Organizing your Photos

Palm Creek Computer Club
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How to Organize Pictures – from article by Nasim Mansurov

- This is NOT a guide for serious photographers with large catalogs of photographs

- During the last 10 years, digital cameras have gotten so popular, that they made their way into our phones and other electronic devices as well. With such a wide array of sources where pictures come from, how do we keep them organized?

- Most people do not even bother organizing pictures. They take pictures, leave them on their cameras and mobile devices and use them when needed to share a picture via Facebook or to send the latest pic to their friends and family. As a result, many pictures get lost and memories are gone forever. So, what should you do to keep your pictures organized and saved?
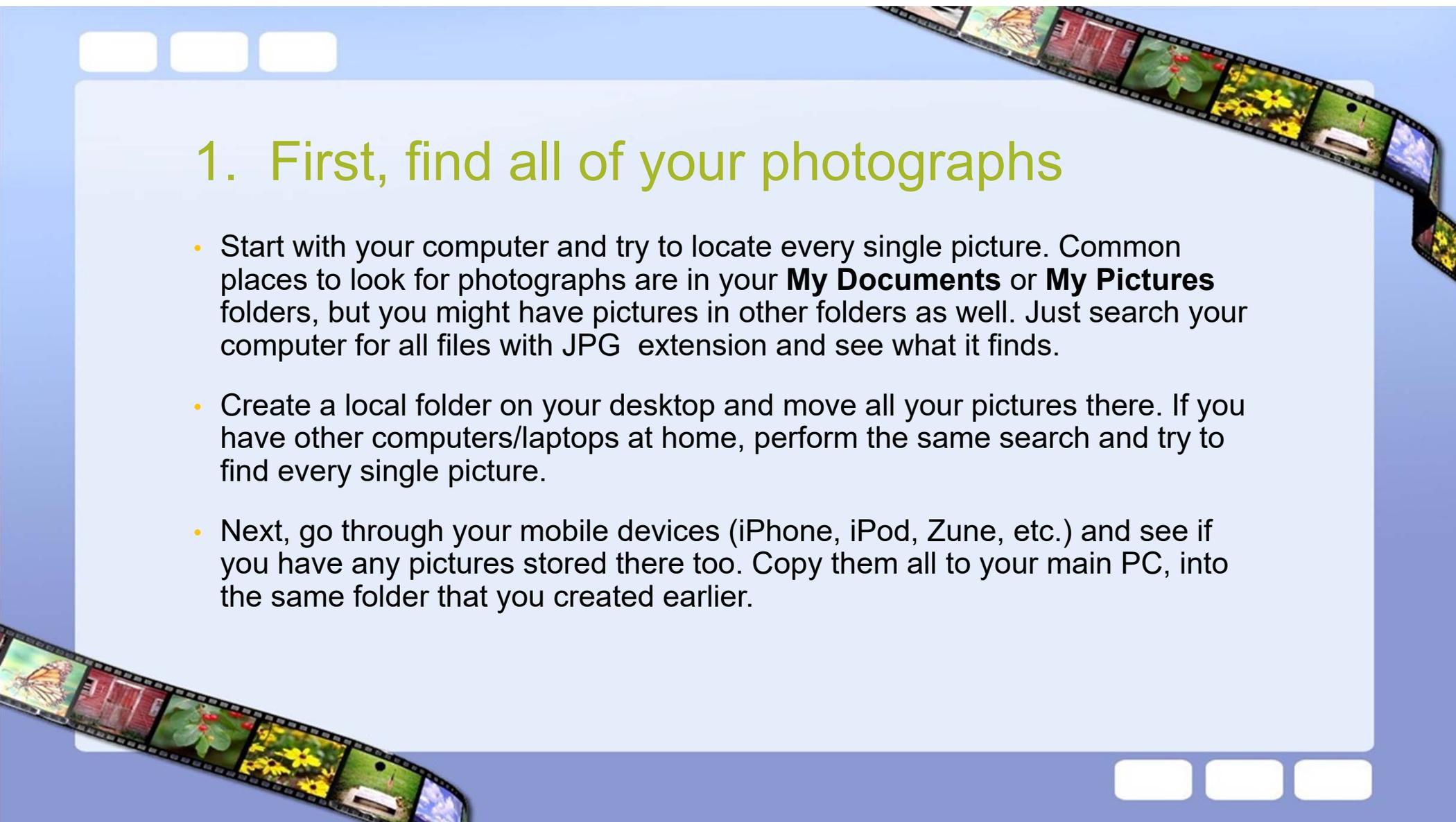
1. First, find all of your photographs

- Start with your computer and try to locate every single picture. Common places to look for photographs are in your **My Documents** or **My Pictures** folders, but you might have pictures in other folders as well. Just search your computer for all files with JPG extension and see what it finds.

- Create a local folder on your desktop and move all your pictures there. If you have other computers/laptops at home, perform the same search and try to find every single picture.

