

One Way to Write Your Personal Story

by Ed Millis

This is *One Way* to write your memoirs or personal stories. It's not the only way, but all ways have something in common—you *have to begin somewhere!*

Reasons not to write your memoirs:

"I had such a dull childhood nobody would be interested in it."

"I can't remember anything."

(Unspoken fear) *"I don't remember grammar or punctuation and I can't spell. I'd be embarrassed to let anybody see my writing."*

The four steps in creating your personal story

Collecting your stories and getting them organized

Writing the chapters of the book

Getting it ready to be printed

Turning it into ink and paper

Collecting and organizing your stories

Collecting the stories of your life

- Might be the most time-consuming part of writing your story.
- Must develop a habit of **WRITING DOWN OR RECORDING** the stories as soon as you remember them.
- Use a "one-liner" technique to trigger the thoughts later.
- Carry a pocket notebook or recorder with you. Or both.
- Remember—you **WON'T** remember the stories if you don't capture them promptly.
- Memories don't usually come flooding back. They come back one at a time over days, weeks, and months.
- Memories come back when you least expect them, and at the most inconvenient times.
- It takes time, like several months at least, to recall most of your great stories.
- You have a **LOT** more stories in your brain than you can imagine—pry them out of there for your book!

Organizing your "one-liners"

- Don't begin organizing until you have a lot of one-liners collected and the well's about run dry.
- Identify and mark similar stories that could go in the same chapter
- Re-do your one-liner list into possible chapter groups
- Make a tentative Table of Contents for your book.
- Don't forget! As you work, you'll continue remembering new stories. Add them to the chapter lists as you go.
- In each chapter, rearrange the one-liners in the order you'd like to tell the story.
- Lastly, in each chapter list, mix in descriptions and possible pictures

Use the “one-liners” to build your book structure

“One-liners” list for the whole book

- ONE-LINERS
1. Craig and Hugh Jr. and the hairpin in the lamp socket, smoke-filled room
 2. Bicycle chain breaks at the top of hill
 3. Trip to Graham to visit Uncle Paul and Aunt Agnes
 4. Going to Philmont in the old Chevy school bus
 5. Radio serials after school, on the floor in front of the big RCA Radiola radio and phonograph
 6. Mother and Pop meeting near their rooming houses
 7. Putting june bug under the sheet on Craig's bed
 8. Climbing Old Baldy at Philmont
 9. The outhouse incident at Scout camp
 10. Visiting Graham—cousins Norman and Spencer
 11. Model T spark coil on bicycle, Waid Dean
 12. Ran off to ride streetcar downtown, age 5 or 6
 13. Building a shocker in Kraft cheese box and taking it to school
 14. Changing from left-handed to right-handed and stuttering
 15. Pop's home movies
 16. Mrs. Hanshaw and her 1938 LaSalle
 17. Sending up toy balloon with note and getting postcard back
 18. The household underwear color-code
 19. Changing my name from Ted to Edwin in 1st grade
 20. Neiman-Marcus Packard delivery trucks
 21. Remembering Orson Wells "Invasion from Mars"
 22. Riding my bike to Knox St., the Skillerns, the dime store, Killingsworth food store, model airplane store, etc.
 23. Saving my money and buying a "Mighty Atom" model airplane engine
 24. The Physics and Chem labs in high school, with brass equipment and oak cabinets
 25. Pop taking us to "Little Mexico" and showing movies Saturday nights
 26. Riding bike to dime store on Knox and seeing "Mickey Mouse in Blaggard Castle" and not being able to buy it
 27. Horse-drawn milk trucks with rubber tires
 28. Going to the Centennial in 1936
 29. Working for Austin Stanton on Greenville Avenue after school

One-liners identified for possible chapters

- ONE-LINERS
1. Craig and Hugh Jr. and the hairpin in the lamp socket, smoke-filled room
 2. Bicycle chain breaks at the top of hill
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One-liners for one chapter

- ONE-LINERS FOR "ME & BROTHERS" CHAPTER
1. Craig and Hugh Jr. and the hairpin in the lamp socket, smoke-filled room
 2. Bicycle chain breaks at the top of hill
 5. Radio serials after school, on the floor in front of the big RCA Radiola radio and phonograph
 7. Putting june bug under the sheet on Craig's bed
 11. Model T spark coil on bicycle, Waid Dean
 13. Building a shocker in Kraft cheese box and taking it to school
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7 Sept 99 *before school*

