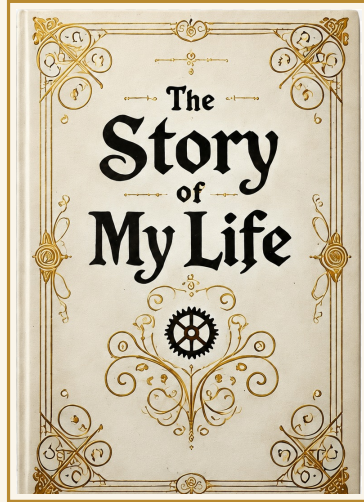




BIOGRAPHY MACHINE

A GUIDE TO TELLING YOUR LIFE STORY

*On remembering, self-discovery,
and the joy of seeing a whole life clearly.*

A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

I want to tell you why I built this.

For most of my life, I was moving too fast to look backwards. There was always another film, another crisis, another impossible deadline, and another year arriving before the previous one had even cleared its belongings from the hallway. I thought life was something you survived, built, repaired, financed, apologised for and dragged forward while pretending this had all been part of the plan.

Only much later did I understand that a life you never stop to examine remains strangely unknown, even to the person who lived it. Human beings are the only creatures able to turn around, look at the road behind them and ask: *What exactly was all that? What did it mean? Who was I becoming? And why did I think that haircut was acceptable?* And yet most of us never do. We leave our lives scattered across fading photographs, family jokes, private griefs, unreliable memories and stories beginning with, “I have never told anyone this, but...” which, naturally, are usually the stories that should have been told first.

I built Biography Machine because I wanted to create what I wish all of us had: a patient, intelligent companion that listens without interrupting, becoming bored or suddenly explaining its own childhood. It asks the questions no one else thought to ask and helps you see your life not as a badly organised collection of accidents, but as a story.

Yes, in the end, it becomes a real book. Something beautiful you can hold, keep and leave behind, preferably before your family reduces your entire existence to twelve photographs, one recipe and a disagreement about who gets the silverware. But the book is not the most important part. The real gift is what happens while you speak.

You remember people you thought you had lost. You notice patterns you had spent decades calling coincidences. You finally understand certain choices. You forgive yourself for a few spectacular mistakes, while sensibly continuing to blame other people for the rest. And perhaps, for the first time, you realise that your life was not ordinary at all. You were simply standing too close to it, exhausted, badly lit and busy dealing with Tuesday.

If you work with people who are trying to understand themselves, preserve their memories or make peace with their past, I think you will immediately recognise what this is. It may use extraordinary technology, complicated architecture and more invisible machinery than any reasonable person should ever agree to build. But it was created for something deeply human: to help a person look back at their life and finally see that it mattered.

Thank you for looking.

Uldis Gabriel Cipsts

Founder of Biography Machine

WHAT IT IS

A conversation that becomes a book, and a way of meeting yourself.

Biography Machine is a warm, guided conversation that turns a person's spoken memories into a real, written life story, a book in their own voice. You don't have to write anything. You simply talk. It listens, asks gentle questions, and helps you tell your whole life, from the beginning up to now.



The Biography Machine, live at biography-machine.com.

But underneath the book is something quieter, and for many people more important: the experience of finally telling your whole story out loud, to something that truly wants to hear it, and then seeing that story laid out as a whole, perhaps for the first time.