- Next, go through your mobile devices (iPhone, iPod, Zune, etc.) and see if you have any pictures stored there too. Copy them all to your main PC, into the same folder that you created earlier.
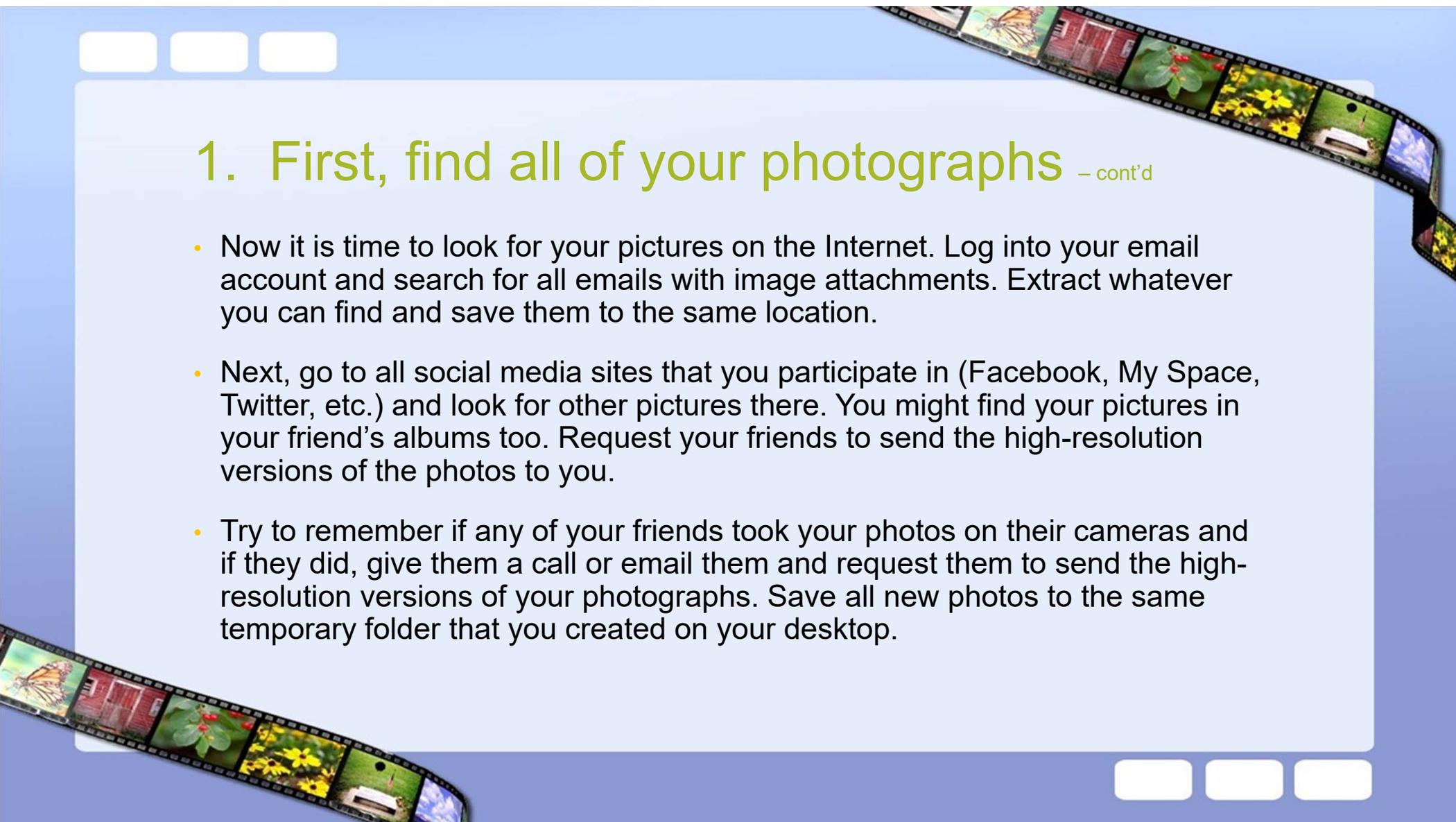
1. First, find all of your photographs – cont'd

- Now it is time to look for your pictures on the Internet. Log into your email account and search for all emails with image attachments. Extract whatever you can find and save them to the same location.

- Next, go to all social media sites that you participate in (Facebook, My Space, Twitter, etc.) and look for other pictures there. You might find your pictures in your friend's albums too. Request your friends to send the high-resolution versions of the photos to you.

