



Over the river and through the woods

Stories about getting to know your grandparents

Removed from them by a generation, we know most of our grandparents' lives only through pictures and stories. When we're young their pictures and stories don't mean much, but as we gain our own experiences we come to appreciate the lives and times of our grandparents. The stories and pictures published here reveal some touching, captivating moments and emotions that have connected grandparents to grandchildren.

After she died I learned of how my mother's mother at age 16, accompanied by a boy friend, fled Russia during the revolution, worked as an interpreter and made her way to Turkey where at 18 she married a physician, my grandfather. I wish I could have heard her tell about it.

— Michael E.C. Gery

Thanks to everyone who submitted stories. See more stories about your grandparents on our Web site at www.carolinacountry.com. Next month we will publish your accounts of the best investment you ever made. (Deadline was Nov. 15). See the upcoming themes and rules in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series on page 13.



The young and the restless

Pictured (opposite page) are my great-grandparents, Fred Lee Ervin and Georgia Anna Brittian. Married April 7, 1913, they lived on a farm in Connelly Springs. This picture was taken around 1915. Fred was 25 years old and Georgia was 18.

Considering neither of them ever had a driver's license or drove a car, it was quite a surprise to find this picture of them on this Civil War-era motorcycle. We are not sure what make or model the bike is. If anyone has any information regarding the motorcycle, we would be delighted to hear about it.

Fred was born in 1890 and lived to be 69 years old. Georgia, on the other hand, was born in 1897 and passed away in 1998 at the age of 101. If she would have lived two more years until the year 2000 she would have lived in three different centuries. Imagine that!

*Jeanie Smart Fusco, Connelly Springs
Rutherford EMC*

Respect from Generation X

At the respective ages of 44 and 46, my grandmother and grandfather adopted me, their firstborn grandchild, and raised me as their own daughter. These survivors of the Depression and champions of WWII brought up a Gen X kid reaping the benefits of their sacrifices and hard work, as well as the advances of the Baby Boomers after them.

To experience childhood in an era of prosperity and peace allows a certain security and comfort virtually unknown to previous generations. Bread lines and hand-me-downs and the generosity of a landlord saw my mother's English family through the Depression. Members of my father's family had to be split up among German relatives. At 18 years old, my father enlisted in the Marines during the war.

Only as I mature and gain a fuller understanding of history and the times can I begin to grasp the depth of the hardship they endured. I remember my amazement when my mother told me she did the laundry in a tub with a washboard. Life without washers and dryers? Incomprehensible. And color TV, air conditioning, hot running water, computers, VCRs ... the technology and conveniences we have at our command today were only then being explored, developed and distributed.

Comparatively, the people of my generation and younger are soft. We have it so easy, and we take it all for granted. I have learned so much from "meeting my grandparents." I hold deep respect and admiration for the lives they led and the honesty and integrity with which they led them.

*Tracie Darnell, Cape Carteret
Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative*

Towed by a wooden Wolverine

My grandfather, G.B. McLeod III, has always been a really special person in my life. I have always looked up to him and he has helped to give me my love of the water.

One of my best memories from when I was little is when I used to spend a week with my grandparents on their sailboat each summer. I remember how Granddaddy made me learn to row the dinghy before he'd let me use the engine. I have since learned the wisdom in this.

The story I want to tell is about my grandfather when he was just a couple of years older than I am now.

His family had a cottage at Wrightsville Beach, and he used to spend most of his summers there. When he was about 19 in the early 1940s, he had seen someone waterskiing for the first time in the sound. He and his friends decided it looked like fun, so he bought the a pair of skies, the second pair of water skies in Wrightsville Beach at the time. He and his friends used a 12-foot wooden Wolverine boat with a 22-hp motor and taught themselves how to ski.

My grandfather is 81 years old now. The last time he went skiing was when he was 70 years old.

*George Dawkins,
Pine Knoll Shores
Carteret-Craven Electric
Cooperative*



Granddad's birthday Sunday

Birthdays were celebrated in my grandparents' tiny antebellum church in eastern North Carolina by depositing pennies into a designated tin box in front of the entire Sunday school congregation—a penny for each year. My grandfather, who was a closet poet, shared his birth date with a church member, a lady of his generation. Each year when they went up to drop in their coins, he recited an original poem to this woman for everyone's pleasure.

Everyone, that is, except my grandmother. I always thought she stayed home on Granddad's birthday Sunday to prepare a special dinner for the family assembled to celebrate. However, I learned in adulthood that grandmother was annually angry with my poet laureate Grandpa. It turns out that she boycotted his Sunday recital because she was jealous of his birthday-mate. This from the lady who was so unaffectionate that she turned her head to be hugged or brush-kissed by even her grandchildren.

I still wonder about the two double beds in their bedroom. They had five children.

*Linda D. Edwards, Morganton
Rutherford EMC*



The true American GI

Since the publication of Brokaw's collection, "The Greatest Generation," many have reflected on Americans who fought so courageously and sacrificed so willingly during the Second World War. As a high school history teacher, I have tried to infuse my students with an interest and appreciation for the war and its participants. Yet not until the January 2002 death of my grandfather, Rhuben Raymond Frank, did I gain a true perspective on just how great he and his generation were.

Poring over my grandfather's mementoes months after his death, I really met him for the first time in yellowed forms, letters and pictures. He fought under the American flag during World War II in the Pacific (1944-1945). Later he was part of Germany's occupation during the war's aftermath (where he met and married my German grandmother). He served two tours in the Korean War (1950-51, 1952-53), and one in Vietnam (1967-68).

