

THE VALUE OF THE WIDER FAMILY

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

What a great afternoon I just enjoyed! I had lunch and an information-sharing time with some cousins. The tragedy of it all is that some of us had not seen each other for over 50 years! One cousin brought her very independent-living and sharp-minded 98 year-old mother that I don't ever remember meeting. She remembered a few occasions when I visited her as a very young child.

Some of us had become very interested in our ancestry, so we were able to share stories and family tree information. When looking at never-seen-before photographs of my grandparents and great uncles and aunts I felt a deep appreciation for their legacy come over me. Now I can see where my looks and family characteristics come from. The stories people were able to tell everyone increased my knowledge and appreciation of that heritage.

It made me think about how we so often let things slide and life speeds by. We have missed out on so many precious years of relationship. This happens in so many families where we just live from day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, year-to-year, and nothing much happens. Goals and plans are rarely made. Before we know it our kids are grown up and are leaving home. We wonder what has happened and reflect with regret why we didn't do more with our kids.

Times have changed so much that our families now may be scattered all over the world. Mine is. My wife's family is. Yours may be. Maybe family members are living in far-flung areas of your State or in other States. Communication is possible through our great technological advances and there should be no excuse for not maintaining relationships. I'm telling you this so you don't make the same mistakes I did. Each cousin today said they regretted the years of silence. It was not due to bad blood, but neglect. The older we get the more family seems to become important, but I have missed out on years of meaningful and supportive relationships.

The worldwide recession has forced many families to close ranks. Children are coming home because they can't afford to make payments on an apartment, because of unemployment or because their parents are ageing and need assistance. Some families are doubling up on accommodation by combining their money. Recently we visited some friends who designed a house that would, by combining resources, have them living upstairs and their eldest daughter's family downstairs.

Our genetic and spiritual heritage often is passed down from previous generations. We miss out on so much enrichment and history when we fail to maintain contact with our relations and friends. We make excuses about being too busy or we are simply too lethargic to get off our couches to make it happen.

It is a tragedy when we let time slip through our fingers with our own children! We can never get that time back and our children will have missed out on so many memories we could have created. All our children may remember is the occasional birthday, Christmas and the odd vacation.

Life needs to be exciting and lived to the fullest. Jesus said, "I have come to give you life, and life more abundant." He wants us to enjoy His creation and to enjoy each other. Why not discuss with your spouse what you may be able to do to make your lives a real adventure. There is so much to enjoy and so many memories you can create in your children's lives. Some parents need to turn off their technology more and invest that time in their children and vice versa.

By investing time in your families, your children will have a remarkable legacy to pass on to future generations. Don't forget to take plenty of photos while creating these memories and for those who like writing jot down your memoirs.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.