THE PATH, FROM FIRST WORD TO FINISHED BOOK

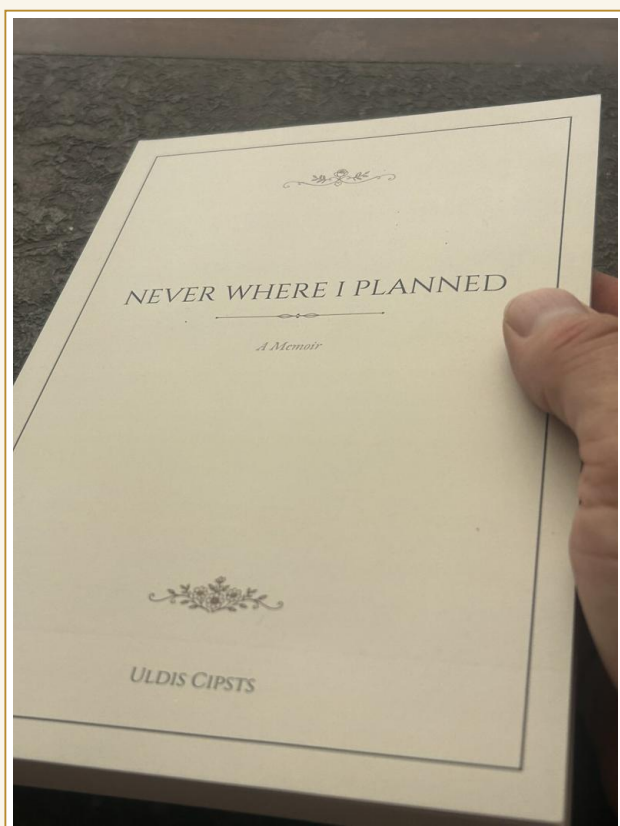
What actually happens, step by step.

Nothing here asks a person to be a writer, or even to remember things in the right order. The journey is gentle, and every step belongs to them:

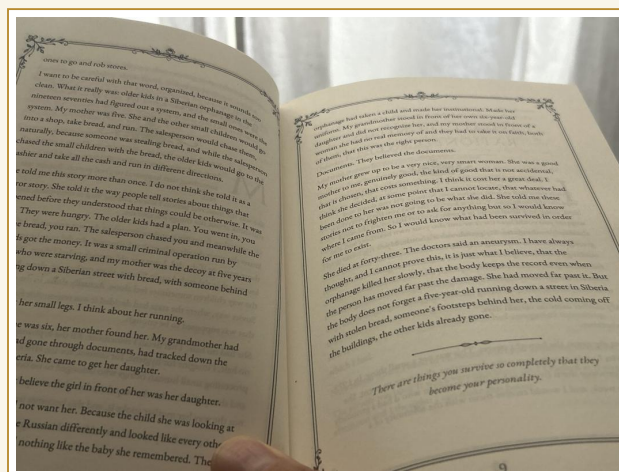
1. **YOU SIMPLY START TALKING.** No forms and no blank page. The machine greets you warmly and begins to ask gentle questions about your life. You can speak aloud or type, whichever feels easier.
2. **THE CONVERSATION UNFOLDS.** Over a few relaxed sessions, at your own pace, it follows your memories and asks the next thoughtful question, gently covering the whole span of a life: childhood, family, love, work, the turning points, the things you value.
3. **YOU WATCH YOUR STORY TAKE SHAPE, LIVE.** As you talk, the machine shows what it is noticing, the themes emerging, the people and places appearing, and how much of your book is gathered so far.
4. **YOU CHECK THE FACTS.** Every name, place and date it heard is gathered into a simple list for you to confirm or correct, so everything in your book is true and approved by you.
5. **YOUR LIFE BECOMES A TIMELINE.** Your memories are organised into episodes, the dated chapters of your life. You can walk the timeline, add a story you had forgotten, or find meaningful material you have not yet told.
6. **THE BOOK IS WRITTEN.** When you are ready, the machine writes your whole life into a real, flowing book, in your own voice, with nothing invented.
7. **YOU READ IT, AND MAKE IT YOURS.** You read every chapter, adjust anything that is not quite right, add your own photographs, and give it your blessing.
8. **IT ARRIVES AT YOUR DOOR.** Your finished story is professionally printed and bound, and delivered to you: a real book you can hold, keep and share.

WHAT ARRIVES AT YOUR DOOR

These photographs show a real book we made, in its softcover edition. Yours will be hardcover.



