

Passing on Family Heirlooms and Stories to the Next Generation

Over the years I have done my fair share of collecting and keeping. Many items I have kept mean something to me. My mom's baby shoes, a diamond ring, my grandmother's cookie jar and my great aunt's steamer trunk are all things that I have kept for years. My hope is to be able to pass on these keepsakes and their stories to my children. But when I look around at all of these "special keepsakes", I realize I have failed to tell my family the story behind these relics.

Old baby shoes in the closet means nothing to others if they don't not know the story behind it. Share some of the memories associated with each of those special items. By adding to the meaning of these special items it gives value and hopefully a story that your children can pass on to the next generation.

If you think back to a special holiday or event, you can remember some of the objects connected to that memory, whether it was the china on the table, the cookie jar that always sat on top of the refrigerator, the wallpaper on the walls of the dining room or maybe the smudges by the light switch, all of those things help to imprint that memory on your mind.

Sharing stories about special objects helps family members to understand the past and learn to appreciate another side of their family. These stories are part of your family legacy. So how can you share this story in a simple way that can easily be shared, preserved and passed on to others?

Create a note card, video or recording that answers the following questions.

- *What is the name of the item?**
- *When did you acquire it?**
- *How did you acquire it?**
- *When and how have you used it?**
- *Who else has owned it before you?**
- *Who do you want to give it to when you no longer need it?**
- *Why do you want this person to receive it?**
- *What other memories do you have of this item?**

***What memories do you have of the people who owned this before you?**

If you are lucky to have the time to share these stories in person, that is great. My preference is to have it written down. If you are using note cards to capture all of this information, then find a way to attach that card to the item so it becomes a part of the item. When you attach it be sure you do so in a way that will not harm the item. For example, I would not want to staple or tape this to my baby shoes, attaching the card to the shoe strings or hand tag may be a better option.

Family members are not going to understand or even value the importance of a family heirloom if the story is missing. That is why it is critical to make sure you have a method to tell the story so family members can understand and appreciate the significance of the item.

Source: Who Gets Grandmother's Yellow Pie Plate—Transferring Nontitle Property