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“Historians in Two Hundred Years’ Time Are Going to Die for That!”

*Historiography and Temporality in the
“One Day for Life” Photography Archive*

ANNEBELLA POLLEN

The photograph’s relationship to history and memory has been extensively theorized, but little empirical research has been undertaken to understand how these ideas intersect with the experience of photographs as historical forms in everyday life. This article explores the complexity of photographs’ temporality and evaluates their memorial status through the prism of a distinctive body of material: the 55,000 amateur photographs taken on a single day in 1987 donated to a fundraising event entitled One Day for Life. Notions of history inflect the project from its original conception to its preservation. On the basis of the extensive archival materials, the published edits of the photographs and questionnaires and interviews with One Day for Life participants, organizers, judges, publishers and archivists, the article argues that the predominant tendency to treat photographs merely as historical sources or as memory aids overlooks their productive potential as historical performances in their own right.

INTRODUCTION

The One Day for Life photography collection (henceforth ODfL), now housed in the Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex, UK, contains the entire body of almost 55,000 prints submitted to a fundraising competition that aspired to be the world’s “biggest-ever photographic event.”¹ Via a high-profile publicity campaign, the cancer charity Search 88

aimed to attract the widest range of participants by distributing 30 million entry forms nationally. Contributors were invited to submit a photograph of everyday life in Britain taken on August 14, 1987, accompanied by a pound donation, to compete for a place in a commemorative book and to raise blockbusting sums for cancer research. ODfL can therefore be characterized in a number of ways, from an ambitious charitable participatory project and a means of apprehending everyday life experience on a mass scale, to a photographic competition with a prize of publication. In addition to these interpretations, ODfL is inflected throughout with a sense of history.

The language of “the historical” was used to describe ODfL from its inception: the day itself was framed as “memorable,” while the resulting book was intended to provide “a lasting record” as a “chronicle” of life in the 1980s.² Additionally, the selection of a single day as an isolated temporal moment was clearly conceived of as a ready-made commemorative event. History making was promoted by the organizers, was a motivating factor in the involvement of a number of participants, and can be seen in the style and content of submissions. The historical dimension of the project was also reiterated by the desire of organizers to preserve and institutionalize the body of photographs at the close of the project. The historical nature and potential of photographs become heightened as they enter an archive, and their historical currency also increases with the passage of time. This temporality is complex, for intersecting with this process is the temporality of photographs themselves, as anticipated memories with an insistent sense of absent presence, which create “events” by isolating moments out of the continuum of experience. Photographs’ relation to time is further complicated by their point of apprehension, for they can change their value and meaning according to the period in which they are viewed and the variable ways in which they are remembered. This article brings together theoretical explorations of the intersection of history, memory and the photograph, alongside current evaluations and future hopes of ODfL’s historic significance, and forms part of a larger project examining the uses and expectations made of amateur photographs in contemporary culture.³

SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

The literature on amateur photography is extensive. Although it tends to be looked on dismissively within art historical frames of reference as lacking in innovation and consequence,⁴ productive approaches to photography that consider the social rather than

aesthetic significance of its non-professional dimension can be found in sociological, historical, anthropological and cultural studies disciplines. The most significant and enduring of appraisals remains Richard Chalfen's *Snapshot Versions of Life*, which examines "snapshots" and home videos ethnographically as a form of knowledge making and social communication.⁵ Chalfen's emphasis, on what he describes as "homemode communication" is limited in its application to the ODfL material however, which may be home-generated but is publicly performed, or "mass mode," in his system. Nevertheless, Chalfen's focus is, appositely, "how ordinary people do ordinary photography," with the objective of considering the field of practice not as a place where accidental masterpieces might be located but as a broad picture of photographic social statements. Chalfen develops some fascinating theory rooted in empirical studies of amateur photography, but the samples for his study are modest and highly particular, and therefore limited in their broader application. An advantage of analyzing a vast resource such as the ODfL archive is that opportunities for accessing amateur photography on this scale and from the pre-digital period are few. New forms of digital photo-sharing and storage have enabled access to mass photographic practice in more recent times, which raise methodological issues of their own.⁶ Because of these factors, most studies of amateur photography to date have tended to concentrate on small-scale, idiosyncratic bodies of material, typically the family album.

Useful work that has emerged from the study of family photography includes the multidisciplinary and influential collection of pictorial and prose essays entitled *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography*. Covering a wide range of approaches, from autobiography to economic analysis, the collection is informed by feminist and Marxist perspectives that see the conventional family as an ideological construction and mass photography as a commodity form. While, as the title indicates, the focus is on what Chalfen would call "home-mode" imagery and therefore is limited in its application to bodies of material solicited for particular projects and events, the volume is founded on the premise that domestic photographs are socially significant beyond the private sphere in which they are largely produced and consumed. As Patricia Holland puts it in her introduction, they "are shaped by the public conventions of the image and rely on a public technology which is widely available." She states that "the personal histories they record belong to narratives on a wider scale, those public narratives of community, religion, ethnicity and nation which make private identity possible."⁷ More recently in studies of amateur photographic practice, Gillian Rose has acknowledged the legacy of texts such as *Family Snaps* but observes that almost all the literature on amateur photographs has concentrated on what they picture. Noting that

“photos tend to be seen as signs,” she states that “What this work has neglected ... is to think of photographs as objects with which a complex array of things are done.”⁸ In this way she shares an approach with a relatively modest number of other writers who examine the *use* of personal photographs.⁹ Of particular relevance to my study of ODfL, Rose’s work examines what happens when photographs leave the domestic environment and are expected to perform publicly and socially in other locations.

The above texts consider the production and circulation of photographs to be as intrinsic to their meanings as the content of the images. In this, these authors share a method with the work of anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards. Edwards elaborates an approach to photographs as three-dimensional sensual objects-in-the-world rather than merely two-dimensional images. As she and Janice Hart put it, this emphasis on materiality “translates the abstract and representational ‘photography’ into ‘photographs’ as objects that exist in time and space.”¹⁰ Edwards’s most recent publications on the amateur production of photographs for historical purposes in the late-nineteenth-century photographic survey movement share a number of characteristics with this article in both approach and subject matter, as Edwards considers amateur photographs outside of the family album as a means of producing history, albeit in another time frame.¹¹ The advantage of my study as compared with studies conducted on archival photographs from earlier periods is that, with a twenty-year gap, photographers can still be located and asked to reflect back on their own work in the light of historical distance.

