

## SHARING YOUR LIFE STORY

By Rev. Taylor Phillips

Everyone has a unique story to share, and someone would like to hear it. Those of us who live in the culture of the PCUSA tend to be self-effacing, and sometimes the consequence is that historical moments we lived through do not get passed along to the next generation. Yet there are people who follow history, there are parents searching for topics for their children's history projects, and there are youth facing the journeys before them who like to hear episodes from another time. An eyewitness recollection from WWII or the protest era of the 1960's can always find an audience.

Regardless of the period, the details from your life, while seemingly commonplace at the time, inevitably reveal an era which has been forgotten. Not too many students in school today have heard of Sidney Poitier, or have milked a cow. One resident at our retirement community was living in Tallahassee, Florida when telephones were installed, so his phone number was simply "1."

If you were to go through your photo albums, you may stumble upon a moment in time that your grandchildren have never heard of. As we engage in these conversations, we also discover how upcoming generations see the world differently. Yet at the same time, we are also discovering how history cycles around. Ten years ago, high school students couldn't understand why the U.S. would have had reason to fear the U.S.S.R.. By this year, reasons to be concerned about Russia have, of course, re-emerged.

We are also role modeling what living a long life looks like, including, our life in faith. One of the many ways we model a long, happy life is the moment when we invite students from schools and churches to come sing Christmas hymns with us. They get to perform for a group that wants them to succeed, yet we have the further awareness that many of them will be singing the same hymns with their grandchildren someday.

Here are some possible discussion-starters:

See if you can recall where you were when you heard the news of one of the turning points in history. How did your family react to the broadcast of Japan's surrender or the assassination of President Kennedy? Try explaining the feeling of that moment to your grandchildren.

Look through your favorite photos from your life, and the lives of your family. You've been through them many times before, of course, but this time you're looking for a concrete detail: clothing, a convertible, the New York skyline in the background, the dirt floor of a one-room schoolhouse. Then your task becomes explaining what that detail was, and what it meant at the time.

Headlines and articles, from newspapers, company newsletters, or any other publication, may include a gem or two, such as "Baby of the Year" or "Musical Chairs Champion of Callaway Gardens."

How did you decide where to go to college? How did you get your first big job? How did you propose, or how were you proposed to? One of the turning points in your journey is bound to have a story behind it.

It may only be possible to pass along a few precious tidbits from a long life through several major chapters of the history of our nation and our world. It may only be possible to reach a few people among the next generation. Still, that one moment or photo stands a chance of being remembered, just as you remember moments from your childhood about your grandparents.

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