

from *The Photo Scribe*

## How to Stimulate Your Memories/Reactions

As you're creating your lifestory using photographs, you'll probably want to be as thorough and as insightful as possible, especially when writing captions and text to accompany the photos. But our memories can sometimes be fuzzy, especially when we're trying to recall events that took place many years ago. There is an exercise you can use to help stimulate your memory recall.

Select the photos of the period for which you'd like to stimulate your memories. Place these photos where you can see them daily — in a line on a table in your living room, for example, or behind a picture frame in the kitchen, or tucked into a frame on your bedroom bureau.

The first task before you is simply to dwell with these photos and to record your memories — data (such as names, actions, addresses) or feelings (“I was lonely then”). As you record these memories, do not give in to any compulsion to “do it the right way.” Write a title that identifies the photo and below it jot down whatever memories come to mind in whatever order they come to mind.

Recording a new memory on a new page will help you to organize your text(s) later, but you can do that as a separate step. One way to feel free about starting new pages when new memories occur is to use the backs of scrap paper — that way you won't feel that blank parts of a page are wasted paper.

Your entries might read like this:

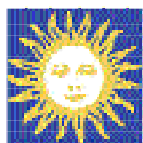
Header: Wm. & Marie Ledoux on couch #1

My grandmother Ledoux had a much lighter sense of herself and of life than did my grandfather. While he craved order and regularity, she seems to have wanted disorder and spontaneity. Over the years they did not work through this difference. In this photo, she is indulging in her lighter side and he is good naturedly submitting to it.

Header: Wm. & Marie Ledoux on couch #2

[On a new scrap sheet even if for the sake of space I don't do that here]

I would come to visit and, walking in on them, would always find them sitting in different rooms. They would not be engaged in conversation as were my other grandparents when I walked in on them unexpectedly. While the silence did not seem to affect my grandfather, it did affect my grandmother who (I think) experienced a loneliness in her relationship.



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Header: Wm. & Marie Ledoux on couch #3

[On a new scrap sheet]

She was also a woman who believed that she could not have a good relationship with her sons but had to focus on her daughter. Unfortunately, her daughter moved 3,000 miles away to California. My grandmother was given to bouts of melancholia.

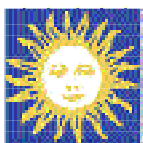
Header: Wm. & Marie Ledoux on couch #4

[On a new scrap sheet]

She lived upstairs from us. She always played favorites. I was one of her favorites.

This exercise will produce all sorts of writing. Some will be lengthy while others will be short; some will be full of meaning and feeling while others will seem superficial. Many will form the beginnings of your photo album texts.

In the above examples, I have recorded four entries. Perhaps when I record my stories they will end up being woven together into a lifestory. On the other hand, I may decide to make cameo narratives of them and use them "as is" interspersed throughout the album.



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