Earliest memories *Cutting my hair on the bedroom floor*

1. Memory of being in baby carriage and looking out at the edge of the house near the back.
4. When I ran off at the age of 4 or 5 down to McMillan to ride the streetcar downtown. The conductor wouldn't let on and told me nicely to go back home. *Memorable*
6. Going into my parent's bedroom and asking when I'd be able to start to school *Shuttering? Left handed?*
2. Having pneumonia when I was a kid, and the memories. The "tent", blowing up balloons, having an x-ray taken at the hospital, Pop getting mad at the hospital for putting me on a cold x-ray table. Wondering if I'd ever get out of the bed and be able to play in the rest of the house. *1932 from front records*
5. Going off somewhere across town to another church for a week during the summer for some sort of activities. I remember bringing home various things I'd built out of paper. Maybe 5 or 6 years old? *Stepping on copper can out of bathtub*
7. Before I started to school and my name was changed from Ted to Edwin officially, one of the things I used to hear was "Ted, Ted, strong and able. Get your elbows off the table." Also heard "Ted, Ted, wet his bed..." a couple of times too.
8. Home movie - *last written w/ Barbara stone key*
 Morningside as I remember it
The house - wreck by Pop. 1930s
The fish pond in the back yard.
Animals - Betty, Tommy Tigger, Spot, Bonnie, Spooky
 All the BB gun stories, including being shot in the ankle by the kid up the street
Mrs. Hanshaw and her 1938 LaSalle. Boy Scout
5. Getting a "new" used bicycle for my birthday and not liking it because it had "balloon tires" instead of the high-pressure tires like my brothers' bike had.
6. Sending up a toy balloon filled with natural gas with a note and getting a postcard back from a farmer about 30 miles away. *To Pop & Mason*
6. Telling the people who were interesting in buying the house two doors up the street about the chimney falling in through the roof. (In front of the realtor.)
7. Putting the slingshot in the crotch of the tree in the upper treehouse and pelting the neighbor's garage apartment two doors up the street with marbles.
8. The color-code identifying Hugh's (yellow), Craig's (green) and my (red) clothes and underwear. *to Mom's Pop*
Taking home movies

Completed summaries for writing chapters

Things to describe and/or make chapters out of:

- Your parents, where they came from, what they did, etc.
- The neighborhood where you grew up, neighbors, stores, schools
- Growing up and interfacing with siblings and/or neighbor kids
- The house you grew up in, moves to other houses, cities
- Travels, vacations, trips
- Going to school and/or college—favorite subjects, hated subjects, teachers, grades, graduation
- Things you joined—Scouts, Indian Guides, baseball/soccer teams, choir, etc.
- Your very earliest memories
- Special interests while growing up
- Your first date, or experiences with the opposite sex (or maybe not)

Getting the words on paper:

Computer, using a word processing or publishing program

Typewriter

Typed text transcribed or OCR'd to computer by others

Printed from typed pages

Pen and paper

Text transcribed to computer word processor by others

Printed from written pages

Audio recording, transcribed to text on paper

Time to start writing!

- Practice writing one or two stories to gain confidence.
- Find a friend to be a critic of your writing. Better yet, an enemy.
- Practice hooking stories together to form a narrative.
- Write the book, one chapter at a time, in any order.
- Type “The End.”
- Do a rough edit of the whole book.
- Clean off your desk, put stuff up, and then rest for a week.

Finishing up your book

“Front Matter”

*Frontispiece

**Title page

*Dedication

Foreword

*Preface

*Acknowledgments

**Contents

List of Illustrations

Quotations

*Special Stuff

Introduction

After the text things:

Epilogue

Appendix

Notes

Bibliography

Glossary

***Index!*

Key: **Should

*Might

(nothing) Not likely

Useful tools for writers and editors:

Spelling

Dictionary—your choice

MS Word “Spell Checker”

One Word, Two Words, Hyphenated? by Gilman, NCRA Press

(Website: www.verbatimreporters.com)

Synonyms

The Synonym Finder by J. I. Rodale, Warner Books

Thesaurus of Words and Phrases by Roget

Grammar

The Elements of Style by Wm. Strunk and E. B. White

Style

The Chicago Manual of Style by the University of Chicago Press

A Manual of Style by the US Government Printing Office

Everything

On Writing by Stephen King, Scribner

Producing a Quality Family History by Pat Hatcher, Ancestry

Decisions, decisions...

What size book?

Headers/footers?

Type fonts and sizes?

Fancy stuff?

Margins?

Cover design?

Page numbers?

Lots of other things?

The Library of Congress Copyright Office – www.copyright.gov

ISBN information – R. R. Bowker at www.isbn.org

Getting your little darling printed and bound

Four ways to get your book printed and/or bound

Do-it-yourself printing and/or binding

All digital by a digital printing company—take the printer a CD-ROM

High-quality copies from paper text—take the printer a box of pages, in order

Internet publishers

Digital printing, copying, and binding companies:

FedEx-Kinkos, Office Depot, Office Max, and others

Bindery for hardbound books:

The Library Binding Company in Waco, my favorite, has sold out to Houchen

Bindery in Nebraska. No information about them. www.houchenbindery.com

Internet publishers:

www.blurb.com www.SharedInk.com www.lulu.com www.trafford.com

...and *many* others

Thanks, and good writing!

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