

## 'As Time Goes By' (Memoir Writing) 2025

Introduction	A memoir captures a meaningful slice of life—a memory, a lesson, or an experience that stands out. In our sessions, members come together to share short, reflective stories (up to 500 words) inspired by a new theme each month. <i>As Time Goes By</i> is not a writing skills class, nor is it about creating a full autobiography. It's a space for those who want to record the stories that future generations might never think to ask about—a place to remember and share treasured moments in a welcoming, supportive environment with others who are also telling their stories.
Roles	Convenor - Bev Lee
Contact details	Bev Lee - Mobile: 0478607838 Email: <a href="mailto:bevlee47@gmail.com">bevlee47@gmail.com</a>
Time & Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday from 2 & 4 pm in U3A Room 1 commencing <b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February</b>
Webpages	Home Page: <a href="#">'As Time Goes By'</a> Our Writing: <a href="#">'Our Stories'</a> and <a href="#">'Stories by Topic'</a>
Background	'As Time Goes By' began as Writing Workshop in 2015 with a focus on writing short memoir related stories drawing upon topics from the ABC Open program '500 words'. We had great fun, ending the year with a portfolio of cherished stories. We are still going nine years later, with a change of title to 'As Time Goes By' in 2019 to distinguish us from 'Creative Writing'. We continue to be inspired by new topics developed in the spirit of ABC Open's '500 Words' program.
What is memoir? How does it differ from autobiography?	<p>"Memoir is a unique genre—it's not autobiography or a chronological retelling of one's entire life events. Rather, it's telling a narrow and specific story around a life theme or event, and importantly, the interpretation of those events and what they mean for all of us looking forward. People write memoirs about all sorts of life events, major and small: divorcing their partner, learning to surf, hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. There is always something learned, which is then shared....</p> <p>The memoirist can teach you a new lesson about the world that you could find instructive, interesting, or comforting. Memoirs are like getting a secret peek into someone's life—but they want you to peek..." <i>7 Books to Teach You How to Write a Memoir - Ricki Tremblay blogging in 'The Spellbinding Shelf' (2021)</i></p> <p>"Writing a memoir is not the same as writing an autobiography. In an autobiography, you typically start at the beginning of your life and record all the details you can remember, chronologically. In a memoir, you take a slice from your life—a particular theme or lesson or flavor of experience—and write about that, pretty much ignoring the rest....authors with a special story to tell generally write memoirs... They focus on an aspect of their life that is most unusual or fascinating..." <i>Jessi Rita Hoffman, 7 Common Mistakes in First Time Memoir Writing</i></p>
Some features of 'As Time Goes By'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of monthly topics. We have developed a rich library of topics over the past nine years, largely from ABC Open's '500 words' project, but increasingly draw from a diverse range of sources, including member suggestions.</li> <li>• We usually begin sessions with an icebreaker encouraging reflection on a tiny memory fragment which is then shared with another person or the class.</li> <li>• Our story writing focus is on 'memoir fragments', rather than on writing an</li> </ul>

autobiography from 'go to whoa', however over time stories can be grouped in life stage sequence. Members who have previously written about their lives in a timeline sequence occasionally draw upon this work to craft and edit a 'slice of life' 500 words story on one of our topics.

- Word Limits – we aim towards the target of 500. While there are no penalties for being under or over 500, we do encourage you to aim for this as we have found the discipline it provides achieves noticeable results!
- Poetry as Memoir - it is fine to submit a poem, rather than prose.
- The course is not 'skills focussed' but encourages us to develop our own voice by writing regularly and encouraging & supporting others.
- We do have discussions in class geared to develop our understanding of the nature of memoir and memoir writing, and memoir reading is encouraged.
- We do extend occasional reminders about, for example, extralong sentences with more than one 'and'. At the end of last year Bev prepared a list of some writing patterns she tends to edit when putting our stories on the website. They are usually minimal, however you may notice small differences when reading the story alongside viewing it on the internet in class.
- Keep in mind that while we are working towards finding truth in memoir, other people have different recollections of the same events.
- Writing can be a cathartic process – it is important to look after our personal well-being. Our guideline is to avoid sharing stories which still cause considerable emotional pain. Even when we think we'll be fine, it can be difficult to read some stories aloud. This doesn't mean *not* writing about such issues for your collection but being thoughtful about whether to read them out in class.
- Confidentiality issues can arise when writing about real people (sometimes doing so negatively) - the guideline is to handle privacy issues with care, both when telling stories and with sharing news of stories told in class with others.
- Handling gender and other sensitive or ethical issues in our stories - sometimes the way we write will reflect our recollections of the time, however we do try to apply gender neutral guidelines. It is rarely an issue... but can come up!
- Publishing our stories on the website - we have built up a collection of stories on the website over time, with 'authors' stories joined by 'stories by topic' during Co-vid, when people enjoyed reading the monthly stories on-line. It is fine share a story with the proviso it is not added to the website.
- Photographs - it can be worth locating and including a photo or two related to the story you are writing while you are 'in the zone'.
- Sending in stories before class is optional, however do so if you can as it allows them to be screened on the wall, which helps us all to hear and focus on them.
- Editing suggestions – a gentle approach is taken to editing before publishing on the website, with occasional changes to help with readability and the odd editing out of a swear word for publication posterity!
- In 10 years, we have had very few issues arising out of stories being on the web. If this happens, we consult with the writer of the story involved and recommend and follow through with taking the story off-line immediately.
- If, on reflection you decide you would like to use a pseudonym when publishing stories on the website, this is fine. Writers often use pseudonyms!