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Steph:

Hey everyone, welcome to Modern Photo Solutions. I am Steph Clay and I appreciate you including me in your day and your routine however that is. If you're listening while you are working out or cleaning or driving in the car, which so many of you do, thank you for including me in your routine.

I recently got my Chatbooks order back. For those of you that aren't familiar with Chatbooks, there's a little bit of a history behind it. In the beginning, a long time ago, several years ago, in the beginning Just Family was an app that I really loved and used quite a bit. I was a very early adopter and because I wrote about it on the DailyDigi.com and the owner or at that time the person in charge, the CEO, Nate Quiggly called me. He emailed me and asked if we could set up a time to talk.

So we did and we actually ended up having several calls over the period of years, a year or two I guess where I gave him feedback and input about the Just Family App. It ended up evolving into what Chatbooks is today. I don't know if they would say that it evolved, that Just Family evolved into that. The reason that I say that it did is because the email list, my kids were on the Just Family email list because they had Just Family accounts and because of that they got emails from Chatbooks when Chatbooks launched, which my son thought was really weird at the time.

I think he was, yeah, he was 12 or 13, something like that at that time. He's like, "Why am I getting this email?" That's how I learned that and kind of put two and two together and figured out. So in my mind it evolved and I also was behind the scenes a little bit with Nate talking about different things, about why Just Family, that app wasn't as successful as they had wanted it to be and my opinions on what they needed to do change it so that it could be a successful platform.

Chatbooks is what evolved out of Just Family, and so if you've been with me for a long time you probably remember me talking about it. Just Family had at the time, and still to this day, and I think you can still actually get it in the App Store. I don't know for sure, but it is to this day one of my favorite app icons, what it was back then. It was the cutest thing ever.

Anyway, Chatbooks is a format where you can, when they just launched you could have your Instagram photos automatically put in a photobook that would be printed for you, which is such a great thing. Anything automated I think is a great



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answer and solution for people. They've expanded it little by little over the years, which is good too and added more features. So I wanted to, recently they added the eight by eight size, which is a more standard size.

When they first came out I believe it was just five by five, which is kind of small. Maybe five and a half by five and a half or five and three-quarters. Anyways, somewhere in between five and six inches square is what it was and it's softcover. They recently launched hardcover and eight by eight. I think hardcover came a while ago first. I wanted to try it so that I could give you my thoughts and feedback.

I have done the smaller size before, which I talked about in an earlier podcast, but you can also now you can do series of books, you can do your own photos. It doesn't have to be Instagram integrated. You can also favorite photos and have those automatically added to a book. You can just use hashtags to create a book or a series. There's lots of really great, great solutions, especially because it's automated.

I know that a lot of people are using Chatbooks as a way of documenting their story and getting it told, and I always think that getting your story told in some method is better than nothing at all, so I applaud that for sure. There are some ideas that I got from people that called in and shared their experiences and the ways they're using Chatbooks that I will probably be adding it as a supplement for some specific things and I'll share that throughout the show, how I am thinking I'm going to do that.

So let's jump in. The first person that we will be hearing from today is Merridy. She emailed me back a while ago to share how she has been using Chatbooks as part of her documenting process. I loved it so much that I begged her to record a clip for all of you so that I could share it with you. I'm thrilled that she did that, so here is Merridy.

**Meriddy:** Hi Steph. My name's Merridy. I'm an Australian but live in Hong Kong. Firstly I just wanted to say thanks so much for producing such a great podcast. It's always so informative and I always learn something new. I'm also loving being part of your courses. They're really changing the way I organize my photos and scrapbook pages.



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I wanted to let you know about one way that I'm using Chatbooks as part of my documenting process. My younger daughter is a prolific drawer and there's always pieces of paper lying around my house with her drawings, which I do love and I am enjoying watching her style change and grow and the more and more she practices.

I've been keeping quite a few of her drawings. Sometimes hanging photos of them and including them in my Project Life layouts, but I wanted another way to capture and document this for her. That's when I got the idea of using Chatbooks. My daughter has had an Instagram account for some time now, which is dedicated to posting and sharing her artwork, so I thought this could be a perfect way to document her drawings over the past couple of years.