- Try to remember if any of your friends took your photos on their cameras and if they did, give them a call or email them and request them to send the high-resolution versions of your photographs. Save all new photos to the same temporary folder that you created on your desktop.
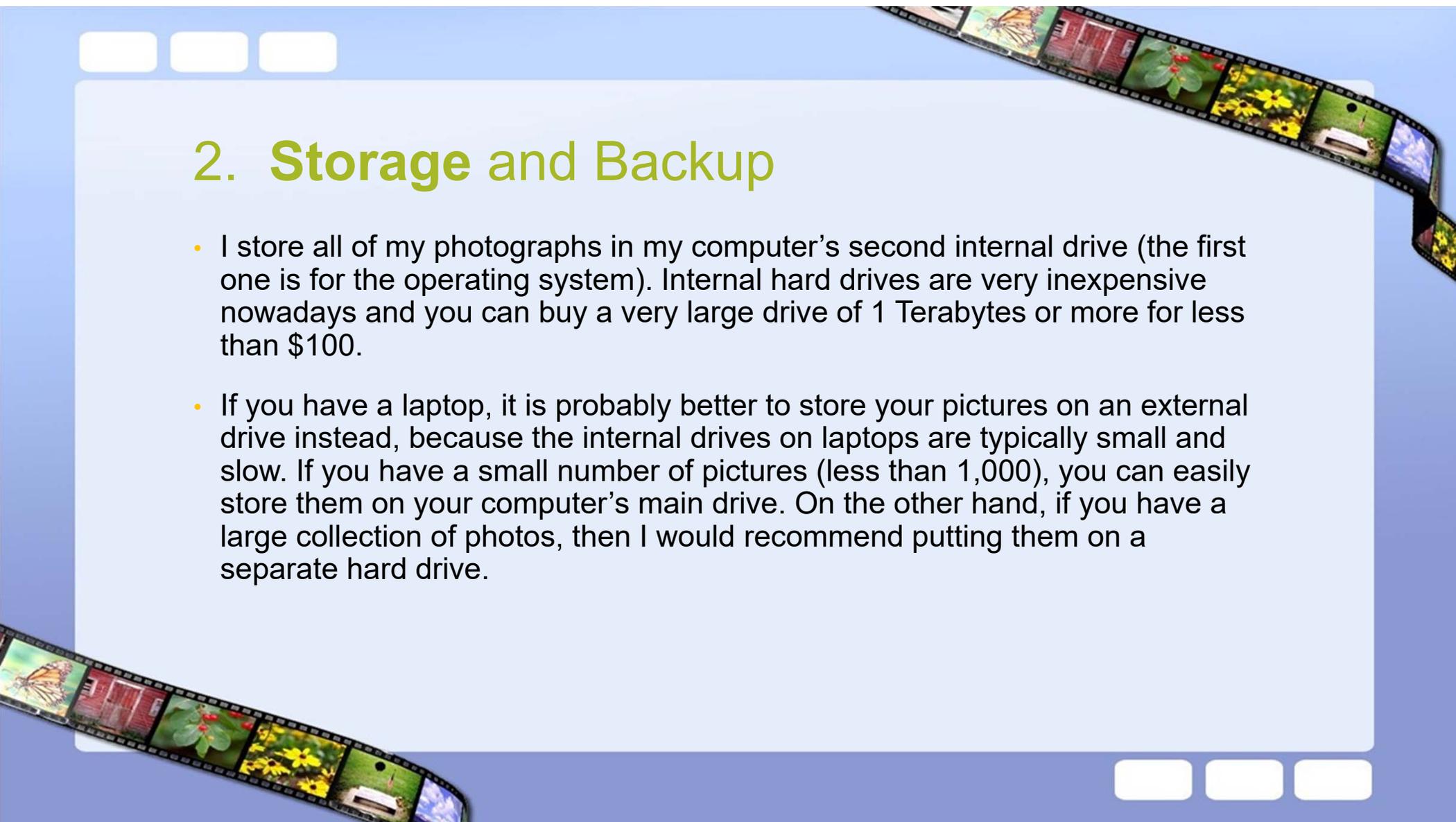
2. **Storage** and Backup

- I store all of my photographs in my computer's second internal drive (the first one is for the operating system). Internal hard drives are very inexpensive nowadays and you can buy a very large drive of 1 Terabytes or more for less than $100.

