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Sharing a Person's Life with Future Generations

The Essential Steps



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It Caught Your Eye

Imagine discovering a plaque featuring a person you never knew. One minute you're strolling along at your usual pace, and the next minute you're slowing down for a closer look. It's pulling you in for some reason, and you're finding it difficult to ignore.

You usually don't give these things a second thought, because they tend to be dry and boring, but this one is different. There's something about the design, the color, or maybe even the scene that's portrayed. It's just so captivating. Part of you wants to move on, but another part of you just can't let go, so you move in for a closer look.

The person and the scene are practically reaching out to you. You take it all in for a moment, almost getting lost in the details. Then you realize the very subtle contoured shape, and begin to gently examine its texture. Little features that would have gone unnoticed before are now flowing under your fingers as your hand moves across the surface. This is unlike anything you have ever seen.

From the inscription, you learn how much this person meant to so many people. Countless lives were touched as a result of the life they led. Words like admired, respected, and deeply loved are filling your thoughts. You appreciate the difference this person made. Then you realize your own world has now been touched by theirs.



Walking away slowly, you're in awe of what just took place. Only moments ago, this was a person you knew nothing about. A complete stranger. But now you understand the love, admiration and respect that must have been felt by those who arranged for this plaque to be where it is today – those who wanted to share this person's life with you. You are thankful.

This is what it means to Share a Person's Life with Future Generations.

By giving people a glimpse into the life of a person you knew so well, and helping them discover how much of an impact this person had on the world they now enjoy, you are creating what will be very special moments for countless people in the future. They are going to appreciate what you share.



*“I have a special person in mind,
but I’ve never done this before.”
Where would I even begin?
What’s involved?*

These are very common questions. After all, how do you go from the idea stage to a plaque as beautiful as the examples you’re seeing? The answers are simpler than you think.

Where would I even begin?

The most important place to begin is with these two key ingredients:

1. An outstanding designer - Someone who is not only patient, helpful, and genuinely happy to be working with you, but also highly skilled at illustrating your ideas.
2. This guide - Because it makes your part of this process so incredibly simple and straightforward. It’s like having the ultimate checklist.

What’s Involved?

Your Ideas. Our Designers. Great Plaques.™

➤ Your Ideas.

The foundation of everything we do begins with your ideas. They form our starting point, and it doesn’t matter how much or how little you have available. Just send them, and our Design Team will take it from there.



➤ Our Designers.

This is the fun part. Our designers will combine your ideas with their artistic talent to create a design so attractive it draws people in for a closer look. Their secret: Making sure each element is balanced and proportioned, working in harmony with the others.

➤ Great Plaques.

The end result of this process is nothing less than a great plaque that reveals the story you originally envisioned. For some people, it will even be breathtaking.





Essential Steps to Sharing a Person's Life With Future Generations

Choosing Your Own Path



If you are the type of person who wants to simply turn this over to a competent designer and let them begin creating, then stop right here, skip the steps that follow, and contact our Design Team immediately. They'll ask all the right questions and guide you every step of the way.

If, however, you are the type of person who enjoys discovering what it takes to make a great plaque, then keep reading. This guide is packed with solid advice, and your plaque will be better as a result.



The Steps

We consider the following steps to be essential when sharing a person's life with future generations. They aren't perfect, and they won't cover every single detail you may be facing, but they will assist you in planning and completing your project.

Our hope is that they will make you aware of at least a few details you may have otherwise overlooked. Read through them completely so you will know what to expect, then follow them in sequence during your project.

