

Amber Anderson
Teacher
Poudre High School

When my father quit drinking, and was declared a recovered alcoholic, he acquired a new addiction: scrapbooking. No, not the fancy pages with ribbons and other accoutrements—they were just books filled with documents, artwork, cards, letters and more that recorded the significant, and sometimes mundane, times of our lives.

I remember coming home from high school one day to find him sitting at the kitchen table. This was strange. Usually he was sitting in front of the television or behind a book with a Coke at his side. He had a large moving box to his left; it was almost as tall as the table. As soon as he saw me he called me over.

“Amber, what grade do you think you made this?” he asked holding up a newspaper print paper with a crayon-drawing of a girl resembling me.

“Uuhhh, first grade?” I guessed.

“Okay!” He wrote on a sticky note and slapped it on the page setting it into a pile that was apparently reserved for first grade work.

I didn’t know it at that moment, but this was the beginning of the rest of his life—and mine. His obsession with preserving our memories became as serious as his previous affair with hard liquor.

The first year after the scrapbooking bug bit, my dad surprised us with an amazing Christmas gift. He had hired someone to convert all of our home movies—previously on Super 8 film, to VHS tapes. What a memorable Christmas—watching our lives unfold on the television screen. Before it had been such a chore to get the films to play on the old projector—and so we rarely did it. And how beautiful it was that he had Christmas music underscoring all of the Christmas footage.

At the beginning of every tape, there was a short story that he had scanned to read on the screen before you watched the film.

“There is a legend of three horsemen crossing the desert at night. Out of the darkness came a voice commanding them to dismount and fill their pockets with pebbles. After they had obeyed and remounted, the voice declared, “Tomorrow at sun-up you will be both glad and sad.” When dawn came, they reached into their pockets and discovered not pebbles, but diamonds. Then they were both glad and sad—glad they had taken as much as they had, sad that they had not taken more!”

My dad also wrote how it was the same with preserving memories, and how his legacy to us was the scrapbooks, the movies, the audio-cassettes that he would save for us.

That first Christmas, as well as the seventeen years that followed before my dad’s death, taught me that preserving cherished memories is an amazing gift we can give our children. We can never take enough pictures, movies, or save enough school papers or artwork. They will all be exquisite gems someday.

I was cleaning out my dad’s office after he died. High up in the corner of a closet I found sealed boxes and envelopes that had different grandkids’ names on

them and dates in which to bestow the gift to them. EMMRY: on her 21st Birthday...CHASE on his 16th Birthday, and more. I'm pretty sure they are gifts like newspapers from the day they were born, or other sentiments of that sort—no shiny toys to be sure. I'm positive my dad's ultimate goal was not only to bring himself to his grandkids' celebrations years after his death, but also to have them realize how wonderful it would be to do the same for their grandkids one day. I know it has worked for me.