

# Memoirs

Notes by David Moffat

## Introduction

As we age, we wonder (perhaps even worry) how we will be remembered, we contemplate the tenor of our lives, or we simply entertain ourselves with our memories. All of these activities can be enhanced or resolved by preparing memoirs.

## Who prepares memoirs?

Anyone who wishes to be remembered can enhance its likelihood, as well as guide the shape of that memory, by preparing a memoir.

In addition, anyone seeking self-knowledge will find that concentrating on the making of a memoir helps dredge up memories and put them in perspective.

Certainly, anyone who wants to share life's lessons with others, or wants simply to entertain, can use a memoir as the medium of expression.

## What is a memoir?

A memoir is just a collection of descriptions of yourself and of events in your life as you experienced and understood them. If you have kept a diary or a journal you already have a memoir.

Your memoir might be presented as a chronological commentary of your life, in detail or in broad strokes.

Or it might be a collection of anecdotes (in the broad sense), free-form or organized by time or subject or place, etc.

It might be a collection of your beliefs, insights, and opinions, not simply the events that you witnessed, or in which you participated.

## Why prepare a memoir?

In general, you might prepare a memoir to tell others, especially relatives and close friends, about your life.

But you might also wish to be remembered in a way that suits you. It is not necessary to include every incident and every detail. A memoir is an opportunity to avoid unnecessary distractions.

On the other hand, you may wish to emphasize and clarify important moments in your life, moments that you feel are most definitive.

Your goal might be to stimulate your memory for your own entertainment or satisfaction, or you might do it to entertain others as well.

## **How is a memoir prepared?**

The universal medium for memoirs is the printed page, but memoirs can be presented as audio recordings, video recordings, or slide shows with commentary.

Memoirs have been done as movies, plays, novels, and poetry.

## **Sources of material**

Obviously, the main source of material for a memoir is one's memories, but very often these are augmented with personal letters, email, journals, and photos that you have accumulated.

Having yourself interviewed by a relative or close friend can be a very effective way to get at details that may be of interest to others, details that you might otherwise ignore or suppress.

You might also interview your relatives or close companions as a way to augment or correct details of your own life.

## **Tools and techniques.**

In addition to the obvious typing or handwriting, there are computerized text entry and editing, dictation to an assistant, dictation to an audio and/or video device, and dictation to a computer.

You might also have the luxury of employing an editor or editorial assistant.

## **An example**

I decided to write a memoir because my daughter always seemed interested in anecdotes about my life. Rather than try to write them in chronological order I wrote them as they come to me, over a period of several months. I then organized them into chronological order.

I wrote them as entries in a private blog using a free program, called Word Press as the text entry and editing tool.

When it came time to organize them chronologically, I thought it would be useful to make them into a book that I could distribute to family, relatives, and close friends. I then prepared the text for publication using a program called Blurb, and had several books printed.