BACKGROUND AND METHOD

ODfL was one of a number of ambitious plans for fundraising campaigns developed by the British cancer fundraising charity Search 88. Established in 1986 by a South African businessman, Gareth Pyne-James, and banker Richard Hambro, the charity emerged during a period marked by large-scale, celebrity-led, frequently participatory fundraising endeavors, such as Band Aid and Live Aid, that had aimed to raise money for famine relief through rock concerts and the sale of charity singles. In the idea for a book, Pyne-James was also directly inspired by a 1982 publication, *A Day in the Life of South Africa*, which had organized professional photographs taken in one country, on a single day, into a large-scale, bestselling hardback book in aid of visual impairment charities, and was in turn inspired by the best-

selling *Day in the Life* photography series that published photojournalistic surveys of a range of nations during the 1980s and 1990s.¹²

The Search 88 team was made up of professional fundraisers who were interested in photography only as an accessible means to enable mass-participation and as a vehicle for donation. Judges for each stage of the project were drawn from amateur photographic societies and the world of photographic “celebrities,” and the project was in part sponsored by film processors and manufacturers, yet the project was more informed by charitable and publishing models than it was concerned with photography as a profession, practice or medium. As such, it bears little relation to contemporaneous emerging trends in arts practice for what has latterly been described as a turn to vernacular photography. In relation to the coming discussion, in addition to its charitable origins, ODfL bears some relation to the renaissance of interest in photographs as popular history, as documented by social historian Samuel.¹³ It was one of a number of broadly contemporaneous projects that asked “ordinary people” to contribute to large-scale community history projects such as the BBC Domesday project of 1985, through to local, regional and national visual history endeavors that culminated in many collective “people’s photography projects” throughout the 1990s and especially at the time of the millennium.¹⁴ Although there were no preconceived plans to preserve the project at the end of its life, beyond the production of the commemorative book, it was due to an enthusiastic interest in history by one of the organizers that the project entered an archive when the charity folded after ODfL.

The close to 55,000 photographs in the ODfL archive are largely uncatalogued and retain only a very basic level of organization, which reflects the way that they were donated in 1990 and their limited use since.¹⁵ As part of the stratification process, pre-publication, the submitted photographs were originally judged on their eligibility firstly by regional camera clubs and later by professional photographers. This resulted in the creation of core sections that remain visible in the archive organization: a rejected category (comprising about 50,000 prints), a longlist of around 4,000 prints and a shortlist of around 700 put forward for consideration for publication in the book, which eventually comprised 350 images. As noted, the photographs were not solicited with the intention of creating a historical archive, and only became one at the close of the project when the only other alternative was disposal (as is usual at the end of a photography competition). Consequently, additional accompanying data is very limited. Participants were asked merely to provide their name and address, the location of the photograph and the time at which it was taken. Most provided this on the back of the photograph and only a very small minority added further detail, for example, by giving

their photograph a title, offering some explanation of its significance, detailing the camera specification, and so on. There is little other accompanying documentation in the archive, so in addition to scrutinizing the entire collection, the larger research project has also necessitated a reconstitution of the history of the project through press research and through contacting organizers, judges and publishers. Some of this data is drawn on here.

In order to substantiate the photographic information, 400 contributors selected from across the published, shortlisted and rejected categories were sent an introductory letter about the research project, a photocopy of their submitted print(s), a two-sided questionnaire and a consent form. The questionnaire asked for age and occupation at the time of the competition; memories of the project; motivations for entering; description and significance of the photo(s) submitted, along with more general questions about their photographic practice and competitive, charitable and historic activity. A final tick box was provided for those who would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Despite 21 years having elapsed between participating in the project and my approach, 125 questionnaire responses were returned. 67 indicated that they would be happy to provide a follow-up interview, a cross-section of 21 were approached and 16 finally took place. The data analysis below therefore draws on archival, questionnaire and interview material. Participants were happy to have their names included in analysis and this credit acknowledges both their authorship of the photographs and the contribution of their interpretations.

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN - EVERYDAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Simultaneously characterized as a charitable fundraiser, a national portrait and a creative photographic project, the historic dimension was but one of the ways that ODfL was promoted. Nevertheless, 30 percent of participants who responded to questionnaire and interview invitations described it in these terms, either by explicitly mentioning the word “history” in their responses or by describing the project in terms of its “documentary” capacity to function as a “record.” One participant, for example, explained his attraction to what he described as “the concept of random images all based on one day and the potential for it to represent a historical snapshot,”¹⁶ while several participants described the book as a valuable visual record of a single day. As participant Nicky Yoxall stated, it was “a unique historic record rather more attractive than a census or doomsday [*sic*] book!”¹⁷ In addition, images of historical places and objects abound in the archive, from monuments and

architecture to ancient woodland and archaeological sites. Notes accompanying these and other, less obviously historical subjects, reveal a variety of historical intentions behind submissions. As one example, a photographer positioned his photograph in relation to historical time and the passage of time by noting, on an attached card, “I thought that, on the 14th August 1987, I would like to take a picture of a centuries old yew tree in Petts Wood, stand there and wonder who’d stood there perhaps two hundred years ago; and who, perhaps, would be there in two hundred years’ time.”¹⁸

Although it could be argued that all photographs are in some sense anticipated memories and therefore inherently historical—a point to which I shall return—a distinctive sense of historical consciousness is evident in many of the statements made by participants contacted through interviews or questionnaires. Several described ODfL in terms of preservation in the face of loss caused by the pace of social change, and their photographs could thus be described as performing a kind of salvage ethnography. Participants who photographed threatened practices were aware that they were making records for the future. For example, a participant explained why he had chosen a fishing subject for his photograph: “Cockling,” he detailed, “is a comparatively uncommon industry in this country and the method of unloading the boats was quickly dying out at this stage and would be well worth recording for historical reasons.”¹⁹ Others photographed “the old,” not as under threat, but as a form of historical persistence. David Kightley, for example, submitted a photograph of a burial mound (figure 1) and explained: “For me, it was a symbol of the continuity of human existence in this place over many centuries. As an historian and a naturalist I find these ancient remains in our wonderful countryside both moving and reassuring.”²⁰ For some participants, the “for life” part of ODfL was understood not in relation to the life-preserving opportunities that a cancer charity might provide but rather as shorthand for preservation or perpetuity.

Fig. 1. David Kightley, “Bronze Age Barrow, Suffolk Cornfield.” University of Sussex Special Collections, Mass Observation Related Collections, ODfL photography collection, “Landscapes” folder, Box 2, shortlisted photographs. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

Throughout the archive, photographs labeled with titles to denote their temporal currency—from the unambiguous “Life Today” to those that reference terms such as “modern,” “1987” and “twentieth century”—inevitably reveal a sense of history. Images of very topical or ephemeral subject matter—from the latest subcultural fashions and newspaper headlines to the new technology of automatic cash machines and personal stereos—abound both in the larger archive and in the published book. Some contributors who photographed “the new” explained its relationship to historical change. Hylde Peart, for example, looked at her 1987 street corner (figure 2) through the eyes of the present: “Historically it could be interesting. ‘Holes in the wall’ were fairly new, everyday clothes and hairstyles are interesting and can be placed historically. I have always loved red phone boxes (rather scarce now).”²¹ Evocations of newness and topicality, as requested by organizers in their requests for images that “typify life in Britain today”²² may be recast as historical statements when viewed at a historical distance, even if not originally intended as such.

Fig. 2. Hylda Peart, “Communication Corner.” In Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs by the People of Britain, Taken on a Single Day* (London: Bantam, 1987), 157. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

Some participants submitted photographs that evoked a historical style, and there are examples in the archive where photographers have used sepia or oval shaping on the print to suggest nineteenth-century photography formats. A minority of photographs in the archive are black and white, and while photographers using this format are not necessarily historically focused, and the prints may designate technical knowledge or a photojournalistic aim, a number of participants reflected on the historicizing effects of monochrome. Angela Towell, for example, took a black-and-white photograph of a horse and cart crossing a river ford in Lancashire with a particular sense of history in mind (figure 3). She explained that her aim had been to “capture a day in 1988 [*sic*] with a picture that looks like it was captured in the past ... black and white film and the subject of the photo all added to the mood.”²³ Edwards has argued that “the signifying properties of material forms” can act to produce historical affects, standing for “sensory and embodied desires” associated with “the ‘feeling

tones' of the past,"²⁴ and this accords with numerous observations made by participants who noted black and white's evocative sense of period.

