

*The  
Story of  
Your Life*

*By  
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# The Story of Your Life

## *How to Craft an Inspiring Autobiography for Posterity*

*Everyone has a book inside of them, but it doesn't do any good until you pry it out. -Jodi Picoult, bestselling author*



## Introduction

**If we don't invest the time to write out our life story, no one else will!**

This would be a tragic waste of the wisdom we've each gained over a lifetime which could potentially help our family, friends and future generations best remember us after we graduate from this life to the next.

This booklet will focus on telling the story of your life as a collection of short memoirs, grouped chronologically in four basic categories; **1. Early Childhood, 2. School/College, 3. Marriage/Family/Career and 4. Retirement.**

Readers/writers will be provided with a list of 155 prompting questions designed to help you focus and reflect upon key memories from each of four major seasons of life.

I recommend choosing 50–60 questions to write about for at least 15–30 minutes daily. By the end of the 8-weeks you will have a nice collection of 50–60 memoirs to form your autobiography.

Here are few sample memory-prompting questions:

- *Write about your earliest memory. What do you see? Was anyone you with? Does it have a special meaning to you now?*
- *Describe your first job. How much did you earn? Were you a good employee? On good terms with the boss?*
- *Who has influenced your life the most? Why? How have you changed as a result of this person?*

The goal of this class is to remember what has shaped your life so far, what you hope to accomplish in your remaining years and then presenting your finished autobiography to your loved ones as a keepsake for posterity.

**The first assignment is to create a theme, or purpose statement for your autobiography.** Taking a few minutes to reflect and then write down a short, one-paragraph life summary/obituary is a good starting point.

Why? Because this forces us to reflect upon (and condense) our entire lifetime into a single paragraph. In your own words you are

telling your family (and the world) in a nutshell how you hope you'll be remembered.

While writing your own obituary may seem a bit morbid, the truth is that reflection upon our own death can provide us with added meaning to our daily life.

Here's a sample obituary I wrote when facing [my own mortality](#) in 2022:

*Michael David Bradshaw (1953–2022) affectionately known as 'ideaman' passed peacefully of natural causes. His passion was helping others discover that they were created in love, as a reflection of the image of God. In his professional work as a financial writer he sought to help readers discern economic reality and grasp that true wealth transcends 'money'. His book reviews/songs expressed his joy in promoting closer relationships — both human and divine. David is survived by his four loving daughters, ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren.*

Your life purpose statement could be a single sentence or a paragraph. Having this as your central theme will help your short memoirs and autobiography flow together.

Additional help prompting your memories may also come from old photo albums, letters written/received from loved ones, favorite songs, or old home movies.

## **1. The Big Picture**

### **Why Write Your Life Story?**

The purpose of writing your autobiography is twofold;

1) To create a record of small snapshots of your life for your family and OTHERS to gain from your accumulated life wisdom, joys, sorrows and lessons.

2) To remind YOU of who you really are, by stimulating important memories of your life to help integrate your small self with your BIG True Self.

As we age it is vital that we invest some time reflecting upon what is most important to us. St. Augustine said, “Know Thyself”. This life review also helps us resolve any fractured relationships, bitterness or unforgiveness we may be holding on to.

Reflecting upon the past helps us become more grateful in the present and hopeful about the future. Today, more than ever, our children and grandchildren are in need of true elders who can help them face the adversities of life they will face and encourage them about how we’ve overcome them during our lifetime.

Lastly, let your family and friends know you are doing this project and watch their faces light up. Likely they will even have some photos or information to add.

## **2. Resources Needed:**

A 3-ring binder and 4 colored subject divider tabs. Some 3-ring punched lined paper...OR a laptop computer... OR a smart phone with voice mp3 recording to text capability.

To write a draft of your autobiography over an 8-week period will require a commitment to answer 6–7 prompting questions per week, writing at least 15–30 minutes/day. You can of course stretch it out over longer period, or get your 50 or more memoirs done in as little as 3-4 weeks if you have a lot of available time.

The goal is to complete a collection of 50–60 memoirs spanning your lifetime, arranged chronologically, to form your autobiography.

You could either save your digital autobiography document as a pdf and add new memoirs to over time, or publish it now and give a printed copy to your family/friends. It is the gift of a lifetime! Your lifetime!

### **3. Once Your Memoirs/Autobiography is Written:**

Next begins the somewhat tedious process of editing, which is best done with the help of another writer or experienced editor. You need to “take a machete” to your first draft and streamline it to make your points as efficiently and powerfully as possible.

I am available to help you with this process. Simply email me, M. David Bradshaw, with the particulars of what you would like to end up with and a pdf or Word draft if possible. Then email me for a free estimate at: [ideaman@myideafactory.net](mailto:ideaman@myideafactory.net)

When you and your editor are happy with your text, you can either read it aloud into your smart phone to create a digital text document, or type it into a Word document. I recommend the document is sized at 5.5” x 8” or 6” x 9” for a standard paperback book output. Or, if you prefer 8.5”x11” format with a spiral binding, which can easily be done at any print shop or online printer.

If possible, I recommend adding a variety of relevant photographs to the text of your memoirs. You can digitally insert your photos into your Word document for added impact and readability.

Once you are happy with the finished product and are sure that it is free of typos and spell-checked, then you can decide on how

many copies you want to print and whether you are content with black and white or want it printed in full color.

If you would like a “perfect bound” book/booklet with a glued spine that looks like a standard paperback/hardback book I recommend Smartprint.com.

Depending upon your document’s dimensions, quantity, number of pages and if you decide on B&W or color, the cost per book will vary. For example, 20 copies of a 6”x9” 148 page book, printed in full color will cost about \$18/each. As the quantity goes up, price goes down.

#### **4. Your First Assignment:**

Your assignment the first week is to create a theme, or purpose statement for your autobiography and write the first 6-7 memoirs.

Memoirs can be written in any order, from chronologically to starting with your most recent memories and then working backwards. In this booklet I am suggesting you start with your most recent memories to begin the reflection and writing process.

The order that you decide to write your memoirs is completely your choice. You may discover while writing one memoir that it triggers memories of another stage of life. Keep the flow going.

Write on whatever comes to your mind and then file it in one of the four seasons of life in your 3-ring binder: *1. Early Childhood, 2. School/College, 3. Marriage/Family/Career and 4. Retirement.*

I suggest choosing 12–15 prompting questions which strike you as good topics from *Section 4 - Retirement*, in the 155 Prompting Questions at the end of this booklet.

Start writing! I recommend setting aside a dedicated time of day to establish the habit of writing regularly. Feel free to add your own prompting questions if you prefer.

