God Motivates

Generation Bridge exists to honor God by building bridges across generations and helping people navigate the challenges of different life stages. This work is driven by purpose, not profit, and reflects a desire to steward the gifts God has given me in service to others. Masonicare's willingness to engage in this project reinforced the belief that preserving stories and fostering connection is meaningful work. Everything that follows is rooted in God's leading and intended to point back to Him.

Proverbs 3: 3-4 (ESV)
Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
*   bind them around your neck;*
*   write them on the tablet of your heart.*
So you will find favor and good success
*   in the sight of God and man.*

WHAT WE DID

The Project: Why

Why This Mattered Personally

I wish I had more of my grandparents' stories preserved for posterity. I try to recall the stories they shared, but memory fades, details blur, and confidence in what's remembered weakens over time. That realization sparked a simple question: Is there a way to do this intentionally, while people are still here to tell their stories themselves?

- Our elders have lived wisdom, faith stories, family histories, lessons learned the hard way, etc.
- Most of this is never written down, never shared beyond immediate circles, lost within one generation

Families often realize this after it's too late

Solutions I Had Seen Already

There are excellent tools available today. I gifted my mother a subscription to Storyworth—a thoughtful and well-designed platform. While the concept was strong, she didn't engage with it much. What became clear was that these tools work best for individuals who are already motivated, disciplined, and comfortable writing regularly.

But what about those who aren't? What about people who are willing to talk, but not inclined to write—or who need encouragement, conversation, and presence to unlock their stories? Storytime was designed for those individuals.

The Project: Defined

The Problem

We don't do a great job of preserving memories within our families. While photos and videos help document moments, they rarely capture the story behind the eyes—the experiences, beliefs, struggles, and faith that make someone who they are. As generations pass, these stories are often reduced to fragments, remembered imperfectly or lost altogether.

At the same time, there are more technological tools available than ever before. The challenge is not access to technology, but intentionality.

The Solution

The solution begins with intention: creating space for meaningful conversation. Storytime was built around scheduling one-on-one interviews, listening carefully, and capturing stories as they were told. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using AI tools such as Otter.ai, then thoughtfully shaped using tools like ChatGPT to reflect the voice, tone, and perspective of the interviewee.

Each participant was given the opportunity to review their story, make edits, and ensure it accurately reflected their life and experiences before it was finalized and included as a chapter in the book.

What We Did (Simplified)?

01

The Process:
- Partnered with Masonicare
- Focused on voluntary participation
- Not an interrogation—a collaboration

02

The idea:
- Residents share their stories (written or interviewed)
- Explore what they felt mattered
- Capture stories in their voice

03

Outcomes envisioned:
- A gift to families
- A learning tool for others
- A public artifact honoring their lives

The Process End to End

High-level steps:

- Coordination with entity (i.e., Masonicare)

- Invitation & Consent

- Pre-Interview Outline and Explanation of Process

- Schedule Interviews

- Record Interview

- Transcribe Interview

- Narrative Development (ChatGPT, Other AI) - Illustration Design in AI If Desired