Fig. 3. Angela Towell, "Horse Crossing Ford in Wycoller." In Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs by the People of Britain, Taken on a Single Day* (London: Bantam, 1987), 201. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

POPULAR HISTORICAL PRACTICE

A significant number of participants had passionate interests, or even professions, in history. Questionnaires asked participants to detail documentary or community history projects in which they had been involved, and 41 percent of respondents positively identified activities within this category. For example, participants stated, "I am *very much* into history generally, and local history in particular" and "History?—don't get me started!"²⁵ The range of interests varied from those who describe themselves as amateur or professional historians and curators to respondents who were seriously involved in historical reenactment or who had undertaken

substantial family history work. Other participants listed activities on a more modest scale such as contributions to a local museum display or participation in local reminiscence projects. While the presence of a question about history in the questionnaire inevitably produced responses that linked ODfL to history, it is notable that a number of respondents did not see how the question was related to my research and seemed unsure of how to answer. Some listed historical interests but also noted that they were not connected to photography, implying that they were not immediately connecting photographs to history.

Of participants who had interests that combined the photographic with the historical, activities included participation in community documentary or national record projects, such as those organized by the BBC, the History Channel or English Heritage, particularly at the time of the millennium. Participants were also involved in the creation of personal and local histories, either through keeping photographically illustrated diaries and extensive family albums or through the production of “then and now” photographs of their local area, either for personal reference or as cards for sale. Some participants were nonetheless hesitant about describing ODfL as a historical project. Doris Stubbs, for example, came to the hesitant conclusion, “It *can* be a historical record... well it is! Whether you intend it to be or not. It is, sort of, a historical record, yes.”²⁶ Despite her keen interest in history, having written and directed plays based on local heritage, Stubbs was one of a majority of participants who listed the aesthetic, charitable or competitive aspect as their principal point of attraction and described the project in these terms. Participants with these motivations were less likely to recognize ODfL as “about” history, and indeed, although there were many passionate reflections on the historical value of the photographs, two-thirds of questionnaire respondents did not characterize the project in this way. ODfL’s principal function was as a fundraiser in the form of a photographic competition, and the short-term outcome was always for an immediately saleable publication and not, for example, the creation of an archive or a time capsule, even if some treated it as such. Not one of the 136 participants who responded to my request for participation knew that the photographs had been preserved in a social history archive, and it was probably this knowledge, along with the attentions of a researcher of the history of photography, and the effects of the passage of time, that led many contributors to reassess their feelings about their photographs and the project in historical terms. John Whitby, for example, who had been attracted to participate as an aspiring photographer rather than as a historian, described the book in interview as “a little national archive of how we were on that day.”²⁷

Respondents used the prompt of being asked about ODfL in terms of history, and the now historical nature of the archive, to reflect on the use of the photograph to history more generally. As a range of examples, Rob Wilkins stated, “The power of photographs is amazing. I love looking at photographs of ‘ordinary people’ taken 30, 40, 40, 100 years ago.” Roseanne Moss noted, “I’ve always been intrigued by old photographs and the way they can conjure up the past, particularly the everyday past. Have you ever noticed how stiff and solid was the fabric of Victorian clothes—especially men’s coats and trousers—compared with the fabrics of today?” Joseph Lynch observed the enduring effects of photography and its historical potency. He reflected, “The spoken word is often forgotten. Photography is powerful. It grabs the attention of people. As George Bernard Shaw said: ‘I would willingly give up every painting of Christ for one snapshot.’”²⁸ Even if not historical at its point of origin, ODfL becomes, by definition, historical with the passage of time, and certainly memorial in its effects once it enters the highly theorized space of the archive.

Photography’s relationship to history and memory has been extensively explored by scholars. It has been observed that the invention of photography and the discipline of history share a point of convergence in their birth date and the correspondence between the two is seen, by some, as indisputable.²⁹ As Eduardo Cadava claims, “That photographic technology belongs to the physiognomy of historical thought means that there can be no thinking of history that is not at the same time a thinking of photography.”³⁰ Given the consensus among these theoretical assertions, then, it is all the more interesting that participants in ODfL did not unanimously characterize their photographs as history making. For many contributors, their photographs only become history through age and retrospective attribution.

Geoffrey Cubitt, in his study *History and Memory*, argues that the majority of “representational activity” in everyday life (which I would extend to include the practice of photography) “is geared to purposes that do not specifically require the formulation of an understanding of the past as such.” He states:

The information transmitted in such cases is presented not as information “about the past” but as information relating to present concerns and transactions. The preservation and transmission of this information is presumably motivated by the assumption that it will be useful essentially in helping people to formulate a view of what will by then be of the past. Only retrospectively, and through a crucial shift of perspective, does anybody come to think of this information as “belonging to the

past,” and hence as useful in constructing representations of which the past of a given community or social formation is the essential object.³¹

The shifts whereby “the contemporary” becomes “the past” in ODfL, however, are not simply a product of the passage of time or of the process of preservation but are, I would argue, a manifestation of the effects of photography’s temporal complexity as anticipated memory. What has been described as photography’s grammatical tense, the future anterior, is sometimes described as that which will-have-been.³² Celia Lury calls this photography’s “retrodictive prophecy.”³³ Photographs, additionally, show not only “what was,” that is, the past or the what-has-been, but also offer an insistent sense of presence. Roland Barthes describes this combination as “a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*.”³⁴

LOOKING BACK ON ANTICIPATED MEMORIES

A complex temporal sense can be found in contributors’ responses. A range of narrative anachronies such as prolepsis—a device “that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later”³⁵—and analepses, that is, comments about the past, can be found among participants, many of whom described their submissions as investments in the future. Several were aware that the historical content of the photographs had, more than twenty years on, already acquired value and would yet become more valuable. As illustrations of the consensus of such remarks, Joanna Rice observed: “The further away from the time [it gets] the more interesting it becomes as a documentary piece of one whole day in the 1980s.” Jane Wedmore stated that “It will be a wonderful archive for the future of a ‘typical day’ in that year.” Angela Tribe noted, “It will be interesting, I suppose, in another 25 years, to see, to *really* see it in perspective. And I am surprised already, that that should seem an image of its time.” She said, “It *is* interesting... And it will become increasingly interesting.”³⁶ Others had looked forward, when taking their photographs, to those who might consult the images for information about the past, thereby self-consciously instituting a historical “event” that could be revisited in the future. “It is good to date a time to help historians,” Joan Allen said, of her reason for participation.³⁷ Some had looked into the future when considering the subject of their photograph. Wedmore mused, “It made me think—what

is typical of life on this particular day that people in the future might find interesting.”³⁸ In this way, ODfL was both an event that could become historically interesting with the passage of time, and one designed in advance to be commemorative. ODfL’s complex temporality and the intervening role of the photograph in the construction of historical “events” are points to which I shall return.

