

Rave Reviews of

Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life

by Kim Pearson.

Published by Primary Sources Books, 2nd Ed 2007. ISBN: 978-1-932279-75-7. \$24.95

Book Review Club. com:

Extremely recommended!

Anybody has a story to tell and *Making History* is for everyone who believes in it. As a professional storyteller who teaches writing and history, author Kim Pearson is the right person to show you how to tell your story in an engaging and historically correct way.

Divided into three parts, this book focuses on the reasons why writing your personal history is an inspiring endeavor, how to discover your place in history and how to create powerful vignettes effortlessly. For this purpose, Pearson generously included important milestones in economics, politics, social fabric, wars, technology, science, arts, entertainments, crime and trivia to be used as the backdrop of your story. While most books about writing a memoir or personal history pivots around internal dialogues to unveil "inner stories," *Making History* shows how this can be done by looking both inward and outwardly. Any writer, both seasoned and amateurs, will find this book extremely valuable –much more than a simple how to book.

As a reference, this book is as good as a comprehensive and concise history book about events around us that has shaped our society (and ourselves) the way we are today. *Making History* makes us all feel connected to the whole civilization regardless of how small our parts might be.



"Kittitas Kinfolk", Kittitas County, WA Genealogical Society Newsletter:

This book is an inspiration! The author teaches classes and leads workshops on writing personal history, and her belief is that everyone has a story to tell. "The point of this book is that your life matters," she writes. "Write about what you did, what you saw, what you thought, what you felt." We may think our life experiences are too ordinary to be of interest, but the author reminds us that someday we will be someone's ancestor and that person will want to know about us. As we would enjoy reading our great grandparent's account of his or her life, so will our descendants want to read about us.

This book is a helpful guide for both beginners and more experienced writers. It is packed with advice and encouragement. There are numerous examples of vignettes or short stories written by the author or her students (anonymously) on an incident or an emotion they experienced. There are many pages of timelines, incidents of past years, to help prod your memory.

With this book as a guide, you too can write history.

Statesman Journal, Salem OR

Here is a useful book. One of the phenomena caused by the explosion in self published books is the frequent appearance of memoirs, autobiographies or books about the author's family. These sometimes are intended just for the family, but more often their authors hope to find a wider audience for their story.

Unfortunately, very few of the people who write and publish these books know how to organize them or write well. *Making History* is a book designed to let such aspiring writers get organized. It also has advice on how to recall details and how to know what you are going to write before you start the process.

Everyone who is contemplating writing a memoir about themselves and/or their families should read this book. ***Making History* is practical and fascinating.** It even includes timelines of major events in history and culture over the past 40 years. This book will help aspiring writers learn to recall details and get organized.



Verde AZ Historical Society Newsletter:

We seldom include book reviews in our newsletter. But, sometimes there is a book of such importance and interest that it should be reviewed. Each of us makes history each day. But few of us bother to record our history. Perhaps we don't think we can write, no one would want to read what we have written, or we need a good guide. *Making History* is a book that can help you overcome these obstacles.

For example: My grandmother raised turkeys. She often herded the turkeys into the woods that bordered their fields. While the turkeys searched for bugs and other food, Grandmother found a log to sit on, gathered her grandchildren around her, and told us stories. We loved the stories she told about when she was a young girl in the 1870s and 80s while living in the backwoods of Arkansas. My regret is that no one wrote Grandmother's stories down. Now, 70 years later, I can remember only a few of her stories. I didn't want that to happen for my children and grandchildren. I began writing my life story when I purchased my first computer 15 years ago. My writing didn't go well until I bought and read books about how to write your life's story. I wish I had Kim Pearson's book, *Making History* when I started writing my story.

***Making History* is the best book of its type that I have read.** Kim Pearson is an accomplished author and teacher. She loves teaching others to write about their history. The book is filled with great ideas, excerpts of her own history, and examples of stories her students have written. Her book is so inspirational that it should convince you that you too can write history. And, it should dispel any doubts you may have that the task is too daunting or difficult.

Norm Goldman, Editor of Bookpleasures.com

When our children, relatives and friends broach the subject of writing our memoirs, most of us manage to provide a broad array of negative responses from who cares about our lives to even if I wanted to write my memoirs, how would I go about it as I don't have a clue.

