



FOR MEMORIES' SAKE

A DOCUMENTARY BY ASHLEY MAYNOR



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SYNOPSIS

For Memories' Sake, a half-hour documentary, explores Angela Singer's life and hobby of photography through the lens of her granddaughter, filmmaker Ashley Maynor. As the film investigates one Southern homemaker's obsession with the photographic image, it asks questions about photography as a form of memory and captures a cross-generational portrait of two Southern women whose lives as image-makers have taken very different paths.

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Angela Singer has lived almost her entire life as a homemaker in between two towns—Joelton, a rural suburb of Nashville, Tennessee, and Ashland City, a town of 7,000. For the last thirty plus years she has taken at least a dozen photos a day – several more than that since the advent of digital photography – amassing an archive over 150,000 photographs, most of them processed at the local Wal-Mart.

This incredible archive of pictures chronicles Angela's everyday life in stunning detail. Her photographs provide a diaristic view of her life, from raising nine children in the 1960s to living alone as a widow today. While the film largely tells the story of one Southern homemaker and photographer, Angela's images speak, however incompletely, for the countless other women of her generation whose lives of pain, happiness, and searching in the rural South have rarely been documented.

As the film begins, we are exposed to hundreds of photos from Angela's archive, as well as home movie footage she has shot over the years. The photos are a mix of the banal and the bizarre, the beautiful and the morose. Mixed among the predictable images of birthday parties and blooming flowers are photos of animal carcasses and checks she receives in the mail.

When questioned about her snapshots Angela dismisses her work as a hobby and nothing more. The photos, however, seem to be taken by someone who photographs out of an obsessive compulsion and not just, as Angela would say, to pass time.

Angela's granddaughter, filmmaker Ashley Maynor sets out to discover what drives Angela's obsession in interviews with family members as well as a photography critic and curator. Ashley finds that her grandmother's image-making exists to separate her from others, to mark her as an outsider observing painful events and realities. Angela's "hobby", because it is so obsessive, is also an unshakeable practice of recording in the face of death, loss, violence, and humiliation. Yet, the paradox of this image-making is that it serves as a kind of escape. The art of photography allows Angela to transcend and transform these dark events.

Inspired by essay-films like Ross McElwee's *Time Indefinite* and Agnes Varda's *The Gleaners and I*, *For Memories' Sake* combines archival home movie footage and still photographs with new live-action video and a voiceover that is by turns searching and humorous. In this way, *For Memories' Sake* investigates the human desire to create lasting images, and what it means to grow up and live in the changing American South.

What People Are Saying

"A wonderful, very beautiful film. And I'm not only speaking as a film enthusiast, but as a member of the Association of Moving Image Archivists. An incredible example of preservation by an individual and understanding how what can seem so mundane as a family photographer to one person can be shown by another as a moving lifelong artistic statement. And that [Maynor] created another work of art out of it shows a great deal of love, talent and intelligence."

— Dennis Doros, owner, Milestone Film, who recently named FOR MEMORIES' SAKE his favorite film of the 2010 Maryland Film Festival.

"This is the rare example of ethnographic filmmaking when the subject becomes the true author. [...] a work of power and integrity."

— Louis Massiah, MacArthur Fellow and director of *W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices*

"Viewers of this film will gain insight into one extraordinary woman's extensive archive and experiences, and I believe they may also be inspired to view their own image collections and those of the women around them in new ways."

— Dr. Katherine Henninger, author *Ordering the Façade: Photography and Contemporary Southern Women's Writing*

"I know of no other film that approaches such a particular and universal story."

— Tom Rankin, Director of the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University

"A moving generational portrait of life and love."

— James Parrish, James River Film Festival

"This film alone was worth staying for. A fascinating documentary."

— Harry Kollatz, Jr., *Richmond Magazine*

"Maynor demonstrates an admirable mastery of the tools of documentary in a vivid and affectionate portrait...reminiscent of Alan Berliner's *Nobody's Business*."