Organizers also reflected on the latent historical nature of the photographs. Christopher English, a keen amateur historian, was responsible for donating the archive to Mass Observation and so was clearly attuned to the photographs’ historical capacity. He described himself as “very aware of history” and described the photographs as “forming a remarkable record.”³⁹ Beverley Bailey noted that there had been a strong feeling among all of the organizers that the photographs should be preserved at the end of the project but apart from English, no organizers, publishers or judges knew that they had been donated to an archive before I informed them. Just as with the participants, this change in destination, along with the passage of time, inevitably caused several to review their understanding of the photographs in historical terms. Bailey stated, “Twenty-one years, that’s a long time! ... That’s a hell of a long time, and you know, pretty soon it’ll be thirty years old, and then it’ll be a hundred and fifty years old. And you think now of things that are fifty years old, and the kind of historical value that they have now!”⁴⁰ The idea that the photographs were in a state of becoming, and that their historical significance was increasing and would multiply as time went on—even if their current value was latent—united many of the observations about ODfL and history from both participants and organizers. In particular, ODfL’s book designer Bob Searles was unequivocal about the historical potential of the archive, describing it as “immense.” He said, “Just think: you’ve got 55,000 photographs all taken on one day. It’s *just*... Historians in two hundred years’ time are going to *die* for that!”⁴¹

ACTIVELY CONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL EVENTS

The temporal organization of ODfL around a single day was seen by many participants and organizers as an essential part of its historical value, and the idea that the project could encapsulate a historical “moment” was written into its promotion. As the book’s blurb put it, “One Day for Life celebrates the moment in Britain’s history when a whole nation, inspired by the wish to help one of the most worthwhile of all causes, set out to record the richness and variety of its everyday life.”⁴² The significance of the selection of a single day as a

readymade historical event is very evident in the photographs submitted. Many people commemorated the day literally, painting it on walls, drawing it in the sand or etching it into cement (figure 4). The date was recorded through photographs of the front of newspapers, screens of digital watches and pages of calendars. The organizing charity chose an apparently ordinary day to act as a metonymic symbol of “the everyday,” but the creation of a singular calendar event is also a common and continuing practice among charitable fundraisers to focus attention on particular campaigns. Daniella Petrelli, Elise van den Hoven and Steve Whittaker have also observed in their study of time capsules that the one-day sample of “typical” events is a popular form for memory making.⁴³ Mass Observation also used the single day as an organizing device to apprehend the anthropology of daily life, and continues to do so through the Mass Observation Project.⁴⁴ Although the date of August 14 was chosen largely for pragmatic reasons—as the last possible day such a scheme could run if the book was to meet the publishers’ deadlines for getting it to the shelves for Christmas sales—both organizers and participants were aware of the historical potential of producing extensive photographic records of a single day, no matter how arbitrarily chosen. ODfL’s construction of “a day to remember” recognizes the centrality of “dates” to conventional understandings of how history is written.

Fig. 4. Photo by Diane Clayfield. University of Sussex Special Collections, Mass Observation Related Collections, ODfL photography collection, Box 14, Non-shortlisted photographs. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

Historiographic studies have long acknowledged the primary status of “the event” in the making of history. While traditional, narrative models may sequence the past in terms of significant occasions, dates and occurrences, these devices of historical structure have also been subject to significant challenge. Raymond Fogelson, for example, has pointed out that “most history is non-eventful” and has identified a number of forms of “non-event” as alternative approaches to understanding and organizing historical experience. Of these, both

the definition of the “latent event,” being that which passes beneath the radar of historical knowledge due to its status as the not-yet-historicized, and the “constructed event,” that is, the event self-consciously designed to *become* historical, are, paradoxically, both applicable to ODfL.⁴⁵ By requesting that participants photograph “everyday life,” organizers were explicitly asking for a view of that which is usually passed over: the inconsequential, non-eventful “ordinary.” Yet, by combining these fragments into an organized whole, clustered around a highly choreographed and widely promoted significant day, the project became inscribed by an overarching narrative of a ready-made “special event.”

The media manufacture of historic events has been explored at length by Daniel Boorstin in his conceptualization of the “pseudo-event.”⁴⁶ Boorstin’s thesis, originally published some fifty years ago, critiqued the then-emerging trend in media production for the creation of planned news events and celebrations that are primarily produced for the purposes of being reported or reproduced and, by extension, memorialized. Although ODfL may appear from some angles to be a collective amateur documentary project that has little relation to these debates, the overall project was a media construction deliberately calculated to generate headlines. It was, after all, devised by public-relations-informed charity professionals to attract maximum media exposure, with the content merely generated by amateurs to fulfill a preexisting brief. The date chosen was not a chance selection designed to capture “the ordinary” but was, in fact, carefully calculated by promoters to take place at a peak time in the summer holidays to maximize participation and, strategically, to then translate into Christmas sales. The inherently pessimistic tone of Boorstin’s polemic—where the artificial construction of media events is seen as symptomatic of the growth of an inauthentic culture—is, interestingly, at odds with the largely positive reception of ODfL by its participants. Very few respondents felt in anyway “duped” by the promotional promises of the project. Most characterized ODfL as innovative, participatory and a fun way to be creative and to raise money for a good cause. As will be discussed, the advance claims that August 14, 1987 would be “a memorable day” were largely borne out—at least in winning participants’ experiences. Through the act of participation and the subsequent sense of validation, the fabricated “event” became meaningful and historically significant at the site of the photograph.

It has been frequently observed that the medium of photography has the transformational capacity to turn single moments, in the form of single images, into matters of greater consequence, that is, into “events.” The observation that photography both removes “events” from the flow of time’s continuum *and* creates them, is central to Susan Sontag’s

argument in *On Photography*: “A photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself.... Our very sense of situation is now articulated by the camera’s interventions. The omnipresence of cameras persuasively suggests that time consists of interesting events, events worth photographing.” Through the act of making a photograph of such integrated moments—those that Fogelson might describe as “non-events”—Sontag asserts that the resulting picture confers on the event “a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed.”⁴⁷ A further intersection between the notion of event and the photograph is not just the moment that it records, or the event of photographic inscription, but also the event of the spectator’s photographic encounter. The complex tense of photography, with its insistent “presentness” (even as it seems to authenticate the past) makes the moment of viewing itself a temporal event. Martha Langford, who is one of a number of photography theorists to describe photographic reception as performative, notes that “to look at a photograph is to rehearse its making, to stand where the photographer stood and see what he or she saw.”⁴⁸ For Margaret Iverson, photographic tense is less predicated on recording a “ghostly trace of an absent referent” but instead points to the contemporary moment and what comes after. She states, “Photography is thus conceived, not as a melancholic ‘that-has-been’ but more as a future oriented and interrogative ‘what-will-be?’”⁴⁹

David Green has expanded on this realignment of the photograph’s temporality, noting that it is deictic, that is, that its meaning is in a process of flux dependent on the context of its viewing. He states that “thinking of the photograph’s particular kind of referentiality as analogous to deixis anchors meaning to the immediate spatio-temporal context of the communicative act and to that which is immediately present. In other words ‘This now here’.”⁵⁰ His thoughts about the adaptability of the tense of photography, to be not only of the present but of a range of presents, depending on when they are looked at, is worth quoting at length. He writes:

photographs are pictorial representations that—like every other material object—travel through time and are therefore subject to inevitable change. The photographs I was familiar with in my childhood in the 1970s have changed over time; the familiar now of the earlier experiences cannot be recovered from the now comparatively old, certainly dated, images. The effects of time are palpable in these pictures, and although the speed of change may be slower than the observable motion with which we are most familiar, the subject matter of a photograph nonetheless changes, grows

old, as its only possible witnesses become ever more removed from its origin, and wiser or more ignorant about its subject matter. We might put the point here in the form of a variation on Heraclites' well-known aphorism: you can never encounter the same subject matter of a photograph on two separate occasions.⁵¹