Review the entire list of 155 prompting questions and begin choosing 12–15 questions from all four sections, and if you should feel inspired to write about your youth, schooling, or adult memories, go ahead. That is the purpose of the 3-ring binder with a tab for each of the four life stages — to help you file your memoirs chronologically... *Good luck!*

**Assignment: Write answers to 6–7 questions from the prompting questions *Retirement* section.**

## **Sample 1 - Retirement Memoir:**

### *How am I unique?*

*Each and every one of us is a very unique human being. No two life experiences are exactly the same. This fact should prompt us to practice extreme compassion toward our fellow man. Yet our human nature still nudges us toward judging and comparing ourselves with everyone else.*

*What makes me unique is the sum total of my upbringing, gifts or talents of intelligence, curiosity, creativity, actions and life choices as well as my deepest held convictions.*

*I am unique in having chosen a spiritual path at a young age. At 20, I chose to follow my heart and soul. I tried to answer my calling to seek first the truth, rather than seeking first educational degrees or maximum monetary compensation.*

*Between the ages of 21-30 I viewed my work as a means to the end of ministry, but eventually the financial pressures of life,*



*marriage and family motivated me to more seriously apply myself to a career in sales and marketing for the next 40+ years.*

*Thankfully, working for a spiritually-driven investment firm allowed me a rather unique opportunity of blending work and ministry. A lasting legacy of SwissAmerica.com is helping explain that “true” wealth is both physical and spiritual.*

*In 2023, our company prayer/Bible study group celebrates its 30th year. The group started as a twice a week 8am meeting led by the founder and Chairman Craig. R. Smith. The group now continues online due to the major changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020.*

*Since moving into semi retirement in 2022, I have chosen new ways to serve and volunteer, such as leading a senior class in writing. Another somewhat unique gift I have developed is condensing inspirational books into song lyrics and then putting them to music to share truths I’ve learned.*

*In some ways we’re all very ordinary people with much in common. We are living ordinary lives which eventually lead us to an ordinary death. We are also extraordinary people, special and unique.*

## **Week 2 - From Retirement to Reinspirement**

### **A Generational Shift**

Webster defines “retire” as: “1: to withdraw from action or danger, 2: to retreat for privacy, 3: to move backward, 4: to withdraw from occupation, conclude working or career.” All four of these “withdrawals” mark the end of a season of life. But “where should we go from here?” is the question.

Today another 10,000 Baby Boomers will turn age sixty-five. That's over 3 million Boomers a year entering a "new stage" of life — for the next decade! And today 7,500 Greatest Generation seniors will pass away into eternity. Sadly, many will never understand their true life purpose nor record it for posterity.

Millennials, as well as generations X, Y and Z need our help to become all they can be! Let's shift into gear, use our many gifts and help them move from surviving to THRIVING! Lets demonstrate to every generation how to become a NEW Greatest Generation!

Statisticians report U.S. life expectancy in the 21st century will be ninety years or more. Ready or not, one-third of the population will enter this new season of life — scarcely imagined 50 or 100 years ago — without a rite of passage or road map. Your autobiography can help serve as a road map.

In his book *The Big Shift* author and founder of [Cogenerate.org](http://Cogenerate.org) Marc Freedman, makes an impassioned call for boomers and seniors to accept the decades opening up between midlife and old age for what they really are — an entirely new stage of life, which he dubs the "encore" years.

"We're envisioning this chapter," writes Freedman, "as a time when we make some of our most important contributions, for ourselves, for our world, for the well-being of future generations."

**Assignment: Write answers to another 6–7 prompting questions from the *Retirement* section.**

## **Sample 2 - Retirement Memoir:**

*I want to be remembered for...*

*I would like to be remembered for being more of a giver than a taker in life as a reflection of God's giving nature.*

*The older and wiser we become, the more we understand that when our time on earth we take nothing with us except our spiritual consciousness. What is most important to leave behind are good memories of loving relationships and shared activities, rather than stuff.*

*This reality has prompted me to work on becoming a stuff minimalist and a relationship maximalist over the last decade. For example, when I moved to Florida from Arizona in the summer of 2021, I decided to empty my storage unit and give away my furniture, bike, kayak and other stuff to my daughters and grandchildren.*

*I took only what I could fit in the back of my car on this new adventure: two guitars, a small amp, my clothes, a few pictures and memorabilia.*

*It was a very liberating and reminded me of the freedom I felt as a teenager hitchhiking up the California coast with only a backpack, guitar and a few changes of clothes. Somehow it seems that detachment from things promotes a greater trust and union with God.*

*I also hope to be remembered as a patient soul, willing to wait upon the Spirit before speaking or acting impulsively. For much of my life I was pretty self-centered, but gradually over the years, by the grace of God, I've learned to shed my ego layer by layer.*

*To me, earning patience means being able to say "It's all good, even when it's not!" Being able to hold a paradox of unresolved issues and still maintain my peace of mind and heart.*

*Lastly, I hope to be remembered as a loving father and grandfather, willing to invest time and money into the lives of my amazing family. In my younger days, at times I failed them and caused some painful memories, which I am hopeful have faded over the decades and been replaced with better memories that will last a lifetime.*

*In my professional and ministry life I hope to be remembered as a connector, communicator and distiller of truth. Although truth is unchanging, our understanding of it can evolve over time. This has been the case with me. The older I get the less sure I am that I fully understand the great mysteries of life and God, yet the more sure I am that this is how it should be.*

*Sitting in silence can be the greatest teacher of who I am, rather than an ever-growing abundance of information. The fruit of knowing the truth is being set free from the cares of this life, regrets about the past, and fears about the future.*

## **Week 3 - Midlife Transitions**

### **The Art of Letting Go**

Richard Rohr's bestselling book, [\*Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life\*](#) explains, "In my opinion the first half of life task is no more than finding the starting gate...the warmup act, not the full journey."

*"The usual crossover points are a kind of 'necessary suffering' and 'homesickness'. Our unique little bit of heaven is installed by the Manufacturer within the product at the beginning! We are given a span of years to discover it, to choose it, and to live our own destiny to the fullest, to discover our True self."*

In his book, “[\*The Art of Letting Go\*](#),” Rohr describes “Nine Stages of Maturity” in simple, non-technical terms. He stresses that the more advanced (or evolved) levels of consciousness should always *include all of the previous levels*, rather than excluding them, which usually requires deep compassion and patience. To model this inclusiveness to youngers is an important role of a true elder.

Rohr emphasizes that ongoing spiritual growth usually requires some type of a loss at each new successive stage of consciousness, which serves to prod us onward. This “art of letting go” helps us move to further stages.

*A ship is safe at harbor, but that is not what a ship is made for.* Many have thought of retirement as a harbor that, if we can just reach it and drop anchor, we will be safe from the gales, travails and burden of life’s work. In this harbor, we thought when young, life will become perpetual vacation.

With maturity however, we discover that our deepest yearning is not to stop, but to go on — to discover and fulfill what we were made for, exploring new worlds of our heart, dreams and soul.

**Assignment: Write answers to 6–7 prompting questions from Section 3 on *Marriage/Family/Career*.**

### **Sample 3 - Marriage/Family/Career Memoir:**

#### *Child rearing do-over*

*Reflecting on my early years as a father leaves me wishing I had invested more time with each of my older daughters, Jenni, Beth*

*and Grace individually, which I was able to do three decades later with my youngest daughter Braida.*

*The first decade was a very challenging time for my wife Barbara and I. For me to discover who I was in my early 20s, while supporting a family and pursuing ministry at the same time was a major juggling act.*

*While in the midst of it, my time was so splintered that I was not as attentive as I could have been to my girls need for quality time. Having all three girls in the first four years meant having less available free time for each.*

*So if a do-over was possible, I would have spread out having children over 6-8 years, instead of 4 years which would've given me more time with each child before the next one arrived.*

*Another change I would've made is committing to less outside ministry duties and more family time. I remember working all day then dashing out at night to help out at the Crossroads Coffeehouse, coordinating an upcoming concert or doing a weekly Sunday night radio program.*

*All of my busyness at the time seemed more important than doing things with my girls. Of course none of us are permitted a do over in real life, so at best I can try to invest as much time as possible with my grandchildren and great grandchildren now.*

*I can also encourage them that good relationships are more important than achieving more and more things. Time is more valuable than money when it comes to raising children. It's a shame that by the time I learned this lesson so much water had passed under the bridge.*

## Week 4 -The Two Halves of Life

### Order → Disorder → Reorder

What's the happiest time of life? Early 20s and early 70s, say researchers and polls. Our 20s are happy because our whole adult life is still ahead of us, full of limitless hopes, dreams, and opportunities. Our 70s are happy because we let go of our early dreams and embraced the realities of life and yet we're content.