To help us overcome our lack of enthusiasm, Kim Pearson has come up with a most unique resource, *Making History: How to remember, record, interpret and share the events of your life*, which evolved from her history class that she teaches and which is based on her system of part history lesson and part memoir writing.

This **very well-organized and entertaining book**, complete with extensive timelines spanning the years from 1930 to 1989, as well as exercises and suggested readings, presents a fresh look into memoir writing. To make it a **delightful and interesting read**, Pearson has interspersed her own personal anecdotes as well as some wonderful stories of her former students, where we are reminded why each of us plays an important part in history and why it is important to share these experiences with others.

Conveniently dividing the book into three broad sections and a conclusion, Pearson explores why tell your stories, how to tell your stories, fitting your stories into history and the meaning of life.

Commencing with the first section, Pearson examines the reasons for telling your stories which she breaks down into: connection, wisdom, inspiration and healing. As pointed out, one way or another we are all connected by our stories to each other, to the past, and to the future. It is up to us to fill in the details and connect ourselves to the events we may have experienced within a particular perspective.

No doubt living through some of these events you probably learned a thing or two. Why not pass on this knowledge to others? Moreover, you probably are one of the millions of unsung heroes who at one time or another have performed a brave deed, followed your passions or achieved your goals. Here again, why not let your descendants in on your secrets. Finally, there is probably some unfinished business where you wished you could be able to turn the clock back and apologize for what you may have done to someone. You now have the opportunity to explain why, how, to whom, the circumstances and situations. How often do we go through life wondering why our parents are not talking to a particular relative? What actually happened?

In discussing how to tell your stories, Pearson emphasizes focusing or as she states, there is no need to write a long tome about your life. Why not limit your memoir to a vignette or short-short story. This will help you resolve the problem that we all encounter, too much information and too little time.

From here Pearson gives us the tools to explore our lives within various contexts such as economics and politics, the social fabric, wars and the international scene, technology and science, crime and disaster, arts and entertainment, lifestyle activities and the weird, trivial and hard-to-

classify. Each one of these sections presents an overview of the era in relation to the particular context. For example, if we refer to economics during the time frame of 1930 through 1959, we are reminded of the Great depression, the new economic and political programs, the 1940s War Production and labor unrest. If we were alive during this era, how do we fit in either as adults or perhaps children listening to the tales of our parents?

To prod our memories, an extensive events timeline is included at the end of each section. We are free to scan these timelines and circle the events we remember, make notes in the margin, and place question marks beside the events we don't remember, cross out things we believe are wrong or misleading or do whatever else works best with us. Pearson also suggests various writing topics to consider and how to go about writing about these topics.

In addition, several helpful writing rules with their explanations are presented such as using trigger sentences, don't be polite, be specific and remember your five senses when describing and telling your stories, it is not necessary to be right, rational or logical, don't worry about the rules of grammar or spelling when writing your first drafts, and trust yourself.

The concluding chapter or as it is entitled, The Really Big Stuff, Pearson challenges her readers to become philosophical and answer the biggies as to what is the meaning of life, what are we here on earth, what is your purpose and are you fulfilling it?

I have to admit that by the end of the book I certainly concurred with Pearson when she states in her introduction: "we are actors, not just reactors." And **if you are considering writing your memoirs, this is one book you don't want to be without**. After all, we have all accumulated a wealth of information about success, failure, and life itself from many sources. We should not permit this information to be lost.



New Books Review, the Historical Society of Michigan:

I have addressed a number of Historical Societies on the power of our own personal histories and how important it is to document these histories for our children and future generations, which is **why I became so excited to read *Making History* and to pass along its message**. A number of years ago I inherited the photo collection of my family when my parents passed away. When I looked at the family photos from the 1920 and 1930s I didn't know who many of the people in the photos were, even though in some cases they were my aunts and uncles, and there were no notations to help me identify them. That's when I realized we are all repositories of our own, and our families, history, and if we do not document that history for our children and grandchildren we might lose the connection between generations. **Kim Pearson has created as valuable resource** for anyone interested in documenting the events of their lives, family or ancestors before, like in my case, that information is lost forever.

