

How Stories Want to Be Found

How Writing My Own Story
and Listening to Others
Revealed The One Memory at a Time
Guided Storytelling Methodology©

A JOURNEY
OF CURIOSITY,
OBSERVATION,
COMPASSION,
AND DISCOVERY—
**ONE MEMORY
AT A TIME.**

Everyone
has a story.
Every story
deserves to
be remembered.



TONY J. HEBERT

CREATOR OF THE ONE MEMORY AT A TIME
GUIDED STORYTELLING METHODOLOGY©

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This book is the original work of the author, Tony Hebert. The concepts, methodology, observations, structure, examples, conclusions, and written content presented in this book are the result of the author's own research, experience, reflection, and creative work.

To prepare this manuscript, the author used commonly available writing and publishing tools, including Microsoft Word, Grammarly®, ProWritingAid®, and artificial intelligence (AI) applications. These tools assisted with editing, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, readability, brainstorming, and creating conceptual graphic illustrations based on ideas and descriptions the author developed.

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Just as a camera does not create a landscape, and a word processor does not write a book, artificial intelligence and the many software and human tools did not discover the ideas presented here. It served only as one of several tools to communicate a methodology that emerged from years of observation, experience, writing, and personal reflection.

How Stories Want to Be Found

*How Writing My Own Story and Listening
to Others Revealed the One Memory at a
Time Guided Storytelling Methodology®*

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A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Imagine that someone handed you the exact GPS coordinates to your childhood home, not the address, just the GPS numbers. The home may still exist. The road may still be there. But without a map to guide you, finding it could take hours—or you might never arrive at all.

I have come to believe our memories work much the same way. A GPS doesn't create the destination. It simply reveals the best route to a place that has always existed. That is exactly what *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* does. It doesn't create memories. It helps people navigate the path back to memories that were there all along. The stories of our lives do not disappear. They remain quietly stored within us, waiting to be rediscovered. Yet no store sells a GPS for memory, and no map tells us exactly how to find the stories we know are still there.

For years, I believed that some people were simply blessed with an extraordinary memory. We often hear someone described as having "a gift for remembering," as though they were born with an ability the rest of us never received. While writing my memoir, I discovered something that changed the way I think about memory forever. I no longer believe those people have better memories. I believe they simply understand, consciously or unconsciously, **how memories arrive**. That realization began an unexpected journey. I wasn't searching for a methodology. I was trying to write my own story in 2016. Along the way, I began noticing patterns. One memory led naturally to another. A photograph unlocked a forgotten place. A familiar smell revived an entire afternoon. A simple conversation opened a door to stories I hadn't thought about in decades.

Slowly, in 2016, I realized I wasn't just remembering my life. I was discovering the pathways that memories travel. This book is really the story of my surprise. I set out to write a memoir and help seniors preserve their stories. I never expected to discover a different way of thinking about how memories arrive. My hope is that by sharing what I observed, I can help you find the pathways to your own stories more easily. Not because your memories are missing, but because, like any meaningful destination, they sometimes need the right map to help you find your way. This book is not about memory. It is a book about discovering a better way to help people remember together. It is the story of one personal, practical discovery and the journey that led to *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*.

Like many discoveries in life, this one came later than I wish it had. I think about my mother and father, and about so many other people who helped shape my life. I wonder what stories remained untold simply because I didn't yet know how to invite them into the conversation. Perhaps that is the quiet gift hidden inside every discovery. While we can't return to yesterday, we can change tomorrow. My hope is that this book encourages you to begin those conversations today, while the people you love are still here to tell them... *One Memory at a Time. Enjoy!*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A PERSONAL REFLECTION - 4
FOREWORD - 6
PROLOGUE - 7
PREFACE - 10

PART I — THE JOURNEY TO THE DISCOVERY

Chapter 1 - It Began with a Simple Question - 12
Chapter 2 - Memory Doesn't Work the Way I Thought It Did - 14
Chapter 3 - It Was Never About the Questions - 17
Chapter 4 - Building the Toolbox One Observation at a Time - 20
Chapter 5 - The Bird Feeder I Didn't Know I Was Building - 23
Chapter 6 - Discovering the Philosophy - 27
Chapter 7 - When I Realized It Was Bigger Than Me – 29

PART II — BRINGING THE PHILOSOPHY TO LIFE

Chapter 8 - The Philosophy Behind “ <i>The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology</i> ”- 31
Chapter 9 - What Makes “ <i>The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology</i> ” Different? - 34
Chapter 10 - The Most Important Tool Isn't a Tool at All - 37
Chapter 11 - Why I Think It Works - 39
Chapter 12 - I Hope It Never Stops Growing - 41
Chapter 13 - The Journey Continues - 43
Chapter 14 - If I Could Leave You with One Thought – 45

AFTER THE CONVERSATION...

Appendix A — The Journey So Far — A visual timeline of how <i>The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology</i> evolved - 48
Appendix B — Things I've Learned Along the Way — Personal lessons about listening, curiosity, silence, invitation and human connection - 50
Appendix C — What I Believe — The principles at the heart of the methodology - 52
Appendix D — Questions People Often Ask Me - 54
Appendix E — Where Your Journey Begins — A personal invitation - 56
Appendix F - Why I chose to give <i>One Memory at a Time</i> © and my book away - 58

THE FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Observation 1 — <i>The Journey I Didn't Know I Was Taking</i> - 11
Observation 2 — <i>Memories Don't Behave Like Filing Cabinets</i> - 16
Observation 3 — <i>Stories Open Doors That Questions Cannot</i> - 19
Observation 4 — <i>The BIRD FEEDER PRINCIPLE</i> - 26
Observation 5 — <i>Silence Is Sometimes Doing the Work</i> - 33
Observation 6 — <i>The Most Powerful Tool Was Never in the Toolbox</i> - 38
Observation 7 — <i>Every Story Changes Two Lives</i> - 40
Observation 8 — <i>One Memory at a Time Can Change a Community</i> - 47

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – 61

FOREWORD

People often ask me when *I created The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*. I usually smile because I honestly don't know.

If they expect a date, I can't give one. If they're hoping I'll point to a particular meeting, a carefully written business plan, or a moment when I suddenly announced, "I've discovered a new methodology," I'm afraid I'll disappoint them.

It simply didn't happen that way. Looking back now, I don't believe I invented this methodology. I believe it was discovered. Like many discoveries, it revealed itself one small observation at a time.

When I first began working with seniors using my *One Memory at a Time* program, my goal was wonderfully simple. I wanted to help people preserve their life stories before those stories disappeared forever. That seemed like a worthwhile enough ambition. I certainly wasn't trying to create a methodology. In fact, if someone had suggested that I would one day write a book explaining a storytelling methodology, I probably would have smiled, thanked them politely, and suggested they were talking to the wrong Tony.

What happened instead was something I never expected. The seniors became my teachers. Every visit, every conversation, every pause, every unexpected smile, every forgotten name that suddenly returned, and every story that seemed to appear from nowhere quietly taught me something. Looking back, I sometimes wonder if they ever realized they were my teachers. Sometimes the lesson was so small I almost missed it. Other times it challenged everything I thought I understood about memory, conversation, and the simple act of listening.

Over time, I began noticing patterns. Certain approaches invited stories almost effortlessly, while others brought conversations to a halt. Some questions opened doors, while others seemed to close them. A familiar photograph often accomplished more than a carefully prepared interview of questions with a senior. A few moments of patient silence frequently proved more powerful than another question. The more I observed, the more I realized I wasn't simply collecting stories. I was learning how stories wanted to be found.

That realization changed everything. Instead of asking, "What question should I ask next?" I found myself asking a very different question. "What helps a memory decide to arrive?" That single shift in thinking eventually became the foundation for everything that followed. As the months passed, I filled my notebook with observations. I changed activities in my stories, rewrote prompts, experimented with different approaches, and watched carefully to see what happened. I wasn't trying to prove an idea. I was trying to understand one. Little by little, those observations began fitting together like pieces of a puzzle. Looking back now, I can see that a methodology was quietly taking shape long before I recognized it myself.

One of the greatest surprises was discovering that this wasn't only about seniors.

The same gentle approach that encouraged older adults to share their stories could also work with families, students, volunteers, churches, entire communities and even industries. It wasn't limited by age, education, or background because it wasn't built on asking better questions. It was built on creating better conversations.

That may sound like a small distinction. It isn't. That's why this methodology exists. As you read the pages that follow, I hope you'll notice something. This isn't a book filled with theories developed in an office or ideas borrowed from someone else's research. It's the story of what I witnessed while sitting beside people who generously shared pieces of their lives with me. They taught me far more than I ever taught them, and this book is, in many ways, my attempt to honour those lessons.

If you're looking for a technical manual, this probably isn't the book you expected. If you're looking for the story of how one observation slowly became a philosophy, a philosophy became a methodology, and a methodology became a movement, then I hope you'll enjoy the journey as much as I have.

This is the philosophy behind *One Memory at a Time* —the belief that memories are invited rather than extracted, and that every person deserves to have their story heard with patience and respect. Who knows? Before you've finished reading, you may begin seeing conversations a little differently yourself.

PROLOGUE

If someone asked me today where *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* began, they would probably expect me to talk about a retirement residence, a group of seniors, or perhaps a telephone call that changed everything. They would be partly right.

A telephone call did change everything. But it was not the beginning. The real beginning came years earlier, when I picked up a pen and began writing a few stories for my daughter Kelci about my life in sales. I didn't recognize that I was using some memory-recall ideas.

In 2016, I sat down to write my memoir. I didn't intend to study memory, develop a methodology, or create a new approach to storytelling. I simply wanted to preserve the story of my own life before too much of it disappeared. I had lived through experiences I wanted my daughter and family to understand, and I felt increasingly responsible for recording the people, decisions, opportunities, disappointments, and lessons that had shaped me.

Like many people, I assumed that writing my life story would be fairly straightforward. I would begin at the beginning, move through the years in order, and eventually arrive at the present. I believed the memories were stored somewhere inside me, waiting to be retrieved

whenever I needed them. Unfortunately, my memory had other ideas. I remember thinking, *"This is going to be a lot harder than I expected."* More than once I wondered if I'd ever finish the memoir.

Some days I could remember an event from fifty years earlier with astonishing clarity yet struggle to recall something that had happened much more recently. At other times, a memory I had not thought about for decades would arrive without warning. One story would awaken another. A photograph would take me back to a street, a classroom, or a house I hadn't visited in years. A familiar song would bring back the people who had once listened to it with me. The smell of newly sawed wood could return me to my father's workshop before I had time to understand where the memory had come from.

My memories did not arrive in order. They arrived as moments.

I might begin writing about my childhood paper route and suddenly remember an early lesson about selling. A story about business could lead me back to something my father had taught me. A conversation with an old friend could restore a detail I had forgotten completely, while an old family photograph might reveal an entire story waiting quietly beyond the edge of the picture.

There were nights when a memory arrived after I had gone to bed. I learned not to trust that it would still be there in the morning. I would get up, go to my office, and begin writing while the details were still fresh. Sometimes I captured only a few sentences. Other times, one recollection opened the door to several pages.

At the time, I thought these were simply the challenges of writing a memoir. Looking back now, I realize they were my first lessons in understanding memory. For nearly six years, I unknowingly became my own first storyteller. I was not interviewing seniors or leading group discussions. I was observing how my own mind searched, connected, wandered, hesitated, and eventually remembered. I was learning that memories rarely respond well to pressure. They are more likely to appear through association, emotion, familiar places, sensory experiences, photographs, conversations, and other people's stories.

I did not have a MEMORY COMPANION sitting beside me. I had to become my own. At the time, I had no idea that I was quietly becoming the first person to test what would later become the methodology.

I wrote, reviewed, remembered, and wrote again. What began as a few stories for my daughter gradually grew into *The Knock That Changed Everything*. By the time I completed my memoir, I believed I had reached the end of an important personal journey. My stories had been preserved. I had recorded the lessons I wanted to leave behind. I felt grateful to have finished what I had set out to do. I could not have been more mistaken. Finish is not a word you place at the end of a writing assignment. You learn quickly that there is always another opportunity for another story. It becomes quite frustrating.

Not long after I shared the memoir with family and a few friends, I received a telephone call from Gary Comeau, the Recreation Director at Oakwood Terrace in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Gary had read my book and commented on how clearly I remembered stories from my youth. Then he asked what seemed like a simple question. “Tony, have you developed some sort of system that could help our seniors remember and write the stories of their lives?” The honest answer was no.

I had spent six years learning how to write my own story, but I had never considered whether that experience might help someone else tell theirs. Another person who read my first draft in 2020 said almost the same thing: they could see themselves in my stories.

At first, Gary’s question sounded as though it could be answered with a workbook containing some sample stories, a collection of prompts, and a few blank pages. Many books already in bookstores asked people questions about their lives. Surely, I could create something similar? But Gary’s question stayed with me.

The more I considered it, the more I realized that I would not be starting from nothing. During the six years I had spent writing my memoir, I had learned something important, even though I had not yet found the words to explain it. I had learned that memories did not usually arrive because I demanded them. They arrived because something invited them. A photograph invited them. A familiar place invited them. A smell, a song, an object, a conversation, or another story invited them. One memory invited another.

I began to wonder whether the same thing might be true for other people. Could a carefully chosen story help someone reconnect with a similar experience from their own life? Could a gentle prompt accomplish more than a direct question? Could conversation, patience, sensory cues, and companionship create an environment in which memories felt safe enough to appear? There was only one way to find out.

Gary’s telephone call did not create *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*. It revealed the next step in a journey that had already been underway for years. The six years I had spent exploring my own memories had quietly prepared me to begin listening differently to the memories of others.

The call opened a door, but the path leading to that door had been under construction for a long time. I simply had not travelled far enough to see it.

Looking back today, I understand that I had not only been writing a memoir. I had been learning how memories arrive, how stories connect, and how a lifetime can begin to reveal itself through one small moment. Without realizing it, I had begun discovering how stories wanted to be found. Sometimes we believe we are writing one story when, in truth, that story is quietly preparing us to discover another.

PREFACE

Before we begin, I'd like to tell you something about this book. It wasn't easy to write. That may sound like a strange thing to say after spending a lifetime writing business plans, fundraising campaigns, community projects, books, and countless presentations. Writing has been part of my life for many years, yet this book challenged me in ways I never expected.