*“The greatest and most important problems of life are unsolvable. We must outgrow them,”* said psychologist Carl Jung. You might even say *we learn more by doing things wrong... than by doing them right!* Aging is a privilege. With age comes wisdom, and reflecting on past experiences can serve not only as our cherished memories, but also as grounds to impart our hard-won knowledge to younger generations.

*“What is great in the morning is of little importance in the evening.”* -Carl Jung. What Jung observed is that our life is roughly divided into two halves. The first-half task: creating a proper container, our identity and survival. Second half task: finding what the container is really meant to hold and deliver.

The usual crossover points between first and second half of life is some type of loss, suffering or unforeseen crisis. A loss of job, marriage, family member, health, etc. This falling point becomes either a point of further growth, or further decline, depending upon our perspective.

As we age, Rohr says we see this life pattern emerge; *order, disorder, reorder...* life, death, resurrection... this is not the exception, but rather the norm. *“First comes the fall, then the recovery. Both are the mercy of God.”* -Lady Julian of Norwich. This is a key life principle elders are able to share with youngers!

The great problem with modern American culture is that the vast majority of youngers (and far too many mid-life and older folks too) are stuck in the first half of life for their *entire life!*

**Assignment: Write answers to another 6–7 prompting questions from section 3 on *Marriage/Family/Career*.**

## **Sample 4 - Marriage/Family/Career Memoir:**

### *Thanks to my mentors*

*A few men and one women have served as mentors over my lifetime, although often unofficially.*

*My first mentor was my mother Virginia who showed me what unconditional love looked like in all circumstances. She accepted me no matter whether I was right or wrong, good or bad, obedient or rebellious. In an uncertain and often unforgiving world she was my safe harbor, my refuge from the storms of life.*

*My next mentor was John McGovern, a young man who boldly stood up for his faith and ultimately asked me to join him in a prayer to invite Christ into my life back in 1973. John then invited me to visit his home church in Scottsdale, Arizona Peoples Church, which would later lead me to enroll at Melodyland School of Theology.*

*My next mentor helped me enter the world of direct sales. Brad and his wife recruited me into Southwestern book sales. He and his wife were about 8-10 years older and were very persuasive and passionate about this unique job which also incorporated ministry. Entering up to 30 complete strangers homes every day presented challenges and potentially big rewards and he was a pro who willingly shared his secrets to success. Thanks to Brad I*



*made it through the toughest sales Boot Camp I could ever imagine with flying colors.*

*My next mentors were Dr. Jack and Jim Hayford who did team teaching at Melodyland. Dr. Jack and Jim were both living examples of how to bring the Kingdom of God alive both from Scripture and from their experience.*

*Next I met Dennis Peacocke, founder of Strategic Christian Services in Santa Rosa, CA. Dennis is a pastor, Bible teacher and global outreach strategist with a gift for helping others think and live big and strategically. His passion was for Christians to grasp the political and economic implications of the gospel.*

*For me, Dennis' seminars and teaching tapes were like a deep fountain of wisdom in a barren and dry land. He explained why economics and geopolitics should matter and how to begin to restore self-government in our broken, fragmented world.*

*The next major mentor to dramatically impact my life has been Richard Rohr, a Franciscan teacher, author and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His 2012 book Falling Upward was a breath of fresh air regarding understanding the spiritual steps of maturity connecting the first and second half of life. He explained clearly things such as: spiritual inclusivity, universal salvation and the value of silent contemplation.*

*Rohr challenged my fundamentalist views on many key topics. He explained persuasively why to I should focus on experiencing and modeling the presence of God. He taught me to see things in wholes, rather than in parts and how to be gracious and compassionate toward those without the same spiritual understanding.*

## Week 5 - From My Story to The Big Story

### From “My Story” to “Our Story” to “The Story”

We left off discussing the two halves of life and how they both need each other. Sadly, many in their 20s, 30s, 40s and even 50s are still so caught up in survival. In all of our seeking upward mobility in our job/career, future dreams and the busyness with child rearing we can miss a great deal of living in the present.

*“Our life is frittered away by detail...Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! Let our affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand.”* -Henry David Thoreau.

This is much easier said than done during the midlife years — there’s so many distractions and so little free time for reflection. That is why elders serve as important mentors to younger, to help them “wake up” to enjoy life, despite its many pitfalls.

Moving from a childish, egocentric life and worldview to a more mature, inclusive mindset is a gradual process, sometimes taking many decades... if ever.

Philosopher, author and futurist Ken Wilbur in [\*A Brief History of Everything\*](#) estimates that the vast majority (about 60–70%) of the world today is stuck at either the egocentric (my story) or ethnocentric (tribal/our story) level of consciousness.

Wilbur says that following “waking up” the next big step up is surrendering to the process of “growing up” — which takes time, inner work, and frankly a fair amount of letting go of the small false self in pursuit of the larger True Self. This requires some spiritual practices of connecting our head and heart.

In midlife we begin to move from “My Story” (egocentric) to “Our Story” (ethnocentric) to “The Story” (cosmocentric). We

need all three stages, but ultimate fulfillment is only possible as we learn how to fit ‘my/our’ story into a larger ‘the’ story of practicing unconditional love for everyone and everything.

Every phase of life, from marriage to child rearing, to navigating our career gives us opportunities to make the choice: to either try to change adverse circumstances, or to allow these circumstances to change us. A willingness to let go of our preconceived notions of success, or rightness, is the sign of maturity, regardless of age. If elders do not show youngsters how to let go of adverse situations... who will?

