

I Remember . . .

Learning & Sharing Your Family History

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How many times as a child did you sit and listen to your parents and grandparents talking and hear one or more of them utter the phrase “I remember” followed by a story of their youth, a childhood friend or prank, something that happened between siblings, a major tale they’d heard about an ancestor or something else that proved completely fascinating to your young ears?

How often do you now find yourself saying that same phrase as you begin to share a story of the first time you went to a high school or college event, met your spouse, gave birth to a child or any number of family adventures?

Memories are what make us who we are, describe where we came from, and help identify the values we share with our ancestors. These stories have been passed down for centuries, long before the iPhone, Android and Internet came into our lives to make sharing stories easier. Memories also help define what’s important to us; what impacted our lives as we grew up; and what continues to affect us.

I’ve been lucky enough to travel during my career. Years ago, my mother told me I should “write down your memories” of those trips so I could take those trips again, even if my memory was no longer as vivid. She had a good point; yet I never seemed to find time to do that. After all, there are a lot of memories and that takes a great deal of time and effort.

As I’ve researched more and more of my ancestors’ history, I’ve discovered just how valuable those memories and stories are, not only for me but for future generations who are seeking the “whys” of our lives. How often have you asked, “Why did my ancestors come to this country when they did”? Imagine being lucky enough to have a journal or letter that answered that question.

That’s the reason that 2017 is going to be the year to finally take My Trip Down Memory Lane! I hope you’ll join me as “I Remember”

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Where to begin? For some people, it’s automatic to say “start at the beginning” with your earliest memory and that’s OK. For others, the place to begin is with a list or a series of questions. Select one question and answer it; then move to the next question. Whatever process you decide to use, the key is to take the first step.

SET A GOAL

Whether you decide to spend 15 minutes each day writing, decide to write every Saturday at 9:00 a.m. for 30 minutes, or spend 2 hours each month is not important. The important thing is to set a goal that works for you and stick to your schedule.

GETTING STARTED

You've decided to write, but you don't know what to write about. The blank page can be intimidating for even the most seasoned writer. Sometimes you just need a little nudge. There are resources to help you begin.

Use a Journal Jar, List Books, or Create Your Own List

Some people use a "Journal Jar" a basket or jar containing a certain number of questions in it on individual pieces of paper. If you've set a goal to write 15 minutes each day, for the next year, then there should be 365 questions in your Journal Jar. Pick one each day and spend your 15 minutes writing about that.

Google "journal jar" and print the questions from the web site to create your own Journal Jar. There are several books by Lisa Nola and Nathaniel Russell in a "Listography" series including *Listography Journal: Your Life in Lists*. These and others are available on Amazon.com.

Create your own **list with ABCs**: "A" is for most memorable Adventure; "B" is for favorite Birthday; "C" is for your favorite car/first car; "D" is for your first date or most memorable date; etc.

Create a "My Memories" list that highlights the events and people you want to write about. Often some event will happen that reminds us of a favorite memory. Yet we may not be at a place or time when we can write more about it. Instead keep a "My Memories" list on your smartphone and add this item to it. Next time you sit down to write and that blank page is staring back at you, you have a place to begin.

USING TECHNOLOGY

Write the stories as part of the **notes section in your family tree software**, whether it's something you store online or on your computer.

Create a **blog** for sharing family information. If you want to share stories about family members living today, I suggest creating a website or blog that is password protected and allow limited access. In some ways Facebook has fueled the interest in sharing day-to-day activities for future generations.

Watch for those **Facebook lists** that ask you to answer or list items you remember or places you've visited (examples: a map of the U.S. to track the states you've visited or lived in; pictures from the 50s, 60s, 70s that say "share if you remember this").

WAYS TO SHARE YOUR MEMORIES

YouTube Channel – **make videos and share online**; create your own YouTube (www.youtube.com) or Vimeo Channel (www.vimeo.com) for your family.

Create **printed Memory books** (www.mycanvas.com) and other sites.

Create **family blogs** using Weebly or Wordpress. Links to some family blogs are on the following page.

REMEMBER

Start today to write your memories by taking it a step at a time. Make your goals manageable for you. That's my plan for the year and I've started already. **Make 2017-2018 your most memorable year** – for yourself and for future generations. It all begins with just two words,

I Remember . . .

SOME WEBSITES TO HELP TELL YOUR STORIES

Online Writing Prompts or Places to Write

- **52 Stories, FamilySearch** – <https://familysearch.org/blog/en/52stories/>
- **Creative Gene** – <http://creativegene.blogspot.com>
- **Family History Writing Challenge**, The Armchair Genealogist – <http://familyhistorywritingchallenge.blogspot.com>
- **Fearless Females**, The Accidental Genealogist – <http://www.theaccidentalgenealogist.com>
- **Geneabloggers** – <http://www.geneabloggers.com>
- **National Novel Writing Month** (November) – <http://www.nanowrimo.org>

Resources and Websites

- **Adobe Spark** – <https://spark.adobe.com>
- **Animoto** – <http://www.animoto.com>
- **Audacity** (free) – <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>
- **Day One App** – <http://dayoneapp.com>
- **Evernote** – <https://evernote.com>
- **EveryStory** – <http://everystory.us>
- **Saving Memories Forever** – <http://www.savingmemoriesforever.com>
- **Storyboard That** – <http://www.storyboardthat.com>
- **StoryCorps** – <http://www.storycorps.org>
- **Treelines** – <http://www.treelines.com>
- **Twile** – <https://twile.com/>

Storing Your Stories – File Storage

- **Box** – <http://www.box.com>
- **Dropbox** – <http://www.dropbox.com>
- **Google Drive** – <https://drive.google.com>
- **MozyStash** – <http://mozy.com/stash>
- **SugarSync** – <https://www.sugarsync.com>

Timelines and Mind Mapping Tools

- **Freemind** – http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page
- **Genelines** – <https://progenygenealogy.com/>
- **iThoughts** (iTunes app) – <https://www.toketaware.com/ithoughts-ios>
- **MindMeister** – <http://www.mindmeister.com>
- **Our Timelines** – <http://www.ourtimelines.com>
- **SimpleMind** (iTunes or Android app) – Available in the iTunes Store or Google Play
- **TimeToast** – <http://www.timetoast.com>

Other Resources to Review

- **15 Free Tools for Better Online Storytelling** - <http://www.newsdesigns.com/innovations-industry-news/15-free-tools-for-better-online-storytelling/>
- **Ancestry Press** – <http://ancestry.mycanvas.com>
- **eBook Publishing: The How-To Guide for Writers** – <https://www.bookbaby.com/campaigns/request-ebook-guide?source>
- **Creative Continuum** – <http://www.creativecontinuum.com>
- **GenWriters** – <http://www.genwriters.com>
- **How to Conquer Self-Doubt and Just Write** – <http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/guide-to-literary-agents/how-to-conquer-self-doubt-and-just-write>
- **How to Write for Kindle: A Non-Fiction Book in 72 Hours or Less (Kindle Edition)** – <https://www.amazon.com/How-Write-Kindle-Non-Fiction-ebook/dp/B00AQRMLW>
- **Life Stories Writing Guide** – https://storyterrace.com/en-US/write-your-life-story-in-your-own-book/?gclid=CP_UsvHf1NMCFZG3wAod_t4DJA
- **Scrivener Writing Software** – <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php>
- **Stories to Tell** – <http://www.storiestotellbooks.com>
- **Writer's Digest** – <http://www.writersdigest.com>