



Tips for helping elderly family members preserve and share their history

An African proverb teaches that when an elderly person dies, a library burns to the ground. Too many of our family members pass away without documenting their personal history. These beloved members of the family have inspiring stories to tell and it's important these stories are preserved and shared with their posterity. The elderly have a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. The youth are adept at the technologies that allow family history to be preserved and shared. Consider the following tips to help elderly members of your family to preserve and share their story:

- **Feel the urgency.** You never know when a person's mortal sojourn will end or how long they will have their mental or physical faculties. The sooner their stories can be preserved the better.
- **Hold regular "Family Tree Gatherings."** Elder Quentin L. Cook said, "We finally have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology for families to accomplish this glorious work of salvation. I suggest one way this might be done. Families could hold a "Family Tree Gathering." This should be a recurring effort. Everyone would bring existing family histories, stories, and photos, including cherished possessions of grandparents and parents. Our young people are excited to learn about the lives of family members—where they came from and how they lived. Many have had their hearts turned to the fathers. They love the stories and photos, and they have the technological expertise to scan and upload these stories and photos to Family Tree and connect source documents with ancestors to preserve these for all time. Of course, the main objective is to determine what ordinances still need to be done and make assignments for the essential temple work. The My Family booklet can be utilized to help record family information, stories, and photos that can then be uploaded to Family Tree." (Elder Quentin L. Cook, *Roots and Branches*, CR, April 2014)
- **Give a family history Christmas or birthday gift.** What better gift than to give of your time as a family to help elderly relatives preserve and share their family history? A family history gift might include inviting elderly relatives to dinner and asking them to share the key stories from their lives. This can be repeated as many times as needed. You might provide some questions ahead of time and invite them to bring pictures or other family history artifacts. (See links to question prompts below.) Ask them ahead of time if you can audio

record their responses. Following each session, you can use software to separate the audio into the individual stories. You can transcribe the audio and upload the story with a picture to FamilySearch or you can simply upload the audio clip along with other pictures and documents, and link them to the respective story or audio clip. Consider using the [FamilySearch Memories App](#) to record stories.

- **Submit a family history Eagle Project.** A family history Eagle project would bless an elderly relative's posterity for generations to come. The project might include first having the scout pick an elderly family member, interview and audio record the elderly family member talking about his or her life story (see links to question prompts below), help the elderly family member include pictures and other artifacts associated with the stories, and learn how to upload pictures, stories, audio, and documents to FamilySearch. After accomplishing this for one or more of their elderly relatives, the scout could teach a set number of individuals the same process and ask them to follow that process for one or more of their relatives.
- **Submit a tribute to a grandparent, parent, sibling or other relative that they can upload to their FamilySearch Memories page.** Looking for a great Christmas gift, imagine a thoughtful tribute to a loved one or friend with your memories of that person and what you have learned from him or her. Accompany your tribute with an appropriate picture or pictures and encourage or help him or her to upload the tribute and pictures to his or her FamilySearch Memories page.
- **Always be ready for that impromptu story.** Keep your recording/video device handy (e.g., smart phone) and next time you visit one of your elderly relatives, be prepared to capture that impromptu story or experience.
- **Link to possible question prompts for interviewing family members or even yourself!** Keep in mind that your objective is help those you are interviewing to record those stories and experiences that shaped their character, values, and passions. Many of the questions in these links will serve to create a brief life chronology and provide excellent background information to add to the core experiences and stories. Make sure you have a good interview game plan.
 - FamilySearch Blog: 52 Questions in 52 Weeks-Writing Your Life Story Has Never Been Easier <https://familysearch.org/blog/en/52-questions-52-weeks/>

- Ancestry Learning Center: Interview Questions
<http://www.ancestry.com/cs/learning/20110911InterviewJSS>

- MyHeritage Blog: 25 Family History Questions You'll Really Want to Ask:
<http://blog.myheritage.com/2016/06/25-family-history-questions-youll-really-want-to-ask/>

- Barry J. Ewell: 150 questions to ask your family members about their lives:
<http://genealogybybarry.com/genealogy-150-questions-ask-family-members-lives/>

- Geni: 10 Family History Questions to Ask Your Grandparents
<https://www.geni.com/blog/10-family-history-questions-to-ask-your-grandparents-390010.html>

- About Parenting: 50 Questions for Family History Interviews
<http://genealogy.about.com/cs/oralhistory/a/interview.htm>

- Write Your Family History: 50 Questions You Must Ask Your Parents or Grandparents before They Die by Mike Brozda
<http://www.tonganoxielibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/50-Questions-to-help-you-Write-Your-Family-History.pdf>