

# Preserve the Everyday

I recently had a birthday (another year wiser, I hope) and during the evening's conversation with my grown children, I reminisced about the many things I did or had during my "growing-up" years. The toys I played with, the movies I saw, the price of gas, and so forth. I tried to convey to my children what life was like back in the 60s and 70s. And I also wished I had something from life back then to hand down to them. Have you ever wished that you could experience how great-grandma lived? Or even your parents? We can't go back in time, but we can do two things to give future generations a feel for their ancestors' lives - preserve today and re-create yesterday.

Preserve today by making scrapbooks that encompass the "little" things of everyday life. They needn't be special. People of the future would love to see one of today's grocery store ads and marvel at how cheap (or expensive) the items are. Think of the scrapbook as a collage of pictures, items, and words that show how we live. It's a social history of your life. To get you started, here is a list of everyday items you can include in such an album:

- Department store receipts
- Utility bills
- Restaurant take-out menus
- Ticket stubs from movies, sporting events, plays
- Report cards
- School lunch menus
- Event programs
- Pages from TV listings
- Bestseller lists
- Grocery shopping list
- The instructions from "things" you had to assemble.
- Advertisements from newspapers or magazines, especially one's with prices.
- Pay stubs
- Apartment rental agreement
- Brochure on the new car you bought
- Hospital bill from the birth of a child.
- A "You could be a winner" contest flyer.
- Postal stamps
- An old credit card
- Car registrations
- Gasoline receipts
- Car repair bills
- Anything from the purchase of your house
- Pictures of local stores - outside and inside (I wish I had one from the old "5 & 10" we went to as kids)
- Box panels from breakfast cereals, bake mixes, frozen foods...
- A picture of your mail and newspaper deliverers
- Pages from your favorite mail-order catalogs
- Listing of games you or your children play (include items from the games if feasible)
- The scorecard from a game you completed.
- Covers from your favorite magazines.
- Copy of an excuse note for a child's school absence.
- Car pool lists or "phone trees"

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Car/house insurance declarations  
Sports schedules  
Copies of used airline tickets and boarding passes  
A page from a calendar

Get the idea? To someone 50 or 100 years from now, these everyday items would be exciting to see.

You needn't do anything special to make the album. It can be as simple as a random collection of the items, with the items themselves "telling the story". Or you can personalize it by journaling your thoughts on how the item related to your life. For example, if you use a page from a TV listing, choose one that has a favorite show and then indicate that, including why it's a favorite.

Obviously this type of album is never-ending, but you can consider doing your "how we live" album in snapshots. Every three to five years collect a bunch of items for three months and make an album of them. Or go ahead and make it an ongoing album that you gradually add to over the years. When its full, just start a new one. However you do it, be sure to note the date of an item so future generations will have the proper time perspective.

Re-creating the past is a bit tougher. You won't be able to make an album for your ancestors like the one discussed above, but you can read local histories and old newspapers for information. You will need to look at this type of research from a social point of view, rather than an historical perspective. Take your "social" information and interweave what life was like in among the biographical and historical facts you've gathered. For example, perhaps a local history might have a notation about a Fall harvest celebration the community held. This would be an interesting bit of information about life "back then" to include in your farmer ancestor's write-up. You can also include photocopies of old newspaper ads, society articles, or similar that you come across. Any historical type of items that are similar to the earlier list would be wonderful to include.

And of course, remember to properly preserve all the items you put in your albums. For help on this, read our Document Preservation article at:  
<http://www.webyfl.com/generic.jhtml?pid=17>

If you enjoyed this article, please forward it to a friend. Thanks.

Your Family Legacy

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