

Getting the Story Down

Questions and answers on writing life experiences for ourselves and others

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1. Why is it important to record life stories?
2. What if your life seems boring and ordinary? Who will want to read it?
3. What is the best way to capture the story? Video, oral tapes, written narrative etc.
4. What is a story? Definitions of different types of life experiences and how they are captured.
5. Who's who in the capture of a life event: Story teller, listener, interviewer, historian, audience, transcriptionist, archivist etc.
6. What is the role of a listener? How should the questions be phrased so that bias or personality is subdued and the storyteller is in charge?
7. Is the role different if the storyteller is facing a life threatening disease?
8. How do you handle it if in telling of the story emotions and repressed feelings surface?
9. How do you get enough information? When do you turn to family members or public records?
10. How much time does it take to complete a story?
Everyone is so busy and life goes by so quickly, how can I ever squeeze this in?
11. What is truth? Why would two different people present at the same event see it entirely different and which version do you believe and record?
12. How should you convey the story? First person, third person, lots of photos with captions, small easily read sections or one long letter?
13. What are the main types of personal anecdotes, life events, experiences, tragedies and triumphs that make a good memoir?
14. How do you narrow it down to the "real" story? What is hidden beneath the iceberg?
15. What are some questions to jog memories?
16. What about editing, spelling, composition etc? What if others judge your work and find it less than perfect?
17. How do you structure the narrative so that it is interesting, believable and leaves the message the story teller wanted to convey?
18. What do you do with the narrative when you have finished writing it?
19. Who does the finished work belong to?
20. Where can you find additional assistance on personal historians or story telling issues?
21. Where is the paper and pen?

If you are interested in getting the answers to these and other questions about life story writing, please contact us at judywright@artichokepress.com and sign up for a tele-class and our FREE e-zine *The Artichoke-finding the heart of the story in the journey of life..*