— Dr. Bill Huie, former president *University Film & Video Association*

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SCREENINGS

Winner Best Documentary Faculty Juried Screening - University Film and Video Association. New Orleans, Louisiana. August 2009.

Ibrahim Theater at International House. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 2009.

Flagler College. St Augustine, Florida, November 2009.

Dallas Video Festival. Dallas, Texas. November 2009.

New Genre Arts Festival XVII. Tulsa, Oklahoma. February 2010.

"Southern Stories" - University of the South. Sewanee, Tennessee. February 2010.

James River Film Festival. Richmond, Virginia. March 2010.

"Virginia Minds Wide Open" - Lyric Theatre. Blacksburg, Virginia. March 2010.

Nashville Film Festival. Nashville, Tennessee. April 2010.

Iowa City International Documentary Film Festival. Iowa City, Iowa. April 2010.

Maryland Film Festival. Baltimore, Maryland. May 2010.

Indianapolis International Film Festival. Indianapolis, Indiana. July 2010.

Saving Private Reels. Cork, Ireland. September 2010.

Library of Congress Audiovisual Conservation Center. Culpeper, VA. September 2010.

East Tennessee History Center. Knoxville, Tennessee. October 2010.

Winner Rosebud Award Rosebud Film & Video Festival. Arlington, Virginia.
November 2010.

Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers. March 2011.

East Tennessee State University. Johnson City, Tennessee.

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art. Charleston, South Carolina.

Buckman Performing Arts Center. Memphis, Tennessee.

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Millsaps College. Jackson, Mississippi.

Clemson University. Clemson, South Carolina.

Western Carolina University. Cullowhee, North Carolina.

Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Durham, North Carolina.

Capri Theatre. Montgomery, Alabama.

Manship Theatre. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Arts Council of Central Louisiana. Alexandria, Louisiana.

Lucas Theatre at Savannah College of Art and Design. Savannah, Georgia.

PRODUCTION CREW

ASHLEY MAYNOR: Writer/Director/Editor.

Ashley Maynor is a award-winning documentarian whose films and new media works have been exhibited around the country. Maynor is also engaged with building communities through video partnerships, empowering youth and communities to tell their own stories. Maynor's creative work, outreach, and research have been supported by the Southern Humanities Media Fund, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

In addition to teaching at Temple University in Philadelphia, Maynor has taught workshops as a video facilitator for Scribe Video Center's Precious Places Project and as a guest artist in the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge's *Artists in Schools* program. Locally, she is the co-founder and program director of Virginia Tech's Blacksburg Stories Youth Video Workshop. Maynor also organizes Southwest Virginia's annual Home Movie Day celebration.

PAUL HARRILL: Producer/Co-cinematographer.

Paul Harrill's narrative films and documentary videos have screened on five continents at film festivals, museums, and on television. Venues have included the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, and the Sundance Film Festival, where Harrill's short film *Gina, An Actress, Age 29* was awarded the Jury Prize.

Harrill's work has been supported by the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and the Aperture Film Grant (among others), and by residencies at Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Harrill has taught courses in digital video production at Virginia Tech since 2006. In addition to his teaching and filmmaking, Harrill maintains a popular weblog, *Self-Reliant Film*, which discusses issues surrounding the art and practice of do-it-yourself regional filmmaking.

LOUIS MASSIAH: Executive Producer.

Louis Massiah is a MacArthur fellow and independent filmmaker who has produced and directed a variety of award-winning documentary films for public television, including *W.E.B. Du Bois - a Biography in Four Voices* and *Louise Thompson Patterson: In Her Own Words*, a biography of the activist and organizer. Massiah has received awards from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Black Programming Consortium, the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and several Emmy award nominations. He has also received fellowships from the Pew Trust and the Rockefeller Foundation.

