

# Creating and Sharing Thanksgiving Memories



There are two or three celebrations throughout the year that bring families together. These special occasions provide an opportunity to remember and share special memories. For some, this Thanksgiving may be the last holiday we will spend with a parent, grandparent, or a special aunt and uncle. Be sure to preserve the occasion.

It's time to start preparing for the upcoming holiday while your stress level is still "relatively" low (pun intended). If you are traveling, save time and money by purchasing and organizing your supplies before you leave. Think how stress free the trip will be if you are organized and don't have to worry about arriving before the stores close. If



the freeway is at a standstill you can relax and teach the kids/grandkids a song or game from your childhood. Remember the songs and games you learned while traveling?



*by Marlo E. Schuldt*

## The Greatest Gift

### A Note of Encouragement

Taking photos, doing all the "behind the scenes" work and documenting the occasion may not be much fun for you. It may take you out of the event and put you in the background where you can silently work your magic unnoticed. However, in the days, weeks and years ahead, you will be grateful you made the sacrifice to record the special stories, photos and videos.



Soon, everyone's memories of the day will fade. The cute little children will soon grow up. Mom, dad, and our grandparents will pass on.

In the days ahead you will be center stage when you share your slideshows and make family history presentations. The applause and gratitude will more than make up for your "behind the scenes" efforts!

## Digital Camera

There is nothing worse than picking up your camera to take photos and discover the card is full. Worse yet, you may discover the camera has dead batteries.



Remember last year and how tedious it was trying to take the big family photo? How long did the little children hold still? I'd suggest about four squirming seconds. Prepare now because you will not get a second chance to take the big photo.

You will have about two minutes to take the photo before everyone starts to complain and the kids run off. The last thing you need is a problem with your camera. Take note of the following checklist:

### Digital Camera Checklist

- Check batteries. If they've been running down quickly, buy new ones.
- Locate the charger and set it up. Put it where you can easily find and use it.
- Charge batteries the day before. Have at least two sets charged and ready.
- Immediately charge batteries after using the first set so you will be ready for the unexpected events that always occur after the second set is drained.
- Empty camera card. Import photos in the Heritage Collector before the holiday and each night.
- Clean your camera lens. Be sure to use a camera cleaning kit.
- Take a few practice shots to refresh your memory and test the camera.

## Digital Camera Video

Most digital cameras will take about one minute of video with sound. It's not the highest quality but it is better than no video. These little vignettes are perfect to record the spontaneous events of children taking their first steps, making a mess of themselves eating, etc.

Try recording video with your digital camera. Find and consult the camera manual if you need help. It is easy if you know which button to rotate. Now is the time to

experiment and not on Thanksgiving when all the noise and pandemonium ensues challenging your superior senior concentration skills.

Tip: When taking video, do not pan quickly – move the camera slowly and avoid using the zoom since the camera will pick up the sound of the lens moving.

## Digital Voice Recorder (DVR), Video Camera and Tape Recorder

DVRs are perfect to record stories since the unit is small, inconspicuous and provides excellent quality when positioned properly.



- Empty (export) audio files from the DVR to get as much recording time as possible.
- Check and charge batteries so you are always ready for the unexpected opportunity.
- Buy new batteries if you don't have two sets.
- Old batteries will make recordings play too fast in tape recorders. Charge or use new batteries.
- Locate the charger and set it up near the tape recorder for easy access.
- Use the AC adaptor for tape recordings to ensure better quality. Place the cord where it will not trip people or become disconnected. This will insure better quality if you are using a tape recorder.
- Use an external microphone for the tape recorder or video camera for the best quality sound.
- Avoid recording in noisy environments with a lot of background sound or in echoey rooms.
- Do a test recording to make sure everything is working properly and check your sound level settings. Do this at the site if possible. Use a set of headphones to listen to the test recording
- Have extra audio and video cassette tapes in your bag or with the video camera or tape recorder.

*A battery charger that works in your car will be a lifesaver if your batteries go dead traveling to grandma's house.*



## Photo and Video Opportunities

It's impossible to predict when a great photo, story or video opportunity will present itself. However, you can be prepared and positioned in the best location to take photos or record sound or video. Have everything ready and within reach so you will not attract attention to yourself. A small photo bag is perfect since you can move it quickly from room to room while keeping all your resources at hand. Consider the following tips:

- Keep your camera close to you and be ready for those one-of-a-kind photos.



- The extended family group photo. Take many photos before they are all ready – not just the perfect one. Count to three but take the photo on the two count. You will trick the kids before they make faces, hold up their hands or give rabbit ears to those in front of them.
- Set up and start your video camera (on a tripod) when you are taking family photos. It's very interesting to watch later.
- Take individual family photos.
- Other groupings. All the girls, grandkids, cousins, young children and grandchildren.
- Christmas lights and candid shots of the awestruck little ones in their own little wonderlands.
- Get everyone around the Thanksgiving table. It may take a couple of photos to get them all in.
- Special Thanksgiving Activities

## Proper Lighting is of Paramount Importance!

Use a flash if necessary but remember it destroys spontaneity and the quality may not be optimal but it may be better than an underexposed photo.



