December genealogy tip

The holidays are a great time to capture family stories, especially from the elder members of your family. One of the biggest regrets that family historians have is that they didn’t ask few questions when their grandparents, parents, or older aunts and uncles were alive.

We’re all busy during this time of year. So here are a few quick tips to collect those stories now, before it’s too late. Don’t overwhelm yourself by thinking you have to do everything all at once. Collecting just a single short story or a few facts is fine.

Try a few of these suggested questions to get a conversation started with your family elders:

* What were your grandparents’ names? Where were they from?
* Did your parents or grandparents ever tell you stories about “the old country?”
* Where did you live when you were a child? What was the neighborhood like?
* How many students were in your elementary school? What was your best friend’s name?
* What games did you play when you were young? Did you have a favorite pet as a child? What was its name?
* What did you want to be when you grew up? What did you actually become when you grew up?
* What was your first job?
* What was your favorite subject in school? Your least favorite?
* What holidays did you celebrate? Did you have any family traditions?
* What did your father do for a living? Did your mother work outside the home?
* How did you meet your spouse?
* Can you identify for me the people in this old photo? Do you know where the photo was taken?

Genealogists don’t just gather names and dates, but try to put their ancestors’ lives in context and add the “color” to it. And, by the way, it’s always a good time to start collecting your own stories for *your* descendants. They will thank you later.

Happy holidays from all of us on the Genealogy Committee!