The folklore class I took as a sophomore at Brigham Young University required me to conduct a project that, after grading, would be filed away in the Harold B. Lee Library’s Special Collections archives. We were instructed to choose a subject of interest and then conduct interviews that we would transcribe, analyze, write about, and bind in a book that would be turned over to our professor, presumably never to see the light of day again. I decided to pursue a topic close to my heart—my family.

I grew up surrounded by cousins—older and younger, and always fun. Grandma and Grandpa’s house was as familiar as my own. Holidays were special because they were spent with extended family—fireworks and a barbeque on the Fourth of July and gifts and my aunt’s lasagna at Christmas. In many ways, my young life was shaped by family traditions. Interviewing my family about those traditions helped me to see how time together had bound us into a cohesive unit. I assembled my project, grateful for the lessons it taught me, and turned it in.

That was ten years ago. The intervening years have proven to be hard on family relations. I now don’t have the chance to interact much with my cousins. My grandparents have passed on, their house no longer a meeting place for us. I miss the togetherness we once had. Reflecting on those times recently reminded me of my class project. I had once written about my family and had been promised my writing would be kept.

This week, I went in search of my family. I went to the Special Collections archives. I gave the staff my name, and they brought to me the work I’d accomplished a decade ago and promptly forgotten about. “Family Traditions: The Ties that Bind,” I had titled it. I read it, cover to cover, smiling over personalities, laughing about stories. It was all there—memories from my grandma, uncle, aunt, cousins—in the only copy I’d made, and for a moment it was if we were together again.

To me, this find is invaluable. I am so grateful that others had the foresight to preserve my family story. The archivists graciously made a copy for me to take home. I plan to add the book to my own stash of records, deeply happy to have found my family in the archives.