- Having Peace of Mind
- A Successful Event
- Getting Your Thoughts on Paper
- Finding the Perfect Photograph
- Stunning Photo Relief™ Images
- Personalizing Your Inscription
- The Right Mounting Location
- Balancing Your Plaque With Your Mounting Area
- Balancing Your Inscription With Your Plaque
- Flawless Inscriptions
- Remembering Every Detail
- Confirming Your Order
- Appendix: Questions & Answers
- A Final Word

An Essential Step for Having Peace of Mind



Your own peace of mind is critical to a successful project. With it, you will enjoy a standard production time (and its lower cost), your project will go smoothly, and you will be pleasantly surprised when viewing your new plaque for the very first time. Without peace of mind, well, let's just say some things may not turn out as you expect. Here is how you can set the stage for your own peace of mind...

Start Early

Starting early is the best "Peace of Mind" advice we can give you, because it reduces the chances of mistakes and allows enough time for all of the various pieces of your project to come together.

You should allow for design time prior to approving a design, then 4-5 weeks for regular production, plus a few days for transit time. Rush production is available if necessary, but our Design Team will help you plan appropriately to avoid any such extra expenses.

Event Dates – Set Them After Your Plaque Arrives

Delays in production and shipping are rare, but they do happen, so we recommend waiting until after your plaque arrives before setting dates for ceremonies, dedications or other events. Without such deadlines, something as simple as a weather delay or mis-routed package won't have any effect on your event – or disrupt your peace of mind.

Dates in the Inscription - Use Only the Month and Year

The safest way to include your ceremony date in the inscription is by listing only the month and year. For example, consider using "July 2012" instead of "July 15, 2012".

Why This is Essential

Taking this essential step will set the stage for your project to proceed with no deadlines, no pressure, and no anxiety about whether it will be finished on time. In other words, it is essential to your own peace of mind.



An Essential Step for A Successful Event

If circumstances will not allow you to wait until after your plaque arrives before setting an event date, then you can still have a successful event with some appropriate planning...

Notify Your Designer – During Your FIRST Contact

When your designer knows your event date (and the date you must receive your plaque) they will help you plan accordingly. For example, they can get a layout and quote to you quickly, give you an ordering deadline that allows enough time for production, compare the cost of rush production to upgraded shipping so you can decide which is best, etc.

Many more options are usually available at this stage than there are at later stages - options that can keep your overall cost as low as possible – so be sure your designer knows your event date during your very FIRST contact.

Allow for a 1-2 Week Safety Margin

Your designer will be able to estimate your plaque's arrival, but this estimate does not factor in delays of any kind. Therefore, a safety margin of 1-2 weeks is ideal between their estimated delivery and your event. The wider your margin, the better chance you have of receiving your plaque prior to the event.

Why This is Essential

If your designer is not aware of your event date during your first contact, your plaque may not arrive in time. For your own peace of mind, and the success of your event, make sure this information is a part of your initial project details.



An Essential Step for Getting Your Thoughts on Paper

If the inspiration for your plaque inscription comes naturally to you, then by all means just sit down and begin putting your thoughts in writing. If it's a challenge, however, and you seem to be drawing a blank, relax. You just need to get a few thoughts on paper...

Start a List

Start a list of ideas, and keep it with you at all times. Your mind will come up with things right out of the blue, so write down every single thought you have. Skip nothing. This will be the basis of your plaque inscription, but your notes do not need to be perfect. They're just the raw ingredients. Don't even try to write a formal inscription yet. Your mind needs time to digest this information. For now, be confident that it will all make sense when it needs to.

If someone had made notes about the Ronnie Lane Gaspard plaque on the cover, they may have included something like this:

- Born and raised in Crowley.
- We traveled quite a bit.
- Business sometimes took him overseas.
- Lived in Texas for 10 years.
- Couldn't believe how many sympathy cards.
- Etc.



Why This is Essential

Everything you need to know about this person is already in your mind. It may not be flowing into words at this very moment, but it will once you begin thinking about it more often. The human brain has a way of working on such things behind the scenes, when you aren't even aware of it.

Why Now

In the next steps, you will be finding the perfect photograph and thinking about other inscription elements. By starting your list now, you'll be able to write down thoughts as they occur to you.

