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Grandparents' Day a great time to document family stories

Your voice: Heidi Bright Parales

My grandfather, a Connecticut farm boy, courageously circled the globe as an ordinary crew-member on W.A. Slater's yacht Eleanor during the 1890s. Little did this landlubber know that 110 years after his maiden voyage, The Slater Memorial Museum would open in Connecticut. The curator would have treasured including a record of my grandfather's two-year expedition - what experiences he and other shipmates shared both on the yacht and in their ports of call.

Oh, the fabulous adventures he must have enjoyed! Unfortunately, no one wrote them down. A few brief stories and a couple of photos remain, lovingly collected and now stored in an heirloom family book.

My other grandfather missed out on overseas travel and university promotions because he refused to join in the European politics leading up to World War II. The pressures he lived with and the eventual destruction of all he knew could have provided his grandchildren with more perspective and an understanding of life in a war-torn country.

Again, no one recorded these stories. They are forever lost.

Fortunately, my maternal grandmother kept a journal while trudging hundreds of miles across the ravaged European countryside, without food, to rejoin family members. My siblings and I cherish this brief diary, our only personal connection with her.

My grandparents will never know how much I would have enjoyed hearing their stories. The wisdom my ancestors garnered, the challenges they overcame, the lifetimes spent in such a different reality - so little remains.

How much richness they could have added to my life, and the lives of my children, by providing us with a deeper sense of core values, of connection, of intergenerational love.

Today, on Grandparents' Day, gather family stories. Preserve them for your children and grandchildren.

They will be cherished for generations.

Loveland writer Heidi Bright Parales, author of "Hidden Voices: Biblical Women and Our Christian Heritage," is a member of the Association of Personal Historians.