

PRESERVING FAMILY MEMORIES

Knowing your family's story and where you came from is a treasure. If you make a point of recording and/or writing down your family story it is something that will be cherished for generations.

Just think how happy it would make your mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, etc. to have someone really listen to them while they take a trip down memory lane. The best gift you can give someone, especially the elderly, is to listen to them. When you take the time to listen, you are telling that person that what they've done, and the things they care about are important.

Anyone can create a *life* story for themselves or a loved one. It's as simple as setting aside some time and really listening. Can easily be preserved on any Smartphone!

Here are a few tips for a successful life story interview and a list of questions to get you started:

- Prepare your questions in advance.
- Set aside a quiet time and place free from interruptions and test your equipment before starting.
- Ask open-ended questions like: Tell me about. .. Describe ... What was it like when ... In what ways Why and How ...
- Start with easy, friendly questions and work your way up to more difficult or sensitive questions.
- Listen carefully to what the person says; don't interrupt or correct. Maintain eye contact and show interest by leaning forward and nodding.
- Photos, mementos, or other visual aids are great memory-joggers, have some ready if necessary.
- Don't try to force any subject they are uncomfortable discussing. If the person doesn't want to talk about something, just go to the next question.
- As you listen to answers, other questions will come to mind. Asking follow-up questions will help you get more information.

An interview shouldn't last more than about an hour. People do best when they're not tired. You can always do another interview.