

Preserving people's personal history

Townsend's home-based business makes old, faded photos look brand new again

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Just as Kodak announced that it will retire its famous, Kodachrome film, a longtime Redmond resident shared the story of his home-based business, Photo Restoration and Retouch by Joe Townsend, which helps to preserve people's personal histories through their cherished, non-digital photos.

Townsend invites customers to "give me your damaged, faded, folded, spindled, torn or mutilated photos and delight as their stories are revealed again." He said his goal is to deliver the "the 'Oh, wow!'" feeling with your new photo from a long-ago special moment.

Townsend has a real fondness for history, including the City of Redmond's. He moved here in the mid-1970s when there was just one stoplight. He's a board member of the Redmond Historical Society and started tinkering with photos in the mid-1990s, "as part of doing computer tricks and then I got my first flat-bed scanner" he commented. "It helped me with my work at Safeco — I was there for 32 years — and I had some family photos that needed attention."



Joe Townsend, owner of Photo Restoration and Retouch, can take an old, faded photo, above left, and make it look crisp and clear again, above right. He said his goal is to deliver "the 'Oh, wow!'" feeling with the restored photo.
Courtesy photos

Old portraits and snapshots of family gatherings make up the bulk of his restoration/retouch work. He also gets monochromes from the Civil War era and big panoramic views of landscapes such as farms.

"People have many different motivations for bringing things in, Townsend said. Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries or funerals are times when customers realize the importance of their weathered photos and what they can reveal about their roots.

In his restoration work, he helps both individuals and businesses repair photos or documents damaged by floods, fires, mishandling or poor storage. He's seen photos that were ruined by a toddlers scribbling or others that became stuck in glass frames after over-use of Windex.

Are any photos not salvageable?

"Most photos can be brought back," Townsend stated. "The only ones which couldn't were taken in very low light. There is no image there because the shadows are so deep."

While retouching photos, Townsend can add or subtract people or objects. For example, a couple celebrating their 20th anniversary wanted cars in a parking lot removed from their "first date" photo. You could also delete an "ex" boyfriend/girlfriend — or add a would-be love interest — to a photo.

But people joke more about doing that than actually requesting it, he noted. He can also colorize black-and-white photos.

As part of his education and consultation services, Townsend has a PowerPoint presentation called "Preserving Family History through Photo Restoration and Repair," which has been popular with retirement communities and civic clubs.

For more information, call (425) 883-3175, e-mail jj-townsend@att.net or visit www.jjtowndsend.com.

Note: this article was reconstructed in its entirety (except for my photo), from scanned text, since it is no longer available on the Redmond Reported newspaper website. *Joe*