

Tip #3 Journaling

Journaling in your scrapbooks is something I feel very strongly about. I will be the first to admit that sometimes I even get a little “preachy” about it. A scrapbook with photos only is just a photo album, but a scrapbook with journaling is your family’s history/story book.

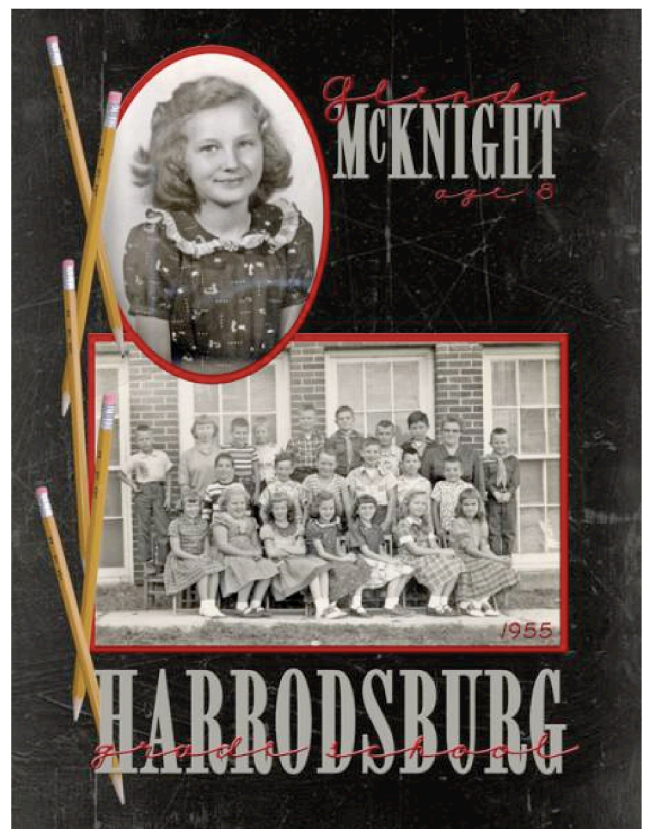
I’ve heard a lot of people say, “But, I don’t know how to journal,” or “I don’t know what to say.” Yet, when they post their layout in the gallery, they will write a beautiful description of the pictures that are in their layout. How much better would that layout be if they had only written their description actually in the layout.

What do I write? Remember before you started scrapbooking and you would pick up your photos from the developer? You can’t wait to show that package of pictures to someone. And when you do trap someone . . . er, I mean, when you do find someone to show your pictures to, you stand over their shoulder and explain each picture to them. You explain to them **who** that person is, their name, their relationship to you; **what** they’re doing in the picture; **where** the picture was taken; **when** the picture was taken (the date). You might even explain **why** you took that picture, and **how** you felt at the time. In journalism those are known as the **4 Ws and an H**: who, what, where, when, why and how.

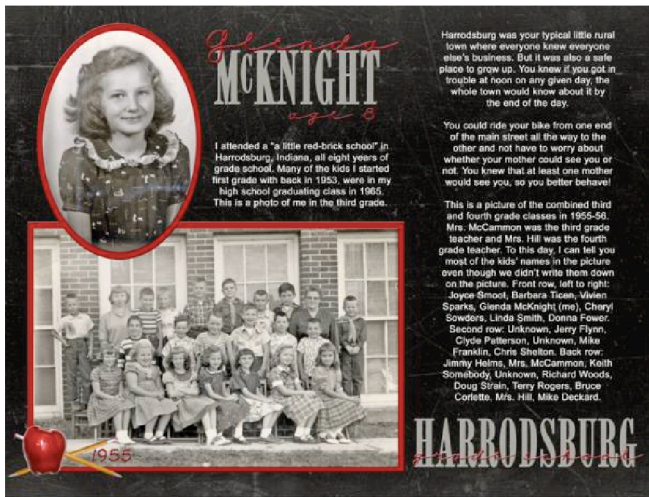
How do I write it? There are several different ways you can write your journaling. You can do it in a “bullet” format, which is basically information about your layout, point by point. Or you can write it in a “story” format, which is exactly like it sounds, you tell the story of your layout. Once you get comfortable actually journaling, you will find that some layouts call for one kind of journaling and other layouts call for something else.

