



Photo by Angelique Chielli

## **Tina Martin**

President Tina Martin Personal Histories

Works in: Upper Nyack

Lives in: Upper Nyack

**You said everyone has a ‘library of stories to tell’ regarding themselves and people in their lives. Why is it important to you for people to put these stories into personal histories?**

“A person’s life story is one of their most prized possessions. I founded my company because of my conviction that everyone has a unique and fascinating story worth preserving. As families live farther a part from one another and as their lives get more hectic, there is less time to share the stories of the past that have shaped their heritage. I believe that life experiences are like a library of rare books. Once that

library is gone, it is gone forever. By working with clients to preserve their stories in audio or video recording or as a written biography, I help them insure that the insights, adventures, lessons and hopes of their lifetime will be kept alive for future generations.”

**How has your background in literary research and as an arts administrator and curator affected how you approach your current work?**

“My years of experience working on biographies have helped me become an empathetic and skilled interviewer, often drawing from my clients, stories they have never told and memories they have forgotten. I am able to utilize my experience as a writer, editor, artist, curator and researcher, to take pictures, video and text from raw interview material and create a cohesive interesting narrative that is beautifully designed and presented as a family treasure.

“To grow this business I have also drawn deeply on skills that I needed to develop as a parent and the manager of the complexities of family life — resourcefulness, resilience and flexibility.

**You said many of your clients come to you to create a personal history for an ill family member or to memorialize someone who has passed away. Did battling and overcoming breast cancer help you become a better interviewer and have a broader understanding of clients? If so, how?**

“A year and half after starting my business, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My journey to recovery required me to close my business. Since my work had often taken me to bedsides and hospital rooms, I was not entering completely unfamiliar territory. However, this time I was experiencing firsthand aspects of my clients’ lives that I had only imagined before. What I realized is that the experience of telling one’s story can have as powerful an impact on individuals and their family as the story itself. As a result, my interviews now serve not only as a means to create a beautiful product, but are designed to be a satisfying process in themselves. After a year hiatus, I re-opened my business with a renewed commitment.”

**If someone were to write a personal history about you, what pivotal moment in your life thus far would you want them to pin point and why?**

“Rather than one pivotal experience, I believe most people have many. What makes people interesting is how these experiences bump up against one another to form the whole. Perhaps one of my daughters will interview me in 30 years and I’ll figure it out.”