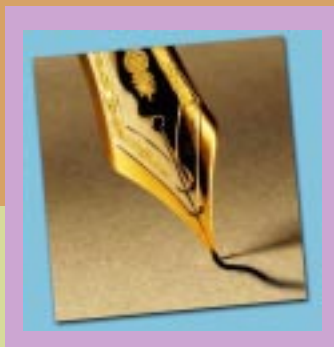


January 2006
Premier Issue



Journaling Life

Writing to bring wisdom, clarity & truth to your life

Getting the Elderly to Journal It's Never too Late

Well, it's been a while since I put out a Journaling Life newsletter, and I have to say it's great to start back at it. I struggle at times with deciding what to write about each month because I don't believe writing about fluff is very interesting to most people. I suppose a journaling web site should contain material that is helpful and interesting enough to keep people in the site for more than thirty seconds. There is plenty of material out there for people to harvest in order to help them write better, and our site has plenty of tools as well, and we trust that it has been helpful to you all.

I've already written about getting children into journaling (really any kind of writing), and I still make that a major focus, but what about getting adults, especially elderly adults into journal keeping? Think of the wisdom and insight that is lost when the elderly pass on without leaving some of it behind. I guess I could include adults of all ages in this discussion, but the older we get, the less time we have (another brilliant insight into the obvious), and I believe we need to start with the elderly. The treasures many of them have to share are worth more than the material goods they will leave behind.

A friend of mine used to be one of the world's most enthusiastic journal fanatic and often spoke of meetings he would have with people in several retirement communities in Florida. Apparently, he would set up meetings with the people living in these communities, and have a little talk and presentation about journaling. Most of the people he met with had never thought about it, but now in their 70s and 80s, they were being sparked and challenged to think about the value of recording their thoughts and ideas. In most cases, it worked like a charm.

Some of the older people I've spoken with don't think they have much to say, or much insight to give, but we all need to keep in mind that it's not necessary for us to be literary geniuses to have insight. Every generation has a responsibility to pass on what it has learned to younger generations, and whether we know it or not, we do pick up bits of wisdom throughout the course of our lives. Some people seem to have an abundance of it, while others very little, but there is always something to pass on, regardless. Those who have an abundance of insight tend to be more reflective people, and often they are readers and thinkers who can scrape the marrow out of areas many of us can't see.

Continued on Page 2

*"Writing
is the
miracle of
making the
invisible,
visible."*

- DAVID L. RUSSELL

For many elderly people, memories are all they have left, and I have found that they often come alive when they are asked about their life.

Another friend of mine likes to collect journals and diaries from people he doesn't even know. Typically, he's found them at used book stores, garage sales, estate sales, and auctions. He once read me an entry from a diary written by a dairy farmer in Wisconsin in 1907. This farmer described his working conditions, the names of his cows, and a little bit about the hoipolloi of his community. There wasn't a great deal of wisdom articulated, but you could get a glimpse into simpler times and his words painted pictures of what it might have been like in those days. I've said it before, but I'm a wisdom junkie, and I tend to look for insights from anything I read. I want to know the essence of life and to find ways to live it well. Regardless of how smart we believe we are, or how fluently we handle the language, we all have a story to tell, and all stories contain bits of insight that we often don't even know we're passing on.

I really enjoy spending time with older folks and for those with the capacity to still write, I always encourage them to record their thoughts about life, especially their own life. I've given this much greater thought since my father entered a nursing home for rehabilitation for a severe injury he sustained a few weeks ago. Many of the people in this home are beyond help, insofar as they are incapacitated in mind, body, or in some cases, both. I have to believe that within these homes, there exists a gold mine of wisdom and insight about life, but sadly, it seems that too often these people are forgotten.

Would you like to share your love for Journaling with others?

We are working on a publishing project and are looking for several guest writers...

If you are interested in writing a brief essay about WHY you are a journaler and also submit 3 samples of your journaling entries, we might be picking you for a book that Dave Russell is compiling and editing.

