

GIFTING YOUR STORIES

*There's a way through the woods
and I'll show you.*





Have you ever thought of writing down your memories?

Making a record of the streets you've walked, the houses you've lived in, the people, places, and experiences that have been important to you?

HERE IS AN ONLINE CREATIVE WRITING COURSE TO HELP YOU DEVELOP A COLLECTION OF STORIES AND PERSONAL MEMORIES THAT YOU CAN HAND ON TO CHILDREN, FAMILY, FRIENDS AND POSTERITY.

Created and facilitated by Grant Hindin Miller (creative-writing teacher, author, composer, and filmscript-writer), this course has been successfully offered at Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand, for the last fifteen years.

As your personal tutor, Grant will guide you through a writing process to help you recall your childhood, your home and family, the characters you've known, and those life experiences that you would like to preserve.

At the end of the course you can make an engaging booklet as a gift for your family and friends to treasure and prize.

Writing memories is also a gift for your mind, a gift for your heart, a gift for your soul, and a gift for others.

“Everyone is talented, original, and has something important to say.”

/BRENDA UELAND

GRANT SAYS :

“On Feb 22nd 2011, the second Christchurch earthquake closed Canterbury University, curtailing my writing courses for at least six months. So I decided to offer a writing course online.

I am offering my most popular course, 'Gifting Your Stories', an imaginative writing adventure designed to help you explore and record your own life.

People say of mothers and fathers, of grandmothers and grandfathers: “I wish she'd written down her memories, or, I wish he'd written about his life.” **Gifting Your Stories** is about writing down those memories and reflections. It will help you write about your life. People think 'I'll get around to it one day,' but days turn into decades and fragile memories are taken by the wind and are lost forever. Here is a way to begin. A way to ensure that your stories are preserved.

Revisiting family, childhood, and personal life-experiences can be touching, enlightening, therapeutic, and comical. It's a great pleasure to view your life as a continuous canvas, and to record your thoughts and impressions. You can focus on whatever period or stages of your life that you choose.”



How does it work?

There are eight carefully designed assignments that I will send to you. I become your personal mentor. I send you the first assignment. You read it, complete the exercises, and then send (by email or post) what you've written back to me for a response.

I will read through your work, make any helpful comments and suggestions, and return my responses to you with the next assignment. You will write, develop, and learn as you go.

THE COURSE HAS FOUR MAIN GOALS:

- » To produce a body of written memories (there are numerous small exercises and two extended writing exercises with each assignment).
- » To improve your writing skills (students also say the course enhances the way they read and increases their appreciation of the art of writing).
- » To enrich your life and give you pleasure. Writing memories is not only emotionally and spiritually therapeutic but also offers a physical benefit. (The Auckland Medical School has been able to demonstrate that the act of recording memories boosts the body's immune system – it's a health-giving exercise – and, mysteriously, it doesn't matter if the recalled experiences are positive or negative.)
- » The course is also designed to give you confidence, and the discipline, to keep writing after its completion.

How much is this going to cost ?

For those living outside New Zealand:

The total cost is US or Australian \$395 (for the online course) and will be offered at this price until Dec 31st, 2011. The pound sterling price is £249; or €295. Contact Grant at granthm@paradise.net.nz to enroll.

If you don't have access to a computer and want paper assignments (rather than working online) then add \$40 to cover the cost of postage and photocopying.

For those living in New Zealand :

The same prices apply with the addition of GST.

Payment can be made through Paypal or by cheque to:

Grant Hindin Miller
117 Grahams Rd
Burnside
Christchurch 8053
New Zealand

Here's a unique opportunity to treat yourself to a creative, rewarding, and valuable life experience.

STUDENTS OF THIS COURSE HAVE SAID :

"Richly rewarding."

"Excellent motivation, guidance, and information. Loved it."

"Valuable writing skills and guidance."

"It really made me recall things of the past."

"Stimulated so many memories and promoted writing."

"Adored and enjoyed every moment. Thank-you."



Writing excerpts from students of the course:

"We were always shifting house. I attended ten different schools as a youngster, and in between houses mother shifted furniture constantly. Mother didn't spring-clean : 'Only dirty people need to spring-clean'.

She did do most of the painting and wall-papering - from burning off outside paint, to varnish-work indoors. Our home smelt of paint and varnish, whereas my friends' homes smelt of baking and perfume. Mother didn't believe in perfume, although Grandma used lavender water: 'Only people who didn't wash needed perfume'."

/ROBYN

"When I was a little girl I first saw my father shoe a horse. On the farm there was a shed in the yard which contained a forge. He never had any training as a farrier, but it was necessary for my father to have this skill to be able to care for the horses in his stable. I came upon him when I was allowed to wander around the yard. There stood the stables, the shearing shed and the forge.