It was so easy to set up, choose which pictures to include and I also love the little captions she writes and the types of hashtags she uses. So far I have two volumes of her drawings and a third one's almost ready to go. I just went for the smallest and the cheapest version of Chatbooks and I was really happy with how they turned out, and so is she. I think that just when she's an adult she'll love looking back at her old drawings and it also helps her recognize how much she's improved. Anyway, keep up the great work and I hope this little idea helps someone out there and adds another dimension to documenting their life. Bye. Thanks.

Steph: Thank you so much, Merridy. Thank you so much, Merridy. Couldn't you just listen to her all day? I know that I could. I love Merridy's idea so much that this is one of the ways that I'm going to be implementing it in my documenting. I have a daughter that is a prolific DIY-er as she calls it. She is constantly making things from socks and clothes and anything that can be painted or sewn or rearranged and changed, she is on it.

It's going to be fun to take some pictures, which I've been doing, but they've been here and there throughout my books. I think it's going to be really great to have one book, a Chatbook that's dedicated to her artwork. This is something that I would not take the time to document or spend the money to document in a bigger, nicer book for sure, but in a Chatbook I can totally use this. It's very affordable, inexpensive and it's easy for me to just create an album on my phone and put photos in there and then when I have enough I can upload them into Chatbooks.



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I can even get those going in the Chatbooks App and every time I take a photo just add it and add a caption about what it is. One of the great things about Chatbooks is that it will automatically add the date for you around the photo if that's what you wanted to do if you're not doing a full bleed page. All right, Michelle is also using Chatbooks to supplement her memory keeping and she has some great tips to share with us as well, so here is Michelle.

Michelle: I Steph. My name is Michelle and I'm calling to tell you about the process I use with Chatbooks. I like Chatbooks, but they're not my main story keeping method, so I kind of make specialty albums, maybe a little gift album or something for the coffee table of a trip. I was finding that having the Chatbooks account tied to my regular Instagram was a lot of work because sometimes I post things to Instagram that are completely random and yes, you can go into Chatbooks and make selections of photos, but it was more work than I was really interested in doing.

So what I did was through Instagram you can make multiple accounts and be logged into them at one time, so I created a separate private account, and when I say private I don't mean just people who know me can see it, it is completely private. A random account. I don't take requests, I don't friend anybody or follow anybody or anything like that.

As I decide which book I'm going to work on, so right now I'm working on summer of 2017, I just put pictures in there. They may or may not be in my regular Instagram feed, but this way they're in one location. I can work on them as the time goes on, so as the summer goes on I'll continue to add things. It doesn't show up in a feed that anybody sees, but that's okay. Then when I've got that album done I send that off to print.

I've done several different vacation albums this way. I worked on an album for my niece so I just collected it and put in that private feed all the pictures that I wanted to use and then edited the text that goes with them. So I could work on it without anybody really seeing it as I wanted to. It works great for me to have it separate from my regular Instagram feed because then I don't need to go in. Sometimes the pictures are so random and I don't really want a Chatbook of all this random life stuff.



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I don't need the picture of ... I don't know, just random stuff. I don't need those things in a Chatbook, so funny moments. I've taken a picture and shared it with my family, but again, it doesn't need to make it into longterm memory storage. So I like the separate Instagram feed for me. It just works. Thanks.

Steph: Thank you, Michelle. I appreciate that. I appreciate you taking the time to share that with us. Really great ideas there as well. I know for me, and I bet Michelle's the same way, she's not going to take the time or spend the money on a nicer quality photobook for summer. However, to have those memories documented in a book all about summer is super fun.

So being able to add them to a private Instagram account like she has so that it automatically pulls her text and journaling from the caption of the photo, pulls the photo down in the order that she adds, I think it's a great solution. A lot of these photos from how I understood it she's sharing on Instagram anyway on her public account and then adding them to her private account.

There's stuff in between on her public account that she doesn't want in her books is how I understood it. I think that's a great idea and a really great solution. It makes it more automated and you can actually just copy the text from one account over to the other too. Okay, my friend Sarah who can be found on Instagram at TheKindredPress, she uses Chatbooks as well to document vacations. I asked her if she would share what she does. I like her ideas as well. Here is Sarah.

