

Use Your PC to Make a Special Tribute

By Bruce A. Love

Unfortunate events allowed me to make interesting use of my PC this year. When my father passed away in late January, the family gathered to make the usual arrangements that occur on such occasions. We had a lot of support from family and friends during that time. We were all so grateful for the kind words we received, and for the meals, desserts, and other sources of comfort our friends brought. In the evening, however, when it was too late for visitors, but too early to think about sleep, there was a noticeable void. It was during that time that the family dragged out some pictures to reminisce a bit.

For baby boomers like me, family photos exist in a variety of formats: color and black and white prints, slides, negatives, and digital images. As we sorted through the envelopes of old pictures, and thought about the guests that would be arriving for the memorial service, we decided to put together a visual tribute to Dad so that we could share these precious memories with others who knew and loved him. We decided that a computer slide presentation, along with a three-panel display board for photographs, was the way to go.

In times of grief, keeping busy is essential for maintaining one's sanity and composure. I think it must be a natural response we all have to cope with the losses we experience. As we started into our project, each family member contributed in his or her own way. For some, sorting through envelopes of pictures in search of "Classic Dad" shots was the activity of choice. For others, constructing the photo display board was the focus. I chose to run the slide projector, while some enjoyed just observing the whole process. The experience of preparing Dad's presentation was actually quite cathartic.

When we had selected about 60 photos and slides, we were ready for the next step - scanning! Most modern scanners accept photos, slides, and even negatives! The

CanoScan 4200F, for example, scans photographs and documents in just about any format. It runs about \$100.

Scanners and digital cameras always seem to be configured to produce huge files by default. I suppose they are set up this way to emphasize the biggest and sharpest images that the device is capable of producing. But if you intend to just use the digitized images in a computer slide presentation or a web site, it is preferable to keep image sizes smaller. By experimenting with "Size" and "Resolution" settings on your scanner or camera, you will discover that you can make sharp images that load quickly in your intended program.

Once your pictures have been scanned, you will want to insert them into a program such as PowerPoint (part of Microsoft Office). If you are pressed for time, however, the newer versions of Windows have a slide show mode built into Windows Explorer. I like PowerPoint because I can control image intervals, picture backgrounds, animations, music, and other multimedia elements. I configured the presentation to loop through the 60 slides, pausing for 5 seconds on each image before fading through black to the next slide. For memorial tributes, you may want to omit sounds and moving images. When it was time for the memorial service, the three-panel photo display board was placed on a table, with other framed photos, near the receiving line. The laptop computer displaying the slide tribute to Dad sat in the middle of the table and looped silently as guests recounted fond memories.

If you would like to memorialize a loved one, consider producing a computer slide presentation. You will enjoy the activity of digging out photographs you probably haven't seen in many years, reminiscing with loved ones, and sharing memories with the youngest members of the family. Once completed, presentations can be copied to CD-ROM, and distributed to friends and family as very special keepsakes.

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