The cover, in the author's own hands.



Opened for the first time.

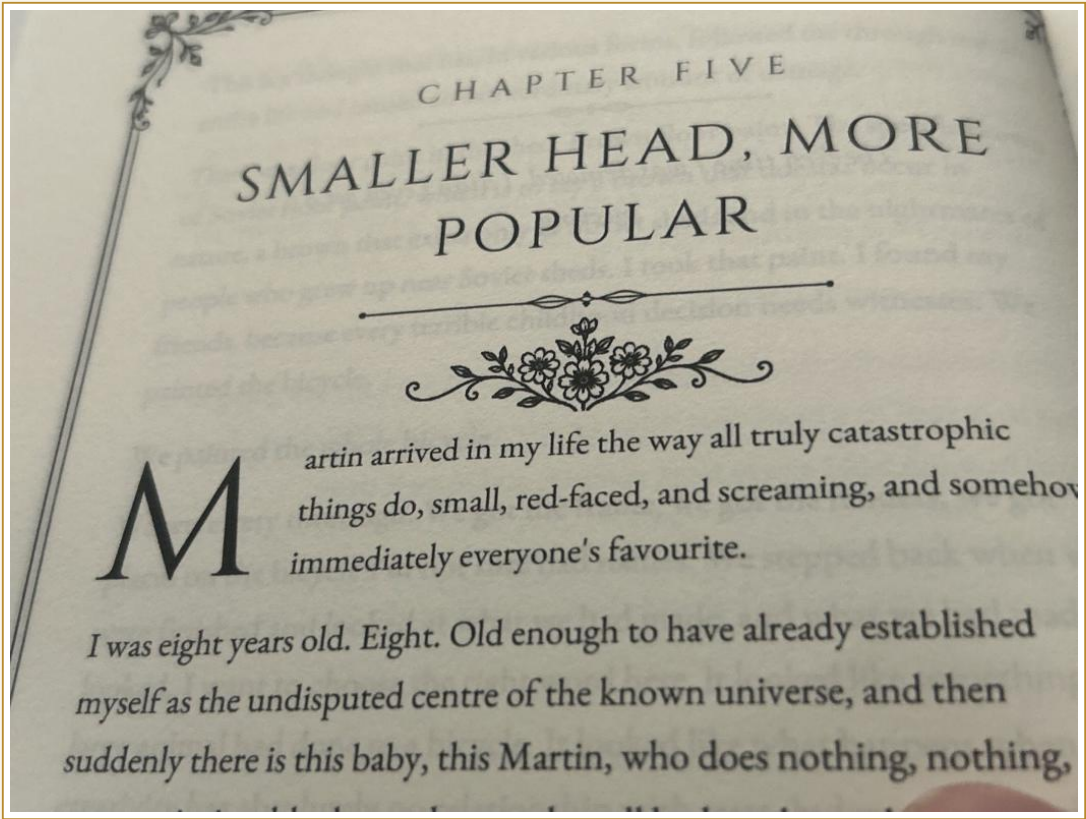
It weighs what a life should weigh. About 150 to 200 pages, typeset like literature, with chapter ornaments, a contents page full of stories rather than dates, and a voice on every page that the family will recognise instantly. It is not a keepsake pretending to be a book. It is a book.

