

Name: _____

Date: _____

Personal and Family History

You

What was your birth name? Is it different from the name you use now?

Is there an interesting story about your birth that you heard from your family?

Your Father

When and where was your father born? When did he, or his family, come to America? Where did they settle and why?

What do you know about his family that is important to you?

What do you know about his childhood, and his sisters and brothers?

Your Mother

When and where was your mother born? When did she, or her family, come to America? Where did they settle and why?

What do you know about her family that is important to you?

What do you know about her childhood, and her sisters and brothers?

Your Family

Were you raised by both your mother and father? If not, with whom did you live and why?

How many children were in your family? Which one were you?

Have your relationships with your siblings changed over the years? How?

What did you learn from your parents that helped you later in life?

What made you proud of your family and what bothered you about them?

Your Grandparents

When and where were your [mother's/father's] parents born? What have you been told about them? Is there a story told by either of your parents that showed what it was like during their childhood?

Do you remember your grandparents? What special memories do you have of them?

Did you have a favorite grandparent — what made that relationship special?

Coming to America

What [country/countries] did your ancestors come from?

When and why did they come to America?

Did they stay in touch with relatives in the “old country”?

Do you have family rituals or customs that are rooted in your family's past?

Family Life

Day to Day

What was it like growing up in your family?

Who provided the family income and how?

What language(s) were spoken in your home? If more than one, can you still speak those language(s)?

What did you do after school, when you were growing up?

Did you have any hobbies? What made them interesting to you?

What did you do after supper in your house, when you were growing up?

How did you spend the weekends when you were a child?

Did anyone in your family play a musical instrument? Did you? (Can you still play it?)

What kind(s) of music did the members of your family listen to?

What kind(s) of magazines and books did your family read? Are there books which are especially important to you?

Did you have a pet? Is there an interesting story about that pet?

What was it like to go to the movies when you were growing up? How much did it cost and what were your favorites?

How and where did you spend your summers when you were a child? Did you go somewhere for vacations?

What were family gatherings like, if you went to them? Where were they held, who came, and how did the relatives act?

Did you have a family member that you considered a “character”? Are there stories that show that person’s eccentricity?

Did anyone outside your immediate family live with you when you were a child (uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, etc.)? For how long and why?

Religion

What religion were your parents? How did they teach you about this religion?

Do you still belong to that faith? If not, what faith do you now practice and why did you change?

If you no longer practice organized religion, does spirituality play any part in your life?

Living Places

How many places did you live while you were growing up? Which place do you consider your “home town”?

What is your home town like?

What was your house like? Describe its size, modern conveniences (or lack of them), and surroundings.

Did you have your own room? If not, who shared it with you? Did you share a bed with that person?

What do you remember about the neighborhood and the neighbors?

If you took a walk around that neighborhood, what would be different from where you live today?

School Years

Grade School & High School

Did you go to school as a child? If so, describe the schools you attended for grades K-12. If not, how were you educated?

How did you get to school each day? How big were your classes? Was there more than one grade in the same room?

If you did not graduate from high school, why did you drop out?

How important was formal education to your family? Did your parents encourage you to continue your education past [grade school / high school / college]? Was there a particular career your parents wanted you to pursue?

Did you like school? Did you have favorite subjects? Why did you like them best?

Did you play on sports teams or belong to extracurricular clubs?

How did your opinion of yourself change during your school years and why?

Who was your best friend? Are you still close today?

During your school years, was there someone who you looked to for guidance and advice? How did that person affect your life?

Did you go to your high school prom or high school dances?

When you left high school, did you have plans for the rest of your life?

College and Graduate School

If you went on to college, where did you go and why did you pick that school?

How much was tuition and how did you or your family pay it?

Did you already have a specific major in mind, or did you choose one later? How did you discover where your interest lay?

Did you graduate and, if so, in what year and with what degree? If you didn't graduate, how long did you attend and why did you stop?

Did you pursue a graduate degree and, if so, in what subject? Where did you attend and how did you pay for it?

Serving Your Country

If you did not serve in the military, did you serve your country some other way, as a civilian? What did you do? Why did you choose to serve in that way?

If you served in the military, did you enlist or were you drafted? When did you serve and in which branch of the military? What was your final rank?

Where did you do basic training? Where were you posted?

What assignment did you like most (or least)? Why? How long were you posted there?

Were you ever in combat? In what war or military action?

Were you ever injured in combat? Where were you treated and did you return to active duty?

Were you ever a prisoner of war? Where and for how long? Describe the experience.

Were you ever decorated and if so, for what? Do you still have your medals and where do you keep them?

What is your most vivid memory of your years in service?

Have you stayed in touch with others from your military unit?

Working Your Way Through Life

Did you have after-school or summer jobs when you were growing up? What were they and what were your responsibilities?

Did your parents like their jobs? Did they pass on a work ethic or work expectations to you?

What was your first full-time job? How old were you when you got it, how did you get it, and how long did it last?

If you were a homemaker, how old were you when you began keeping your own house and what was it like in the early years?

Did "homemaking" change for you over the years? Did you enjoy it?

How old were you when you left home to live on your own? Where did you live and how much did it cost?
List all the jobs you have held, with as many dates and details as you can remember.
Have you ever gone into business for yourself? How did it turn out?
When and how did you settle on a permanent career or job, if you did?
Is there another career that you wish you had pursued instead of the path you did take?
If you could go back and change the way you handled your finances, what would you do differently? Why?
At what age [did you/do you] plan to retire? If you are retired now, did you make adequate plans in advance to support yourself during these years?
How has retirement changed your life? Did you expect these changes?