An Essential Step for Finding the Perfect Photograph



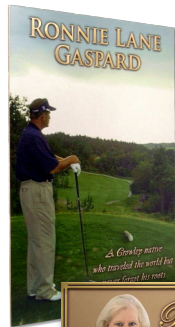
Although it will be nice if you already have a perfect photograph, there are plenty of options available if you are having difficulty finding one.

Photographs of Your Person

If you are honoring a living person, the best way to get a perfect photograph of them is to have one taken. If this isn't possible, then begin an in-depth search. Besides your own photo collection, contact family, friends, co-workers, etc. Explain your goal, and ask them what they may have. You might be surprised.

Some of the best photos are candid shots that reveal a little bit of their character. Therefore, consider any good photograph of the person, regardless of what else is in the scene or the angle from which it was taken. Our skilled designers are able to isolate people and use them separately, or place them in other scenes entirely.

Photographs of a Scene (optional)



Scenes add substantial depth and insight to the story you are sharing, especially when they show a person's interests or accomplishments in life. They are not absolutely necessary, however. The Pamela J. Smoak plaque, for example, works extremely well without a scene at all.



Unless you already have a photo of your person in a great scene, one will need to be created by carefully combining separate photographs. This opens up all kinds of possibilities with the scene photograph, including taking your own, having one taken, finding it in someone's collection, or using a stock image.

Why This is Essential

While photographs are not required on plaques, they do offer viewers a strong visual connection with the subject and his or her interests or accomplishments in life. They add tremendous depth to the story you are sharing.

An Essential Step for Stunning Photo Relief™ Images

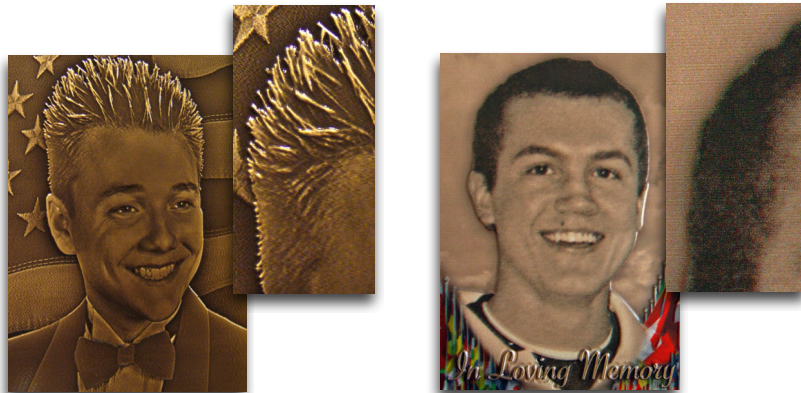
The quality of a Photo Relief™ image machined into your plaque is based entirely on the quality of your original photograph. For stunning Photo Relief™ images that draw people in for a closer look, use the highest quality image available.

Original Photos



The photo on the left was submitted as an extremely high resolution digital image file with perfect lighting, high contrast, and crisp focus. The photo on the right is a scanned and enlarged section of a printed image. It has lower resolution and lacks focus and detail.

Finished Plaques

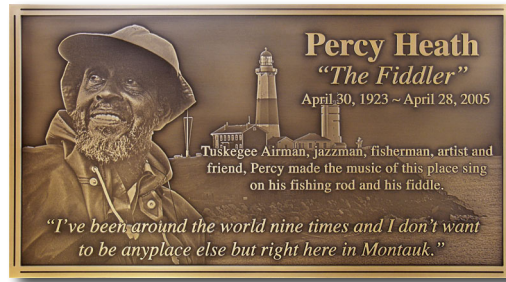


As expected, the Photo Relief™ sculptures have significant differences. The left plaque is crisp and detailed while the right has less contour and definition (just like the original photos). Color differences are due to an oxidized finish (left) vs. painted finish (right).

