friends and family."

"It's a tribute to his high school years — I guess to his life in general," Lanter added. "The book is something he can take with him and have on his coffee table rather than having to go through separate albums."

"I work a bit differently than many in the field," Forbes said. "My clients write their own stories, and I do the layout and design through to a soft-cover hand-bound book. I am available throughout the project for direction, focus — chronological, thematic, narrative, storytelling — and suggestions on how to make their book a captivating treasure."

STORYTELLING MODE

She has clients start out with her e-zine, Write from the Inside, for triggers and sample stories. She also teaches classes on the process.

Gribbon begins with what she calls a life-line exercise. She and the client plot out the major milestones of his or her life from birth to present. She then uses the information to develop more in-depth questions that will move the client into storytelling mode.

"In other cases where I am creating more a tribute piece after someone has died, I will interview surviving family members to glean summary quotes and a timeline of life

events," she added.

Gribbon holds monthly meetings where clients come to work on their albums and receive input from her.

Jackson starts out by asking personal questions about a person's family and hobbies. "From this we talk about what kind of album they're interested in starting, and if it's a manageable project," she said. "Some are just too big for a beginner."

As a consultant, Jackson helps clients create their own personal history scrapbooks. She teaches basic techniques on how to choose good pictures, what to toss, when to organize photos chronologically versus by project and what types of memorabilia to use.

In addition to these classes, Creative Memories sells materials needed to create what are called safe albums — albums with pages that are acid free and won't cause photos and other memorabilia to disintegrate or discolor.

Gaylan Tracy has used Creative Memories supplies to put together a few scrapbooks, the first one as a surprise for her parents on their 50th wedding anniversary. "When I gave it to my mom, she cried," she said.

Tracy now is working on two albums for her aunt, the first one being a collection of love letters her uncle wrote from 1944 on, starting from when he was overseas during the war.

"My uncle passed away two years ago, and when I started reading the letters, I had tears rolling down my cheeks," she said. "My aunt has three daughters who hadn't even

read these love letters, so I asked her if I could put them in a safe album so they wouldn't disintegrate."

In addition to the letters and photos, the album is embellished with pullouts and captions.

Tracy has spent about \$200 creating two books for her aunt and \$75 on her parents' book, which took about 100 hours to complete.

"A book I created was designed to capture the subject's anecdotes from birth to marriage, with captioned photographs and period art as well as historical footnotes," Gribbon said. The interviewing, writing, research, photo scanning and placement, layout, design and production took more than 130 hours.

While this project totaled \$10,100, most of her projects cost about \$1,250.

"Other projects may require less work, or clients may take on some of the work, like interviewing," she added.

Books created by or assisted by the three companies have ranged from 45 pages to 150 pages. Prices are based on the amount of time required by the personal historian plus expenses like printing.

"Why I wanted to do the scrapbook myself is because it was fun, and I wanted to do it personally," Tracy said. "What's really important to me, though, is that I'm putting these things in safe albums and I'm saving some things that are important."