FOR THE PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER

Twelve questions to ask *while you still can*

The stories that matter most are rarely in the records. They are in a kitchen, at a table, in the voice of someone who was there. Pick one question. Press record on your phone. Then mostly listen.

Childhood

01 What is the first home you remember? Walk me in through the front door.

Then ask: What could you hear and smell in there?

02 What did your family eat on a Sunday or a feast day, and who did the cooking?

Then ask: Who laid the table, and who washed up?

03 Who were you a little afraid of as a child, and who could always make you laugh?

Then ask: Is there something they always used to say?

Home

04 Where did your parents and grandparents come from, and why did they leave, or why did they stay?

Then ask: Who was the first in the family to go?

05 When you left home, what did you take with you, and what do you wish you had kept?

Then ask: Where is it now?

> "Tordelli, always tordelli. My mother started the sauce on Saturday night and the whole street could smell it."
>
> Rosa, from the Bellini sample family in Telling Roots

Love

06 How did you two meet, and what did you notice first?

Then ask: What were you both wearing?

07 What did your wedding day, or the day you just knew, really feel like?

Then ask: What went wrong on the day?

Work

08 What was your first job, and what did you do with your first wage packet?

Then ask: How much was it, and what did it buy?

09 What work are you proudest of, even if nobody else saw it?

Then ask: Who taught you how to do it?

Advice

10 What was the hardest year of your life, and what got you through it?

Then ask: Who stood by you?

11 What do you know now that you wish someone had told you at twenty?

Then ask: Did anyone tell you something that stuck?

12 What would you like your grandchildren, and their children, to know about you?

Then ask: Is there a story you have never told?

Before you press record

1 **Hold the phone**
Keep it in your hand or on the table between you, about an arm's length away. Airplane mode stops a call cutting it off.

2 **Say who and when**
Start with the date, the place and who is talking. In fifty years that line will matter.

3 **Let silences sit**
Count to five before you speak. The best part often comes just after the pause.

4 **Ask for one more detail**
A name, a colour, a price, a smell. “What did she say?” turns a memory into a story.

5 **Bring a photo**
An old picture on the table will open more doors than any question on this page.

6 **One question is plenty**
Twenty minutes and one good story beats an hour of rushing. Save the file in two places that day.

Telling Roots is a private family tree your whole family builds together. Ask a question like these on your phone and it writes their words down, suggests a gentle follow-up and keeps the recording with their name. Founding families open in February 2027.