

# LaGrange woman starts business that shapes people's lives into art

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Staff Reporter

Three years ago when Sheryl Entwistle discovered her neighbor had lived a life as a belly dancer and acted as a plane spotter in World War II before her death, she was amazed and fascinated.

The fact that this woman had lived a full and eventful life and Entwistle did not know her sparked the idea of starting a business called Living Celebrations.

Entwistle, a LaGrange resident, decided to capture a person's life, before death, through the use of various art forms.

The only prerequisite upon consideration is to have achieved some form of personal goal. She notes that most of her clients are middle-aged, the age of each client can vary.

She said that each person's art design is a masterpiece, which can take about six months to create.

To get started, Entwistle created a team of artists.

"Locating artists to act as the creative team took two years," said Entwistle. "The contacts came from a network of people knowing people within the arts community," she said.

The creative team includes

Nancy Sans, an Emmy Award-winning writer whose work has appeared on HBO, Cinemax, and PBS, and Kendall Harris, an artist at the world headquarters of American Greetings Card Company.

Next, Entwistle reached out to her family and convinced her father, Fred Holland of Denver, Colo. to let her create a masterpiece for him.

In the first month of production, team members spent eight to 12 hours interviewing Fred, the celebrant. These conversations took three to five sessions, and were in the celebrant's home or some other comfortable spot. The purpose of this initial dialogue was to help the team learn about the celebrant's attitudes, preferences, passions, and quirks in order to determine how this particular story should be told.

Fred's masterpiece was a book filled with pictures and words.

"It came to us as a surprise at our granddaughter's wedding," said Jo Ann. "Fred had trouble sharing his emotion."

At the heart of every Living Celebrations Masterpiece is the text of the celebrant's story. Living Celebrations matches each author to the appropriate project. For instance, a sports-

writer would be the ideal person to write the story of a celebrant with a passion for athletics.

"When speaking with the artist, the celebrant sometimes remembers things long forgotten that come back," said Entwistle, who has shared her marketing efforts with the Poughkeepsie Area Chamber of Commerce, and in Chicago and Miami.

"We don't pass out catalogs to prospective clients," said Entwistle. "Each individual is treated with an individual masterpiece which they help shape, to call thier own."

Living Celebrations also uses painters and illustrators for design. Calligraphers are brought in to handprint the text. Professional bookbinders are brought in with the proper fabrics and other materials. It is also common for sculptors, jewelry designers, leather-crafters, gold and silversmiths to add to the cast of designers.

Entwistle has had a masterpiece designed for herself. She mentions that it is a personal artistic experience at capturing life. She notes the price range for each creation varies. Price ranges can be in the thousands, as she pointed out one masterpiece reaching \$10,000.