

Sample Q & A

Laura Hedgecock, *author of*

MEMORIES OF ME: A Complete Guide to Telling and Sharing the Stories of Your Life

Tell us a bit about your new book.

The sub-title tells it all; it's a "Complete Guide to Telling and Sharing the Stories of Your Life."

Memories of Me guides writers of all experience levels, enabling them to create a legacy of stories and memory episodes. You can think of it as an in-depth memory-compilers' companion that keeps you from getting bogged down or overwhelmed.

Memories of Me not only introduces topics, but also has in-depth brain storming worksheets and writing exercises to spark recall and creativity. It also provides writing samples for each topic and has just enough writing tips for writers to take pride in their projects.

What made you decide to write this book?

It was inspired by my grandmother, who passed down a collection of memories and reflections that she called her "Treasure Chest of Memories." However, my grandmother did not want any of her writings to be published. In fact, my cousin Harry (rightly) swore on all our behalves that we'd keep her "Treasure Chest" in the family.

Her writings have brought us all such a deep level of connection to her, that the concept practically begged to be shared. By providing a guide for others to emulate her, I hope I'm honoring her love and her passion without baring her private thoughts to the world.

Who is the audience for your book?

It's for anyone with the urge to write about their past—anyone who wants to preserve and share memories, whatever their background or writing experience.

Could you explain your concept of a Treasure Chest of Memories?

"Treasure Chest of Memories" is my inspiration and my favorite metaphor. I was on the receiving end of a legacy of memories. My grandmother wrote in secret throughout her life. Shortly before her death, she passed on her memory collection, which she called her "Treasure Chest of Memories." I tap into my grandmother's ideas and her passion for connection through shared memories throughout the book.

As a metaphor, a "Treasure Chest of Memories" is simply a collection of memory episodes and family stories. Using my book, folks can decide what kind of "chest" they want to create, what "treasures" they want to put in it, as well as how, when, and to what extent they want to share its contents.

What's the most important message readers will get from your book?

Sharing memories and family stories matters and it's doable. Stories connect us to our loved ones. They springboard conversations now and, when we preserve them, allow us to continue to connect with future generations.

And it's not that hard. It's something that people can do on a piece-meal basis.

Tell us a little more about your grandmother and her collection.

Grandma wrote in a re-purposed spiral bound notebook. She wrote by hand and her handwriting was almost totally illegible. Luckily, my mother could decipher it. She transcribed everything my grandma wrote and gave each family member his or her own copy of Grandma's "Treasure Chest of Memories."

She wrote about her memories of relatives, watching her children grow, and family stories. She also wrote prayers—some of which were laments, very personal poems, and reflections on life. Sometimes she'd add a good recipe or a tip for getting a stain out. It's like a patchwork quilt of memories.

I have to say, it really *is* a treasure. Grandma died the year I graduated from college, so I never enjoyed a woman-to-woman relationship with her. However, through her memories, I'm able to connect with her, again and again, throughout the various stages of my life.

What make *Memories of Me* different from other memory or memoir books?

Some of the main differences are that *Memories of Me*

- Focuses on a collection of stories, not a cohesive memoir.
- Presents text in a light-hearted, often humorous tone, conveying encouragement to the tune of "If I did it, you can too."
- Provides an in-depth exploration of each topic, as opposed to simple fill-in sheets.
- Allows readers to decide the format and depth of their writing for themselves.
- Has writing tips for all experience levels, but doesn't impose any particular style on memory collectors.
- Crosses age and experience demographics. The advice is applicable whether using ink and paper or blogging. It also encompasses the memory-sharing potential of blogs and social networking platforms.
- Draws from my grandmother's "Treasure Chest," giving a fresh perspective and compelling reasons to share memories.
- Demonstrates how do-able memory writing is with anecdotes from my own "Treasure Chest." These writing samples also allow me to connect with readers.

Did writing this book change your life in any way?

Yes. As I wrote it, I discovered how important writing is to me. During this process, I decided to pursue writing as a full-time vocation.

What are you working on now?

Way on the back burner, I have a fiction project I'm working on as well as a possible sequel to this book. Neither one is flushed out enough to announce them.