

# Media Release - The Life Stories Project

*“I should have done this when they were alive!”*

[www.lifestories.co.za](http://www.lifestories.co.za)



Life Stories founder Lisa Chait displays a project DVD

## A Unique Story Begins

Eighteen years ago South African broadcaster and media personality Lisa Chait asked a friend to help her film an interview with her eighty-eight year old grandfather Jacob Spilkin. He died six years later aged ninety-four. What remains is a priceless record of his and his ancestral families lives. A short while ago Lisa's niece in New York was doing a roots project at school and Lisa placed her grandfathers interview on YouTube for her to use as a reference.

## The Life Stories Heritage Project is Born

What emerged is a unique project called **Life Stories**, which now sees Lisa and her team travelling to various locations in South Africa to film interviews with those who have recognised that their life story should be made available to future generations.

Unsurprisingly many of the Life Stories also contain fascinating and valuable information for those beyond the family. With the permission of the interviewee they are now being offered to archives and museums so that they can form part of the public record.

Sons, daughters, family members and interviewees themselves are contacting Lisa because they see the enormous value in recording a Life Story. People are also gifting Life Stories as milestone, birthday, anniversary or retirement gifts and business leaders and companies are beginning to use the project to record their Life Stories or the Life Story of their company for staff, clients and others.

## **How the Project Works**

The Life Stories Project films and edits oral testimony and presents interviewees with a customised DVD which includes photographs, clippings, memorabilia and, when available, historical film or home video. Then, if requested, Lisa places these stories on the Life Stories website [www.lifestories.co.za](http://www.lifestories.co.za) on a public access or private view encoded page.

**The result:** Viewers around the world can watch Life Stories anywhere and anytime without DVD's having to be sent by mail or getting lost. 'Millions of photographs are being kept online in albums, says Lisa, 'We are taking this one step further into pictures that talk'.

## **Grandchildren Take the Lead**

Lisa also facilitates grandchildren to interview their grandparents. Young people take the lead in uncovering precious stories and make sure that they are captured forever.

## **A Global Project**

Family members wishing to be part of the recording are included via Skype. The project has even seen interviews being conducted from remote countries.

'With today's technology, geography poses no barrier', says Lisa, 'One of my favourite Life Stories was where a 19 year old daughter conducted an interview with her father who happened to be living in Cape Town. The possibilities are limitless and very exciting'.

## **It's Not Only About Older Generations**

The Life Story project records anybody who wishes to have their story put on record and made available to others in an elegant and simple way. People with life experiences or messages that they believe can be useful to others are also candidates.

## **A Visual Autobiography**

Lisa explains: 'I had a client who has taken many years to write his autobiography and it is still not completed. We sped up the process radically and created a powerful visual Life Story for him within weeks and also provided a transcript'.

***'It is a project that is truly redefining the world of autobiography'*** - the words of the late Advocate Dave Meyerowitz (94), after watching his Life Story.

## **History, Heritage and Preserving The Future Today ... For Tomorrow**

Filming a Life Story unfolds a rich tapestry of heritage and value that might, without effort, have been lost forever. The themes of preserving memory, the power of personal testimony and contributing to the public record are integral to the project and enthusiastically embraced by all involved. The global resurgence of interest in genealogy, helped enormously by the Internet, is a fantastic context within which the Life Stories project thrives.

**The Life Stories Project is preserving history for future generations... before it is too late!**



Ronen Oblowitz (centre) interviewed his grandfather Sydney with his father Eddie's help

**To Find Out More or Contact Life Stories:**

**[www.lifestories.co.za](http://www.lifestories.co.za)**

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**Media Message**

- High resolution photos are available on request. Please also see the 'Media' page on our website for more.
- We also welcome you to join us on set and meet the interviewees and their families to find out first hand what it is all about.

**ENDS**