The reason is simple. This isn't really a book about memory. It's a book about people. More specifically, it's about the privilege of being invited into someone else's life for an hour and discovering that ordinary conversations are often far more extraordinary than we first imagine.

When I began this journey, I thought I was creating a storytelling program for seniors. Looking back now, I realize how small that original vision was. I had no idea that the conversations around kitchen tables, in recreation rooms, and beside comfortable chairs in retirement residences would slowly change how I understood memory, listening, relationships, and even my own life. I longed for that insight when my parents were alive.

If someone had told me then that those early observations would eventually become a methodology, I probably would have smiled politely and changed the subject. I wasn't looking for a methodology. I was looking for a better way to help people preserve the stories that mattered most to them.

Fortunately, life has a wonderful habit of leading us toward discoveries we never knew we were searching for. One thing you'll notice as you read this book is that I don't pretend to have all the answers. In fact, many of the chapters begin with something I didn't understand. Time after time, I found myself surprised by what I was observing. The more I learned, the more I realized how much I still didn't know. I think that's one reason this work has remained so enjoyable. Curiosity has a way of keeping us humble.

You'll also notice this isn't an academic book, even though it discusses ideas researchers have explored for many years. I have tremendous respect for the science of memory and the people who have devoted their careers to understanding it. My contribution has been different. I approached memory as an observer rather than a researcher. My classroom was a conversation. My laboratory was a room filled with people. I wrote my notes after listening carefully to what happened when human beings simply spent time together.

Everything you'll read in these pages grew from those observations. Some ideas worked beautifully. Others didn't. Whenever something failed, I tried to understand why. Whenever something succeeded, I resisted the temptation to assume I knew the reason. Instead, I watched, listened, adjusted, and learned. Looking back, I think that's how *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* was really built—not in one brilliant moment, but through hundreds of small discoveries that slowly began fitting together.

As the methodology grew, something else happened that surprised me. People started seeing possibilities that I hadn't considered. Educators imagined students interviewing seniors. Churches envisioned conversations between younger and older members of their congregations. Community leaders began talking about preserving local history. Families saw a way to reconnect across generations. My friend, who has worked on the railroad all his life, imagines his coworkers getting together to write a history book. Everywhere I went, someone seemed to be saying, "Have you ever thought about using this here?" The answer was usually no.

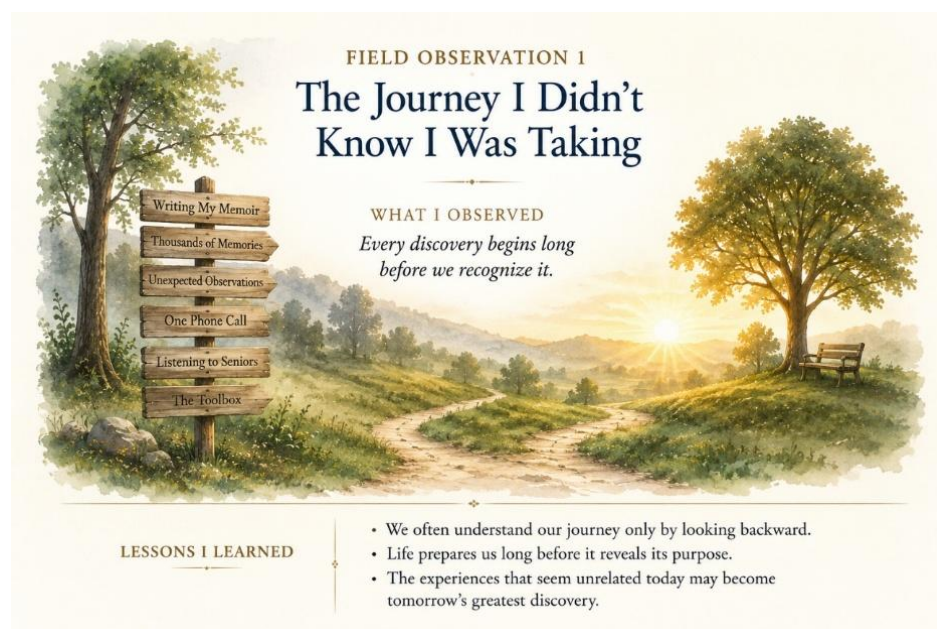
Until they asked. That's one reason I love this work so much. It continues to teach me. Perhaps that's the message I hope you'll carry with you as you read this book. You don't have to become a memory expert to change someone's life. You don't need perfect questions, remarkable storytelling skills, or years of experience. You simply need to be present, genuinely curious, and willing to give another person something that has become increasingly rare in our busy world. Your full attention.

If this book encourages you to see conversations differently, then it will have accomplished far more than I ever hoped. If it inspires you to preserve a family story, strengthen a friendship, reconnect generations, or simply spend a little more time listening to someone you love, then every hour spent writing these pages will have been worthwhile. Thank you for joining me on this journey. Now...Let's begin.

FIELD OBSERVATION 1

The Journey I Didn't Know I Was Taking

Every discovery begins long before we recognize it. Looking back, I realize I wasn't trying to discover a methodology. I was simply writing my memoir. Life was quietly preparing me for something I could never have imagined. Sometimes the path that changes our lives is the one we never realized we were already walking.



PART 1 – THE JOURNEY TO DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 1

It Began with a Simple Question

Although my journey into understanding memory began years earlier while writing my memoir, one moment transformed those private observations into something much larger. Looking back, I can now see that the path had been quietly leading me toward it all along. At the time, however, it felt like nothing more than an ordinary phone call from a friend.

It came from Gary Comeau, Recreation Director at Oakwood Terrace Retirement Residence in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Gary had recently read my memoir, *The Knock That Changed Everything*, and he reached out with what seemed like a simple request. "Tony, have you developed a sort of system that could help our seniors remember and write the stories of their lives?"

At first, I thought I had misunderstood the question. The honest answer was, "Not even close." I had spent six years learning how to write my own story, but I had never considered whether that experience could help someone else tell theirs. Writing a memoir is a deeply personal journey. Every memory belongs to you, every decision about what to include is your own, and every page reflects a lifetime that only you have lived. Helping another person recall and preserve their memories felt like an entirely different challenge.

Still, Gary's question stayed with me. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I hadn't simply written a memoir. During those six years, I had unknowingly learned a great deal about how memories arrived. I remembered how one forgotten story had often unlocked another, how a photograph could awaken a memory that had been silent for decades, and how the strongest memories almost always appeared unexpectedly rather than on command.

Without realizing it, I had already become a student of memory. What I didn't know was whether those same observations would hold true for someone else. There was only one way to find out. I took on Gary's challenge. I agreed to rewrite a few stories from my youth for Gary to use with his residents and include a few pages on how I thought to present them. After each story, I would come up with 15 or 20 prompts to help someone remember their story based on the one I had presented. I would then work with a small group of seniors, fully expecting to prepare a collection of thoughtful questions, encourage conversation, and hopefully help them write a few meaningful stories of their own. In my mind, it sounded fairly straightforward. After all, thousands of life-review books with questions already existed. Surely, I could build on that idea. That assumption lasted only a short time.

During those early sessions, I found myself paying as much attention to *how* memories appeared as I did to *what* people remembered. It quickly became obvious that asking a direct question didn't necessarily produce a meaningful answer. Sometimes a question would be met with silence, yet a few minutes later, after another conversation, a vivid childhood memory would suddenly emerge. On other occasions, someone would insist they couldn't remember much at all, only to spend the next twenty minutes telling a remarkable story that seemed to surprise even them. I found those moments fascinating. The memories hadn't been forced. They had arrived.

That distinction may sound subtle, but it would eventually change the direction of everything that followed. As the weeks passed, I stopped thinking about finding better questions and started wondering whether I should instead be creating better conditions for memories to emerge naturally. It was a completely different way of looking at the challenge. Rather than trying to retrieve memories, perhaps my role was simply to make them feel welcome.

That single thought changed my perspective. I wasn't looking for a better interview process. I was beginning to observe a different relationship between memory, conversation, emotion, and trust. Of course, I didn't describe it that way at the time. I certainly wasn't thinking about methodologies or philosophies. I was simply curious. Every session taught me something new, and every storyteller seemed to reveal another small piece of a puzzle I didn't yet know I was assembling.

Looking back now, I realize that Gary never asked me to create a methodology. He simply asked whether I could help seniors remember their stories of their youth. This was one of those questions.

I did, and by listening carefully to the people using the *One Memory at a Time* workbook, I kept refining it. It has now evolved through three versions, with many additions designed to help memories come through more naturally and expand the role of listeners, including high school students helping preserve living heritage. Sometimes the simplest questions lead us to places we never imagined.

CHAPTER 2

Memory Doesn't Work the Way I Thought It Did

When I first began visiting seniors, I assumed memory worked much the way most people imagine it does. I pictured it as a library. Every experience a person had ever lived was sitting neatly on a shelf somewhere in their mind. If you asked the right question, they would simply walk over, pull down the correct book, open it, and begin telling the story. It was like they had a recipe box full of memories just waiting to be opened.

It seemed perfectly logical. It also turned out to be completely wrong. One afternoon, I would ask someone about their first job and receive little more than a shrug. A few minutes later, another participant would begin talking about an old country store or a neighbourhood bakery, and suddenly the very same person who couldn't remember a thing would smile and say, "That reminds me..." Then the stories would begin.

Not one story. Several. Sometimes they would continue for twenty minutes without another question from me. Sometimes they only got through half of my story in a session. It brought a flood of memories that I had no idea were there, just waiting to open the gates. I found myself wondering what had just happened. I can still picture myself driving home that afternoon, replaying the conversation over and over. I wasn't excited because someone had remembered something. I was excited because I couldn't explain why.

The sale was no longer something I was doing to them. It became something they were experiencing with me. Funny how a lesson from a fifteen-year-old Fuller Brush salesman waited fifty years before showing me why it mattered.

It certainly wasn't my question about a time in my life that had unlocked the memory. If anything, the memory had arrived because something in my story had gently invited it forward. The question hadn't opened the door. Something else had. My story helped a memory arrive! I was very proud of what I had accomplished.

The more I observed these moments, the more often they occurred. A faded photograph would awaken a forgotten childhood. The sound of an old song would transport someone back to a Saturday night dance sixty years earlier. The smell of fresh bread would suddenly bring back memories of a mother's kitchen. A Christmas ornament, an old school report card, the mention of a favourite teacher, or even the sound of rain on a window could send someone travelling effortlessly through time. It was fascinating.

These weren't isolated events. They happened over and over again.

That's when I realized I had been thinking about memory backwards. I had assumed that memories waited for questions. Instead, it seemed as though memories were constantly waiting for invitations. That may sound like a small difference, but for me it changed everything. Questions often ask people to search. Invitations allow memories to find them.

Once that thought settled into my mind, I couldn't stop testing it.

During every session, I paid close attention to what happened immediately before a story appeared. I wasn't listening only to the story anymore. I listened for the pathway that led to it. Sometimes it was another person's memory. Sometimes it was an object lying on the table. Sometimes it was laughter. Occasionally it was nothing more than a comfortable silence that gave someone enough time to wander through their own thoughts.

I began filling a page of notes with these observations. Not because I was trying to prove a theory. Quite the opposite. I was trying to understand what I was witnessing. The more I watched, the more convinced I became that memory isn't nearly as orderly as we like to believe. It doesn't always move in straight lines. It doesn't always answer direct questions. It wanders. It circles back. It follows emotions, familiar places, sounds, smells, faces, and feelings. One memory reaches for another, and before long a person finds themselves telling a story they hadn't thought about in decades.

Looking back, I think that's one reason so many traditional interviews become frustrating. We often expect people to retrieve memories on command, as though remembering were simply a matter of concentration. My experience delivering my workbook early to seniors suggested something quite different. Memories seem to prefer companionship over interrogation. They arrive more naturally when people feel relaxed, safe, interested, and unhurried.

That observation became one of the first real building blocks of the *One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*. Asking better questions wasn't enough. I had to create better conditions for remembering.

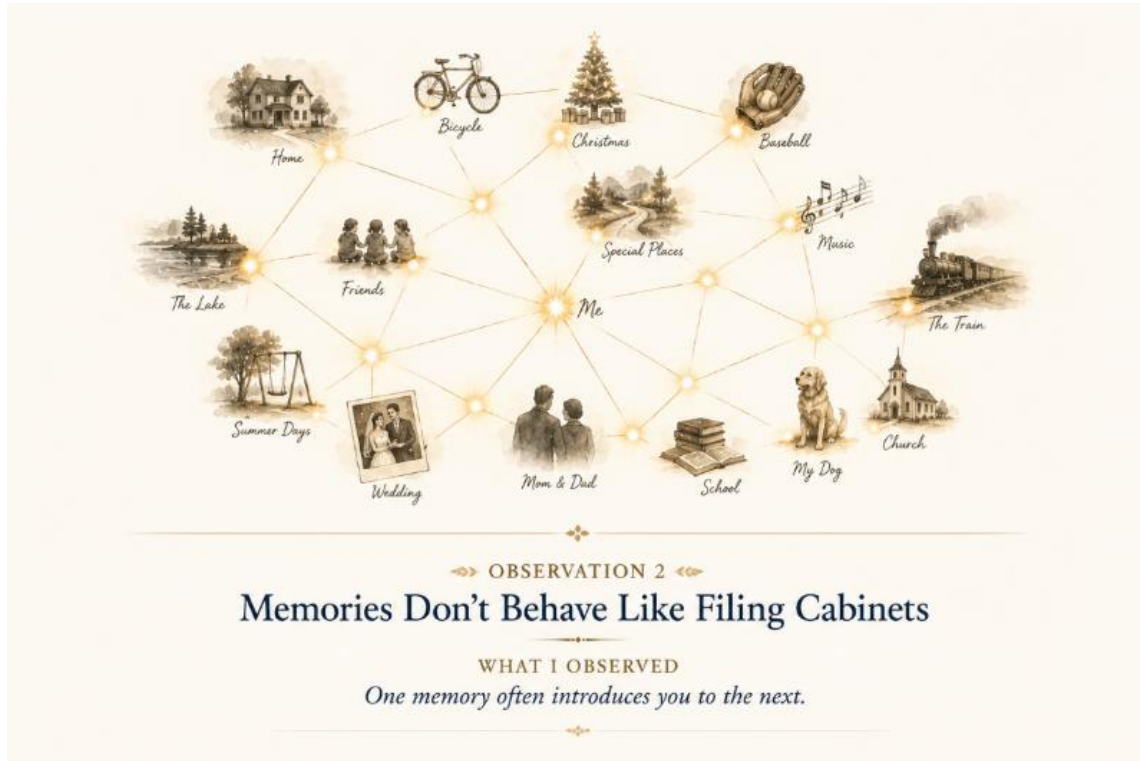
As I reflected on everything I was seeing, another thought slowly emerged. Perhaps memories aren't really lost as often as we imagine. Perhaps they're simply waiting for the right invitation. I still think about that idea whenever someone tells me, "I don't remember much anymore." I've heard those words countless times. I've also watched those same people spend the next hour laughing, reflecting, and sharing stories that had been quietly waiting beneath the surface all along.