A GIFT FOR YOU, PERSONALLY

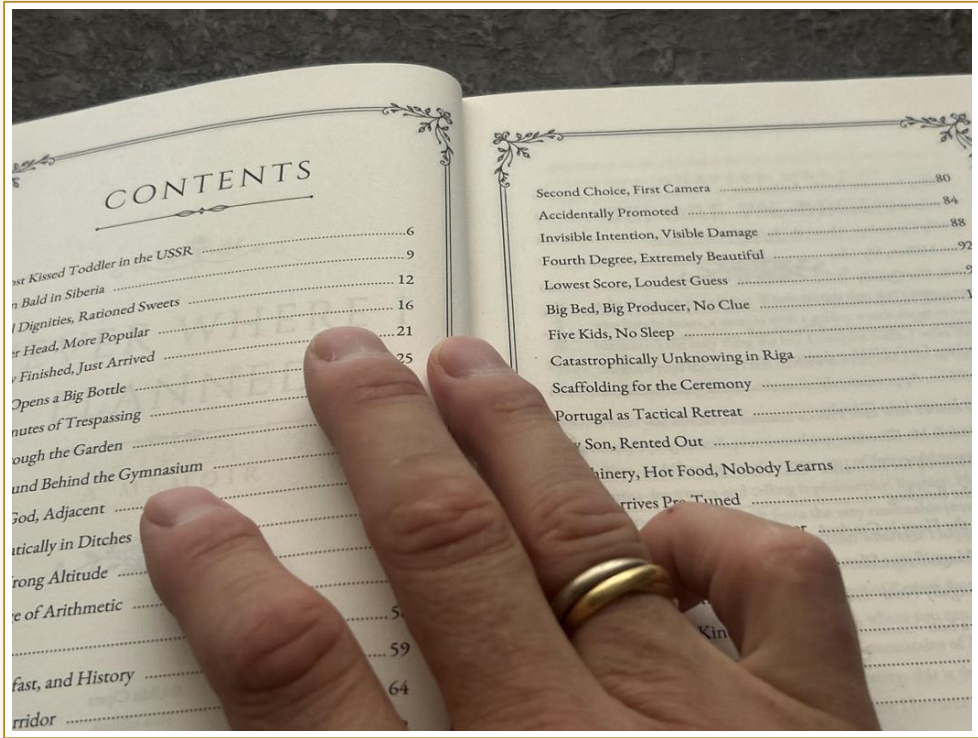
Because you are reading this guide, your book comes with a free upgrade: it will be printed as a **HARDCOVER**, at no extra cost. Simply begin with the same email address this guide was sent to, and it is applied automatically.

THE PAGES THEMSELVES

Typography, chapters and titles, exactly as they come off the press.



A chapter opening. Every chapter begins like this, with a title that makes you want to read on.



The contents page of a real life: not “Childhood, 1954 to 1966”, but stories with names you cannot resist.

WHY WE NEED TO TELL OUR STORY

Self-discovery begins the moment you look back.

We come to know ourselves in story. Not in facts or dates, but in the shape we give them when we tell them, what we linger on, what we forgive, what we finally understand. In reflective traditions this appears again and again: in *life review*, in *reminiscence*, in the idea of a *narrative identity*, the quiet work of turning a pile of memories into a story that holds together, and, in holding together, reveals who we are.

Psychologists have studied this instinct for decades. Robert Butler named the natural process of *life review* in 1963; Erik Erikson placed the task of making sense of one's whole life at the centre of maturity, the search he called *integrity*. Dan McAdams' work on *narrative identity* shows that we build a stable sense of self out of the internalised story of our life, and that the coherence of that story is linked to our wellbeing. And James Pennebaker's studies of *expressive writing* found that putting difficult experience into words can measurably improve both mind and body.