All interested journalers, please email your request to: Dave@Westvon.com

Writing is a great way to improve the thought process, and it blows out the cobwebs, so-to-speak, that can collect due to inactivity at any age. I also think that writing gives people a purpose and also something to look forward to from day to day.

If you have elderly people in your life, try to get them to record their thoughts about life and share some of their insights. If they are too old to write, or perhaps too weak to do so, try recording them. Generate a list of questions that will get them talking about the past. For many elderly people, memories are all they have left, and I have found that they often come alive when they are asked about their life. If you want to see a wonderful example of this, watch the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes* and you'll see what I mean.

I will be putting a list of questions on the *Journaling Life* web site that you might want to utilize for any discussions you have with the elderly. They are great for generating great life stories, and also if you choose to record their stories.

I trust you all had a great holiday season, and we wish the best to you in the coming New Year.

David L. Russell



“Writing has been a way of explaining to myself the things I do not understand.”

- Rosario Castellanos

Journaling Links

www.TheJournalGuy.com

This is a very interesting site with some beautiful custom journals for your writing pleasure. Such beautiful journals! I want the griffin one! How about you????

www.writersdigest.com/articles/pj_mag/knerr_storytelling_medicine.asp

This is a lovely article about journaling with the elderly and the ill in a hospital. A great reprinted article.

January Journaling Prompts

Three great journaling prompts for the month to help you get writing!

Write about the New Year Resolutions of year's past that you made and quickly forgot and cast aside. Why? What made these resolutions fail so quickly?

Is there a person in your life with whom you wish you could start over? Perhaps a love lost, or someone that for one reason or another, you've started off on the wrong foot. Write some of your thoughts and feelings on how you wish things had started off better... or at the very least differently. Is there something that you can do to remedy the relationship and strengthen it? Writing can bring ideas to might that might not come easily in idle thought.

Study, detail and examine a favorite child in your life. List his or her characters, ideas, philosophy or just their favorite things in the world. Study and watch them for an afternoon and write down your observations.



Visit our newest website devoted to quick and easy journaling prompt books about one specific area of your life that you'd like to really reach in deep and study!

www.TheJournalingHabit.com



Dave's Bookshelf

Books that will help you to love life and journal with wisdom and clarity.

The Underground Man

by *Mick Jackson*

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Penguin (Non-Classics);

Reprint edition (June 1, 1998)

ISBN: 0140274375

This book is a brilliant example of the value of journaling. The story is a fictional account of Victorian England's most famous eccentric, the Duke of Portland. It is written as though you are reading the journal entries of an eccentric of man plagued with a host of fears and insecurities. A most tragic figure that will make you want to laugh hysterically, and at other times weep with the deepest of grief.

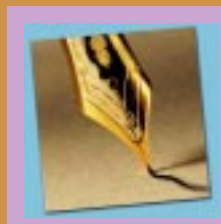


Eventually, the Duke leaves behind his quest to resolve his perceived physical problems, and ventures into the realm of the mind and of memory. This is a worthwhile read that will get you thinking a great deal more about the value of memories, and reflective thinking.



David L. Russell Ph.D
is a watchful observers of life, seeker of wisdom, clarity and whatever else he may find on the journey. He's a lifelong

journaler, a writer, a musician and a wonderful father. He's also the editor of the Bluegrass Journal as well as CEO of Westvon Publishing, providing educational materials for the homeschooling family.



Journaling Life

Writing to bring wisdom, clarity & truth to your life

Visit our website:

www.JournalingLife.com

for information on all types of personal journaling and writing. Guides to get you started with ideas and prompts to keep you writing!

Art Design & Layout: *Sherri Chekal*

You can email him at:
Dave@JournalingLife.com

This is a free monthly newsletter and can be distributed in its entire file to friends and fellow writers. For excerpts of the material, please contact for permission to reprint.