Sarah: Hey Steph, it's Sarah. I was just finding a moment to sit down and listen to what info you needed before I left you a message, but my process for Chatbooks is I've been using them really just for the road trips we go on. My family likes to take road trips and I take tons and tons and tons of pictures and it just seemed like a really easy way to get them all compiled, but I also really like adding in captions, and so it was an easy way to do that and just get a finished book sent to me.

I like that I can do it while I'm on the road trip. I'll add photos from our day every day and add little captions about what happened. I'm using the custom books and I do order the hardcover because my kids love to sit down and look at them and flip through them, but it's been a really fun way to kind of memorialize our trips that we take and remember all the little details of where we ate or little road stops that we went to or things like that.



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Just a good place to have all of my photos in one place with those typed up captions and something that I can do a little bit each day as we go through our road trips so then when I get back it doesn't feel so overwhelming like I have to go back and try to remember everything we did and where we went and where we stayed and things like that. Thanks. Bye.

Steph: Thank you, Sarah. I appreciate you sharing that with us. I like the idea of using that while you're on the vacation to get the details documented and to get them down. It's easy to forget some of those details so that's a fast way to be able to do it as well. Thank you, Sarah.

One of the things to think about too is if there are things that you want to have documented but you don't necessarily like to spend more time on, for me, there are things like the holidays and birthdays and stuff like that that I would like to have documented, but I don't like to spend time doing those in my traditional Project Life format just because they're not fun to me. I don't ... But it would be really fun to put together a birthday album in Chatbooks and just do for instance, my son, birthdays one through 18 in one book.

That would be fun and I could do that and just add a photo and a little bit of information because I don't necessarily remember a lot of information from all of his birthdays. So I think that that would be a great way to be able to do some of those things that we don't want to spend as much time on, but love to have documented. Heather Winfield is another friend of mine. She's actually the cohost of my Capturing Magic Podcast, which is a pretty much all Disney, well, it is. Yeah, we talk about a few other things here and there, but it's Disney memory keeping and documenting because one of my very favorite things to document in the world are Disney vacations.

Heather is one of my cohosts over there along with Tanya and she, Heather has done a lot of Chatbooks as well. I was really thrilled that she took the time to record this little bit for us about how she uses Chatbooks. I didn't even have to beg her, so Heather, thank you so much. I didn't even have to ask you. I appreciate you just taking care of it for me and making sure that we could all glean from your experience because she has some good ideas. Here is Heather.



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Heather W: This is Heather. I'm talking about my experience with Chatbooks, which I really love as a way to document quickly. I think I've been using them for about two years and what I really like about them is that you can pull any pictures you want using specific hashtags. So I post a lot of pictures on Instagram, but I decided I wanted to make Chatbooks for my Run Disney pictures, so I have a special hashtag for when I do Run Disney events.

In Chatbooks I just have that hashtag and it just pulls those pictures right in. It automatically makes my books for me and I just go in and edit the captions and take out my billing hashtags that I have for each picture. I have a nice little book with a cover. I pick one of my pictures and use it for the cover and it's really easy and it gets sent to me and it's one of few events that I have documented because of it.

Steph: Thank you, Heather. I appreciate that so much. Heather has completed nine Run Disney Chatbooks and she has two more that she said are waiting to be printed. That's a lot. That's so great. That's a lot of races too. You can find her on Instagram at HeatherW25 and the tag that she uses for her Run Disney books is HeatherRunsDisney if you want to check those out as well.

One thing that I wanted to talk about because it's a little bit, there's a difference here. There are custom books that you can do in Chatbooks where you can upload the photos and I think that they're a little bit more expensive than doing the Instagram books. I don't know for sure, but I have heard from several people that have said that they prefer the Instagram books because it's just easier and less work.

If they upload their photos to Instagram in the order that they want them to appear in the Chatbook and they use that specific hashtag that they want in their series, then they will appear in the book in that order. Then it just happens and it's all automated. It's a lot easier. I have heard that people do prefer that.