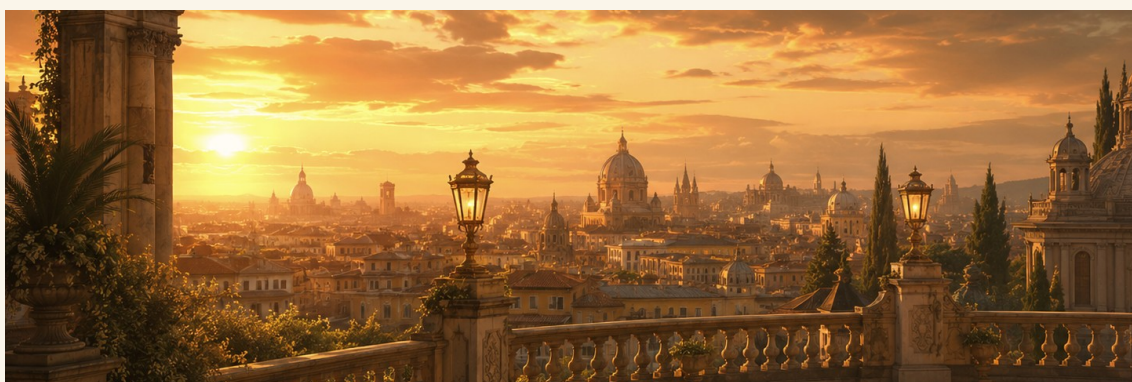
Telling your life aloud, roughly in order, is one of the most direct routes to self-discovery there is. It helps a person:

- understand why they became who they are, the turns, the wounds, the loves that shaped them;
- make meaning of the hard chapters by placing them within the story of a whole life.

It is close to what journaling reaches for, but where journaling captures moments, telling your whole story reveals the *arc*: the through-line you cannot see while you are still inside a single day.

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live."

JOAN DIDION

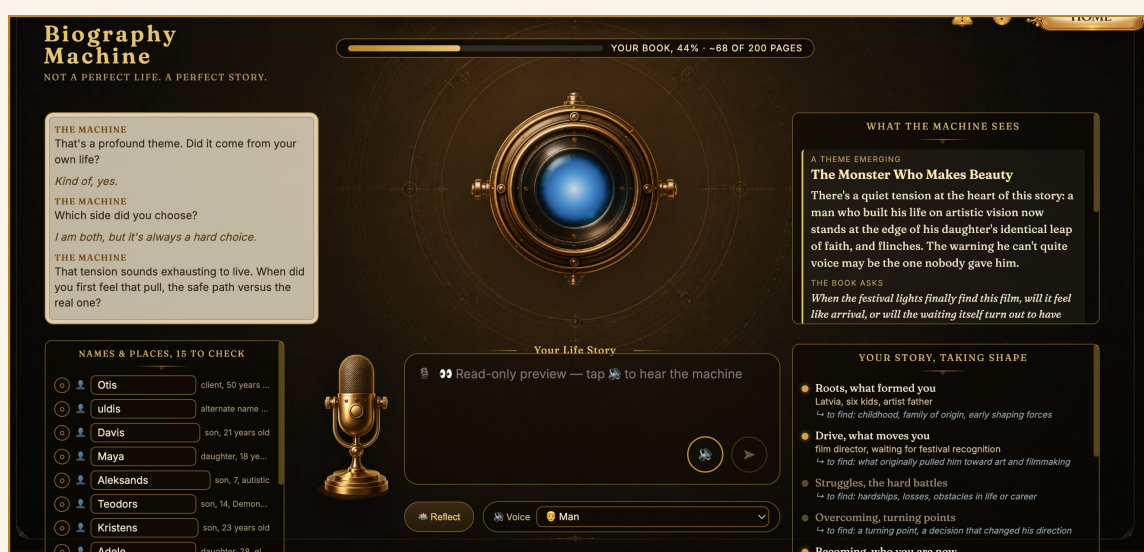


WHAT THE CONVERSATION FEELS LIKE

Unhurried. Kind. No pressure to perform.

- It is warm, patient and genuinely curious, with no judgement, and no right answer.
- It starts light and alive, a happy or ordinary memory, never a wound. Heavier things come later, and only if the person chooses to go there.
- You go at your own pace. You can pause, skip a question, or return another day.
- It is often surprising: forgotten memories resurface, a small detail brings back a whole world, and feelings arrive gently rather than all at once.

The feeling many people describe is simple: “at last, someone who wants to hear my whole life.”



A real conversation: the machine listens, notices the themes emerging, and gathers the story taking shape, in the person's own words.

THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS IT ASKS

Gentle doors, not interrogations.

It asks open, specific questions that invite a *memory* rather than a summary, because a concrete scene (“the kitchen on Sunday mornings”) reaches a person far more than an abstract one (“what shaped you?”). A few examples of the kind of questions it might ask:

- Where did you grow up, and what did it smell and sound like?
- Who was the first person who really believed in you?
- What did an ordinary day look like when you were ten?
- Tell me about the day you met someone you love.
- What is a decision that quietly changed the direction of your life?
- What were you most afraid of, back then, and now?
- What are you quietly proud of that almost no one knows?
- What would you say to your younger self, if they were sitting across from you?

It steers gently toward memories you can *see and feel*, and away from questions that land like homework. That single choice is what keeps self-reflection feeling like a pleasure rather than work, and it is often in the smallest, most specific memory that a person suddenly understands something large about their life.

SEEING YOUR LIFE WHOLE

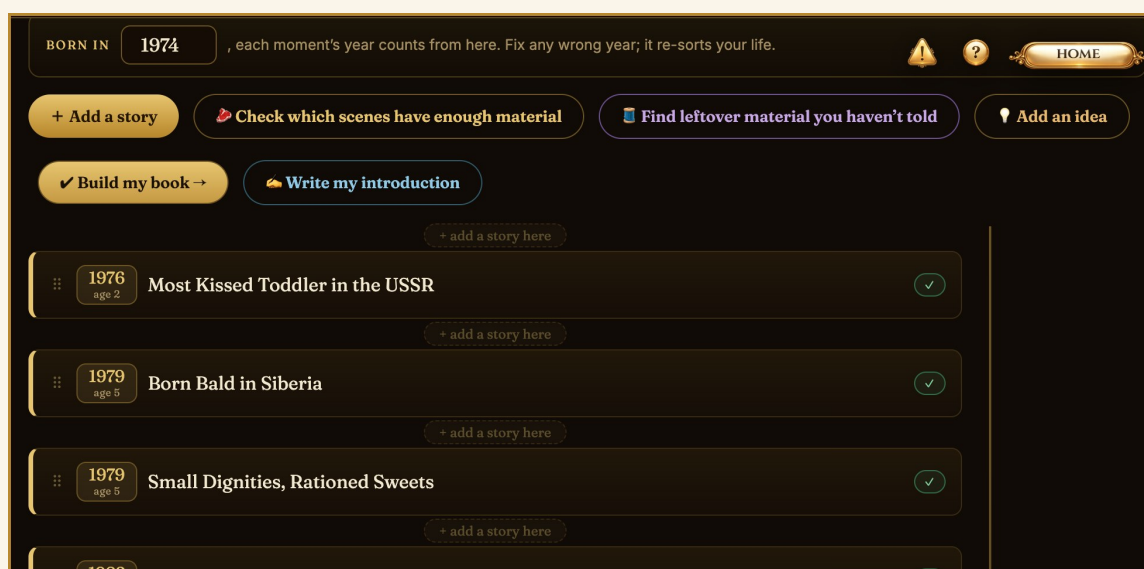
Your life, laid out as chapters, and the shape it reveals.

As you talk, your story is gently organised into EPISODES, a timeline of the chapters of your life. Seeing a life laid out this way is often the moment something shifts. You begin to notice the threads that run through it: the values you kept returning to, the fears that echoed across decades, the people who kept reappearing, the quiet ways you grew.

Up close, a life feels like scattered days. Laid out as a whole, it reveals its shape, and with the shape comes understanding. This is the heart of self-discovery: not merely remembering, but *seeing*. The pattern. The arc. The meaning that was there all along, waiting for you to stand far enough back to notice it.

