

## Writing a Memoir June 2012

The relationships we have and the people and who we meet during this short journey on earth, will one day be the witnesses to our lives lived.....

A book never just happens; it is usually preceded by an accumulation of events, people and choices.

Life is a big picture, and each of the choices we make and what we experience is a stroke of a brush on the huge canvas of our years.

Writing a memoir does not necessarily have to be a tragic or sad event- in fact most memoir are written just about the ordinary and wonderful small moments in life – which make add to the brush stroke of our life's canvas!

.....A small moment which fills your thoughts with joy...nostalgia...or satisfaction- **that** is where you **Start**.....just start!

My father always told me that

' fact is stranger than fiction!"

### A daunting task...

Most people embarking on a memoir are paralyzed by the size of the task. Where to start, what to put in...who may they offend...who will publish it. Because of this very reason so, many memoirs linger for years half written, or never get written at all.

How do you start- the most important thing to remember is that YOU are the protagonist in your own memoir, in other words- the tour guide. You must become the narrative trajectory for the story you want to tell and never relinquish this control. And like I have just done- chose to write the sections I wanted to write, and chose to leave out some things I did not wish to include!

### Universal truths

Most people can relate to universal truths....like- *the bad guy gets caught in the end*..... Justice prevailed!

This is what makes a story, your own unique one...and the outcome the good that came from this event in your life

### Reduce- don't bore people with too many facts!

When you start writing for example about your family- this can be daunting- I suggest you start to think small. Don't rummage around in your past too much— or your extended family's past — to find episodes and events that you think are "important" enough to be worthy of including in your memoir.- like a painting, the strokes of the brush form the most important picture- not the background necessarily! Look for small self-contained incidents that are still vivid in your memory. If you still remember them it's because they contain a universal truth that your readers will recognize from their own life.

### Commit to Writing Daily

Many people think you must start at page one, then write the whole book- this is not necessarily so. You can go to your desk or sit in the garden on a Monday morning and write about some event that's still vivid in your memory. What you write doesn't have to be long — three pages, five pages — but it should have a beginning and an end. If you are doing this electronically save it both on your computer and on a flash disk. Then print it , or put the hand written episode in a

folder and get on with your life. On Tuesday morning, do the same thing. Tuesday's episode doesn't have to be related to Monday's episode. Take whatever memory is calling; your subconscious mind, having been put to work, will start delivering your past. It is quite amazing how events will just flow; it is so therapeutic and healing to many!

Keep this up for a few weeks- even months. According to author on writing, William Zinsse, once you have spread all this out- the floor being the biggest and most practical place to work from. Once you start to read through what you have written you will then see what patterns emerge. They will tell you what your memoir is about and what it's not about. They will tell you what's primary and what's secondary, what's interesting and what's not, what's emotional, what's important, what's funny, what's unusual, what's worth pursuing and expanding. You'll begin to glimpse your story's narrative shape and the road you want to take.....Then all you have to do is put the pieces together. And you have a memoir-

### **Getting it published.**

Not many people can edit their own work- in fact one should not! The best option to get a copywriter or editor, to check this for you.

A publisher can then publish your book....Or if all fails, you can opt for the 'self publishing option' (e.g. [www.danpoynter.com](http://www.danpoynter.com)) has a self publishing template you can download free on his website- like many others!

Or you can just put your book together, have a few copies printed and bound and you will have your memoirs.! That's easy.

### **Leaving a legacy**

Your memoirs could directly or indirectly help someone achieve a goal, or overcome an obstacle. The rule- don't put too much detail- the boring day to day bits, nobody wants to read about. It's the exciting elements that will hold a reader's attention and those are the elements you should focus on when you write. So your memoir should be devoted to helping your reader achieve similar goals. Or at least give them hope that they, too, can achieve as you have.

I believe that the secret of mastering life is like the stroke of the brush - one stroke at a time. Doing in life as much as you can during that specific season, and leaving the rest to God. It is this divine partnership that finally gets us through it all.

So why not sit back and let your memories live again, take time out start writing your memoirs- remember everybody's life is a story0- and be the best you can be until next time!

Quote of the month

Fact is stranger than fiction...

-Peter Welgemoed -

thought

*There is a great deal of poetry and fine sentiment in a chest of tea.*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims*