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To: Julie L. Sigall  
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

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From: Melissa Johnson

Comment:

My husband and I are avid scrapbookers. We are working hard to preserve our families' old photographs, by getting them into safe environments in our albums. We have MANY photographs that are at least 40 years old, if not older, that we would like to make copies from. However, we cannot because we have no way of tracking down the original photographer or studio. In most cases, our photos do not have ANY information on them indicating who took them, and our family members who would know either don't remember or are not around anymore. And for the ones who DO have any info on them, it's so outdated that the businesses are no longer around, and we have no way of figuring out who to contact next.

We are not looking to sell these copies to make money - no one beyond our families would be interested. We just want to be able to make quality copies that will last, and in some cases, will restore the quality that the original has lost (due to fading, damage, etc). Plus we would like to make backup copies to keep in case the original is lost, and also to use in our scrapbooks - we would like to be able to use the photos creatively but are not about to cut an original.

If photographers want to retain the copyright on their work (which I understand, because otherwise they cannot make a living), they should be required to keep contact information up-to-date and accessible. And I think there should be some sort of time limit. I do believe that the SUBJECT of the picture should have some say in how they use their own photograph. For instance, my kindergarten picture from 1972 is faded...I have no idea how to contact the studio. Why do I have to risk losing the photograph completely to fading? I'm not trying to rob anyone, I just want to make a better, improved copy for my own memories.

The copyright laws need to either be changed or clarified -something needs to be done to make it easier for everyone involved.