

WRITING YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Whenever we discover personal information about an ancestor it's a treasured find, but when we come across an actual autobiography it's pure gold. So why are we so reluctant to put down on paper our own story for future generations? We all know the answer to that. At best we think it's a daunting, time consuming task, and at worst, a flashback from school days when the assignment made us sick to our stomachs. It doesn't have to be either. In fact, you can write your autobiography in an afternoon with the ease and fun of a lively conversation with an old friend. The old friend of course is you, and the conversation is a brainstorming technique. If you plan on writing your full memoirs someday this method is a great way to create an outline, but if you don't have the time or the literary talents, this is a great way to put your story down on paper in your own words. But like learning to write cursive, the harder you try, the clumsier the outcome. So relax and have fun with it. Here's what you do:

Jot down your core information, with dates if you know them, in list form. Your birth, first day of school, high school, wedding day—all the basic information of your life. Leave room between the items so you can add more later as you think of them. Beside each date or event write something, no matter how trivial, that you know about that part of your life. Next to birth, you might say simply "I was only four pounds", or "Mother said I wouldn't wait until she got to the hospital", or "Uneventful". It can be one word or dozens of paragraphs—anything you know or remember, and it doesn't have to be in complete sentences. Information is great but also talk about how you felt—was the first day of school exhilarating or terrifying? Don't rack your brain—just jot down the things that come to mind. If nothing comes to mind, move on. If you don't force it, the most memorable aspects of your life, the things you hold important, will come flowing out with pleasant ease. If this is as much as you care to do—great! If you want to do more, go back and expand on your thoughts, put them into full sentences and paragraphs if they're not already. Go back to it and add things as they come to mind. In time, your afternoon autobiography may turn into a full volume of memoirs. In the meantime, put your writings in acid free sheet protectors and go out and make more memories.

Related Sources & Links on writing your life story:

For writing tips: <http://www.kansas.net/~lifestor/tip.html>

An Internet Guide on Preserving and Sharing Personal & Family Histories:

<http://users.deltanet.com/~lrawlins/set/set.html>

LDS Tips for Keeping a Personal History: http://www.ldshome.com/family_history.asp

"Writing Family Histories & Memories" by Kirk Polking (Available at Your Family Legacy).

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Your Family Legacy

"Discover and Preserve Your Family Heritage"

<http://www.webYFL.com/>