



Memoirs - and an upcoming author presentation

We have an in-person event coming up this month. Author Daniel Trinklein who grew up in Frankenmuth and has written a new memoir about his and his brothers' childhood here in the 1950's and 60's, will be here Saturday, July 25. This will be held outdoors at Churchgrove Park from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. (Look for additional details on the Library's website and Facebook page.) Trinklein's book, **An Age of Brotherhood**, can be purchased at the event or in advance for those who want to have a signed copy. Library Director Pamela Williams said, "We are excited to host this event in a way that acknowledges social distancing practices but also allows patrons to enjoy some return to normal by welcoming a writer."

We also have available a handful of memoirs new this month that patrons can check out. It's worth a minute to consider the various forms of this kind of writing.

Autobiographies, diaries, journals, creative non-fiction, and memoirs have a lot in common, namely someone telling his or her own story. The distinctions among these is sometimes pretty fine (or non-existent), but the term the author uses also sets up slightly different reader expectations.

For example, an autobiography is often a comprehensive book about one's life done when the writer is in his later years. Autobiographies also tend to be about people most of us have heard of. But as we'll see, these terms seep into one another.

Thus, the **Diary of Anne Frank** is one of the most famous books but is also squarely classified as an autobiography, perhaps to lend it the historical weight it deserves. And of course, the author had nothing to do with what it was called. She kept a diary. But Nelson Mandela's **Long Walk to Freedom** is always considered an autobiography and is in fact comprehensive.

But more recent books by or, in one case, about famous people, namely **Barbara Bush** and **Michelle Obama**, either are called or feel almost like memoirs. Memoirs tend to be more selective, not obligating the author to tell all, but instead choose a thematic focus. "Memoir" is also a clear indicator that the writer's memories are good enough in terms of research. But in Bush's case, her complete cooperation with author Suzanne Page led to a detailed friendly book that felt as much like a memoir as a biography can. These are fluid terms.

Creative non-fiction is the newest term for a memoir, embraced by some and rejected by others. The term represents an acknowledgement that any memoir represents the memory

of the writer which can be flawed and incomplete. And that's ok. (Read: "Don't sue me for what I remember." After all, others are always mentioned.)

Pam especially likes the new memoir by Alisha Keys, **More Myself**. One reviewer has described this book as part narrative and part documentary – so maybe a documentary about your own life is also an autobiography.

Memoirs can be put together after the fact in a completely different format. The new book **The Lost Memoir** by famous baseball player **Lou Gehrig** takes a series of articles Gehrig wrote for syndicated publication in 1927 and, for the first time, publishes those articles as a rags to riches book. Gehrig died of ALS fourteen years later and 80 years beyond that, we can read the freshly compiled book. Sports figures often make for good stories, and I'd bet this would be an easy and interesting read.

Another new memoir out this month is Madeleine Albright's **A Twenty-first Century Memoir** focusing largely on her career as a diplomat and the first woman U.S. Secretary of State. The New Yorker characterizes it as "riveting, funny and inspiring."

But memoirs by non-famous people can become big. A good example of that is the writing of David Sedaris. Sedaris writes diaries and better yet, he keeps them – all of them. He even keeps them in an organized way. He then has a literal lifetime of material to draw on to create books from his diaries that people love to read. He is famous now as an essayist. His witty and touching writing about ordinary life is well worth reading. A good one to start with is **Me Talk Pretty One Day**. The library owns nine Sedaris books.

My granddaughter, age 11, just bought an old-fashioned paper diary, complete with lock. And this is exactly how it starts. Her brothers might think she's dabbling in creative non-fiction (should they figure out the combination lock), but I'm sure she's sure that's the way it all happened on any particular day or week. None of us knows whether we have a David Sedaris level writer in us unless we pick up that first diary and keep writing.

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