

# THE Transylvania TIMES

Sunday, December 29, 2024

## **New Year, New Beginning, New Chapter**

By Daphne Larkin



**A Transylvania County Library memoir writing class toasts memoir writing in the New Year with instructor Daphne Larkin (center front).**

If writing about your life has been a long simmering goal, New Year's Day is a fortuitous time to pick up your pen and paper. Since Julius Caesar proclaimed January the beginning of the year and named the month after Janus, the Roman god with two faces who could see in all directions, January has been the month to look forward and backward. Which is exactly what you will do when you look back on your life and write it forward.

To rev up your inner Janus, you might consider following the Danish tradition of opening the doors on Dec. 31 to let the old year out and then jumping from a stairway the next day to let the New Year in.

It might be easier, however, to just begin scribbling down some story ideas, but be sure to do this on January 1. According to the ancient belief, what you do on the first day of the New Year foretells what you will do for the rest of it. Tap into the cooperation of the cosmos and leap into an auspicious future by beginning your memoir on the first day of 2025!

## **Let The Fates Conspire to Help**

For those of you who have dreamed of writing your memoir, but have hesitated, ask yourself if not now, when? In the "The Alchemist," the legendary novel about following one's dreams, author Paulo Coelho wrote: "People are capable, at any time in their lives, of doing what they dream of." To realize your dream, he notes that you must make the decision to pursue it and dive "into a strong current" that will carry you there.

## **What's Your Story?**

What will you write about? Memoirs cover everything from childhood, to coming of age, family and marriage, living abroad, an unusual experience, poverty, mental illness, alcoholism, death and more.

The subjects are endless. Consider what several of my memoir writing students are working on. Forty-two-year-old Lynn Smith is writing a book about "living on the run during childhood." Retired Navy pediatrician Gerry Kilpatrick is covering a variety of subjects from boyhood fishing stories to serving as an MD during the Vietnam War. Vicki Hollis is exploring how her childhood led her to becoming a therapist.

## **To Launch Your Dream, Take a Walk!**

You've decided to go for it, you will write about your life. But how to begin, you may ask? One of the best ways I know is to take a walk. Not just any walk, but a solitary one on a quiet street or on a path in the woods. Before you leave, be sure to tuck a small notepad (2 by 3 inches) and a pen in your jacket pocket.

As you stroll along, take in the beauty all around you. Breathe in our fresh mountain air, note the sound of a running creek or waterfall, listen to a birdsong and allow yourself to think of the life behind you and the one ahead of you. But don't think too hard! Let your ideas float freely so you can experience what meditation experts call "flow state."

Once you do that, ideas about what to write about will begin to magically arrive. When they start coming, stop walking, dig out your pen and notepad and jot those ideas down before they fly away into the land of lost dreams.

Then start walking again until the next idea comes. Repeat. In 20 to 30 minutes, you'll have so many ideas that you'll want to rush back home, head to your computer and begin writing.

Rooted in the Buddhist tradition, a walking meditation can be a game changer for writers. For me, a silent, solitary walk is a much quicker way to generate ideas than sitting in front of a computer waiting for them to arrive.

## **Turn Your Life into Gold**

Like the ancient alchemists turned metal into gold, why not summon your own alchemy and write about your life? What better way to usher in 2025 than to follow your dream to write a memoir in the New Year and claim a new beginning, a new chapter and a new you?

*Daphne Larkin is an award-winning book author, columnist and magazine writer. Her next memoir writing class will be held at the Transylvania County Library on Thursdays from 3 to 5 p.m. beginning March 27 through May 22. For more information, contact Larkin at [daphne@daphnelarkin.com](mailto:daphne@daphnelarkin.com).*