Not because someone finally asked the perfect question. But because, for a little while, the conversation became a place where memories felt welcome. That was one of the most important discoveries of my journey. And it changed how I think about storytelling forever.

FIELD OBSERVATION 2

Memories don't behave like filing cabinets

Memories do not behave like filing cabinets. They are connected. One introduces us to another, and another to the next. I learned that following the memory that arrives is often more valuable than searching for the memory we thought we wanted.



CHAPTER 3

It Was Never About the Questions

As my observations continued, I became less interested in the questions I was asking and far more interested in what was happening between them. That may sound like an odd thing to say, but it became one of the most important discoveries of the entire journey. A nursing home that was launching my program read my workbook and came up with another suggestion. Instead of inviting memories with a story, why not break the story into smaller parts and add a prompt after each part? I called that new prompt a “*memory moment*”. And the revised story framework became the “guided story”. Thank you, Sarah!

Like most people, I had started with the assumption that better questions would naturally produce better stories. It seemed perfectly reasonable. If someone couldn't remember, perhaps I simply hadn't asked the right question yet. So, I tried asking different questions. Some worked. Many didn't.

What puzzled me was that the very same question could produce completely different results with different people. One person would answer with a sentence or two, while another would spend twenty minutes sharing memories that wandered through family, friendships, school, work, and childhood adventures. The question hadn't changed. So why had the conversation?

That thought stayed with me for quite some time. Then one afternoon, while driving home after another presentation to residents of a retirement home, an old memory surfaced from a very different chapter of my life.

When I was fifteen, I became a Fuller Brush salesman. Looking back now, I sometimes smile at the thought of a teenager walking door to door carrying samples and hoping someone would answer. Like every new salesperson, I believed my success depended on having the perfect sales presentation. If I could simply explain the products well enough, surely people would buy them. It didn't take me very long to discover I was wrong.

Everything changed the moment I stopped talking and started demonstrating. Instead of telling people how well a brush worked, I handed it to them. Instead of explaining a product, I invited them to try it for themselves. The sale was no longer something I was doing to them. It became something they were experiencing with me. That is what my stories were doing: helping seniors experience a memory without having to ask for one.

That early lesson in sales stayed with me throughout my business career, although I didn't realize how important it would eventually become. Years later, sitting beside seniors, I suddenly recognized the same pattern. The best storytelling sessions weren't happening because I had presented an interesting story or asked clever questions. They happened because the storyteller became an active participant in discovering their own memories.

We were exploring together. That was a completely different experience.

It also explained why traditional interviews of questions sometimes felt uncomfortable. Interviews often place one person in the role of expert and the other in the role of respondent. One asks. The other answers. It's a perfectly reasonable format if you're gathering information, but I was beginning to suspect that it wasn't always the best environment for discovering memories. Conversation felt different. Conversation has no finish line. It must allow people and their thoughts to wander.

One Memory at a Time would welcome interruptions, laughter, unexpected detours, and stories that seem to appear from nowhere. One memory reminds someone of another. A photograph leads to a neighbour. The neighbour reminds them of a teacher. The teacher leads to their first job. Before anyone realizes it, the original question has long since been forgotten. That prompted me to document those findings in my facilitator's guide, advising facilitators to do those things when conducting a *One Memory at a Time* session.

Oddly enough, that's often when the richest stories begin. As I reflected on those early pilot sessions, I realized I had gradually stopped thinking of myself as someone asking questions. Instead, I began thinking of myself as someone creating opportunities. That may seem like a subtle change in language, but it completely changed the way I approached every conversation that followed. I no longer felt responsible for finding the perfect question. My responsibility became creating an atmosphere where stories could emerge naturally.

Sometimes that meant introducing an old photograph. Sometimes it meant allowing a long silence to settle over the room. Sometimes it meant smiling at another participant's story and simply waiting to see where the conversation wanted to go next.

I discovered that storytelling isn't something we lead nearly as much as something we accompany. Perhaps that's why I've always liked the term *MEMORY COMPANION* so much. A companion doesn't decide the destination. A companion simply walks beside another person for part of the journey. Looking back now, I realize my years in business taught me something I wouldn't fully understand until much later. People don't enjoy being pushed. They enjoy being invited.

That lesson helped me build successful businesses. It helped me raise money for worthwhile causes. It helped me build community partnerships. And, without my realizing it, it eventually became one of the quiet foundations of the *One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*©.

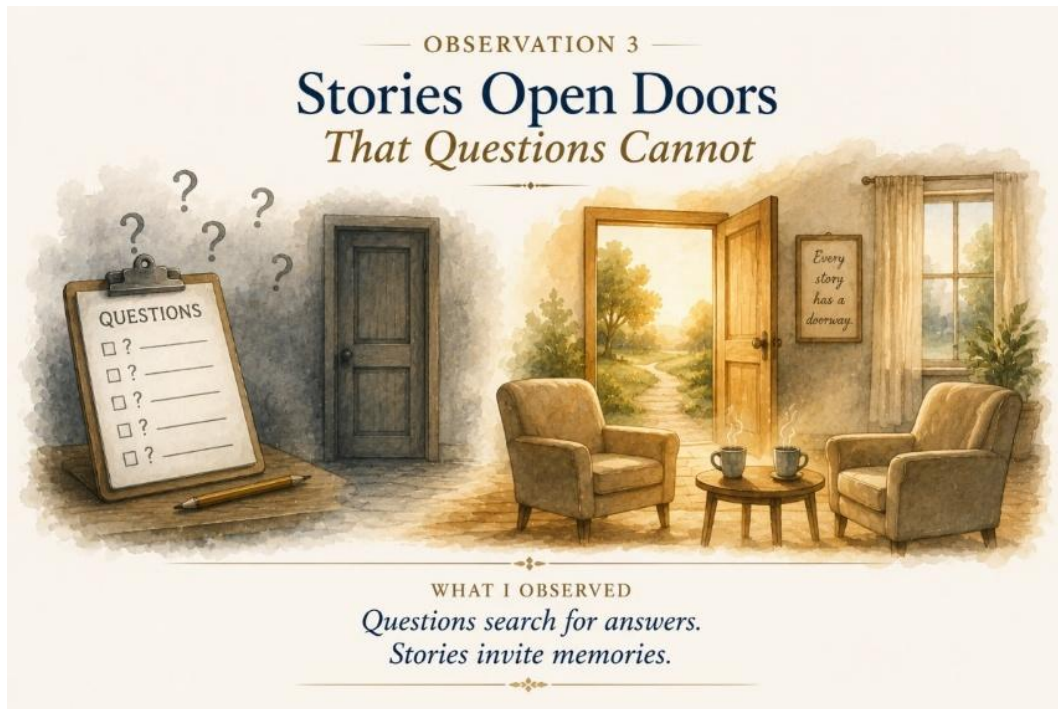
Today, if someone asked me what makes this methodology different, I don't think I'd begin by talking about prompts, workbooks, or activities. I'd simply say this:

"We stopped trying to collect stories. We started creating conversations where stories wanted to appear." For me, that changed everything.

FIELD OBSERVATION 3

Stories Open Doors That Questions Cannot

Questions search for answers. Stories invite memories.



CHAPTER 4

Building the Toolbox One Observation at a Time

People occasionally ask me how long it took to create the *One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*, and I never know quite how to answer. If they're asking how long it took to write the workbook, that's a relatively easy question; it took about 5 months. If they're asking how long it took to build the methodology itself, I'm not sure I can answer because, in many ways, I don't think it's finished yet. I certainly didn't sit down one morning with a master plan and begin designing a complete storytelling system.

Looking back now, I don't think this methodology could ever have been created that way. It was built the same way most worthwhile things in life are built—one small improvement at a time. Every pilot session taught me something new. Every conversation revealed another opportunity to make the experience a little easier, a little more comfortable, or a little more natural for the person sitting beside me. I wasn't trying to invent something new. I was simply paying attention to what people were quietly teaching me.

One of the earliest things I noticed was how intimidating a blank page could be. When you ask someone to write the story of their life, you've unintentionally handed them an impossible assignment. Where do they begin? Do they start with childhood, school, marriage, work, raising a family, or retirement? Most people don't know, and before long the task feels bigger than their desire to begin. That observation stayed with me for a while until I realized the problem wasn't that people couldn't remember their lives. The problem was that I was asking them to remember too much all at once.

That's how I started my memoir. I simply wanted to write a few stories for my daughter Kelci. After I wrote about 10, I saw a pattern. I had a couple of stories each from my youth, my career, my community work, special people who influenced my life, and life lessons I hoped she would appreciate. Well, that became the beginning of the memoir. Looking back now, I smile because I thought I was writing a gift for my daughter. I never imagined she was giving one back to me, too, and that my stories would be available to my grandson Wil.

The answer to remembering is surprisingly simple. Don't ask for a lifetime. Ask for one memory. *One Memory at a Time*.... One teacher. One Christmas morning. One summer vacation. One first job. One family tradition. As the destination got smaller, people relaxed. They no longer felt they were expected to write a book. They were simply sharing one moment that had mattered to them.

The volunteers were teaching me something just as important. They cared deeply about the seniors they were spending time with, yet many quietly worried they weren't doing it correctly. They wondered whether they were asking the right questions or should keep the conversation moving when silence settled into the room. Some worried about what to do if someone became emotional or wandered away from the topic. Listening to those concerns

made me realize they weren't looking for complicated training. They were looking for reassurance. They needed permission to stop trying to become experts and simply become good companions. That realization eventually became one of the foundations of the methodology. A MEMORY COMPANION isn't expected to have all the answers. A companion walks beside another person, listens with genuine curiosity, and trusts that the conversation will usually find its own direction if it isn't rushed. That's why I developed my facilitators' manual for staff, volunteers, and students.

The workbook grew in its next version exactly the same way. I didn't start with a table of contents and decide what to include. Every page solved a problem I had already witnessed. If a prompt consistently encouraged conversation, I kept it. If people hesitated or became confused, I rewrote it or removed it. In the end, I went from 20 prompts in version one to only 6 core prompts. I took my own advice: simply supplying more questions wasn't the answer; a few core ones were enough to get the memory engine started.

If a paragraph felt awkward or unnatural, I removed it without hesitation. I often smile when people compliment the workbook because, in truth, it wasn't written from imagination. I edited it from experience, using the same story from my memoir. Those stories were about 3000 words or more. In my workbook, I edited them down to about 800 to 1,200 words, selecting the paragraphs I felt would evoke the strongest memories. And they did.

Every revision represented another afternoon spent watching people remember, another volunteer discovering their confidence, or another storyteller reminding me that there was always a better way to invite a memory into the room.

As time passed, another pattern emerged. I noticed that no two people remembered in exactly the same way. One person would light up at the sight of an old photograph, while another seemed completely unaffected by pictures but became wonderfully animated the moment they heard a familiar song. Some responded to familiar smells, a sound or treasured keepsakes. Others needed nothing more than hearing someone else's story before one of their own quietly surfaced. The more I watched, the more convinced I became that no single doorway could lead to memory, because every person's life had been shaped by different experiences, emotions, and moments. If memories arrived by different paths, then the methodology needed to offer different paths, too.

Sometime during those months, I stopped thinking of *One Memory at a Time* as an activity and started thinking about the tool it would use.

A carpenter doesn't expect one hammer to solve every problem. A gardener doesn't use the same tool throughout the year. They build a toolbox because every situation asks for something a little different. The same, I realized, was true of storytelling. Sometimes a photograph is the perfect invitation. Sometimes it's music. Sometimes it's a familiar object, a local landmark, the smell of Christmas dinner cooking, the sound of a train whistle, a shared laugh, or simply allowing enough silence for a memory to make its own appearance.

None of those tools are better than the others. Each simply serves a different purpose, and together they give the MEMORY COMPANION the flexibility to respond naturally to the person sitting beside them rather than forcing every conversation into the same pattern.

Looking back now, I don't think I was creating a workbook so much as quietly removing obstacles. Every time I saw someone hesitate, I asked what stood between that person and their story. Every improvement became another way of removing one of those barriers. When people open the workbook today, they see sample stories, guided stories, prompts, memory moments, memory activities, sounds, smells, photographs, conversation starters, facilitator guides, and reflection pages.

Yet I see something very different. I see hundreds of conversations that slowly shaped every page I wrote. I see seniors who unknowingly became my teachers, volunteers who taught me the importance of simplicity, and countless small observations that eventually grew into something much larger than I ever expected. That's why I still think of this methodology as a toolbox rather than a finished product. Every tool inside it has earned its place in my memory program through experience, and I have a feeling there will always be room for one more.

CHAPTER 5

The Bird Feeder I Didn't Know I Was Building

Looking back now, I think one of the clearest ways to explain what I had been discovering was sitting outside my window all along: a bird feeder. At first, that may seem like a strange comparison for a book about memory and storytelling. Yet the more I thought about it, the more I realized it described almost perfectly what had been happening to me for years.

When I began writing my own memoir, I wasn't trying to study memory. I was simply trying to remember enough of my life to write something worthwhile for my family. What I did not understand at the time was that I was slowly learning how to create the conditions that helped my own memories return. One memory would lead to another. A photograph would awaken a place. A place would bring back a person. A person would remind me of an experience I hadn't thought about in decades. I thought I was simply writing. In reality, I was learning how memories arrived.