**Assignment: Write answers to 6–7 prompting questions from section 2 on *Education/College*.**

## **Sample 5 - Education/College Memoir:**

### *Independence and responsibility*

*As a teenager, I learned how to become increasingly independent as a so-called latchkey child. I soon discovered I could more or less do as I wished during the day as long as I got passing grades and did not do anything illegal, with the exception of smoking marijuana.*

*I remember after arriving home from my San Francisco runaway trip to the Haight-Ashbury, my parents decided a military summer school was the best option to correct my rebellious ways. So off I went to Army Navy Academy in Carlsbad, California.*

*Although much less strict than during the regular school year, I still faced a very scheduled lifestyle with set times for meals, recreation and bedtime. It was a new experience which I grudgingly adapted to. The goal was to teach me to live within school boundaries and become more responsible.*

*Although it did not feel especially like a form of heavy punishment, it definitely clipped my wings by requiring that I stay within the school walls for a full month. I remember learning how to play pool and surf as being the most fun activities at the Academy which was located on the beach.*

*I made a few friends who, like myself, were in the school as a form of discipline for misbehaving at home. I don't think the Academy experience changed me much, except that I learned how to follow the rules and then figured out a way to break them.*

*Upon arriving back home my parents decided a private school might be more challenging academically, so I was enrolled in The Buckley School in Sherman Oaks for ninth grade. This was another new experience which called for wearing navy slacks, tie, blazer, wing tip shoes and a much tougher curriculum than public school.*

*I gravitated to other students with long hair and hippie tendencies and did not feel like I fit in very well with this mostly pre-Ivy League crowd.*

*One day at lunch, I went off-campus to smoke some pot and upon my return being promptly sent to the vice-principal's office and then immediately expelled from the school.*

*This was a major disappointment to Mom and Dad, who were once again near their wits end with how to control my behavior. It was at this point that I convinced them we would all be better off if we took a break from each other indefinitely.*

*I proposed moving in with a friend and having his mother become my Foster parent. Mom and Dad agreed and this arrangement which worked for almost a year. But, due to some infraction of the*

*Foster Mom's strict rules, I ended up needing to move out into another Foster home.*

*This was a much more difficult environment without having a friend in-house and also being thrust into a new high school. Still, my stubborn pride preferred this arrangement rather than agreeing to live within my step-Dad's rigid rules.*

*This situation continued until one day I decided to take my Foster parents car out for a short joyride in the neighborhood. Upon my return a few hours later, I was reprimanded strongly and given a ticket by the police.*

*Soon thereafter I decided that my stay at this less than amiable Foster home was over, which led to the next chapter of my life that would take me from Southern Cal to Phoenix, AZ.*

## **Week 6 - Education and Transformation**

### **How Mature Love Overcomes Fear**

Did you know the most common one-liner in the Bible is “Do not be afraid”? (365 times!) It requires faith and love to overcome fear. But our school days can be full of fearful circumstances which can only be fully understood from a wider perspective later stage. This is why youngers need elders to reassure them that regardless of how difficult a crisis they face “this too will pass”.

Elders who offer a written testimony of how they have survived (and hopefully overcome adversity) offers youngers something solid to hold on to during their storms of life — even if we cannot be there to hold on to them in person.

In our mature years we have a changed and expanded capacity to love — to hold both good and bad, light and dark with less anxiety and to transmit this ability to embrace paradox on to others around us. While youngers define themselves by differentiation (or exclusivity), elders in contrast look for commonalities (inclusivity).

Youngers often stumble upon some very adverse circumstances which cause them to step back and rethink their life goals and face the reality of their so-called “shadow” or “false” self. This can be painful because this not-so-bright persona (or stage mask) is what we refuse to see about our self — and especially don’t want others to see! Writing about both your biggest pleasures and biggest pains can be both healing and therapeutic for others.

Our false self-image (or idealized role such as mother, father, doctor, nice person, professor, etc.) can trap us into lifelong self-delusion. This is where the elder’s second half of life wisdom and healthy self-critical thinking can help youngers see beyond their shadow’s disguise to find their larger, real self.

Elders can model to young adults that true joy and freedom comes in giving to other. Why? Because as we mature there is no longer a big need to impress others with things, houses, travel or knowledge. Elders can now become the “grand” parents to the world because children and adults feel safe and loved around them. Elders can help youngers see that education (learning more facts) is not the same as transformation (applying new information to affect a change of lifestyle).

**Assignment: Write answers to another 6–7 questions from section 2 on *Education/College*.**

## Sample 6 - Education/College Memoir:

### *Educational Advice*

*As an elementary school student I was eager to learn, but I often talked out of turn, therefore my best advice is: "talk less and listen more." This is a genuinely good rule in all of life.*

*A book I recently read entitled Just Listen explains how we can get much more agreement with others by first listening very closely to them, then asking a few additional prompting questions and listening. Often even those who diametrically disagree with our view on a subject will become more open to reconsideration if we make an earnest effort to really listen and understand their position.*

*Next, I think you must "read to lead." In a world now dominated by an audio/video entertainment-driven culture, we need to set aside quiet time to read, study, reflect and to make new personal discoveries in textbooks and recreational reading.*

*I have found that writing a book review after finishing a good book, particularly nonfiction books, helps me to digest the contents and then to periodically refer back to as a refresher.*

*Regardless of your field of work or endeavor, reading keeps us on the cutting edge of our rapidly changing world and technology. I'm a lifelong learner by choice and necessity.*

*Another key is to maintain a so-called "beginners mind," which simply means remaining open to return to square-one as needed to relearn something we may think we already understand. The goal being to gain further understanding from a new perspective.*

*A beginner's mind requires humility, a willingness to admit being wrong and to jettison our immature ideas if needed, which we otherwise might be prone to hang onto for a lifetime.*

*This could range from a hypothesis in science, our worldview or philosophy of economics and politics. Our understanding often grows over time. If we keep all of our options open we may discover new truth.*

*As for public vs. private or home school for the early years, I've become a fan of the Montessori method of teaching children how to be creative, yet orderly, self-motivated yet community-oriented.*

*Once a Montessori preschool student masters a skill, whether tying their shoes or building a block house, they are encouraged to find a younger child and teach them this new skill, which reinforces the joy of learning and teaching from a young age.*

*Parents who have the time, skill and patience for home schooling are able to choose the curriculum and the worldview they want reinforced.*

*As for post high school education and college, my advice is to closely examine all of the available options. Some adolescence are motivated toward a specific career path, others are unsure and might well consider a break from school to work or explore a vocational school.*

*I think the notion of every high school student jumping directly into four years of college, unless an academic scholarship is available, is not always the best path, especially given the high cost of educational debt.*



*A two-year, junior college seems like a wise and frugal way to start, which allows time for pondering the best career path. Sometimes finding a low paying apprenticeship job could be the best way to determine if you're really skilled or serious about entering a particular career path.*

## **Week 7 - The Learning Tree**

### **Learning is Taught and Caught**

During our early education we learn everything from our ABC's to our 1,2,3s. This "beginners mind" allows children to gather lots of information, much of which they're unsure of how it will help them to navigate their future. But, just as important as what we are taught in classrooms, is what we have caught from the lives of parents, grandparents and other elders.

*"When young and old connect, it's like joining the poles of a battery. Together we generate energy for personal and social change that age-segregated society cuts off... the young yearn for us to take an interest in them, their fears, their dreams, and their futures,"* writes Parker J. Palmer in *On the Brink of Everything*.

Even before children begin to navigate elementary school subjects and socialization they begin to recognize their own personality, strengths and weaknesses. Unconditional family love is vital to child development.

*"The glory of family love,"* writes C. S. Lewis in *The Four Loves*, *"It unites those who would otherwise not come together... Family love teaches us first to endure, then to enjoy — affection causes us to notice the goodness in others."*

During our pre-school days we also learn the value of friendship. True friendships are much more than mere companionship or comradery, usually involving strongly shared values and activities.

Later on parents' and grandparents' influence often fades as friendships and peer groups grow. Elder's have an opportunity to serve as youngers face growing pains, broken friendships and rejection.