- If you have a laptop, it is probably better to store your pictures on an external drive instead, because the internal drives on laptops are typically small and slow. If you have a small number of pictures (less than 1,000), you can easily store them on your computer's main drive. On the other hand, if you have a large collection of photos, then I would recommend putting them on a separate hard drive.
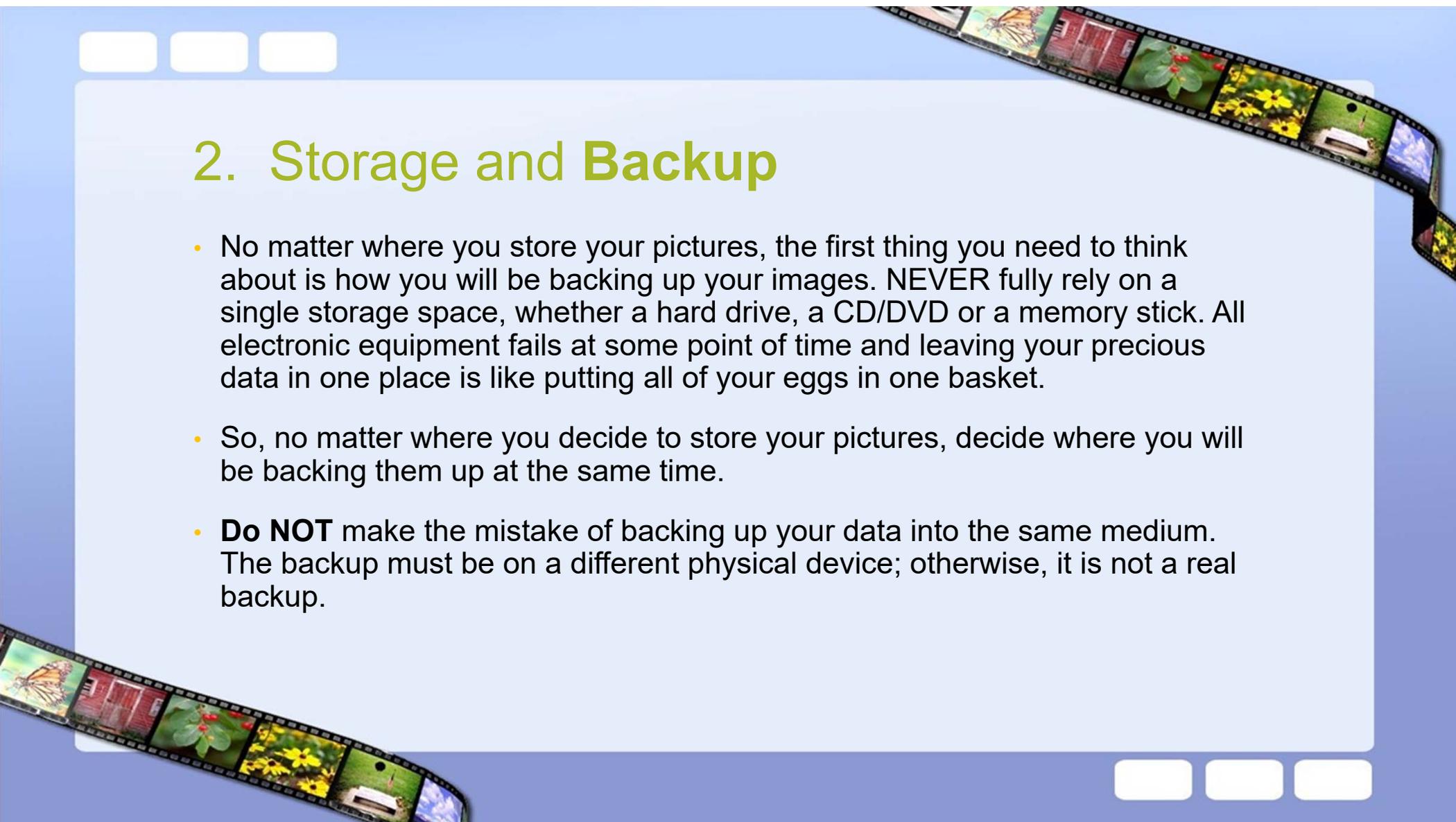
2. Storage and **Backup**

- No matter where you store your pictures, the first thing you need to think about is how you will be backing up your images. NEVER fully rely on a single storage space, whether a hard drive, a CD/DVD or a memory stick. All electronic equipment fails at some point of time and leaving your precious data in one place is like putting all of your eggs in one basket.

- So, no matter where you decide to store your pictures, decide where you will be backing them up at the same time.

- **Do NOT** make the mistake of backing up your data into the same medium. The backup must be on a different physical device; otherwise, it is not a real backup.

3. Create Main Folder Structure

- Now that you know where to store your images and backups, it is time to think about your folder structure strategy, i.e. how you will be storing your pictures. There are many ways to do this and everyone can give different suggestions.

- Let me show you the way I do it and I will leave it up to you to decide if it works for you or not. I first start with the root folder and create a folder called Pictures:
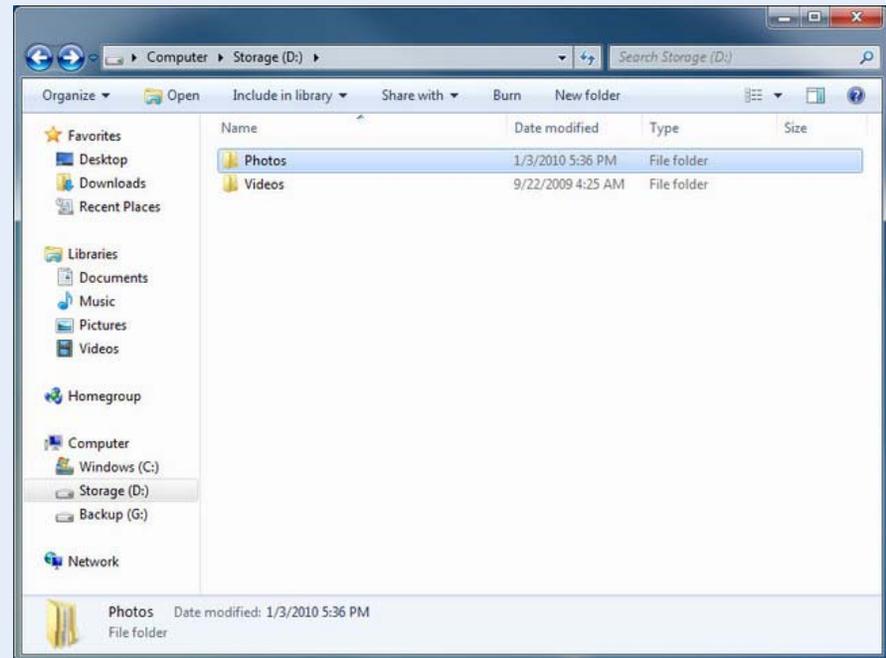
4. Create One Folder per Event & Move Photos

