

Save Your Life...



By Telling Your Story

By Nanette Fimian Randall

Many of us have warm memories of tales we heard in our younger years. Can't you just see yourself hearing them? They were the stories spun by our special loved ones at dinner tables, in kitchens while meals were being prepared and in cars, when driving from here to there. There were so many stories and we heard them about a million times, sometimes begrudgingly. We knew them inside and out and forward and back but we never had a care or concern that we'd forget them. How could we?

Capturing an individual's story is akin to leaving an inheritance ahead of time.

In our naiveté, we honestly believed we'd hear the voice, see the face and remember the scent of the storyteller, usually one of our grandparents or parents forever. In those days, everything was so clearly etched in our minds. And before we know it, 20, 30 or 50 years pass. In ever-so-quiet ways, we realize that we no longer see, hear or remember the details of who said what. The voices of those loved ones, once vibrant and alive, have grown silent because of disease, illness or death. Time steals the memory and clarity of the voice and the stories. Even

technology can't fix the fact that an unrecorded story is a buried story.

If we can think of our lives as an open treasure chest, it may help with perspective. When all is well and right with the world, we can readily recall and share life's memories. But when things go awry and, most especially, when stories are not documented, those precious jewels are gone forever, and we lose our family's legacy.

There is hope, however, because when just one person takes a step to preserve the stories, the course of history is forever changed. Anyone can do it, and all you have to do is make a plan to start the process.

Here are 10 ways to do just that:

1. Sign up for a writing class.
2. Ask other family members to help you remember important events.
3. Put yourself in a quiet place and think about old stories passed down.
4. Locate old photographs and see if you can remember some of the faces and stories.
5. Look at memorabilia in old scrapbooks.
6. Find old letters.
7. Jot down some of the things you recall about your life.
8. Fill in details later.
9. If genealogy interests you, check out www.familysearch.org.
10. If you have desire but lack the fire to do this work yourself, hire a personal historian to help you. Seek expert help in interviewing, transcribing, story writing, editing and printing. Expect to devote a few hours or longer working together.

Like every life, each person's spin on life is uniquely different and wonderful. Life memoirs give families insight about how a loved one overcame hardship and loss or how they persevered and found joy. They tell others the ways that challenged, graced and helped them develop strength and courage. They speak to our humanity.

Capturing an individual's story is akin to leaving an inheritance ahead of time. If you view documented stories as precious as a family heirloom, it's not

surprising that you will feel a sense of peace and gratitude once the story treasures have been captured.

Nanette Fimian Randall is an experienced personal historian with *Memoirs by Design*. She specializes in capturing oral histories, self-publishing family legacy books, and provides assistance in all phases of storytelling.



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