Why This is Essential

People must be drawn in for a closer look in order for you to begin the process of sharing a person's life. Although any photograph can be used on a plaque, high-quality photographs contribute greatly to how stunning your plaque will be, and how much attention it will get as a result.

An Essential Step for Personalizing Your Inscription



People love stories about other people, so the more personal and in-depth a plaque can be, the more interest it will create.

Ideas for Personalizing Your Inscription

- Scripture verses, especially this person's favorite.
- Quotations from this person or someone they admired.
- Their lifelong work on missions, projects or causes,
- Activities they loved to do, a place they liked to visit, or hobbies they enjoyed.
- Some of the best inscriptions have simply described a person's character.
- Friends and family members are a great source of ideas. Ask them what they remember most about this person.

Concentrate on the content for now, not on how it will be sized or placed.

How Much to Include

Great inscriptions convey just the right amount of full, rich content, and that amount varies from plaque to plaque. If you need a second opinion in this area, your designer should be able to offer some words of advice.

Why This is Essential

Sharing someone's life is an extremely personal expression. It's a small glimpse into their world, and your hope is for people to discover and remember what you consider to be their most endearing qualities.



An Essential Step for The Perfect Mounting Location

There are several factors you should take into consideration when determining the perfect mounting location for your plaque...

Space Available

The most visually pleasing settings have enough open mounting space for plaques to fit comfortably in the size you are considering.

Visibility and Physical Access

Your plaque should be located where it gets the visibility you desire and is able to be read from the distance where most people will be viewing it. This may require a visit to the site in order to make note of the best locations.

Consider whether you would like the general public to have full access to your plaque, including the ability to stand close and even touch the surface, or whether you prefer to make it visible yet inaccessible. Natural barriers such as plants or a bordered walkway may be helpful if you prefer to keep people a few feet away.

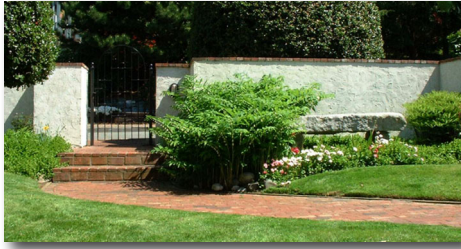
If vandalism is a problem, consider deterrents like hedges of thorn-bearing bushes, or extreme measures such as an enclosed display of some kind.

Exposure to the Elements

Limiting your plaque's exposure to weather, roof drainage, fountain overspray, etc. will prolong the life of its finish. Also, maintenance personnel should be advised that pressure washing of any kind can cause damage.

Why This is Essential

The perfect mounting location will make your plaque available to all who want to discover the story you have to share, yet protect it from a variety of things that may distract from this story. All this requires is some advance thought and planning.



An Essential Step for Balancing Your Plaque With Your Mounting Area

Balancing your plaque size to your mounting area will significantly improve the overall appearance of your setting. This can be as simple as orienting it horizontally or vertically, then adjusting the overall size to fit comfortably within the available space.

Measurements Your Designer Will Use to Achieve Balance

Horizontal and vertical measurements of your mounting area (the width left to right, and the height top to bottom) are all a skilled designer needs. Supplying a photograph such as the one above is optional, but will allow for even closer balance.

Comparisons



Out of proportion to setting.



Balanced with setting.



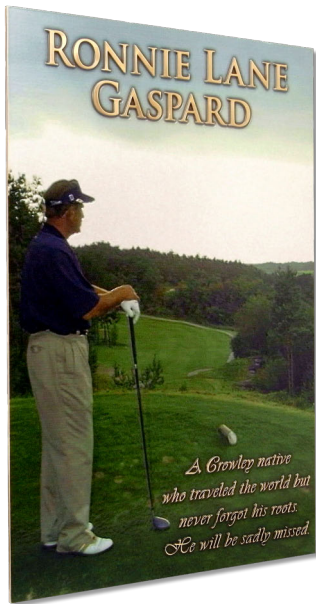
Too large for column.



