

# PRESERVATION CHRONICLES

THE MAGAZINE FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

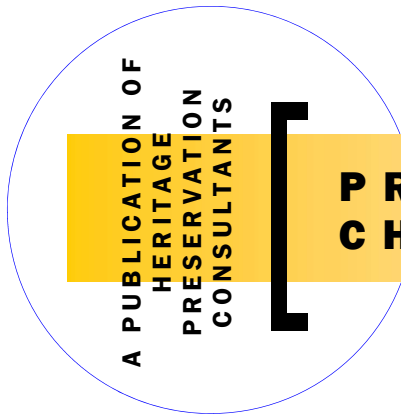


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Cover Photo: The Folland FO-141 Gnat seen here at March Field Air Museum was built for the Indian Air Force and was eventually constructed by the Bangalore Division of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

## Masthead

### Publisher / Editor-in-Chief

Brent D. Johnson

brentjohnson@gmail.com

### Advertising Sales

Rene S. Johnson

johnson.rene@gmail.com

### Web Master

Markus Diersbock

mdiersbock@gmail.com

### Advertising/Marketing

(949) 709-5046

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Heritage Preservation Consultants

PO Box 80142

Rancho Santa Margarita CA 92688

## USING VIDEO TO PRESERVE A FAMILY'S IRISH ROOTS

Tom Devine lives in New Jersey and has ancestors who fought for Irish independence against the British. One of them was caught and jailed, then fled to America. Tom's parents followed suit some 30 years later and created a large family, of which Tom is the oldest boy.

Tom's mother has the story of the family's Irish patriots, which include Tom's grandfather. She heard it directly from him, her father, who has since passed away. Needing to know more, Tom went back to Ireland in 2009 with both his parents to visit some of the old family haunts. He took along his video camera.

Tom, one of eight children, has learned to play the Irish rebel song "The Wearing of the Green" on the bagpipes. He plays that song, and others, each year in New York City's St Patrick's Day Parade:

*Oh! Paddy, dear, and did you hear  
the news that's going round,*

*The shamrock is forbid by law to  
grow on Irish ground.*

*Saint Patrick's Day no more we'll  
keep - his color can't be seen.*

*For there's a bloody law agin' the  
wearing of the green.*

In 1920 Tom's ancestors burnt down Ballintogher Barrack, used by the British to house troops. Tom has managed to unearth the local press story. The report notes that the rebels took care to ensure there were no inhabitants before starting the fire. Fighting for what you believe in runs through the family. Tom fought in Operation Desert Storm and his father – within a year of landing in America in 1954 – joined the US Army. Several of Tom's siblings have also served.

Tom has been collecting information and stories about his family for years now. He has maps, photographs, genealogical documents, an old audio recording of his grandfather, and much else besides. Tom's problem was what to do with all the information he had. There was too much for a slideshow, but maybe not enough for a book. Besides, a book would take too much of his time - Tom has a demanding career in medical technology.

After some internet research, Tom decided to create his own documentary.

"It's increasingly common", says Jane Shafron who runs Your Story Here Video Biography (<http://www.yourstoryherehome.com/>) from her Southern California home and who helped Tom with his family history project.

"The Baby Boomer generation knows that their parents lived through some really dramatic events in the Twentieth Century. And they want their kids to learn about those experiences. Boomers are also in touch with modern technology and so know what can be done to give the stories a thorough telling – even if they are unable, or don't have the time, to do it all themselves."

Tom's Irish family history project runs just over an hour and features interviews with his parents as well as his uncles and aunts. Personal and historical images are included, as are old documents and news stories. Tom's parents are filmed in Ireland, New York and New Jersey revisiting significant places from family - and their own history. The whole thing has chapters and is tied together with a voice over track.

Some of the interviews and all of the Irish footage Tom shot himself, and all of the US interviews and east coast location footage he asked Your Story Here to shoot. Not all of the interview material could fit in the main documentary, so a lot of what was left over formed a "bonus track" on the DVD. All the rest of the interview material, and all the other images, documents and other material - whether used in the documentary or not - was collected on an archive hard drive which Tom now has.

