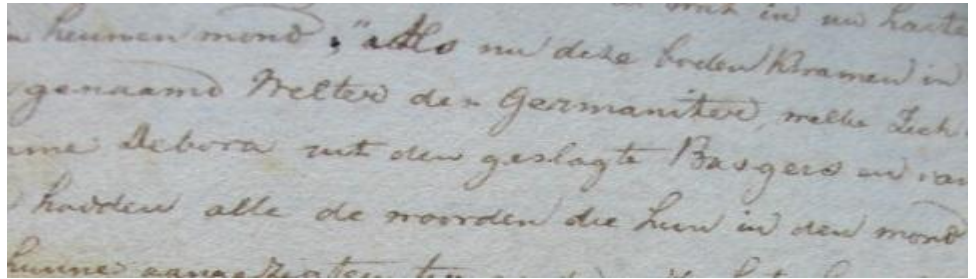


Retirement that rocks – writing your memoirs



Cookbook/scrapbook style

Chronological writing of biographies and memoirs is just plain boring but we can pump it up and make it all a bit of fun by nicking good ideas from cookbooks and scrap books.

If your grandson ever asks, what were you “like” he does not want a chronology of your life, he just wants to hear the things that made you that little bit different to his mates’ grandfathers or his other grandfather.

Your sons, daughters, brothers and sisters want to be able to flick through your book and say “I remember that” or “That is not how I remember that” or “I wondered where that went”.

You do not have to be a great writer because a picture tells a thousand words. But you don’t have to be a boring pedantic writer either.

All you have to do is write in conversational style. Conversational style does not mean “he said” – “she said” it just means you write exactly how you would say it.

For example you could have a picture and a caption, which in conversational style you might type as:

‘This is a photo of the spot where Bill rode his bike into the crocodile infested river with a pork chop tied around his neck with a piece of string.’

You might type it, or write it on a scrap of paper stained with tea or coffee or red wine and glue it in next to the photo and deliberately make it crooked.

The next page could have a neatly typed anecdote and a photo of something you like unrelated to the story and no caption. The following page might be your favourite recipe with stick men running around the borders and across the page like they’re frantically running a hotel kitchen.

You can have the words to your favourite song or a picture of your dog but do not forget; what you really need is to tell the readers what made you different.

The mechanics

The way to build the best book, is to collect lots of material then cull ruthlessly. You need a big fat commercial binder and a pack of clear plastic pocket pages to put in it.

Hint - Double sided tape is better than glue.

Your book format

The ideal book format is when you open it anywhere, the two pages you see are complete, and there is no need to turn a page to finish reading that topic.

Why?

The reason we do this is to make it suitable to be left out on a coffee table, so that anyone can flick through without committing to a long read. And you must agree that a coffee table book is better than having your memoirs ending up in a cardboard box in the bottom of a wardrobe.

This is, of course, the opposite concept to the book you can't put down.

So like the cook books you need lots of appealing photos and like the scrap book you can have drab newspaper clippings but you can liven up those pages with artwork or cartoons or stickers or computer generated calligraphy, which is what they used to call Illumination (artwork around text).

To summarise:

- You need more material than you can use
- No need for chronological order
- No need for indexing
- Artwork is good or improvised art work and illumination or even stickers
- There is a need for double page completeness
- Backing page colours could be used to group "like" things

Your book cover

Last but certainly not least is your final book cover.

You will end up with a master book in a loose leafed folder. These days, coloured copies are easy to come by, but each book you put together needs a cover.

You can use a binder and dress the cover up, maybe even with a photo on the front and something amusing on the back. Or you can nick the innards out of a binder and make a wood or leather cover. But the whole idea is to make it appealing enough to keep it out of that cardboard box in the bottom of the wardrobe.

The final product

Your book should be an easy read coffee table book that you can open anywhere for a look rather than a committed reading session. Turn offs are big blocks of words, drab dull pages and family trees. But it is your book and is supposed to represent your personality so if you like big blocks of words, drab dull pages and family trees, then go for it.

I hope you all have a retirement that rocks.

From an Aussy Shedder