I’m going to show you a couple of layouts and let you judge for yourself which one you think my grandchildren would rather see and read many years from now.

This layout has a picture of me in the third grade and a picture of the combined third and fourth grade classes. The first layout gives you a bit of information, such as who the picture is of (Glenda McKnight), when the picture was taken (1955), and where (Harrodsburg Grade School).



The next layout uses the same pictures, but instead of giving you the “bare-bones” information, I tell a little bit about myself at that time in my life and what it was like to grow up in a small town. Since this layout was done just recently it’s written from my perspective as a grandmother, not as an eight-year-old child. I hope that in years to come when my grandchildren and maybe even my great-grandchildren look at this page in my scrapbook, they learn a little something about their grandmother (Yay-Yay), besides the fact that our clothes look funny!



Journaling on this layout reads: I attended a “a little red-brick school” in Harrodsburg, Indiana, all eight years of grade school. Many of the kids I started first grade with back in 1953, were in my high school graduating class in 1965. This is a photo of me in the third grade.

Harrodsburg was your typical little rural town where everyone knew everyone else’s business. But it was also a safe place to grow up. You knew if you got in trouble at noon on any given day, the whole town would know about it by the end of the day.

You could ride your bike from one end of the main street all the way to the other and not have to worry about whether your mother could see you or not. You knew that at least one mother would see you, so you better behave!

This is a picture of the combined third and fourth grade classes in 1955-56. Mrs. McCammon was the third grade teacher and Mrs. Hill was the fourth grade teacher. To this day, I can tell you most of the kids’ names in the picture even though we didn’t write them down on the picture. Front row, left to right: Joyce Smoot, Barbara Ticen, Vivien Sparks, Glenda McKnight (me), Cheryl Sowders, Linda Smith, Donna Fower. Second row: Unknown, Jerry Flynn, Clyde Patterson, Unknown, Mike Franklin, Chris Shelton. Back row: Jimmy Helms, Mrs. McCammon, Keith Somebody, Unknown, Richard Woods, Doug Strain, Terry Rogers, Bruce Corlette, Mrs. Hill, Mike Deckard.

Sometimes you might feel strange putting information in your layouts that seem so obvious to you. For instance, you have a picture of your son at age three. You know that’s your son and you know he’s three years old, so why do you need to put that information on the page? Because 50 years from now, when your son’s grandchildren are looking at that page will they know it’s their grandfather? Or, will they wonder if it’s a picture of his younger brother, their Great Uncle So and So? See what I mean? You have to not only think “current day,” but you also have to think what “future” readers will want to know about that layout.

You don’t need to put all the information on every single layout in your album. But I think it’s a really good idea to put full names of everyone in that album at least once or twice throughout the book.

I personally like to put journaling in my grandchildren’s albums as though I’m talking to them. I may say something like this: Grayson, that’s a picture of you and your Daddy (Jason Full Name) on Father’s Day, June 19, 2005. Now, Grayson knows his Daddy’s name is Jason (or, at least he will when he’s a little older than 21 months). But, for future generations it may not be so obvious that Jason was Grayson’s father.

This may sound like “over-kill” to some of you. But think about it for a minute. Wouldn’t you just love to know for sure who that picture is of that you *think* is your Great Uncle Harry. Or, is it his brother, your Great Uncle Bob? See what I mean? Your grandmother *knew* which of her brothers it was, but she’s gone now and you just don’t know for sure. Great Uncle Harry, or Great Uncle Tom, whichever one it is is the one that your youngest son looks a lot like. Now wouldn’t it be better to know positively so you can tell your son that he looks just like his Great-great Uncle Harry!

I told you sometimes I tend to get a little “preachy” about journaling. I’m just so afraid that one day our grandchildren are going to have these beautifully made scrapbooks that don’t tell them anymore about their family than these shoe-boxes full of pictures tell our generation! What a pity that would be!

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