- Then under each folder, I create one folder per event:

- Examples of events are: Mom's Birthday Party, Christmas Celebration, etc. whatever fits the description of an event. If you have one large event that has smaller sub-events, then create one main folder and smaller subfolders underneath. For example, if you have something like California Vacation, it could have several subfolders inside such as Disneyland, Universal Studios, etc. Go ahead and create events for one year based on what you have.
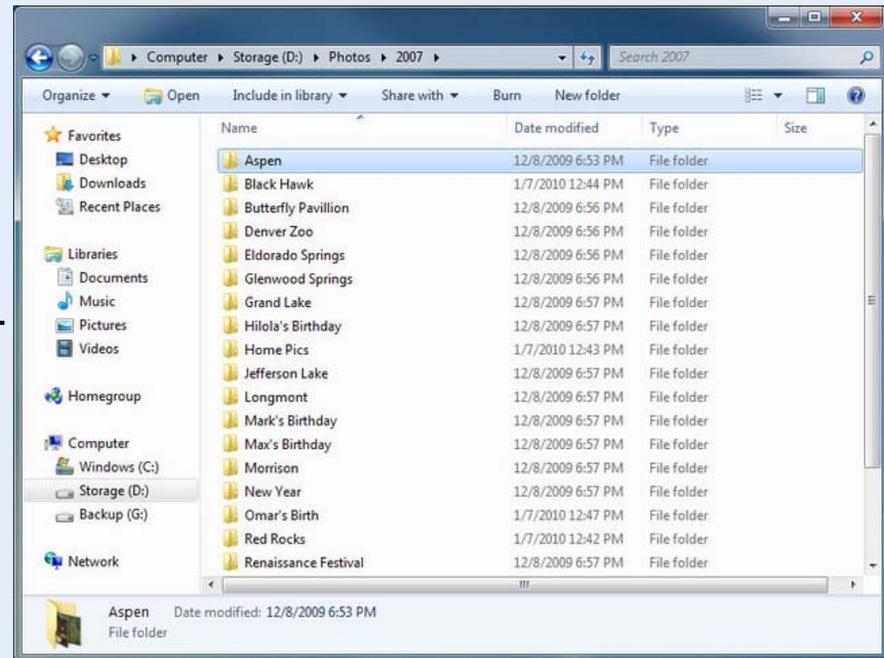
4. Create One Folder per Event & Move Photos – cont'd

- I used to store each folder name by Date Event, such as 01-01-2007 Aspen, but I chose to abandon this idea because I now use dates on my pictures instead:
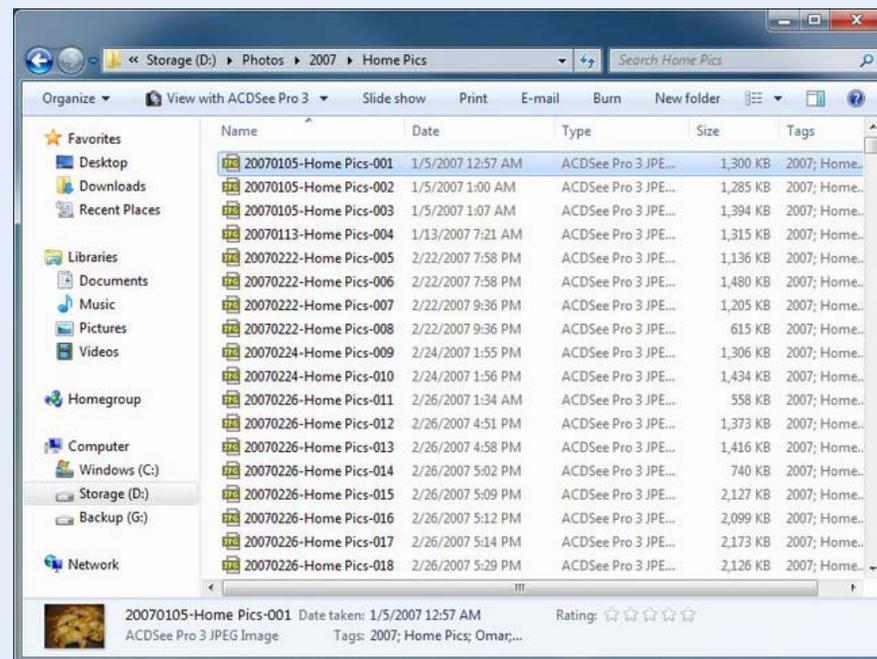
4. Create One Folder per Event & Move Photos – cont'd

- Now upload your photos into appropriate folders. This is the hard part, because you will have to go through all of your photos one by one and sort them through. Just looking at the picture by itself is not easy, as you might not remember when it was taken and where.

