

King County Journal
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Cover Story



King County Journal Review
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Women's Journal

What's hot
at New York
Fashion Week

Who should
win Emmys
tonight?

Iced tea is
brewing into
elegance

Headphone
use fueling
hearing loss

Using up
that squash
as it ripens

Memories that last

Learn how to create
a personal memoir

CHRONICLING YOUR OWN HISTORY

*Issaquah writer teaches workshops
in memoir writing*

Carole Beers
Journal Reporter

How best to preserve precious memories?

Or, as the song says, "How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?"

Journalists such as Tom Brokaw do so in words on paper ("The Greatest Generation" and other books), a lasting vehicle for memoirs, with room for personal commentary.

Issaquah writer Kim Pearson, 56, does the same. She's penned 20 recollections of others, as well as books of short stories and poetry.

The Pasco native, who earned a history degree at the University of Washington, also gives workshops on many kinds of writing, including short and long memoirs.

Her free workshop at 1 pm Saturday at Kirkland Library is based on her book "Making History: How To Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life."

A similar workshop at a Wordstock Festival in Portland was sold out.

"You can slice and dice memoir writing however you want, because one size doesn't fit all," Pearson said. "We're all different."

Why remember?

Basic memoir-writing tips, however, such as those Pearson offers, are applicable to most.

Her workshops and book explore American history of the past 80 or 90 years, a period within recent memory. Events in that time frame, whether personal or global, are her suggested starting point for a memoir.

"I ask, how did you participate or contribute to these events?" she said.

Remembering and recording events and feelings from these times is important for several reasons. These include:

MEMOIRS WORKSHOP

- Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life
- 1-3 pm Saturday
- Kirkland Library, 308 Kirkland Ave.
- Free
- <http://www.kpearson.net>

Connections. We are all connected to each other and to the past and future, and as such, are part of, and players in, history.

Teaching. Our stories teach us and stretch us, and are a way of passing down our wisdom.

Healing. Telling stories helps heal emotional wounds. They can make us whole again because they allow us to understand our times and lives and loved ones better. Explaining them puts them in perspective, and can lead to forgiveness and wisdom.

Inspiration. Our stories inspire others because when you act with courage, compassion and dedication, and tell a story about that, you can change the course of another person's life because you inspire them that they can do the same.



Besides writing, Kim Pearson, a member of the Seattle Storytellers Guild, makes masks out of Japanese mulberry paper as props for storytelling.

How to do it

The actual writing of the memoir doesn't have to be difficult, Pearson said. It should be approached with a sense of adventure.

Here are her tips:

Find memory triggers in the world, your family or circle of friends. Look for timelines, and newspaper stories in the arts, sports, politics, medicine, fashion and other fields.

Keep a box or folder of clippings, notes and photos. Indexing them can help.

Chat with people who know you or knew you. They can offer jogs to memory as well as helpful viewpoints on some event.

Just start writing for a set time, say for 10 or 15 minutes. Keep at it.

Don't censor yourself. Don't worry about whether it's good writing.

Craft an outline if writing an entire book, but for a long vignette or essay, merely start writing.

Pearson offers more tips, handout topic prompts, and shares experiences with writing in her book and workshop.

The basis of all this is (my belief that) that each of us is responsible for history," Pearson said. "We are in a way responsible for what we see, feel, and witness. It's not just something life dumps on our head."

About the Author

Kim Pearson – an author, ghostwriter and teacher – has been fascinated by the storytelling aspect of history for her whole life. In addition to writing fiction, nonfiction and poetry, she's ghostwritten 20 nonfiction books and memoirs.

Her writing service, Primary Sources, helps people tell and preserve their stories, histories and ideas.

Pearson's published works include a collection of quirky short stories, "Common Disguises," an illustrated children's book "Animal ABC," a novel in the magical-realism genre, "Eating Mythos Soup, Poemstories for Laura"; and her new nonfiction book, "Making History: How to Remember, Record, Interpret and Share the Events of Your Life."

Born in Pasco but a graduate of Inglemoor High School in Kenmore, Pearson is the mother of two daughters, ages 27 and 32. One works as a wildlife biologist in Olympia, while the other is earning a master's degree in history in Colorado.