The image of a bird feeder helped me understand it. If you want to see birds, you have two choices. You can spend your day wandering through the woods trying to find them, or you can create a place where they are naturally invited to come. You choose a location, put out the feeder, add the seed and wait. You don't decide which bird will arrive first, and you certainly don't control what comes next. One bird may appear, then another. Sometimes a bird you have never noticed before lands right in front of you. It may have been living nearby all along. The difference is that you finally gave it somewhere to land. I began to realize that I had been doing something similar with my own memories. Without knowing it, I had built myself a bird feeder.

But that wasn't the whole discovery. I had also begun learning how to provide the seeds. A photograph could be a seed. So could a song, the smell of fresh bread, the name of an old friend, a school photograph, a bicycle, a first car, a family recipe, a church pew or an old neighbourhood. Each one could pull something from the past and bring it closer. The important part was that I did not always know what would arrive. If I looked at an old school picture, I might expect to remember my teacher. Instead, I might suddenly remember the coatroom, the walk home, the boy who sat beside me, or the day I was sent to the principal's office. The seed invited the memory, but it did not control it. Memory seemed to choose its own path.

That is why I eventually stopped believing that remembering was simply a matter of asking better questions. Questions can be useful, but questions often tell the mind exactly where we expect it to go. Seeds simply invite it to wander, and wandering, I discovered, is where some of the best stories are found. When I later began working with seniors, I saw the same thing happen again and again. Someone might tell me they didn't remember very much. Then another person would mention a country store, a school dance or a Christmas morning.

Suddenly the person who had been quiet would begin smiling and say, “That reminds me...” And off they would go.

One memory would arrive, followed by another. That was when the bird feeder began to mean something more to me. The first bird was not necessarily the story. Sometimes it was simply the beginning. A childhood bicycle might bring back the neighbour who taught someone how to ride. That neighbour might lead to the street where they grew up. The street might remind them of the corner store. The corner store might bring back their first job. Before long, the original seed had almost disappeared from the conversation. That didn't matter. It had done its job. It had helped the first memory arrive, and the first memory had helped the next one arrive.

Only later did I realize I needed a name for what I was watching. I began thinking of these connections as **MEMORY PATHWAYS**. A Memory Pathway is simply the route one memory creates toward another. The first memory that arrives may not be the story at all. This happened to me a lot. Sometimes it simply knows the way to it. That helped me understand why I should never be too quick to pull someone back to the subject we started with. If a bicycle leads to a neighbour, and the neighbour leads to a street, perhaps we should follow the street. We don't know where it will take us. The storyteller may not know either. That is part of the discovery. I learned to trust the memory that arrived and became curious about where it wanted to go next.

The more I watched this happen, the more I understood that *One Memory at a Time* was not really about retrieving memories at all. It was about creating the conditions where memories felt welcome enough to come forward. That is where the different parts of the methodology began to make more sense to me. The environment was the bird feeder. The stories, photographs, sensory cues, familiar sounds, objects, places and gentle prompts were the seeds. The memories were the birds. And the MEMORY COMPANION was simply the person who tended the feeder.

That last part became especially important. A person who tends a bird feeder does not stand beside it shouting instructions. They don't demand that a particular bird arrive, and they don't frighten away one bird because they were hoping to see another. They create the conditions, provide the seed, and let nature do the rest. A good MEMORY COMPANION does much the same thing. They create a comfortable environment, offer a story or another gentle invitation, listen, wait and allow silence. If a memory arrives that seems completely unrelated to the original subject, they do not immediately drag the conversation back. They follow the bird.

That may sound simple, but I think it represents one of the most important differences between interviewing and guided storytelling. An interviewer usually has a destination. A MEMORY COMPANION has a direction. If the storyteller moves somewhere unexpected, the companion moves with them. The goal isn't to finish the questions. The goal is to see

where the memory wants to go. This also helped me understand why some approaches worked better than others. If we overload the feeder with too much at once, the experience can become confusing. If we keep changing the seed before anything has had time to arrive, we may interrupt the very process we are trying to encourage.

Memory needs room. Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is simply put out the seed, wait and listen. That can be difficult for people who believe their responsibility is to keep a conversation moving. I learned that silence was not a failure. Sometimes silence meant the person was travelling somewhere. A face might change. A smile might slowly appear. Then came the words I learned to love hearing: “I haven't thought about that in years.” To me, that sentence is a bird landing.

Over time, I also realized there was no single perfect seed. One person might respond immediately to a photograph. Another might barely look at it. Someone else might hear an old song and suddenly be transported sixty years into the past. A familiar smell might work for one person, while another simply needs to hear someone else's story. That is why the methodology could never depend on one tool. Every life is different. Every feeder is different. And every bird seems to have its own favourite seed.

This helped me understand the toolbox I had been building. The guided stories, Memory Moments, sensory activities, photographs, local images, sounds, familiar objects and conversation prompts were never meant to compete with one another. They were simply different kinds of seed. The skill was not in using all of them. The skill was in noticing which one helped this particular person remember. Once I understood that, the whole approach became gentler. We no longer had to chase stories. We did not have to interrogate people. We did not have to pressure anyone to remember. Our job was much simpler: build the feeder, provide the seeds and trust the memories to come.

I sometimes wonder now how long I had been doing this before I finally understood it. During all those years of writing my memoir, I believed I was simply searching through my past. In reality, I was gradually learning how to make my past come closer to me. I had built the feeder before I knew what to call it. I had discovered the seeds before I understood why they worked. Later, while sitting beside seniors and watching their own memories arrive, I finally recognized what had been happening all along. The stories were not gone. The memories were not necessarily lost. Many of them were simply waiting for somewhere to land.

FIELD OBSERVATION 4

The BIRD FEEDER PRINCIPLE- The Best Stories Are Never Chased

The environment is the feeder. Stories, photographs, sounds, smells, familiar places and gentle invitations are the seeds. The memories are the birds. We cannot decide which one will arrive first or where it will take us next. Our job is simply to create the conditions, provide the seeds and give memories somewhere to land.



OBSERVATION 4

The Best Stories Are Never Chased

WHAT I OBSERVED

*Create the right environment,
and stories will come to you.*

“

*One person spends all day
chasing birds.
Another builds a bird feeder.
Guess who sees the most birds?*

”

CHAPTER 6

Discovering the Philosophy

At one point in this journey, I stopped making individual observations and began seeing something much larger. Until then, I had been collecting ideas in much the same way someone might collect pieces of a puzzle. One day I would notice how a familiar photograph encouraged conversation. Another day, I would see the remarkable effect of letting silence linger just a little longer. On another occasion, I would watch two participants awaken memories in one another simply by sharing stories from similar childhoods. Each observation seemed interesting on its own, but I still wasn't certain how they all fit together. Then, gradually, I realized they all pointed to the same simple truth. The methodology was never really about memory. It was about creating the conditions where memory feels comfortable enough to appear.

That realization changed the way I looked at everything I had built up to that point. The workbook was no longer the centre of the program. The memory prompts weren't the centre either. Even the MEMORY COMPANION, as important as that role had become, wasn't the centre. They were all tools serving something much more important. They existed to create an experience in which another person felt safe, valued, unhurried, and genuinely listened to. Once I understood that, every decision became easier because I was no longer asking whether a new activity was interesting. I was asking whether it helped create that kind of experience.

Looking back now, I can also see that many of the lessons shaping this philosophy had been teaching me quietly for most of my life. Long before I worked with seniors, I had learned through business that people respond better when they feel involved rather than persuaded. If I could get a customer to try my product before they purchased it, the sale would be half made. Whether it was a typewriter or a portable X-ray unit, I did a lot of product trials.

During years of fundraising, I discovered that generosity grows from relationships, not pressure. Community work taught me that lasting change happens when people feel ownership of a community solution, not obligation. At the time, I thought I was learning separate lessons in completely different parts of my life. It never occurred to me that they were all preparing me for this work. Years later, I found myself applying those very same principles while sitting beside someone sharing a memory from seventy years earlier.

One of the most rewarding parts of this journey has been watching what happens when people stop worrying about getting everything right. Volunteers relax because they realize they don't have to perform. Storytellers relax because they no longer feel they're being tested. Conversations become more natural because neither person is trying to control where they should go next. The pressure quietly disappears, and something much more valuable begins to grow in its place. Curiosity replaces performance. Listening replaces interviewing.

Companionship replaces instruction. Before long, memories begin arriving almost as though they had been waiting patiently for exactly that moment.

As these ideas became clearer, I found myself thinking less about techniques and more about philosophy. Techniques are useful, but they often change as we learn more. A philosophy provides something much steadier. It reminds us why we do what we do, even as the tools continue to evolve. I learned a key philosophy when I began selling that has followed me throughout my career: *Marketing is about getting in the customer's head; selling is getting into their wallet.*

I suspect that's one reason the *One Memory at a Time Methodology* has grown beyond retirement residences. The same philosophy that helps a senior remember a childhood Christmas also helps a student interview a grandparent, encourages conversations within a church community, and preserves local history one story at a time. The setting changes. The people change. The tools may even change. The philosophy remains exactly the same, just as it did in my sales career.

People occasionally ask me whether I worry that artificial intelligence or future technologies might one day replace this methodology. My answer is always the same. Technology will undoubtedly keep improving, and I hope it does. It can help us preserve stories more accurately, organize them more efficiently, translate them into other languages, and make them available to future generations in ways we can barely imagine today. None of that concerns me because technology has never been the heart of this work. As long as human beings continue to seek connection, understanding, and belonging, there will always be a place for one person sitting beside another, listening with genuine interest. Technology can strengthen that experience, but it cannot replace it.

When I finally stepped back and looked at everything I had learned so far, I realized the methodology could probably be summarized in two single sentences: *We don't ask people for their memories. We create an environment where memories feel welcome.* Everything else—the workbook, the prompts, the MEMORY COMPANION, the sensory tools, the local photographs, the guided conversations, and even artificial intelligence—exists to support that one simple idea.

Looking back now, I don't think I discovered a collection of storytelling techniques. I think I discovered a philosophy. The methodology simply became how I put that philosophy into practice.

CHAPTER 7

When I Realized It Was Bigger Than Me

People sometimes ask me when I realized that *One Memory at a Time* had become more than a storytelling program. It's an interesting question because, once again, I can't point to a particular day. No meeting announced that we had created a methodology. No newspaper headline or standing ovation suddenly made everything clear. Like so many other discoveries in this journey, the realization arrived quietly.

It happened because people began seeing possibilities that I hadn't seen myself. When I first started this work, my focus was wonderfully narrow. I wanted to help seniors remember their stories and preserve them for the people they loved. That seemed like a worthwhile goal, and if the journey had ended there, I would have been perfectly satisfied. Helping one person reconnect with a lifetime of memories felt meaningful enough.

Then something unexpected began to happen. People stopped talking to me about seniors. Instead, they started talking to me about the methodology. An educator would say, "Could our students use this with their grandparents?" A church leader would ask, "Could this help strengthen relationships between younger and older members of our congregation?" A volunteer coordinator wondered if the same approach could train community volunteers. Families began asking whether they could use it around their own kitchen tables. Community leaders started talking about preserving local history. Industry associations wondered whether it could help preserve the history of their industries, such as railways or fishing. Everywhere I went, people seemed to be asking the same question in different ways. "Could this work here?"

At first, I honestly didn't know the answer. The interesting part is that I wasn't the one imagining these new possibilities. Other people were. They weren't looking at the workbook. They were looking at the philosophy behind it. Without realizing it, they were helping me understand something I hadn't yet recognized myself. The methodology wasn't limited to one setting because it had never been built around one setting. It had been built around something much more universal—the way people naturally connect through conversation. Looking back now, I think that's when I began to understand the difference between the simple *One Memory at a Time* program and a methodology.

A program usually belongs in one place. A methodology can travel. It can be adapted without losing its identity because its strength isn't found in the individual activities. Its strength lies in the thinking behind them. That realization changed the way I looked at everything I had created. I stopped asking whether another organization could use the workbook. I began asking whether another community could benefit from the philosophy. Those are very different questions.

As more people became involved, I noticed something else that humbled me. The methodology was beginning to grow in directions I had never planned. Educators imagined students interviewing seniors. Churches envisioned conversations that strengthened faith across generations. Communities saw opportunities to preserve local history before it disappeared. Industry leaders began talking about capturing the experiences of workers whose knowledge had never been written down. Even families who had no connection to an organized program were using the ideas around their own dinner tables.

None of those possibilities came from a strategic plan. They came from people who saw something I had been too close to see. For me, that was one of the most rewarding moments of the entire journey. It also carried an unexpected responsibility. I realized that if this methodology was going to grow beyond me, it needed something more than enthusiasm. It needed a clear philosophy. It needed principles that would remain constant even as new ideas, new tools, and new technologies continued to emerge. The workbook would change. Future volumes would be written. Artificial intelligence would improve. New memory activities would undoubtedly appear. But the philosophy—the belief that memories are invited rather than extracted, and that every person deserves to have their story heard with patience and respect—could never change. That philosophy had become the compass that would guide every future decision.

Perhaps that's when I truly understood what had happened. I hadn't simply created another resource for seniors. I had uncovered a way of thinking about conversation itself. That realization was both exciting and humbling because it reminded me that this work was never really mine alone. Every storyteller who trusted me with a memory, every volunteer who sat patiently beside another person, every educator who imagined a classroom, every family that chose to begin a conversation, and every organization that believed these stories mattered had become part of the discovery. They shaped the methodology.

As I reflect on those early days of *One Memory at a Time* now, I don't think the greatest achievement was writing a workbook or developing a collection of tools. The greatest achievement was discovering a philosophy that other people immediately recognized as their own. That's when I realized something I hadn't expected.

This journey was no longer about creating a program. It was about stewarding an idea. And good ideas were never meant to belong to one person. They were meant to be shared, strengthened, and eventually carried forward by others. Looking back now, I think that was the moment I realized this was bigger than me. Memory was not a financial transaction.

PART II

BRINGING THE PHILOSOPHY TO LIFE

CHAPTER 8

The Philosophy Behind the *One Memory at a Time* *Guided Storytelling Methodology*

That's an interesting subject heading because, honestly, I don't think I ever sat down one day and decided to create a philosophy. If someone had asked me that question in the early days of *One Memory at a Time*, I probably would have pointed to the workbook sitting on the table and said, "Well, there it is." At the time, I thought the workbook was the program. Looking back now, I realize it wasn't. The workbook was simply the tool people could hold in their hands. The philosophy had been quietly taking shape long before I ever wrote the first page. I just didn't recognize it yet.

