

Save Your Memories:



ARCALIFE.COM, <http://www.arcalife.com>, is a fun place to store and share all your important life information for free. They also offer fee-based services with additional features. Most of us agree that documenting and sharing our family stories is important; it's just translating that great idea into reality where we have trouble. With services such as one hour family history interview, photograph scanning service, media conversion service, family tree print and family album, Arcalife has made it easier.

The creator of Arcalife, Paul Taylor, says, "From the time of early cave paintings, we have always striven to document and record our lives in a safe place where they will remain forever, and not be washed away or overwritten. After having my first child, shared family experiences and the memories of my parents and grandparents took on a new significance. Suddenly, every moment, story, photograph and smile became important." He goes on to talk about how, often, only a few people know the family stories, which risk being lost when they are gone.

This resonates with me as my mother died relatively young, at age 52. Unfortunately, I didn't really get to know my mother until I researched her life after her death. I learned so much about her that I did not know — she played the piano and earned awards, she starred in local theater projects. Even as I work on researching my ancestry and the ancestry of my clients, I am increasingly aware that I have a desire, and an obligation, to learn more about those who are still

alive, such as my father, and to capture his memories and experiences, to share them with my children and their cousins and descendants.

Arcalife has created a web-based environment where this is possible. It has options for you to build a family tree, add in "life archives" information for other family members, create photo albums, share your tree with others and much more. Two features that really caught my eye were My Memories and My Experience. If you are like me, you are often so focused on ancestors that you forget about documenting your own life for your descendants. I have learned that some of the most fascinating information about people can be found in the details of their lives, rather than the major events. This is a good way to preserve the small moments and milestones in your life.

The My Memories feature is broken down into the following chapters: My Birth, My Beginnings and Infancy, My Toddler Time, My Younger Years, My Teens, Relationships: Close Family, Relationships: Other Family, Adult Life, Love and Work, Pregnancy, Giving Birth and the Infant, Parenting and Younger Years, Parenting: Looking Back, Mid Life: Empty Nest and The Golden Years. For each chapter, you can do as little or as much as you like and skip those that may not yet apply. This made me realize that I know very little about my early life — only bits and pieces until high school and beyond. I think it might be time to quiz my dad about me! I did have fun answering some of the questions in the

"My Younger Years Section". There is a 1,024 character limit for what you write as an answer to each question — I learned that limit the hard way! However, when talking with Kia Rahmani, Arcalife director of business strategy and partnerships, I learned that "[they] will be adjusting this rule shortly to allow users to make extended contributions to this field".

The My Experience feature is broken down into Major Events, Education and Occupation, Fun and Leisure, Personal Self and Serious Side of Life. For example, under Fun and Leisure, select subtopics are Bucket List, Holidays and Travel, Cool Things I've Done, Food and Drinks, Hobbies and Interests, and under Personal Self there are categories like Pearls of Wisdom and Rules We Live By. It was a lot of fun to travel down memory lane and record some of this information. However, it does take time. As you get started, you realize how much you have done and experienced in your life. Though most of us might not have led glamorous and exciting lives, we have been busy living them!

Arcalife presents us with another option for how we might create and document a lasting tribute to our families. I like it's very straightforward interface, and how it allows you to create a complete picture of yourself, your family and your ancestors by making it easy to incorporate facts, media (photos or video), thoughts and more. Maybe documenting my own life for my descendants won't be so hard after all.

