

Telling Your Family Story

“Ordinary riches can be stolen from you, real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you.” – Oscar Wilde

Telling our individual stories is very important, so we claim all the “infinitely precious” dimensions of our lives and know the ground on which we stand. The value of telling and recording our family story - through written, audio or visual media - has added benefits:

- Sharing with family members the pivotal experiences that shaped us as individuals and as a family can give us insight into our core family values and heritage.

The record of significant moments for each family member can be an invaluable means for communicating with, and growing in appreciation of, other family members and so opening new possibilities for conversation and dialogue. Often, our immediate family does not know or understand the significance of our key experiences. Sharing our significant moments is a way to tell others what is of most importance to us – what we genuinely love. Unless we know what a family member really loves, we don’t know what they bring to the family or what they take with them when they die.

Sometimes, the same experience is pivotal for several family members, but they have different perspectives on what happened and why it is important for them and the family. The record of these interpretations of a common experience helps expand on the substance and significance of the story in the family history.

Family stories touch on the inherent strengths of the family and how it has dealt with inevitable challenges. There is often a great sense of accomplishment as family members learn to appreciate the obstacles that have been successfully faced by the family.

- We have a clear statement of our family’s understanding of its story at the time at which it is recorded. This can help future generations as they seek to understand the source of their legacy – which is so much more than financial inheritance alone - and the powerful personalities of those who went before them and on whose shoulders they stand. It helps to know where the family has been, and where it is now, to know where it is going.
- Telling the family story may give every family member a voice and opportunity for their reality to be heard. In this way, the telling of the story takes on great significance and, where needed, can be a powerful tool for individual and family healing.

A family story told well communicates existing realities accurately at the same time as encouraging future generations to be true to their unique circumstances and opportunities. The process of family members joining together to tell their family story, and the resulting testimony to the family and understanding of its legacy, can be enormously helpful to current and future generations.