

## QUAKER AGING RESOURCES

# *Celebrating Lives and Life Stories*

More information is available through our website:

**[www. quakeragingresources.org](http://www.quakeragingresources.org)**

### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

**Websites with suggested interview questions and other ideas for storytelling:**

<http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/roots/family.html>

[www.WholeLifeStory.com](http://www.WholeLifeStory.com)

[http://www.timegoesby.net/elderstorytelling/2007/04/new\\_elder\\_story.html](http://www.timegoesby.net/elderstorytelling/2007/04/new_elder_story.html)

### **Books for Meeting Library or Discussion:**

Franklin/Shaffer, The Old, Old Man and the Very Little Boy, 1992, Atheneum, NY. (Multigenerational/Picture)

Britain Yearly Meeting, Spirituality and Ageing Group. This Is Who I Am: Listening with Older Friends, 2001, Quaker Books, London.



*“Live in love and learn from one another.”*

PYM Faith and Practice, 2002



Aging Resources Consultation Help



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***One of the amazing joys of growing old is to reflect on life experiences.*** In fact, Sophocles in writing about old age, said, “One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been.” As if to say, the rays of sun finally come together in striking brilliance as a sunset. So how can this brilliance be captured for ourselves as elders and to bless the Meeting?

First, create opportunities to celebrate individual lives. Perhaps it is a landmark birthday. An 85 year old in our Meeting is still relishing the joy of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. She said, “It was like going to my own Memorial Service, but I got to hear and enjoy it all.” Another person slowed the pace of an eventful life work as a peace activist. A cast of characters from 44 years of her work around the world were asked to share memories and fill a scrapbook. The Meeting shared a potluck and sang the songs that accompanied the journey. This celebration allowed all of us to reminisce about the marches, campaigns, joys, and sorrows of trying to make a difference in the world.

The second way to capture the brilliance of the sunset is through the telling of one’s own story. There are many lists of interview questions and books that can help get the story telling juices flowing, but you simply need to sit down and put your thoughts to paper.

***“...let us know how truth spreads and prospers amongst you...”***

George Fox, 1682, To Friends in New Jersey and Pennsylvania\*

\* Epistle 376, A Collection of Epistles, edited 1698, London, T. Sowle. Quoted in PYM Faith and Practice 2002

***Everyone has a story!*** It is easy to think our own lives are not as significant as someone else’s life story, but in reality there is goodness in each story. My mother’s story is called ‘Homemaker’. She had an amazing ability to make home in seemingly unorthodox settings, like a chicken house or a truck bed. She painted, put up curtains, raked the gravel and created a home for her family. We all appreciated her willingness to make the most of what she had and her story reminds us of that goodness.

Monthly Meetings can be especially helpful in this process of capturing life stories. Individual or group story gatherers such as Young Friends are a gift to all. In our Meeting, the present clerk has spent previous years interviewing elders particularly on their role and experiences as Quakers. Subsequently, Times to Remember sessions are scheduled, where she asks the Meeting and all who know these elders to come, hear their stories, and share their memories. This is a delightful ongoing process.

Many find their life story contains a message that needs to be shared in a Pendle Hill pamphlet or an article in Friends Journal. Don’t be bashful—put these life stories in the Meeting library.

Perhaps those who especially need to have your story recorded in some way are your family. An easy way to capture a life story is with the photo album. A picture of swimming at the beach in Silver Bay can be used to tell the experience of going there over a life time, while breaking out some special incidents or meaningful memories. “The Baker Family and Silver Bay” can all be built around that one picture, or many such pictures! A good life story is one of the most important gifts we can ever offer each other.