Rave Reviews of *Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life*

Seattle Storyteller's Guild, *In the Wind* Newsletter

As storytellers, many of us want to develop personal stories. Some of us have a considerable number of years and experiences to draw upon. Comes the dilemma - "I can't remember." Kim Pearson has provided us with a wealth of story starters and techniques for mining the nuggets of story ideas just waiting to be brought to light.

Detailed historic timelines from 1930 through 1989 lead us back to discover our place in history. It's not accomplished with mere dates and numbers. Politics, lifestyle, social aspects are but a few of the categories that trigger memories of "back then". Extensive topic suggestions geared to what WE experienced during these times help to bring forth the memories.

The book grew out of Kim's classes on exploring the times of your life against the backdrop of historic events. Stories from students are found throughout giving first hand examples of what is possible to remember and share.

This is not a book to be read straight through from beginning to end. This is a volume to keep by the bedside to pick up and browse. **What a resource for personal story ideas.**



Pierre SD Genealogical Society Newsletter:

"One of the greatest gifts you can give your descendants is the story of who you are." This is how author Kim Pearson starts to give us the motivation to write our stories. We are also given "un-rules" Rules that we are free to ignore, but we will have better results if they are followed. In Part 3 of the book, we are told to find where our stories fit into history. There are some very fine timelines and insights to past "social fabrics", wars, technology, disasters, arts, lifestyles and a section on the trivial that is just fun. At the end of the book are the really meaningful questions for us to answer and record. These will give the meaning of our lives, or as the author stated, "The Really Big Stuff." **This is a book full of information, and is also a wonderful starting place with inspiration and motivation for us to BEGIN.**



Ventura County CA Genealogical Society Newsletter:

I just completed reading Kim Pearson's book *Making History*. I wish I had read this book before I completed my life history because **it covers more than any other book I have read.** Everyone who is thinking about writing their life history should read this book and keep it close for reference. The actual stories used in the book were not only well-written but very moving. In an interesting way the book provides lists by date of happenings in the world. It covers subjects such as social fabric, arts, entertainment, etc. It gives you information on why to tell your stories, how to tell your stories, and how to fit them into history. The author asks you many questions to stir your memories. **I highly recommend this book.**

Past Times, Issaquah WA Historical Society

Kim Pearson treated participants to one of her memoir writing workshops, sharing techniques and methods that she lays out in her new book, *Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life*. In just ten minutes of writing, participants recorded memories that some of us had never thought of as important or significant. This is the hallmark of Pearson's method. Her philosophy is that we all have memories of value, not only to ourselves and our family, but also as a record of historic events. History is more than the names and dates of occurrences; it is also the impact each event has on individual people. With that in mind, recording one's memoirs becomes an act of broad significance.

Pearson's method makes writing memories easier by breaking them down into manageable chunks. Pearson groups events into eight categories (economics and politics, crime and disaster, and lifestyle activities are three examples), and then provides a timeline for each decade from the 1930s to the 1980s that corresponds to each category. The timelines and other prompts in the book inspire memories that may be long forgotten, or previously dismissed as insignificant. If you want to record your memories, but the idea of sitting down to do it is daunting, then **Pearson's book is for you.**



Mercer County PA Historical Society Newsletter:

Hundreds of genealogists use the MCHS library each year to uncover the stories of their ancestors. Most consider themselves fortunate to come away with names and dates. A lucky few may uncover evidence of an ancestor's hobbies, church involvement, or organization membership. Occasionally a photo may surface. Very seldom does a researcher find the type of document – a diary, journal, or memoir – that leads him or her to truly understand the lives of those long gone.

Now consider the importance of leaving such a document for *your* descendants. MCHS has received a copy of a **new book by Kim Pearson that just may convince you to share the story of your life.** In *Making History*, the author maintains that one of the greatest gifts we can give our descendants is the story of who we are. She provides extensive lists designed to jog your memory about the events of your life and encourages the use of short stories or vignettes to overcome the daunting task of putting an entire life into words. Pearson's book will help you discover your place in history, remember the stories you thought you had forgotten, and inspire you to set the story of your life into words.