Certainly, participants and organizers were reflective on the historical changes that they perceived in the photographs and their differing relations to them over time as they looked back through the book in interview. Just as Green argued that a photograph can never be experienced in the same way twice, participant Stella Skingle said, "It is the sort of thing, I think, that every time you look through it, you see something different. Like yesterday afternoon or evening I was looking at it, thinking, 'I like that one and that one now. I wonder if I liked them back in 1987?' You change." For Ruth Hathaway, with time, the collective aspect became more prominent than her personal memories. She noted, "looking at it with the remove of twenty years, I did feel a bit different. I think I saw my photo more as one of all the others, whereas before it was 'my photo' and 'everybody else's.'"⁵² Several participants, unprompted, outlined what the photograph meant to them in the present day, and how the area or their personal circumstances had changed. Some sent me photographs of the same subject twenty years on so I could see for myself the changes brought by the passage of time. Photographs are thus far from static objects, or "stills." Not only do they anticipate future reflection at the moment of capture, but with the passage of time, the past that they contain is always in flux through the prism of the present.

Although there was some reflection among respondents on social changes visible in the photographs, and on changes in photographic practice and technology, a sense of history for many participants and organizers was mobilized more by reflecting on changes in their own lives since 1987 rather than on broader or depicted social change. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen have suggested that people's sense of the historical has less to do with the scholarly subject and more to do with their own intimate pasts.⁵³ ODiL organizer Bailey, for example, measured the distance of the project in time in relation to her own aging. She said, "Seriously, when you said to me that it was twenty, twenty one years since *that*. That's phenomenal to me! Really, you know, *twenty-one* years, that's a long time! That's over half, no slightly less than half my lifetime."⁵⁴ Ruth Hathaway said in her questionnaire, "I remember it fondly—it was a time when most of my future still seemed to lie ahead, and I felt I could evolve in all sorts of different ways (alas, I never did!)." She elaborated in interview:

It does sort of remind me...how different I felt in those days to how I do now, really. Being much younger and feeling that I had my whole life ahead of me and feeling that I would do all sorts of clever things. All sorts of things I couldn't do, I would be able to do when I was grown up, when I was old. When I was younger and there were things that I felt unable to do, I thought "When I'm old, I'll be able to do them" and now I am, I find that I still can't! It happens to you; it happened to me gradually. But looking back at that, it really brought back to me how I felt then.⁵⁵

It is the particular capacity of photographs to simultaneously evoke the *there-then* and the *here-now* that prompted participants' reflections.

Participants and organizers also reflected on the temporality of the photographs in terms of their possible futures, afterlives and effects Bailey, with a mordant sense of humour, stopped at a photograph of a wedding in the book (figure 5) and exclaimed, "So gorgeous, really gorgeous! [laughs] I expect they're divorced. He's probably in jail." Hathaway made similar comments about a published photograph of her daughter (figure 6): "You know, it's funny looking through them now. All these babies are—you know, my daughter's now 23 now—and some of the old people are probably dead. It's sort of strange now."⁵⁶ Both Bailey's and Hathaway's reflections correspond to Siegfried Kracauer's theory that photography tends to suggest "endlessness." Although a photograph can only ever represent a fragment out of the continuum, he asserts that "Its frame marks a provisional limit; its content refers to other contents outside that frame; and its structure denotes something that cannot be encompassed."⁵⁷ Similarly, Clive Scott states that when old photographs in particular are looked at, the eye wishes "to generate a future in the past, a future that will make looking worthwhile. This strange tense of looking means that every photograph has a slight tendency to become a photogram (film still), to extend into a temporal rather than spatial blind field."⁵⁸ Photographs viewed out of time prompt reflections on what was, what could have been, and what may yet be.

Fig. 5. G. A. Dingley, "Family Joy." In Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs by the People of Britain, Taken on a Single Day* (London: Bantam, 1987),169. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

Fig. 6. Ruth Hathaway, “Child Posting a Letter.” In Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs by the People of Britain, Taken on a Single Day* (London: Bantam, 1987), 120. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

MEMORY AND FORGETTING

ODfL was styled as memorable in its promotion, and the role of memory in relation to the photographs is multiple. Photographs constructed with historical consciousness were created in order to remember, and the photographs’ current status in an archive has led to them being claimed as a kind of collective memory.⁵⁹ Participants who were selected as finalists certainly had memorable and momentous experiences, especially if they were published for the first

time, were rewarded with certificates from royalty, and perhaps appeared on television, radio or in the press as a result of their success. For these participants, ODfL was certainly unforgettable. Since none of the participants and only one of the organizers knew that the photographs had been turned into an archive, it was the book that had become the historical repository. Some still remembered the page number of their photograph after more than twenty years. For others, revisiting the book again and again over the years had reinforced the photograph and the experience in their mind, and ultimately caused the pages of the book to fall out. For those who had additional experiences as a result of publication, for example, those invited to the book launch at Claridges, it was “*so* memorable” because they felt they “were part of it.”⁶⁰ For John Bradley, the cover photographer, who was presented with a prize by the Duchess of York, it was a “once in a lifetime experience.”⁶¹

There were, of course, other participants contacted who had not had the reinforcement of selection and/or publication and whose memories were much less forthcoming. The first question on the questionnaire asked, “What do you remember of One Day for Life?” While some sent detailed responses while simultaneously claiming to have forgotten it, others literally could not remember participating. J. T. Thacker, for example, sent my questionnaire back, along with the photocopy of his submission, denying that it was his. He simply stated, “I think you must have the wrong person because that is not my photograph.”⁶² Thacker’s name was clearly marked on the reverse of the photograph in the archive, along with a number of others taken by him of the same subject, but he did not remember being a part of the project. Similarly, Pat Holmes, an unpublished finalist, said of the photograph I sent with her questionnaire, “I can honestly say that I cannot remember anything about that particular photo.... I suspect I must have got muddled with someone else’s entry.” When asked “What do you remember...?” she replied, “Not very much, and certainly not the picture I apparently sent in!”⁶³ Without the reward of winning or the reinforcement of repeated viewings of the book, it is perhaps inevitable that ODfL would not achieve the commemorative density necessary to move an act of charity or a competition entry or a photograph on a film—perhaps one of many—into a personally or socially defining historical event.

