

Journaling preserves family history, writer says

Plainfield author uses book at her workshop to guide storytelling

By Denise M. Baran-Unland
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD NEWS

Since childhood, Kim Jackson has kept a diary of one form or another. But not until her mother died more than a decade ago did Jackson ever consider writing the story of her own life.

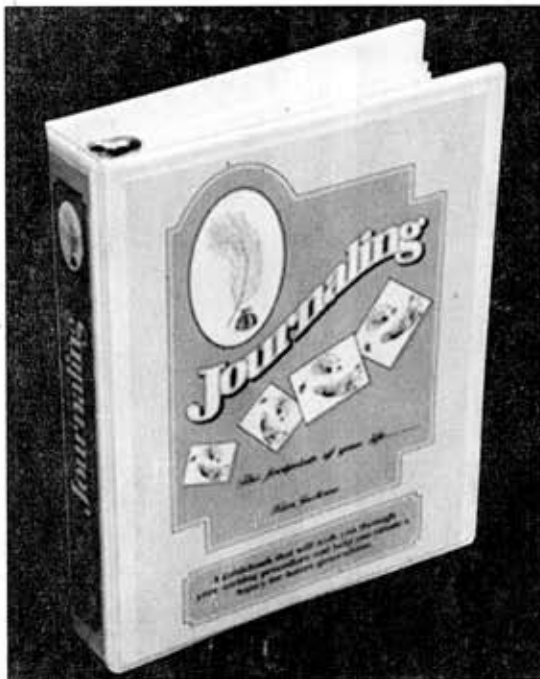
"Even though we had a good relationship and talked a lot, after her death I found out a lot of things about her I never did ask or thought about asking, and I didn't want to do that to my children," said Jackson, 52, of Plainfield. "It's a legacy for them and for your grandchildren so they will know the history about your family and what you did in your life."



Jackson

Her first book, "Journaling, the footprints of your life," is spiral-bound and divided into several sections to make it easier for the writer to add, delete and correct the stories contained within it.

Inspirational sayings at the beginning of each section encourage reflection, while a list of nearly 500 simple, yet thought-provoking questions stir the writer's memory and allow the words to flow onto the page.



Kim Jackson says her book, "Journaling, the footprints of your life," "... is not about making money. It's about helping people tell their life story."

For instance, a person may know to write about family traditions and travels, but may not consider expounding on whether or not he likes crowds, had bad habits — such as nail biting or thumb sucking — in childhood and whether or

not he eats breakfast in the morning.

Not every question will apply to every writer, although many of them are open-ended enough to relate to a broad audience. An individual may never have had biological children, but may have parented pets or mentored a child in need. "An answer to one question may bring other stories to mind," Jackson said.

Although the self-published "Journaling" has been available to the public only since the end of September, Jackson has used it as the official text at the ongoing journaling workshop that she facilitates at Leeza's Place at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet.

"I wanted to be sure the book worked with a lot of people before putting it on the market," Jackson said. "This is not about making money. It's about helping people tell their life story."

This is not Jackson's first creative attempt or her initial heritage-related project. For 25 years, this former model, graphic designer and school secretary made commemorative photo ornaments for friends and organizations.

"The year my mother died the whole Christmas tree was decorated with ornaments of family members," Jackson said. Although she still makes some ornaments each year, she has found much more satisfaction in journaling. She hopes her book "Journaling" helps others who have had that same experience.

"Many people say they don't have time to do it, but I don't believe that. If we want to do something badly enough, we will make time for it," Jackson said. "You can write during that cup of coffee in the morning or cut off that TV program

Benefits of journaling

In addition to strengthening memory and leaving a personal history for one's family, regular journaling may also:

- Strengthen the immune cells known as T-lymphocytes, said University of Texas at Austin psychologist, researcher and author Dr. James W. Pennebaker.
- Decrease the symptoms of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Help writers gain knowledge of themselves, such as what makes them feel happy and confident and about what people and situations to avoid.
- Reduce stress by releasing the intensity of feelings.
- Solve problems more effectively.
- Lead to the resolution of disagreements by gaining a perspective of another person's point of view.

From www.psychcentral.com

half an hour earlier. Or keep the book by your side and write during commercials. Make use of every minute of time you have available."

"Journaling" is available from www.journalyourlife.com or can be ordered from Off the Press, LLC, 16041 S. Lincoln Highway, Plainfield, (815) 436-1010. For more information about the book or the author, call (815) 254-6060.