

The Lost Generation

Kevin T Gilbert – Photojournalist and Memory Evangelist, Mylio (USA)

Do you love your children?
Do you love your spouse?
Do you love traveling... and being amazed by our planet?
Do you love being a citizen of the world?
Do you love the little things in life that thrill you?
Do you love to relive moments of your life?
Do you love serendipity and the sheer joy of discovery?

And do you care about these memories, from the most insignificant to most precious?

How would you feel if those incredible moments were taken away? Dashed in an instant. Gone forever. Crushed, burned, flooded, picked up and thrown miles by a horrific wind. Mother Nature at its worst: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, mudslides.

This is not a doom and gloom, Armageddon-type scare tactic. This is the reality we face daily in all parts of the world. The unexpected moments when our memories can be wiped out. Not pestilence, but a gin and tonic killing your phone. A power surge wiping out your external hard drive, leaving your tablet in a cab, dropping your memory card in the ocean, or just getting a new computer or device and losing all the cords and interfaces that allowed them to connect in the past, but not today.

What happens in those kinds of disasters? Years worth of memories gone in an instant.

And nobody but you knows. You are crushed. Your memories wiped out.

I am a photojournalist who has spent 30 years photographing life—around the world and, mostly, in Washington, DC. From Reagan to Bush, Clinton to another Bush, my kids' birthdays to their college graduations, pro sports to peewee football, I have been a witness to history—a public and personal history that is the portfolio of my life.

1.3 Trillion photographs will be taken this year around the world. (*IDC Study*) That is an incredible amount of content, and memories. Most will never be seen again, or just disappear in a moment.

- Roughly 300, 000 will be uploaded to Facebook every minute
- 65,000 will be instagrammed every minute
- 3.5 million smartphones will be lost or stolen
- Millions of photographs will be taken, shared, laughed at, and cried over.

But most of them are not backed up, safe from disaster, available to search and re-live with friends and family.

A picture is worthless if you cannot find it. As a pro, you lose revenue if your image is missing. As a dad, you lose those precious moments of your family. It's heartbreaking, and when considered in its enormity, it can take your breath away and leave an ache deep inside you.

We are on the precipice of another kind of disaster—not caused by global warming, but caused by a lack of understanding.

In the blink of an eye, an entire generation of memories can be wiped out.

Our parents all had shoeboxes full of slide and prints, often scribbled with names and places we never went. It was their family legacy, their time capsule.

But today, you and me, our kids and our neighbors, are more visually aware, and—dare I say it—addicted to the new visual language. We are quickly becoming a visual society, where a snapchat image will be seen, processed and then destroyed, while indelible imagery from locations around the world still amaze us daily by the professionals and the new cadre of citizen journalists.

I love photography—maybe more than most people. This is my life, my love, my passion, my work, and my hobby. I should be able to show you pictures from any one of the 70 countries I have shot in. But I can't.

Can you show me the photographs taken at your child's birthdays over a decade ago? I will be thrilled for you if you can. We barely can remember last year's vacations, let alone vacations since our children's first splash in the ocean.

This is the picture today; hard drives, multiple computers, old DVDs, new phones every 24 months, tablets—all capturing our visual society. Trillions. Life, love, places, food, you name it—and life is framed pixel by pixel.

The Care Curve

There are five kinds of photographers today (and I don't mean the one good one and the four bad ones in your extended family).

There are obviously the professionals. At one time, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, now over 2 million strong in the USA alone.

Then there are those guys... You know them. All the best cameras, always in your face, planning vacations around full moons and the best time to catch the leaves changing colors. Lets call them the enthusiasts, the hobbyists, the prosumers. Your neighbor, the dentist or the retired lawyer.

Then there is me and you. The ones who have made a digital camera part of our technology arsenal. The camera that comes out whenever there is any special occasion: parties, vacations, soccer games. Some call them the mamma-razzi—I call them the casuals, the masses, the chief memory officers of the family.

Then there is the snapshooter. The iphone generation, the ones who frame life through the lens of their smart phone. They are the ones running out to buy the new Lumia 1020 with 41 megapixels. This is the always-connected crowd, who tells stories and shares pictures 25 times a day. They shoot their dinner, a manhole cover painted yellow, a sunset through the window—just about anything that strikes their fancy.

These camps are the majority taking that 1.3 Trillion photos.

These are the images of a generation that will be lost. Whether by accident or the increasingly fast pace of new devices, these folks will make up the Lost Generation.

Do people care about their pictures? Absolutely.

But they don't know what to do to protect them or even manage them. There are too many options, too much technology, too many pictures taken and not enough time in the day. Because we either don't understand technology or we put too much reliance on its infallibility, we delude ourselves into thinking our pictures will be there for a lifetime.

They won't.

We need to help those who care about their memories and the moments in their lives. We need to encourage everyone who travels, has a family, attends events, or just marvels at sunsets, to just examine their backup plan. To see how their pictures are safeguarded and accessible for future generations.

Here is what we all need to do....

- Jot down a few words—like who, what, where and when for all your memories.

- Find ways to transfer memories from old computers to new ones.
- Get pictures off your phone and tablet and get them saved, someplace, securely.
- Save the best moments of your lives someplace other than on your phone or a social network; look into local back up hard drives.
- Use the cloud if that is your choice.
- Find a way to tell the story of your life, using the moments you have lived.
- Tie your life together with the moments that have meaning and the images that capture them.
- Don't be afraid—your life is waiting for you to rediscover it.
- Tell a story—generations to come will thank you.
- Meet Mylio and see how you can enjoy your memories today and keep them safe for tomorrow.