Balanced with column.

Why This is Essential

When your plaque is a natural fit to its mounting space, your setting will be in balance, pleasing, and inviting to all who discover it.



An Essential Step for Balancing Your Inscription With Your Plaque

Balancing your inscription with the shape and size of your plaque follows the same principles as the previous step, balancing your plaque with your mounting area. Combined, they are the secret to outstanding plaque settings that invite people in for a closer look.

Inscription Content

Even though your designer is responsible for balancing your inscription, fitting the inscription contents into this space depends on the quantity of information you provide. Too little information may make for a stark plaque, while too much may result in a cramped, overwhelming presentation that nobody will want to read.

Think about the amount of inscription contents you would like to include, compare them to sample plaques, and consider asking your designer for their advice as well. There is an appropriate quantity for every plaque, and they will help you find it.

Why This is Essential

Achieving proper balance requires a skilled designer who is personally driven to reach this goal, as well as an appropriate amount of inscription content. When both of these factors are present, your plaque will be pleasing to the eye, easy to read, and inviting to those who discover it.

An Essential Step for Flawless Inscriptions

A flawless inscription will make your day when it arrives. You will finally get to see and touch your new plaque, and you will immediately experience a sense of accomplishment for a job well done. This will only be possible by diligently proofing your inscription.

Proofing

Keep errors at bay by proofing your inscription from top to bottom, and double-checking all names, dates and numbers.

When finished, reverse the process and work your way through your entire inscription backwards, very slowly, word-by-word. The key is to see each word individually, which causes errors to become obvious.

If your plaque contains individual names of people who can be contacted easily, you may also consider getting signed approval from every one of them. When a person is asked to approve the spelling of their own name, you can be almost certain they will scrutinize it thoroughly.

If you still need reassurance, have a second person proof it also.

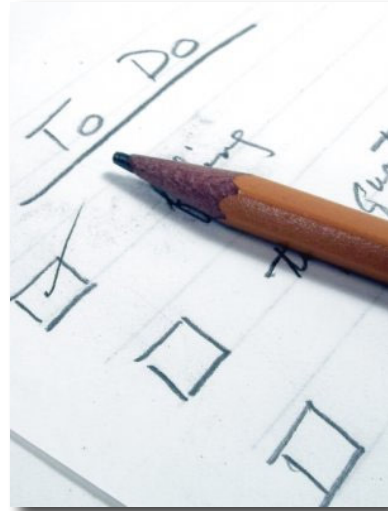


Why This is Essential

If you receive your finished plaque and notice an error, it will ruin your entire day. Spending the necessary time to find mistakes now, before it goes into production, is going to make your day when it arrives with a flawless inscription.

An Essential Step for Remembering Every Detail

This is a simple way to avoid that nagging feeling that always seems to crop up after placing your order - that you forgot one little detail.



Ordering Checklist

Your layout and quote will include an ordering checklist for you to follow when placing your order. It is designed with first-time buyers in mind, to make sure every single detail is taken into consideration.

Print it out and literally check off each step as you complete it. If you have additional details to remember, then add them wherever appropriate.

Special Instructions



Remembering every detail also means following any instructions provided by your designer, such as placing a deadline-specific order by a certain date. Because your delivery date hinges almost entirely on that order date, write it on your checklist and enter it in your calendar, as well.

Why This is Essential

Following a checklist ensures that every item on the list will receive your full attention when necessary. It also removes that nagging feeling that some little detail is being overlooked.

An Essential Step for Confirming Your Order



This step is already listed on the ordering checklist that accompanies your layout and quote. However, it is so important that we listed it here to make sure you are aware of it.

Confirm Your Order

Even though the vast majority of e-mail, faxes and US Mail get delivered as expected, there is an unfortunate reality that none of these systems work 100% of the time. Therefore, plan ahead by always following up on the orders you place. Just call or e-mail your designer and ask this question:

"Did you receive my order?"

