

## ***Keep it Simple when starting your memoir***

If someone doesn't show up with a recorder to ask about your life, write your own story.

Self-doubt is a common obstacle to starting a memoir, according to Pete Petersen, a retired Shasta College instructor who has taught "Telling Your Own Story" classes for Simpson University for Seniors in Redding.

"Many people imagine having a cranky English teacher red-penciling their work," he said.

He recommends writing as fast as you can for 10 minutes. If you write quickly, you won't have time to edit and second-guess as you write. It's not necessary to start at the beginning of your life and cover every detail, he noted.

"I encourage people to write memoirs, not autobiographies," Petersen said. "They can start anywhere and talk about what interests them at the moment."

He suggested beginning with something simple, such as describing your childhood neighborhood or the view from your bedroom window. Or write about a pet, teacher or the foods you liked.

"The goal is to write short pieces about aspects of their lives. That way the job will not overwhelm them. And they will have interesting, readable material right away," he said.

To trigger memories, think about things like your third-grade classroom or your grandmother's kitchen. Start by writing "I remember" and then listing the memories, Petersen said.

Or re-create a scene by thinking about a place that was important to you, he said. In your mind, what do you see, hear, smell or taste?

Old photographs are a great way to bring out memories, Petersen said. And, the photographs can be included in the memoir.

By Laura Christman: [lchristman@Redding.Com](mailto:lchristman@Redding.Com)

Record Searchlight: <http://www.redding.com>