Another important part of youthful education is learning how to treat the opposite sex, dating and romance. Parents often set boundaries, which may or may not be adhered to. These precious teenage years offer elders an opportunity to model for youngers a healthy healing of heartbreaks, forgiveness of bad behavior, as well as serving as a safe harbor of unconditional love.

**Assignment: Write answers to 6–7 prompting questions from section 1 on *Youth*.**

## **Sample 7 – Youth Memoir:**

### *When I grow up...*

*As a youngster, my first recollection of what I would like to do was influenced heavily by my favorite TV shows like; Gilligan's Island, which brought to mind notions of learning how to survive living on a beautiful deserted island relying only on nature and my wits.*

*TV shows like Leave it to Beaver seemed to illustrate that being mischievous was both fun and had consequences. Andy of Mayberry, which starred my fellow elementary schoolmate Ron Howard. The show gave me the desire to live in a small town,*

*rather than a suburb of LA. It seemed like a simpler lifestyle less stressful and always a happy ending.*

*My favorite show was The Man from UNCLE because it had lots of intrigue. I imagined living life as an international secret agent, like Napoleon Solo, who seemed the most exciting of all. I got my brother Kevin to play my perfect sidekick Illya Kuryakin, complete with his blonde hair he played a supportive role on all of our secret missions.*

*I remember spending hours cooking up missions that would take us from throwing dirt clods in empty lots to shooting at phantom enemies with plastic guns in abandoned buildings. We would, of course, always emerge as the victors and then head back home before dark and get ready to watch another episode on television.*

*I had several childhood jobs like mowing lawns and occasional babysitting, but those didn't seem to be jobs that would be in my future, they just allowed me to make a little extra money.*

*So far school failed to inspire me regarding what vocation I might be best suited for. It wasn't until my 13th birthday, when I was given my first guitar, that I began to dream of becoming a famous musician in a rock band. So I then set off to teach myself to play some of the popular songs of the mid-1960s like Pipeline, House of the Rising Sun and Michelle by the Beatles.*

*It would be a decade later before I played well enough to help lead music worship in small groups at church, but my lifelong love affair with making music was off and running.*

*Five years later, at age 18, I accepted a job selling magazine subscriptions door-to-door. This was my introduction into the challenging world of direct sales.*

*I enjoyed meeting a variety of new people and trying to figure out which magazines best suited their hobbies. My success in sales led me to believe the whole world could be my oyster. I enjoyed finding new and creative ways to overcome objections. I learned the value of time management early on and the value of hard work - lifelong lessons that would serve me well.*

## **Week 8 - Ego-Building Youth**

### **The Ego's Cycle of Birth, Life and Death**

Our earliest experience as an infant is a magical time of connection, with both our mother as well as with our Creator, or as some call it “the Ground of Being.” This is state of Divine union reflects our original goodness, purity and total surrender. It is this luminosity that is perceived and experienced in the presence of a new-born infant which parents witness at this earliest stage of self which evokes love.

At our birth we begin to build our ego and at our death (or a result of spiritual practices) we let go of our ego. As we grow, the ego-self moves toward increasing differentiation, a dawning sense of me, as Kathleen Singh puts it in [\*\*\*THE GRACE IN DYING\*\*\*](#). This developing consciousness of the child establishes the “First Dualism” between self and not-self — very relevant because it also represents the final letting go stage of the dying.

This First Dualism launches us into a lifetime journey into ego building and spawns our concept of space and time. We begin to make distinctions between past, present, and future, which births the “Second Dualism” — the distinction between life and death. These first two dualisms, which develop in early childhood, seek to divide and separate everything, our thoughts from our feelings,

thus removing us from experiencing wholeness and the unquestioning place of Love from which we came.

Next comes the “Third Dualism” — between mind and body which is usually developed in the early to middle childhood years. According to Singh, “The loss is immense. We lose our deep integrity, the unity of body and mind, which is the unity of feeling and attention — the ability to be present.”

The “Fourth Dualism” — our persona, is division between our acceptable self-image and the shadow self, which consists of all the parts of our self that we cannot see or that we disown. “Our personal consciousness believes in its apparent independence and self-control.” In early adulthood years “we become lost in our own dramas; we forget our Original Nature and goodness,” writes Singh.

It is most interesting that the healthy ego-building of the first half of life is followed by a healthy ego-decline in the second half of life. Elders are able to see this full cycle of life from a much broader perspective and therefore have much to share with youngers that can help them become whole humans rather than dualistically fragmented, as so many are.

**Assignment: Write answers to another 6–7 prompting questions from section 1 on *Youth*.**

### **Sample 8 – Youth Memoir:** *The hardest part of growing up*

*The hardest part of growing up for me was not having an actively engaged father as a role model who took an interest in my life, my interests and my future. In an era where both parents worked full-time, I’m not alone on this.*

*I remember wanting to learn from my step-Dad Keith, but it seemed like everything I tried to do, whether repairing something around the house or building something new, I was told to stay back and out of his way. I don't think it was always intentional to injure my self-confidence, but it hurt nonetheless.*

*Over time I stopped, asking to be his helper with any school projects or homework assignments. This also carried forward into other activities, such as sports and other normal father-son activities which I saw most of my friends engaging in.*

*Of course, I would come up with other activities to fill the void, but my primary take away was that Dad was just too busy and/or too important to invest time in fathering me.*

*The net effect was that I began to think that the best way to cope with life without a father's love and guiding hand was to simply do what I felt was best without any counsel other than my friends.*

*I also resolved that when that I became a father, I was going to be very involved with my children's lives.*

*In retrospect, I now have more compassion for Keith, knowing how difficult it can be to juggle education, work, play and family priorities as a young man.*

*I only met Keith's father Harry once or twice as a child. I believe Keith inherited his hands-off perspective of child-rearing from his father, who was also a regular drinker like Keith. Likely, Keith did the best he could, given the lacking model of his own father.*

*I think the idea that the sins of the father are often passed on to their children sadly is a truism, unless we undergo some type of*

*spiritual transformation which can reveal a Heavenly Father who can help us to re-model our thinking and actions.*

## **155 Prompting Questions**

*Please review this list and choose 10–15 questions from each of the four life categories to start creating your memoirs which will be combined chronologically to form your autobiography.*



### **I. Early Childhood Memories**

1. Do You Feel Your Name Fits You?

How did your parents come to name you? Is there a story attached to your name? Does it have a meaning? How do you feel about your name? Have you thought of changing your name?

2. What is Your First Memory?

Write about your earliest memory. What do you see? How old do you think you were? Was it an event or just a mental “snapshot?” Does it have any special meaning to you now?

### 3. Mother Memories?

Describe your mother. What did/does she look like? What were/are her personality traits and characteristics? How are you like or unlike her? Did she exhibit unconditional love?

### 4. Father Memories?

Describe your father. What did/does he look like? What were/are his personality traits and characteristics? How are you like or unlike him? Did he exhibit unconditional love?

### 5. Where Your Parents in Agreement on Discipline?

When conflicts arose, did both parents agree on how you should be disciplined? Was one parent a “good cop” and the other a “bad cop”? Whom were you closest to as a child, and then in later life?

### 6. Maternal Grandparents

Do you remember your mother’s parents? Describe them, and your relationship to them. Do you did spend much time together?

