

from *The Photo Scribe*

Understanding the Creative Process.

Like all long-term projects, the task of creating a lifestory from your photographs will have its ups and downs, its exciting moments, and its moments of boredom. This is normal, but it's important to be aware of these ups and downs. Otherwise, you may be tempted at some point to abandon your project. Some suggestions you can follow to achieve and maintain a good working perspective throughout the creative process are provided below.

1. Recognize the different stages of creative work.

As you create your lifestory from your photos, you'll find that you progress through a number of stages, from excitement to boredom to anxiety. By recognizing and understanding these stages, you'll be better able to deal with them and achieve your goal, which is to finish the project.

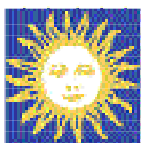
There will generally be no problem when you start. As you first put your photos in an order and look deeply into them, you will feel excitement. (It can be a bit like falling in love and having everything else recede a bit.) It's creative, and your juices are flowing. You jot down your annotations and place these tentatively in your book. Ideas for cameo narratives and lifestories come to you. You had no idea you were so creative! You begin writing your texts. You place these, too, in your album.

Before you know it, one album is all "sketched out." You go through the book again. Oops, a few of the photos are out of order—how did that escape you? You're now faced with the task of altering a section of the lifestory text that fit in just right or writing additional text for one of the photos. Not only is this annoying, but it also will take a little longer to finish the album!

Later, when you reread one of your lifestories, you realize that the clever twist you had given it is really a bit shallow or silly. You need to revise the text. The whole project begins to seem a little less fun.

So the work goes on, taking longer than you had thought. You find yourself getting bored with the task of adhering the photos to the page. Four points at which to stick each photo! How many photos have you done now? One million? Or is it ten million? You have other things to do! When will the end come in sight?

The actual end may be far away, but the anxiety can end when you accept the fact that all long-term projects have their ups and downs, their exciting moments, and their moments of boredom. Your anxiety will end when you make up your mind that



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your task is directed by a vision of your goals and not by the current task and feelings of the moment.

It's as hard as that — and as simple!

2. Create benchmark goals to encourage yourself.

You probably will be working on your lifestory project for a long time, so it's important to set intermediate, or benchmark, goals — not just the ultimate, and distant, ones — that you want to reach as you progress through the project. By reaching these intermediate goals on a regular basis, you'll have an ongoing sense of achievement. This in turn will help you feel successful throughout the life of the project.

Some tips to keep in mind when creating benchmark goals are listed below.

✓ **Give yourself plenty of time to collect all of your photos and record lifestories.** More than likely you'll have a lot of photos to collect and a lot of lifestories to record. Be sure and give yourself plenty of time to accomplish this task. When it's finished, congratulate yourself or give yourself a small reward for completing this important phase of the project.

✓ **Work at a stride you can maintain.** Since you're always taking new photos, there will always be a need to create new scrapbooks. But don't get ahead of yourself. Create one scrapbook at a time, work at a reasonable pace, and allow yourself the time you need to enjoy what you're doing.

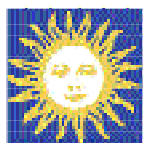
✓ **Build breaks into your work.** You'll be more creative and find the work more enjoyable if you take a break every once in awhile. Walk away from the project, do something else, and try to relax. Come back to the task at hand when you feel refreshed and energized.

✓ **Recognize that there may be some years you really don't care to document.** Don't force it until you feel like it, because if you do, your work won't be its best. Instead, set aside a certain year or period in your life. Come back to it when you feel ready to deal with it properly.

✓ **Decide that you don't have to "do" lifestories with every photo or every album.** It's all right to be selective. Just because you have a photo doesn't mean you have to use it either.

✓ **Show your work-in-progress to friends and family.** Gloat in their praise and envy. Let their enthusiasm inspire you. Praise yourself for the good work you have accomplished.

✓ **Acquire the organizational skills you need to complete the project.** You want to avoid making the envelope of developed photos in today's mail into tomorrow's shoe box filled with unidentified, undated images. Being organized can help ensure your success.



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