

The Who, What, When, Where and Why of Writing: Fun Ways to Trigger Memories, from Oral History to Written History.

Every individual has to find their own personal motivation for making the effort to write a personal history. Writing personal stories can be fun, but also a challenge, evoking both joy and pain. We remember choice experiences because our emotions are embedded in those memories. What importance does that memory have in your life and why do you want to share it? Does it contain something about your character; something you've learned of eternal value; something funny about life; dates and social conditions during that time period; family talents and strengths; family pain and nobility; family relations? **Why have you decided to write a family history?**

"A people without a history have nothing. They do not know who they are, or where they are going." Hector P. Garcia, founder, GI Forum, Presidential Medal of Honor Recipient.

- 1) I want to write a family history because _____
- 2) I think it will help me to _____
- 3) I am writing for my _____
- 4) I want my family to know that I _____
- 5) I have learned in my lifetime that _____

BASIC INFORMATION to include: Who, What, When, and Where

Your descendants will be grateful for even the most basic information, the foundation or minimum of details. In a notebook, jot down some memories that you would like to share. Try to recall as much detail as possible: who was involved; what happened that stands out in your mind; when and where did it take place? Don't worry if you can't remember everything. It will unfold.

STYLE: Your goal is to *convey information*. Don't inhibit yourself by judging your writings as you write. Read your paragraphs out loud. Would it flow better by moving some of the sentences around, within the paragraph? As a family historian you write your narrative to tell a story. Once the skeleton of facts are ready to use, embellish to heighten the *emotional impact* of the account, writing not to impress, but to share a bit of yourself.

STARTING the flow of memories, visual, sensory, tactile, auditory. You are a walking depository of memories. Look around you, your surroundings and holdings are clues to what matters to you: Photos and pictures on the wall. Items on the table, furniture. Look in your cupboards and drawers. You are surrounded with memories.

In addition you might have . . . perhaps a diary, journals, scrapbooks, daily calendars, saved letters, birthday, Christmas, and special event cards, thank you notes, funerals obituaries, baby clothes, toys, or blankets saved, photos with captions on original

poetry, family videos, old homes and cars memories, school records smells family newspaper articles, treasured objects, notes on books, emails family banners family traditions, family sayings, trips, dogs, cats, and other pets hobbies, songs vacations, shoes, foods, relatives, movies, flowers, furniture, pictures, toys . . . the list is endless.

You may want to share near misses, the effects of illness on your life, deaths and major losses. Perhaps regrets in action not taken, or mistakes made. What were the major turning points in your life?

WHAT DO WE WANT EMBEDDED, CONVEYED?

Understanding you, would have to include some knowledge of the events happening during the time period in which the events took place, the social, economic, political times. Though many experiences are independent, or outside of those factors, most will reflect some of those conditions.

Your attitudes towards life and God will be passed on in how you share your stories. Will it be with forgiveness and gratitude remembering the good in your past, the victories, sacrifices made by family members, kindness of others, important values learned?

DROP IN clues into your narrative about the time period: . . . Music . . . movies . . . recreation. . . family traditions attitudes values . . . foods . . . clothes . . . world condition . . . haircuts . . . skirt length . . . socializing . . . popular dances and songs . . . games . . . sports teams . . . heroes . . . vacations . . . words . . . sayings . . . leaders

Seek for CLARIFICATION AND AUGMENTATION of your stories through talking to family members who shared an experience or time period with you. Everyone's perspective is personal and slightly different. If you have a memory that does not quite fit in to your over-all picture of your life, ask why, what was happening at the time. Why did a certain memory not make sense? Writing your personal family history is a personal discovery to understand the lessons that you were meant to learn. Seek them out. Increased love and forgiveness will be the fruit, and gentle peace the result.

"Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5-6

MimiLozano@aol.com 714-894-8161
www.SomosPrimos.com