- Participant Review

- Final Written Piece

- Compilation into a Book

- Printing Book

- Distribution / Archiving
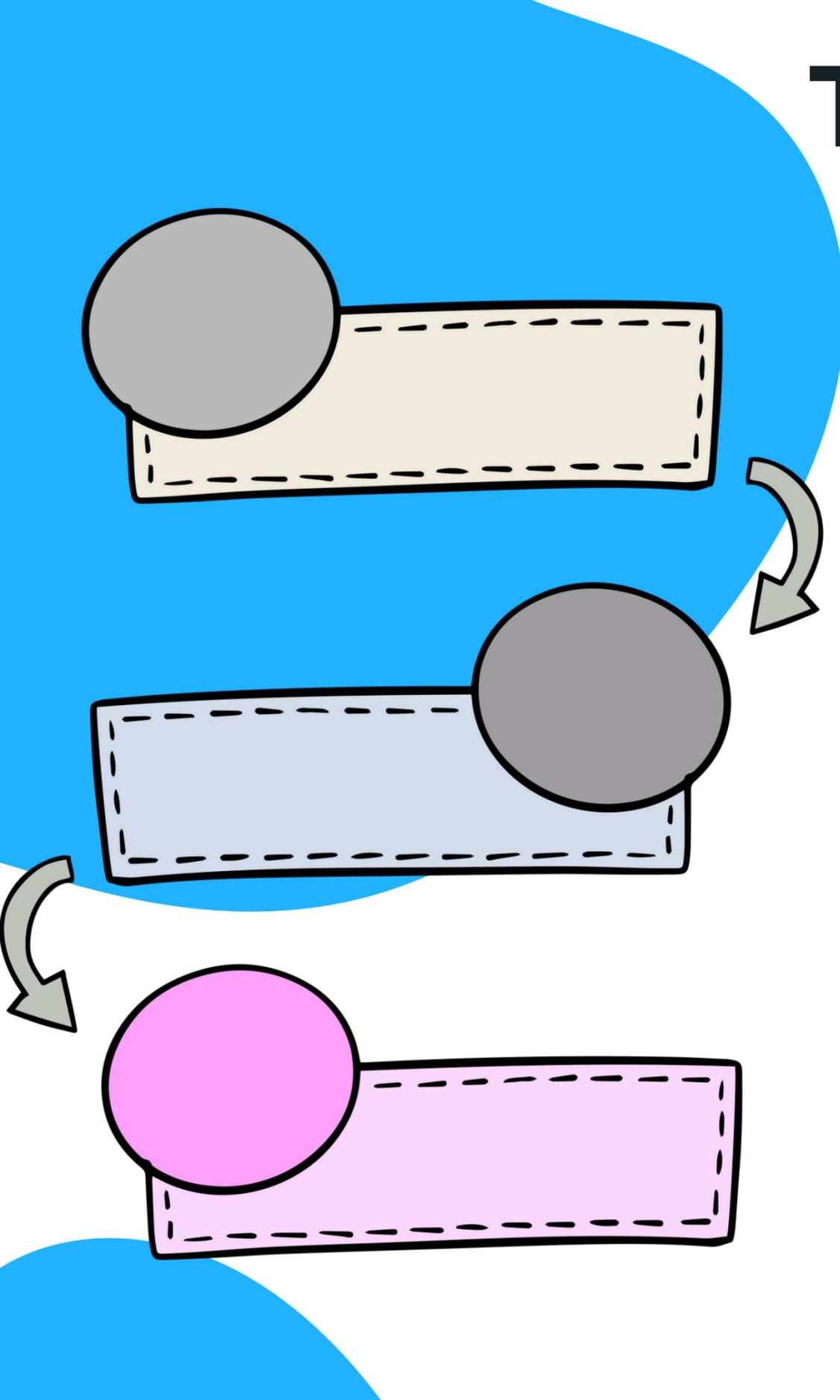
WHAT WAS PRODUCED

Here's an excerpt from the storyteller project. Vincent is a wonderful person who led an incredible life. Following his father's path, he became a fireman after serving in the Navy. Throughout his life, he drew comfort from the belief that he was never alone; Jesus was always by his side. I inputted the story into AI and requested ChatGPT to generate an image that captures its essence.

- 1 -
Never Alone

By: Vincent Tanner

I was born in 1947—smack in the middle of five kids and often left feeling like I was stuck between everyone else's stories. I had two older sisters, two younger brothers, and me—wedged right there in the center. It seemed like they all had someone to pair up with. I was the one with hand-me-downs, a tiny room, and one new shirt for Easter. But I never felt alone.

Because even when no one was paying much attention to me, I always knew God was.

My house was one of faith and work—Christ at the center and hard work as the way of life. My father was a firefighter, and when he wasn't running into burning buildings, he was digging a basement by hand under our house—literally digging, with the house already built on top of it. That's the kind of man he was. By night he pulled stones the size of tombstones from the New England earth, by day he wore a uniform and risked his life. And somehow, he also managed to serve as District Superintendent of the Sunday School at West End Congregational Church.

Generation Bridge Approach

Generation Bridge

Define Scope and Theme of Compilation

As a faith-based group, we encouraged participants to share impactful stories involving Jesus or God helping them. This fostered unity and highlighted stories that shaped their identities, from which we all can learn. But if participants didn't want to write about faith, they were encouraged to write about something personally important.

Personality

Start defining the storyteller's personality and demographic traits—birthplace, upbringing, self-description [quiet, humble, talkative, etc.], and how others see them. This provides the AI with perspective on how to best frame voice and tone.

