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Senior Real Estate Matters

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Memoirs Capture Family Lore

By Elyse Umlauf-Garneau

A hand-written recipe. A doodle. A voice. All such things bring a flood of memories and a slice of joy when families reminisce about a loved one.

Corina Kellam found a way to package those memories into something that can be held, heard and read. Her company, Life History Books (<http://www.lifehistorybooks.com>), produces family memoirs that capture the fundamental nature of a person or family.

The process starts with personal historians who interview individuals or multiple family members. Life Books then produces a memoir based on those conversations.

The finished product can include not only a written history, but also audio and video clips and family artifacts.

"Each book is custom and has a different flavor and personality," Kellam says.

Life Books produces both memoirs for living people and tribute books for family members no longer living that uncover personality traits, quirky stories, and the things that a family or person value most.

"It's pretty rare that a family gets together to reminisce and answer the really big questions," comments Kellam. Personal historians interview family members either in person or by phone and ask about those topics that routinely get lost in the day-to-day shuffle.

Questions, both big and small, address everything from the benchmark events in people's adult life, who their role models and mentors were, what they found surprising or difficult about marriage, along with what they'd change if they could, as well as wisdom they'd like to impart to the next generation.

Lighter fare is part of the process too. Interviews explore funny family incidents, how nicknames and holiday tradition emerged and what people's favorite toys and food were during childhood. In doing the books, Kellam routinely uncovers interesting family lore.

One woman, for example, talked about tossing a pillow out a hotel window at a cute boy she saw walking by. That's the way a grandmother described meeting her husband. Others reveal what it meant to them to be a father, struggles they faced while growing up, and what informs their political and religious values.

Clients can review and edit the content, choose the book's overall aesthetic, colors and fonts, and provide family treasures, such as photos and recipes, letters and postcards, family trees, artwork, marriage licenses, and so forth, to scan and incorporate.

An array of packages and prices are available and range from \$950 to \$3,200. A one-person memoir, for example, starts at \$950 and a tribute package, featuring audio and video and interviews with up to 12 subjects, sits at the top of the range.

The concept dovetails well with societal changes, some of which have been brought on by the recession, believes Kellam. "People are drawing into their families, thinking about what's important, respecting older people, and getting their traditions down," Kellam observes. "I do think there's been a shift in values and that the family is being valued more highly than it was before."

Mobile Apps

Whether you just got a smartphone or you're a long-time user, here are some nifty apps to help you manage life more easily on the fly.

Convenience and personal safety

- At some point, everyone pats down pockets and realizes that a cell phone has gone missing. Phone-finding apps generate a map to locate lost or stolen phones. Two options are <http://sites.google.com/site/alienmanfc6/wheresmyandroid> for Androids and <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/find-my-iphone/id376101648?mt=8> for iPhones.
- Find Wi-Fi hotspots around the world with <http://www.wefi.com> or <http://www.jiwire.com/iphone>
- When you encounter an emergency, panic alarms apps can bring help and deter criminals. Some examples include <http://www.brite-strike.com/I-PHONE.html> and <http://www.adducestudios.com/apps/panic>.

Care giving

- If you're the primary caregiver to an elderly relative, Elder 911 and Elder 411 (<http://www.elder411.net>) may make care giving easier. Elder 411 delivers 500-plus bits of advice and solutions to the routine problems caregivers encounter. And in a crisis, 911 guides you through the steps of managing an emergency, outlining who to call and what to ask, along with list of post-crisis strategies.
- iTriage (<http://www.itriagehealth.com>) offers something of a self-diagnosis tool for common health ailments. It also provides location-based information about nearby pharmacies and the closest emergency rooms and doctors.
- Use Mpassport (<http://www.mpassport.com/support.cfm>) to find doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics in foreign countries. The app also helps with medical term translation.

Money

- Manage your dough on the go. Mint ([http://www.mint.com/how-it-](http://www.mint.com/how-it-works/anywhere/)

[works/anywhere/](http://www.mint.com/how-it-works/anywhere/)) gathers financial data from all your accounts, including checking, savings, investments, and loans. It gives you a full picture of your financial life and a way to track investments and keep an eye on expenses and budgets.

- If Mint tells you there's disposable cash, use Radlser (<http://redlaser.com>) to scan an item's barcode to see where it's being sold for a rock-bottom price. The app does other things too. Scan a book and Redlaser can tell you whether it's available in a nearby library. Scan a food product and find out whether it contains an array of common allergens, such as gluten, peanuts, and so forth.

Travel

- Parlez-vous anglais? No? Translation apps, like Google Translate (<http://www.androidapps.com/tech/apps/309953-google-translate-google-inc>), probably won't help you carry on a philosophical discussion about Sartre, but they'll feed you the words to locate the right subway stop and the nearest loo. World Nomads (<http://journals.worldnomads.com/language-guides/>) offers language guides and mobile phrases in less known languages, such as Turkish, Greek, Malay, and Arabic.
- Wonder how that purchase in Euros or Yen will appear on your credit card bill next month? Quickly find the exchange rate with a currency converter, such as <http://www.xe.com/iphone>.
- Book a taxi without dialing a phone. Taxi Magic (<http://taximagic.com/>) lets you hail a cab, track its arrival, and charge the ride to your credit card. It works in major cities, including Chicago, Dallas, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and San Diego.
- Lighten your paper load during trips by relying on TripIt (<http://www.tripit.com/uhp/mobile>) to track itinerary details, get maps and directions, link to airlines, and find hotels and restaurants in your vacation venue.

Food and fun

- There's no reason to get stuck gnawing on carrot sticks and drinking water because

you can't find dining spots that accommodate your allergies. Use <http://glutenfreepassport.com/mobile-apps/> to locate safe restaurant food.

- Find restaurants and make dinner reservations on the go with Open Table (<http://www.opentable.com/mobile>). The app gives you access to more than 15,000 restaurants in the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom.
- Wonder what all that jargon means that you read or hear from grandkids or co-workers? Find out what they're really saying by using Urban Dictionary Definitions, (<http://www.beardedpony.com/applications.htm>).

Real estate

Put the power of REALTOR.com® (<http://www.realtor.com/mobile>) in your hand when you're searching for a new house in the United States or Canada. The app pulls housing data from more than 800 MLSs.

Real Estate Matters: News & Issues for the Mature Market
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