When I think back on those first pilot sessions, I remember spending a lot of time watching rather than talking. I wasn't there to prove that my ideas were right. Quite honestly, I was there because I wanted to see what happened when people were given a gentle opportunity to talk about their lives. I found myself noticing the little things. What made someone smile? Why did one memory suddenly lead to another? Why did some questions seem to come alive while others simply faded away? I didn't realize it then, but those afternoons became my classroom. The participants were my teachers, and each session left me with another question to ponder on the drive home.

One of the first things I noticed was how often people underestimated their own lives. I can't tell you how many times someone looked at me and said, "Tony, I don't really have much of a story." My good friend Marjorie, at 104, would say that each time I tried to get her to talk about her youth. After hearing that enough times, I almost began smiling before someone using my program finished that sentence because I knew what was probably going to happen next. Twenty or thirty minutes later, that same person would be laughing about a childhood adventure, describing their first day at school, remembering a neighbour who changed their life, or telling everyone how they met the person they eventually married. Nothing magical had happened during those few minutes. Their story hadn't suddenly appeared. It had always been there. The only thing that had changed was that someone had given it a comfortable place to begin using my sample story.

That observation stayed with me because it changed the way I looked at storytelling. I had always assumed that stories were what we were trying to collect. Eventually I realized that stories weren't really the starting point at all. Memories were. One small memory would often open the door to another, and before long a story would emerge almost naturally. The

more I watched that happen, the less interested I became in asking bigger or more questions. Instead, I found myself searching for smaller, gentler invitations that allowed people to begin wherever they felt comfortable.

That word—*invitation*—has become one of the most important words in my vocabulary. People often describe *One Memory at a Time* as a book of stories and questions, but I don't see it that way anymore. To me, they're invitations. There's a difference. A question can make someone feel as though they're expected to produce an answer. An invitation simply says, "If you'd like to, tell me about this part of your life." One feels like an interview. The other feels like a conversation. I learned very early that conversations almost always produce better stories than interviews.

I think that's because conversations don't have a destination. They have a direction. If someone starts talking about their first bicycle and ends up remembering the neighbour who taught them how to ride it, I don't consider that getting off track. I consider that memory doing exactly what memory was meant to do. I eventually came to think of these connections as MEMORY PATHWAYS. A Memory Pathway is the route one memory creates toward another. The first memory is not necessarily the story we are trying to find. Sometimes it simply knows the way to it.

For years I thought my job was to guide people toward a particular story of the product I was selling. Eventually I realized my real job was much simpler. I needed to create an environment where people felt comfortable enough to participate. Years later, I discovered the same principle applied to memory: create the right environment and let the story find its own way forward.

Another lesson I learned when attending a session surprised me even more. I discovered that listening is far more important than speaking. The first rule of sales was also the best rule to remember. That may sound obvious, but I didn't truly appreciate it until I watched volunteers sit with seniors during the pilot sessions. The volunteers who seemed to have the greatest impact weren't necessarily the best talkers. They weren't trying to impress anyone or demonstrate how much they knew. They were simply present. They listened with genuine curiosity, and in doing so they gave the storyteller something that has become increasingly rare in our busy world—someone's complete attention.

I've often wondered if that's why these sessions feel so different. We live in a world where conversations are constantly interrupted. Phones ring. Notifications appear. Someone is always in a hurry to get to the next thing. Yet for an hour, two to ten people sit together with no agenda other than sharing a part of a life. It's amazing what can happen when someone feels they don't have to rush. I've watched memories surface after several minutes of silence because nobody felt the need to fill the quiet. Sometimes the silence was actually doing the work.

As the months passed, I also found myself thinking differently about what we were really preserving. At first I thought we were collecting stories for families. That certainly remains an important outcome, but today I think something even more meaningful is taking place. We're helping people reconnect with parts of themselves that may have been sitting quietly in the background for years. Every time I hear someone say, "I'd forgotten all about that," I can't help but smile. I don't think they've simply remembered an event. I think they've reconnected with a piece of who they are. To me, that's one of the greatest gifts this methodology offers.

So, when people ask me about the philosophy behind the *One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*, I don't start with memory prompts, facilitator guides, or story workbooks. Those things matter, and we'll explore them in the chapters ahead, but they aren't the foundation. The foundation is much simpler. I believe every person has lived a life worth remembering. I believe every life deserves to be listened to with respect. And I believe that when we create the right environment—one built on patience, curiosity, kindness, and genuine conversation—people will often surprise themselves with what they remember.

I didn't invent those truths. I simply had the privilege of watching them unfold, one conversation at a time. In many ways, this methodology isn't a collection of techniques. It reflects what hundreds of storytellers quietly taught me over the years. I was fortunate enough to be there, paying attention, while they showed me that the best stories are rarely pulled from people. They're invited. And when they're invited with patience, respect, and genuine interest, they have a wonderful habit of arriving... *One Memory at a Time*.

FIELD OBSERVATION 5

Silence Is Sometimes Doing the Work

When someone becomes quiet, our instinct is often to ask another question. I learned to wait. Silence does not always mean the conversation has stopped. Sometimes it means a memory is finding its way home.



CHAPTER 9

What Makes the *One Memory at a Time* Guided Storytelling Methodology© Different?

That's probably the question I've been asked more than any other since people began using *One Memory at a Time*. They'll often look through the workbook, flip a few pages, and then ask, "So what makes this different from all the other memory books out there?" It's a fair question.

The interesting thing is that, at first, I wasn't sure I had an answer. I knew the sessions felt different. I knew people stayed engaged longer than I expected. I knew volunteers and staff told me conversations seemed to flow naturally. But if someone had asked me to explain why, I don't think I could have. I simply knew that something was happening and I had started it.

Looking back now, I realize I was concentrating on the wrong thing. I was looking at the workbook. What I should have been looking at was what happened after someone opened it. You see, a workbook doesn't create a conversation. A facilitator doesn't create a conversation either. Even the storyteller isn't entirely responsible for creating the conversation. What matters is what happens between two people. The methodology lives in that space. It comes alive when two people become genuinely interested in each other and allow a memory to unfold without trying to force it. And I helped start that conversation.

That may sound like a small distinction, but for me it changed everything. I began realizing that people often think the success of a storytelling session depends on asking the perfect question. I don't believe that anymore. In fact, I think that's one of the biggest misconceptions about storytelling. There isn't a perfect question. There are simply invitations that feel natural enough for someone to accept.

Once I stopped chasing the perfect question, I started paying much more attention to the environment we were creating, using sample storytelling as its key ingredient. Was the storyteller comfortable? Did they feel heard? Was there enough time for silence? Was the volunteer curious without being impatient? Those things began to matter far more than whether prompt Question Number Three came before prompt Question Number Four.

I also noticed something that surprised me. The workbook wasn't really leading the conversation. The storyteller was. The workbook simply offered places where the conversation might begin. From there, the storyteller decided where the journey would go. Sometimes they followed the sample story exactly. Other times they wandered into memories that weren't even mentioned in the workbook. At first, I might have worried we were getting off track. Today I smile because I've learned that those unexpected detours often lead to the richest stories of all.

That realization eventually changed the way I designed every part of the program. Instead of building a system that controlled conversations, I wanted to build one that encouraged

them. That's a very different objective. One approach tries to manage people. The other trusts people. I suppose that's one of the deepest beliefs behind this methodology. I've come to trust that people know their own lives far better than I ever will. They don't need me to direct every step of the conversation. What they often need is someone who creates enough safety, patience, and encouragement for them to explore those memories in their own way. People sometimes ask me why I use the phrase *Guided Storytelling*. I usually tell them that the answer is found in the first word: Guided. **Not directed. Not controlled. Not interviewed... Guided.**

Think about taking a walk with someone through a beautiful park. You don't decide what catches their eye. You simply walk together. They may stop to admire an old tree, point out a bird you've completely missed, or tell you a story that the scenery unexpectedly brings to mind. The walk belongs to both of you, but the discoveries belong to them. That's exactly how I see a storytelling session using *One Memory at a Time*. The facilitator, or "MEMORY COMPANION", walks beside the storyteller, not in front of them.

As I thought more about that distinction, I began to think of this skill as **STORY GUIDING**. The MEMORY COMPANION is the person sitting beside the storyteller; STORY GUIDING is what that person learns to do. It means noticing the memory that has arrived, listening for where it may be leading, and resisting the temptation to pull the storyteller back simply because the conversation has wandered away from where we expected it to go. A Story Guide does not choose the destination. The storyteller does.

That became especially important once I understood MEMORY PATHWAYS. If one memory naturally leads to another, then the person listening has a choice. We can interrupt the pathway by returning to our next prepared question, or we can become curious and follow it. Sometimes that means asking a gentle question. Sometimes it means acknowledging something the person has just said. And sometimes it means doing absolutely nothing except listening and allowing a little silence. I began to realize that good STORY GUIDING wasn't about keeping a conversation on track. It was about recognizing that the storyteller's track might be more interesting than mine.

Over time, I also began to understand why so many volunteers enjoyed the experience as much as the storytellers. They weren't just helping someone else preserve memories. They were being invited into another person's life for a little while. That's an extraordinary privilege when you stop and think about it. How often do we get to sit with another human being and hear the stories that shaped who they became? In many cases, those who participated in the eight-week program are now volunteering to run the next program. Perhaps that's why I never think of this methodology as being about books, binders, or workbooks. Those things are useful, and they certainly have their place, but they're only tools. The real methodology exists between two people willing to slow down long enough to listen, wonder, and discover together.

When people ask me what makes *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* different, I could probably give them a list of features. I could talk about memory prompts, sensory cues, guided conversations, facilitators, story companions, AI-assisted editing, or community legacy projects. All of those things are important, and we'll explore them throughout the rest of this book. But if I'm being completely honest, I don't think any of those things are what truly make it different.

What makes it different is that it begins with a simple belief. People are not projects to be completed. They're stories waiting for the right conversation. As I've been writing this chapter, something has been quietly working its way into my thoughts. I didn't plan to include it, but perhaps that's fitting. After all, this book is about memories, and sometimes they arrive when we least expect them. I suppose there's a reason I've called this methodology a toolbox throughout this chapter.

My father was a carpenter. Like so many craftsmen of his generation, he made his living with his hands. As a little boy, I loved watching him work, and I was fascinated by the tools he carried with him every day. But one thing about his tools has stayed with me all these years. He never bought a carpenter's toolbox. He built one. At the time, I simply thought that's what carpenters did. Looking back now, I realize it meant much more. My father understood his craft so well that he knew exactly what he needed to do his work. Rather than settling for someone else's idea of the perfect toolbox, he built one that fit him perfectly. Every compartment had a purpose. Every tool had its place. That toolbox wasn't simply where he stored his hammers and chisels. It reflected the way he worked, the problems he solved, and the pride he took in providing for his family. As a young boy, I don't think I appreciated what I was really seeing. Today, I see it very differently.

Without ever realizing it, I've spent much of my own life building a toolbox as well. Mine isn't made of wood. I've built it one observation, one conversation, one sales meeting, and one sale at a time. Every tool in *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* was created because I encountered a problem that needed a better solution, just like I did to solve a customer's problem.

Some tools in *One Memory at a Time* encourage conversation. Others help unlock memories. Some help volunteers feel more confident. Others make it easier for families to preserve the stories of the people they love. Like my father's toolbox, every tool has a purpose, and every one of them earned its place. Perhaps that's why the word *toolbox* has always felt so natural to me. My father built his toolbox to build solutions for his boss and customers, earn a living, and care for the people he loved. I've simply been building a different kind of toolbox for memory recall. One that I hope helps people build conversations, strengthen relationships, preserve family stories, and remind one another that every life is worth remembering. When I think about it now, I like to believe my father would have understood exactly why I chose that word.

CHAPTER 10

The Most Important Tool Isn't a Tool at All

If you've read this far, you might think the most important part of *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* is the workbook. Others might guess it's the memory prompts, the sensory activities, or perhaps even the artificial intelligence that helps transform a senior's conversation into a written story. They're all important.

But none of them is the most important part of the methodology. The most important part has always been the person sitting beside the storyteller.

When I first began developing *One Memory at a Time*, I thought a good workbook would do most of the heavy lifting. If the stories and questions were well written, I assumed the participants' stories would naturally follow. It didn't take long for me to realize I had it backwards.

Two volunteers could open the same workbook to the same page, ask the same memory prompt, and have completely different experiences. The difference wasn't the page. It was the person. That realization made me stop thinking of volunteers as helpers or facilitators and start thinking of them as MEMORY COMPANIONS. I've always appreciated the warmth of that word. A companion doesn't arrive with an agenda. They aren't there to fix someone, evaluate them, or hurry them along. They're simply willing to walk beside another person for a while. That's exactly the relationship I hoped to create.

I also discovered something else that surprised me. The best MEMORY COMPANIONS weren't necessarily the ones who talked the most. In fact, it was often just the opposite. The people who had the greatest impact were usually the ones who were comfortable letting the storyteller lead the conversation. They knew when to ask another gentle question, but they also knew when to remain quiet. They understood that silence isn't awkward. Sometimes it's the sound of a memory making its way home.

One of the things I enjoy most is watching a new volunteer during their first session. They're usually a little nervous, wondering if they'll say the wrong thing or forget an important question. By the end of the hour, many of them discover that their greatest contribution wasn't anything they said at all. It was the fact that they cared enough to be fully present. That word—*present*—has become increasingly important to me.

In today's world, giving someone our complete attention has become surprisingly rare. We're often distracted by our phones, our schedules, or our own thoughts. Yet when someone realizes that another person is genuinely interested in their story, something begins to change. They relax. They smile more. They begin to trust. Before long, the conversation isn't about remembering anymore. It's about connecting.

Over the past few months, people have thanked me for creating *One Memory at a Time*. While I appreciate the kind words, I usually think they've thanked the wrong person. The real magic doesn't happen because I wrote a workbook. It happens because thousands of ordinary people choose to sit beside another human being and listen. That's the methodology at work.

I've often said that we don't collect stories—we receive them. The difference matters. Collecting sounds like taking. Receiving sounds like being entrusted with something valuable. Every story shared through this methodology is a gift. Like any gift, it deserves gratitude, careful handling, and respectful return.

That's why I believe the title “**MEMORY COMPANION**” matters.

- A companion doesn't walk ahead.
- A companion doesn't walk behind.
- A companion walks beside.