### 7. Paternal Grandparents

Do you remember your father’s parents? Describe them, and your relationship to them. Do you did spend much time together?

### 8. Grandparent Regrets

Do you wish you knew more about your grandparents or other ancestors that they never told you?

### 9. Favorite Childhood Home

Where was it? What did it look like? Describe the smells, sounds, and textures in the home. What was your room like? What was the best thing about it? The worst? Where you good at making new friends?



#### 10. Childhood Friendships

Can you remember your best childhood friend? If so, write about that person. Have you stayed in touch over your lifetimes? If not, do you have any regrets about losing track of them?

#### 11. Childhood Retreats/Hideouts

Did you have a hideout, fort or other special place as a child? Was it secret, or did you share it with siblings and friends? Write about it.

#### 12. Proudest Childhood Moment

What was your proudest moment in your childhood? A special award or achievement?

#### 13. Biggest Childhood Embarrassment /Regret?

What behavior (if any) are you most embarrassed about? Were there any consequences?

#### 14. Your Childhood Neighborhood

What was your neighborhood growing up like, or neighborhood(s) if you moved? Was it social, or did you feel isolated from your neighbors? Did you have a neighborhood hangout?

#### 15. Childhood Playmates

Did you have very many playmates? What did you do together? Were you the leader or follower?

#### 16. Holiday Traditions

What holiday traditions did your family celebrate when you were growing up? Were there special foods or rituals involved? Have you continued those traditions in your adult life? Were holidays happy times or stressful times in your family?

### 17. Childhood Sports

What were your first athletic experiences? Community night games? Little League? Gym or ballet class? How did you feel about sports in general? Were you good at athletics or was it hard for you?

### 18. Movie Memories

Do you remember the first movie you ever saw on the big screen? What were some of your other favorite movies growing up? Favorite actors/actresses? Why were they your favorites?

### 19. Siblings

Describe your sibling(s). Which one was most like you, which one was least like you? Which did you get along with the most/least? What have you learned from your siblings? Do you stay in touch?

### 20. Childhood Environments

Describe the sounds and scents of your childhood environment. Did you wake up to the smell of brewing coffee, or fall asleep to the muffled sounds of your parents' conversation or music in the next room? What about your school, your outside play areas, your friends' homes?

### 21. Your Family Pet(s)

Tell a story about a favorite (or least favorite) pet/animal in your young life. Did they sleep with you?

### 22. Family Vacations

Did your family go on any vacations? Where was your favorite place you remember visiting? Describe what that was like for you.

### 23. Childhood Relocation

Did your family move during your childhood or youth? How did you feel about the move(s) and how did moving affect you?

#### 24. Childhood Trauma/Issues

Was there anything or anyone that really bothered you in your childhood or youth? How did you deal with it? Did you ever consider running away from home?

#### 25. Musical Interests

Did you learn to play a musical instrument? If so, did you enjoy it? How good did you get, and do you still play it now? Did learning about music influence you in any other way?

#### 26. Brushes With Death

In your youth or childhood, did you experience a death (of a loved one, or a favorite pet)? How did that experience affect you?

#### 27. Religious Beliefs

Did you have any religious or spiritual beliefs in your childhood/youth? What experiences did you have that led you to those beliefs? Have your beliefs changed since then?

#### 28. Most Memorable Day

Think about your elementary school days. What was the most memorable day, event or occasion? What happened? Was it a positive or negative memory?

#### 29. Childhood Money

Did you receive a weekly allowance? Were you a saver, or spender? Describe something you bought with your own money. Did you earn extra money with a lemonade stand paper route or mowing lawns?

#### 30. Childhood Reading

At what age did you first learn to read? What were some of your favorite books/stories? Did someone read to you at night? Who? Did your early reading habits carry into school and adulthood?

## II. School/College Memories

### 31. When I Grow Up...

What did you want to be when you grew up? Did your ideas change from younger childhood to older childhood? Did your childhood dreams affect your adult choice of career?

### 32. Favorite Teacher

Who was your favorite teacher in school? Why was he/she your favorite? What is the most important lesson or subject that you learned?

### 33. Fashion

Did you have a favorite outfit or piece of clothing in your childhood or youth? Why was it your favorite? Did the clothing you wore when you were growing up have an influence on your life in some way?

### 34. Historical Events

What historical or political events do you remember most clearly during your childhood/youth years? (Pearl Harbor, assassination of President Kennedy, 9/11?) How did they affect you?

### 35. Favorite Foods

What were your favorite foods growing up? Who cooked for you, and how was it? Did your family grow any food?

### 36. School Dances

Did your school have dances or did you ever take dancing lessons? What was that experience like? Did it help or hurt your social life as a youth? Did you meet or take your first love at a dance?

### 37. Performing

What was the first time you recall speaking or performing in public? Were you terrified, or did someone have to pull you off the stage with a cane? How do you feel about it now?

### 38. Adolescence

Overall, how would you describe your adolescence? Was it a difficult time for you, or full of fun and adventure?

### 39. Most Embarrassing

What were you most embarrassed about as an adolescent? What do you think about that now?

### 40. Passions and Ideals

What were you most passionate about as a teenager? Did you have any strong religious, political or social justice ideals? Or were you obsessed with a celebrity, hobby, musical group or sports team? How did this passion influence your life?

### 41. Admiration

As an adolescent and young adult, who, out of your friends/family/acquaintances did you admire the most and why? Who did you admire in the public arena and why? How did these people influence your later life?

### 42. Independence and Responsibility

As an adolescent and young adult, how did you learn independence and responsibility? What lessons did you learn that you carried with you into your adult life?

### 43. Entertainment

In your teen years, what did you do for entertainment? Who did you do it with? Do you have any regrets about what you did?

#### 44. Transportation

How did you get around when you were a teen? Did you borrow your parents' car or have your own? Take the bus? Ride a bike or horse? Describe a memorable incident.

#### 45. School Subjects

What were your favorite school subjects in junior high/high school? What was your least favorite?

#### 46. Cliques

Were there "cliques" in your school? Did you identify with any of them? How did the social hierarchy of school affect you?

#### 47. Best School Friends

Who were your best friends in junior high/high school? Were they different than the friends you had in childhood? Did your friends help you or hinder you, and why? Do you still keep in touch?

#### 48. Generation Gap

What was your relationship with your parents like when you were a teen?

#### 49. Future Dreams

In your adolescent years, what were your hopes and dreams for your future? How do you feel about those ambitions now? Did you fulfill any of your dreams?

#### 50. The Hardest Part

What was the hardest part about growing up, or the hardest thing you had to go through in your childhood/adolescent years? What did you learn from it? How did it shape your character? What would you warn the child you about?

#### 51. The Best Part

What was the best part about your growing up years?

#### 52. Dating Philosophy

What rules or philosophy did your parents and/or faith tradition have about dating? What advice or instruction did you get regarding romance and relationships? How did that affect you?

#### 53. Leaving Home

When and under what circumstances (college, mission, marriage, military, job?) did you leave home for the first time? How did you feel about leaving home? How did your family feel about it?

#### 54. Coming of Age

Was there a particular event that marked your becoming an adult? What was it, and how did you feel about it?

#### 55. Secondary Education

What were your goals regarding secondary education? Did you achieve them? If so, how? If not, why not? Do you have any regrets about your education or lack thereof?

