

Turning Memories into a Life Story

Crockett County Historical Commission

Don't begin at the beginning. Just start writing your favorite memory. Record names, dates, places and stories. You can move scenes around as the stories grow. Sometimes a good beginning is written at the end.

Be specific. Details make a good story come alive. Start with a memory list, times of struggle or joy to get to the deeper story. Begin recording info and stories about your parents, siblings, spouse, children, and grandchildren. Create a Family Tree or relationship chart to help keep generations straight.

Set a deadline. Be deliberate in finding time to write and gather information. Make it a regular part of your schedule and stick to it. Schedule interviews at family gatherings and events when you are likely to see distant relatives.

Timeline or Time Periods. Break your story up in time periods or decades. This can help you remember what happened when. A timeline of your family can also help jog memories and help keep people and events straight.

Memories and traditions. Keep your family traditions alive by writing where they came from and how your family shares them. Discover how to preserve family heirlooms and save their stories. Create a Keepsake CD or DVD full of digital photos, old documents, family relationship charts and records to share with other family members.

Military service and news makers. Honor ancestors who served in the military or held down the home front during times of war by recording their stories and experiences. Record any newsworthy family members and moments that made the newspaper. Clippings and pictures provide excellent resources and provenance.

Family recipes and remedies. Foods evoke strong memories of special times with family. Consider telling your story around favorite recipes or special occasion foods. Remember home remedies passed down from generation to generation provide fascinating stories.

Places and important dates. Commemorate your family's journeys – their origins, did they immigrate or migrate from another country. Find the old family home or places where they settled. Remember birthdays, anniversaries, and other special family dates by making a perpetual calendar or timeline. Always work backward from present to past or you might end up tracing the wrong ancestors.

Check your sources. Always document people and dates and details. Take family legends with a grain of salt. Just because Grandma said so doesn't make it true!

Confirm identities. Names are common so use other identifying information, such as Census age and spouse's name, to make sure you've got the right John Doe. Forget the 'right' spellings and look for variations in ancestors' names

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Names and nicknames

How did you like school and where did you go to school?

Did you have pets?

Birth date and place

What did you want to be when you grew up?

What was your first job? Were you ever fired or promoted?

Parents and siblings

How are you like or different from your parents?

What are your favorite memories of your siblings?

What did you do during the summer when you were a child?

Marriage date and place

How did you meet your husband/wife?

What is the secret to a good relationship?

Death date and place for parents/siblings/children

What was the hardest decision of your life?

How did important historical events, like war or epidemics affect your family?

Time Line or Time Periods

Make a timeline of events or break family stories into decades.

Family Traditions

How did it begin?

Include favorite memories or stories about birthdays; holidays; weddings; or special occasions.

Pictures

Single portraits or family groups

Action shots of important event or special occasion