

What is YOUR Story?

by Wanda Randle, Membership Chair – Greenville Co., SC Genealogical Society

Take a minute and imagine what your grandchildren will tell their children about YOU. Will they have funny stories to tell? Perhaps they can speak with pride when they recall your achievements or how kind you were to them. Or maybe their memory will involve a special treat that they shared with you.

In this busy world, with blended families, it may be that their children will never ask who their great-grandparents were; and when the next budding genealogist tries to find out who their great-great grandparents were-even your name, birth and death dates, their father or mother might not remember very much. Will there be photographs in a dusty scrapbook and if there is a scrapbook will it have names to identify who the people are? Perhaps there is a DVD that in the future will no longer have a working machine to show it. Remember that what is written in a notebook can always be read, because there is no equipment failure for books.

After the very interesting program that Bill Kivett gave to the Greenville Chapter of the SC Genealogical Society in November, the above questions were in our minds. Mr. Kivett read from a small book that he wrote just for his grandchildren, and there was a power point presentation that illustrated the story of his life. His descendants will know what he looked like as a very young boy, and will have an idea of what life was like as he grew up. There were humorous parts that were not so funny at the time although his audience certainly found them to be so now, as there was quiet laughter. One story was of a Thanksgiving that had a possum as the main course instead of a turkey. That certainly was a memory for him!

“Be sure to tell about a special interest or hobby that is unique to you,” Mr. Kivett said; and he mentioned that whenever he is on a trip, he selects a small rock from that location and labels it, attaching a note that explains where it was found. He has quite a large collection of small rocks in a display case. His curious grandchildren have heard plenty of interesting stories about them. One day they will retell remembered stories to their children.

He told of his dreams as he grew up and showed us how some of them came true during his travels as part of his job, and later on private excursions. He included pictures to help them visualize his dreams and achievements. Remember how powerful a picture is when you write your own story.

Toward the end of the book was a picture of the present Kivett family. There are small children in their family now who will have this book to let them know their grandpa's story and I am very sure that there is another book that tells their grandma's story, too.

That is what Bill Kivett has done for the children who affectionately know him as "Grandpa" and because he prepared his story, future generations will have some idea of who Bill Kivett was. He suggested that we write and rewrite our own story, whether on paper or on a computer, then make a final copy of it, including pictures that help tell your story. His includes a picture of a possum. What will yours have?

Because our membership is a group of people who are interested in genealogy and finding out as much as possible about our ancestors, we realized after Mr. Kivett's program that it is important to write our stories now. One of our frustrations is of finding family pictures with no names on them. People knew who all the people were in that time and they didn't realize the importance of writing names and dates on the backs of pictures of people that they knew. Will you be a dusty photograph in an album for your great-grandchildren to glance at or will you seem a living, interesting person to them? This is what spoke to me. I resolved to continue to make memories WITH my grandchildren and to put in a book something of who I am for them so they can make me REAL to their children.