Questions for Family Interviews

Compiled by Jennifer Wilder

Youth

1. What's your full name? Why did your parents give you this name? Did you have a nickname?
2. When and where were you born?
3. How did your family come to live there?
4. Were there other family members in the area? Who?
5. What was the house (apartment, farm, etc.) like? How many rooms? Bathrooms? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Telephones?
6. Were there any special items in the house that you remember?
7. Describe the personalities of your family members. What were their full names?
8. What was your father's occupation? Where did he work?
9. Did your mother work? Where?
10. Did you have a job as a kid? Doing what?
11. Did anyone in your family ever serve in the military?
12. Did anyone in your family ever hold a public office?
13. Describe a typical family dinner. Did you all eat together as a family? Who did the cooking? What were your favorite foods?
14. How were holidays (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions?
15. What is your earliest childhood memory?
16. What was your favorite song?
17. Did anyone in your family play a musical instrument?
18. What kind of organizations did your family belong to (fraternal, charitable, scouting, etc.)?
19. What kind of games did you play growing up?
20. What was your favorite toy and why?
21. What was your favorite thing to do for fun (movies, beach, etc.)?
22. Did you have family chores? What were they? Which was your least favorite?
23. Did you receive an allowance? How much? Did you save your money or spend it?
24. What was school like for you as a child? What were your best and worst subjects? Where did you attend grade school? High school? College?
25. What school activities and sports did you participate in?
26. Who were your childhood heroes?
27. What were your favorite songs and music?
28. Did you have any pets? If so, what kind and what were their names?
29. What was your religion growing up? What church, did you attend?
30. Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper?
31. Who were your friends when you were growing up?
32. What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?
33. How is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?
34. Who was the oldest relative you remember as a child? What do you remember about them?
35. Of all the things you learned from your parents, which do you feel was the most valuable?
36. What do you know about your family surname?
37. Is there a naming tradition in your family, such as always giving the firstborn son the name of his paternal grandfather?
38. What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors?
39. Are there any stories about famous or infamous relatives in your family?
40. Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members?
41. Are there any special heirlooms, photos, Bibles or other memorabilia that have been passed down in your family?

**Marriage**

42. What is/was the full name of your spouse?
43. When and how did you meet your spouse? What did you do on dates?
44. What qualities drew you to him/her?
45. Did you exchange any special gifts during your courtship?
46. How long did you date before getting engaged?

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47. What was it like when you proposed? Where and when did it happen? How did you feel?

48. Where and when did you get married?

49. What memory stands out the most from your wedding day?

50. Who participated in your wedding?

51. Did you have a reception? Was there music? What songs were played?

52. How would you describe your spouse? What did you admire most about them?

53. Do you have any favorite stories from your marriage or about your husband/wife?

54. What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

Military

55. Were you in the military?

56. Did you go to war?

57. During your service, can you recall times when you were afraid?

58. What are your strongest memories from your time in the military?

59. What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

Parenting

60. How did you find out you were going to be a parent the first time? How did you feel?

61. Why did you choose your children's names?

62. What was your proudest moment as a parent?

63. What did your family enjoy doing together?

64. Can you describe the moment when you saw your child for the first time?

65. Do you remember when your last child left home for good?

66. Do you have any favorite stories about your kids?

67. Do you remember what was going through your head when you first saw each child?

68. How did you choose each name for your child?

69. What was each child like as a baby? As a young child?

70. Do you remember any of the songs you used to sing to me? Can you sing them now?

71. What were the hardest moments you had when I was growing up?

72. What is your favorite memory of each child?

73. If you could do everything again, would you raise your kids differently?

74. What advice would you give about raising kids?
75. What are your dreams for each child?
76. What are your hopes and dreams for what the future holds for each child?
77. Are you proud of each child?
78. How has being a parent changed you?

Adult Life
79. What was your profession and how did you choose it?
80. What are you proudest of in your life?
81. What inventions or developments changed your life, and how?
82. Who has been the most important person in your life? How and why?
83. What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?
84. Who has been the kindest to you in your life?
85. What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
86. If you could hold on to just one memory from your life forever, what would that be?
87. If this were to be our last conversation, what words would you want to pass on to me?
88. How has your life been different than what you’d imagined?
89. How would you like to be remembered?
90. Is there any message you want to give to or anything you want to say to your great-great-great grandchildren when they see or hear this?

Spiritual
91. Can you tell me about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs? What is your religion?
92. Have you experienced any miracles?
93. What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
94. Do you believe in the afterlife? What do you think it will be like?
95. When you meet God, what do you want to say to Him? What do you think He’ll say to you?
Remembering a loved one

(This section is to be used for the family member to reflect on the life of someone who has passed away. Enter this section with respect and gentleness, asking permission to continue.)

1. What was your relationship to ____?
2. Tell me about ____.
3. What is your first memory of ____?
4. What is your best memory of ____?
5. What is your most vivid memory of ____?
6. What did ____ mean to you?
7. Are you comfortable/can you talk about ____’s death? How did ____ die?
8. What has been the hardest thing about losing ____?
9. What would you ask if ____ were here today?
10. What do you miss most about ____?
11. How do you think ____ would want to be remembered?
12. What about ____ makes you smile?
13. What was your relationship like?
14. What did ____ look like?
15. Did you have any favorite jokes or sayings of ____’s?
16. Do you have any stories you want to share about ____?
17. What were ____’s hopes and dreams for the future?
18. Is there something about ____ that you think no one else knows?
19. How are you different now than you were before you lost ____?
20. What is the image of ____ that stays with you?
21. What has helped you the most in your grief?