**Writing Memoir: From Free Write to Manuscript**

** A person wearing glasses and smiling at the camera

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Village Santa Cruz County member Marlene Anne Bumgarner, author of *Back to the Land in Silicon Valley*, recently presented to our Writing Group, strategies on writing about our lives.  
  
The presentation was very informative and I asked Marlene if she’d be willing to share her ideas and process in our newsletter, for those who missed the presentation.

from Marlene: ‘Mary Howe asked me to share some of the elements of our Zoom memoir-writing workshop last week. Here, in a nutshell, is my presentation:

* Dedicate a journal just for memoir – lines for writing; blank pages for sketching and mind-mapping
* Start anywhere in your life – tell a story just like you would for a grandchild
* Free-write first – don’t censor yourself – then write for an hour
* The physical process of writing connects your hand directly with your creative brain.
* Once you have a collection of stories, begin to organize them
* What is your theme? (Coming of age; Dealing with loss; Determination; Discrimination; Friendship)
* Develop a story arc – study fiction -- write like a novelist
* Decide on structure – chronological or thematic; stream of consciousness
* NOW you can think about your audience, research details, start to muse a bit

Five Elements of an Effective Memoir

* A focused theme. Identify an overarching theme, takeaway lesson, or message for your readers, and thread it through all the stories
* Conflict. ...We all like a bad guy
* A personal writing style. ... use supporting stories and details to bring your stories to life
* Use storytelling elements. ... First person, memory, musing, defining moments
* Tell the truth – memory is fallible – do your research, check with others who were there

**For more ideas about writing memoir, visit my blog at**[***http://www.marlenebumgarner.com***](http://www.marlenebumgarner.com/)**after Nov 1.’**