

BECOMING THE ANCESTOR

By Beth Swartz

kindredgenes@yahoo.com

What happens to your genealogy when you're gone?

- Who will continue your research?
- Who will accept your research?
- Who do you want to have access to your digital life?
- Do you want your DNA data available for future research and who should have permission to use it?

Talk to your family, is anyone interested in your research? Spouse, children, grandchild(ren) or other relative? Talk to your close friends, society members, genealogist, etc to see if they're willing to take your research. No family/friends available, consult with the local historical society, Family Search and Allen County Public Library (Fort Wayne, Indiana) to "drop off" your research.

Be specific, name the person(s), society, etc. If more than one, state the order/priority of who it should go to.

Plan and Organize

Create a road map to where your genealogy is currently located.

- Do you have file, binders, assorted papers? *In a red box, located in the home office closet. Flash drive in 2nd drawer on my desk in the den.*
- Files located on your computer or online? Provide the login information, user names & passwords. *On my laptop, folder called "my family". Laptop password is sweetie.*

Make a list of your items and who should inherit them. Use a Spreadsheet, word doc or write on paper.

- Include the person's name, a picture, description and any relevant information/story behind why the item is a family heirloom or important to you.

Specify if you have "originals" and/or digital copies and how to distribute them.

- Make a file with photos, documents, etc saved on a USB flash drive that can be copied and provided to family members. Note items you don't want shared with specific people and any privacy concerns.

Digital Accounts

- Make a detailed list of your digital accounts. This includes your personal records, email, social media accounts, any paid websites or free sites that required an account.

BECOMING THE ANCESTOR

- Passwords to access your cell phone, computer or other devices. *Face recognition and fingerprint access won't be available.*
- Check with the provider to see if they have a "Legacy" or "Beneficiary Designee" option.
- What are the requirements/process for your executor/designee to access your account to either continue using it or delete it after downloading your information. *"Third Party Access"*
- Avoid "locking" or accidentally "deleting" your accounts. Providing your passwords/account info to your beneficiary, instructing them not to notify or add your death date to your existing account, will avoid these issues. **Note:** FamilySearch locks/disables your account upon notification of your death. They DO NOT allow 3rd parties to access your account. This includes your spouse, children, family members, designated beneficiary or executor.

DNA Data

- What do you want done with your DNA Data? This is a data file on the website(s). It's what provides "cousin matches". The actual sample you gave to the testing company is not shared.
- Were you working on a DNA project that you'd like your DNA to be accessible after your death?
- What future uses/ technologies are you agreeable to and what don't you agree to? *Law enforcement/ crime solving is okay, but cloning isn't.*
- Do you agree/disagree with your DNA data being uploaded to additional website/projects?
- Try to be as specific as possible to convey your intents.

Genealogy Will

- Create a will or codicil to include the information you've organized.
- Include instruction on how to destroy or delete information you don't want passed on.
- Provide for any ongoing payments to websites, account maintenance, etc. Specify length to continue paying & where the funds come from.
- Example beneficiary, wills and codicils are available online and by contacting an attorney.

BECOMING THE ANCESTOR

Personal Papers & Publications

- Have you published?
- Are you in the process of writing a book? Do you want someone to finish it or leave it as is?
- Do you want your personal papers/letters published?
- Who should receive royalties or cover the costs of publishing on your behalf?

Obituary Outline

- Name, include maiden and any nicknames
- Birth date & location
- (Death date & location)
- Summary of your life: notable occasions, special events (dates/locations), job, charity/volunteer work.
- List family: “proceeded in death by (list parents, siblings, children, etc)”
“Survivors include (list family first last name or first (spouse) last name).”
List number of grandchildren, great grand, etc instead of naming each.
- How do you want the family listed? Designate stepchildren from “your” children? 1st, 2nd, 3rd marriage?
- Funeral arrangements
- In leu of flowers, donations or charity information (include address or website)
- Photo
- Legacy.com offer permanent obituaries for \$99

This is **NOT** legal advice. Please consult an attorney or estate planner.

