

Inheriting Memories

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Just before Anna Krueger was about to enter a nursing home at the age of 85, she held a family gathering to discuss who should get her personal belongings. With each of her four children gathered, Anna shared family history and stories that went with the important possessions in her life, wishes were expressed, and decisions made. Six months later when Anna died, her children not only held onto her possessions, but also the stories of her life. By making inheritance decisions ahead of time, Anna also prevented disagreements about who should receive what items.

Almost everyone has personal belongings such as wedding photographs, a baseball glove, or a yellow pie plate that contain meaning for them and for other members of their family. What we've learned by listening to families and attorneys is that it is often the non-titled personal property that creates the greatest challenges for families when estates are divided—not the money. When doing estate planning, families too often talk about the house or the investments, but forget to plan ahead or discuss personal possessions. Do you know what items have special meaning or value in your family and why? Do you know how to get started to communicate and plan ahead?

What's unique about personal possessions and inheritance?

- The sentimental meaning attached to personal possessions can make decisions more emotional
- Objects can involve the process of grieving and saying goodbye
- Objects help preserve memories, family history, and family rituals
- Being fair is complex
 - Personal belongings will have different value and meaning to each individual
 - It is difficult to measure the worth or value of personal property
 - It can be impossible to divide items equally
- Distribution methods and consequences are not understood or known

Here's Help

Help is available to jump-start planning and action in, "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate? Workbook: A Guide To Passing on Personal Possessions." The workbook is a step-by-step guide filled with worksheets, practical suggestions, proven strategies, and real-life stories. To order call 1-800-876-8636 or place an order on www.yellowpieplate.umn.edu. (Item #MI-6686-WG, \$12.50 plus shipping and handling)

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