



Our Tales UnTold

“The more you love a memory, the stronger and stronger it becomes.”
~ Vladimir Nabokov

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HISTORY:

In 1984, Deborah Kevin said goodbye to a woman who had been her champion and cheerleader, her friend and companion. Virginia Lynch Munro passed away on May 19 after a short, hard battle with cancer. Deborah sat down on the eve of the first of three surgeries to learn more about her grandmom's early years, asking questions she'd never before thought to ask. During this conversation, a passion for family history was born. Unfortunately when Grandmom Munro died, she left behind three drawers stuffed full with photos, unmarked and unlabeled, frustrating all who attempted to figure out who these ancestors might have been.

This experience led Deborah to genealogical research, creative writing, and scrapbooking her own family photographs (most of which are labeled). Each year, she creates a photo book for her sons, highlighting for each of them what they've accomplished in the previous twelve months. Sometimes the books are funny, other times serious, but always they are treasured. She has been called upon to create documentaries and slide or film conversions, which she lovingly designs, with an eye toward building a careful arc and emotional tone.

Telling stories, connecting present to the past, helps others live on through beautifully preserved documents, audio files or DVD films so that generations which follow can know the heart of those who came before. Deborah knows this is her calling: to preserve and share stories.

Don't let your best story be your obituary, written by someone else.

ABOUT OUR TALES UNTOLD:

MISSION: Our Tales UnTold’s Mission is to ensure no one ever has to say, “I wish I could hear my mother’s voice one more time.” We help people record and organize their memories, photographs, and stories, and save it all in a way that makes everything sharable and accessible — forever. We make sure people take as much care organizing their memories as they do their finances because the real treasures of life are intangible.

CHIEF INSPIRATION OFFICER DEBORAH KEVIN

Deborah Kevin is the online editor of the art and literary journal *Little Patuxent Review*. She is a graduate of the Stanford Online Writing Program, where she wrote her first novel, *Finding Grace* (currently under revision). Debby is the owner of RipCord Communications, LLC, which owns the personal historian brand, Our Tales UnTold. She’s a member of the Association of Personal Historians, Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, and the Association of Writing Professionals.

Her passion for travel is exceeded only by the love of her family. She has lived “Here, There and Everywhere,” but currently calls Maryland “home.”

OUR TALES UNTOLD:

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TESTIMONIALS:

“The video Debby made for us introduced me to my 82-year old mother's sister, who died when she was sixteen. Seeing my 14-year old mother, grandmother, and aunt jumping rope, shooting marbles, playing with their chickens was incredible. I didn't even know these movies existed, so to get a compilation set to perfect music was such a gift! As we watched the DVD together as family on Christmas day, we had such a great time talking, laughing, and reminiscing. I'll cherish this forever and watch it again and again.” - Cindy Graham

“Deborah captured the EXACT idea I was looking for and I felt accomplished, knowing I put together something powerful for my family to look back on and treasure. I'm amazed at her skill at putting together pictures I've seen before in a way that makes me SEE them all over again.” - Danny Miller, New York Life

Our Tales UnTold are perfect for:

- ✓ Your personal story
- ✓ Company history, company founder's stories
- ✓ Community elders, war veterans, hospice residents
- ✓ Family reunions
- ✓ Celebrations: anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, etc.
- ✓ Memorials
- ✓ Members of civic, ethnic or religious groups
- ✓ Trauma Survivors
- ✓ Holiday gifts

You tell us! Who has the voice you never want to forget? Whose stories keep you riveted for hours and should be retold for generations? Who makes you laugh so hard your stomach aches? Who would you like to remember jumping in mud puddles, baking Christmas cookies, climbing to the top of a mountain, dancing under the stars, reading a bedtime story?

Services Offered:



Our Tales UnTold MONTAGE

A downloadable high-definition video 2-5 minutes in length chock-full of your favorite photos set to music perfect for your special occasion like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Veteran's Day, Christmas, or Hanukkah or celebrations like graduations, birthdays, a new baby, weddings.



Our Tales UnTold DO-IT-YOURSELF

Lifetime access to a Do-It-Yourself course, which guides you over ten weeks to create a memorable interview experience, capturing stories, integrating photos, and generating a one-of-a-kind lasting treasure for your family or business. Each Our Tales UnTold Do-It-Yourself includes checklists, templates, and loads of encouragement and is perfect for someone who is comfortable with technology and interested in tackling a personal history project.



Our Tales UnTold DO-IT-YOURSELF PLUS

legacy for your family, community, or business. Sounds like a match made in heaven, right?

All of the benefits of the Do-It-Yourself program except you hand off the transcription, editing, and book creation to our team of experts! We work with your raw interview files and uploaded photographs to create a one-of-a-kind



Our Tales UnTold

interviews plus original transcriptions along with a beautifully bound keepsake.

A "done for you" product where you (or others) will be interviewed, have your story written, and your best photos selected to include in an Our Tales UnTold printed book. You'll receive CD copies of all the recorded

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Chief Inspiration Officer Deborah Kevin

Q: How do you pronounce your last name?

Deborah Kevin: It's a question I don't often get asked, but appreciate when I do. My last name is pronounced "Key-vin." My ancestry is primarily Scots-Irish and, from what we can tell, this name evolved from Cavanaugh. But that's genealogy and not personal history!

Q: What is a personal history?