Specifically ask for verification that it arrived, and make sure you receive a response.

Why This is Essential

Confirming your order ensures it is in production and scheduled for delivery when you need it. This is the only way to discover an order that never got placed, and prevent the delays that would occur as a result.

Smile...
You're Going to
Love this Plaque!



Sharing a person's life with future generations can be a very personal, emotional and even rewarding experience. Therefore, we want to do everything possible to make sure your plaque is planned, designed, manufactured and delivered exactly as you intend it to be. Because when it's finished, and you stand back to take it all in, we want you to smile.

That's why we consider these steps to be absolutely essential. If you have questions or comments about them or any aspect of your project, please contact our Design Team today. We're here to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Bart H. Baker
Founder & President



P.S. There is an Appendix following this page, and it answers some of the more detailed questions you likely have about memorial plaques. Take a look, and be sure to call if you have additional questions.

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Your Ideas. Our Designers. Great Plaques.™

Appendix: Questions & Answers

When you see a memorial plaque for the first time, your natural reaction is to pause and study the details. There really is something captivating about them, something that draws you in for a closer look. More often than not, curiosity is what follows. The conversation usually goes something like this...

How are these plaques made?

There are many plaque types, and each one is made differently. Engraved plaques, for example, are made with an industrial CNC milling machine. Cast plaques are formed by pouring molten metal into a mold. The recessed areas of Etched plaques are created with an acid spray. Anodizing and other techniques are used on other plaque types.



Lettering on all plaques can be raised or recessed, and photographs are represented in many different forms. Your designer will recommend what is best for your specific needs and budget.

Can they be used outside, and how are they mounted?

Yes, they can be outside, and there is a mounting method for almost any surface. There are even concealed mounting methods, so no hardware is visible from the front.

What are they made of, and how much do they weigh?

Gold-colored plaques are available in bronze, brass, muntz and copper. Silver-colored plaques are available in aluminum, stainless steel and zinc. Weight varies from material to material, as this example illustrates:



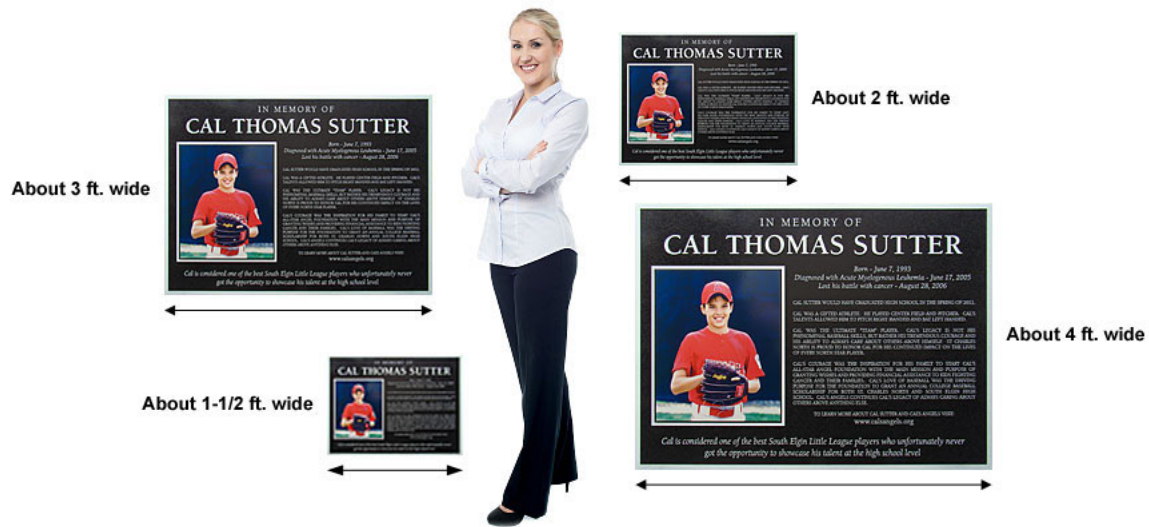
22"x12" Bronze: 22 lbs.



