WRITING YOUR BIOGRAPHY

For those of you who are working in genealogy and trying to write your life story (or indeed, the story of someone else's life) then here is a list of prompts to help you get the story underway ....

Childhood and School Days

- Where and when were you born?
- What is your birth date?
- Over time, what names have you been given and which name have you chosen to use?
- Did your mom tell you about the day you were born?
- What time of the day were you born?
- The middle of the night, morning, evening?
- What was the weather like? Were you born during the middle of a blizzard or on a balmy spring day?
- Describe your mother
- Describe your father
- Draw a floor plan of the first house you have a memory of.
- What are your memories?
- Did you have brothers or sisters?
- Where were you in the birth order?
- What was your relationship with each?
- Were boys and girls treated differently in your family? How?
- Where and when did you go to school?
- What were your favourite subjects? Why?
- Who were your favourite teachers? Why?
- What were your favourite hobbies, sports, amusements, youth groups as a child, teenager, young adult?
- What would a typical school day, Saturday, Sunday have been like as a child, teenager, young adult?
- If you had an after school or summer job, what did you do?
- What did you like about it? Dislike about it?
- What was the funniest thing that happened on the job?
- How much did you earn?
- What would that buy in terms of candy bars, movie tickets, toys, or other things you were likely to buy at that age?
- Where did you live as a child, teenager, young adult?
- What was the house like?
- What was the town like?
- What do you remember liking and disliking about it?
- As an adult, why did you pick the places you picked to live (Specific apartments, neighbourhoods, cities, regions)?
- What was the most exciting thing that happened to you as a child, teenager, young adult?
- How did you feel on the day your first (second, third) child was born?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What Did You Collect?
- Do you have any collections?
- What got you started in it?
- What was your first item?
- What is your most prized item?
- Did you collect anything when you were young?

Romance, Work, Play and History

- How did you and your spouse meet?
- What attracted you to each other?
- Do you have a favourite incident from your courtship that was either funny in the ordinary way or embarrassing then, funny now?
- What was your wedding like?
- Where and when was it held?
- Was this typical for the time?
- Did you dance?
- What did people wear?
- Military service - When and where did you serve?
- Why did you choose it, if you had a choice?
- What was the most exciting thing that happened to you in the service? Funniest? Most frightening?
- Occupation - what did you do?
- Why did you choose it as a career?
- What did you especially like and dislike about the job(s)?
- What are some of the things your are proudest of?
- How much did you make to start with at your first full-time job?
- How much was that in terms of a "starter" home, or a good second-hand car?
- What did you do outside of your job as an adult?
- Why do you do it?
- What did you like or dislike about it? Funny, proud, sad events?
- What historical events have you witnessed in person?
- How did you and your friends and neighbors react to them?

Religion, Children, History again

- Religion - Why did you choose your particular denomination, if you did?
- What do you like about it? Dislike?
- What was the funniest thing that ever happened to you in church?
- What was the most awe-inspiring thing?
- What was your proudest moment?
- What was your saddest moment?
- Children - where and when were they born?
- How did you pick their names?
- What were they like as infants and toddlers?
- Larger events, personal perspective - what do you notice is the biggest (three biggest, five biggest) change in the world today from the world you knew as a child?
- What one, three, five things can you remember being invented in your life which people today take for granted?

Eating - Holidays and Hard Times

- How did you celebrate Easter, Christmas?
- What did you eat, and how did you cook it?
- How did you decorate the house?
- Did you do anything special for breakfast, lunch or dinner on your birthday?
- Did your family celebrate any holidays that were special to your religious or ethnic heritage?
- If, for instance, you are Jewish, Muslim or Sikh, how did you feel when Christmas rolled around?
- How did your parents help you cope?
- What was your favourite meal, apart from the holidays?

The Unknown Side

- What have you done that no one would guess you'd done, to look at you?

Some more ideas

- Tell about the house you lived in, as a child.
- Where was it located?
- How many rooms did it have?
- What were the sleeping arrangements?
- Who was in charge of putting the logs on in the morning?
- Did your mother do all the cooking or did the kids help?
- How were chores assigned? By age? By gender?
- Tell about the town you lived in.
- What was it like?
- Did you know everyone in town?
- Did your parents perform any civic duties besides voting?
- Did they attend city council meetings, hold any office etc. ?
- Where did you have to go to get your mail?
- Where did you have to go to get the staples you needed for living?
- Did you buy clothes or did Grandma make them for you?
- Tell about the first home you lived in after your marriage.
- Where was it and what was it like?
- What did you like the most about it?
- What did you like the least?
- Tell about your travels.
- What did you get in trouble for the most when you were a child?
- How were you punished?
- Did you feel that Grandma or Grandpa had any favourite children?
- Least favourites? Or did you feel that you were all treated equally?
- What was the one thing that you learned as a child that you carry with you to this day?
- What is the biggest problem facing our country today?
- What time of the day do you like the best and why?

