

# Telling Your Story

By Ryan Helfenbein

“Will you remember me in a week, in a month or in a year?”

“Why of course,”

“Knock Knock?”

“Who’s there?”

That might be the one concern many of us have regarding generations to come. Will they remember me? Or better yet, how will they remember me?

How do I write an obituary? First, let’s change the word obituary to what I’d refer to as a life history. Leaving a legacy is important for us all, but leaving an explanation of that legacy is much more beneficial to those left behind and generations to come. We often find the write-ups in the newspaper answering a series of questions: Born on, died on, went to school at and married on. And the list just keeps going. But do these questions really explain the life of someone? Better yet, does the personality come through in simply answering questions or should we look at this differently? Perhaps we need to eliminate the idea of listing facts of an individual, and instead look at writing about the highlights of a life lived with the personality of that individual shining through.

The best life history is autobiographical, written by the person who lived the life being remembered, and well in advance. Second, and most commonly, is a collective effort from close family and friends collaborating over the ways they were touched through the life journey of the individual being remembered. There should be no limit on how long or short, what should or should not be included, who is mentioned or not and most importantly not limited to the answering of a few questions. The recording of a life has no limitations and should shine with personality of that individual versus a list of facts that simply is no different from another person other than a few dates. Technology today allows modern undertakers to showcase the individual’s full life history for all to find with no limitations on words or lines like a newspaper would. In addition, photos and background images can be attached to what a modern undertaker can provide to enhance the personality of the life history created.

A great example of what I mean was recently published in March of 2019. See if you can pick out the personality of this individual in the first two lines alone: “*Tim Schrandt (Lynyrd) made his last inappropriate comment on March 29, 2019. If you are wondering if you may have ever met him, you didn’t – because you WOULD remember.*” With just those first two lines, and there

was much more to follow, future generations will know that their friend and relative was quite a character and full of personality! Now if a typical mortician would have written that opening line, it would most likely have been written like so: “*Schrandt, Tim (Spillville) passed away on March 29 of cancer. He was 63.*” Major difference between the two, right? The first sentence alone explained the personality behind the individual and focused on a life lived versus the reality of his passing.

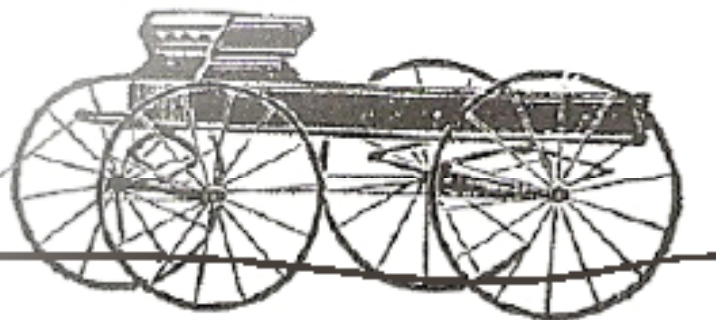
Everyone that read that life history of Mr. Schrandt knew his personality, what he must have been like and that he truly lived life to the fullest. The entire write-up read just like that too! How he will be remembered for “*always wearing his shirts unbuttoned three quarters down*” and my personal favorite, that “*...he did not lose his battle to cancer, that cancer departed when he did, so technically it was a tie.*” What truly hits home is the fact that out of this life history alone his family will receive the strongest therapy available – an opening for friends, family and acquaintances to freely share memories of his glowing personality.

What if the personality is a bit softer? Not a problem. That in itself is the message to portray in a life history. “*At the age of 63, Sally left this world peacefully, at her home, overlooking her garden, surrounded by family, to be with her savior.*” This tells us that Sally was a peaceful person, with strong faith and a love for gardening and family. You can almost picture the person being in front of you.

Take the time now to simply list the highs and lows in life, stories that showcase your personality and list the memories that stood out. Each of us has a story to tell, and all of us have affected someone else at some point in our lifetimes, whether we knew it or not. Life histories are created to allow an avenue of therapy for all to be a part of and most importantly provide a record of a personality so that one is never forgotten.

*Ryan, who is owner, supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers area residents solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be contacted at 410.897.4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com*

## We each have a story to tell...



Persistence is so often the key to success!