- Look at the information that is stored inside the picture. Almost every digital camera today stores vital information such as Camera Type, Date and Time right into the picture when it saves it. You can easily access this information by simply right-clicking the image, clicking Properties, and then clicking on the Details tab:
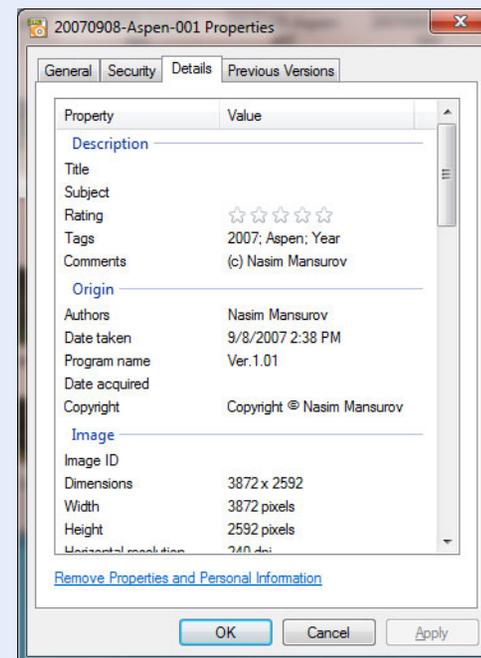
4. Create One Folder per Event & Move Photos – cont'd

- Look at the Origin->Date field for the date when the picture was taken.

- Other information such as Camera might be useful to determine who took the picture (whether it was your camera or somebody else's).

- Move all of your photos into appropriate event folders and make sure that nothing is left in your original temporary folder that you created in your desktop.
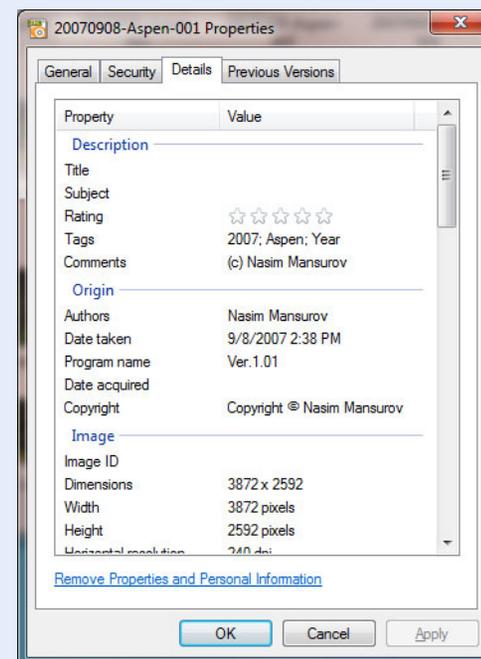
5. Rename your Photographs

- Unfortunately, many cameras produce images with weird filenames like DSC1005.JPG that do not make any sense. I highly recommend renaming all of your images to make it easier for you to locate them by searching for the file names in the future. Again, you can do this in many different ways, but I will show you the easiest method.

- Go to one of the folders that contain your pictures. It is a good idea to start with a small folder, so pick one with only a few pictures. First, sort all your images by date by clicking the Date column (you should be in a Detail view for this to work). Then select all pictures by clicking on the first one and then pressing CTRL+A (select all):
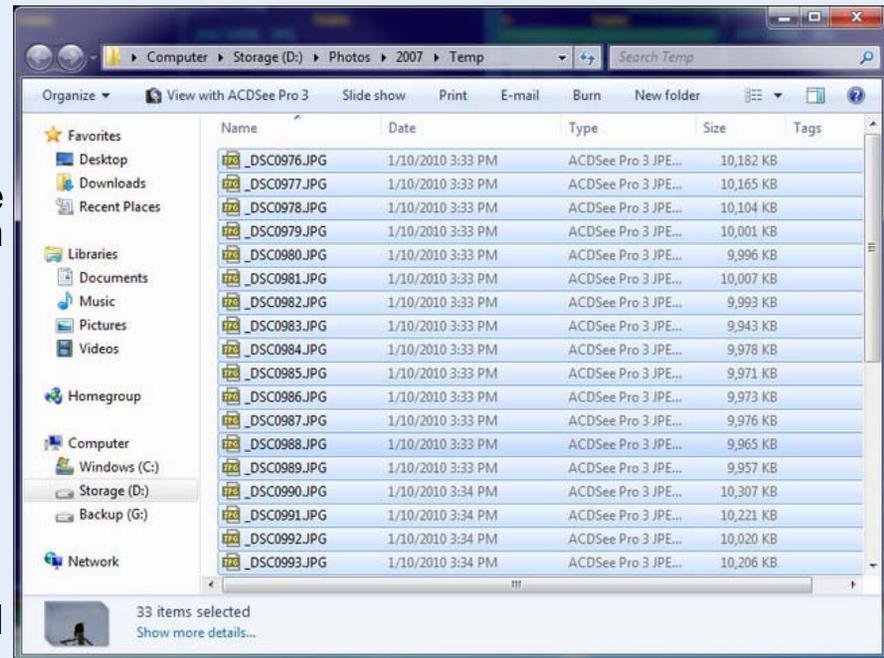
5. Rename your Photographs – cont'd