#### 56. College Days

If you went to college or university, take this time to list a few memorable events of your time in college. If you didn't attend college, write about why you didn't go and how you felt about it.

#### 57. College Teacher

Was there a college teacher or professor who had a particularly strong influence on your life? How and why?

#### 58. Community Service

In your young adulthood, did you do some kind of substantial community service, such as a humanitarian trip, or religious or service mission? What did you learn from the experience?

59. Educational Advice

What advice or wisdom would you like to share to others about education? What did you learn from your educational experiences that was especially valuable?

### **III. Marriage/Family/Career Memories**

60. Career

How did you get into your primary career or line of work? Was it planned or unexpected?

61. Best Job

What was the best job you've ever had and why? What was the worst job? What did you learn from each?

62. Career Changes

What career or job changes have you experienced? What were the reasons behind the change and how did it affect your life? Can you now see an evolutionary pattern?

63. Work Challenges

What have been the biggest challenges in your work life? How did you solve or overcome those challenges?

64. Career Redo

If you could go back and change any of your career choices, what would you change and why? If you could choose a different career in a theoretical "alternate universe," what would you be?

65. Economics

What economic fluctuations/challenges have you experienced in your life? How did they shape you?



#### 66. Mentors

Did you have a mentor or mentors in your career or work life? What did you learn from them? Have you ever mentored someone?

#### 67. Financial Advice

What advice would you give about finances (saving, investing, habits, etc.), based on your own experience and successes/failures? Did someone give you financial advice at some point? If so, how did it affect your life?

#### 68. Discrimination

Have you experienced any discrimination in your career or workplace(s)? If so, how did it affect you and how did you deal with it?

#### 69. Family Values

What beliefs or attitudes regarding marriage and family were expressed by your family of origin? What of those have you held on to—or let go of—and why? How have their ideas influenced your own marriage or family experience?

#### 70. How We Met

Tell the story of how you met your spouse(s) or partner(s).

#### 71. Failed Romances

Describe a romantic relationship you had that didn't last. What happened? What did you learn from it?

#### 72. Initial Attraction

What was it about your spouse/partner that first drew you to him/her? Was your attraction immediate, or did it grow over time? How did your courtship with your spouse/ partner proceed and how did you get to know one another better?

### 73. Proposal/Engagement

Describe your marriage proposal. What was said? Where did it happen? How did you feel? How long was your engagement period? What did you learn about each other during this time? Was it blissful or stressful and why?

### 74. Wedding Day

Describe your wedding day. Did everything run smoothly, or was there a glitch or two? Was it big or small? Who was there? What did you wear? How did honeymoon go?

### 75. Marital Adjustments

What did you and your future spouse have the hardest time getting used to? What were your most challenging differences?

### 76. Spousal Qualities

What are/were the qualities of your spouse that you appreciate most?

### 77. Spousal Challenges

What are/were the qualities of your spouse that are/were the most difficult for you?

### 78. First Home Together

Describe the first place you lived together as a couple. What memories do you have of that place?

### 79. First Fight

What was the first fight or argument you recall having with your spouse/partner? How did you resolve it?

### 80. News of First Child

Describe how you felt when you found out you were going to have your first child. Was it planned?

81. First Child

Describe the day your first child was born. Did anything unusual happen? How did you feel?

82. Children Names

Record the names, birth dates, and birthplaces of each of your children. How did you come to pick each child's name?

83. Favorite Thing About Each Child

What is your favorite thing about each of your children/grandchildren?

84. Biggest Challenge With Each Child

Describe the biggest challenge you have had with each of your children./grandchildren.

85. Family Traditions

What family traditions did you observe in your family of origin? What, if any, of those traditions did you continue with your own family? New traditions you began?

86. Child Rearing Philosophy

What are/were your beliefs or philosophies regarding raising your own children? How did it differ from the philosophy of your parents and the way you were raised?

87. Memorable Family Vacation

What was your most memorable family vacation or trip and why?

88. Proudest Parental Moment

What was your proudest moment as a parent?

89. Heartbreaking Parental Moment

What was your most heartbreaking or difficult moment as a parent?

90. Teaching Moment

Describe a “teaching moment” you experienced with one of your children.

91. Favorite Family Activities

What did your family like to do together? Describe some of your favorite family activities.

92. Child Rearing Do-Over

If you had it to do over, what would you do differently in raising your children?

93. Mini Me

In what ways are your children like you? In what ways are they like your spouse? In what ways are they unlike you or your spouse?

94. Career Story #1

Pick an event from your work/career life and write about why was this event memorable?

95. Career Story #2

Pick another event from your work/career life and write about why was this event memorable?

96. Career Story #3

Pick another event from your work/career life and write about why was this event memorable?

97. Career Regrets

Do you have any regrets about your career or work life? What would you have done differently and why?

98. Firing Line

Have you ever been fired from a job? Or have you ever had to fire someone? How did either experience affect you?

99. Bosses

In your career or work life, who was the best boss you ever had and why? Worst boss?

100. Awards

Have you received any awards or accolades from your work? What was the nature of them and how did they affect you?

## **IV. Retirement**

101. Retirement Plans

What are your plans and dreams for your retirement? If you are already retired, how do you feel about being retired? How do you spend your time?

102. Bucket List

What is on your “bucket list” that you haven’t accomplished? (In other words, what are some things you’d like to do before you die?)

103. Remembered For...

What would you like to be most remembered for?

104. Kindred Spirits

Who are the soul mates or kindred spirits in your life? What is the nature of your connection with them?

105. Violence

Have you ever been the victim of an act of violence? How did that affect you? Have you recovered, and if so, how?

106. Technology

What do you think have been the most significant inventions or technological advances in your lifetime? What of those has specifically affected your life the most and why?

107. Personality

What personality traits run in your family? What traits do you feel you've inherited?

108. Biases

What biases or prejudices have you held and where do you think they came from? Do you still feel the same way now?

109. Personality Changes

Has your personality changed in any way since you were young? In what way has it changed, and are you happy or unhappy about the change?

110. Ashamed

What are/were you most ashamed of in your lifetime?

111. Pet Peeves

What are your pet peeves—the things you find most annoying—and why?

112. Silliest Fads

What have been some of the silliest fads you have seen come and go in your lifetime?

113. Competition

Have you ever won a competition of some sort? How did you prepare and what circumstances led to your win? How did you feel afterwards?

114. Political Beliefs

How have your political beliefs evolved in your lifetime? Have you changed your mind on any major political or social issues, or have your politics remained consistent? Why?

115. Spiritual Evolution

How have your spiritual beliefs evolved over your lifetime?  
Why?

116. Spiritual Practices

What if any spiritual practices do you follow regularly, such as; religious services, walks in nature, daily meditation or silent contemplation?

117. Greatest Strengths

What do you feel are your greatest strengths and why? What do you think others would say are your greatest strengths? Are they the same or different?

118. Greatest Weaknesses

What do you feel are your greatest weaknesses? Have they changed or improved over time? How have they affected your life?

119. Addictions

Have you ever had a problem with substance abuse or addiction, or been close to someone who has? How has it affected your life? How did you overcome?

120. Travel Story #1

How has travel played a role in your life? Write about a memorable travel experience.

