

* A MENU FOR *

A GREAT INTERVIEW

By Margaret Sheffield

I thought I knew all about Grandpa, but boy was I wrong.

While recently involved in a stake youth music festival about family history, I was invited to find a story about a living relative or an ancestor. At first I wasn't excited about the assignment. I'd always assumed I would work on family history when I was older. But I decided to start by emailing my grandparents to see if they had any interesting family stories.

After emailing, I called to schedule a time to interview my grandpa. We decided to meet at a restaurant for dinner. There, my grandfather told me childhood memories and a special story about being sealed to his family in the Salt Lake Temple when he was seven years old.

I've heard other people tell incredible tales about their ancestors, and I wanted an amazing story too. But as I learned more about my family, I discovered that dramatic stories don't make up all of our family history. Most of our genealogy is full of everyday people who had incredible faith.

I really enjoyed interviewing my grandpa, but afterward I thought of ways I could have done things better.

First, we were in a noisy restaurant, and that was fine while Grandpa spoke of his childhood. But it didn't provide the right atmosphere for his sacred story. I wish I'd had a quieter place to listen.

Second, I became so enthralled with his stories that I often forgot to take notes. I

wish I'd recorded the interview so I could listen to the story and make sure no information was lost.

Finally, I learned the importance of asking more specific questions. Instead of asking, "What are some of your favorite childhood memories?" I could have asked, "What was your favorite Christmas tradition as a child?" or, "Do you remember a time when your testimony first began to grow?"

I still don't know everything about my grandfather, but through interviewing him, I discovered life-changing events in his life and became closer to him. I'm grateful for the experience I had and look forward to interviewing him again, along with other relatives. **NE**

Margaret Sheffield lives in Utah, USA.

* Tips for *

INTERVIEWING

BEFORE the interview

- * Find a quiet location where both you and the person being interviewed feel comfortable and where you could have a spiritual conversation.
- * Make a list of questions to ask. Questions can start a conversation, and specific questions can draw out stories. Remember that you don't need to ask all the questions on your list and you can always add more as the interview progresses.
- * Share the types of questions you'll ask in the interview when you talk to the person about when and where you'll meet. This will give them time to start thinking about what they could say.

ILLUSTRATION BY NATALE HOOPES

DURING the interview

- * Record it. Bring a pencil and paper and take notes. Bring a recording device so you can listen to the conversation later. You may even consider video recording it so future generations will know what the person looked like and see their mannerisms as they talked. Be sure that the person is fine with you recording, and try to place the equipment where it won't be a distraction but where it picks up the voices.
- * Begin a conversation. Make sure the person you're interviewing has time to talk, give them plenty of time to tell you things that aren't on your list. Ask follow-up questions when needed as they tell a story, and ask how they felt about a certain situation.
- * Know when to end each discussion and move to the next question. Make sure the person feels comfortable with the time spent on your questions—not too much and not too little.
- * Be sensitive to personal matters and emotions. When my grandfather told me his story, he became very emotional. I was patient and waited for him to continue instead of jumping in with more questions.

AFTER the interview

- * Thank the person for the interview.
- * Review your notes immediately. The notes you took may not have been very complete, and you want to make them more understandable when you read them later. Write a summary as soon as possible while everything is still fresh in your mind.
- * Make a backup copy of your notes and digital files.
- * Follow up. You may want to schedule another interview.