

**A Picture is (Literally) Worth a Thousand Words: Memorable Family Moments  
Caught by Photography  
(1,333 words)**

Family photographs have enabled me to develop a way to keep my family with me all the time, even when they are really not there. These pictures of my family represent a wide variety of importance and emotions in my life. Many of them serves as a link to my home life, since I am away at college without my family I allow their pictures to be decorations (memoirs) in my apartment. Some of them mean more than others, some are recent, and others come from my childhood. A picture I have framed on the center wall in my apartment is of my family on vacation this summer; it depicts our true “selves” and exemplifies how much we truly love one another.

I am standing on the left side of my father in this photo with my mom on his left and my brother on hers. We are on vacation at the Atlantis Resort and as I look at this picture of my family a warm, delightful feeling rushes over me. I remember the exact day it was taken and all the wonderful things that occurred on this trip. We are standing in front of the same decorative wall by the pools, as my brother was the night before when he proposed to his girlfriend, Leslie, of six years. Our annual family vacation is normally to Amelia Island, but this year we went further away to a totally different environment. Our pictures from this trip look different from our other family vacation photos, yet we are still the same loving family.

Ideas of the traditional, typical, yet blissful family vacation that many families try to take each year is what I think of when I see pictures like this one. Whether or not a family has the capability of affording some sort of vacation, they normally try to get their family together at least once a year and go on either a one-day excursion or short trip. These are usually the times where they snap pictures of their love ones to create memories of happy, quality times with one another, especially if these times are not easy to come across. On my family trips and on the family trips of others the idea of being united and having fun together is exemplified through these informal photographs we take. In an article by Judith Williamson called “Family, Education, Photography”, she discusses how “with the informal arrives a new element, never so highly developed as in contemporary family photography: the necessity of ‘fun’”(339). Families in turn can show the fun they have with one another in these pictures of their vacation and other informal, happy times with one another.

Judith Williamson’s article also has several other important viewpoints on family photography and how it has changed over the years. She states that “in earlier family images it seemed enough for the family members to be presented to the camera, to be externally documented; but now this is not enough, and internal states of constant delight are to be revealed on film”(339). Today, the element of displaying the true “self” in pictures gives more meaning to the photos and how we in turn value them. When photography was first developed only the upper class families could afford these portraits and thus the norm for what family photographs should look like was set by them. In the past people did not even smile in their pictures and most pictures they took were formal and all looked or tried to look the same. Different types of family photographs and how each is used is shown

throughout the article, hence giving the reader an understanding of how different the two can be. She sums up the article by saying, "Photography offers an important, enjoyable and potentially radical access to the means of producing self-images: but as long as those images remain bound by the ideology of the family, that potential will only occasionally or accidentally be realized"(342). Photography and its advantages are often taken for granted and the importance that certain photographs can have for people can sometimes only be seen through their eyes.

I recently lost my grandfather and the picture that I have of him on one of our family vacations gives me a very strong feeling each time I look at it. I feel sad that he's no longer here with me, but then again I am very thankful to have this picture of him so that I can have a sort of imprint of him to reflect on. He was very special part of our family and since he has passed away our family portrait of what we look like now has changes. I hold this picture of him close to my heart and it serves from me as a way of keeping him alive in my eyes. This picture can have no meaning to other people, but the meaning it has to me is tremendous.

My apartment is filled with pictures of my family and all the times we spend with one another. There are pictures of us smiling, laughing, and hugging one another, which makes me happy each time I see them. I use these pictures as decorations for my new college life away from home where my family is no longer with me. They serve as a family mythology and link me to my home life I have with them, which can help keep me going knowing that they are still there for me if I need them. The significance that pictures can hold for someone can sometimes be a form of strength for them. I know that for my grandmother looking at our family photos with my grandfather in them helps her from feeling lonely and get her through her day. Many people believe that pictures have a lot more significance to people as they get older, even Judith Williamson says that "it is by and large parents' memory that family photo represent, since parents took and selected the pictures"(339). I see that this is somewhat true, because pictures now mean so much more to me than when I was little. If I did not have the decorations of my family photos in my room I would feel very alone and my life change by going to college would have affected me a lot worse because I would have felt as though they had been striped away from me. Family holds people together in many ways, and if they are not actually physically with you, a picture of them can serve as substitution of their love while you are apart and allow you to still know that they care and think of you as you do them.

I have always loved to take pictures, throughout high school I took and enormous amount of pictures of my friends and myself. Naturally, these pictures are important to me, but as I think about it they do not hold nearly as much meaning in my heart as my family pictures do. The value you install on pictures comes from within your own heart and is generally never the same for two different people. This family photo at the Atlantis is important to me because it is of my loving family while we are away from the stresses of one typical day-to-day life and our having a good time with one another. Yet, from my brother and Leslie who got engaged on the trip it holds many other memories and importance. Emotions can arise from almost any type of picture you own, but a family photograph, especially one where the families "real" selves can be seen, can illuminate a person's heart to many feelings of contentment and self-belonging. Family photography has existed throughout time

**and holds a special meaning to all of us, yet how we interpret it and use it in our own life depends on the way we feel truly feel about the ones who stand in the photograph with us.**