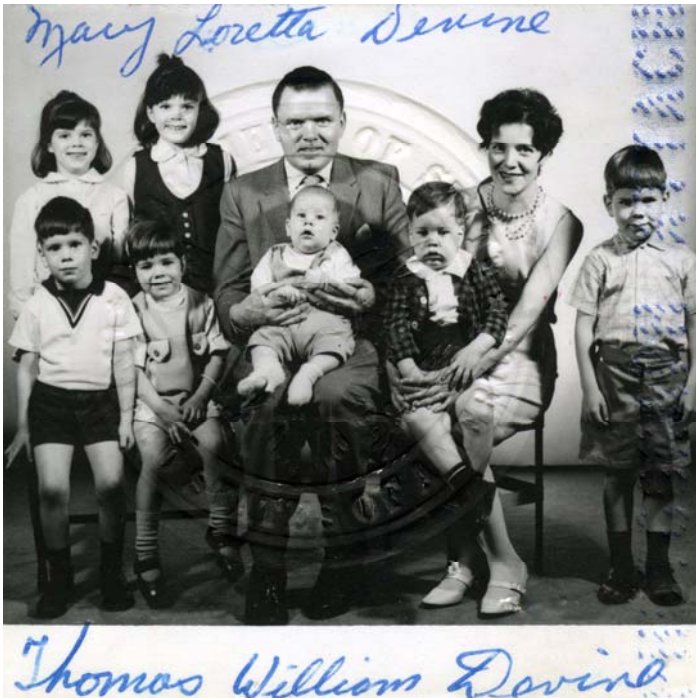
"Getting the kids interested in their family history is a goal of all of our projects", says Jane Shafron – who has recently been elected a board member of the Association of Personal Historians [www.personalhistorians.org](http://www.personalhistorians.org) - an expanding group of almost 600 individuals and organizations formed in 1995 to help people create personal and family histories through print, video and oral recordings.

"With our video histories, we think of the project as a pyramid, with the easiest, most digestible part being



*Tom Devine's grandfather, Patrick O'Hara (left) with brother John (right) helped rid Ireland of the British while still only a very young man. Patrick O'Hara's brother was forced to leave Ireland or face execution for his anti-British activities.*

## PRESERVING A FAMILY'S IRISH ROOTS



*The Devine family has stayed in close touch with their Irish roots. This passport photo was taken of the Devine family about to journey back to Ireland for a visit in the mid 1960s. Tom Devine (far right) - now the family historian—was just a boy.*

at the top: That is usually a YouTube video preview, typically the introductory chapter of the documentary. That can be emailed around the family across the country or across the globe - and is something even the youngest grandchild can watch, or download to a device.

“Now, if you have watched the opening clip, that serves as a teaser for the documentary itself - typically 40 minutes to one hour. And being video, it's attractive and accessible. Those who are very interested can watch the bonus tracks.

“And, for those who really want to take their interest in family history further, they can look at the “master tapes” of the interviews and, in a project like Tom Devine's, they can get a copy of the archive hard drive and really knock themselves out!” says Jane.

Tom had been planning a family reunion for months, and he hosted it just after the 2011 Independence Day holiday coinciding with his parents' 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. All his siblings and their families came, plus his parents, aunts and uncles; some folks even made the trip across from Ireland.

The highlight of the weekend was his family history documentary, and a family tree (designed by Your Story Here) showing all the ancestors he has so far identified and

all the grandchildren (and great grandchildren) so far born.

A family history video can take up to 3 months or longer to plan, shoot and edit. So you might think that the whole process would have exhausted Tom Devine. Not one bit. He is now planning his next project: “Perhaps I will do a video on my brothers and my experiences in the (Gulf) war, as well as around September 11th”, he says.

Many in Tom's family were first responders on the attack on the Twin Towers, and one member had to pay the ultimate price for his heroism. “We were all involved in many different ways, and people seem to think it is a compelling story.” As indeed it is.

A family history video documentary is not for everyone. And it is not a substitute for oral recordings and books. Actually some of the best projects already have oral recordings, an oral history or even a book available. But with the right combination of assets and enthusiasm, it can be an excellent way to present the stories of lives lived before the telephone and the TV - to those who now live with an iPhone or Android forever in their hands. You can see a clip of the Devine project on YouTube by cutting and pasting this link into your browser: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp\\_u5kDN41Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp_u5kDN41Y)

Your Story Here LLC Video Biography (<http://www.yourstoryherehome.com/>) was established in 2006 with the mission of celebrating loved ones and saving lives - one video at a time. It was following the passing of their parents that Jane Shafron and her husband Peter realized that they had not done enough to preserve their stories for the benefit of their children. “It is so easy”, says Jane “and yet we all act as if we have all the time in the world. We don't.” Thus was “Your Story Here” born.

The enterprise has grown every year since its establishment, confirming Jane and Peter's initial confidence that they were not the only ones who wanted to immortalize their progenitors. Their projects have now delighted hundreds of clients and their friends and families. And their touching, award-winning documentary films have been featured in film festivals in the United States and Canada, and have won numerous awards.

*Jane Shafron, co-founder of Your Story Here LLC Video Biography has helped hundreds of families document their history on video. She was recently elected to the board of the Association of Personal Historians.*

