

ORAL FAMILY HISTORY FADES IN JUST THREE GENERATIONS

By Paul Nauta

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Have you ever worried when you couldn't remember details of a family story about your grandparents or great-grandparents? Well, there may be good reason for concern—it has been said it takes only three generations to lose oral family histories.¹

When he learned this, Jim Ison of Utah resolved that it wouldn't happen on his watch. He decided at that moment in 2013 that—as the connecting link between his grandchildren

and his grandparents—he was going to upload old photos, stories, and source documents onto FamilySearch's Family Tree so his posterity could enjoy them and so they would be preserved forever.

He started with a box of old family photos that had been passed down for generations and included family members going back to his second great-grandfather. "I uploaded the photos to the 'cloud' online in my

free FamilySearch.org account for safekeeping," says Jim enthusiastically. Then he added to the photos some stories passed down from his father. "Now any grandchild or future great-grandchild can see these pictures and read these stories anytime."

He also found research indicating that the more children know about their forebears—where they grew up, illnesses they struggled with, and tough trials they went through—the greater their self-esteem and ability to deal with life.² So Jim focused on sharing those kinds of things in the lives of his ancestors. For example, Jim's Bavarian great-grandfather, a widower, married a woman who spanked the children every morning and told them the spanking was for anything during the day she wouldn't catch them doing! Jim's grandfather and the grandfather's older brother ran away

Getting Started



Watching My Grandson Play Ball

In this video, Elder Tad R. Callister relates how his grandfather missed an important meeting to watch him play softball. (2:36)

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Watching My Grandson Play Ball

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FIRST AND FOREMOST A GRANDFATHER

Watch Tad R. Callister, Sunday School general president, share a story about his grandfather: lds.org/go/callisterE815.

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from home, changed their last name to avoid being caught and sent back, and came to America about 10 years

later after serving in the German navy. "My grandchildren can learn helpful lessons from the lives of their

ancestors that they can easily find online," says Jim, who loves his role as an intergenerational connection for his posterity. ■

NOTES

1. See Aaron Holt, in Sally Johnson Odekirk, "What's a Family Tree Gathering?" *Ensign*, Oct. 2014, 39.
2. See Bruce Feiler, "The Stories That Bind Us," *New York Times*, March 15, 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html.

WHO YOU ARE



"In many ways each of us is the sum total of what our ancestors were. The virtues they had may be our virtues, their strengths our strengths, and in a way their challenges could be our challenges."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Phenomenon That Is You," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 53.