



Writing Your Life

How to Leave a Lasting Legacy for Your Loved Ones.

by Patricia Charpentier

Have you ever thought about writing your life story? Do your children or grandchildren repeatedly ask you to write about your life's experiences? What stops you? Don't know where to start? Worried about how to do it? Well, here's the most important thing you need to know — you can't do it wrong. Anything you put down on paper in any way, shape or form, is going to be appreciated by those who love you.

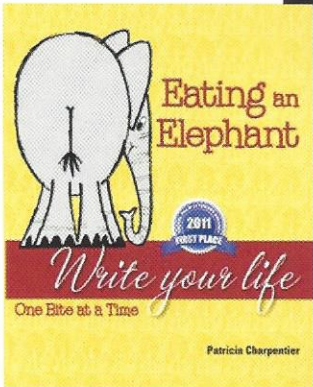
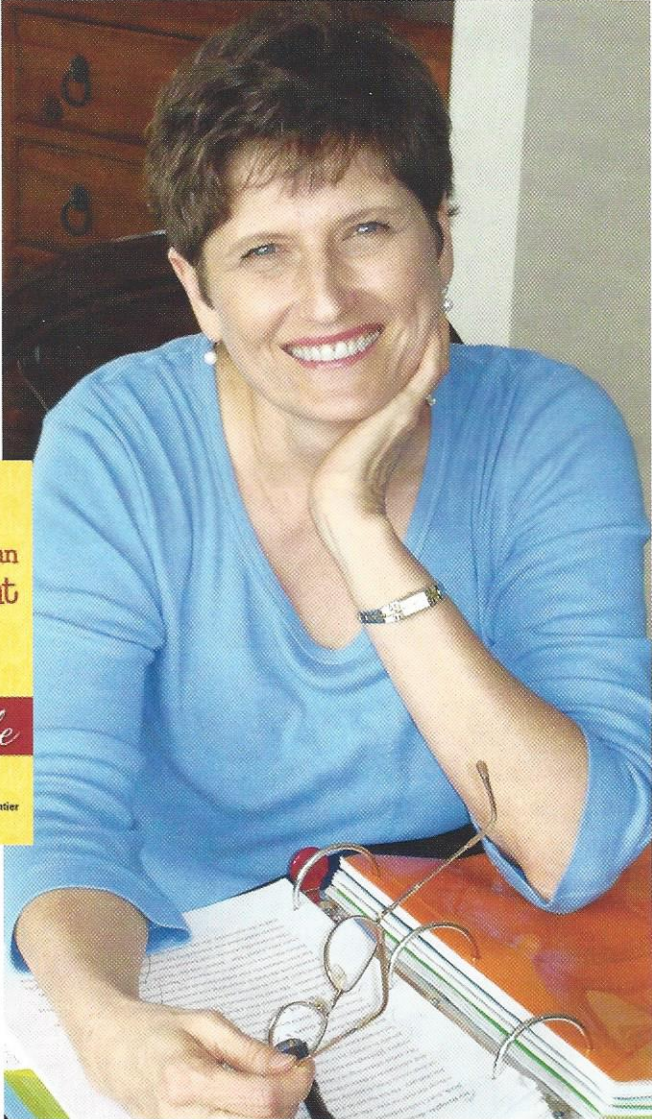
Just write from your heart. Ignore the ninth-grade English teacher sitting on your shoulder with a red pen. Have some fun and let the stories flow from your memory onto the page. You can revise and edit later.

Know also that there are as many ways to write life stories as there are people to write them. One man in my class had never written a complete sentence, but he made a list of whatever was on his mind every day for more than 30 years.

A woman I teach writes what she calls snippets — stories only a few paragraphs long, which are funny, touching and sometimes sad. I've seen cooks dish up family recipes and write the stories behind those delicious meals; artists sketch and write the scenes they lived; gardeners trace the seasons of their lives by what grew in their gardens; and automobile enthusiasts chronicle their lives based on the cars they drove.

So, if you can't do it wrong, how might you write your life story?

Try this: Write about your earliest memory. What's the first thing you remember? Who was there? Where were you? What happened? What was the feeling? ■



Patricia Charpentier, author of the award-winning book, *Eating an Elephant: Write Your Life One Bite at a Time*, teaches, writes, edits, ghostwrites and publishes personal and family history. Visit her at writingyourlife.org. ■

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