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

SOREN KIERKEGAARD



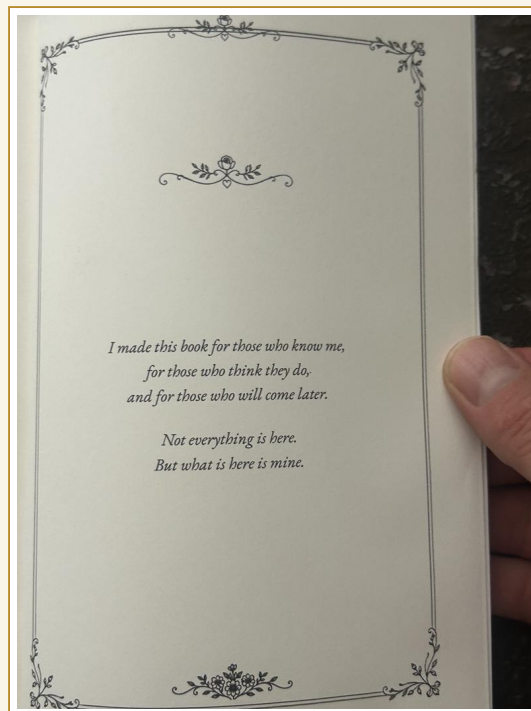
Your life, gently organised into chapters: a timeline you can finally see whole.

A FRAGMENT, FROM A REAL BOOK

Spoken aloud by the author, written by the machine, approved word by word.

“When I was six, I was yanked from the countryside and dropped in Riga like luggage forgotten on a bus. All I remember from that first morning is the taste of toothpaste in the back of my throat and a suitcase handle digging red into my palm, the sidewalk impossibly wide, as if someone had rolled out concrete just to make us look smaller. My stepfather and mother walked ahead, heads together, and I tried to match their stride, but my shoe caught in a crack and snapped the back clean off. No one looked back.”

from “Never Where I Planned”, a memoir told to the Biography Machine



The dedication page the author chose to open his book with.

IT STAYS TRUE TO YOU

Nothing invented. Your words, your truth.

Everything in the book comes from what you actually said, nothing is made up. You review the facts (names, places, dates) and approve them. The story is yours, in your own voice, told the way you told it. Nothing is imposed on you.

This matters more than it first appears. Self-discovery cannot be handed to a person by someone else's words. It has to be *theirs*, recognised, owned, true. That is why the book is never a polished narrative written *about* you; it is your own life, in your own voice, that you can read and say: yes, that is me.

“All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story, or tell a story about them.”

ISAK DINESEN

WHO IT IS FOR

Anyone ready to understand their own story, at any age.

- Anyone curious about their own life, who wants to see it clearly and understand how they became who they are.
- People who journal, and want to see the whole arc, not only the fragments.
- Someone standing at a threshold, a new chapter, a big decision, a fresh start, who wants to know where they have come from.
- Families who want to capture a loved one's story and voice, in their own words.
- Anyone who has ever felt: “there is a story in me I would love to finally tell.”

A GENTLE NOTE ON CARE

A companion for self-discovery, not a replacement for therapy.

Biography Machine is a warm storytelling and reflection tool. It is built to be a pleasure, not a task: to lead with what is alive, to let a person set the pace, and never to push them toward pain. It can be deeply moving and clarifying.

But it is not therapy, and it does not replace the care of a professional. For some people, remembering can surface difficult feelings, and that is exactly where a trusted person, or someone like you, matters most. Used *alongside* reflective and therapeutic work, it can be a beautiful way to help a person see, and hold, the whole of their life.

THE SIMPLEST WAY, FOR FAMILIES

The storyteller only talks. Everything else can be someone else's job.

Make it about yourself, or give it.

Both are equally natural. Many people make the book about their own life, our very first authors all did, because a life deserves its book while its author can still laugh about it. And many books begin with a son or daughter: you buy once, a beautiful gift certificate with a redemption code arrives, and the storyteller simply enters it and talks. They never touch payment, accounts or settings.

Talking is the whole job.