I have another friend that is doing a hashtag series book, but she's doing it a little bit different. I wanted to share that with you as well. Her name is Heather a well. Heather Joyce, and I have known Heather for about seven or eight years I believe, a long time. We met through my old website and business that I had that was digital scrapbooking related, The Daily Digi and when I met her, Heather was a



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young, single twenty-something hipster, which she's still super hip. I would definitely say a hipster and she is the perfect example of figuring out what will work for her at different stages in her life and documenting and doing it and changing it up as things stop working for her.

She started out and wanted to do some digital scrapbooking. She works for Apple. She's tech savvy and I remember her saying that Photoshop was just a struggle for her and it wasn't a good fit for her. So she used what she knows well and she used Keynote, which Keynote is the Apple presentation software.

Heather was able to document a lot of her life in a beautiful way using Keynote. Over the years she's evolved and she's changed like I said, as she's changed. Her life and her interests have changed, technology has changed and it's just, she is such a good example of this. I'm actually talking to her about getting her on the show, but it's difficult with her schedule because now she is married, and I got to meet her husband as well once when we did a trip in California, a meetup in California, Wes.

That was super fun. They were brand new newlyweds, but it was really fun to get to meet both of them. She and her husband both work for Apple and they are balancing a very busy life and she has a new baby. She has a seven month old, so as you can see, I'm sure it's not easy to find time when she can sit down and chat with me. Hopefully we'll be able to figure it out. I'll be super flexible and whenever she wants to talk.

Now see, now that I've talked about it maybe it will get her on here because I know that all of you would love to hear just about her evolution. All of the different things that she's done, which there are a lot and a lot that have worked for her well, which is just so perfect and I'm so proud of her for doing that.

She, okay, so her baby's name is Ansel and if you wanted to see the cutest Apple hipster baby ever, be sure to scroll down through her Instagram feed, which I will give you in a minute. All the way to right after Ansel was born. It is the cutest picture ever. Yeah, be sure to do that. I will give you that in just a minute, but Heather is using a series, a hashtag series of Chatbooks to document her baby Ansel and I love how she's doing it.



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She's taking his picture in a similar location every single month and it's adorable. Then she includes all of these details in her posts about his weight and the size diapers he's in, the size of clothes, what he's doing, physically all of the different milestones. She's doing this once a month and it's under the hashtag AnselFinn. It's A-N-S-E-L, F as in Frank I-N-N, and those are N's as in Nate or Nancy at the end.

Ansel Finn, so if you want to check out that hashtag on Instagram you'll be able to see all of these cute posts that she's done and all of the information and details that she's including. This automatically goes into the Chatbook, but then she is going in and adding additional photos of him from throughout the month that maybe she didn't post on Instagram and details. It's super cute. She is doing one completed Chatbook per month of Ansel's first year of life.

Please check it out, especially if you have, if you're a new mom or you have babies, young kids, you'll want to see everything that Heather's doing. Doing it this way makes it super fast and easy for her and she's getting all of these details, so many details documented and down and printed and in books. Then Ansel's going to have his first year in books. That's pretty incredible for him.

Heather's Instagram account is TalkToHeather. It's @TalkToHeather on Instagram so be sure to check her out as well. I'm going to check that really quick just to verify that I gave ... Yes, it's TalkToHeather. Yeah, it's so cute. Anything that they did during the month with him, like they've taken some vacations and things like that, people that he's met. It's adorable and oh so cute. He's a cute baby.

Be sure to check that out. Heather, you're doing such a great job documenting your life and now documenting Ansel as well, just really hats off to you. Way to go. Standing ovation really. That's what I feel like doing, a standing ovation for Heather for just keeping at it. Even though her life has changed and her circumstances have changed, she's moved a lot, all kinds of, I mean everything that most of us use as an excuse to not get our documenting and memory keeping done, Heather's been, she's worked through and she's pushed through and figured out.

Other hobbies have come up, but she still is getting her story told. So way to go, Heather. Let's see, my Chatbook. Okay, last thing to talk about is I did get my eight by eight hardcover book back. When I do this with companies, I order, and I don't



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tell them that I'm placing an order and that I have this podcast or this website. I just do it and a lot of times I've even been known to use aliases, talk to Shari about my aliases at Persnickety Prints.

