

November 21, 2001

Dear Walt, Cindy, Deb and Laura,

I have a suggestion for a Christmas present for Mom and Dad.

I am having their slide collection scanned. There are a few over 400 of them. Once scanned, the digital images will be copied to CDs. All 400 of them will fit on from 1-3 CDs. The reason I am doing this is that Microsoft recently came out with a device that allows you to show your digital photos on TV. It is called the TV Photo Viewer (see attached article), and it cost \$130. My suggestion is that you go in on one for Mom and Dad. The list price is \$159, but I got one for myself from Buy.com for \$130.

The viewer is about the size of a paperback book, and it has a slot where you insert 3½ floppies. Each floppy holds up to 40 pictures. Microsoft recommends that you limit the number of pictures to 20, but reviews I've read say that there seems to be no loss in picture quality with 40. The device comes with a remote control, so you can sit back in your easy chair and click through the pictures. You can go forward, backward, or set it to show a picture every few seconds. I've tested it, and it does a good job. The only problem is that since the device is on a short cord, you have to get up to insert new diskettes. Mine sits on top of my TV.

There are other benefits of having the slides scanned. One is that they are then preserved forever. I am finding that some of the slides are already in pretty bad shape.

Another is that making copies is easy and cheap. I am going to send complete sets to each of you. If you want to show them on your TV, there are a couple of ways to do it. One is to buy your own TV Photo Viewer. It comes with software to create your own "albums", which are the diskettes. It even allows you to add a caption to the picture. It also comes with a program for editing pictures. Its features include cropping, changing colors, and flipping (in case the slide was scanned the wrong way).

There is another way to show the pictures on your TV. Photoworks.com offers "PhotoDVD", where you upload pictures to their website and create an album. They then send you your pictures on DVD. You can put up to 200 on a DVD. The price is \$25 for the first 50 pictures, and 10 cents for each additional, so a 200-picture DVD would cost \$40. Two problems here. One is that you will need a DVD player. The other is that unless you have a high-speed Internet connection, uploading the pictures and building your album could go really slow.

I suspect that other ways of showing digital pictures on TV will come along. I am surprised that Microsoft's TV Photo Viewer uses diskettes rather than CDs. If there is interest, I bet someone will come up with one that does. One CD would probably hold about 400 pictures.

Another benefit of scanning the pictures is that you can get prints from the digital images. I am having them scanned at a fairly high resolution, so you will be able to enlarge them with minimal loss of sharpness. And if you have decent image editing software, you can play

around with them. The best is Adobe PhotoShop, but it costs about \$700. Less expensive software is available.

I am having the slides scanned by Alan Jansen, an old friend of mine here in Lansing who is retired and has money to spend on gadgets. He has a \$900 photo scanner and Adobe PhotoShop. The scanner scans both slides and negatives. He is charging me 50 cents a slide. We have talked about scanning slide collections as a business, but at this point it is just talk. We will see how this project goes. Once you get your CDs and you see a picture you really like that needs fixing - dust spots, scratches, etc. - you could send it to Alan. He'll be happy to fix it for a fee.

I will send you your CDs in about 2 weeks.

Steve