Any phone or computer, the microphone button, and fifteen unhurried minutes with coffee. Short sessions are perfect. The machine remembers everything and always knows where you left off, so there is no wrong way to do it and nothing to prepare.

For a parent or grandparent.

Set the page up on their phone and press the button with them the first time; after that, most people simply talk. And for hands that do not love telephones, we are finishing a version of our app with a single button on the screen and nothing else. One press, and the machine listens.

The family checks the facts.

As the manuscript takes shape, a link arrives by email. There, on a comfortable page, names, dates and places are checked word by word, by the storyteller or by whoever loves them and knows how the grandmother's village is spelled. Nothing is printed until every word is approved.

Do not wait for the right moment.

The right moment is a myth the calendar tells. Every family we have met wishes they had started one year earlier. Begin with one small story, the machine will find the rest.

HOW TO TALK TO IT, A SMALL MANUAL

There is no wrong way. But these make it easier, and more of a pleasure.

Say how you feel, out loud.

If you are tired, or a memory feels uncomfortable, simply tell it so. The machine hears this and reacts: it softens, changes direction, or wraps up the session warmly. Nothing has to be finished today, and nothing heavy is ever forced.

Use the Reflect button when remembering feels like work.

One press, and instead of asking for memories the machine talks with you about meaning, beliefs and the philosophy of your life. It is a rest that still feeds the book. After about five minutes it gently returns to your story by itself.

Jump through time freely.

Tell things in whatever order they come: childhood, then last Tuesday, then the war stories. The machine keeps the chronology and the connections for you. Memory does not work in straight lines, and neither does the interview.

Never spell anything.

Talk naturally. Every name and place appears afterwards in a small panel where you, or someone who loves you, corrects the spelling with two taps. Grandmother's village will be written exactly right, just not by your voice.

Misspoke? Just say so.

Say "actually, that was 1962, not 1963" and carry on. The book follows your latest version, and everything is checked with you again, word by word, before printing.

Stop while it is still a pleasure.

The best sessions end a little too early. Fifteen good minutes beat two heroic hours, and the machine always knows exactly where you left off.

A LAST WORD FROM ME

Technology has become remarkably good at demanding our attention. It interrupts us, tracks us, recommends things we already bought and occasionally asks whether we are still watching, usually when we are horizontal, surrounded by crumbs and no longer entirely sure what day it is. I wanted to build something that does the opposite. Something that gives attention back.

Biography Machine offers a person the increasingly exotic experience of being listened to properly. No interruptions. No hurried conclusions. No relative waiting for a brief pause so they can tell a much better story about themselves. That matters particularly in the work you do. People often arrive carrying memories they have never arranged, experiences they have never named and truths they have spent years circling with the commitment of an airline refusing to land.

They do not always need advice. Advice is plentiful. Entire families are standing by, fully prepared to provide it without being asked. Sometimes people need time, patience and one intelligent question asked at precisely the moment they were hoping nobody would ask it. This is what I hope Biography Machine can offer. Not the definitive explanation of a person's life, because that would be outrageously arrogant and probably require a government licence. Rather, it creates a private space where people can speak freely, change their minds, contradict themselves and discover that the version of events they have repeated for thirty years may have been edited rather generously by the main character.

You already do the profoundly human work of helping people feel seen. I built this as another instrument you can place in their hands: patient, private and available whenever they are ready, including at three in the morning, when no responsible professional should be expected to discuss someone's childhood, first marriage or catastrophic decision to open a restaurant with friends. Should it help someone finally say what they have avoided saying, understand something they have repeatedly misunderstood, or leave behind a record that sounds like a human being rather than an obituary written by a cautious committee, then it has done what I built it to do.

And every long night, failed version, mysterious error message and deeply personal argument with a server was worth it. The server has not apologised.

With warmth, and genuine gratitude for the work you do,

Uldis Gabriel Cipsts

Founder of Biography Machine