*Using a flash would have made this a perfect photo.*

## Backgrounds

- Avoid windows or bright lights in the background. It will overexpose automatic settings.
- Do not take photos of people in white clothing in front of a white wall. They will disappear into the wall.
- Take charge and move people and select optimal backgrounds and locations to get the best photos.
- Notice the background or objects behind the person when framing the photo. A fern or ceiling fan coming out of someone's head is distracting.

*An example of a bad background.*

*The ceiling fan and black picture frame are very distracting and ruin the photo.*



## Picture Taking Locations

Position yourself early to get the best location.

- Imagine taking the photo from different angles before you actually snap the photo.
- Look through the viewfinder or LCD and experiment with different shots.
- Move around to determine the best location.
- Change the camera height. This is very important when taking photos of small children.
- Get down on the floor with them and you will be amazed at the difference in the photo.
- Remember, no one will recognize the back of someone's head and it's not flattering.
- Taking a photo of the back of heads at the dinner table is worthless. Take several shots from different angles.
- Take many photos and change the settings

Remember, you are using a *digital camera* and it doesn't cost you anything to experiment. So take lots of photos. You will get some pleasant surprises.



## Candid Photos Events

Use your camera zoom whenever possible.

- Food Preparation
- Cooking
- Dishwashing
- Children playing (not fighting) with each other
- Table decorations
- Grandma's famous punch and punchbowl
- Family heirlooms
- Using a flash or being too obvious will destroy the spontaneity of the photo.



## Storytelling / History – Video / Audio Opportunities

Many stories are told when people gather – it's a requirement of the human family. Some of the funniest stories and jokes are related when everyone is together.

You need to be there to capture these one-of-a-kind events. You may hear things about parents, relatives and children you never knew. Many of these priceless stories will never be retold. It may be a once in a lifetime event – so be prepared to record this fascinating and valuable information. Let the recorder run or even forget it. Good stories seldom appear in context and are not predictable -so capture all you can and edit later.

### Natural Poses

- Some of the best photos are candid shots.
- Take a few photos in a natural setting before they know what you are doing.
- Take test photos, not just the perfect pose.
- Tell them you are taking a few test shots and not to worry. These photos may be your best and most natural photos.



## Your Undercover Assignment

Be there with a digital camera, digital voice recorder, video camera, or tape recorder. Be cool! Don't be obvious. Keep your technology out of sight and in a bag if possible. Just move about the group casually listening or facilitating a discussion with a few leading questions such as. "Grandpa, tell my son about the ten pound trout you caught. How did you and grandma meet and marry? Tell me about the time the brakes went out coming down Jackson Pass. Grandma, what did you think of grandpa the first time you met?"



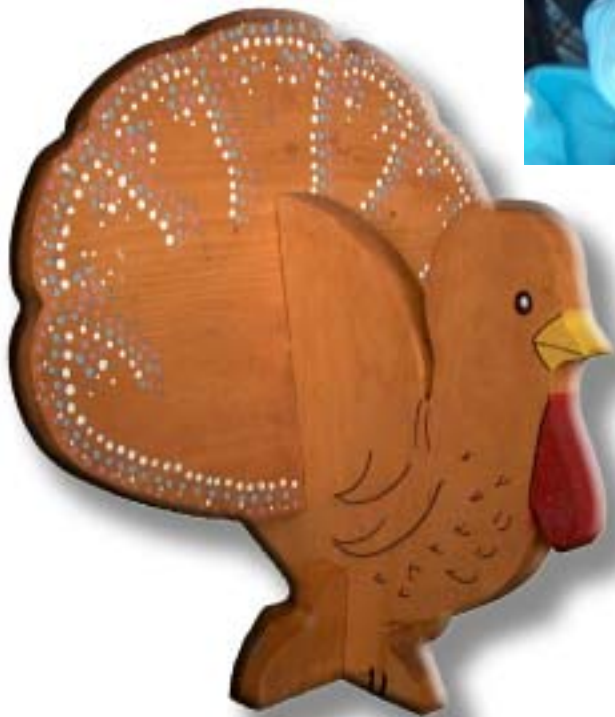
Some people become embarrassed or self-conscious when they realize you are recording or taking photos of them. This is where your zoom lens becomes useful in getting candid photos of grandma talking to her grandchildren. Place your DVR or tape recorder near her and move away to take photos. Soon they will forget about the recorder and talk naturally.

The small size of a digital voice recorder is helpful since many people will not be aware or even know what it is. You might consider telling them you are recording them if you think they will be offended. It's your call. If you ask first, they will probably say no because it will make them feel pressured or the center of attention. If you record and ask for permission later they may be okay with it. You can always erase it.

# Do Not Procrastinate!

## Finish!

Import your photos, video clips and sound recordings into collections in Heritage Collector now. Don't wait until you are nearing the holiday overload to get your material organized. Do it soon so you will not forget any important details. You will be ready for the big Christmas event and your first annual low stress holiday season.



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