A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE
(WITH GRANDPA IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT)

LIFE SKILL
communicating with others

Why take this trip?
Grandparents, great-grandparents, and older relatives love to share their memories. As you listen to them, you will begin to appreciate their past and your own heritage. In this activity, you’ll make a tape recording or videotape of older family members to capture the past and create a cherished family possession.

What do we need?
video camera or tape recorder with microphone; cassette tape

How long will it take?
30 minutes to 1 hour

What do we do?
• Arrange to interview an older person in your family who will share interesting stories or experiences.
• Select a quiet place for the interview. Be sure to choose a place where you won’t be disturbed by other people and avoid background noise that would spoil the quality of the tape. If you’re filming with a video camera, choose a location that is special to your family.
• Make a list of the questions you want to ask. Ask questions that prompt a story. Stay away from questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Sample questions are provided below.

Sample Questions:

Tell Me About You
T What were you like when you were my age?
T What did you do for fun?
T Tell me about a time when you did something mischievous.
T What kinds of toys did you play with when you were a child?
T Describe a favorite pet and tell why this pet was important to you.
T Tell me about a time your parents disciplined you.
What was it like going to school?
Where were you born?
Where did you live?
What do you remember about the house or apartment you grew up in?
Did you have brothers and sisters? How did you get along with them?
Do you think life was easier when you were my age?
Tell me about mom or dad when he or she was little.
What were your parents like?
What were your grandparents like?
How did you celebrate holidays? What foods did you eat?
What traditions did your family have?
What kind of work did you do before you retired?
If you could choose one thing in your life to change, what would it be?
What would you tell someone my age to do with their life?
What sorts of things do you like to do now?

Tell Me About What You’ve Seen

Do you remember anything about the Great Depression?
Were you affected by a war in your lifetime? How were you affected?
What were you doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?
How were women treated differently when you were in your 20s?
What woman was the biggest influence in your life?
What did you think of President Roosevelt?
Of all the presidents you’ve known, who do you think was the best? Why?
Did you vote for John F. Kennedy?
What were you doing when you found out Kennedy had been shot? Martin Luther King?
What radio programs did you listen to?
What was it like getting your first television set? What was your favorite program?
What is the greatest invention that you’ve seen in your life?

Tell Me About Me

When was the first time you ever saw me?
What was I like then?
Do I remind you of anyone else you knew as a young person?
What do you think life will be like when I’m your age?
What sorts of things do you think will happen during my lifetime?

Questions can be revised to fit the age of the person being interviewed.
Option: Tape the birthday celebration of the person you interviewed. Add your interview tape to that tape. You could also start a recording of younger members of your family, adding to it each year. When they are 18 or 21, you can give them the tape to keep.
What happened?

- Who did you interview? How old was the person you interviewed?
- Why did you select this person to interview?
- How did you feel about asking the questions?

What did you learn?

- What did you learn about the person that you did not know before?
- What did you learn about the time when he or she was your age?

Why was this activity important?

- Why is it important to learn about the past and what it was like to live at another time?
- Why is it important to know some of the experiences that helped shape a person's character?

What's next?

- Now that you know this person better, how do you think it will change your relationship?
- What are some things that are helpful to know about people if you want to understand them better?