

From Granny with Love
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We have all heard the stories of grandparents who walked five miles in the snow and blistering wind to get to school. Or what about the legendary tales of how great-grandma kept the children fed one summer on nothing but beets and radishes. What about the tales of romance as Auntie Mae was courted as a young girl by her first and only love Wilbur, her childhood sweetheart who knew at the tender age of seven they were destined to be together till death do us part.

And let us not forget the handkerchief that Liza Jane, our great-great aunt, received from a stranger while aboard the Commander on a summertime voyage across the Atlantic. What about the precious locks of hair belonging to Cousin Sissy when she was only three years old? Then there is the small swatch of fabric from a wedding dress shipped from the family of a young girl of 16 from her motherland of England.

Do you have precious memories such as these? Do you remember sitting in the arms of Grandma as she rocked you to sleep sharing stories of her childhood. Have you forgotten some of them? What about the details, are those still crisp as the first day you heard them? Have you passed them on to your children and

grandchildren? Have you thought about the stories of your family, the tales and yarns they have spun, the legends and heroes, and maybe even if you are like me a story or two of about scoundrels and scallywags.

If you have the stories and can add a dash of fun, a smidgen of laughter, and a dollop of creativity then you can create something special for your loved ones. Mine is called From Granny with Love. It's a memory box my grandmother created for me with the stories and mementos that were precious to her. It was her legacy to me and it is something I treasure. While its contents are not valuable, it's priceless to me. It is a one-of-a-kind; there is none equal or like it; it cannot be duplicated. But the good news is you can create your own that your grandchildren will cherish.

There are no limits to what you can do or what you can include. However, you should collect, preserve, and prepare your memory box as an archivist. It's not necessary to read the latest books on preservation or have any fancy training. Everything you need to know, you already know, you just don't know that know it. And most likely, it's already everything Granny already shared with you rocking in the rocking chair during those lazy summer afternoons.

First things first: **Select a container.** How many items are you planning to include? Consider how long you want your Memory Box to last. To control

moisture desiccant "gel bags" such as those included in the packaging of electronic goods and in bottles of vitamin C tablets can be used. If a memory box is going to sit on a dresser or a chest, desiccants are most likely not necessary. However, if it's possible the box will find its way into a dark basement or dank attic than you definitely want to consider their use. It is recommended careful consideration is made when selecting a container. You want to choose one that is not made of metal nor has metal locking mechanisms as over time these will rust and potential seal the container permanently. Fabric is a good alternative.

1. Collect the objects to go in your time capsule. Who is the recipient of your memory box? What kind of items are you planning to include? Have fun with the gathering of items. Memories are sparked by all sorts of items, some large, some small, some simple, some fancy. Some old, some new. Choose things that reflect your spirit and personality. Here are some suggestions. Photographs, diaries, letters, a favorite book, mementos and souvenirs from travels, postcards, stamps, a favorite toy, a bookmark or pamphlet, a handkerchief, a scarf, a pair of glasses or gloves, programs or playbills from events you attended, cards or announcements, news clippings, swatches of

fabric, or small clipping from a favorite childhood dress. There is no limit to what you can include.

Additional items to consider: a favorite children's book, movie ticket stubs, flyers from events, restaurant menus, a favorite recipe or two, maybe it's grandma's secret recipe for flaming hot mustard greens.

2. Keep in mind there are items that are not suitable for inclusion in a memory box including food, drinks, furs such as mink collars, any type of writing instrument with ink, liquids of any kinds, medicines, herbs, plants (unless they are pressed), paperclips (metal rusts and adheres to paper over time), any items that are considered toxic or dangerous such as Roman candles or a package of fireworks, crayons and/or any wax-based writing instruments. Candles of any type including Beeswax, Pop Rocks candy, packages of gum, matchbooks, lighters, ammunition such as BB's, or glow sticks. Lotions and other beauty items such as lip gloss, lip stick, eye shadow will disintegrate over time. Items with that might potentially cause leakage should also be avoided. Any paper items with mold are not suitable. Mold will spread to other items. It is also recommended to avoid textiles such as wool and nylon fabrics because

they could potentially break down causing other items to degrade more quickly. However, you can contain items made of these fabrics in a sealable pouch.

3. Consider writing a description of what it is like to live right now compared with when you were a child. Talk about daily life and ordinary day-to-day activities; current fads, fashions, attitudes, and trends; how much everyday objects usually cost; and anything else that you would like to say.

4. Suggestions and recommendations for preserving items include individual bags and containers for specific items to prevent such problems as color transfer and the migration of acids from one item to another. Using special buffered acid-free interleaving tissues between posters, maps, and other flat items in the same enclosure is highly recommended. Certain printing techniques, inks, and paper can over time fuse together. The same is true for photographs. Textiles should be wrapped in acid-free tissue paper. Coins, jewelry, hair accessories, etc. should be placed in tarnish-reducing envelopes or bags. Newsprint must be handled properly. Items should never be laminated as the acids cause the deterioration of the item.

5. If papers are included such as magazines, newspapers, brochures, it is highly encouraged to use an acid free sleeve or envelope ensuring the paper will endure longer. (Acid free materials absorb humidity and extend the life of materials.)

The last thing you might consider doing is a self-interview or having one of your family members interview you. An oral history is a wonderful way to document your life and all those family stories. They are also special because even after we are gone are grandchildren and great grandchildren can hear Granny's voice. As an oral historian, I often get call from children or grandchildren asking for a copy of their mother's oral history – they want to hear her voice. What could be more special than Granny sharing family tales in her own voice?

All too often our good intentions fall to the wayside when it comes to sharing our memories. Many times, it's too late to capture the stories because like all things details begin to fade. With a memory box, you can become the oral historian and archivist for your family preserving your family's history. What you start can easily be shared with others involving them in the process. Start now to save the past and capture the moment.