- Then right-click on the first image and click Rename:

- Then type the date, dash, event name and press Enter (for example: 20070101-Local Park). I prefer to use the year first, then month, then day; because if your files are somehow mixed up in one folder, it will be easier to differentiate them by year, then month then day. If you start with a month, it will all get mixed up, because the months are repeated every year:
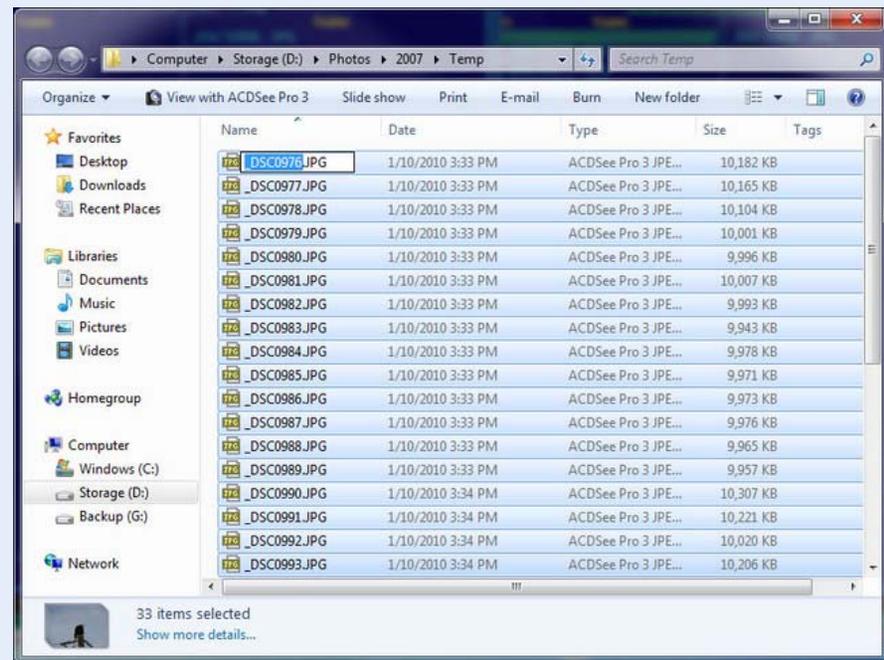
5. Rename your Photographs – cont'd

- You should now see that all your files got properly renamed. The system will automatically add a number in brackets at the end of the file, which represents the file sequence number:

