

### Prompts for home use

1. Quickly jot down words or phrases in answer to any of the following questions:

- What physical characteristic are you proud to pass on?
- What or whom did you leave behind?
- What are you sorry you never did?
- Where were you on important days in history?
- Of which accomplishments are you the most proud?
- What was taboo in your childhood? Adolescence? Career? Marriage?
- Whom have you met briefly and never forgotten?
- What do you have too much of?
- When did you know you were in trouble?
- When did you know you'd be OK?

Working with those answers that feel most promising in terms of the details that you remember, write for 15-20 minutes on the topic.

2. Think of a family story you have told or heard told many times. What do you remember? What have you already told, or been told, about the event(s)? Write the story succinctly.

Now, imagine you are talking to a trusted close friend or relative. Write down your thoughts about the story as if talking it over. Do you think it's true as told? What was left out? What does it say about the people involved? What does it say about you?

3. Think of an episode of joy, shame, or fear. Jot down a few words summarizing the event—*almost drowning at Newport Beach*, say, or *the birth of my first grandchild*.

Now, answer the following questions for the event:

- What did you feel against your face? Hands? Skin?
- What were you wearing?
- What could you taste?
- What time of day was it? Describe the light.
- What did you smell?
- What could you hear?

Using concrete details, spend 15 minutes writing about the moment without “telling” the feeling.

4. Make a list of topics about which you feel passionate. What do you argue about, think about, want to change? What happened in your life to form these opinions?
5. What stories haunt you?
6. Tell the story of a family vacation.
7. Write about mealtimes in your family (or another group you regularly ate with over a long period of time).
8. Write about your life in a particular year, making references to the culture that entered your daily life (music, radio or TV shows, food fads, fashion, movies, arts, etc).
9. Describe a former job. Include coworkers, details of the work itself, its relationship to the world at large, how you felt about it.