Just so that I can have the same experience that my listeners and my students would get because if I tell them that I have this and then I print with them and then they give me a free book or whatever, then they're going to naturally do a better job and I'm going to have a better experience than what my listeners might have.

So I try to do it so that it's just the same as what you would get. I will be honest with you, that I got the book and at first sight I was impressed with the book. It's a hardcover book. It's a nice texture on the cover. It reminds me of the Project Life covers, the way it feels. The inside pages, the colors were beautiful. No complaints there at all. The quality of the printing is quite good.

The pages, it's not lay flat binding. It's not the thicker pages like I like with AdoramaPix. The binding is glue binding and I learned this a long time ago, there are several different ways to bind books. You're going to get better quality, better binding with a higher priced book of course. When I did my review several years ago where I printed the same exact book with 12 different companies I believe is what it was and compared all of those, I actually ripped those books apart to look at the binding and make sure that what the companies were advertising is what you were getting.

I found that there were some well known companies that were advertising sewn bindings because that is the known to be or that is the kind of binding that is like, "library binding." Sewn bindings are supposed to last longer. There were some companies that were advertising sewn binding when actually it was staples and maybe a little bit of sewing or something like that. It was really interesting and eye-opening for me to do.

That's not what I'm saying Chatbooks is doing by any means. I don't think that they've ever said that that's what their binding is, but I'm just giving you information so that you can be educated as you make decisions on what photobooks, what companies you're going to print with. But my kids, so everyone in my family had looked at the book. Everyone was excited to see a new book and they all sat down and went through it.



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My little smarty pants 11-year-old, almost 11-year-old, 10, was very kind to let me know all of my spelling mistakes and even the fact that it's really hard to read the white text on beige background. "Mom, it hurts my eyes," so I need to figure out a way, which is good because this is good because I probably will get these pages printed somewhere else again. I did my Christmas. I did my December album that started my December Success album that started on Thanksgiving and then went all the way through New Years.

That's what I had printed, those pages. I probably will have them reprinted because I had looked at the book. All of the other members of my family had looked at the book and the pages are starting to fall out. Super sad. The first page, I opened the book the other day and it came right out. It stuck to the other books, or another page. It stuck to the, on the inside. I don't know what it's called. The cover page I think is what it is.

On the inside of the book these hardbound Chatbooks, on the eight by eight anyway have black paper that covers the inside of the cover and then there's a black page that's just kind of free-floating. The first page of the book is glued to that page. So that is intact. However, it's come out of the binding. Then the next several pages, the top part of those pages have come out. Actually it's more than half of the book.

They're already tearing out. It reminds me a lot of a notebook. You know the glued notebooks that we used to use a lot of and you would open them and the pages would kind of fall off? That's what these are starting to do. Sarah mentioned in her recording that she loves the hardcover. I'm wondering if maybe she's doing the smaller size with the hardcover and Chatbooks very well could get these printed at different places. They could have one vendor that's printing the smaller size and one vendor that's printing the bigger size and a different printer for the softcover versus the hardcover.

They really could have it outsourced to several different companies that are doing the printing for them. If Sarah's getting the bigger size then maybe I just had a bad book. I don't know. I'm hoping that the quality experience that I've had with this book is not common and is a lemon I guess basically is what I'm hoping for.



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Just so you know, on Project Life Pages there is a border of solid color that goes around each of the pages. All of that was cut off on all of these pages, which is okay. It means that the content of my pages, none of that was cut off. Just the border was cut off. None of the text, none of the graphics. That's my experience with the hardcover Chatbooks. It is \$5 more to upgrade to a hardcover book. This book I ordered on July 1st. It was printed on the 3rd, shipped on the 7th and I got it about a week after that.

I selected the regular shipping. To me that seems like a long time. There was the Fourth of July in there so there was a holiday in there, but I'm used to my orders printing within 24 to 48 hours from the companies that I typically use for my printing. I most commonly use AdoramaPix for my books and Persnickety Prints for my prints. I just get them fast and so it felt like forever. It actually felt kind of anticlimactic by the time I got it.

