

I was here



Special thanks to Krystal Starks and Carol Christensen for sharing their photos and story.

## Imagine a life with no photos

A few years ago I was working at the Illinois School for the Deaf with children who lived in the dorms and went home once monthly to visit their families. After one home-visit weekend, I was chatting with some of the girls about their weekends.

"It was OK," replied a freshman. "I just watched TV."

When I asked why, she explained that she'd just met that family. Turns out she was a foster child. Essentially, she went to a different family for every monthly visit. Can you imagine?

My husband and I discussed it and quickly became licensed foster parents to add her to our family. She arrived with one suitcase. (A freshman girl with one suitcase of clothes. Again, can you imagine?)

She had no history. No heritage. No continuity. So I decided she needed to start somewhere, and I invited her to join me the next time I went to work on my scrapbook albums. (Once I started paying for supplies for two of us, I took another close look at the advantages of being a Consultant and signed up immediately!) She loves it.

She's a senior now and has six albums of her own. Times spent scrapbooking together are some of our closest moments. So I was proud but not surprised when she announced, "I want to be a Creative Memories Consultant just like my mom."

**Carol Christensen - Creative Memories Unit Leader**

## Life's

too short not to dig in and leave your fingerprints all over it. A Creative Memories Album does that. Scrapbook photo albums can forever remind the ones you love just what it is that you find so lovable. An album you create showing off your adventures today might someday prove to your children that you were – at one point – cool. An album tomorrow can lift you up and remind you of the things you had to celebrate today.

Don't wait. Don't be afraid. Jump in and leave your mark. Let the world know that you were here. Find out just how much difference an album – and the process of making it – can make in a life!

Try getting started by spending some time with a pad of paper and these 10 real-life prompts. Once you've answered all 10, you'll have the framework for your very first real-life album. That's all there is to it.

### Tell us about a time in your life when you were...

- Really happy.** Was it just one of those days where everything comes together? Or was it a special event?
- Really scared.** Fear takes many shapes. What were you scared of? How did you handle the fear? How did it turn out? Did you learn anything from it?
- Really busy.** There's good-busy and then there's just BUSY. What kind of changes in your life created the time crunch? Were you exhilarated or exhausted (or a little of both)? How did you handle the pressure?
- Really sad.** Was it a loss? Were you hurt by someone important to you? That kind of soul-gripping sadness is hard to escape. Do you remember the steps you took back to happiness?
- Really amused.** You've told the story a dozen times – to anyone who'll listen. And even if all you get back is blank stares, this story just cracks you up. Take the time to get it straight and tell it once for the ages!
- Really angry.** Even the most even-tempered of us has had that moment. Were you proud of the way you responded? Tell about it then, even more importantly, tell about the moment you chose to let it go.
- Really embarrassed.** You know this moment. It's the one that still makes your gut tighten and your forehead sweat whenever your mind accidentally stumbles across the memory. But we all have that moment. (And you've got to admit, it was kind of funny.)
- Really lonely.** On your own in a strange new place? Or right at home...but without the one who makes it feel like home?
- Really proud.** You did it! There were a few moments where even you weren't sure, but you came through and no one can take that away. You should be a little proud. (OK, that's enough. Don't go getting a swelled head.)
- Really tired.** Happy, sad, scared or proud, at the end of the day, you made it to the end of the day. Tell all about your longest day.

Use your answers and your photos to stitch together a story of your real life. Keep it simple. Speak from the heart. Embellish your pages or don't. It's your story.

Looking for more? Check out Rhonda Anderson's advice on The Power of 10 in our Idea Book Volume II (page 40) and in the Project Center on [creativememories.com](http://creativememories.com).