And when I think about everything we've talked about in this book so far, I can't imagine a better place for anyone to begin.

FIELD OBSERVATION 6

The Most Powerful Tool Was Never in the Toolbox

The greatest tool for helping someone remember is another person who genuinely wants to listen.



CHAPTER 11

Why I Think It Works

That's a question I've been asked many times over the past few years, and I have to admit that my answer has changed.

In the beginning, I probably would have pointed to the workbook, its stories or the memory prompts. I might have talked about the structure of the sessions or how the stories were organized. Those were the visible parts of the program, and they were certainly important. Today, if someone asked me why I think *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* works, I would probably answer with a smile and say, "I'm not sure it has anything to do with the workbook." I know that sounds strange after spending over a year developing it, but hear me out.

Over time, I've come to believe that the workbook simply gives people permission to begin. It removes that awkward moment when two people sit down together, and neither one knows quite where to start. Once the conversation begins, however, something much more interesting takes over. People begin connecting. Not because they're trying to complete another page in a workbook, but because they're sharing pieces of their lives.

I've watched complete strangers become comfortable with one another in less than an hour. I've seen volunteers arrive feeling nervous and leave wondering where the time went. I've watched family members hear stories they had never heard before, despite believing they already knew everything there was to know about their parents or grandparents.

I don't think those moments happened because someone asked a brilliant question. I think they happened because someone cared enough to listen. The more sessions I observed, the more I noticed something else. People rarely remembered just one thing. A single memory seemed to have a wonderful habit of introducing itself to another memory. One story would remind someone of a neighbour, which led to a favourite teacher, which somehow led to a first job or a family vacation. It was almost as if one memory reached over and invited another into the conversation.

I stopped trying to understand exactly why that happened. Instead, I simply learned to trust it. That may sound unusual, but I've found that not every worthwhile observation needs an immediate explanation. Sometimes it's enough to recognize a pattern, respect it, and let it keep teaching you.

Another thing I've noticed is that people seem to enjoy remembering together. That may be one of the simplest observations in this entire book, but I don't think I appreciated it enough when I first launched *One Memory at a Time*. Think about how often memories become richer when someone else is part of the conversation. "You remember that too?" "I'd forgotten about that!" "No, that's not how it happened..."

Before long, everyone smiles, laughs, and adds another piece to the story. The memory hasn't simply been recalled. It's been shared. Perhaps that's why loneliness begins to soften during these conversations. The session isn't about looking backward. It's about discovering that our lives still have the power to bring people together today.

I've also learned that stories have a remarkable way of changing the person who's listening. That's something I never expected. When I first began, I naturally focused on what the storyteller might gain. What surprised me was watching staff and volunteers leave with a completely different appreciation for another generation. Students volunteering in retirement and nursing homes began seeing seniors differently. Family members gained a deeper understanding of the people who had raised them. Even staff members who had known a resident for years would occasionally say, "I never knew that about her." Those moments reminded me that storytelling is never a one-way gift. Everyone receives something.

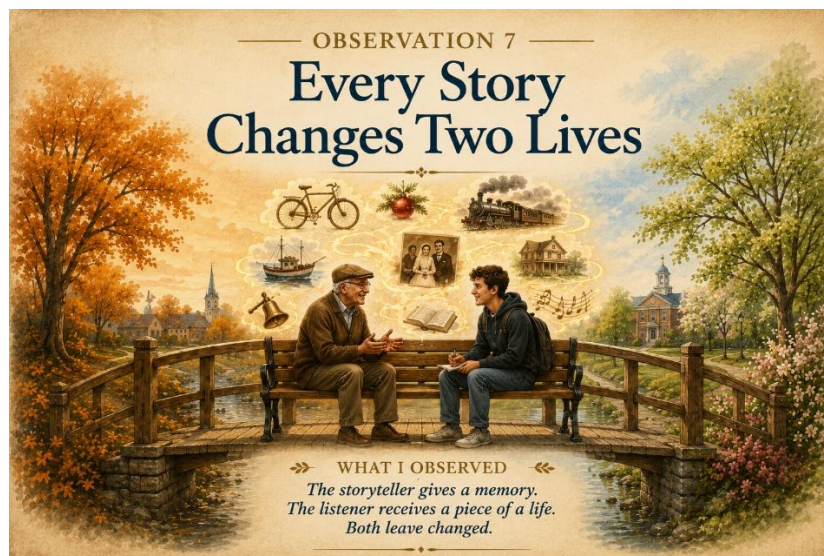
As I look back over everything I've learned, I think I've finally settled on the answer to the question I was asked. Why do I think this methodology works? Because it isn't really about memory. Memory is simply the doorway. What people are truly looking for is connection. They want to know that their lives mattered. They want to feel heard. They want someone to be interested in where they've been, what they've learned, and what they hope will be remembered long after they're gone.

The *One Memory at a Time* workbook opens the door. The MEMORY COMPANION walks through it. The conversation brings the room to life. And somewhere along the way, without anyone announcing that something important has happened, two people who were strangers an hour ago walk away knowing each other just a little better. If that isn't worth preserving, I don't know what is.

FIELD OBSERVATION 7

Every Story Changes Two Lives

The storyteller gives a memory. The listener receives a piece of a life. Both leave changed.



CHAPTER 12

I Hope It Never Stops Growing

Every now and then someone asks me where I see *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* five or ten years from now. It's an interesting question because, if you'd asked me that when I first began, I probably would have talked about how many retirement homes I hoped would use it or how many stories might eventually be collected. Today my answer is very different. I've come to realize that this methodology was never meant to measure its success by numbers. If it helps one family reconnect, one student understands another generation, or one senior remembers that their life still matters, then it has already accomplished something worthwhile.

Of course, I hope it keeps growing. I hope it reaches communities I will never have the opportunity to visit. I hope volunteers I'll never meet sit down with storytellers whose names I'll never know. I hope teachers discover that history becomes much more meaningful when students hear it from someone who actually lived it. I hope churches use it to strengthen relationships across generations, and I hope communities and industries like the railway, farming and fishing preserve stories that might otherwise disappear forever. Those are all wonderful possibilities, but they aren't really what I hope for most.

What I hope for most is that people continue adding to the toolbox.

That might sound a little strange after spending so much time explaining the tools I've created, but I honestly don't want this methodology to remain exactly as it is today. I hope someone discovers a better way to encourage conversation. I hope another volunteer creates an activity that helps unlock memories none of us have thought about yet. I hope educators adapt it for classrooms in ways I would never have imagined. I hope artificial intelligence opens new doors while always remembering that technology exists to serve people, not replace them. If this methodology is still the same twenty years from now, then perhaps someone stopped listening.

One thing I've learned throughout my life is that the best ideas are rarely finished. They're living things. They grow because thoughtful people care enough to improve them. They adapt to new generations, new technologies, and new challenges without losing sight of the reason they were created in the first place. That's exactly what I hope happens here.

I also hope that nobody ever feels they must protect this methodology from change simply because I happened to be the person who started it. Quite honestly, that would disappoint me. Every meaningful movement I've admired has grown because other people embraced the original idea, respected its purpose, and then found new ways to help it serve even more people. I'd much rather see *One Memory at a Time* evolve with integrity than remain frozen in time out of loyalty to me.

Sometimes people ask if I'm worried that someone else will improve on what I've built. My answer is always the same. I certainly hope they do. If someone develops a better memory prompt, use it. If someone creates a wonderful activity that helps people remember, share it. If a teacher discovers a new way to connect students with seniors, celebrate it. If technology makes storytelling easier without taking away its humanity, welcome it. None of those things diminish what I've created. They honour it.

Perhaps that's because I've never believed this methodology belonged exclusively to me. The original idea may have started with me, but every storyteller, volunteer, family member, educator, and organization that has welcomed it into their lives has shaped it. In many ways, I've simply had the privilege of watching it grow.

When I think about the future, I don't picture shelves filled with workbooks. I picture conversations. I picture a grandson hearing a story from his grandmother that would otherwise have been lost. I picture a high school student discovering that an interview assignment unexpectedly became a friendship. I picture a volunteer driving home with a smile because they spent an hour listening instead of rushing. Those are the images that give me hope, because they remind me that this methodology has never really been about books. It's always been about people.

If, years from now, someone picks up this book and decides to continue building the toolbox, I hope they'll remember one thing. Don't be afraid to improve it. Just never lose sight of why it was built in the first place. Everything else can grow from there.

CHAPTER 13

The Journey Continues

One of the questions I hear most often today isn't about how *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* works. People seem to understand that once they've experienced it. The question they ask instead is much simpler. "Where do you see this going?" I usually smile before answering because, if this journey has taught me one thing, it's to be careful about predicting where curiosity might lead. Every time I thought I understood the destination, another door quietly opened. My Stories Across Generations© is one such example. Looking back now, I don't think I was ever deciding where the methodology should go. Other people were showing me where it already wanted to go.

When I first began this work, my vision was quite modest. I wanted to help seniors preserve the stories of their lives before those stories disappeared forever. That seemed like a meaningful enough purpose, and if the journey had ended there, I would have considered it a success. Helping one person reconnect with their memories and leave those stories for the people they loved felt worthwhile. What I didn't realize at the time was that I wasn't really creating something for seniors. I was discovering a philosophy that revealed itself through seniors.

The first clues appeared almost by accident. After presentations, people rarely spoke only about retirement residences or long-term care homes. Instead, they approached me and began describing completely different possibilities. A teacher would ask whether high school students could use the same approach to interview their grandparents. A church leader would wonder if it might strengthen relationships between younger and older members of the congregation. Someone involved in local history would talk about preserving their community's stories before they were lost. Every conversation seemed to end the same way. Someone had imagined another place for this philosophy.

At first, I simply listened. I wasn't looking to expand the program or create new initiatives. In fact, many of the ideas that eventually became important parts of this journey weren't mine at all. They belonged to people who had recognized something I hadn't yet fully appreciated. Like the people of Rocmaura Nursing Home in Saint John, NB. They pointed out that I was asking too many prompts and told me to ask fewer and to make sure they were core questions. They weren't looking at the workbook or the activities. They looked beyond the tools and saw the philosophy itself. That realization became another important turning point for me because it confirmed that the methodology wasn't confined to one setting. It could travel. It could adapt. It could serve different generations, different communities, and different organizations without losing its identity because its foundation had never been the workbook. Its foundation was always the conversation.

That's how Stories Across Generations© came into being. It wasn't because I decided to enter the education system. It happened because educators recognized that students and seniors both had something valuable to offer one another. The methodology simply gave them a way to come together. Before long, I found myself thinking not only about preserving memories, but about building relationships, fostering understanding between generations, and giving young people a chance to discover history through the people who lived it.

The same thing happened with Faith Across Generations©. Conversations with church leaders made me realize that faith has always been passed from one generation to the next through stories, shared experiences, and relationships. Once again, the methodology wasn't changing. Only the setting was. The philosophy that encouraged a senior to remember a childhood Christmas also encouraged conversations about faith, family, and belonging.

Perhaps the broadest expansion came when I began thinking about Canada's Living Heritage Initiative. As I looked across our country, I realized that every generation quietly takes with it experiences that can never be recreated. Fishermen, farmers, railway workers, miners, foresters, factory workers, teachers, nurses, and thousands of others have lived through extraordinary periods of Canadian history. Much of what they know has never been written down because it exists only in memory. Suddenly, I realized that the same philosophy that helped preserve one family's story could also preserve the living history of an entire nation.

What fascinates me today is that, on the surface, these initiatives appear completely different. One serves seniors. Another serves schools. Another supports churches. Another helps preserve Canada's heritage. Yet when I step back, I don't really see separate programs. I see the same philosophy expressed in different ways. Each begins with the same simple belief: create an environment where stories feel welcome, and people often surprise themselves with what they remember.

CHAPTER 14

If I Could Leave You with One Thought

If you've stayed with me this far, I'd like to thank you.

When I first began writing this book, I thought I was documenting a methodology. Somewhere along the way, I realized I was really documenting a journey. Looking back now, I can see that the two are impossible to separate. The methodology grew out of the journey, and the journey was shaped by hundreds of conversations with people who trusted others with pieces of their lives.

I've often wondered why some stories stay with us for years while others quietly fade away. I don't think it's because one story is more important than another. I think it's because certain stories remind us of what it means to be human. They remind us that every person has known happiness and disappointment, success and failure, courage and fear, laughter and tears. We may have lived different lives, but when we truly listen to one another, we usually discover that we have far more in common than we ever imagined.

If this journey has taught me anything, it's that people don't need perfect memories to tell meaningful stories. They don't need to remember every date, every name, or every detail. They simply need someone who is willing to listen without rushing them, correcting them, or finishing their sentences. I've seen memories arrive in unexpected ways, and I've learned that the most beautiful conversations are often the ones that wander a little before finding their way home.

One unexpected gift this work has given me is a deeper appreciation for ordinary lives. We live in a world that often celebrates famous people and extraordinary achievements, yet I've come to believe that some of the richest stories are found in kitchens, workshops, classrooms, fishing boats, church pews, family farms, factory floors, and neighbourhood streets. History matters, but so do the lives of the people who quietly lived it. Those are the stories I never want us to lose, and I hope my work to bring *One Memory at a Time* to life gives them their best chance.

As I sit here writing these final pages, I find myself thinking about my own parents. Like so many of us, there are questions I wish I had asked and conversations I wish had lasted a little longer. At the time, I assumed there would always be another visit, another holiday, another afternoon together. Life has a way of reminding us that tomorrow isn't always guaranteed. If this methodology has changed anything in my own life, it has made me appreciate the value of asking one more question while we still have the opportunity.

Perhaps that's the one thought I hope you'll carry with you after you close this book. Don't wait. Don't wait until someone is ill. Don't wait until a birthday or an anniversary. Don't wait until you finally have more time. Sit down with someone you care about. Put your phone aside. Make a cup of coffee. Go for a walk. Open an old photo album. Ask a gentle

question, and then do something that has become increasingly rare in our busy world. **Listen.**

You may hear a story you've never heard before. You may discover something that changes the way you see someone you've known your entire life. You may even learn something about yourself. If that happens, then everything I've shared in these pages will have been worthwhile.

When I began this journey, I thought I was creating a way to preserve memories. Today, I think it's something much simpler. I think it's a way to remind one another that our lives matter, that our stories deserve to be heard, and that the greatest gift we can sometimes offer another human being isn't advice, or answers, or solutions. It's our attention.

