

**Book Review** – *Mentoring Your Memoir*, Goldie Alexander, self published, Melbourne VIC, 2010 ISBN 978-0-9803572-1-9 paperback, 271pp E-book option See [www.goldiealexander.com](http://www.goldiealexander.com) for other books, short stories and articles Goldie has written for adults and young children.

It's funny how our paths cross with various people in our lives. My own current focus on tidying up my draft family histories for publication, and my recent contact with Hazel Edwards author of *How to Write a Non Boring Family History* (see my review of this book at [www.shaunahicks.com.au/resources](http://www.shaunahicks.com.au/resources)) led me to meet Goldie and to learn about her book *Mentoring Your Memoir* and her classes on the same topic. I can only hope that I have that much energy and enthusiasm when I get to Goldie's age.

That energy and enthusiasm also comes through in her book *Mentoring Your Memoir* and I can imagine all the people who attend a class going home inspired and ready to start their own memoirs. The layout of the book is essentially chronological with an Introduction looking at overcoming procrastination. There are some practical tips and advice and I really should 'just do it'! But for now I really should get on with this review.

There are four parts with Part 1 addressing childhood years 1936-1943 and as Goldie uses her own life experiences as examples, this has dictated her timeframes. It is easy for the reader to insert their own timeframe and places. Also in Part 1, she talks about setting yourself up and research – all practical advice for people who have probably never written or researched before.

Part 2 deals with Adolescence 1944-1954 and also covers increasing your readership, problems, openings, controversy, creating characters, and fiction, non-fiction and fact. Although Goldie is writing about autobiographical writing, a lot of what she talks about is also relevant to anyone writing a family history.

Part 3 is titled Young Woman, Young Wife 1955-1958 and here she goes into detail about plotting, structure and shaping your story. I think the best way to get the most out of her book is to read it through from cover to cover and then go back and look at the various parts as you need to.

Part 4 is Young Wife, Young Mother 1959-1967 and in this part Goldie looks at using dialogue, point of view, titles, second drafts or more and endings. She concludes by discussing whether to publish or not and acknowledgements are at the end.

An interesting sideline for me was that Goldie is two years younger than my mother, and I was thinking about my own mother's life as I read all about Goldie's life in the various examples she gave to demonstrate the points she was making in each part. In fact I got more hooked on reading Goldie's story and found myself skipping over the sections where she used examples from her other books.

As a self published book it could have been more tightly edited and there are a few typos here and there but overall its real value is that it actually inspires you to write about your own life. (NB since originally doing this review, there has been another print run, and the typos fixed). Goldie's own story is not that unusual for a woman born in Melbourne just before World War 2. Her parents were Polish immigrants to Australia after World War 1 and this adds a cultural diversity to her story.

I suspect most of us might think our own lives are too boring or non eventful to write about but wouldn't it be a great gift for future grandchildren or great grandchildren. I was only young when one of my grandmothers's died and I would love to have known about how she grew up in Charters Towers and met my grandfather and so on. As a family historian, I am now trying to recreate their lives so that I can get to know them more – how much better would I know them if they had written out their own memoirs!

Of course, this also means that I should really think about writing my own memoirs (as well as publishing those draft family histories) and I wonder if somewhere back in time, I unconsciously made a decision to document my own life. Since 1982 I have kept scrapbooks of all my 'appearances' in newspapers, conferences, speaking engagements, and other life highlights and there are currently 13 scrapbooks. Having this kind of reference material will assist me in recalling my life, but if you don't have diaries or scrapbooks, Goldie's *Mentoring Your Memoir* will help you recall those memories and help you get started in writing them down. Good luck!

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