



## Foreword

In March 2020, our world became much smaller, and we added new words to our vocabulary: coronavirus, SARS-CoV, and COVID-19, among others. Restaurants and shops closed. People went home to work. Masks were mandatory accessories. Coughs and sneezes filled us with fear. The number of new cases and deaths from this then-little-known virus rose each day.

I looked for some small thing I could do to take individuals' minds off the chaos in our world for just a few minutes and decided to run a free, online seven-day writing challenge. Every day, I sent out a writing prompt designed to trigger memories and asked participants to write a response and then share it with the group. More than 200 people from across the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Egypt, and India answered the call and began writing.

At the end of the challenge, a core group of active participants asked, "What are we going to do now?"

I hadn't planned for anything to follow the challenge, so off the top of my head, I said, "I can do a four-week class." Twenty or so people signed up, and we continued to write together for another month.

When the class ended, again, this core group asked, "What are we going to do now?"

I had no intention to continue teaching online classes. Still, I offered another four-week session, and the same people signed up, wrote their stories, read each other's stories,

provided supportive and encouraging feedback—and became friends.

By this time, I anticipated the group's request at month's end. It came, and I offered, "Would any of you be interested in an online membership that includes what we've been doing in these classes plus a few extras?"

A resounding yes immediately followed, and the online Life Writers membership launched in October 2020.

More than two years later, Life Writers remains a dynamic, caring, supportive group. We've picked up new writers along the way, but many of that original group still draft new pieces and remain part of our vibrant writing community.

What you hold in your hands is a sampling of the outstanding stories written by twenty-one Life Writers. They include some who never finished high school and others who hold multiple advanced degrees. Their ages range from one in her mid-forties to 105-year-old Lucille Ellson. Many are prolific and write daily; other writers draft stories only when a memory corners them and won't let go. Several have published one or more books. For others, this is the first time to see their names in print. Some authors have been writing since childhood; others never wrote a word until they joined the group. Several Life Writers write in a second language. But all of our authors share a deep belief that their stories are important and should be written from the heart.

The stories on these pages will make you laugh and cry, and you might recall moments you haven't thought about in ages. You can vicariously experience the life of a frazzled farm wife, the horror of losing one's sight, the unique talent of impersonating classic cars, the joy of becoming a grandmother amid profound grief, the love between a mother and

her children, the blessing of teaching blind students to read and write Braille, the dance of a lifetime under the stars while at sea, and much, much more.

To say I am proud of these and all our Life Writers is a gross understatement. Writing life stories isn't effortless, but the rewards are great, as each of these authors will readily tell you. They drafted and edited these stories, received detailed feedback from fellow Life Writers, and revised their narratives multiple times over several months. They worked hard and tweaked each sentence until it said what they wanted.

Our motto in Life Writers is *the only way to do this wrong is to not do it at all*.

If you feel inspired by these writers, join us at LifeWriters.us and receive the help you desire to create the story only *you* can write.

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