He was an Oklahoma farm boy turned American GI. His scribbled notes, bronze stars, purple hearts and black and white pictures remain as a testament to the tremendous life he did not always share. Kind, selfless and humble, he was certainly great. Now I finally know just how much.

*Bianka Rhodes Stumpf, Sanford
Central EMC*

Grandma's lesson in table manners

The lesson I learned was "Never put your hand in the food bowls."

I usually ate at Grandma's anyway. We would come in from playing outside, wash up and fix the table. We would put the food on the table and sit down for dinner. Well, one time, Grandma cooked some biscuits, chicken and other good food. I always thought Grandma's food was the best. I still do. So, I was fixing my plate and I was getting my chicken, but I just reached in with my hand and SLAP! My grandma popped my hand.

She said, "You don't stick your hands in the bowls. Use your fork." I just sat there.

She asked me, "Do you want some chicken?"

I said yes.

So she grabbed the chicken with her hand and put it in my plate. I just kept my mouth shut and ate.

*Beth Mullis, Stanfield
Union Power Cooperative*

Sending hope in their final letters

The basket of letters had been sitting in the closet of my family's home for over 50 years. They were letters my grandparents had written to their son, my father, in the months of 1941 before they were taken to a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. They were Austrian citizens and the letters were written in their native language of German, which no one in my family spoke other than my father.

Many years after Dad had passed away, my mother gave me this basket of letters and I was fortunate to find a kind woman who could translate them for me. As she read page after page, her German accent unfolded the words and it was as if my grandparents were speaking. Finally, I had heard from the grandparents I had never known.

Their words assured their son they were okay and not to worry about them. They were hoping to get visas issued so they could travel to America. They were learning to speak English and were adjusting to the restrictions forced upon them by the Nazis. They spoke of other relatives and the hope of being together soon. Always optimistic, they never complained. And in each letter, they encouraged their son to take care of his health and to succeed in his life in America.

Their visas never arrived and the letters to their son stopped.

*Elise Israel, Candler
Haywood EMC*

A cook for the Mattamuskeet dredge crews

One day while taking my son to baseball practice, my husband bought a newspaper. After skimming through the paper, David jokingly said, "There is a picture of your grandmother in The Beaufort-Hyde."

The pictured titled "Looking Back" was from 1926 and showed a man, Mr. Earl Pugh, and to my surprise a lady named Nora Daniel. After showing the picture to my family and comparing it to other pictures of my grandmother, we decided it had to be her.

When I tried to get in contact with Mr. Pugh, I discovered that he, like my grandmother, had died a few years earlier. I did talk to his son, Mr. Earl Pugh Jr., who told me his father had always kept the picture on his TV as long as he could remember. He also told me my great-grandmother used to cook for the crews that dredged the canals around Lake Mattamuskeet.

He sent me a copy of the original photograph and some pictures of the dredges that my great-grandmother worked on.

Even though it raised a million other questions, I felt my grandmother had shared a story with me that we had not heard before.

*Nora Diane Davis, Pantego
Tideland EMC*



Saved by the cold

I never knew my Grandpa nearly lost his life in WWII, but one day he was telling one of his many stories to my dad and I just happen to overhear him. He was on the USS Missouri somewhere on a foreign coast during the war. His job on the ship rotated every night: one night in the boiler room, the next night outside in the crow's nest. He switched out every other night with a buddy of his.

Well it was his turn in the boiler room one very cold night, but his buddy wasn't too fond of cold weather, so he asked my Grandpa to switch for the night. A German torpedo hit the ship that night and killed everyone in the boiler room. He sure was thankful and so was his family because he got to come home.

*Brent M. Wagner, Lexington
EnergyUnited*

The amazing Mammy Omie



My Mammy Omie (Omie Redding of Ronda) never ceases to amaze me. She is 93 years old and continues to tend her flower and vegetable garden every summer. She cooks delicious meals and still makes her jellies and apple pies. Mammy is still able to touch her toes (flat-handed)—something I can't do as her 27-year-old granddaughter. What an inspiration to stay healthy!

*Rebecca Redding, Wilkesboro
EnergyUnited*

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

February 2005 Finally On My Own

Tell us about the first place you lived on your own. Send pictures.

Deadline: Dec. 15

March 2005 Wacky Plants

Pictures of strange-looking or unusual garden plants or produce?

Deadline: Jan. 15

April 2005 Road Trip Horror Stories

Where did you go and what happened? Send pictures.

Deadline: Feb. 15

May 2005 Safety Lessons

Accidents and mishaps that taught you a safety lesson.

Deadline: March 15

June 2005 On the Farm

The best things about growing up or living on a farm.

Deadline: April 15

July 2005 The First Meal I Ever Made

What was it and how did you like it?

Deadline: May 15

The Rules

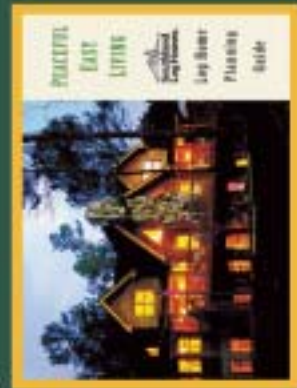
1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

Since home is where the heart is, here is your guide. It's 52 pages of photos, plans and valuable information about the



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