

I REMEMBER THE EASTER SUNDAY my family went to Marietta to visit my grandmother. We always called her Mamaw. The effects of Alzheimer's was showing; she needed constant attention, including watching to make sure she didn't slip off of the piano stool I had her sitting on for photos.

I had taken my light kit with me, and a backdrop. She had not had any professional photos taken in a while, and precious time was slipping away.

After taking a series of images with her on the piano stool and her daughter to the side supporting her, just out of sight of my lens, we discovered an old, worn rocking chair on the front porch. Beyond its prime, but still a work of art, it matched perfectly. One of the images is included here.

About three weeks after the photo session Mamaw had a stroke that made further sessions impossible.

It seems our precious memories are all a generation away from fading into obscurity. My mom's great grandmother, I believe I have it right, was a full blooded Indian. My skin tone and features show the evidence of this, but the details are now gone as to which tribe, where they lived, or any other of the "fine print" that is of interest now to the family. We all get too busy to write things down, make copies of the photos or share them somehow, and often times we get too busy to simply sit down and talk to the older generation, while we can.

How many times do the old family photos that were kept in a drawer for years, then pulled out to reminisce when family comes over, get scattered to the wind when someone passes away? And too many times I have gone into a flea market or junk store to find old photographs for sale. Some are obviously very old, over a century. Other times it may be no more than forty or fifty years. Odds are those family photos are lost forever to the descendants, either thrown out by uncaring kids or disposed of following a divorce. Maybe the junk dealer bought them at an estate sale because no one really cared.

Modern culture has gotten more interested in preserving our current memories, especially with the help of low cost digital photography. How many photos of a couple's first child are lost due to a computer hard drive crash? Gotta back it up, and then consider archival media. Consumer CD's and DVD's aren't going to last over ten years, and I've heard numbers closer to 2 and 3 years in some cases. My writings are not in a bound journal that will be here forever barring a fire, but they're on the laptop. It's all backed up. I feel like this current generation, despite taking more photos and perhaps writing more than any other, is in danger of leaving less behind when looking back 100 years down the road.

About a year ago I mentioned to my wife that I was heading out to go photograph an old abandoned church close to our home. I had admired the old charm, from the rock exterior to the beautiful architecture around the windows, and had been talking about photographing it for quite a while. She told me I waited too late; it had been torn down a week earlier. Sure enough, a cornerstone was all that was spared. The land had already been cleared and smoothed out. A year later, nothing further has been done to the property.



A month ago a mama bird built her nest in an outside light fixture just outside a bedroom at our home. We could see the babies with heads turned up, beaks wide open, waiting to be fed. I waited for good lighting and better weather, and when I finally walked over to the window to do my photos a few weeks later, they were gone.

I'm talking about more than just things; ever go to a funeral and wish you could go back and say something to the deceased, just one more thing, just to let them know? Say it now while you can. Know anyone that has touched your life in such a way that you would be devastated beyond words if something happened to him/her? It could be a phone call away. Say it while you can.

I treasure the old family relics, more so as I get older, and the generations pass. And the precious time with those that have touched my life in a positive way. Some are only here for a season, but their touch can last for generations if we allow it to.

It's good to remember where we came from, and how we got here. And try to pass along something to the next generation that will be of value.



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