

Couple recounts 'your stories'

By **Stephen Vittorioso**
Staff Writer



The birth of a child, the story of a couple's romance, a milestone birthday and a retirement – these are all examples of cherished memories in one's lifetime. While these memories may go by quickly, there is now a way to secure those memories for generations.

Reading native David Andrews and his wife, Isabel, recently founded YourStory, Inc., which is dedicated to preserving people's most valuable memories by creating books and other mementos about them.

"This is something that is a gift of a lifetime," said David Andrews, who is creative director of the company. "I was discovering that a lot of these personalized gifts were a lot more meaning full than the gadgets that you could give somebody."

David Andrews, whose family still lives in Reading and who previously worked as a creative writer and journalist, said he and Isabel started the company in summer of 2007 not only to spend more time together, but also because they enjoy hearing – and writing – about people's stories.

"My favorite stories were always getting to know somebody and talking about what experiences they have had," David Andrews said of his work as a reporter. "I just enjoyed sort of listening and asking questions and finding out what makes people tick."

He added that as a child, he enjoyed writing stories about his family and often wrote about moments for birthday and holiday presents.

Company president Isabel Andrews said YourStory falls into the personal history field – a market that is "booming" with 60 percent of Americans interested in personal histories.

"It's a growing area," David Andrews said. "It's a gift, I think, that's in a different category from something that you'll buy for Christmas, [like] a flat-screen TV, but in three years, it's going to be outdated and you'll have to buy a new one. It's something that grows in value as time goes on."

To date, YourStory has had around 10 customers, but Isabel Andrews noted the company is in its "beginning phases."

Isabel Andrews, who has previously worked in preserving fine arts, said a YourStory interviewer sits down with the subject – or the subject's family – to have a comfortable conversation about the subject's life, including the subject's childhood and career, among other memories. As a writer, David then transcribes an audio recording of the conversation, specifically pulling out the subject's most valuable memories, into a written memoir.

"It's not just about getting your story down, writing it and preserving it forever," she said. "It's really about the experience of being able to tell your story."

Isabel Andrews said YourStory features three formats. The Life Story package is a 50-page book that describes the accomplishments and joys of one's life through a written narrative supplemented with photographs.

She added that the Milestone story is a 20- to 30-page book devoted to recapturing a thematic chapter of one's life, such as the birth of a child or a story of an engagement. The Tribute story announces the triumphs of one's life or career through a mock newspaper article that is framed and presented to the subject at a special event, such as a birthday or retirement.

“All our products really span multi-generations and can be used for various purposes,” she said. “We provide a service that is comfortable and relaxing for our clientele that really values memories and would like to have them preserved so that they can be passed down for future generations.”

While the memories may be free, the hardbound books are not. David Andrews said the complete Life Story package costs \$2,600. He added that the Milestone Book costs \$1,600 and the Tribute story costs \$900.

David Andrews said because of the price tag, the books are ideal for a group gift.

“It’s a unique gift,” Isabel Andrew said. “It’s more of an investment.”

Even though YourStory is based in Rhode Island, David Andrews said he is itching to write stories about the many interesting people that live in his hometown – a place that he fondly remembers.

“I have so many fond memories of Reading,” he said. “In the process of trying to write down my own memories, I just realized how much I have enjoyed recapturing some of those moments. The more you sit down and think about it, the more you remember.”

For more information, visit www.all-your-story.com or call 1-877-556-2111.

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