 **How to get started**

 **“Everyone has a good story to tell … and it is up to you to share yours!”**

We all have great family tales just waiting to be written and shared. Every family has a favorite that is repeated so often, almost every relative has a version. The written story is the version that will live on. There are as many reasons to write as there are writers. The most important reason is the one that motivates you to write. The main thing to do is WRITE!

W – Write down your first story!

R – Read aloud your first draft and read books by others.

I – Investigate the facts and background of your story.

T – Talk with others familiar with your story.

E – Edit and Enjoy.

**Write** the tale that you have heard or told a hundred times as your first story. It will be the one that will come most easily as you begin. Put pencil to paper or fingers to keyboard and just write. It can be just a page or two. Don’t worry about syntax or structure or chronological order – that will come later. Your first draft should focus on content. Don’t judge your material, just write it.

**Read** your story aloud to yourself and you will discover confusing phrases and items your reader may need explained. You may wish to read books on the craft of writing. Read books in your genre, on topics similar to the experiences you wish to write about. For instance, you may wish to read a book about farm life or about military service similar to yours.

**Investigate** your story background; revisit the location where events happened if possible. Your local library may have some information. Often a small detail can enrich your story. Explore your family genealogy – where did your family come from? You may find surprising new details. Seeing an old picture may jog your memory.

**Talk** with others, especially family members, about your story. They will have a different perspective and additional details. You will find older relatives, even if they have short-term memory issues, are likely to have excellent long-term memories. Remember, it is always author’s choice - you choose to incorporate their details or not. As you review your story with others, you will likely think of additional facts yourself. For feedback on your writing join a critique group and find writing workshops.

**Edit** your story until you are satisfied with it. Put in more details such as description of people, and places – think of the five senses and include as many as possible (show don’t tell). Add in dialog to bring the people in the story to life and literally give voice to your characters. Enjoy sharing your story with other friends and family.

Repeat. Now start your next story.