



The words on the tattered pages of this old yellow notebook will be cherished within the Couch family for years to come.

It's just a small, yellow, wire-bound notebook. The pages are bent. Some are stained from coffee or tea. Several are half torn out, with edges frayed. And it's now one of our family's most valuable possessions.

Memories recorded

It's the notebook in which my dad wrote some of his favorite memories as he lay in that nursing home for the final year of his life.

That Old Yellow Notebook

His dear friend encouraged him to record these memories. And, although the multiple sclerosis had severely affected his ability to hold a pen and to write, he did it.

On those pages are some of the stories my brother and I had heard for years. If you did not know they were true, you likely would not believe them. Our cattle-loving son, Nolan, hangs onto every word. He can recite them for you, almost verbatim. And now that my dad is gone, I cherish those shakily handwritten pages even more.

As we grow older, it becomes more apparent memories of our parents are even more special, and it warms my heart to see other families feeling the same.

I'm in the beginning phase of working with an incredible man in the Hereford business — and an incredible man, period. His son and daughter have asked him to begin recording his stories for their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have for posterity.

We are recording his memories from throughout his life. I am visiting with

his family, and with individuals from his stellar career, and we are compiling them into a document that his loved ones can enjoy through the years.

He's told me he doesn't plan for the project to ever go beyond his family. But it will be something to help those future generations to know who their grandpa; and someday great-grandpa and great-great-grandpa really was. I can promise they will cherish it forever.

Take the time

If there's one thing about the cattle industry, it's filled with true characters. So many stories. So many memories of how things were done in the past. Memories of riding railroad cars with cattle to the Pens of Denver, of hitting six state fairs and 15 county fairs in one summer, and of sleeping in the barns with wallets under pillows so they did not get stolen. Memories of hauling a string of 30 to the shows and not thinking a thing of it.

Even more important are the stories of what influenced those we love. The people who encouraged and mentored.

The experiences which shaped our loved ones into the people they became. The life lessons to pass down through the generations so they are never forgotten.

I'm so very thankful for the memories my dad shared with us while he could. My only regret? I didn't record more of them while he was with us.

I encourage you to reach out to your parents and grandparents, should you be so blessed to still have them here with you. Sit down with a recorder or a notebook. Ask them the questions you've always wanted their answers to. Do it while you can. It will only take a few minutes, but, I promise, those few minutes will be cherished for generations.

Everyone should be so lucky to have an old, yellow, wire-bound notebook to pass down. **HW**

Christy Couch Lee is a freelance writer from Wellington, Ill. She can be reached at christy@ceeleecommunications.com.