Oral historians have noted that the memory process “depends, not only on individual comprehension, but also upon interest.... Accurate memory is much more likely when it meets a social interest and need.”⁶⁴ Quite simply, those who had no reason to remember ODfL were not likely to. Forgetting and misremembering, however, need not be interpreted as a weakness but as a particular feature of historical evidence, highlighting the social variables of significance, priority and preference. Forgetting is significant. As Alessandro

Portelli notes, “The facts that people remember (and forget) are themselves the stuff of which history is made.”⁶⁵ Cubitt agrees that it is more productive “to view memory’s instances of reliability less as simple manifestations of defectiveness than as part of the more general—and always both necessary and problematic—process by which the mind creatively and pragmatically interprets and engages with its stream of experience.”⁶⁶

Photography has long been implicated in debates about memory and forgetting. Cadava, in his study of the photography of history, has gone so far as to state that “forgetting is inscribed in every photograph.”⁶⁷ Photographs are popularly seen as an aide-memoire, and many theorists have gone further and characterized photography as a form of surrogate, substitute or prosthetic memory that remembers so that we do not have to. Photography has been described as an adjunct to memory, its configuration, its enemy, and even a manifestation of memory itself.⁶⁸ The overdetermination, speculation and abstraction of some of these claims, however, obscure the diverse and rather pragmatic ways in which the practices of photography and memory intersect in everyday life. ODfL participants were, at times, articulate and astute about the memorial aspect of their photographs. Ben Austen wrote that he always photographs “with the thought that ‘If these things are not recorded on photographs they will be forgotten...and if forgotten they might just as well have never taken place.’ I have had a compulsion to capture happy moments in time and preserve them for others to share (as if preserved in a glass jar!).”⁶⁹ John Plowman remembered the fine detail of a photograph that he submitted to ODfL but that was not returned, and that he had not kept a copy of. He explained:

You never forget. Do you know, it’s the most amazing thing. If I’ve taken a photograph, and it could be twenty or thirty years ago, and I see that again, for some reason—perhaps I’ve gone to that area again—I look at that and I think, “Yeah, I’ve taken that.” It might be twenty or thirty years ago. You don’t forget. When the shutter clicks, something goes [makes clicking action] in your brain. Funny really.⁷⁰

Bailey also observed that, for many participants, the memory of taking part endured. She said that on several occasions over the years when she had mentioned One Day for Life, people would still remember it. She said:

Absolutely, I honestly don’t think people do forget. I still do, occasionally, on the odd occasion, get people saying, “Oh my god, my cousin had a picture in there.” And it

has been brought down through family history. You know, “My uncle Arthur had a photo in the book.” “Uncle Derek’s dog” kind of thing [laughs] ... you know, it’s not like JFK dying, but the people who took a picture on the day won’t have forgotten they took a picture on the day. You know, you were kind of either in or you were out. If you did, you won’t have forgotten it.⁷¹

While Bailey is cautious about attributing excessive historical significance to ODfL, she makes reference to popular understanding of flashbulb memory in her remark about Kennedy’s assassination and is adamant that participation was unforgettable. Although a small minority of participants described their image in terms of personal consequence or turning points—for example, in terms of personal narratives of illness and death or as marking a shift in personal direction—for most participants the point of significance in ODfL was not what Ulrich Baer has described as “the shutter’s click” that “allows certain moments to be integrated for the first time into a context (of experience, of memory, of meaning)”⁷² but the point of being told that they were competition winners. Photography, for all the memorial status thrust upon it by scholars, was not as important to these participants as the validation that “winning” provided.

Several interviewed participants shared significant memories about the moment at which they were informed that their photograph had been selected for publication, and these had become their personal historic “events.” What could be described as the cumulative social processes of photographic involvement—participation, recognition, reward and commemoration—had created the significance that embedded the memory, rather than memory being invested in the making of the photograph or, indeed, in the photographic image per se. Although some participants, like Plowman, noted that the act of photography offered a moment of commemorative coherence, for many, the point of convergence between photograph and memory was a retrospective attribution. Personal recognition, delivered through publication, archiving, and later added to by my attention, raised the photographs’ status, attributed them with significance and infused them with additional meaning.

The commemorative potential of a publication designed as “a permanent record”⁷³ and dedicated to a cancer charity was recognized by a number of participants, who treated the publication, at times, as a kind of book of condolence. Cancer and charitable fundraising was intrinsic to ODfL’s purpose, was central to the motivation of many participants, and is made manifest in a number of ways in the archive, in particular through a small but fascinating section of photographs in the archive that date from before August 14, 1987. Old photographs

were used as a way of participating in the commemorative spirit. In one example in the archive, an inscription on a small studio portrait of Margaret June Soundy, apparently taken some years earlier, reads: “b. 27.6.27. d. 31.7.87. She died of breast cancer! Please publish to remember all those who died and are dying of cancer.”⁷⁴ A tattered and faded black-and-white photograph of two girls, apparently taken precisely seventy-two years before, featured in the ODfL book as a “postscript” final photograph (figure 7). The caption in the book reads, “I’m sorry—I had no film in my camera, but this photograph was taken on August 14th 1915. It shows my two big sisters who have now died of cancer.”⁷⁵ In another example, an old photograph was re-photographed to fit with the rules that photographs should be taken on a set day (figure 8). The inscription on the reverse states: “I do hope that you can print this in your book. This is a photograph of a photograph of my sister Ryna, who died of cancer, after a courageous battle, last year. It was taken in London on 14 August 1987.”⁷⁶ That old photographs are put to work in ODfL through tacit recognition of their mnemonic capacity, and as reflections on the passage of time, means that the charitable concerns of the project seep beyond the boundaries of the single day and are both preexisting and enduring.

Fig. 7. G. M. Holland, “Kathleen and Sheenagh Kelly, c. August 1915.” University of Sussex Special Collections, Mass Observation Related Collections, ODfLphotography collection, Box 72, non-shortlisted photographs. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

Fig. 8. Photo by Anne de Ballastero. University of Sussex Special Collections, Mass Observation Related Collections, ODfL photography collection, “Misc” folder, Box 5, shortlisted photographs, 14 August 1987. © Search 88 Cancer Trust, reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive.

FROM BOOK TO ARCHIVE: BECOMING HISTORY

The memorials that such participants sought took the form of the book, but a further memorial was created when the entire archive was preserved. It has been observed by numerous scholars that archival authority confers historical status on its objects; in the archive, history becomes History.⁷⁷ Peter Enser, the supervisor of a classification project using ODfL in 1993, reflecting on what archiving had done for the photographs, tellingly described it as the moment that they “gained historical warranty.”⁷⁸ Although English, the donor of the photographs, had shown absolute conviction of their future worth to historians, he was less sure about precisely *how* they might be used, imagining only that they might serve as a commercial picture library in the short term.⁷⁹ Dorothy Sheridan, then director of the Mass Observation Archive, while acknowledging the points of convergence between ODfL and Mass Observation, was also unsure of what their use might be, other than illustrations to support life writing of the period.⁸⁰ How photographs might deliver “history” apart from as sources of evidence about “how things were” is evidently far from clear. Both were convinced, however, that the photographs should not be thrown away.

Photographs are almost always difficult objects to dispose of, evocative as they are of a near magical connection between the object and that which it represents.⁸¹ Photographs are attributed with lives of their own, both in popular understandings of their emotional potency and in material culture scholarship.⁸² Discarded, destroyed or forgotten photographs are often seen to be painfully symbolic of social discontinuity, rupture and loss.⁸³ The threat that the photographs might be disposed of was enough to convince English to find sanctuary for them; that nobody else wanted them was in part why Sheridan felt that the Mass Observation Archive must have them.

