

## **Mining for Memories**

Summertime is prime time for family reunions— an ideal place to mine for family stories. Play like a professional journalist and grab a video camera, recorder, still camera, and a notebook. Record a video of a relative telling his version of a family story then tape another family member's version. Several years ago my niece recorded each of my siblings telling their version of a family Christmas tradition involving chocolate-covered-cherries. I couldn't believe how differently we each told the story: we had all experienced the same event together. Our individual perspective is what made each story unique.

Involve the entire clan in your quest for gold by creating a competition such as oldest photograph, most romantic love letter, or a game of Mystery Photo. Incorporate a display of artifacts at the reunion, careful to protect documents in plastic sleeves.

Since relatives don't typically lend their priceless memorabilia a family reunion offers the perfect opportunity to photograph their stash. Take a portable scanner, copier, and laptop to copy images or take a break and head to a local business that provides copying services. Take special precautions handling fragile documents or play it safe and have the owner handle the documents for you.

Collect nuggets of information by creating and distributing forms for gathering vital statistics, family group sheets, and other desired data. Prepare family members by sending letters in advance advising them of your goals. You may want to request they bring specific items such as family Bibles, old letters, birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, genealogies, old photos, newspaper clippings, and military records.

When you return home put your storytelling and scrapbooking talents to work by creating digital scrapbooks recounting the reunion and a second storybook for historical data. It's guaranteed to be the following year's main attraction. Digital albums and individual digital pages can be created using Creative Memories StoryBook Creator Plus software (\$59.95).