

5-3-97

Workshop

Writing personal memoirs with present-day and future generations of genealogists in mind:

AUDIENCE: define your audience:

living genealogists: children, nieces, nephews, others?

later genealogists: grandchildren, other descendants?

GETTING STARTED: some suggestions:

customs and expectations of your time or an earlier time you know through family stories.

"firsts" in your life - What did they replace?

significant contemporary events - historical or personal.

everyday material - chores, leisure activities, school days, childhood games, hobbies.

public entertainment - silent films, musical programs, circus, vaudeville, Chautauquas, radio.

holiday traditions

medical and home remedies

the Great Depression

World War II

Vietnam

Get the habit of putting "brilliant" ideas down immediately.
Keep a file.

WRITE YOUR BEST STORIES FIRST

If history enters in, tell not only what happened but how it affected you, what you were doing, feeling, where you were. Work in as much action, description, dialogue, details as possible.

ORGANIZATION

Brainstorm.

Timed, forced writing.

Chronological order.
Spatial order.
Least important to most important or a mixture

Outline

Establish the point you want to make.

Locate your story in time and place. Remember the five W's: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

Use as many senses as possible - sight, smell, hearing, feeling, taste.

Keep to the point. Add details not diversions.

WRITING

Don't feel that the first draft is set in concrete.

Learn to write without worrying about mechanics.

Edit and correct later.

The Important thing is to get the main idea(s) down.

Look for a strong lead.

Don't begin "I was born."

REVISION

Expect to rewrite, revise.

Don't be afraid to rearrange (cut and paste, draw arrows, number inserts, use the computer).

FIRST DRAFT Read aloud to yourself. Make revisions.

Read aloud to a friend. Revisions?

Look for variety in sentence structure and sentence length.

Be sparing in your use of the passive voice.

Avoid repetition of words, but don't be afraid to repeat necessary, key words.

Before you consider your story finished, check for these things:

Are names stated at least once in full?

Are they spelled correctly?

Give the maiden name of women somewhere in your story.

Check for accuracy of facts. (Remember you're the authority if you are talking about your feelings and reactions.)

Do the kind of verifying you do in your genealogical work.

Cite fully any materials you have used.