

Childhood, Home & Neighbourhood

A guide for recovering the sensory world around a childhood instead of producing only dates.

This is preparation, not homework. You do not need complete dates, perfect memory, or a box of scanned records. Circle what helps. Leave the rest. Uncertainty is part of an honest history.

Before we speak

- Sketch the rooms of the home from memory.
- List neighbours, shops, schools, streets, smells, sounds and routines.
- Remember what happened before school and after supper.
- Think about rules: what children could do, could not do, and did anyway.

Gather only if it is easy

- House or street photographs
- School photographs and report cards
- Maps, addresses or old directories
- Objects still kept from childhood

Prompts worth thinking about

- What was the first thing you heard in the morning?
- Where did everybody sit?
- What did a nickel, shilling or dollar buy?
- Where were you forbidden to go?
- What place disappeared that you still miss?

Set your boundaries first

Before the interview, decide what may be explored, what should be handled carefully, and what is off limits. You can change those boundaries later. A useful history does not require surrendering privacy.

After the first conversation

No quotation is given before the first conversation. If the project is a fit, use the Story Mixer to show the balance you want - emotional depth, humour, intimacy, historical context, voice and boundaries. I then assess the actual scope and normally send a written quotation within 24 hours.

Mark E. Paull / Menachem Elyah Paull | Writer & independent researcher | markpaull56@gmail.com | +1 438 346 2476

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