

Kate Wise

LI827 Preservation Strategies

Project Proposal

Family, whether natural or adopted, shapes who we are. I never knew my paternal grandfather, Harold Wise – he passed away 8 years before I was born – so, I’ve always been curious about him. Do I share any of his physical characteristics or personality traits? Nothing ever really replaces knowing someone personally, but fortunately for me, he did keep a diary for a short time and was an amateur photographer. Being able to read the diary and look at his photos is an invaluable chance to understand my family and myself a bit better.



*Grandpa, in 1947, reading during a spare moment*

The diary covers 9 months while he was in the US Army in 1946 - 47. He was stationed in Japan during much of the diary’s writings. But what is even more important was that he was only 21 years old when he wrote the diary – a very formative time in a young man’s life. So much of his life-long personality shines through. Take, for example, this excerpt:

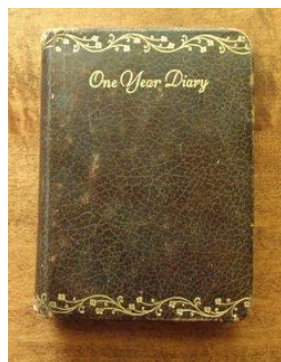
*Thursday August 1, 1946*

*We were awakened at 3:30 this morning because so many of the boys were shipping. Most of us went back to bed after the roll call. The chow line was not very long after so many had left. I received my shipping orders this afternoon. I have spent the rest of my time getting ready and packing. I leave tomorrow morning for Manila as a quartermaster’s replacement. I*

*thought about the annual 4-H club picnic today. Wish I could have been there. I had plenty of milk and ice cream tonite. I have been busy writing letters.*

Naturally, this diary and the accompanying photographs are very important to me as well as the family. Preserving family history contained in documents like diaries and photographs leaves behind an invaluable legacy for current and future family, and is not too difficult to accomplish. An important thing to remember is never do anything that would permanently change the document unless the document is in immediate danger of being damaged. My grandmother had already taken steps to preserve the diary by keeping it in a dark, environmentally stable room in her house. However, there's even more one can do to keep a document like a diary secure. Here's what I did for the diary and photographs:

Because the diary was written in 1946, I can assume that the diary is made of acidic paper. Paper made from wood pulp between about 1840-1980 is usually naturally acidic, and will disintegrate faster than paper made from cotton, linen, or paper made after 1980. While there are processes to de-acidify paper, they are usually too expensive and complicated for an individual to use. The next best thing for the diary would be to store it in an acid-free, buffered box. This means that the box's cardboard is slightly alkaline, and will absorb some acid to prevent further paper deterioration. There are several companies that provide acid-free, buffered archival materials such as buffered boxes. I purchased an archival book box kit from Gaylord Brothers <[www.gaylordbrothers.com](http://www.gaylordbrothers.com)> for less than \$10.

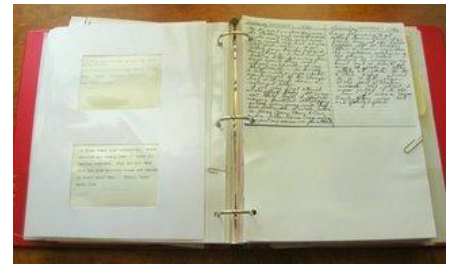


*The diary*



*The diary in its new box*

The photo-making process involves acids which remain in the photo paper. This is why light colored paper pages in old scrapbooks carry “burn” marks where the photos have been mounted. My grandmother had photocopied pages of the diary and put them in a three-ring binder notebook to pass around to the family. She had also paper-clipped photos taken by my grandfather onto the corresponding copied diary-entry pages. Grandpa had thoughtfully left typed messages on the backs of the majority of photos, so it was important to be able to see both sides of the photos while preserving them in such a way that handling the photos would not be necessary. If you are at all familiar with scrap-booking, you will know that virtually all scrap-booking materials today are available as archival quality and are acid-free. I purchased plastic scrapbook page covers, photo corners and white liner pages from a local discount store, then cut out “windows” to show both sides of the photos.



*A page in the notebook with photos before... The front of a photo page after... The back of a photo page after*

I wanted a way to store both the notebook and original diary. So, I went to the Hollinger Corporation <[www.genealogicalstorageproducts.com](http://www.genealogicalstorageproducts.com)> and found an archival document storage box for less than \$20, and some buffered tissue paper to cushion the notebook and diary.

Lastly, I also digitized the photos and transcribed the diary into a word-processing file. This leaves many options open to share the diary without ever exposing the original

diary and photos to unnecessary UV rays, dust, changes in humidity, or wear from handling. I can email files of the diary text or of the photographs to anyone in the family with internet access, or burn and mail CD-ROM discs to send in the mail. With the wealth of free social networking tools I can also post the files to a blog or other personal website.



*The diary, entered into a word processor as preparation for electronic publishing*