22"x12" Aluminum: 8 lbs.

What size do I need?

The right plaque size depends on the amount of mounting space you have available (and its proportions), the contents of your inscription, and even your own personal preference. Therefore, it's best to choose a basic width as a general starting point (see below), then let other factors dictate the exact dimensions.



If you're the type of person who wants to be more precise, however, then make mock-ups of various plaque shapes using paper, cardboard or whatever you have on hand. Make various sizes and hang them in your mounting space, then stand back for a "big picture" look. This will help you quickly narrow down the best size.

I have a special person in mind. What would I need to get started?



Surprisingly, not as much as you think. The basic ingredients are only an inscription and your photos. As for the general design, just make note of any plaque examples you like, then call our Design Team. They will be glad to get your design started, and model it after any existing designs you point out.

How does the ordering process work?

It's very straightforward. Our Design Team will design your plaque based on your preferences. At no charge or obligation, a scaled layout and quote is then sent for your approval. Ordering is as simple as following the included checklist.



How much do they cost?

Your exact cost will be based on the size of your plaque, as well as its type, material, finish, etc. There are quite a few details involved, resulting in thousands of possible combinations – far too many to list here. Let's simplify things...

If you want the exposed areas of your plaque to be gold (the tops of lettering and borders, usually), follow the gold row left to right for average price ranges at four sample sizes. Note: We can make ANY size, not just the ones shown.

If you want the exposed areas of your plaque to be silver, follow the silver row.

Sample Sizes →	About 1-1/2 ft. wide e.g. 18" x 10"	About 2 ft. wide e.g. 24" x 12"	About 3 ft. wide e.g. 36" x 24"	About 4 ft. wide e.g. 48" x 30"
Ave. Gold Metal Plaque (bronze, brass, etc.)	\$581-995 or more	\$989-1795 or more	\$2516-4995 or more	\$4194-8295 or more
Ave. Silver Metal Plaque (aluminum, zinc, etc.)	\$317-658 or more	\$498-1054 or more	\$1420-3162 or more	\$2367-5269 or more
Turnaround Time →	As little as 5 working days with rush production, or just a few weeks for standard production. Plaques with sculptures or other complex graphics could take up to 8 weeks or more. Transit time is additional, as is the time required to approve special artwork (if required).			

I hesitate to call, because I don't want a salesperson pressuring me.

You came to the right place, because we don't pressure people. Our only focus is on designing great plaques to help you share a person's life with future generations. That's it. The buying decision is up to you, and it always will be.

I've never done this before. It seems overwhelming. Will you help me?

Feeling overwhelmed is very common if you have never done this before. We understand. That's why this guide is here to point you in the right direction. And yes, we are here to help, as well. Just ask.

A Final Word... Before Sharing a Person's Life



Every Person is Different

Sharing a person's life with future generations is one of the most thoughtful and caring things you can possibly do. For decades to come, your efforts today are going to help countless people not only discover this person, but truly understand just how much they meant to you and so many others.

For some people, this is a joyous celebration of a person's life. It is a wonderful occasion that brings people together so they can look back fondly on a life well-lived. If you find yourself in this situation, then you will truly enjoy creating what so many people are going to discover in the coming years.

If you find yourself in an entirely different situation, however, where you were very close to a person who recently passed, this may be an extremely difficult subject to even discuss. Emotions may get in the way. Tears may show up when you least expect them. At some point, you may even need to put this whole idea on hold until you are ready to pick it back up again.

We Understand

Because we understand, each member of our Design Team is committed to helping you every step of the way, remaining sensitive to your specific situation, and working at whatever pace is most comfortable for you.



There are no salespeople here to pressure you, no commissions, and no quotas to meet. We're simply a group of designers with a passion for great designs that help you share a person's life with future generations.