Elaine Blom, co author of *Wake Up ... Live the Life You Love*

***Making History* strikes a major chord ...** encouraging the revelation of the personal threads that bind us all together. Take the time to share who you are. This book shows you how.

C.E. Weidel for Bloggernews.net

Much to my surprise, I am a primary historical source. So are you.

In a conversational and engaging tone, author Kim Pearson will help you to see the value of your life story, to set it in the context of larger events, and have fun in the bargain.

The stories you tell don't have to be big, or long, or feature important historical people. But setting them against events current at the time adds flavor and perspective.

Ms. Pearson provides scads of examples from classes that she has taught. For instance, here's a story of ham-and-bean soup: "Alice" remembered watching her mother cook dinner the day FDR died. Her mother was weeping so heavily and steadily that her tears dropped into the ham-and-bean soup she was preparing. Although Alice tried to eat the soup at dinner, because wasting food was a great sin in her house, she was unable to. She called it "sad soup" and to this day she cannot eat ham-and-bean soup."

No political analysis, but who can forget that pot of ham-and-bean soup salted by grief-stricken tears?

Ms. Pearson provides timelines for context, exercises to warm you up, and guidelines to keep you going. (Don't be polite. Trust yourself. Don't worry about grammar or spelling.)

Here is one of her topics (page 158) that makes me want to sit down and write a paragraph or two:

"If you were a non-combatant during the Vietnam War, what was your opinion of the war? Did your opinions change over time, and if so, when and why did they change? Did you watch war news on TV? What scenes impacted you? Did you disagree with others about the war? If so, were the disagreements major or minor? Did Vietnam cause divisiveness in your family?"

One of the sharpest memories I have of the Vietnam War was of the "incursion" into Cambodia. I watched the televised announcement while babysitting when I was a high school student. I knew it was serious, and crossed a line besides the political boundary separating Cambodia from Vietnam. The shifty wording ("incursion" rather than "invasion") fed an uneasiness towards President Nixon despite my grounded belief that the United States presidency should be respected and defended. That uneasiness bloomed into betrayal when Nixon resigned the presidency, and fed ambivalence towards politics generally that took decades to put into perspective.

Would this story help my own children gain perspective on current politics? Probably.

Another source of personal histories is science and technology, one of my own special interests. Ms. Pearson provides a timeline (page 161) beginning in 1960 that has so many personal tie-ins that I must laugh. For instance, when Neil Armstrong hopped to the lunar surface from the LEM's ladder, I ran outside to look up. The moon looked the same, but I had changed.

Another context for stories is crime and punishment, with this example:

"Paul" remembered his first experience observing a courtroom when he was a pre-law student. His strongest impression was of the banality of crime and the pitiable nature of criminals. "It was astonishing how much grief was caused by that one poor, deluded excuse for a human being," he commented.

I just finished a tour of jury duty for a serious felony. The defendant faced a long jail term if convicted. As it turned out, the defense was granted a continuance because of new evidence and the jury pool — after days of suspense and tedium — was dismissed. This incident is an example of care for the rights of the accused. The judge in the case went to unusual lengths and discomforted over a hundred potential jurors in order to ensure that a fair trial is held. As a member of the jury pool, I groaned along with everybody else each time we were told to come back. I drummed my fingers. I griped that the \$15-a-day stipend didn't cover the aggravation, nor did the 34¢-per-mile transportation allowance (one-way) cover costs. But I admire that judge.

A valuable witness to the American judicial system? Sure.

So don't hide behind false humility. Each of us has stories to tell.

Ms. Pearson rounds out her book with sources, suggested reading, and recommended books on writing and creativity. All good places to check, but **start by ordering a copy of *Making History***. Use its many exercises and examples as a springboard to writing histories of your own.



Nebraska State Genealogical Society Bulletin

In four basic parts with 18 chapters, *Making History's* author explains why and how to write your personal memories of the history you have lived through. **I tried out one of her suggested topics at my local society meeting and the discussion was wonderful.** We should have been writing it down as instructed in the book. The book was easy reading and is best done with a pencil and notebook, or your computer, at hand so you can begin to write at once.



