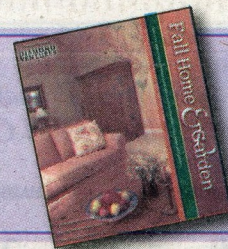


EXPLORER

14 years of serving Catalina, Catalina Foothills, Casas Adobes, Marana Oracle, Oro Valley, SaddleBrooke, Sun City, Tortolita, Tucson



See what's new in Fall
Home and Garden

Page 17

'Shared experience'

Local videographer Steve Pender finds niche in creating personal histories

BY TY BOWERS

EXPLORER Newspapers, Inc.

His grandmother always had a story for him.

Alice Pender would regale her first-born grandson, Steve, with stories of the family's past.

"She loved her family," Steve Pender recalled recently. "And, she loved to talk."

While growing up in Clifton, N.J., the young Pender loved to listen.

For years and years he listened to her stories. Then, one day, the professional videographer set up his camera and began recording those precious memories.

"It finally dawned on me she wasn't going to be around forever," Pender remembered.

The younger generation "would never know her the way I know her," he said.

A smile spread across the west side resident's face last week as he thought about his grandmother and her stories. Little did he know in 1995, as he began picking his grandmother's brain for posterity's sake, that years later he would be helping others do the same with their family members.

Pender in 2003 started a small company called Family Legacy Video, which aims to get others to take full advantage of the wealth of history around them, to tap the one "storyteller in every family."

Alice Pender never got a chance to see the film her grandson made of her telling those stories he so loved. She passed away in 1998 at the age of 87.

But, her memories — and the vivid way in which she recalled them — will live on forever.

Pender, 50, is what many call a "personal historian," a relatively new distinction bestowed on a person who spends his or her time recording individuals' recollections of their own pasts. The field, which is at once an ancient calling and a modern invention, has some 400 practitioners worldwide, according to the Association of Personal Historians.

The profession has drawn a mix of journalists, filmmakers and other media types to its ranks.

Pender, who has made his career developing all manners of commercial media products, considers it his passion. And, it seems, that passion is contagious.



Randy Metcalf/EXPLORER

In 2003, Steven Pender started Family Legacy Video, a company that teaches people how to record personal histories. It also offers film, editing and other production services.

In November, he will travel to Tennessee to teach workshops on the craft at the association's annual conference. But, in the years since starting Family Legacy Video, Pender has given a variety of talks and workshops throughout Tucson.

Every time, he hears a common refrain: "Gee, I wish we'd done one for — substitute whatever relative — while they were alive."

Early on the trick for Pender was to figure out how to teach people, especially those who've never interviewed someone or tried to use a video camera, to capture the essence of a subject or something as fleeting as a memory.

He created a step-by-step "Producer's Guide" with all the details, a how-to tutorial not unlike the scores he had made as a commercial videographer.

Then came a "Producer's Music" CD, which contained royalty-free tunes to go with folks' homemade videos. Of course, the technically uninclined could avail themselves of Pender's services as well, for editing or the complete treatment.

Two years ago, Tamzin Sugiyama heard Pender extoll the virtues of recording personal histories — or "legacies," as he likes to call them — at St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, where she was a member.

"I'm not really a video kind of person," Sugiyama said last week. "But, I thought there's no time like the present."

She bought Pender's "Producer's Guide"

and set about interviewing her mother and her aunt.

"For my mother and her sister it was all about growing up in a small town," Sugiyama recalled.

She hired Pender to edit the interview and produce a video.

"I grew up hearing these stories," Sugiyama said. "And now I have them."

Though the easy availability of technology — video and editing equipment — has sort of "democratized the process," Pender said, teaching people to think in terms of narrative, especially when it comes to inter-

Family Legacy Video

- **What:** Company that offers a range of services for compiling and producing video family or personal histories.
- **Who:** Steve Pender founded the company in 2003.
- **Services:** Pender has created a how-to "Producer's Guide" and a CD of "Producer's Music," which contains royalty-free tunes for use in videos.
- **Phone:** 743-4090
- **Online:** familylegacyvideo.com



photo courtesy of Steve Pender

Pender puts a lot of preparation into interviewing his subjects. He starts with a pre-interview before beginning the process, which sometimes can take days, depending on what someone has to say.

viewing and filming their own relatives, can prove difficult. About a dozen people have hired him to produce their personal histories, from pre-interview to post-production.

"I think the (Baby) Boomers are really driving this," he said of many people's push to record their own legacies.

After all, it's personal. "It's really about learning where they came from," he said.

Some day he plans to hold a "family

premiere" of the film he made of his grandmother. Then the younger generation might realize just how special he always thought she was.