My mother and sister have been working on our family trees for some time now.

My sister is the keeper of the binders. There are four of them – one for each of our grandparents.

There are gaps here and there and some things they've found don't have an explanation.

Since this project started well after all the immediate ancestors had passed, they may never be filled in. I guess we just never asked the right questions or showed interest in where we came from or who.

On Thursday, I traveled to Ottawa with a group to interview a 98-year-old woman who spent the better part of her childhood living next door to the "The Place on Jennings Creek," or what most of us refer to as the Peltier House.

The thrust behind the afternoon jaunt was Jack Adams' quest to learn more about who had lived in the home he and his wife are now renovating. Sue Vasquez and Helen Kaverman were my other travel mates.

We spent the better part of 90 minutes listening to her stories and asking questions when she would stop.

While we were there, it struck me that often we don't realize how many vital pieces of history we let go when someone leaves us without sharing them; perhaps because no one ever asked.

There have been numerous times we were working on a story in the newsroom and would come up a question or two to which we couldn't find the answer. Someone would way, "Oh, so-and-so would know that but they are gone."

Mel Westrich was one of those. Jim Metcalfe was trying to put together an historical piece about baseball in Delphos. Time and time again people he would talk to would say, "Mel Westrich would know that." Well, Mel was gone and he took with him all that history. He was a gold mine and we let it get away.

Cameron and I have marveled at the work my mother and sister have done. He actually started it all by requesting a packet. Weeks later, an inch-thick envelope arrived with what would become the basis of my families' trees.

Oddly enough, we do have a few places that don't branch much. Perhaps you don't find that odd at all. Just don't tell me, OK. There were two brothers who married sisters and so on. It wasn't really that uncommon for cousins to marry back in the day. There were a lot fewer people on our planet and they couldn't just hop in a car and go.

Meanwhile, back on the ranch, the lady we spent Thursday afternoon with was delightful. She was sharp and a tack, witty and had a great sense of humor. I hope I am still those things 20 years from now let alone 50.

Helen learned some about her family. They share a cousin or two. It was Sue's aunt so she learned about her family, too.

Jack filled in the gaps in a few of the years in his new home's history.

I came away with a story you guys will read next week.

I enjoy my job and most of it doesn't seem like work. I feel blessed I got to spend an afternoon with such good company and call it a job.

After you read this, you should call a relative and just ask, "What was it like when you were growing up?"

Then write it down and pass it on.