Root Cellar Preserves of the Sacramento, CA Genealogical Society

This book shows that writing your life stories may bring healing for the events of sadness or regrets you experienced. Through the writing process, you come to understand yourself better and resolve some of your issues. This book is written to guide you through these processes. Many examples are given in the form of vignettes, or short stories. Eight categories are suggested as a framework to explore your part of history, your contribution, your experiences and your foibles. Timelines are provided as a framework and to job your memory. Recommended.

Rave Reviews of *Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life*

"Ancestry Seekers" column by Carlene Marek in North Central California newspapers Enterprise-Record and Mercury-Register

Imagine how thrilled you would be to find an ancestor's autobiography or even as page or two of reminiscences. There is no greater gift. Everyone has a story to tell, the problem is most of us just can't seem to get started. But help is on the way in the form of Kim Pearson and the latest edition of her book, *Making History*. Pearson offers inspiration and a helping hand that enables the reader to discover their place in history, to remember stories thought to be forgotten, and then create powerful memory vignettes. The message here is to get your story down on paper and don't worry about the details. For those contemplating writing about their life and times, **this is a must-have book.**



Bulletin of the Genealogical Forum of Oregon

The author, as a teacher in a continuing education program, guided her students in realizing that they themselves were part of history. She encouraged them to write vignettes about their own lives. This book was written from these experiences, and now is used as a textbook for her workshops. It includes many timelines in eight subject categories which are sure to jog readers' memories and help start ideas for stories. She also gives rules for writing, none of which include grammar or spelling, which she says can be corrected later. For anyone interested in writing and having difficulty getting started, **this book will provide the necessary inspiration.**



Blair County PA Genealogical Society Newsletter

If you are thinking of writing your own book, this is a good one to read. Kim Pearson, a teacher, explains how to record the events in your life or someone you are writing about. She gives examples of her students' writing, and many timelines for you to use. Looking up the facts in genealogy – birth, death, marriage – are important but it is the stories about the people that bring your family tree to life and make it much more interesting.



Escondido CA Genealogical Society Newsletter

Genealogists are also historians. *Making History* helps you write your history by providing a historic timeline from 1930 through 1989, helping you to make your story more interesting by providing events and asking questions. There are stories from others, both humorous and tragic, to assist you in telling your own history and how you fit into the times and events of your life. The book is arranged in categories to help you to write how you and your family looked at elements such as politics, arts, crime, technology. If you are finding it difficult to write your history, **this is the book for you.**

Dane County WI Genealogical Society Newsletter

Thinking of writing your family history, but having trouble getting started? Then **you should read Kim Pearson's book *Making History***. When I went to review this book my thoughts were: "Oh it will probably be another boring how to do it book." But I had procrastinated long enough and had promised to write a review about the book for our next newsletter. So it was now down to the wire, the Packer game was on and I thought I could read between replays and commercials.

Well by half time I had finished half of Kim's book. Her writing style is flowing and the examples she uses to help you see how a large task of recording your family history can be broken up into manageable segments holds your interest.

Using timelines to help you focus on different events within your lifetime, or within the lifetime of one of your ancestors, assist you in getting started. Picking a topic like "What were you doing on September 11, 2001" and how this event affected you shows how historical events impact your life. She shows us how to write the short stories that give meaning to our lives.

If you don't want to write alone, Kim suggests forming a writing group. Getting together with others and focusing on one of the topics is a good way to get started. But before doing this, **I suggest you read Kim's book, *Making History***. Thanks, Kim for allowing me to review your book.



Distant Trails, Newsletter of the Sweet Home, OR Genealogical Society

This is the book that may well provide as path through or around those brick walls that many researchers have encountered or confronted over the years. Have you written your "memoirs" yet? As we pester our various relatives for information, think about your own children and those to come after you. It's never too early (and sometimes too late) to get started on preserving your own history. How often in researching your ancestors have you found a personal diary or story providing that extra insight into a personality not well known. Take advantage of the opportunity to tell your story – in your words, with your viewpoint. Who knows, sometime in the future a descendant may marvel and be very thankful for the outlook that you provided. **This is the book that will help you discover your place in history.**



Katie Arnold, reader

I just this morning, got into your book **I LOVE IT!** I love history set up the way you have done it makes it so easy to find particular bits and pieces ... I know your book is going to get all dog eared and worn. Thank you very very much.