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Massiah is also the founder and executive director of the Scribe Video Center in Philadelphia, a media arts organization that provides low-cost workshops and equipment access to emerging video and filmmakers and community organizations.

MELISSA THOMPSON: Consulting Editor.

Melissa Thompson is an independent filmmaker from North Carolina. She received her M.F.A. in Film and Media Arts from Temple University in 2000. She began a series of documentaries on Irish women's rights while a Fulbright fellow in 1998-1999. Completed pieces from the series include *Like A Ship In The Night* about the experiences of women traveling to England for secret abortions. Her previous short documentaries, including *In the Weeds: Waiting for a Living and Novices*, have screened in many film fests in the US and abroad (Women in the Director's Chair, the Dallas Video Festival, Frameline, the Cork Film Festival) and have been broadcast on Free Speech TV and Philadelphia public television. She has worked as a videographer and editor on major independent documentaries such as *Desire: The Teenage Girls Documentary Project* (directed by Julie Gustafson) and *By Invitation Only* (directed by Rebecca Snedeker), as well as on many grassroots media projects with kids, artists, and immigrant communities.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Starting in December of 2005, I began the process of preserving the Super-8 and 8mm home movies shot by my grandmother, Angela Singer. What began as the simple task of transferring old film to video turned into a much larger discovery. In addition to the hundred-plus hours of home movies I found she had shot over time, I discovered that Angela has taken at least a dozen photos a day for the last thirty years, amounting to an archive of more than 150,000 still images.

As a child, I always saw her snapping pictures, but I never thought what she was doing was unique in any way, much less an act of artistic creation. She was considered a "homemaker" by everyone I knew. It was only after I began making films of my own and as I began to preserve her work that I discovered my grandmother's impressive archive of footage and images and her secret identity as an artist.

For Memories' Sake is a half-hour documentary about my grandmother's obsession with the photographic image, my relationship with her, and an exploration of the American South—the place that we call home—in a rapidly-changing media age. I also see this film as a portrait of my grandmother as an outsider artist, photographer, and documentarian in her own right.

Using her archives of 8mm and VHS-C footage, 35mm and digital still photographs, and newly-created digital video footage, *For Memories' Sake* synthesizes the impact of my grandmother's picture-making on my work as a filmmaker. It is, in many respects, a reflection upon privilege—that of having my work (in some settings) called "art" while hers is referred to as merely "hobby" or pastime.

Inspired by the work of Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Agnes Varda, and other filmmakers who flirt with the so-called essay-film form, I tried to make a film that would reveal, in spite of our generational differences, our common attempt to overcome tragedy through documenting life.

Lastly, I believe *For Memories' Sake* is a modest antidote to the mostly non-existent media representations of rural Southerners, particularly Southern women. Though my grandmother's photography habit is unique, the loss and tragedy in her life, as well as her drive to transcend and transform these events through art, hits upon universal themes that touch us all.

It is my hope that the film itself will bear witness to experiences of those neglected by the mainstream media and will give these audiences a new context in which to understand their own lives.

PRODUCTION NOTES

What began by filmmaker Ashley Maynor as a modest attempt to preserve home movies by her grandmother, turned into a more than three-year investigation into the content of Angela Singer's massive film and photo collection. The result of these efforts is *For Memories' Sake*.

Production of the film began in earnest with the tedious process of preserving Angela Singer's home movie collection, which consists of 79 reels of 8mm and Super-8 film.

After these initial efforts, director Ashley Maynor, with the help of a part-time intern, scanned and digitized over 30,000 of Angela's photos. Ashley also logged much of Angela's VHS-C video collection, which consists of over 150 hours of footage.

As Ashley began assembling Angela's still and moving images into a movie, she simultaneously began gathering original footage to contextualize Angela's striking images: audio interviews with family members, video interviews with Angela herself, and original Super-8 footage of Angela taking photographs.