Other topics that you can write about

- What scares you?
- Did you have a Plan for life? What was it?
- What places you have enjoyed visiting.
- What things have you done that you previously thought you could never do.
- Who are the people you most admire.
- What are your favourite books.
- What are your favourite movies.
- What are your favourite songs.
- What are your top five short term goals.
- What are your top five long term goals.
- Nobody knows that I . . .
- The biggest lie I've ever told was . . .
- Is there anything you feel guilty about? What is it?
- Is there anything you need to be forgiven for? What is it?
- What's the worst thing you've ever done?
- What's your secret desire?
- What's the most outrageous thing you've ever done?
- The most terrifying moment of my life was . . .

- The most fun I've ever had . . .
- The most surprised I've ever been . . .
- The most disappointed I've ever been . . .
- What are you looking forward to the most?
- What things can't you go without?
- What are your favourite book characters.
- What are your favourite things to wear.
- What things are important to you in a relationship.
- If you had to evacuate your home because of a natural disaster, what three things would you take with you?
- What are your pet peeves.
- What things you'd do if you weren't so afraid.
- What are your favourite TV shows.
- What are your favourite Activities
- What are your favourite Restaurants
- Who are your favourite People
- What are your favourite Foods
- What are your favourite Games
- What are your favourite Drinks/Beverages
- What are your favourite Paintings
- Who are your favourite Writers
- My saddest memory is . . .
- Some of the things that make me happy are . . .
- How do you deal with anger?
- My favourite Sunday ritual . . .
- What holiday traditions do you most look forward to . . .
- Things I always did with my dad when I was small were. . .
- Things I always did with my mom when I was little were . . .
- If you could have dinner with anyone currently alive, who would it be?
- If you could meet any fictional character, who would it be?
- If you could change one thing about your present life, what would it be?
- If you could live anywhere you wanted, where would you live?
- If you could go back in time and change one things from your past, what would it be?
- What was your favourite toy?
- Did you ever get lost? If so write about it
- Who was your best friend in primary school?
- Did you ever run away from home? If so write about it
- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What was your favourite subject in school?
- Who was your favourite teacher?
- What's your first memory?
- What was your favourite cartoon?
- What book did you read over and over again as a child?
- What is your most vivid memory of the kitchen in your childhood?
- As a child, who was your favourite relative?
- Write about your first dance.
- Write about your first crush.
- Write about your first week in College or High School.
- Write about your first job.
- Write about the first apartment you ever rented.
- When did you feel truly independent for the first time? Discuss
- What would you do if money were no object?
- What would you ask for if a genie granted you three wishes?
- What's your wildest dream?

- What grand adventure do you wish you could go on?
- If you could become an expert in any subject or activity, what would it be?
- What would your perfect day be like?
- What makes you unique?
- How do you stand out from the crowd?
- What are your best character traits?
- What are you really good at?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What character traits do you need to work on?
- What are some of your idiosyncrasies?
- How do you indulge yourself?
- Do you have any famous or high profile family members?
- Describe an event that changed your life forever
- Describe someone who is a hero to you and explain why.
- Write about a time in your life when you struggled with a choice and made the right one.
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishment to date and why?
- If you could go somewhere where you've never gone before, where would you go and why?
- What's, if anything, would you be willing to fight or even die for? Explain your answer.
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be? Why would you make this change?
- Write about a time you performed in front of an audience.
- Write about a difficult decision you had to make.
- Write about learning to skate, to ride a bike, to climb a tree, or to turn a cart wheel.
- What was it like to spend your first night away from home?
- Write about a disappointment.
- Did you ever win or lose a contest? Tell the story about what happened.
- Write about something you desperately wanted when you were younger.
- Did you ever forget something really important? What happened as a result?
- Write about an experience in a hospital.
- Were you ever accused of something that you didn't do?
- Write about a disastrous trip or vacation.
- Were you ever in a fire, flood tornado, or hurricane?
- Describe the best concert you ever attended.
- Did you ever meet a famous person?
- Describe learning something from a friend.
- Write about the funniest thing that ever happened to you.
- What would you pack in your suitcase if you could not go home again?
- If you could change one law, what law would it be and how would you change it?
- What 3 items would you take to a desert island and why?
- If you had three wishes, what would they be?
- Write about two things that your family has taught you.
- Name one thing you like about yourself and why you like it.
- Name and describe a teacher who made a difference in your life. What did that teacher do that was so special?
- Describe the one thing that gives you the most comfort.
- Describe the most difficult thing about being your age.
- Who is the most important role model in your life?
- If you could study one subject in school that wasn't offered, what would it be and why?
- If you had a chance to live anywhere you could, where would it be and why?
- Describe your dream house.
- What is your definition of success?