

Create a Timeline of Your Life

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In these “Preservation Tip of the Month” columns, we often talk about preserving not only your paper documents and photographs, but preserving your personal memories for future generations. Here is another idea in that category that is a fairly easy way to jump-start this project of getting facts about your own life recorded.

Begin with a sheet of paper and write down each year that you have been alive, one to a line, like this:

1962

1963

1964

Next to the year you were born, write, “I was born” and your date of birth. If you are or have been married, write that date in next to the appropriate year. Record your children’s and grandchildren’s birth dates next to the years that they were born. Write down the death dates of any loved ones. Next, write these kinds of events next to the years where they apply:

- Siblings’ births
- Started school, left school or graduated
- Entered the military
- Got your first job, started subsequent jobs, retired
- Moved from one locality to another
- Won an award
- Attended a memorable event (concert, sporting event, etc.)

Your first goal might be just to write down as many events as come to mind. Another time, go back and add details: Where were you born – the city and state, and was it at a hospital or at home? Are there any circumstances you have been told about your birth? For example, the day of my birth still holds the record for the hottest August 20th on record in Fort Wayne. You can begin to expand on many of these events, taking them one at a time. No doubt there are many things you can write about your school years, the jobs you have held, and how you felt when your children were born.

If you begin with a sheet of paper, as I suggested, you will soon run out of room! Consider using your paper as a guide and writing your memories on index cards or in a computer word processing program. Tackle them one at a time and soon you will have a bank of memories that will be cherished for future generations.