About a year into the project, as Ashley began making the first assemblies in the editing room, filmmaker Paul Harrill became involved with the project. As the film's producer and co-cinematographer, Paul helped Ashley find the structure of the film, advised her as she developed and performed the voice over that drives the narrative, and shot the film's *verite* sequences and most recent interviews.

As the film evolved to a fine cut, editor Melissa Thompson was consulted to help refine, shape, and tighten the film to "picture lock," while veteran documentarian Louis Massiah signed on as the film's Executive Producer to provide further feedback and support.

In the final stages of post-production, Paul Hinson took Ashley's animation concepts and polished them using Motion and After Effects with creative touches of his own. Meanwhile, Paul Harrill worked to secure the rights for the music that runs through the film. Finally, the sound was edited and mixed by Keith Thomas.

A product of "self-reliant" and regional filmmaking, the film was made with a small crew and minimal budget and benefitted from support from the Southern Humanities Media Fund, The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge, and Virginia Tech's School of Performing Arts and Cinema.

To learn more about the preservation efforts behind *For Memories' Sake*, visit Ashley's blog, [Preservation Project](#), which details the home movie transfer process and provides tips for others interested in preserving their family archives. To learn more about the production of the film, please visit [Self-Reliant Film](#), which features posts by Paul Harrill and occasional guest posts by Ashley Maynor.

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CREDITS

US, 2009, 29 minutes, English

Writer/Director/Editor Ashley Maynor

Producer/Co-Cinematographer Paul Harrill

Executive Producer Louis Massiah

Motion Graphics Paul Hinson

Consulting Editor Melissa Thompson

Music:

"Annabelle June"

Written & Performed by Abigail Washburn & Béla Fleck

© 2004 Fleck Music

From the album "Appalachian Picking Society" (Windham Hill)

"Avril en Mai"

Written & Performed by The Apples in Stereo

© 1999 McDuffie/Schnedier

From the album "Electronic Projects for Musicians" (Yep Roc)

"Orange Blossom Special"(Traditional)

Performed & Recorded by Steve Kaufman

"Your Squaw is on the Warpath"

Written & Performed by Loretta Lynn

©1969 Sure Fire Music Company, Inc.

From the album "Your Squaw Is On The Warpath" (Decca)

"Intro"

Written & Performed by Homemade Knives

© 2006 Triple Stamp Records

From the album "No One Doubts the Darkness" (Triple Stamp)

"Last Dance"

Written & Performed by Sarah McLachlan

© 1997 Sony ATV Songs and Tyde Music

From the album "Surfacing" (Arista Records)

"People Take Pictures of Each Other"

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Composed by Ray Davies

Performed by Sarah Garrison, Keith Thomas, & Paul Harrill

© 1968 Warner/Chappell & Abkco

From the album "The Village Green Preservation Society" (Reprise)

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The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge

Motion Adrenaline

Virginia Tech Department of Communication

Virginia Tech School of Performing Arts & Cinema

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PHOTOS & PRODUCTION STILLS

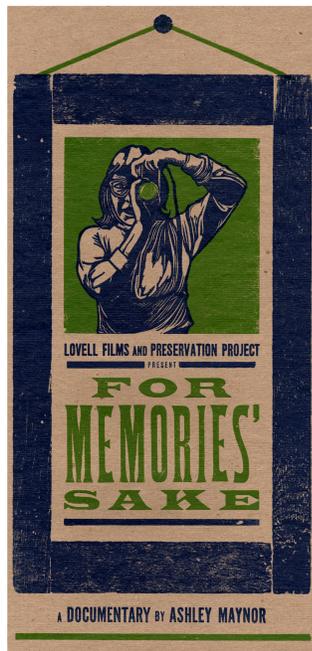
For Preview only. For high resolution copies, please download the press kit folder online or email ashley@preservationprojectfilms.com.



Still from *For Memories' Sake*



Still from *For Memories' Sake*



Film poster



Angela Singer



Ashley Maynor