Love & Romance

Teen & Adult

Do you remember your first childhood crush? Did you ever tell that person that you liked [him/her]? Did you ever date that person?
Did you date as a teenager? If so, describe a typical date. Were you chaperoned? How late were you allowed to stay out and what happened if you missed your curfew?
Who was your first real [girlfriend/boyfriend]?
How old were you when you gave or received your first real kiss?
Did you have a steady [girlfriend/boyfriend] during your teen years? What did it mean to “go steady”? What was considered “proper” romantic behavior?
How did you meet the people you dated as an adult? Is there a story you might like to tell about dating as a single adult?
[Were you / are you] happy being single? What [did you / do you] want from a romantic relationship?

Courtship & Marriage

If you are married, how long were you single and how many people did you date before you met your spouse?
If you are single, is there a reason you haven't married?
Where did you meet your spouse? What was attractive to you about your spouse and why was your spouse attracted to you?
How long did you date before you became engaged? How and where did you “pop” or “answer” the big question?
What did your family think of your fiancé(e)? What did your spouse's family think of you?
Where did you and your fiancé(e) live before you got married? How long was your engagement?
When and where did you get married? Was there a reception? How many people attended? Describe your wedding (and the reception, if there was one).
Where did you spend your wedding night and your honeymoon?
Where did you live as newlyweds, and how would you describe the early years of your marriage?
Are you still married? If so, how many years have you been married? How would you describe your marriage today?
If you are no longer married, how and why did the marriage end? Are you still friends? Has either of you married again? How has this [second/third] marriage worked out?

Children

Becoming a Parent

Did you and your spouse discuss whether or not you wanted to have a family? If so, what issues came up during that discussion?

If you decided not to have children, how did the decision affect you? How do you feel about that decision now?

If you did have children, how soon after your marriage did the first baby arrive?

How many children did you have? Did they all survive infancy? Did they all reach adulthood?

Did you adopt children? If so, why did you choose to adopt?

List the full names and birth dates of each of your children. Where do they all live now?

Are they in school? (At what school, studying what subject?) Do they work? (Employed by whom, doing what?)

How often do you see your children?

Parenting

What have you enjoyed about being a parent? What was most challenging?

If you could do it again, what would you change about the way you parented your children?

What was the most difficult problem ever brought to you by one of your children, and how did you handle it? Do you feel you handled it well?

How did you discipline your children?

Tell a story about each of your children that illustrates what they were like when they were small.

What is the best piece of advice you ever gave to your children?

What values did you strive to teach your children? What traditions did you try to pass down to them? Were you successful in this?

What makes you proud about each of your children? What bothers you about each of them?

Did you take an active role in your children's schooling, or in their activities?

Did you travel as a family, for vacations or for other reasons?

Did other members of your family live with you? Did they help take care of your children?

Leaving the Nest

If your children are grown, how did your life change when they moved out of the house?

Have your grown children fulfilled your expectations and hopes for them, and what was your reaction to the path they chose?

Are any of your children married and, if so, to whom? When did they get married?

Do you have any grandchildren? Tell about them.

What do you enjoy most about being a grandparent? What is most challenging?

Do you have a special relationship with one or more of your grandchildren? What makes it special?

Have you become a great-grandparent? Tell about your great-grandchildren.

Living Your Life

Beliefs and Expectations

If you practice a religion, has your faith helped you during difficult periods in your life? How?

What do you believe happens to people after they die?

What do you think each of us owes to people who are less fortunate than we are? What have you done to help others? Do you feel it [is/was] enough?

Was there someone you admire, who was your role model? Do you measure yourself against that person? Why do you admire that person?

What makes life worth living for you? How has your answer to that question changed over the years?

What are the most important rules you've made for yourself to help cope with difficult times during your life?

Life Choices

Has your life turned out the way you thought it would when you were young?

Was there one incident or insight that changed you and altered your future? What happened and how did it affect you?

What was the biggest risk you ever took, and how did it work out?

How have friendships been important to you? Have you been successful in making and sustaining friendships? Have you had a "best" friend? For how long? What role does he or she play in your life now?

If you had your life to live over again, what (if anything) would you change?

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given and what is the best advice you ever gave to someone else?

Looking back, what makes you most proud?

Politics & People

When did you first vote for a president, who were the candidates, and what was important to you in making your decision?

Have you belonged to one or more political parties? What policies or positions drew you to that party?

Describe the world events that were most important in your lifetime.

Who were your heroes when you were growing up? Who are your heroes now? How have these heroes influenced you over the years?

What historical events and technologies most changed the world during your lifetime? What were their effects?

Leisure Time

How important to you is your leisure time and how do you spend most of it?

What do you do for exercise and how often do you do it? What purpose does exercise serve for you?

Do you have a pet? If so, what is its name and what need does it fill in your life?

Do you have a vacation home or a favorite place where you go "to get away"? What need does it serve?

Describe how you live today? How close is it to your ideal of the way you would like to live.

Predictions

What is there about life today that you could never have imagined when you were a child?

How do you think someone will answer the previous question 100 years from now?

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future? What do you think holds the greatest promise for the future or the greatest challenge?

What do you expect life to be like 100 years from now?