

Write Your Own Memoir

Several early readers of my haiku memoir have expressed special interest in “Part 6: How to Write Your Own” (page 159).

We of a certain age often sense our looming mortality and wish to leave a record so posterity will know we existed. Who were we?

Rather than write the usual autobiography (a daunting task), I offer an easier alternative to tell your life story: snippets. Bite-size bits. Carry-ons, not a steamer trunk.

Your descendants will surely want to know details of your actual lived experience — not just your birth and death dates and where to find your grave. What happened between those markers? I would be grateful had my ancestors done so.

How to write your own memoir:

1. Select a structure. I use the haiku quintet. Consider the hundred-word-box (exactly, no more, no less). Or, write sonnets (poems of 14 lines). Design your own device that suits you.
2. Recall a significant event that occurred at a particular time and place (or period) in your life. Browse my “Part 1: Life Snippets” for ideas.
3. Choose a working title. It may change as your snippet evolves.
4. Write the first draft—aka brain-dump.
5. Edit. Prune. Wordsmith. Mold your words into the shape of your chosen playpen. Pack your snippet with maximum meaning/relevance/impact that can fit within its borders.
6. Let your maturing snippet incubate for hours/days/weeks between edits as it approaches perfection. I find my pre-coffee “morning brain” taps into a curious kind of editorial creativity that I can’t access at other times.
7. Illustrate your snippet (optional) with a photo from that dusty box in your closet. Browse. A long-forgotten picture may awaken your muse.
8. Repeat from step 2 above.
9. Arrange your life-snippets chronologically by event occurrence (not by composition).
10. Voila! You have written your memoir! Preserve it physically as a bound document or digitally. Let it grow. Share with those who know, love, and care about you.

Write history
Speak to the future
Become immortal

