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>> Subject: Interviewing family members questionnaire

Guide for Interviewing Family Members

The purpose of this questionnaire is to guide you in recording the life experiences of a member of your family. The information you record will become an important link between you and your descendants.

At the top of a sheet of paper write: the full name, and the date and place of birth of yourself, your mother (maiden name), your father, your brothers and sisters, your spouse, and your children: and the date and place of marriage for yourself, your brothers and sisters (with spouse's names), and your children (with spouse's names).

Write your thoughts on sheets of good quality paper, numbering each answer to correspond to the appropriate question. Write your name on each sheet, too, and leave room to add new thoughts later.

Grandparents

1. What were the names of your mother's parents?
2. When and where were they born and where did they live?
3. What did they do for a living?
4. Do you have personal memories of them?
5. What were the names of your father's parents?
6. When and where were they born and where did they live?
7. What did they do for a living?
8. Do you have personal memories of them?
9. Did you know your grandparents well?
10. What do you remember hearing about your GREAT-Grandparents?
11. Did you ever meet them?
12. Did your great-grandparents, grandparents, or parents come to the US from a foreign country? Any stories told in your family about the crossing? Do you have any relatives in foreign countries?
13. What traditions are still practiced in your family?

Childhood

The family house

14. What type of house did you live in as a child?
15. Other buildings on the same property?
16. If you moved during your childhood, tell where and when and what you can remember of each house and the family circumstances and the reason for the move.
17. In what room did you eat? Kitch? Dining room?
18. How was your home heated?
19. Did you have a fireplace?

20. What kind of kitchen stove did your parents cook on?
21. What fuel was used?
22. Did you have to buy the fuel or was this a chore, such as cutting wood, with which you had to help?
23. Did you always have electricity? If not, when did you get it?
24. Did you ever use candles or kerosene lamps?
25. Did your family have a cellar? Where did you store food?
26. Where did your family get water? Was it plentiful? What methods were used to conserve water?

Family relations, responsibilities, conditions

27. What was your position in the family? Oldest? Youngest?
28. What were your duties as a small child?
29. Who cooked the meals? Who did the ironing?
30. Did you buy or make your own clothing?
31. When did you learn to cook and who taught you?
32. Did you ever learn to sew? Crochet? Knit? Embroider? And who taught you?
33. Did you ever learn the mechanics of a car and who taught you?
34. Did your family keep in touch with distant family?
35. Did you visit relatives often?
36. How did you get your mail?
37. What do you remember about family pets?
38. Were you especially close to anyone in the family?
39. How did the family spend its evenings?

Family income and livelihood

40. What did your father do for a living?
41. Did your mother ever work outside of the home?
42. Did you contribute to the family income?
43. When did you get your first job outside of the family?
44. Did your family have a garden?
45. Who did the work on the garden?
46. What kinds of vegetables did you grow?
47. Did your family have fruit trees?
48. Who did the canning?
49. Did you raise chickens?
50. What kind of meat did you eat?
51. Did you keep a cow for milk?
52. Did you make your own butter and cheese?
53. Did anyone in the family sell eggs or butter?
54. If you lived on a farm, what crops were planted?
55. Who did the work? Family? Hired hands?

Days, seasons, and special occasions

56. What did Saturday mean to you?
57. What did Sunday mean to you?
58. Did you attend church on Sunday?
59. Where did you attend church?
60. How did you spend Christmas?

61. What kinds of gifts did you receive at Christmas?
62. Did your family observe Easter?
63. How and where did you observe the Fourth of July?
64. How was your birthday celebrated?
65. What kinds of gifts did you receive on your birthday?
66. Did your family entertain often? When?
67. Did your family attend picnics? Family reunions? What do you remember about them?
68. How did you keep cool in the summer?
69. What did you wear in the winter to keep warm?
70. Do you remember any blizzards or tornadoes or floods?

Friends and Games

71. What did you do for recreation?
72. Did you or your brothers or sisters have any hobbies?
73. Who was your best friend?
74. What did you and your friends do when you got together?
75. Did you and your playmates play any organized games?
76. Did you ever learn to swim?
77. Did you participate in youth organizations?

School

78. Where did you go to school?
79. Did you ever attend a one-room schoolhouse?
80. How did you get to school? If you walked, how far?
81. What do you remember about these walks? Did you walk alone or with friends?
82. Were these walks a hardship in winter?

Transportation and surroundings

83. Describe the size of the town where you lived or shopped.
84. Where did your parents shop?
85. How large or small were the stores?
86. If you lived in a small town or on the farm, did you ever go into the city to shop?
87. What was the largest town you remember visiting when you were young?
88. Did you ever travel on a train while you were young?
89. Did you or your family own a horse and buggy?
90. When did your family acquire its first car? What make? How much did it cost?
91. When did you learn to drive a car?
92. Where did your family go on vacation?

Outlook

93. Whom did you admire most when you were young?
94. When you were small, what did you hope to do when you grew up?

Higher Education and Career

95. What education did you get past high school? Did you

- study in your adult years?
96. Did your family support, oppose, or encourage you?
 97. Who influenced you most and helped you to develop your skills?
 98. Would you choose the same career if you had it to do over?

Marriage and Later Life

99. When and where did you meet your husband or wife?
100. How and when did you get engaged?
101. When and where did you marry?
102. Did you go on a honeymoon?
103. Where was your first home?
104. What is your spouse's occupation?
105. Where and when were your children born?
106. Did you or your spouse go into military service?
107. If your husband went into service, what did you do while he was away?
108. What memories do you have of war years?
109. To what organizations have you belonged?
110. Have you been politically active during your lifetime?
111. Which presidents have you voted for?

Philosophy and Outlook

112. Do you have a philosophy of life to share with your descendants?
113. Do you have a favorite philosopher, teacher, or writer who best expresses your philosophy?
114. Do you have religious leanings or strong religious beliefs?
115. In your opinion, which have been the greatest advances or inventions of all?
116. What things have given you the most pleasure or satisfaction?
117. Is there anything that has caused you perpetual concern? What events or trends have disturbed you most in your lifetime?
118. What has been your experience in regard to the following?
 - a. Answers to prayers?
 - b. Necessity and power of love?
 - c. Will power as opposed to being ruled by one's feelings?
119. What do you consider to be your most important achievements?

Abstracted from Virginia Allee's "A Family History Questionnaire" in October 1978 FAMILY HERITAGE MAGAZINE.

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