How to use this journal
Each topic is outlined below with examples, questions, and prompts to help you recall and expand upon the experiences that shaped your life. They’re just a starting point—feel free to tailor them so that your stories and advice are even more personal. The first page is blank for you to add a personal note or dedication and each section has an inspirational quote to complement your own stories. When you give this completed journal to your loved one, keep this card for your reference.

Blazing Your Own Trail p.2
How do you get off the beaten path and make decisions that aren’t always in line with where the crowd expects you to go? Share a story about a time you swam against the current. Did you become a chef even though everyone else in your family is a doctor? Did you stand up for what you believed in when none of your friends would? Did you join the Peace Corps instead of taking a well-paid corporate job? How did you pick your career? Did you stick to a plan or do whatever felt right at the time? Did you start on one path and change directions?

Finding Your Purpose p.6
We all search for meaning in our lives. We ask ourselves what our place in the world is, what we are meant to do and how we give our life meaning? Describe a time when you were searching for your purpose. What prompted this journey? Was it spiritual or more tangible, such as a career change? Did you find the answers you were looking for? Are you still searching?

Bumps in the Road p.10
How do you deal with events that are outside your control? You could share how you responded to situations such as losing your job, not getting into your dream college, being diagnosed with an illness, losing a loved one or beating the odds – a time you didn’t think something was possible but it was and you overcame it. How did you get through this experience? What emotions did you feel? What advice would you give about navigating these challenges?

Head vs. Heart p.14
We’ve all experienced a situation in which our head was telling us to do one thing, but our heart was telling us to do another. How did you ultimately make this difficult decision? What were the consequences – positive and negative – of your choice? Do you have regrets? Did you choose a high-paying job or stay with a job you love? Did you follow your significant other to a new city and disrupt the life and career you had built for yourself? Feel free to give multiple examples, ones where you went with your head, and others where you followed your heart.

Questioning Authority p.18
From governments to religious figures, to societal restrictions or our parents’ rules, we’re all faced with authority figures telling us what to do, what to think, and how to behave. Share a story of a time when you challenged an authority figure and why you did it. What were the consequences of your questioning? What did you learn about thinking for yourself? How did it change you?

Keeping Perspective p.22
Share a story of how humor helped you overcome a difficult situation or embarrassing moment. This is a chance to share something funny through a personal experience that you’ve never told your grandchild before. Help them see how everyone has good days and bad days, and nothing is irreversible.
Earning, Spending & Saving p.26
Relationships with money can be ever changing, like the weather. Sometimes we have it, sometimes we don’t. How does money bring independence (a first job, a first car, a first home) and how can it burden us? How does money change you? Advice on what to splurge on and what to save for; what good habits to have (budgeting, emergency account)? What wisdom have you gained over a lifetime of earning, spending, and saving your own money?

Moral Dilemmas p.30
What’s right and what’s wrong is rarely black and white. Would you steal a piece of bread to feed your family? Would you lie in order to protect someone else? Would you stand up for what is right if it meant losing a friend? Think back to a situation that made you question your integrity and understanding of right and wrong. What choice did you make and what were the consequences? Would you do the same thing if you could do it all over again?

Helping Others p.34
We learn some of life’s most important lessons when helping others. What have you learned by giving of yourself through volunteering, coaching, mentoring, or simply performing a random act of kindness? What about helping animals as well as people? What has someone you helped taught you about being a better person? When has someone helped you and made a difference in your life?

Friendship p.38
There is no substitute for a good friend. From the first day of school to your first car, first loves to first heartaches, having children and losing loved ones, our friends are always there for us; they shape and influence us in significant ways throughout our lives. How have your friends helped you, or how have you helped your friends through life’s milestones? What does it mean to be a good friend? How have your friendships made you the person you are today? Was a friendship ever tested and what was the outcome? Were you ever betrayed and how did you handle it?

Family p.42
What was your relationship with your own parents like? Strained? Best of friends? Non-existent? How are you different as a parent to your own children? How are you the same? What about relationships with other family members? What would you change? What would you do exactly the same way? Do you have advice on how to handle or resolve family conflicts? What is the best advice you can give about parent-child or family relationships?

Love p.46
Love and relationships are an important, wonderful, and complicated part of anyone’s life. Maybe you want to share the story of how you fell in love with your spouse, or maybe a story of heartache and the one who got away. Do you have advice on knowing when to stay or walk away? What does love mean to you? How has love changed your life? What’s the most important advice you have about love and relationships?

What I Know Now That I Didn’t Know Then p.50
This is an opportunity to share one or many life lessons that you wish someone had shared with you. Maybe it’s one big story about something you didn’t know at 16, or many little stories of things you didn’t know at 16, 25, 30, 40, 50. Your approach can be lighthearted, serious, or a little of both, as long as it comes from the heart. Additional pages are provided after this section for any other stories, thoughts, or advice you would like add.