In the twenty plus years since it was celebrated on the front page of the *Times* and featured on the BBC national news, ODfL has gone from being a collective event that promised to unite every person in the nation, resulting in a book that reached the top of the bestseller lists, to a nearly forgotten set of dog-eared prints that are rarely consulted. Participants noted the sometimes profound sense of significance that they experienced through being part of a mass event and certainly through being published in the commemorative book, tasting fame, even if only briefly. But even winning participants had not been able to maintain the inevitably temporary sense of momentousness attached to these peak events; it weakened with the passing of time. Everyone I spoke to who had been published had kept the book. Some went so far as to describe it as their prize possession. Others, however, while noting ODfL's original significance, admitted that they had not looked at the book for fifteen or twenty years. Its value had slipped. Roger Pike, for example, used to have his certificate displayed, but eventually took it down. He said, "It was pinned up for a while, I think, somewhere. And then I forgot about it, and then it was in the book."⁸⁴ Even those who had attended the book launch, and described, at length, the impression that this event had made on them, said that they had to seek the book out when I contacted them. Jeanne? Dodsworth said, "We've sorted lots of things out in the last few years, haven't we? And certain books he's kept. And then of course, when we came across this, we said, sort of, 'Put that in the back bedroom.' I mean, obviously, we keep it, but it's on top of the wardrobe."⁸⁵

Neither cherished nor wholly forgotten, ODfL exists in a liminal space in its manifestation as a book and as an archive. Time has affected the value of the photographs in positive and negative ways. While, as was previously noted, several participants recognized the future potential latent in the book and thought that it was becoming more interesting, many also noted that its financial value had diminished. G. J. Pile summarized it thus: "We once found a copy of ODfL in Harrods and have recently found one in a car boot sale!"⁸⁶ For

some this downward slump was painful. Several participants had noted the very high cost of the book at £16.95 when it was first released, but when it decreased in price, this seemed to diminish its wider worth. As the Dodsworths put it, “We thought it were quite sad when we saw it in the car boot, to start with. You look and you think, “A pound? Only *a pound?*”⁸⁷ My own copy of the book demonstrates this slide in value even more dramatically, costing just one penny in the second-hand section of the Amazon online bookshop where it was one of dozens of unsold copies. There is now a surplus of ODfL books that nobody wants and an archive that is barely used but kept, just in case, as if in the back bedroom.

Adam Drazin and David Frohlich have spoken of the “disorganised masses” of photographs that lie about people’s homes—those not singled out, framed or otherwise made special—as photographs that are not so much positively kept as “not disposed of,” a description that is appropriate to the case of ODfL. That they were not destroyed reveals an expectation of their future promise, but they have not yet achieved significance; instead they are “potential mementoes in which the photographic thing has not yet superseded the experience.”⁸⁸ The function of a photographic archive has been described by Mark Haworth-Booth as “a ‘belated court of appeal’ where items are preserved and protected until their true value is realised.”⁸⁹ As anticipated memories, it has been argued that all photographs hold the future in abeyance,⁹⁰ yet in the archive, the photographs’ depicted past has not yet achieved full historical status. Despite all efforts to the contrary, the multiple everydays that the photographs depict remain at the level of non-event. The historical distance that an “ordinary” photograph needs to pass through in order to become interesting is illustrated by the many books and exhibitions that examine selective histories of the “snapshot” photograph and stop short of the present by around thirty years.⁹¹ ODfL photographs, more than twenty years after their taking, remain just under the level of historical vision. They are waiting for the future that is promised—the historians whom participants and organizers envisage will be dying to consult them.

Edwards has argued that photographs can be most useful for the discipline of history if they are used not simply as evidence but “as tools with which to think through the nature of historical experience.”⁹² Examining the historiographic aims and expectations made of the ODfL photographs is more productive than considering them as containers of historical information. As Geoffrey Batchen has observed of analogue images, “the advent of digital technologies means that this kind of photography has now taken on an extra-memorial role, not of the subjects it depicts, but of its own operation as a system of representation.”⁹³ Both the content and the format of ODfL photographs are thus now “of the past.” More

significantly, however, they are also revelatory of the historical values embedded in the time in which they originate. As Sara Shatford has reflected, in relation to image archiving, “photographs can show not only how a time period looked, but what it considered important to record, revealing its values and perceptions of itself.”⁹⁴ As such, then, the submitted photographs are self-conscious and imaginative reflections on the nature of the present as the future’s past.⁹⁵ History is not just thrust upon them by the passing of time. Just as ODfL photographs may variously enact compassion and picture the everyday, so they may perform and consequently produce history.⁹⁶

How historic photographs are seen *now* matters just as much as why they were made *then* because they exist in our own time in complex ways. What they were in 1987 is not what they are now. They live on in their afterlife. This is not to weaken the value of participants’ reflections as merely “post hoc,” but to acknowledge the effect of the present on recollections, and also to leave room for the photographs’ possible futures, for their interpretive *potential* is not wholly determined by what they were originally thought to be, and their external meaning to readers will differ from their original intentions. The anteriority of photographs is written into the medium’s affinities and is reinforced by the historical hopes of those who consciously constructed historical statements. Beyond the example of ODfL, the complex temporality of photographs taken “then” of a “now,” and whose future promise is reflected back on, indicates that photographs can never simply act as containers of a visible past. If they cannot restore what is lost, their historical limitations and points of resistance might be read instead as interventions and opportunities. The contingency and excess of photographs, their fluidity to a range of different interpretations and reinterpretations, and their promiscuous adaptability to a range of discursive frames, make photographs slippery carriers of historical certainty. Despite popular phraseology that photographs are arrested time or “frozen moments,” and despite their name, still photographs are mobile. Moving through a range of locations, shifting meaning as they do so, and flowing through time, where they can never be experienced in the same way twice, the open-ended status of photographs makes them less like gravestones memorializing past events than doorways to unspecified future encounters.

NOTES

¹ Anon., “Prizes for Your Photos: Snap up a Chance to Save Lives,” *Daily Express*, August 12, 1987, 9.

² See respectively Search 88, *One Day for Life—An Invitation from HRH The Duchess of York* (leaflet) (1987); Richard Hambro, “Afterword,” in Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs by the People of Britain, Taken on a Single Day* (London: Bantam Press, 1987), 316; *Six O’Clock News*, November 5, 1987 (BBC Television broadcast).

³ See also Annebella Pollen “The Book the Nation Is Waiting for: One Day for Life,” in Patrizia de Bello, Colette Wilson and Shamoon Zamir, eds., *The Photobook from Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond* (London: IBTauris, 2012); and Annebella Pollen, *Life in a Day: History, Memory and Identity in Mass-Participation Photography* (London: IBTauris, forthcoming).

⁴ Geoffrey Batchen, “Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn,” *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 121–42.

⁵ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1987)

⁶ Risto Sarvas and David M. Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media: The Changing Picture of Domestic Photography* (London: Springer, 2011).

⁷ Patricia Holland, “Introduction: History, Memory and the Family Album,” in Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991), 3.

⁸ Gillian Rose, “‘You Just Have to Make a Conscious Effort to Keep on Snapping away I Think’: A Case Study of Family Photos, Mothering and Familial Space,” in Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer, eds., *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal through Politics, Home and the Body* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 222. See also Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); David L. Jacobs, “Domestic Snapshots: Towards a Grammar of Motives,” *Journal of American Culture* 4, no. 1 (1981): 93–105; David Halle, *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Patrizia Di Bello, *Women’s Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Adam Drazin and David Frohlich, “Good Intentions: Remembering through Framing Photographs in English Homes,” *Ethnos*, 72, no. 1 (2007): 51–76.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart “Introduction: Photographs as Objects,” in Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

¹¹ Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012); Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs and History: Emotion and Materiality,” in Sandra H. Dudley, ed., *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹² *A Day in the Life of South Africa* (South Africa: A Day in the Life of South Africa [Pty.], 1982). Cf. Rick Smolan and David Cohen, eds., *A Day in the Life of America: Photographed by 200 of the World’s Leading Photojournalists on One Day, May 2, 1986* (New York: Collins, 1986).

