



A Case for Cursive

by Debra Scifo, ASAC Executive Director

Cursive writing is the evolution of penmanship and the result of the necessity to write faster because of the writing instruments of the time. Cursive appeared somewhere around 1600 and increasingly grew in popularity. Today, fewer than 15% of students taking the SAT completed the essay portion in cursive.

I can recite the advantages of cursive to include enhanced brain function, academic performance, higher skill development and more. But I want to make my case for cursive personal. Cursive writing is as unique as each of us and is art. A beautiful expression of who we are individually. The fonts found on the computer were derived from cursive handwriting. Fonts are perfect and uniform and easy to read. But they are not personal!

Learning to write cursive was a big deal! It was a step toward adulthood, something akin to getting my driver's license or first date.

Perhaps cursive is no longer necessary or practical. But what would the signatures on the Declaration of Independence look like if they were selected from a list of fonts. I haven't seen any signature that would compare to that of John Hancock, his or ours!

Cursive writing is not always uniform and easy to read, but a special person wrote their message and sent it to me and shared their thoughts with me in cursive. There is something lost if denied the challenge to copy our parent's signature so we can sign our report cards and excuse our absences from school. The cursive handwriting of our parents defined them and is more than connected letters, it taught us values and caused us to acknowledge who they were.

OK, a bit carried away. Here is what I want you to think about.

My recipe box sits on my kitchen counter and is stuffed with recipes from friends, family, friends of friends and friends of family. You get the idea, it is literally stuffed full. You might suggest that I organize my recipes and either scan them or key them into a document on my laptop or tablet. A great suggestion and one I have considered many times.

The recipes in my recipe box tell a story, my story. The recipes are written in the handwriting of my grandmothers; women who long ago have died and entrusted me with these scraps of paper and recipe cards that are tattered, torn and blemished by ingredients from the recipe. I found a recipe my grandmother had sent to me when I was 22. My sister and I were trying to figure out how to make Italian delicacies, a family tradition that began in Italy many generations ago. The recipe came in a letter telling us in detail how to make the perfect confection. You know, we have it dialed and the tradition is alive and well. What is important to me is that the recipe was part of her monthly letter to me. I read that letter at least once a year, each time I make these Italian delicacies.

I was sorting through my keepsake box that is, yes stuffed full of cards, cards that date back to grade school, cards that are full of good wishes and kind thoughts and signed by someone dear to me. Tucked inside a thank you card was a letter written by my grandfather. While my grandmother wrote faithfully, up until receiving this card and letter, I wasn't sure that my grandfather knew how to write! But he wrote me a letter thanking me for a birthday gift. My grandfather was born in 1912 and died in 1999. His letter takes me to many happy and memorable places I shared with him as a child and as an adult.

So, that is my case for cursive. Perhaps not what you might have expected, but an argument to encourage you to make certain your children and grandchildren create something wonderful through cursive communication. What about you? Create a memory, leave a legacy and write a letter 'in cursive' to someone who means the world to you.