



AN EXERCISE
IN **PRESERVATION**



When reflecting on the past, it is common to think of life and the voids left by loved ones no longer with us. In time, we too will pass and leave empty spaces in the hearts of others. Through planning, how can we make it easier for those we love after we are gone? For those in the last stages of their earthly journey, how can we help them preserve their legacy?



ESTATE PLANNING

Most of us are vaguely familiar with estate planning. It is essentially the process of managing one's individual assets and care in the event of incapacitation or death. The concerns are usually financial, with the focus resting largely on the dispersal or transference of assets to heirs and the minimization and/or settlement of certain taxes.

LEGACY PLANNING

Legacy planning, on the other hand, is less well-known. It is an extension of estate planning, but is larger in scope. With legacy planning, one is concerned with actively shaping how a person or group of persons is to be remembered by future generations. In this case, the foci of transference are values, beliefs, personal histories and experiences—not material assets.

AN ETHICAL WILL

The most common way for people to preserve their or another's legacy is through an ethical will. An ethical will is a non-legal document used to pass on values, beliefs, and lessons from one generation to the next (cf., Gen 49.1-33; Deut 32.46-47; Matt 5). They are frequently written, reflected upon, and shared while the loved one under consideration is still alive.

Though an ethical will is an effective way to pass down important information to others, it is limited in what it can communicate.

There are better, more expressive, tools available.



"How will our children know who they are if they do not know where they came from."

—Unknown

VIDEO BIOGRAPHIES

Video biographies are one such tool. At Life. Documented, we offer two types of video biographies to insure the people, stories, and traditions we cherish are available to future generations of family.

MINIS

Mini Biographies, or Minis, are relatively simple and straightforward video productions. They can be done in studio or on location and include various media overlays (e.g., video clips, photos, etc.) to accentuate and strengthen the interview. Minis cover a wide range of the subject's life, from early childhood to the present. Clients choose the content of discussion.

BIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTARIES

Biographical Documentaries are full-scale productions that set out to tell a loved one's story in documentary form. Multiple interviews with numerous interviewees are conducted, both on location and in-studio. Such productions make high use of so-called "B-roll" and mixed media to propel the story and hold the viewers interest.

Unlike ethical wills and other traditional mediums of preservation, Mini Biographies and Biographical Documentaries are able to capture people in their fullness, weaving together a tapestry of emotion through sight and sound. The end result is a priceless family treasure to be passed on—and learned from—for generations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH WORKS

For the subject, the process of creating a legacy piece can be cathartic and transformative, as one is asked to reflect on life and define that which has brought meaning to it. For family members and others, the finished work provides a link to the past and guide for the future. Because video biographies are largely first-person, they are immediately engaging and allow the subject to speak for him- or herself, unfiltered.

THE VALUE

Most purchases we make in life are momentary and lose their value over time. This is not true of a Mini Biography or Biographical Documentary. In fact, time has the opposite effect on them. Each is priceless. You will never look back and regret the decision to have one produced.





Taking the opportunity to sing and reflect on my past was fun and rewarding. Future family members I'll never know will be able to see, hear, and learn from me. That blows my mind. I wish I could meet my great-great grandfather!

- Ron

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As we age, it is natural to focus on who and what it is that we will leave behind at our passing. Among the various areas of concern, legacy issues often top the list. In fact, according to a comprehensive 2005 study on intergenerational wealth transfer among boomers and elders, non-financial leave-behinds—like ethics, morality, faith, and religion—were deemed 10 times more important than financial ones. Further, in a 2012 follow-up², when asked what ranked highest in importance, 86% of boomers and 74% of elders stated family stories. Interestingly though, despite its apparent importance, the majority of people in the study admitted they had yet to discuss legacy planning with an advisor or loved one.

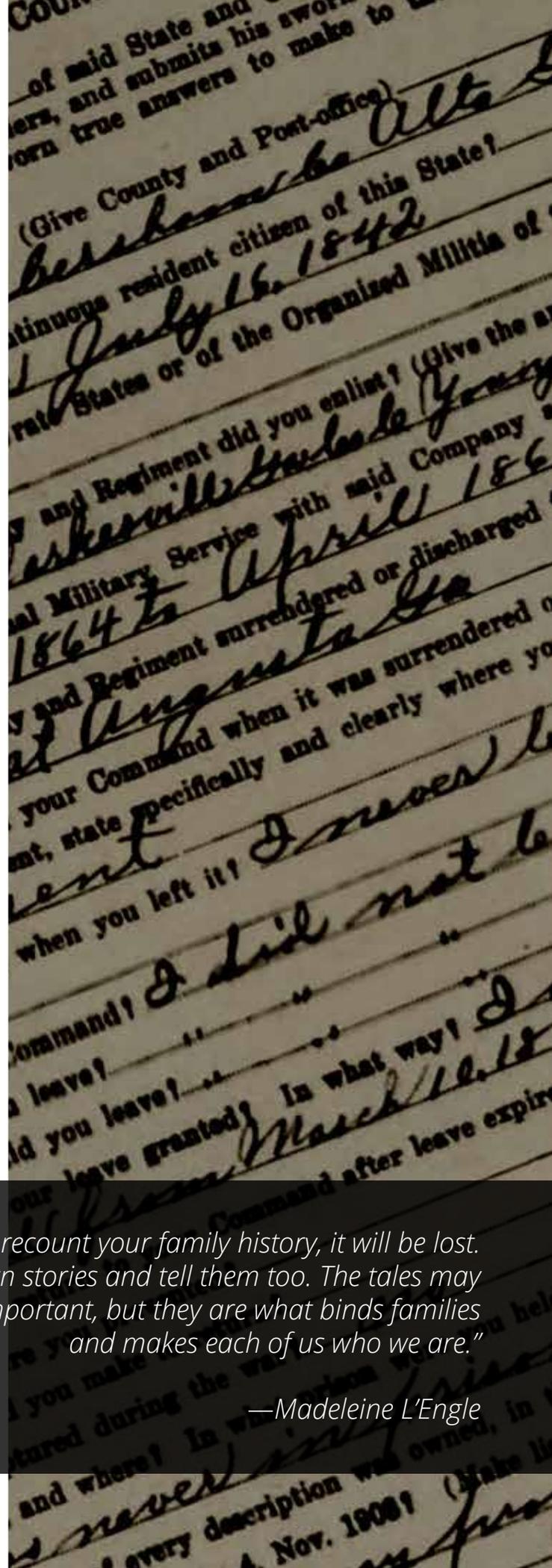
Though working through the past with an eye to preserving one's legacy can be overwhelming, it does not have to be. At Life. Documented, we work with clients to mitigate the difficulties inherent in such endeavors by offering a clear guide to preservation. What questions to ask, what media to gather, and the technical aspects of putting it all together are expertly handled. The end result is a priceless generational keepsake of which you and generations of family can be proud.