¹³ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994).

¹⁴ David Brittain, “Smile, You’re in the Millennium,” *Creative Camera*, no. 360 (October/November 1999): 8–9.

¹⁵ As part of the larger PhD research project from which this paper emerges, I examined every single photograph in the archive in order to ascertain an overall view of the material and gain a sense of patterning. Previously, ODfL photographs have rarely been consulted and have never been analyzed as a whole. In 1995, approximately 10,000 of the photographs were shown in a three-week exhibition at the John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, UK, entitled *Memory & the Archive: Photographs, Images, Documents*, curated by Russell Roberts. In 2013, selected photographs feature in another show curated by Roberts on Mass Observation and photography at the Photographer’s Gallery, London.

¹⁶ Trevor Brown, questionnaire, July 21, 2008.

¹⁷ Nicky Yoxall, questionnaire, April 19, 2008.

¹⁸ University of Sussex Special Collections, Mass Observation Related Collections, ODfL photographic collection (hereafter University of Sussex, ODfL), Bernard Sullivan, box 31, non-shortlisted photographs.

¹⁹ Harry Smith, questionnaire, June 11, 2008.

²⁰ David Kightley, questionnaire, April 19, 2008.

²¹ Hylda Peart, questionnaire, June 11, 2008.

²² *Breakfast Time*, August 14, 1987 (BBC Television broadcast).

²³ Angela Towell, questionnaire, May 27, 2008.

- ²⁴ Edwards, "Photographs and History," 31.
- ²⁵ John Bradley, interview, April 26, 2008; Kightley, questionnaire.
- ²⁶ Doris Stubbs, interview, February 20, 2009.
- ²⁷ John Whitby, interview, January 9, 2009.
- ²⁸ Questionnaires: Rob Wilkins, May 14, 2008; Roseanne Moss, July 15, 2008 ; Joseph Lynch, June 2, 2008.
- ²⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 2003); Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" [1927], trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (1993): 421–36.
- ³⁰ Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xxviii.
- ³¹ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 178–79.
- ³² Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: Sage, 1998).
- ³³ Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), 3.
- ³⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 44.
- ³⁵ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 40.
- ³⁶ Joanna Rice, questionnaire, July 14, 2008; Jane Wedmore, questionnaire, July 15, 2008; Angela Tribe, interview, January 30, 2009.
- ³⁷ Joan Allen, questionnaire, August 7, 2009.
- ³⁸ Wedmore, questionnaire.
- ³⁹ Christopher English, interview, March 26, 2008.
- ⁴⁰ Beverley Bailey, interview, June 17, 2008.
- ⁴¹ Bob Searles, interview, July 11, 2008.
- ⁴² Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs*, flyleaf.
- ⁴³ Daniella Petrelli, Elise van der Hoven and Steve Whittaker, "Making History: Intentional Capture of Future Memories," *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York: ACM, 2009), 1723–32.

⁴⁴ Humphrey Jennings and Charles Madge, eds., *May the Twelfth: Mass-Observation Day Surveys 1937 by over Two Hundred Observers* (1937; London: Faber and Faber, 1987). In the same month as One Day for Life, the Mass Observation Project asked their volunteer writers to keep a one-day diary on August 31, 1987.

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⁴⁶ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1961; New York: Atheneum, 1975).

⁴⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: 1979), 11.

⁴⁸ Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 48.

⁴⁹ Margaret Iverson "Following Pieces: On Performative Photography," in James Elkins, ed., *Photography Theory* (London: Routledge, 2007), 105.

⁵⁰ David Green, "Marking Time: Photography, Film and the Temporalities of the Image," in David Green and Joanna Lowry, eds., *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image* (Brighton: Photoforum, 2006), 17.

⁵¹ Ibid., 48.

⁵² Interviews: Stella Skingle, January 30, 2009; Ruth Hathaway, January 8, 2009.

⁵³ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

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⁵⁵ Hathaway, questionnaire, June 20, 2008; interview, January 8, 2009.

⁵⁶ Bailey, interview; Hathaway, interview.

⁵⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 264.

⁵⁸ Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 199.

⁵⁹ *Memory & the Archive: Photographs, Images, Documents* (leaflet) (John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, 1995); Peter Enser, "Progress in Documentation: Pictorial Information Retrieval," *Journal of Documentation* 51 (1995), 126–70.

⁶⁰ Roy and Jeanne Dodsworth, interview, January 20, 2009.

⁶¹ Bradley, interview.

⁶² J. T. Thacker, questionnaire, July 23, 2009.

- ⁶³ Pat Holmes, questionnaire, April 7, 2008.
- ⁶⁴ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 132.
- ⁶⁵ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (New York: Albany, 1991), quoted in Thompson, 160.
- ⁶⁶ Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 84.
- ⁶⁷ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 15.
- ⁶⁸ A range of texts cover these debates in more detail: Catherine Keenan, "Memory and Personal Photography" *History of Photography* 22, no. 1 (1998): 60–64; Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).
- ⁶⁹ Ben Austen, questionnaire, August 22, 2008.
- ⁷⁰ John Plowman, interview, January 23, 2009.
- ⁷¹ Bailey, interview.
- ⁷² Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 12.
- ⁷³ Anon., "Great Books for Christmas—From Top...To Toe!," *Guardian*, 1987, 16.
- ⁷⁴ University of Sussex, ODfL, Susan J. Egan, Box 28, non-shortlisted photographs.
- ⁷⁵ Search 88, *One Day for Life: Photographs*, 316.
- ⁷⁶ University of Sussex, ODfL, Anne de Ballestero, "Misc" folder, Box 5, shortlisted photographs.
- ⁷⁷ Richard Harvey Brown, and Beth Davis-Brown, "The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 17–32.
- ⁷⁸ Peter Enser, interview, June 10, 2010.
- ⁷⁹ English, interview.
- ⁸⁰ Dorothy Sheridan, interview, November 10, 2006.
- ⁸¹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
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⁸³ Jeremy Seabrook, "My Life Is in That Box: Photography and Popular Consciousness," in Spence and Holland, eds., *Family Snaps*, 171-185.

⁸⁴ Roger Pike, interview, January 16, 2009.

⁸⁵ Dodsworths, interview.

⁸⁶ G. J. Pile, questionnaire, January 14, 2009.

⁸⁷ Dodsworths, interview.

⁸⁸ Drazin and Frohlich, "Good Intentions," 59.

⁸⁹ Mark Haworth-Booth, quoted in David Brittain, "Found in the UK's National Collection of the Art of Photography," *Afterimage: The Journal of Media arts and Cultural Criticism* 35, no. 3 (2007): 19.

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⁹² Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 236.

⁹³ Batchen, "Snapshots," 130.

⁹⁴ Sara Shatford, "Analyzing the Subject of a Picture: A Theoretical Approach," *Cataloguing and Classification Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1986): 66–74.

⁹⁵ Brian Durrans, "Posterity and Paradox: Some Uses of Time Capsules," in Sandra Wallman, ed., *Contemporary Futures: Perspectives from Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁹⁶ Greg Denning, *Performances* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).