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MEDIA RELEASE

Life Writing

It's people we are most interested in. "People," ...as in others and as in ourselves.

That's why the first rule of photo journalism is to capture images of people doing something. Sure, a photograph of a cyan lagoon might be enticing and interesting, but add sun-browned native children diving for coins tossed by tourists from an anchored yacht and you have a photo to pause over and think about. What is it like to be those children? Are they care-free? Healthy? Happy? And the tourists; where are they from? Are they rich? Do the children envy the tourists? Do the tourists envy the children?

Author and professor Fred D. White knows the value of putting people in pictures, but, in his case, the pictures are personal-experiences narratives. He calls this form of people-centered writing *lifewriting*. "Want to add zest to a piece about an inherently boring topic?" he asks. "Write about the people involved in the topic, then add a dash of your own opinions and values. This transforms your piece into what I call lifewriting and good lifewriting is never boring"

According to White, "Lifewriting is the art of writing emotionally-charged essays or books based on the writer's experiences—or on the experiences of others. The writer brings his own special way of perceiving and interacting with the world into the piece." White contrasts this with the more reportorial forms of nonfiction in which such freedom of personal expressiveness is discouraged. To the contrary, "Lifewriting is shaped by the writer's likes and dislikes, his tastes and values."

White, an author of numerous textbooks on writing and a professor in the English department at Santa Clara University, has authored a new book he hopes will get more people writing and reading people-oriented nonfiction: *LifeWriting: Drawing from Personal Experience to Create Features You Can Publish*.

While White may popularize the term, he didn't invent lifewriting. A thousand years ago, Sung Dynasty poet Ou-Yang Hsiu wrote personal impressions of landscapes. And the man who many consider the father of the essay, Michel de Montaigne, a contemporary of Shakespeare, often shamelessly included his own biases and shortcomings in his work.

With *LifeWriting*, White endeavored to leave the field of textbooks and pen a book for writers of every ilk. "This is a book designed for self-instruction," White says. "It takes the reader from first draft to locating a market and submitting the work." And, according to White, many people will find a market for their material. "A vast readership exists for life experiences told well."

LifeWriting: Drawing from Personal Experience to Create Features You Can Publish, is available at brick and mortar bookstores, online bookstores, at QuillDriverBooks.com, or by calling 1-800-497-4909.

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Editor's note: *LifeWriting* (no space, capital W) is correct in the title of the book.