

## Baby Boomer Lecture Series

### Developing Your Lifeline Narrative

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If we really do begin with a *tabula rasa* — that famous clean slate upon which one's personal history is written — it will be filled by the time we turn 40 or 50 years old, with notes scribbled on the margins and on Post-Its clinging to the edges. Most adults have managed to cram more living in their First Adulthood than could be imagined twenty years ago. Typically, we report on our more important accomplishments with résumés and curriculum vitae; including schools attended, degrees or certificates attained, jobs or positions held, and awards received. There are certainly many other noteworthy events in our everyday lives: people we love, children raised, places lived, births, graduations, weddings, deaths and hobbies or special events enjoyed. But, there are also other things we've done that are taken for granted. For instance, we've probably visited foreign places, without even leaving our hometown, through television, movies, and videos we can simulate real sweat from vicariously paddling through a steamy forest in New Guinea or gasping for oxygen during those last 200 yards up a snowy, swirling Mount Everest. We can e-mail Bali, find an exotic recipe for *feijoada*, or bid on a just-found Grecian vase. We drive more powerful cars more dangerous than a herd of buffalo, read/listen to whole books, hear music performed half a globe away, understand depression, successfully interact with more people in one day than our ancestors saw in a year, and live entire lives without the need of a weapon. In addition, we balance jobs, families, necessities, fun, and charity, with time left over to flirt, read to our kids, whistle, daydream, and have a hobby. We have lived a lot!

For this assignment we want you to begin chronicling your life. Start developing your life narrative. How you start or what you decide to emphasize is up to you. Think about your life as a story. To help; respond to the following questions in any manner appropriate.

- ❖ **Who are you now?** (demographics, economic, health, cultural, status, heredity, profession, educations, hobbies, free time, relationships that define you, family, etc.)
- ❖ **Which accomplishments are you most proud?**
- ❖ **What activities do you like doing? Least doing?**
- ❖ **What is it about your life that gives you the greatest joy? Least joy?**



❖ **What have you learned during your time on earth that is worthy of being shared with others?**

With these questions answered take the life review process one step further by representing it graphically—by creating a **Lifeline**. Here are some tips for creating your Lifeline.

**STEP 1: Create a Lifeline draft**

First decide how you are going to create your Lifeline. For example will you do it electronically on your computer in WORD or some other software (advantage: easy editing, unlimited length, graphics and photos can be imported, etc.). Or, will you do it by hand on a legal sized piece of paper.

Second, lay out your Lifeline graphically from *birth* to today's date. Use any increments you want; they do not even need to be equal (for example 1 inch = 10 years, or 1 page = 10 years).

Third, fill in the easy things first: birth (where and when), family (including birthdates of siblings), schools attended, degrees earned, jobs, marriage/divorce, children (birthdates), pets, deaths (dates).

**STEP 2: Create a Second Lifeline draft**

Now begin adding more details about yourself, the details that truly define you as unique. These could include major life accomplishments, career-related and/or personal, important experiences, leisure pursuits (memorable vacations, trips to Europe, climbing Mt. Whitney), skills acquired or developed, significant creations (e.g., cookbook, antique car restoration, photo essay, publication, video), important purchases (special car or motorcycle, Wolf range, swimming pool, diamond jewelry). Also consider adding photographs and other visual memories to your Lifeline.

**STEP 3: Create a Third Lifeline draft**

The third draft is by far the most difficult because you move from a purely narrative role to an evaluative one. In this step you will add another layer of detail about yourself—what do you know, when did you know it, what have you learned about your life, what brings you the greatest joy and sorrow, what life observations are worthy of sharing with others? This probably cannot be accomplished in one session because the task demands deep thinking and critical reflection, take the time you need to work on Step 3. Try to pinpoint these details along your Lifeline where they seem to best fit.