It's okay. If they could do anything to speed up that process it would be great. If I would have paid for faster shipping I probably would have got it a couple of days faster, but the faster shipping was quite a bit more and so for me that wasn't worth it. This book was \$38 I believe, \$35. It was a 38 page book, eight by eight hardcover. Like I said, it's \$5 to upgrade.

In the future I won't be upgrading to the hardcover because of this experience. Also, I noticed the other day when it was laying down on the counter that the top cover is bowed in the middle. The side where you open the book, opposite of the binding, that edge is bowed a little bit. So for me, these series of books that I want to start with my daughter's artwork and her projects, I'll be going with the softcover book. I'll probably go with the bigger size. I just like eight by eight.

The smaller size just seems super small to me. I did do the full bleed pages which is now an option as well. I like that. I like that I can have my whole photo or my Project Life page in there. The smaller size, putting a Project Life page on the smaller size was just way too small, but the bigger size, it's eight by eight, I used to do a lot of photobooks eight by eight for a long time. That was my standard size. I love 10 by 10 and I've been a 10 by 10 girl for a really long time.

That is by far my favorite size. That's one of the reasons that I do use photobooks as much as possible is because I do love that size. As you know you can print 10



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by 10 at Persnickety Prints, but there hasn't been 10 by 10 albums options until Becky added that to the Project Life lineup. Now there are 10 by 10 albums and page protectors, which any of you that are Digi Show listeners know, I have been begging and begging and begging someone in this industry to do the 10 by 10 protectors and albums for a long time.

Most companies saw it a huge risk. I think that they will see it as a huge seller. It will be interesting to see. Hopefully it is a good seller and they don't have to discontinue that size. It's perfect. Eight by eight's a little too small, 12 by 12 is too big. Ten by 10 is perfect. So there you have my thoughts and my experiences. Like I said, I do plan to incorporate Chatbooks into my documenting, storytelling and memory keeping, but I will probably be doing the paperback and the eight by eight version.

I think I ordered one of those. It hasn't come yet. I ordered it a couple days after this other one. It hasn't come yet, so I'll keep you posted and let you know my thoughts. If anything changes from what I've said on this show today I will be sure to let you know. I did announce this last week on Instagram that I will be doing a challenge starting mid-August about is when it will be starting. It will be a challenge, five day challenge where there will be a live stream of some kind.

I think I'm going to end up doing it in the classroom if I can. It will be a course that will be added to people's accounts and then they can have access to these videos later. We'll see. I'm kind of excited about it, but there will be a daily live stream is the goal and then a task for you to do all surrounded around getting your photos organized and backed up in the cloud.

I am excited about it because it seems to be a roadblock for a lot of people. In this challenge, the plan is right now as I've outlined it and there will be a day where we'll be talking about scanned photos as well. That's a big problem for a lot of people. So five day challenge to help you get photos organized and it will work if you have a lot of photos or even if you just are kind of stuck and don't know where to start or maybe you've got photos backed up in the cloud and somewhat organized and you still don't know where to start. This will be a good challenge for you.



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And it will be free, so yeah, you want to do it. Keep your eye out for more information to come in the newsletter, on Facebook, on Instagram and when you hear about it I would love it if you would share it with people that you know that might be struggling with photo overwhelm as well. Thank you so much for all of you that took time to comment on Instagram, reach out in email to me. I am craving interaction with you, so thank you so much for taking time to do that.

Let me know your thoughts on this show. I had a record number of people let me know that they especially appreciated the last episode about avoiding overwhelm. I'm so glad that those tips were helpful for you. Thank you for taking the time to let me know that you appreciated it. It helps me feel connected with you and it also helps me know if I'm helping you, if it's working, if you're making progress, if you're seeing success. That's all the stuff that I want to hear, so thank you for taking time to do that.

Also, if you're enjoying the show, please take time to leave a review for me in iTunes. I don't get hung up on that stuff. I don't normally ask for it, but you know, it's nice to have because I went and looked at some podcasts recently trying to decide if I wanted to listen to them and I looked at reviews. So I think having some more up to date, current stuff in there review-wise would be helpful. Thank you so much for being here and sharing part of your day with me today. I really appreciate it. I appreciate you taking time to spend some time with me. We will see you next time on Modern Photo Solutions.