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I'm the One Who Should Say Thanks

How creating a gift album on a tight deadline gave me a treasured glimpse into my husband's life before we met By Angie Pedersen

A few years ago, my husband David told me he had a special anniversary coming up: September 2002 would mark 25 years of friendship with his best friend Matt. The boys had met on the first day of second grade in 1977, and to celebrate the milestone, David had made reservations for us to share dinner with Matt and his wife at the best steakhouse in the city. Matt thought the special dinner was to celebrate his birthday, but David had a surprise in store.

Over several months, David had gathered memorabilia from their years of friendship. Foraging in our attic, he discovered things like a gym bag from their elementary school, a copy of an obscure movie they both loved, and the goblets they used to toast their high school graduation. (David is a "collector" by nature.)

I was impressed by David's dedication. I was not so impressed when he asked me to put together a scrapbook to commemorate the 25-year friendship—a mere week before the dinner. "A scrapbooker needs time for a project like this," I reminded him. "Time to focus, gather supplies... Have you thought about the paper? The journaling? What fonts to use?!"

Thankfully, after I calmed down a bit, the album went together much faster than I imagined. David chose 25 themes for Matt's album, such as sleepovers, girlfriends, road trips, and college, with one page per theme. "Geeks from the Get Go," for instance, covered all the computer systems and games they've been obsessed with over the years. To speed things up, he gave me

a spreadsheet cataloging memorabilia, pictures, and journaling. (Not that this organizational aid helped me accomplish any cooking, dishes, or laundry that week, but I was impressed with his system!) We worked as a tag team: He scanned and printed while I scrapped.

While putting the album together, I couldn't help but notice the strength of their relationship. I enjoyed a quasi-fly-on-the-wall sort of experience—sifting through all the photos and memorabilia, I vicariously lived much of my husband's life from his perspective, from second grade on. I loved hearing about David

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and Matt's childhood superhero "alter-egos," Blue Bird and Black Bolt. I learned that David's entrepreneurial spirit started early, with the door-to-door sale of a neighborhood newspaper written by two 11-year-old cub reporters. Reading their favorite movie quotes, I could appreciate how many hours they spent in theaters.

Not all wives are lucky enough to know these details about their husbands—the details that reveal the true intimacy of men's friendships. I was deeply grateful for the opportunity. I was humbled that David trusted me with such a meaningful project. I'm proud to have played a part in the creation of such a precious keepsake.

The night of the dinner, David gave a toast to his lifelong friend, and there wasn't a dry eye at the table. When I handed Matt the scrapbook, he was speechless. Watching him pore over the collected stories and share them with his wife, my heart felt so full. I thought of how feverishly my husband and I had worked on it. I remembered the glimpses I had seen of his childhood. I thought to myself, "Here is someone else who loves my husband as much as I do." If I hadn't agreed to create the album, I would have missed the opportunity to learn more about David's life before "us." I would have missed the opportunity to put my speed-scraping skills to the test. And I would have missed the opportunity to offer something I had created as a gift of love.

To this day, I'm not sure who was more grateful for that anniversary album, Matt or me. Matt got to keep the book, but I will always treasure the memory of its creation. 🌱



About the Author

Angie Pedersen is the best-selling author of *The Book of Me* series on scrapbook journaling (EFG, St. Louis, Missouri), and creative editor for OneScrappySite.com. She lives in Kansas City with her husband and two children.

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