

Personal Life History

QUESTIONNAIRE



Ask the questions and take notes.

Consider a voice recording or video if they are open to it.

Compile answers into a booklet form later. Add a few photos if possible.

Ask the questions over a number of days or weeks, not all at one time.

Ask questions on "good" days if health is declining. Don't tire them out getting all the questions answered.

If they are able and prefer to write their answers encourage them to do so.

A handwritten history would be priceless.

BIRTH

Confirm the date

Did parents ever tell the story of their birth or anything special about it?

Hospital and town

Doctor's name

Special events happening at the time

Baby pictures

P A R E N T S

Who were your parents?

How did your parents meet?

What did your parents do for a living?

Where did you live?

What do you remember most about your Mother? Father?

What about your grandparents?

Who do you favor in looks?

CHILDHOOD

Tell me about your childhood.

What kind of house did you live in?

Chores?

What did you want to be when you grew up?

What did you and your friends do for fun?

What was your typical day like in the summer? Winter?

What was special about holidays?

P E T S

What were your pets' names?

Where did you get them?

Which was your favorite?

Could they do any tricks?

What happened to them?

IMPORTANT VALUES & BELIEFS

Values and beliefs important to me are:

What advice would you give to young people?

What values and beliefs did you learn from your parents?

Were there any people who were major influences in your life?

What was one major lesson that you learned during your life?

LIKES & DISLIKES

A few of my favorite things:

Smells:

Foods:

Recipes:

Color:

Pasttimes:

Seasons:

Jokes:

TV Show, Movies:

Music:

Sports:

Time of Day:

LIKES & DISLIKES

Some things I really don't like.

EDUCATION

Where did you go to school?

How did you get to school?

What was your schoolhouse like?

How many were in your class usually?

Did you ever have to miss school to work?

Who was your favorite teacher?

What was your favorite subject?

Did you ever get in trouble at school?

Who were your best friends?

Did you play sports?

What did you do at recess?

What was one of your most embarrassing moments?

LOVE & MARRIAGE

Who were you married to?

When is your anniversary?

Where did you meet?

How did you propose (or how were you proposed to)?

Did you give (or receive) a ring?

Tell me about your wedding day.

What did your family think of your spouse?

Did he/she have any brothers or sisters?

How did you get along with the family?

Any silly arguments between you and your spouse?

CHILDREN

Tell me the names of your children.

How did you decide on their names?

Do you have grandchildren or great-grandchildren?

How did it feel when your children were born?

How did it feel to become a grandparent?

What do the grandchildren call you?

Is there anything you wish you had done differently with your children or grandchildren?

What words would you hope that your children or grandchildren, would use to describe you?

WORK HISTORY

What was your first paying job?

How much did you make?

Tell me about your most favorite job.

Tell me about your least favorite job.

Did you ever get fired?

What was the hardest job you ever had?

Who were some of your work friends?

H O B B I E S & I N T E R E S T S

Did you have a hobby? Tell me about it.

What could you do that most of your friends could not?

Who taught you how to do things?

Did you like to go see movies or shows?

What was your favorite movie?

Did you like to dance?

S P O R T S

Did you play sports or like to watch?

Do you like to fish or hunt?

Did you ever get in a fist fight and why?

Do you like to watch sports on TV?

Who is your favorite team?

Did you ever see a professional game?

TRAVEL

Did you travel?

How about family vacations?

International travel?

What was the largest city you ever visited?

How many states have you been to?

Tell me about the best trip you ever took.

IMPORTANT FIRSTS

First time you spent a night away from home.

First time you drove a vehicle?

First time you kissed someone (or was kissed).

First time you had a telephone.

First time you ever smoked a cigarette.

First time you ever tasted alcohol.

First time you were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

H O M E

Tell me about your favorite home or house that you have lived in.

What does your house look like?

Have you ever lived with someone other than family?

Have you ever lived out on your own before marriage?

FAMILY LIFE & TRADITIONS

What traditions does your family have?

Do you get together on holidays?

How do you celebrate birthdays?

What was the best birthday present you ever received?

What was the best Christmas present you ever received?

What was the worst gift you ever received?

VEHICLES & TRANSPORTATION

What was your favorite form of transportation?

Who taught you how to drive?

How old were you?

Did you ride the school bus?

Did you ride horses?

Tell me about your first vehicle?

Did you ever get a traffic ticket?

What were the roads like?

What was the speed limit?

How much was gasoline?

EXTENDED FAMILY

Did you have aunts, uncles and cousins?

Did they live close to you?

Did you see them often?

Tell me what you would do when you all got together.

CHURCH

Did you attend church?

What did the church look like?

Who was the pastor?

Did you have a Sunday School teacher that you liked best?

What is your favorite gospel song?

What kind of functions did the church have?

Did you go to church on other days than Sunday?

MILITARY

Did you serve in the military?

Which branch of service?

Where were you stationed?

Tell me about your basic training.

Did you have to fight in a war?

Have you remained in touch with any of your military friends?

What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the service?

APPLIANCES & GADGETS

Did you always have electricity growing up?

What was it like if not?

Do you remember the first time your family got electricity?

How was your home heated and cooled?

What did your first TV look like?

What was the first TV show you remember?

First phone?

First computer?

Do you remember getting a microwave for the first time?

LIFE HISTORY

Use these suggested questions and topics to encourage the person to speak about their life. Some are open-ended questions and others are leading. If you get a "yes" to question, expand on it. You can always use the phrase "tell me about.."

They are just suggestions. If the person starts talking about something else, just follow their lead and keep listening.

If you encounter topics that seem distressful, don't dwell on them. Not everyone's life is a bed of roses.

A sad topic is okay, but don't push for more if you have entered a touchy subject.
Encourage those funny stories!

A personal history should only be the facts that the person wishes to share. Don't fill in the blanks with what you know to be fact, unless it just dates, names, etc.

DON'T WAIT

If you have thought about taking a personal history from your parents, friends or other loved ones. go ahead and do it.

A personal history can always be amended later)))