121. Travel Story #2

Write about another memorable travel experience.

122. Travel Story #3

Write about another memorable travel experience.

123. Greatest Person

Who do you think is a truly great person, and why? How has this person influenced your life, either directly or indirectly?

124. Conversation with a Famous Person

If you could have a conversation with a famous person or historical figure (alive or deceased), who would it be and what questions would you ask them?

125. Food

What are your attitudes about food? How did your family influence your eating habits, and have they changed over time? Do you have any fears or frustrations with the issue of food?

126. Funny Bone

Write about your sense of humor. Who in your family influenced you in that way? What kinds of things do you find funny? What is the funniest thing you've ever witnessed?

127. Community Service

Have you been involved with some kind of service to your community? How has that affected you and what have you learned from your experiences with your community?

128. Most Fun Memory

Write about a memorable fun time spent with a grandparent, aunt or uncle. What did you do? What was this person like?

129. They Made Me Who I Am

Make a list of people, events, successes, failures that helped shape who you are today. What did you learn from these influences?

130. Falling "Upward"

What are some experiences that at first seemed negative, but later turned out to be excellent teaching moments, which you now embrace as positives?



### 131. Musical Memories

Often music can transport us back in time to a particular place and time. Can you think of a favorite song which conjures up memories from the distant past?

### 132. Sweet Smelling Memories

Special scents can also transport us back in time. What are some of your favorite smells both in nature and in the kitchen? Can you remember the time you first enjoyed that fragrance?

### 133. On the Road

What are some of your favorite road trip memories? Do you plan to take more road trips in retirement?

### 134. I'm Lost!

Write about a time you got lost. Where were you? Did someone locate you or did you find your own way? Did you learn any lesson from being lost?

### 135. The Sound of Silence

What are some of the types of silence you have experienced? Do you find comfort during times of silence? What do you think about in quiet times?

### 136. Can't Live Without...

What is a possession you have that you can't live without? What is the special significance? Is there a story behind this object?

### 137. First Impressions

What personality traits do you think people meeting you for the first time recognize? What do you do that conveys these traits? Describe a first impression of you? Is this an impression you want to make?

138. Advice

What is the best or worse piece of advice you've ever given someone? Who did you give it to? If you had it to do over again would you tell the person the same thing? Why or why not?

139. A Sight I'll Never Forget

Write about something you saw that you will never forget. Where there any people involved in this memorable scene? Why do you think this spectacle had such an impact on you? Where were you?

140. On the Wild Side

Write about an encounter with a wild animal? What was the animal? Where did you have this encounter?

141. Low Points

Make a list of the low points in your life. Don't back away from painful moments. Pick one of these moments and write about it in more detail.

142. Near Death Experience

Have you ever had a brush with death? If so, what were the circumstances and did the experience change your life in a significant way? If not, what is your perception of the after life?

143. Three Truthful Questions

If you were granted three truthful answers (rather than wishes) who would you question and what would you want to know?

144. Praise and Criticism

How good are you at receiving compliments? How about criticism? How important is what people think of you? Has your attitude and acceptance grown over the years?

145. Financial Preparation

Have you been a better saver or spender over your lifetime? Do

you have any worries about being financially stable during your retirement years? What are you doing to solve any concerns?

146. Is There Not a Cause?

What are some of the social causes that you are most passionate about supporting either with volunteering or donations?

147. Physical Fitness

What are you doing in your later years to stay in good health? Regular exercises that you participate in?

148. Coping With Lost Spouse/Significant Other

In later life we often find ourselves a widow or widower. If this applies, how are you filling the relationship void after the loss of a soulmate? After a grieving period, would you consider seeking another mate? Why or why not?

149. Unique You

What are some of things that you have done in your lifetime that make you a unique person?

150. Standing in Awe

What in all creation are some of the things that awe you the most?

151. Hidden Surprises

What might surprise people if they really knew you? Are you becoming more transparent as you age?

152. I Want More...

What do you want more of in your life? What are you doing to reach your goal?

154. The True You

What do you long for others to understand better about you?

155. The Ideal Life: Describe an average day in an ideal life.

## Four Final Writing Tips

1. Everyone Has a Story – There is power that is released by getting your perspective out of your head and onto the page then speaking it.
2. Make it Interesting – An autobiography explains what happened, but a well-written memoir explains why what happened to you matters!
3. Writing is Therapeutic - When we hold on to our sorrows it can infect our heart, soul and body. When something is written you really own it!
4. Write About What Shaped You – Life’s greatest pleasures and pains are a good starting point. Start with a real grabbing story.

## Suggested Reading

*I have found the following books helpful in discovering your True Self in the second half of life.*

1. *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr
2. *Everything Belongs* by Richard Rohr
3. *The Grace in Aging* by Kathleen Dowling Singh
4. *The Grace in Dying* by Kathleen Dowling Singh
5. *On The Brink of Everything* by Parker J. Palmer
6. *Resilience* by Eric Grietens
7. *In Heaven As On Earth* by Dr. M Scott Peck
8. *The Couples Workbook* by The School of Life
9. *Listening For the Heartbeat of God* by Dr. John Phillip Newell
10. *Sitting With God* by Rich Lewis
11. *How To Live Forever* by Marc Freedman
12. *A Brief History of Everything* by Ken Wilber
13. *Just Listen* by Mark Goulston, MD
14. *The Art of Loving* by Erich Fromm
15. *Touching the Eternal* by Eckhart Tolle
16. *See No Stranger* by Valarie Kaur
17. *The Soul’s Slow Ripening* by Christine Paintner
18. *How to Be an Elder* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes

19. *The Art of Letting Go* by Richard Rohr
20. *Love is the Way* by Michael Curry, Sara Grace
21. *Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown
22. *Into the Silent Land* by Martin Laird
23. *The Book of Soul* by Mark Nepo
24. *Meister Eckhart's Living Wisdom* by James Finley
25. *A Year to Live* by Stephen Levine
26. *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying* by Bronnie Ware
27. *What Retirees Want* by Dr. Ken Dychtwald, Robert Morris
28. *Everything is Spiritual* by Rob Bell
29. *The Four Loves* by C. S. Lewis
30. *Awakening the Soul* by Michael Meade
31. *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton
32. *Wisdom at Work* by Chip Conley
33. *Following Jesus* by Henri Nouwen
34. *The Second Half of Life* by Angeles Arrien
35. *The Ecstasy of Surrender* by Judith Orloff, MD
36. *No Death, No Fear* by Thich Nhat Hahn
37. *How to Be a Holy Rascal* by Rabbi Rami Shapiro
38. *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle
39. *Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila
40. *Wild Mercy* by Mirabai Starr
41. *Life of the Beloved* by Henri Nouwen
42. *The Second Mountain* by David Brooks
43. *The Problem of Pain* by C. S. Lewis
44. *I've Decided to Live 120 Years* by Iichi Lee
45. *The Wisdom Jesus* by Cynthia Bourgeault
46. *Unconditional Love* by Jane Isay
47. *The Contemplative Journey* by Thomas Keating
48. *Learning to Walk in the Dark* by Barbara Brown Taylor
49. *The Living Wisdom of Howard Thurman* by Howard Thurman
50. *A Hidden Wholeness* by Parker J. Palmer

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# Telling The Story of Your Life

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