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WRITING YOUR LIFE STORY – Some Common Obstacles and How to Overcome Them

By Carol M. Upton

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"When the storyteller tells the truth, she reminds us that human beings are more alike than unlike... A story is what it's like to be a human being – to be knocked down and to miraculously arise. Each one of us has arisen, awakened."

– Maya Angelou

Many people who consult with me regarding their family histories are also adamant that they want to do the work themselves. I encourage that. Who knows your personal stories better than you do? Producing life story legacies through books or videos is a priceless gift that brings families together and enhances lives for generations to come. Let 2005 be the year that you start to weave the tapestry of your family's life in words and photographs!

Don't get bogged down with difficulties that prevent you from moving forward with your stories. Here are three of the most common life story writing challenges and some easy solutions for them:

"I can't seem to keep writing."

Consult a personal historian for a list of story-starters or a coaching session, so that you can get excited about your project all over again. Find a writing group to join or start one of your own that is devoted to life story writing and willing to meet at least every two weeks. Read some good books on the subject – "Writing The Memoir" by Judith Barrington is particularly helpful and includes a section on forming a group. Join an ongoing e-course to keep you motivated – Recollections offers one or you can research others on the Internet.

"I can't locate all the facts – birth dates, immigrant ship landings, military regiments, etc."

If you need help with research, Information Desk Librarians at the local libraries are a great help! A personal historian can also point you in the right direction. Often, all it takes is a visit to the right website or the location of the right genealogy book or magazine.

"I've got everything written down, but I'm not sure it makes sense."

This is where a good writer/editor, one who specializes in memoir and personal history, can come in. An editor can tidy up your work in a practical manner, assist with sentence structure and flow and

otherwise make your words sing! The difference between a jumble of dry facts and a personal history is as near as your telephone. If you want to do your own editing but aren't sure how to go about it, an editorial consultation will help point you in the right direction.

Are you feeling stuck in some way that hasn't been covered here? Please don't be discouraged! There are many resources available to help you capture your family memories and those of your relatives – in print, on audio or video. I sincerely hope this is your year to begin such an important project!

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Carol M. Upton is a writer and personal historian whose work has appeared in The Vancouver Sun and Province, The Coast Reporter, The Cup of Comfort Cookbook, The Change Agent and several trade publications. Visit Carol at www.memorybooks.ca. Recollections – Capturing Memories Living Legends free ezine – www.memorybooks.ca Member: Association of Personal Historians and Federation of B.C. Writers

Do You Plot With Your Character In Mind?

By Nick Vernon

Creative Writing Tips -

You are plotting the story. You write down what will happen, what problems will arise, what obstacles you will place so the character won't reach his goals immediately, what he's going to do to overcome these problems etc...

So all these things will be happening to your character since it's his story we are telling.

Does it make sense then to have your character in mind as you plot these things?

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It does. Because it will depend, based on the type of person he is, how he will face these problems, what he will feel, what he will think, what he will do.

Different types of personalities make up our world. Some people worry too much, so whatever problems come along, they will worry with the same intensity. Other people view the lighter side of life. Minor problems do not affect them as largely as major problems. To some challengers are welcome – they thrive on them. To others, challengers are viewed with fear and uncertainty.

As you're plotting the events of your story they have to correspond with the type of personality your character possesses.

What happens when you plot without thinking of your character?

He will act 'out of character.' He will do, say, think, feel things that don't suit his personality.

For instance...

If your character is a worrier and you place him in a situation where he doesn't worry, then that's making him act according to how you want him to act in your plot.

You're manipulating him to suit your plot – You're not writing with his personality in mind.

As you plot the events in the story, simultaneously build your character.

Cross-reference what you have written about your character and the situation he is in. Do they correspond?

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

Do You Plot With Your Character In Mind?

Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?

The Most Famous Line I Never Wrote

YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME!

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How To Overcome Snoring and Sleep Apnea

How to keep up the SPICE in your Love Life.



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