

1. What prompted you to write *A Soldier's Daughter*? What is it about and where are you in the writing publishing process?

I have always written nonfiction and believe the adage "write what you know." I know my life. *A Soldier's Daughter* has taken shape over the past thirty years. It began as therapy, but developed into a cultural history of what it was like for me growing up military during the Cold War era. After taking memoir writing workshops with Patricia Charpentier, I gathered my various diary and journal writings and, with Patricia's help, organized them into a cohesive story line. Today, I am in the final rewrite stage with the help of a professional editor.

2. How does writing this book compare to writing *Unsung Hero*?

Unsung Hero is a biography/memoir/tribute to my father. After his death in 2009, my brother and I decided we wanted to research his military career, add family stories I had been collecting, and Dad's memoir about his life as a Prisoner Of War during WWII. Researching and collaborating on writing brought my brother and me closer together. At first we wanted only to share the book with family and close friends, but after self publishing with the company I chose became expensive, it was decided to market the book to a wider audience. *A Soldier's Daughter* is being written solely by myself, with help from my writer's critique group and, of course, Patricia Charpentier's company. Using Patricia has been most fulfilling, less stressful, and, hopefully, less expensive.

3. What challenges have you faced in the writing and publishing process? How did you overcome the challenges?

The first and possibly the most difficult was overcoming the thought, "Why would anyone be interested in what I write?" After mulling this over for a while, I decided to just write whatever came to mind for myself and worry about what to do with it later. Once I realized how much I enjoyed the act of writing, I joined like minded writers to hone my craft. With their encouragement, I researched self-publishing companies, and after selecting one, began the fight with myself to find money for my book's publication. Now the fun began—dealing with the company. Contracts were signed without full comprehension. Life interfered with personal deadlines and the process lingered too long. The company resource people dealt

with only one aspect of the process, so answers to my questions often changed. Frustration mounted. More than once, I toyed with chucking the entire program and just eating my monetary losses.

With the support of my writing friends and family, I managed to overcome these difficulties by setting a specific amount of time every day for writing without interruption. As I completed research using Google, and various websites of interest to the subject, I immediately wrote about that topic and saved it in folders on my computer for later organization. Thinking that the first draft would be enough, I realized, after some time, that rewriting is necessary and word selection important and that getting feedback one drip at a time is more helpful than digesting the entire manuscript.

As I grew in this endeavor, it became obvious to me that a professional editor could give suggestions from a prospective not cluttered with already knowing the story. This, of course, entails more research and money. Questions need answers: How many pages?, What type of interior design?, Who will create the cover? Where can I find someone to give a recommendation before publication? What photos and how many and where should they be placed? How will the book be marketed? Too many decisions, but they do not have to be made all at once, and they are not etched in stone. I gave myself permission to take my work one step at a time, and to commit to writing or researching every day for a specific amount of time.

4. What encouragement can you offer to others who want to write their life stories?

Everyone has a story. Even those of us who think we have led normal, humdrum lives with nothing spectacular, have something to say—why not write it or record it in some way? When we are gone, our stories go with us. Future generations lose the ability to learn from our challenges and their solutions. Technology today presents many opportunities for this recording—tape recordings, YouTube, even Facebook and Twitter. There are many local and national writing organizations whose goal is to help people rid themselves of doubt, pick up a pencil, or their iPad, and begin writing. My newly formed

company Peggy Best Memoirs and my website www.peggybest.com has been designed to do just that.

5. What is Patricia doing to help you in this process, and why did you come to choose to work with her?

I attended several workshops with Patricia and read her newsletter at Writing Your Life. I became interested in her work, purchased her book, and then asked, during one of the workshops, if she could help me kick start my personal story. "I'd love to," she said. "Contact my assistant." I did, and immediately received feedback. We commiserated over the frustration I had using the company I chose for my first book. Patricia's personal interest in my life and the help she could give in sharing it in book form impressed me. She has personally read the entire script and chose the correct editor to work directly with me chapter by chapter. Every month, we share a video or audio conference. My writing has improved. I've learned a great deal, and consider her my mentor.