

PICTURE PERFECT

By Terri White

“Mimi likes pictures,” Hayden announced as he spotted a tabletop tree sporting clips on which to attach pictures. Hayden and his sister Kendall were shopping for my birthday present with their mother.

After fifteen years, that picture tree still graces my bedroom bookcase laden with photos of Hayden and Kendall. It’s a love tree.

For Christmas a few years ago, three of my grandchildren created a mouse pad featuring pictures of them. I use it fondly every day, a reminder of their bright childhood faces and times more innocent.

Over the years as the Internet became more sophisticated, innovative ways to display our photos emerged. Shutterfly, my favorite, offers mugs, Christmas ornaments, calendars, and photo books, all of which I have created for friends and family for various occasions. It’s a fun way to flex my creative muscles.

But I have received a few treasured photo books as well. What a joy to peruse those books! Sometimes the grandkids will pile them up and browse through them, adding commentary to the events and occasions depicted. Listening to them is a treat in itself. If pictures could talk!

One of those books highlights my stem-to-stern, 17-day tour of Europe. From Amsterdam to Rome, we soaked in every moment: bikes and canals, Rhine River villages and castles, mountains decked in serenity, plazas bustling with street merchants and musicians, ancient historical remains, and getting lost in the heart of Rome. This oversized photo extravaganza reminds me that I really did experience that European adventure instead of imagining it.

Let’s not forget old-fashion photo albums. Those were the days of the 35 mm camera, buying film, and taking it to the camera shop to be developed. And if the people in your picture were not picture-perfect, oh well.

With each snapshot tucked into glued corner tabs or nestled between plastic sheets, I can stroll down memory lane. Some of those pictures reveal our family tree while others transport me back to my childhood years. There’s our 43-year old wedding album – we look so young and fresh, eager to begin our journey

together. Then babies arrived with their zest for life captured in treasured moments.

But back to the present. Our cell phones now serve as a camera. With a touch on the screen, we can order photo books with an app, download pictures on our computers to parade them on our laptops or desktops, edit them with sophisticated software, and save them on the cloud or on a flash drive. The possibilities seem endless.

Even photo shoots with the extended family have become a creative event compared to the studio portraits from the past. Settings indoors and out backdrop creative groupings never thought of in days bygone. In our most recent family photo shoot, our photographer used the wrong lens for our large group picture. What to do? No problem! With a little (or a lot) of magic on Photoshop, our photographer created a whole new group arrangement. Tada!

Years ago, we would pick up our pictures from the studio. Not today! They are all uploaded to the cloud for our perusal. Then we download them to print at home or send them electronically to Wal-Mart to print for us.

From there, mine are framed and placed on a wall or end table. My ten grandchildren's framed pictures are lovingly displayed on our wall-tree. A friend painted that tree on one of our walls years ago for this very purpose. Although one day we will need to repaint that room, I dread it. Afterwards, however, we will replace that tree with a fresh one!

And so it goes. A house full of pictures old and new, framed or on my computer, in photo books or albums. All precious, depicting loved ones, special occasions, and memories of decades of living. Those who have passed live on in their pictures - something to pass on to the next generation and generations to come. Life in pictures. Picture perfect.