

# W2W

WOMAN TO WOMAN

Real Estate  
Rock Star

*Linda  
Skolnick*





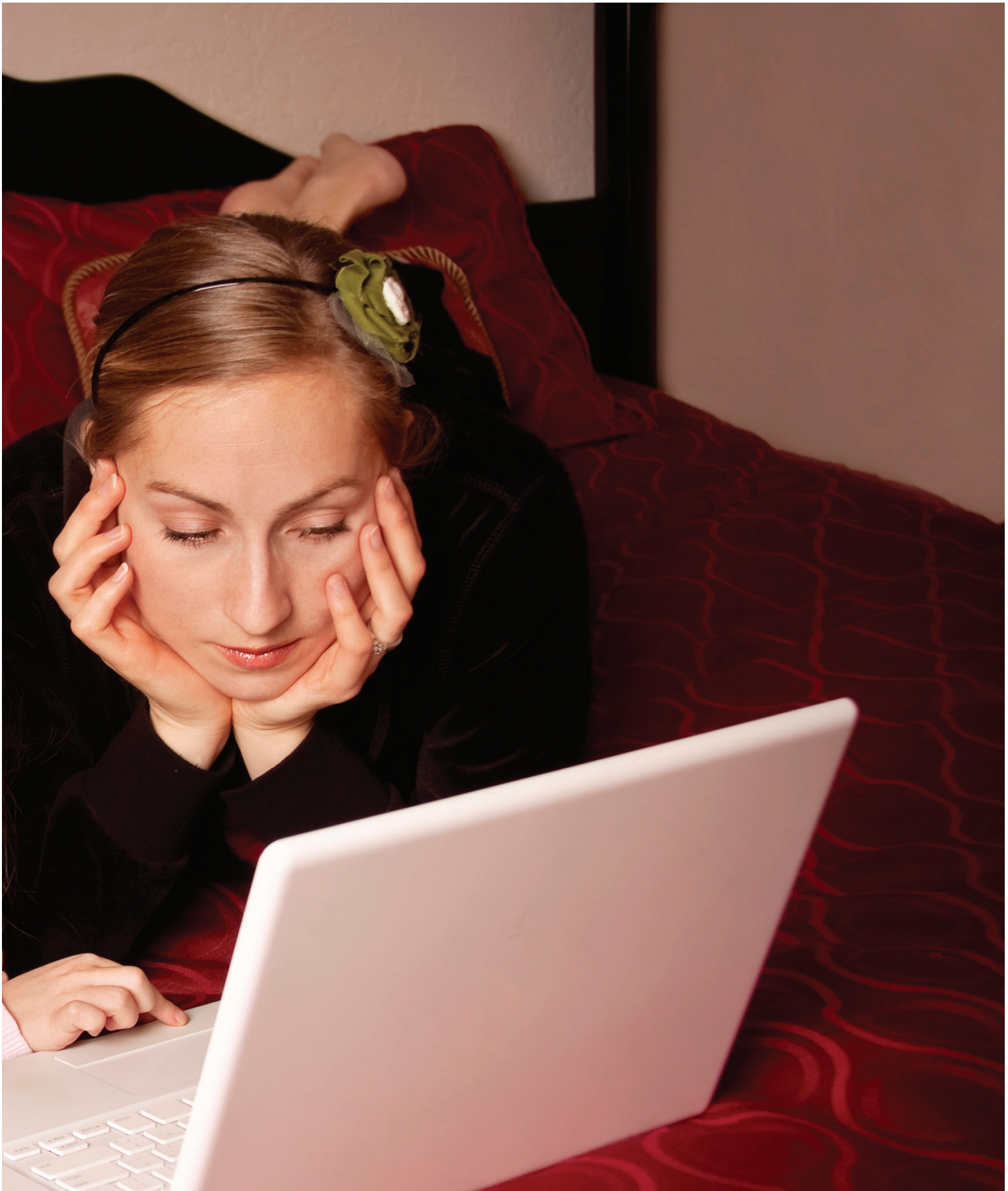
# More than money. More than an estate. Even more, than love.

This can be the single most important legacy you will leave.