One question people occasionally ask me is whether I believe I've figured memory out. My answer is always the same. Not even close. I simply think I've become a better observer than I used to be. And perhaps that's enough. Every session still teaches me something I didn't know the day before.

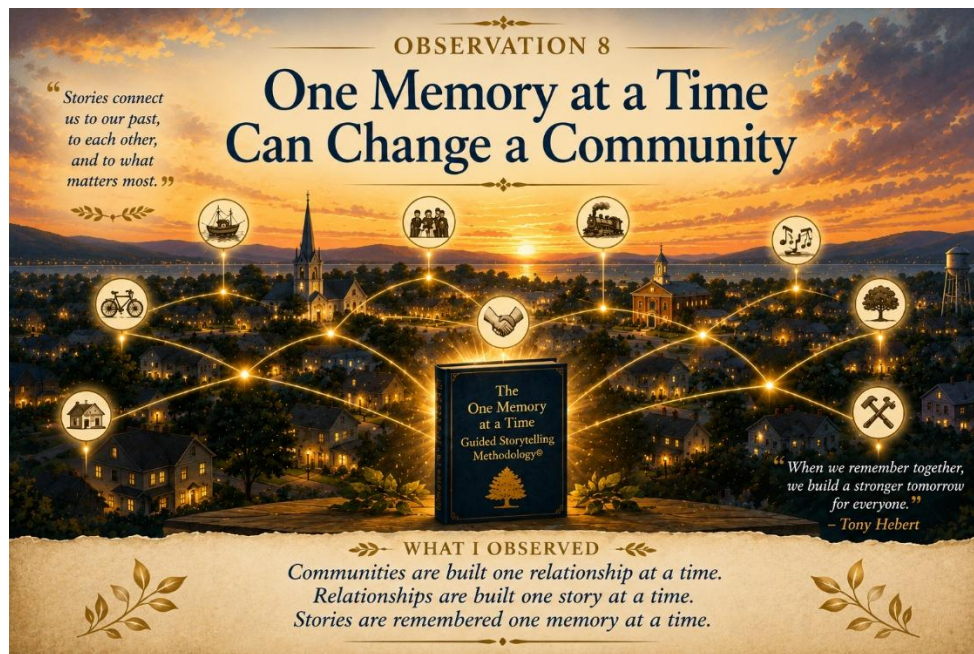
If this book has inspired you to give that gift to even one person, then I couldn't ask for anything more. The *One Memory at a Time* Workbook is free for the asking. Thank you for spending this time with me. I hope our paths cross somewhere along the way. Until then... Take care of one another... and never underestimate the power of one conversation... *One Memory at a Time. "I don't ask you to accept these observations because they are mine. I simply invite you to test them for yourself."*

People sometimes ask me if this methodology is finished. I honestly hope it never is! I still don't know why one photograph unlocks a lifetime while another changes nothing. I still don't know why one memory suddenly introduces five more. I still don't know why silence sometimes becomes the most powerful invitation of all. What I do know is this. Every time I sit beside another storyteller, I leave having learned something new. Perhaps that's exactly the way it should be.

FIELD OBSERVATION 8

One Memory at a Time Can Change a Community

Communities are built one relationship at a time. Relationships are built one story at a time. People remember stories One Memory at a Time.



After the Conversation...

Appendix A — The Journey So Far — A visual timeline of how The *One Memory at a Time* Guided Storytelling Methodology© evolved.

Appendix B — Things I've Learned Along the Way — Personal lessons about listening, curiosity, silence, invitation and human connection.

Appendix C — What I Believe — The principles and convictions at the heart of the methodology.

Appendix D — Questions People Often Ask Me — Practical answers for storytellers, families, volunteers, students, educators and organizations.

Appendix E — Where Your Journey Begins — A personal invitation to begin a meaningful conversation with someone whose story matters.

Appendix F - Why I Chose to Give *One Memory at a Time*© and my Book Away
- A Personal Vision from the Author

Appendix A

The Journey So Far

When I look back now, I realize I couldn't possibly tell you when *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* began. If you're expecting me to point to a particular day on a calendar, I'm afraid I'll disappoint you. Life doesn't usually work that way. At least mine never has. The more I reflect on this journey, the more I realize that discoveries rarely announce themselves. They tend to arrive quietly, often disguised as ordinary moments that don't seem especially important at the time.

Most people would probably expect me to say the journey began with the workbook, or perhaps with the first pilot project at Peoples Park Tower in mid February. Those certainly became important milestones, but I don't think they were really the beginning. If I'm being honest, I suspect the seeds were planted many years earlier. Looking back over my life and my career in sales, I've always been fascinated by how people think, how they make decisions, how they solve problems, and how one simple observation can quietly change the way we see the world. I didn't know those experiences were preparing me for this work.

And when I wrote my memoir from 2016 to 2023, I had no voice beside me to mentor me. I just wrote, reviewed, and wrote some more. That process produced two major draft books on the way to my final book, *The Knock That Changed Everything*. For those seven years, I remember waking up many times during the night when a memory arrived and quickly going to my office to get its content on paper while it was fresh. I simply wrote them, one after another, never imagining they would eventually come together in such an unexpected way as a finished memoir.

One phone call, however, changed the direction of my thinking. In August of 2025, Gary Comeau, the Recreation Director at Oakwood Terrace in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, asked me a question that seemed straightforward enough at the time. After reading my memoir, he remarked on my memory of my youth and asked whether I had a way to help seniors remember and preserve their stories. I don't think either of us realized where that conversation would eventually lead. Looking back now, I smile because that single question became the beginning of hundreds of others.

The first pilot sessions were exciting, but they were also humbling. I wasn't arriving with all the answers. In fact, I spent much of my time watching, listening, and trying to understand why some things worked better than others. Every session taught me something. Sometimes it was a small adjustment to a memory prompt. Sometimes it was discovering that silence could be just as valuable as conversation. Sometimes it was realizing that a volunteer's patience had unlocked a story that no carefully written question ever could. Little by little, the methodology wasn't being invented so much as revealed.

As the months passed, the workbook evolved, the MEMORY COMPANION concept emerged, facilitator guides were written, and more organizations began asking if they could use the program. Just when I thought I understood where the journey was going, another opportunity would appear. Schools began seeing possibilities. Churches saw possibilities. Community organizations saw possibilities. Before long, Stories Across Generations©, Faith Across Generations©, and Canada's Living Heritage Initiative grew from the same roots. None of those ideas were part of some grand master plan. They simply grew because people recognized that the philosophy could serve many different communities.

The introduction of artificial intelligence became another unexpected chapter in the story. Some people assumed it would replace the human side of storytelling. I never believed that for a moment. To me, AI simply became another tool in the toolbox, helping preserve conversations more efficiently while leaving the heart of the methodology exactly where it had always belonged—with two people sitting together, sharing stories, and listening with genuine interest.

Today, people sometimes ask me if I feel as though I've finished building the methodology. I usually smile because I honestly hope the answer is no, and that this journey continues long after I'm gone. I hope other people improve it, adapt it, and discover better ways to start conversations. If I've learned anything throughout this experience, it's that the best ideas are never really finished. They continue growing because thoughtful people care enough to leave them a little better than they found them.

When I read back over these pages, I don't really see a timeline. I see a collection of ordinary moments that gradually became something extraordinary. None of them seemed especially significant by themselves, but together they formed a path that I could never have planned. Perhaps that's the greatest lesson this journey has taught me.

Sometimes we don't recognize the important moments while we're living them. We only recognize them when we stop long enough to remember.

Appendix B

Things I've Learned Along the Way

That's a dangerous question to ask someone my age because, if you're not careful, you might be sitting there for the rest of the afternoon.

The older I get, the more I realize that life has been an incredible teacher. The interesting part is that the lessons rarely arrived when I expected them. They usually appeared in the middle of a problem, during an ordinary conversation, or while I was quietly watching someone else. Looking back now, I don't think I've ever learned my greatest lessons from a textbook. I've learned them from people.

One of the first things life taught me was that people almost always respond better to an invitation than they do to persuasion. I discovered that as a fifteen-year-old Fuller Brush salesman. I thought my job was to convince people to buy what I was selling. It didn't take long before I realized something much more important. People don't like being talked into things, but they enjoy discovering something for themselves. I didn't know it then, but that simple observation would quietly follow me through business, fundraising, community work, and eventually into the *One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*. Looking back now, I smile because I wasn't really learning how to sell. I was learning how to invite people to accept my thinking for a solution.

I've also learned that silence is one of the most misunderstood parts of a conversation. Most of us rush to fill it because we're afraid it feels awkward. I used to think the same way. Then I started watching storytelling sessions. Some of the most beautiful memories arrived after thirty or forty seconds of silence. Nothing was wrong. A memory was simply finding its way home. Since then, I've learned to become comfortable with silence. Memory is not like a spelling bee; silence often says more than another question ever could.

Another lesson took me much longer to understand. For years I believed that helping people meant giving them answers. In sales, that is exactly your job. Today, I'm not so sure. Often, I think helping people means asking a thoughtful question and then caring enough to listen to the answer. That's true whether you're speaking with a senior, a student, a friend, or a complete stranger. People don't always need another solution. Sometimes they simply need someone who believes their story is worth hearing.

I've learned that almost everyone underestimates the value of their own life. I can't count how many times someone has looked at me and said, "I don't really have much of a story." After hearing those words so often, I almost expect them now. What I've also learned is that those same people usually spend the next hour sharing stories that make everyone in the room laugh, reflect, and occasionally wipe away a tear. Their stories were never missing. Their confidence was.

One lesson still surprises me every time I see it happen. When we genuinely listen to another person, something changes in both of us. The storyteller feels heard, but the listener leaves with a deeper understanding of another life. I don't think storytelling is ever a one-way gift. Both people walk away carrying something they didn't have when the conversation began.

As I've grown older, I've also become convinced that curiosity keeps us young. I don't mean curiosity about headlines or technology. I mean curiosity about people. Every person I meet knows something I don't know. Every person has lived through experiences I'll never have. If I remain curious, life never stops teaching me. The day I think I know everything is probably the day I stop learning altogether and simply learn how to die as my last effort.

One of the greatest gifts this journey has given me is a renewed appreciation for ordinary lives. We often celebrate famous people and remarkable accomplishments, yet I've come to believe that history quietly lives inside ordinary families. It's found in the fisherman who worked before sunrise, the teacher who changed a child's confidence, the nurse who comforted frightened patients, the mother who somehow held everything together, and the father who built a toolbox because he knew exactly what his work required. Those stories deserve to be remembered just as much as the ones we read about in history books.

Perhaps the most important lesson of all is one I continue learning every day. We never really know how much another conversation might mean until we've had it. I've lost people I wish I'd asked one more question. I've heard stories I wish I'd heard years earlier. Those experiences have taught me not to assume there will always be another opportunity. If someone you love is still here today, don't wait for the perfect moment. The perfect moment is usually much simpler than we imagine. It's a quiet afternoon, a cup of coffee, an old photograph, and the willingness to ask, "Tell me about..."

When I think about everything this journey has taught me, I suppose it comes down to one simple thought. People are far more interesting than we give them credit for. All they need is someone who is interested enough to discover why.

Appendix C

What I Believe

That's probably one of the hardest discussions to write about in this book because beliefs don't usually appear all at once. They grow quietly over time and through experience. Some are shaped by success. Others arrive through disappointment. Many come from watching people rather than trying to teach them. When I look back over the years, I realize these aren't ideas I decided to believe one morning. They're observations that slowly became convictions.

I believe every person has a story worth telling. Not because every life has been extraordinary, but because every life has been lived. We sometimes make the mistake of thinking a story must include fame, great wealth, remarkable achievements, or dramatic events before it's worth preserving. I don't believe that anymore. Some of the most meaningful stories I've ever heard have come from people who insisted they had nothing interesting to say. They simply underestimated the value of their own lives.

I believe memories should be invited, never forced. The more I observed people remembering, the more convinced I became that memories don't like being chased. They seem to arrive when they feel welcome. That's why I've always preferred gentle invitations over demanding questions. I don't think we're opening doors. I think we're simply creating a place where people feel comfortable enough to open those doors themselves.

I believe listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give another human being. Not listening while we're preparing our reply. Not listening so we can tell a better story of our own. Just listening because someone else's life deserves our attention. I've watched people change simply because, for an hour, they realized someone was genuinely interested in what they had to say. We often underestimate how powerful that can be.

I believe stories belong to the storyteller. That belief matters to me. My role has never been to improve someone's life story or make it more interesting by having them use *One Memory at a Time* or any of the many tools I created for this program's framework. My responsibility is to help them tell it in their own voice. Even when technology helps organize or edit those stories, they must always remain true to the person who lived them. Their voice is far more important than perfect grammar.

I believe technology should strengthen human connection, never replace it. Artificial intelligence has become a wonderful addition to the toolbox, but that's exactly what it is—a tool. It can help us preserve conversations more efficiently, organize ideas more clearly, and make storytelling accessible to more people. What it cannot do is care, encourage, laugh, sit quietly during a difficult memory, or celebrate the joy of an unexpected story. Those moments belong to people, and I hope they always will.

I believe curiosity keeps us connected. One of the happiest discoveries of my life has been realizing that people never stop surprising me. Every person carries experiences I'll never have, lessons I'll never learn firsthand, and memories I'll never create. Curiosity has given me permission to keep learning long after I thought I understood how the world worked. It's one reason I still enjoy sitting beside someone and asking them to tell me about their life.

I believe the greatest legacy we leave behind isn't measured by what we owned. It's measured by what we shared. Long after we're gone, our stories continue teaching our children, encouraging our grandchildren, and helping future generations understand where they came from. That's one reason preserving stories matters so much to me. They become gifts that continue giving long after the storyteller has finished speaking. It's been said that in life you die twice. Once in the physical sense and the second time when no one remembers your name.

Finally, I believe hope begins with one conversation. That may sound like a simple statement, but I've seen it happen too many times to doubt it. A lonely afternoon becomes a friendship. A nervous student gains confidence. A family hears a story they never knew existed. A volunteer discovers that listening can change two lives, not one. None of those moments begin with a grand event. They begin when one person turns to another and says... *"Tell me about..."*

If this book has taught me anything, it's that changing the world doesn't always require extraordinary ideas. Sometimes it simply requires extraordinary attention to another human being. That's what I believe. And after everything I've been fortunate enough to witness, I don't imagine those beliefs will ever change.

