

*David Hoffman*  
*Losing Everything*

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*April 29, 2009*

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TRANSCRIPTION

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1 David Hoffman: I had a fire nine days ago. My  
2 archive is 175 films, my 16 millimeter negative,  
3 all my books, my dad's books, my photographs. I  
4 had collected -- I was a collector, major,  
5 big-time. It's gone.

6 I just looked at it. And I didn't know what to  
7 do. I mean, this was -- was I my things? I  
8 always live in the present. I love the present.  
9 I cherish the future. And I was taught some  
10 strange thing as a kid like you gotta make  
11 something good out of something bad. You gotta  
12 make something good out of something bad. This  
13 was bad, man. I cough. I was sick.

14 That's my camera lens, the first one, the one I  
15 shot my Bob Dylan film with 35 years ago. That's  
16 my feature film, King Murray, won Cannes Film  
17 Festival in 1970, the only print I had. That was  
18 my papers. That was in minutes, 20 minutes. An  
19 epiphany hit me. You gotta make something good  
20 out of something bad. I started to say to my  
21 friends, neighbors, my sister -- by the way,  
22 that's Sputnik. I ran it last year. Sputnik was  
23 downtown, the negative. It wasn't touched. These  
24 are some pieces of things I used in my Sputnik  
25 feature film, which opens in New York in two

1 weeks, downtown.

2 I called my sister, I called my neighbors. I  
3 said: Come dig. That's me at my desk. That was  
4 a desk took 40-some years to build, you know, all  
5 the stuff. That's my daughter Jean. She came,  
6 she's a nurse in San Francisco. Dig it up, I  
7 said. I want pieces, bits and pieces. I came up  
8 with this idea, "A life of bits and pieces," which  
9 I'm just starting to work on, my next project.  
10 That's my sister. She took care of pictures  
11 because I was a big collector of just snapshot  
12 photography that I believed said a lot. Those are  
13 some of the pictures. Something was good about  
14 the burned pictures. I didn't know -- I looked at  
15 that and I said: Wow, is that better than -- --  
16 that's my proposal on Jimmy Doolittle. I made  
17 that movie for television. That's the only copy I  
18 had. Pieces of it. "Idea About Women."

19 So I started to say: Hey, man, you are too  
20 much. You could cry about this. I really didn't.  
21 I instead said I'm going to make something out of  
22 it, and maybe next year -- and I appreciate this  
23 moment, to come up on this stage with so many  
24 people who have already given me so much solace,  
25 and just say to TEDsters: I'm proud of me, that I

1 take something bad, I turn it, and I'm going to  
2 make something good out of this. All these  
3 pieces. That's Arthur Leipzig's original  
4 photograph I loved. I was a big record collector.  
5 The records didn't make it. Boy, I tell you, film  
6 burns. Film burns. This was 16 millimeter safety  
7 film. The negatives are gone. That was my  
8 father's letter to me telling me to marry the  
9 woman I first married when I was 20. That's my  
10 daughter and me.

11 She's still there. She's there this morning,  
12 actually. That's my house. My family is living  
13 in the Hilton Hotel in Scott's Valley. That's my  
14 wife, Heidi, who didn't take it as well as I did;  
15 my children, Davy and Henry. My son Davy in the  
16 hotel two nights ago.

17 So my message to you folks for my three minutes  
18 is that I appreciate the chance to share this with  
19 you. I will be back. I love being at TED. I  
20 came to live it, and I am living it. That's my  
21 view from my window outside of Santa Cruz in Bonny  
22 Doon, just 35 miles from here. Thank you,  
23 everybody. (Applause.)

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