Story by Susan Heller









I hadn't seen her in twenty-five years, maybe longer. We grew up together in a small town, pacing each other through kindergarten into middle school and junior high school; through the times when you are gathering yourself into a person so the people who populate your young life become inextricably woven, for good or for ill, into the fabric of you. We weren't close friends but we shared history. When I was told she was dying, a series of still lifes played across my mind's eye – all in black and white because my memories of being children together were sketchy, but the square-shaped flutter-edged photographs from that era were crystal clear in my head. I reached out and we reconnected, talking by phone several times a

week. Marilyn knew the time-frame was not a long one but she kept seeking ways to prolong it – she had a child late in life, he was only six. As a film and video director I think in pictures, complete with sound track and special FX. Video cameras were teetering on the technology brink of cell phone-cinema, but the actual coding of that reality was a few years out. "What if," I asked her, "what if, you rented a video camera for a couple of days? You could record VHS messages for him, for his 7th, 13th 18th birthdays. You could tell him that every time he saw a SuperLine Mack truck, that was you, letting him know how much you love him... you could congratulate him when he graduated college, got married, had his own child... he would know the sound



of your voice and see the love in your eyes... you could still be a part of his life.”

**The Why of It**

That was then, this is now and we all have superior video technology literally in the palm of our hand. So, what if... what if, you created a multiplicity of videos for the people you love, just the way you

in history, you can. You can keep an ongoing chronicle of what you're proud of to date, you can offer support, advice, encouragement and connection because most of us don't know in advance, the day of our departure. And, if you live a full, long life – you can either have a party and show everybody what you were wearing and how goofy your hair styles were along the way, use the compilation to embarrass kids at a wedding decades in the future, or, simply hit the Delete button.

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create a will because, without being maudlin about it, stuff happens. Accidents at home take 54,500 people in the U.S. annually, 22,631 die from falls. A surprising 40,059 people are accidentally poisoned every year. In the U.S., 46,844 of us die in traffic accidents each year which translates to one American every 11 minutes. Every day in this country, 28 people do not make it home, because they were killed by a drunk driver.\* I don't mean to be a Debbie Downer, quite the opposite actually. This is something you should do, because for the first time

\* Sources: National Vital Statistics Report, 2011, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, 2010, itsMylife.com

**The How of It**

The videos you create can be kept in the cloud on the kind of secure server that many people are familiar with like box.net or Dropbox. However, the sheer magnitude of video being generated by the entertainment industry and other corporate entities these days has en-









gendered a burgeoning market that provides long-term storage for digital preservation that addresses the issues of data availability, portability and durability. Companies like EVault® LTS2 will safeguard your visuals, or Cintrex AV, will also provide media conversion so as time and technology move on - your archived content will be available in a format others, however far down the road, can view. If you change servers or decide to add additional companies to safeguard your material, all you have to do is update that information with the attorney or firm that holds your will and the passwords for each account.

### **The Mushy Part**

How do you begin? Who do you include? How do you do this without feeling ridiculous? In terms of beginning, you might make a list of the people you want to be able to talk to if something untoward happens and you are no longer here. It may feel weird, many people are so uncomfortable about the existential prospect of their own exit that they can't even bring themselves to write a will. But this really needs to be about the others in your life, the ones who need you and who love you. Pondering your own death may be uncomfortable but the solace, the support, the sheer magnitude of the impact you could have as a result of this kind of legacy are immeasurable.

In terms of inclusion, I would make a case for close-held friends as well as family. We can't always look people in the eye and tell them how much we love them or show them how profoundly they moved us, Americans are kind of shy that way. Oh, we bluff and bluster and go around making a lot of noise, but the quiet bits and deep emotion kind of stuff, scares us. I've created outlines and general scripting for folks, and even coached/directed them through the process. It can be grounding to have another person help craft what people may someday see; sometimes it's easier to respond to questions, almost in interview style though there are also ways to create messages for people where you are not "on camera" the whole time. Some messages from the Great Beyond are serious and other times the hilarity of it all strikes people and the gift of laughter becomes a family treasure to be passed on to kids, grandkids and great grandchildren who are not yet born.

The generations that follow will have the extraordinary experience of seeing, and hearing, and feeling, who you were, while you were here... on Planet Earth. If that idea spooks you, remember, you can always, as each milestone passes with you still kicking, hit the Delete key.

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