

Leaving More than a Will

by Liz Gibbons

Because my Will is legalese language about how to divide my assets, I began to gather together other information I wanted to leave for my sons. They are in an expandable wallet that holds legal sized file folders. In this wallet I put my Will plus my Power of Attorney and Health Care Directive. I added a list of people to contact, a list of credit card accounts to close, and bank account and investment information.

But I wanted to leave for my sons something more than material business affairs to take care of. I wanted to convey what life was like growing up in the 1930's, 40's and 50's. So a few years ago I began writing stories of life in those times before the advent of TV, cell phones, and Amazon Prime. I described how rationing of gasoline, sugar, and other items affected us during World War II. I related that occasionally there were air raid drills at night, that as a Girl Scout I collected used kitchen grease to help the war effort, and we grew a victory garden at a nearby farm in addition to our back yard garden. I added a few news articles about rationing and articles about some unusual places we visited in Chicago during the war. I wrote of my experiences with some summer jobs when I was in college. One summer I worked in the dining room at the Chicago Club community in Charlevoix, Michigan, where many wealthy Chicago families had summer homes. One of the most delightful families I served was the Scott family who were part owners of Carson, Pirie, and Scott department store. I included the picture of my Dad with Amelia Earhart when she gave a talk to students in his biology classes at Purdue. I included interesting stories about their grandparents and great-grandparents. I added other snippets of information about life for them to reflect upon and a letter of how much I loved them and what they added to my life.

I don't have family treasures or any valuable items to leave my sons. But I hope these items that reflect a slice of their family history will be a treasure to them.