Appendix D

Questions People Often Ask Me

After giving quite a few presentations over the past year, I've noticed something interesting. No matter where I happen to be speaking—a retirement residence, a church hall, a classroom, a community meeting, or a conference—people almost always ask the same questions. They may phrase them a little differently, but they're really trying to answer one question for themselves. *"Could I do this?"* I always tell them the same thing. *"Of course,"*. The methodology is not complicated.

- Another question people ask is, *"What if I don't know what to say?"* My answer usually surprises them. I tell them that's perfectly all right because this methodology isn't built around having the right words. It's built around being genuinely interested in another person. If you care, if you're patient, and if you're willing to listen, you've already brought the most important qualities to the conversation. Everything else can be learned.
- Another question I hear often is, *"What if they don't remember anything?"* I smile because I've heard that concern from both volunteers and storytellers. In my experience, people almost always remember something. It may not happen in the first few minutes, and it may not be the memory either person expected, but memories have a remarkable habit of arriving in their own time. That's one reason I've learned not to rush the conversation. Sometimes the most important thing we can do is simply wait.
- People also ask me what happens if someone becomes emotional. That's a thoughtful question because memories often carry feelings with them. My answer is that emotion isn't something to fear. It's part of being human. If someone laughs, laugh with them. If someone becomes quiet, allow the silence to do its work. If tears appear, don't feel you have to fix anything right away. Often, the greatest kindness we can offer is simply to remain present. Some memories are joyful. Others carry sadness. Both deserve respect.
- A question that seems to be appearing more often these days is about artificial intelligence. People want to know if AI is replacing the storyteller. My answer has never changed. Absolutely not. AI can help organize a conversation, improve readability, and save countless hours of transcription, but it can never replace the relationship between two people sitting together. The story belongs to the storyteller. The technology simply helps preserve it.
- Parents and grandparents often ask whether young people can really do this well. I enjoy answering that question because I've watched students surprise themselves. Young people don't need decades of life experience to become wonderful listeners.

They simply need encouragement, guidance, and the confidence to begin. In many ways, they approach these conversations with a natural curiosity that adults sometimes forget they once had.

- *"Do I need to follow the workbook exactly?"* The answer is no. The workbook is there to serve the conversation, not the other way around. If a storyteller wanders into an unexpected memory that has nothing to do with the page you happen to be on, let them wander. Some of the most meaningful stories I've ever heard began as delightful detours.
- Perhaps my favourite question is also the simplest. *"What's the most important thing to remember?"* I usually pause before answering because I don't want people to think I'm about to share some secret technique. Then I tell them this. *Don't worry about creating a perfect story. Concentrate on creating a meaningful conversation. The story will usually take care of itself.*

When people thank me after a presentation, they often say they've learned something about storytelling. I always appreciate hearing that, but quietly, I hope they've learned something even more important. I hope they've discovered that every person they meet has lived a life they'll never completely know unless someone takes the time to ask... *"Tell me about..."*

Appendix E

Where Your Journey Begins

You know, after almost every presentation of *One Memory at a Time*, someone eventually asks me the question “*Where do I start?*” Sometimes they're a volunteer. Sometimes they're a teacher. Sometimes they're an adult son or daughter who's suddenly thinking about a parent they haven't really talked to in years. Occasionally they're a senior who has decided it's finally time to tell their own story. No matter who asks the question, my answer is always the same. Begin simply, ***just read the workbook.***

You don't need someone beside you to train you to have your first conversation. You don't need special training, expensive equipment, or the perfect list of questions. Those things can certainly help, and over the years I've created many tools that make the experience easier, but none of them are where the journey truly begins. It begins with deciding that another person's story is worth your time.

Perhaps that's why I've never thought of this methodology as something that belongs only in retirement homes or classrooms. It belongs anywhere two people are willing to slow down long enough to enjoy one another's company. Around a kitchen table. During a drive in the car. Sitting on a porch on a warm summer evening. Walking through an old neighbourhood. Looking through a photo album. Sharing a cup of coffee.

Some of the most meaningful conversations in my own life weren't planned. They happened because someone said something that reminded me of another time, another place, or another person. One memory led to another, and before either of us realized it, an hour had quietly disappeared. Looking back, I wish I had recognized more of those moments while I was living them. I would have asked another question. I would have listened a little longer. I would have worried less about where the conversation was going and simply enjoyed where it already was. If this book has encouraged you to do one thing, I hope it's this. Choose someone.

It might be your mother or your father. It might be a grandparent, a neighbour, an old friend, or someone you've known for years but never really taken the time to understand. Then find a quiet place. Put your phone away. Forget about recording the perfect story. Forget about asking the perfect question.

Simply be curious. You might begin by opening an old photo album together. You might point to a picture and ask where it was taken. You might notice an old family keepsake sitting on a shelf. Or perhaps you'll simply smile and say the three words that have quietly shaped so much of my own journey. “*Tell me about...*” Then let the conversation go wherever it wants to go.

You don't have to lead it.

You don't have to control it.

You don't have to rescue every silence.

Just stay with it.

If you've read this book from beginning to end, you already understand something that took me years to discover. Stories aren't something we pull from people. They're something we're privileged to receive when another person trusts us enough to share them. That's a gift. Treat it that way.

As we come to the end of our time together, I'd like to thank you for spending these hours with me. Writing this book has given me the opportunity to reflect on a journey I never expected to take, if not for that conversation with Gary Comeau at Oak Terrace Nursing Home. More importantly, it has reminded me that the greatest discoveries in my life have almost always begun with another person. Perhaps yours will too.

So, before you put this book back on the shelf, I'd like to ask one small favour. Don't let it end here. Close the book. Call someone you love. Sit down beside them. Smile. And quietly say... *"Tell me about..."* The rest...will take care of itself.

Somewhere tonight, someone will tell a story they have never told before. It may happen around a kitchen table. During a visit to a retirement home. On a drive with a grandchild. Or over a quiet cup of coffee.

Your story has been there for years. Waiting. Not for the perfect question but simply for the right invitation. Perhaps that's how stories have always wanted to be found—not simply on the pages of a book, but in the hearts and conversations of the people who lived them.

Appendix F

Why I Chose to Give One Memory at a Time© and my Book Away - A Personal Vision from the Author

As I reviewed everything I wrote, something suddenly struck me.

I am providing you with a considerable amount of intellectual property for free. This includes *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* itself, the Guided Stories, Memory Moments, Memory Pathways, Story Guides, this book “*How Stories Want to be Found*,” and many of the lessons learned through hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours of development, observation, and refinement.

And I am giving all of it to you so you could help a senior. For a moment I found myself asking a very reasonable question: **Why am I doing this?** Then I thought about hockey.

Imagine if, at four years old, we gave every child in Canada a hockey stick and all the equipment they needed. Imagine if we gave them unlimited ice time and even provided free transportation back and forth to the rink. Would every child become a great hockey player? Of course not.

But wouldn't many more children have the opportunity to discover whether they could become one? Wouldn't we uncover talent that might otherwise never have had the opportunity to step onto the ice? And wouldn't Canada ultimately produce more great hockey players simply because we removed the barriers that prevented children from participating in the first place?

That is how I have come to think about One Memory at a Time© and this book. What if we remove the barriers?

What if the senior does not have to pay? What if the son or daughter does not have to pay? What if the retirement residence, long-term care home, seniors' organization, school, community group or home-care company that wants to deliver the program does not have to decide whether it can afford it before deciding whether it can help someone?

What if we give them the stick, the equipment, the ice time and the ride to the rink?

In my case, the equipment is *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology*. It is the Guided Stories, Memory Companion training, Story Guides, implementation materials, this book and the tools we have developed to help another person's memories arrive naturally. Then we let people use them. Will every senior want to participate? **No**. Will every conversation become a preserved story? **Maybe**. Will every Memory Moment lead somewhere? **Of course not**.

But if no financial barriers prevent someone from trying, **how many more conversations might begin?** How many older adults might have an opportunity to tell a story they thought nobody wanted to hear? How many might experience a little less isolation because someone regularly sits with them and genuinely listens? How many might rediscover pride in something they accomplished fifty or sixty years ago? How many might feel that their experiences still have value and that they still have something important to contribute? I used this philosophy with my Hands Up Expo! for over 105 nonprofits in Moncton in 2008. It worked! Free does attract success.

And through One Memory at a Time© and this book, how many young people, family members, volunteers, and caregivers might learn that one of the most valuable communication skills they can carry is not simply knowing how to speak, but knowing how to listen? I may not know the answers to those questions. But I do know that charging someone for the opportunity creates another reason the conversation never happens. That is the barrier I can remove through my efforts and as a gift to Canada.

I have invested the time in developing the story guides and the methodology as well as the marketing. I have protected the intellectual property. I have learned from the organizations and individuals who have helped me understand what works and what does not. Protecting that work remains important because protecting the methodology helps protect its purpose and how it is delivered. **But protecting something does not mean I have to prevent people from using it.** Quite the opposite.

My vision is to protect the integrity of *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* while removing the financial barriers that might prevent it from reaching the people it was created to serve. I will provide a hockey stick to everyone so they can get on the ice. I have to leave it to the coaches, the “Memory Companions,” to lead the team to success.

Perhaps someday thousands of Memory Companions will be sitting with older adults in retirement residences, long-term care homes, community organizations and individual homes. Perhaps thousands of home care givers and students will sit across from someone two or three generations older and discover that listening to another person's life can teach them something about their own.

And perhaps thousands of stories that might otherwise have disappeared will become part of the living history of families, communities and Canada.

I cannot guarantee any of that. I can only help make the opportunity possible.

So, at age 72, I will provide the stick. I will provide the equipment. I will help provide the ice time. Then we will see who comes to play in our arena to benefit the community. Because sometimes the greatest contribution we can make is not deciding what someone will do with an opportunity in our community. It is making sure they have the opportunity in the first place.

One Memory at a Time© and my book “How Stories Want to be Found” are offered free of charge because they were never meant to be products — they were meant to be used, and now they’re becoming a movement across Canada. I have come to realize that some of the most meaningful programs to help seniors are often the hardest to access and expensive. Budgets are limited, staff are stretched, and even when something has value, cost can become a barrier to getting it into the hands of the people who need it most. Removing that barrier was a deliberate decision.

Offering the program freely allows any organization, group, or family to begin immediately—without approval processes, funding concerns, or delays. The focus stays where it belongs: on connection, dignity, and meaningful engagement.

It also supports something larger.

This program was designed to grow through people—through Memory Companions, communities, and shared experiences. The more accessible it is, the more naturally it can spread, reaching seniors in places formal programs often do not reach, such as their private homes through commercial caregivers. In that sense, offering it for free is not about giving something away. It is about making sure it can reach seniors as far as possible, and where they live. Because at its core, this is not about a program. It is about making sure that every senior who wants to be heard... has the opportunity to be heard. **Memory should never be a financial transaction.**

THE OBSERVATIONS

The Eight Discoveries That Helped Shape the Methodology

Throughout this journey, certain lessons kept returning. I began to think of them as Observations—not academic conclusions, but practical discoveries that emerged from writing my own stories and, later, from listening to the stories of others. Each one helped me better understand how memories arrive, how stories want to be found, and how *The One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology* gradually took shape. I have brought the eight observations together here in my book as a visual summary of that journey.

Observation 1 — The Journey I Didn't Know I Was Taking

Observation 2 — Memories Travel in Pathways

Observation 3 — Stories Open Doors That Questions Cannot

Observation 4—The Bird Feeder Principle—The Best Stories Are Never Chased

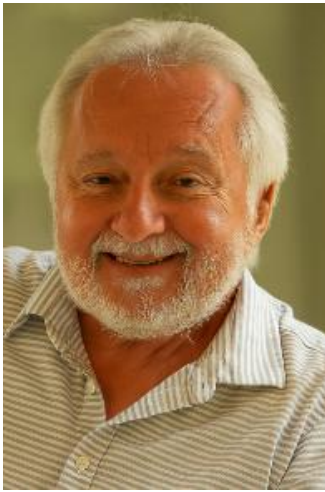
Observation 5 — Silence Is Sometimes Doing the Work

Observation 6 — The Most Powerful Tool Was Never in the Toolbox

Observation 7 — Every Story Changes Two Lives

Observation 8 — One Memory at a Time Can Change a Community

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tony Hebert is a community volunteer, business entrepreneur, author of four books, and social entrepreneur whose lifelong commitment to community service spans more than six decades. Beginning with early acts of volunteerism at age 7 as an altar boy in his church, he went on to play leadership roles in major fundraising and community initiatives, helping raise millions of dollars for organizations such as United Way, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, the Seniors Information Center and numerous other community non-profits and seniors' programs. For more than thirty years, he owned and was on the advisory board of a Level III senior care home, eventually becoming its majority shareholder before its sale.

Tony has served on multiple boards, led large-scale capital campaigns, and created and financed innovative platforms to strengthen community engagement. He founded, financed, and innovated social entrepreneurial initiatives, including the Hands Up! Volunteer Expo, BesideMyDesk, MyCommunityCalendar.ca, and YouthLink.ca. All were designed and invested in to connect people, especially our youth and seniors, with meaningful opportunities to participate and contribute.

Today, Tony created *One Memory at a Time*©, *Faith Across Generations*©, *The One Memory at a Time Methodology*© and *Stories Across Generations*©, the free, national, volunteer-driven initiative gaining attention across Canada for helping people recall, write, share, and preserve the stories of their lives. Through his writing, mentorship, and lifelong commitment to community service, he continues to encourage others to believe that even the smallest memory—or the simplest act of kindness—can leave a lasting legacy.

Throughout his life, Tony has been driven by an endless curiosity about why things work the way they do. Rather than accepting things as they are, he has always been drawn to ask questions, observe carefully, and look for patterns others might overlook. That curiosity has shaped his businesses, social entrepreneurship, community work, writing, and ultimately his discovery of the power of memory described in this book.

He hopes that, as you read these pages, you'll not only discover a different way of thinking about memory but also be inspired to look at the ordinary conversations in your own life with a little more curiosity and wonder.



This book is not about helping people tell their stories.
It is about discovering how stories find their way back to us,
One Memory at a Time®

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