

## Talking to future family

### JUNIOR BESTER

LISA Chait is the founder and project manager of Life Stories, a company that records the stories and histories of people to inform future generations.

#### What does your job entail?

I am commissioned to record people's life stories on DVD, CD, in text documents and books as a record for future generations. It began as a hobby after I filmed my grandfather's story. I have done projects for people aged 49 to 102, so age isn't a factor. After the job is complete I give clients the opportunity to archive and share their life stories online on my website, on YouTube and on public or private access platforms. Life Stories is fundamentally about marrying family stories with technology, allowing clients to literally talk across time to future generations. Practically speaking, the job involves researching a person's life story, then choosing the form of media they want. The next step is filming, audio recording or textually capturing the story.

#### What is your background?

After teaching high school I went into radio broadcasting for 17 years as a news and music presenter and then talk show host. I have just completed co-producing, writing and presenting the first season of the TV series *I Am Woman Leap of Faith* for SABC3. The website is [www.iamwomanseries.com](http://www.iamwomanseries.com)

#### Describe a typical day:

In terms of my Life Stories business, a typical day of filming, for example, sees my cameraperson and me arriving at the client early, to get cracking as soon as possible. After the main sit-down interview, we'll spend the afternoon filming and recording a voice narrative. A lot of my days are spent researching the background of new clients in preparation for filming or audio recording, editing, organising new projects and liaising with subcontractors such as extra editors, printers or designers.

#### What are the biggest challenges at work?

It is definitely the time and patience required to do the work properly. You really need to put heart and soul into it, and meet the clients and families where they are at. Many people think it takes just a few hours to create a DVD or CD. This is really not the case.

#### Your major rewards?

Indescribable joy at providing precious life stories for people, and capturing family history. The fact that one day someone from a future generation might be researching their family online and come across an ancestor who can speak directly to them still gives me goosebumps. It's a very powerful and rewarding thing to do. It's essentially about the effort made today for people in the future to know where they come from, and to feel connected to it in a very direct way.



GETTING IN TOUCH: Lisa Chait with clients Gerald and Rene Kleinman. PICTURE: PETER GREENWALL

#### What do you need to succeed in producing life stories?

An absolute non-negotiable is patience, and then the necessary technical knowledge. You need a genuine interest in the topics and process. You need good interviewing techniques, video, sound and textual editing skills. You must also work within the parameters of a fixed budget.

#### What are the minimum educational requirements?

There are no specific educational requirements, but you must be able to meet the video, sound and text editing deliverables, and know

or learn what it takes to run a business. I taught myself how to edit sound, and with the DVD projects I generally employ editors. I have been writing and interviewing people for years. Life Stories is a growing business, and I have mentors.

#### What is the starting salary?

The market drives your earnings. Obviously you earn based on the number of clients, and there are different budgets, depending on client needs. You can earn anything from a reasonable living to doing extremely well, depending on projects, and the people to whom you delegate key functions.

### Who's where



Yolè Ras, fund manager, Novare



Sipho Maseko, non-executive chairman of the board, M&C Saatchi Abel Communications Group



Henriëtte Loubser, editor, Huisgenoot

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