

KEEPING MEMORIES ALIVE

By Melissa McKneely

When I was prompted to involve my children in family history, our family was blessed in unexpected ways.

A few years ago I had a powerful impression to start involving my four young children in family history, which evolved into what we called “family history nights.” My parents lived close by, and I invited them to prepare some stories about their lives to share with my children. My parents were so excited! They prepared well and brought pictures, maps, old

toys, and cherished belongings. We didn’t know how long my children’s attention span would be, but we were pleasantly surprised that even after an hour, they still wanted to know more. Because my parents have other grandchildren who don’t live close by, they wanted to record their stories on video, and so we did.

First we had an evening about my dad, followed by an evening about my mother. Next they planned to share stories about their own parents, then their grandparents, and so forth. Consequently, our third family history night featured my grandfather’s life

as told by my dad. My children really enjoyed the life stories, pictures, and items that belonged to their great-grandfather Lewis.

Less than a week after this meeting was Memorial Day weekend, and my family was out of state for a wedding. I got a phone call informing me that my mother had died in a car accident. A reckless driver had crossed over a center median, hitting her head-on and killing her instantly. She was only 59 years old.

One of my first thoughts upon hearing of her passing was of the video we had made. What a treasure



The video we took of my mother (left) and pictures of her with my children (right) are family treasures.



LEFT: IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR; TOP RIGHT: BACKGROUND BY FUET/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK



this video of her sharing her life story is to us now! When I told my children of her death, some of the first questions they asked through their tears were, “What about our family history? Who will tell us about her parents?” It was then that I realized what an impact our family history nights had made.

I will be forever grateful that I listened to the prompting to involve my children in family history. Watching that video of my mother brings peace, comfort, and healing.

I now take lots of opportunities to share memories of my mom with my children. I tell them of her favorite things and things that made her laugh.

I have found pictures of her with each of them, and the pictures are framed in their bedrooms. On her family history night, she showed us a toy tea set she’d enjoyed as a child. My daughters were fascinated with it, and plans were made for a tea party. Although the party never happened, the tea set is now ours, and when we use it, we think about her. Through these things, my mother isn’t forgotten. She lives on in our hearts through the stories, pictures, and videos that keep her memory alive. ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.

Find out how to discover your family’s story at lds.org/topics/family-history/to-turn-our-hearts.



EXCITED TO LEARN

“Our young people are excited to learn about the lives of family members—where they came from and how they lived. Many have had their hearts turned to the fathers. They love the stories and photos, and they have the technological expertise to scan and upload these stories and photos to Family Tree and connect source documents with ancestors to preserve these for all time.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Roots and Branches,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 47.

HOW TO PRESERVE YOUR FAMILY’S STORY

Start preserving your family’s story using FamilySearch’s “Memories” feature (familysearch.org/photos). You can share your family photos, documents, audio recordings, and stories and know that they will be preserved for future generations.

