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**“Mentoring Your Memoir”:
a ‘how-to-write’ and a personal memoir all in one.**

Our history is plentiful in stories, but many can be lost if they are not captured in words or images. The more we write and collate, the more our rich cultural and multi-cultural heritage has a chance to survive. But for this to happen, the keeping of personal records is integral.

Many of our older citizens are asked, ‘When you going to write your memoir?’ However, for many the prospect appears too daunting. They have interesting stories to relate, but have never tackled a book length project before. Though they may spend a lot of time telling their stories, collating bits of the past, and even researching the net, when it comes to ‘putting it all together’ they are not sure how or where to begin, much less how to continue.

My personal journey began when a grandson's questions proved how little he knew about his forbears and even my own history. Given that I am now in my seventh decade, it was time to get it all down. Few will argue that a memoir relies on memory. But memory is a capricious thing that rarely belongs to reason and logic, instead returning to us as a series of dreams and images that may be misleading. For some it can be the very spark of life, others can rarely begin a sentence without a 'Can you remember when...?' and 'When *we* were young...'

But this is not my experience. Rather I have always tended to live in the present or in my imagination, so when I began my memoir I wondered how much I would recall. But as I kept on writing the incidents returned as if they'd happened only last week... the enjoyment, the pain and above all, the learning about what life has to offer. Yet even those memories have been corrupted by the process of looking back through eyes altered by immense social and technological upheavals. If we were to visit forties and fifties Australia, it would be like entering a foreign country, we would seem to have so little in common.

I am not vain enough to think that my life warrants placing in print or that in any curious way I stand out from the crowd. So my reasons for adding my own life story to this text is that there are three standard questions thrown at writers. Children, who are always more direct than adults, will ask: 'How old are you?' To which my jokey response is, 'Too old.' The second is, 'How much money do you make from your books?' to which my answer is: 'Never enough.' The third question that comes from anyone interested in the writing process regardless of age or gender: '*Where do you get your ideas?*' and this is usually followed up by '*How do I write my own life story?*'

So *Mentoring Your Memoir* is my attempt to answer those last two questions as clearly as I know how. It's when I go back into my writing that I begin to realise

how much of my early history is in there, and how much it influenced what I later wrote. This is not unusual. Unless writers forage into history or write biography, all use their own experience as material. So it's not what the narrative is *about* that's significant, rather *how* it is transformed and crafted into something worth reading.

Because I write both fiction and non fiction for adults and children of all ages, plus teach, mentor and take workshops in Creative Writing, this text seemed an excellent opportunity to combine all my skills. Thus this guide also offers a practical and stimulating approach that leads the writer through the creative process from research, structure, crafting, plotting, beginning and endings, to controversial issues and publishing, offering practical hints for both experienced and novice writers, Hopefully, *Mentoring Your Memoir* will act as a stimulus for those that have still to record a life story.

Goldie is keen to facilitate workshops. More about her can be found on www.goldiealexander.com