

DENIS *Ledoux*

BY PAULETTE OBOYSKI

Has your family been prompting you to write your life story?
Denis Ledoux may be able to help you with this endeavor.

Denis Ledoux is a storyteller, ghostwriter, editor and writing coach who has twice won Maine Arts Commission Fellowships and a Maine Arts Commission Fiction Award. His expertise is helping people to write and publish their personal stories. He is the owner of the Memoir Network and the Soleil Press, located in Lisbon Falls, Maine. His best-selling book, *Turning Memories into Memoirs/A Handbook for Writing Lifestories* (Soleil Press) is a detailed and easy to read guide to get you started and finished with your memoir.

Ledoux relates, “The *what* and *who* of a story is not enough. What makes a memoir interesting is an exploration of the dynamics of a life. I challenge people to discover their life’s motives. In that respect, writing a memoir can be cathartic. I tell clients that it is not a problem to write something negative, but our object is never to ‘throw stones’! It is merely to tell the truth—as we see it. Many of my clients have told me that the process of writing an in-depth memoir has been emotionally expansive and certainly is less expensive than therapy, and in the end, they have a book. But, not everyone is willing to take a plunge into the depth, and I can live with that. Ultimately, I cannot go further than my clients are willing to go with their stories. It is always their book.”

Born in Lewiston, January 18, 1947, Ledoux lives just a mile from his



Ledoux with His Books
Photo by Victor Oboyski

childhood home. He graduated from St. Joseph’s Oblate Seminary in Bucksport, Maine. He earned a BA in English Literature and MA in Education from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

He became an English teacher at first, but found his true calling when he began teaching adult education memoir writing workshops. A woman from one of his early workshops in Brunswick approached him after class and asked him to be the editor of her memoir. She became his first editing client and his Memoir Network editing, coaching and ghostwriting business has grown from that point to the present.

FRANCO-AMERICAN

Ledoux grew up in a multigenerational home with his mother, Lucille Verreault Ledoux, his father, Albert Ledoux, one brother and four sisters and his paternal grandparents who lived upstairs. Both sets of his grandparents were born in Quebec, Canada and French was spoken in his home. His paternal grandmother and his father were storytellers.

Ledoux’s own Franco American roots inspired his entry into memoir writing. His first book, *What Became of Them and Other Stories*, published in 1988 through his Soleil Press, was fiction loosely based on stories he heard while growing up. In 2014, Ledoux published and co-wrote his mother’s memoir, *We Were*



Ledoux at Brunswick Writers Workshop

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Not Spoiled. The memoir of her young life is an interesting and revealing glimpse into the Maine Franco community in the first half of the last century.

Ledoux and his wife, Martha Blowen, raised their family in Lisbon Falls right next door to her parents. His daughter, Zoe, now lives in Montreal with her husband and two francophone children and Ledoux’s son, Max, lives in New Hampshire. Blowen passed away from breast cancer in 2008. Ledoux declares that his family is his greatest achievement.

An English major at Bates College, Martha Blowen was the main editor of Ledoux’s best-selling book, *Turning Memoirs Into Memories*. It was honed from his writing and teaching experiences.



Verreault Family Photo, 1927

"In 1999, I expanded individual coaching and editing by taking on phone work and *in 2000, I reached an international base* of clients through my website."

The book, which contains sophisticated content written in plain English, has received solid reviews and mentions from publications such as Booklist, Time and Yankee magazines and newspapers around the country. It is a step-by-step guide for anyone who wishes to write a memoir. After his wife's passing, Ledoux compiled her memoir from her journals and his recollections and published, *A Sugary Frosting/ A Memoir of a Girlhood Spent in a Parsonage*. The book has since received over 50 reviews on Amazon alone.

MEMOIRS—HERE AND ABROAD

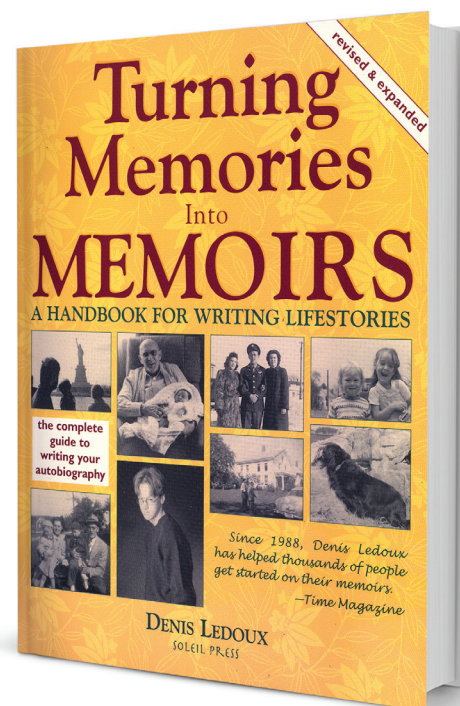
"In 1999, I expanded individual coaching and editing by taking on phone work and in 2000, I reached an international base of clients through my website," Ledoux continues, "I get to work with stimulating people. My real interest is to help people write their stories with more depth and social and psychological analysis. I have written, coached, or edited memoirs every day, 5 days a week, for almost 30 years. I have ghost written at least 30 plus books, have edited many more and mentored numerous people who wrote their own memoirs. I also count as successes, those of my clients who stopped writing after the first draft, but were happy with that result as well."

A few years ago, the Eritrean Minister of Education emailed Ledoux and asked him to ghostwrite a memoir about the Eritrean civil war. He requested that Ledoux send him a bank account number so that the Minister could deposit the payment for this service. It had all the makings of a scam but the full story seemed slightly believable to Ledoux.

At his local bank branch, Ledoux was advised to open a separate account for this client with a deposit of \$25, which would not be a great loss to Ledoux if this were a scam. Ledoux gave the man the account number. The man deposited payments over six months.

Ledoux assigned the story to one of his editors (he has a stable of long-distance co-workers) and the edits were emailed to the Eritrean Minister regularly. The book, which Ledoux believes was funded by the Eritrean government, was completed in record time.

Mona Cocciardi is Ledoux's first cousin. She helped Ledoux finish the last 100 pages of her father, Robert Verreault's memoir, *Business Boy to Business Man*. Her father passed before he was able to finish dictating the book, which Ledoux was ghostwriting. Cocciardi relates, "My cousin and I worked together on the finishing touches of the story, mostly through email. Denis is very skillful at writing memoirs in the person's own voice, so when the book was completed, even the ending sounded like my Dad. For my father, the primary purpose of this book was to have a written family heritage for the grandchildren. He would have been very pleased because at the book launch in Lewiston we had a big turnout of family and friends and all the printed copies of the book were sold out."



MAINE SENIOR

Ledoux has lived the majority of his life in Maine. He says, "What I like about being a Maine Senior is that the whole state is like a small town. You end up, very quickly, having a mutual connection with many of the people that you meet. You can go to any group—Franco American groups, writer's groups, political groups—and chances are you either know people there or they know people that you know. The links make living in Maine personal." Luckily he can do all of his business here in Maine through the Internet! **MSM**

If you would like help creating your memoir, Denis Ledoux is right here in Maine. His website is www.thememoirnetwork.com.