He had built the forge up by blowing the fire with large bellows. In it he had put his tools of trade. He seemed brave to me when he lifted up one of the horse's hoofs and after paring, singed it, and clamped on the sizzling hot horse-shoe. Next he neatly tamped on the nails which attached the shoe. He proceeded to deal with the other three hoofs and the job was complete."

/JOAN

"After the Saturday matinee we'd rush out of the movie, gallop down Hauraki St with our thumbs up, our hands shooting finger-guns. We'd duck behind lamp-posts and hide in hedges, arms outstretched like rifles, and shoot at each other.

I was brilliant at dying. I'd stagger back, slow motion, shifting weight from one foot to the other, trying to keep my balance, grasping at my chest, my body plugged with lead, then I'd reel and turn, groan and twist, waver, stumble, and finally peel inward, my mouth forming a tortured 'O'. There'd be one last sustained spasm before I'd collapse; frozen on the ground for ten seconds.

Sometimes we'd gather in Chelsea Bush and make huts among the pine-trees. In autumn we'd collect sacks of dry cones, load them on trolleys, and drag them a mile up the road to sell around the neighbourhood. One day we clambered up high wooden backsteps with a full sack. A woman came to the door with a fag out of her mouth.

'How much?' she asked.

'A shilling,' we said.

'I'll give you a tanner.' Our shoulders dropped. Half the amount. She was English.

The sacks were heavy. It wouldn't give us an ice-cream but we'd get a bag of winegums to share.

'Come on I haven't got all day.'

We looked at each other.

'Aw ... alright,' we said. "

/LEROY

"I had questioned Paul closely when he came back from looking over the farm.

'Is it on the power ? Has it got a flush toilet or is it a long-drop down the back path. What about the stove ? Is it a coal range ? The list of questions was endless.

'Crikes, Shirl, of course it's on the power and has an inside toilet. And no, it hasn't got a coal-range. They wouldn't advertise it as fully modernized if it had, would they ?'

To this city-slicker the West Coast was New Zealand's equivalent of the American Wild West. I wasn't taking any chances.

We left Christchurch on a warm norwestery November morning. Crossing over the Main Divide the weather deteriorated rapidly and the further west we went the worse it got. Eventually we reached Westport and started heading north. By now it was raining heavily and the windscreen wipers on the small car had trouble keeping up. There were very few houses to be seen along the way, just sodden paddocks with clumps of gorse and scrub rising from amidst the sheets of water that covered the ground.

'We're almost there, Shirl,' Paul said, as we turned off down a gravel road.

We passed a modern house and my spirits lifted.

'It's not going to be as bad as I feared.'

My heart was in my stomach as we drove in through the gate and up the drive. As we pulled up in front of the house my eyes widened in disbelief. Sitting forlornly in the middle of the paddock was this rectangular iron box. A narrow

path led to the front door. There was no garage, no drive, no gate and no fences. With growing apprehension I opened the car-door to get out. The rain slashed across our faces as, picking up the children, we dashed to the back door. The water squelched up through our thin summer sandals.

The smell hit you as you opened the door. An earthy animal smell, it was a mixture of dogs, pigs, cows, dung, and sour milk. It crawled up your nostrils permeating your being. It seeped throughout the house clinging to our clothes, following us everywhere.

Our furniture was piled up in the middle of the kitchen and the truck driver was sitting in a chair waiting for us. He got up as we walked in.

'That'll be sixty-nine pounds,' he said.

'Can you send us an account ?' Paul asked.

'No, you have to pay up now or I'll load it back into the van and take it back to Christchurch.'

We looked at each other in dismay. We had exactly seventy-nine pounds in the bank and that had to last us until we got our first cream cheque the following month. Reluctantly I reached for the cheque-book.

As the van driver left I wondered how on earth we would manage.


Paul has often said, 'If there'd been a bus going back to Christchurch that day Shirl would have been on it.'

How true."

/SHIRLEY

New Zealander Grant Hindin Miller has authored three books ('The Dream Monger', 'Estralita', 'The Song of the Nightingale'). He has written the scripts of three feature films ('Starlight Hotel' based on his own novel 'The Dream Monger'; 'A Soldier's Tale' based on an MK Joseph novel; and 'Chunuk Bair' based on the play 'Once on Chunuk Bair' by Maurice Shadbolt). He has recently written a stage-musical 'The Happy Prince' (based on the short story of the same name by Oscar Wilde); and he has composed the lyrics and music of six CDs of original songs.

Grant has taught Creative Writing classes at Canterbury University for fifteen years.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT GRANT:
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