

CHAPTER 9



Leaving an Enduring Legacy

SHARING YOUR FAMILY'S STORY, WRITING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY, ORAL INTERVIEWS



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Everyone has a story to tell.

Some people may mistakenly believe they have nothing of importance to pass on to others...no legacy they can leave. But you need to know that you don't have to be wealthy, famous, or talented to leave a meaningful legacy for your descendants. Some of the most inspirational, enduring legacies are from people outside of history books and newspaper headlines. Everyday, plain ordinary people are creating and passing down inspirational, historical legacies. And you can be one of them.

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Suggested Activities

1. Conduct an oral interview with a parent, grandparent, aunt, etc.
2. Make a commitment to start keeping your personal history. Record your thoughts and feelings as well as the events of your day-to-day life.
3. Begin to write your own life story. Which ancestors on your pedigree chart do you identify with the most? If you could talk to them about their lives, what questions would you ask? What would you like to know about them that you haven't been able to find through your research? With that in mind, begin to write your own life story.
4. Record some personal, biographical information about yourself, including a physical description, the places you've lived, and your professional training and experience.
5. Compile a list of other topics that you would like to include in your personal history, keeping in mind the things you wish you knew about your ancestors, and schedule a regular time for working on it. If writing it down seems difficult, talk into a tape recorder or video camera and then find someone who can do a written transcription for you.

Family History Insights - 9



Ellen Goodman

Our Most Valued Legacy

"What the next generations will value most is not what we owned, but the evidence of who we were and the tales of how we loved. In the end, it's the family stories that are worth the storage." Ellen Goodman, Pulitzer Prize winning syndicated columnist, www.BostonGlobe.com.



Dennis B. Neuenschwander
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Gathering Family Keepsakes

"Every family has...keepsakes. ... These include genealogies, family stories, historical accounts, and traditions. These eternal keepsakes... form a bridge

between past and future and bind generations together in ways that no other keepsake can. ... Bridges between generations are not built by accident. Each [individual] has the personal responsibility to be an eternal architect of this bridge for his or her own family. ...

If I want my children and grandchildren to know those who still live in my memory, then I must build the bridge between them. I alone am the link to the generations that stand on either side of them. It is my responsibility to knit their hearts together through love and respect, even though they may never have known each other personally. My grandchildren will have no knowledge of their family's history if I do nothing to preserve it for them. That which I do not in some way record will be lost at my death, and that which I do not pass on to my posterity, they will never have. The work of gathering and sharing eternal family keepsakes is a personal responsibility. It cannot be passed off or given to another.

A life that is not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory. What a tragedy this can be in the history of a family. Knowledge of our ancestors shapes us and instills within us values that give direction and meaning to our lives." Dennis B. Neuenschwander, *Ensign*, May 1999, 83



Spencer Kimball
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Your True Self

"Begin today to write and keep records of all the important things in [your] own lives and also the lives of [your] antecedents. ... Your own private journal should record the way you face up to challenges that beset you. Do not suppose life changes so much

that your experiences will not be interesting to your posterity. Experiences of work, relations with people, and an awareness of the rightness and wrongness of actions will always be relevant. ...

No one is commonplace. ...Your own journal, like most others, will tell of problems as old as the world and how you dealt with them. Your journal should contain your true self rather than a picture of you when you are 'made up' for a public performance. There is a temptation to paint one's virtues in rich color and whitewash the vices, but there is also the opposite pitfall of accentuating the negative. ... The truth should be told, but we should not emphasize the negative. ...

Your journal is your autobiography, so it should be kept carefully. You are unique, and there may be incidents in your experience that are more noble and praiseworthy in their way than those recorded in any other life... Your story should be written now while it is fresh and while the true details are available...What could you do better for your children and your children's children than to record the story of your life, your triumphs over adversity, your recovery after a fall, your progress when all seemed black, your rejoicing when you had finally achieved? Some of what you write may be humdrum dates and places, but there will also be rich passages that will be quoted by your posterity.

Get a notebook...a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies." Spencer W. Kimball, *New Era*, October 1975, 4-5

Leaving an Enduring Legacy



LEGACY: A GIFT TRANSMITTED BY OR RECEIVED FROM AN ANCESTOR

One Hundred Years from Now, Will Anyone Know Who You Are?

Knowledge you have acquired about your ancestors during your lifetime instills within you values that give direction and meaning to your life. Whether you realize it or not, you have profited in your lifetime by the experiences, achievements and heritage of your parents and fore fathers. Likewise, do not suppose otherwise that your acquired knowledge, values, achievements and life



challenges that you have overcome will become of great benefit to your descendants.

What legacy will you bequeath to your heirs? A life that is not documented will largely be lost to memory within a generation or two. If you do not record your life, the memory of your life will be largely lost at your death. You have a wonderful opportunity to leave an enduring, historical legacy to your kin. The whole world is in your hands – the legacy of your life (or the life of a family member) may be determined by what you do today. Are you up to the challenge?

One hundred or two hundred years from now, your descendants can know who you are. And they may find their lives forever changed for the better because of the legacy of uplifting, faith-promoting strength you left them. You should

record your life history and experiences for your children and grandchildren, and beyond. In this way, they can benefit and learn from your life. Even if they have never met you, they can come to love you and “turn their hearts” to you. Through keeping journals and writing personal and family histories, you can give your posterity the opportunity to turn their hearts toward you.



Spencer Kimball
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Your Journals Will be a Source of Inspiration

“Any...family that has searched genealogical and historical records has fervently wished their ancestors had kept better and more complete records. On the other hand, some families possess

some spiritual treasures because ancestors have recorded the events surrounding their [life] and other happenings of interest. ... People often use the excuse that their lives are uneventful and nobody would be interested in what they have done. But I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your families, to your children, your grandchildren, and others, on through the generations.” Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Oct. 1978

Our Posterity is Interested in All We Do and Say

“We may think there is little of interest or importance in what we personally say or do—but it is remarkable how many of our families, as we pass on down the line, are interested in all that we do and all that we say. Each of us is important to those who are near and dear to us—and as our posterity read of our life’s experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in that glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted.” Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, Oct 1979, p.5