Deborah: Typically, a personal history is the story of a life, or stories from a life. It may be a memoir, a tribute, a life story, an autobiography, a biography, a video biography, or an oral history. It may also be a legacy letter or ethical will, expressing one's values, wishes, regrets, and observations about life or lessons learned. Personal histories can be captured in a number of ways: video, photograph books, memoir, and audio. Each is as individual as the person creating it.

Q: What is a personal historian?

Deborah: Personal historians are creative professionals who help "ordinary people" tell their life stories. We know that to someone each person is extraordinary. A personal historian is engaged to help individuals, families, communities, or organizations preserve memories, images, voices, stories, and histories — often (but not always) in narrative form.

Q: Why hire a personal historian?

Deborah: Sometimes writing your own life story can feel daunting — that thing you always want to do, but never get around to doing. Working with a professional can shift that overwhelming feeling to an energizing one. Sharing your stories with a neutral person who is trained to listen and ask good questions often elicits more complete stories than something you'd probably write on your own. I can help you recall important events, draw out details that will be meaningful to future generations, and find the thread that ties together the various stories in your life in a coherent and compelling narrative. I also do additional research to place your stories in social and historical context providing a broad structure. If you want, we'll interview friends, family, and colleagues to elicit a more robust picture of your life.

Q: What's the point? Why would anyone be interested in an ordinary person's story??

Deborah: To me, this is *the* key question. Who wouldn't be interested in an ordinary person's story? Wouldn't you like to know what your great-grandparents' lives were really

like — in their own words? I know I'd love to hear my grandmother's voice one more time and have my sons hear her stories directly from her. No matter how ordinary we might think our lives are, they will be interesting to our descendants and to future researchers.

Many people plan to interview aging family members, but put off doing so. Lack of time or skill may keep them from collecting and preserving the stories of their favorite people, and when they finally find time to do so, it is often too late — those who lived the stories are too frail to tell them, or their memories have faded, or their voices are silenced by death. And that breaks my heart. Family members often experience a sense of grief when it's clear those stories and voices are lost forever. I can help you collect those stories while there is time!

Q: What is the process for turning my life story into a book?

Deborah: You and I will schedule a get-acquainted call where I'll get a sense of what periods you want to cover, what general storyline and messages you might want to convey. After developing a rough outline and recording a series of interviews, the interviews will be transcribed, and then I'll organize the material, usually as a narrative (sometimes by themes), and edit for accuracy, consistency, and spelling errors — all while keeping your voice, your way of expressing yourself, true. You'll be asked to read drafts for accuracy and to make sure you're saying what you want to say, the way you want to say it. Together, you and I will choose photos and other memorabilia to include, and the manuscript will be designed as a book, with appropriate placement of photos and captions. After careful proofreading, the book will be printed and bound.

Q: Where and how are interviews done?

Deborah: We want you to be comfortable so we try first to figure out where you'll feel most relaxed. Interviews should be recorded in a quiet, cozy room, where there will be minimal background noise. If you're being interviewed in your home, other family members are generally urged to occupy themselves elsewhere, to prevent distraction. If I'm interviewing more than one person for a history, I'll conduct separate interviews to ensure each has an opportunity to speak openly and comfortably.

If you are shy or reluctant to be interviewed, it may help warm you up to start by talking about objects in the home, the people in old family photos, others in the family, or anything that takes the focus off of you or your fear that you can't remember things. Expect to enjoy the process! (I don't bite.)

Q: How long does it take to do the interviews?

Deborah: Recording a person's whole life story can take anywhere from a few hours to ten, depending on the person's memories and his desire and physical and emotional ability to share them. Each session typically lasts from one to two hours each. They are often spaced out over days or weeks. Some lives are more complex and some projects more ambitious —

in which case the interviews may extend over many months, sometimes years.

With a video montage, projects tend to be shorter in time, more focused and intense. We guarantee a seven-business-day turnaround from start-to-finish, provided all photos are uploaded and the music is selected in a timely manner.

Q: What if there are some things I don't want to talk about?

Deborah: Then please don't talk about them. No one will force you to say anything. I'm not an investigative reporter, digging for dirt. It often helps to talk about difficult periods in terms of how you survived them. Life writing is not therapy, but time after time we have seen its therapeutic effects. By understanding where you came from, you may come to better understand who you are. Even upbeat memoirs gain much of their strength from revealing the dark times through which a person has struggled, and the lessons you learned can be especially valuable to others going through dark times. But you don't have to discuss anything. When you hire us, you control the content.

Q: How long does it take to complete a project?

Deborah: That depends on the project. We guarantee a seven-business-day turnaround on video montages. For the Do-It-Yourself project, length of time depends on your own investment and skill level. Some full length projects can be completed in a matter of weeks, some take three to six months, and some take one or two years or more. Interviews captured in audio can often be completed in a matter of days or weeks. Turning audio-recorded interviews into a book may require two to six months or more, from interviews through writing, editing, photo selection, and production. It depends on how much material there is, how much time you have to spend on the project, how many options you decide to include, and how soon the work can be scheduled. Sometimes families encourage a leisurely schedule, spread over time, so the person telling the story can relish the process and work at a comfortable pace. Honestly, a big part of the pleasure is the time we spend reliving the memories. This isn't a race to the finish line, which may feel counterintuitive. Someone once said, "Memories are but a journey we take in our minds, but relive in our hearts."

Q: After going through all of our material, I just don't think 2-5 minutes is long enough for our montage. Can you make it longer?

Deborah: Longer video montages can certainly be created, and we often do them for super special occasions, like a celebration of life or graduation.