- Do not worry if something got messed up. You can go back to what it was by simply by going to Edit Undo Rename or hitting CTRL+Z. You can also rename the files multiple times, if needed. Repeat this process as many times as you have folders and make sure that everything is properly renamed.
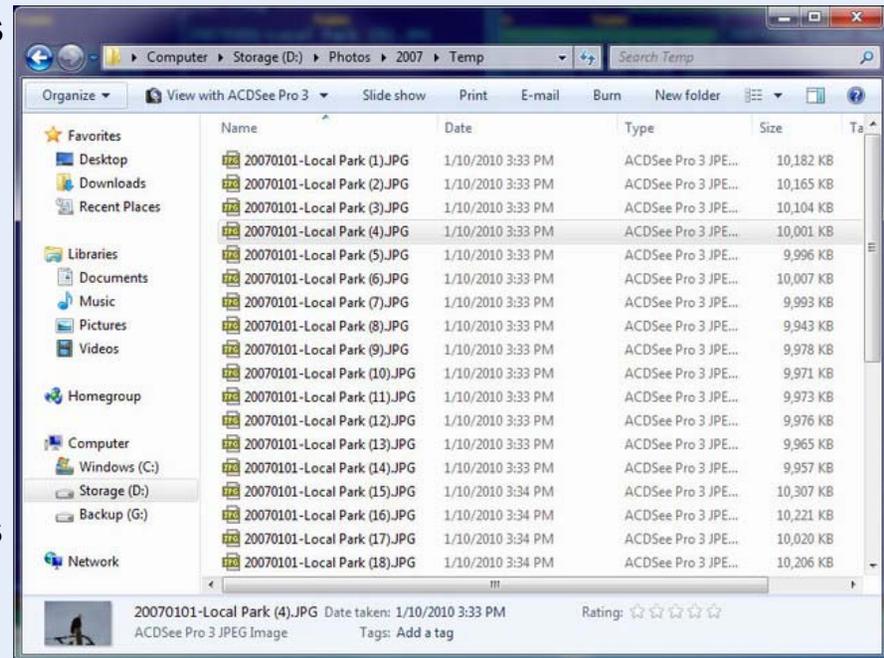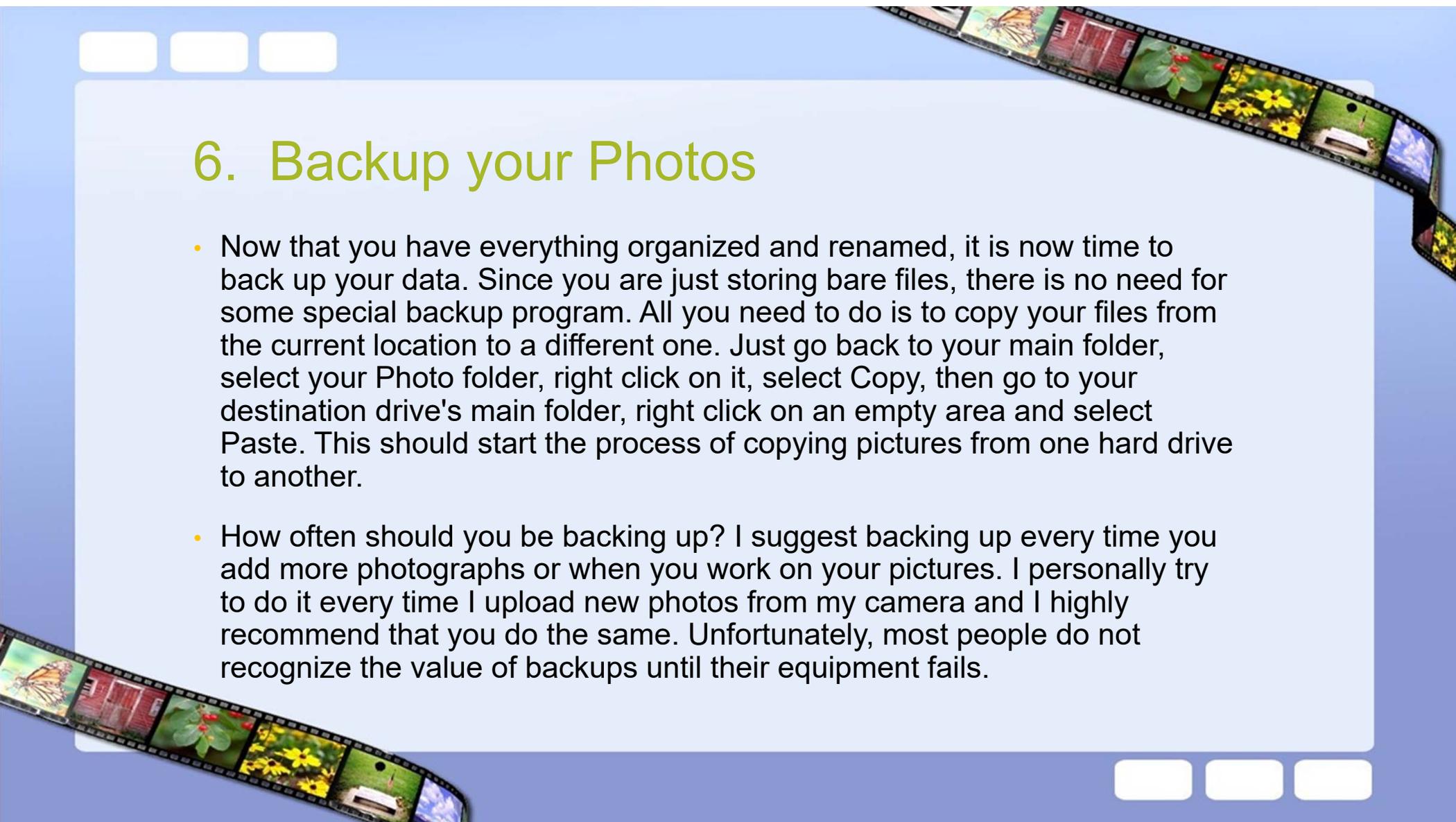
6. Backup your Photos

- Now that you have everything organized and renamed, it is now time to back up your data. Since you are just storing bare files, there is no need for some special backup program. All you need to do is to copy your files from the current location to a different one. Just go back to your main folder, select your Photo folder, right click on it, select Copy, then go to your destination drive's main folder, right click on an empty area and select Paste. This should start the process of copying pictures from one hard drive to another.

- How often should you be backing up? I suggest backing up every time you add more photographs or when you work on your pictures. I personally try to do it every time I upload new photos from my camera and I highly recommend that you do the same. Unfortunately, most people do not recognize the value of backups until their equipment fails.