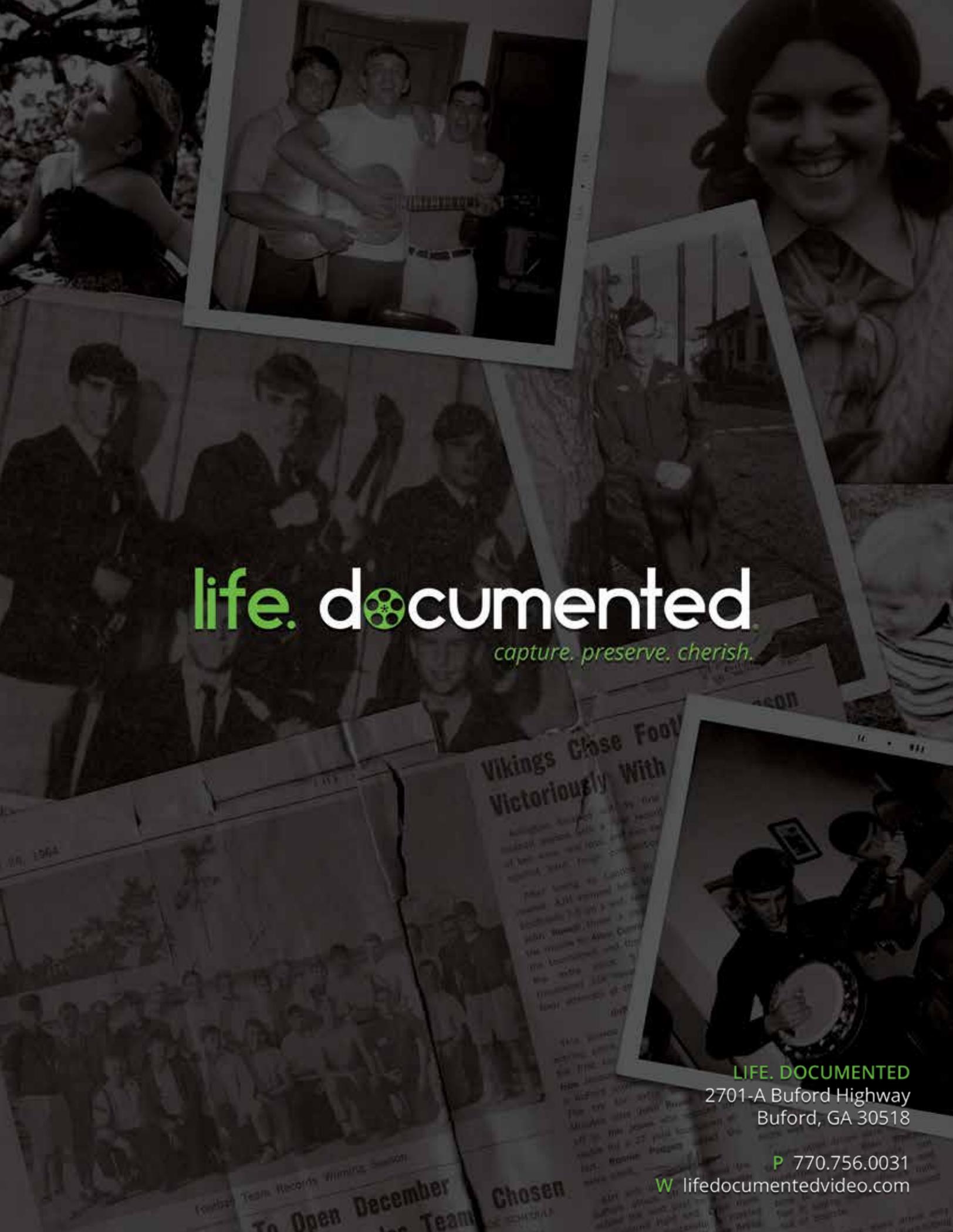
¹ The Allianz American Legacies Study, 2005.

² The Allianz American Legacies Pulse Survey, 2012.

"If you don't recount your family history, it will be lost. Honor your own stories and tell them too. The tales may not seem very important, but they are what binds families and makes each of us who we are."

—Madeleine L'Engle





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