Use of AI Tools
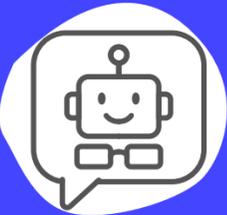
When interviewing, transcription can be done using tools like Otter.ai, as used here. Feed transcripts into an AI like ChatGPT, asking it to craft a story reflecting the interviewee or author's personality. Edit as needed and send for final approval.
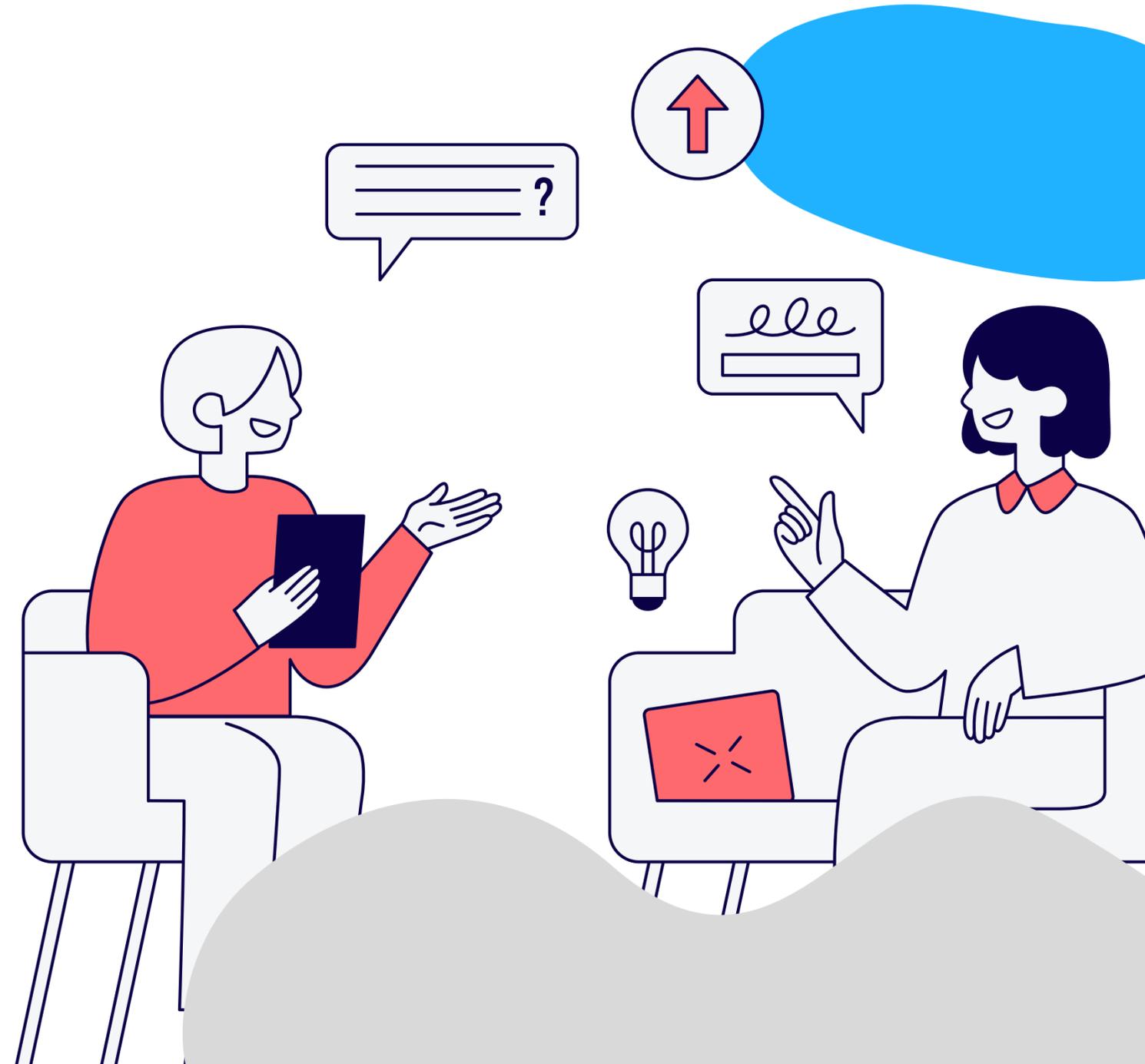
How Interviews / Stories Collected

Volunteers

- Work with the entity (Masonicare) to find volunteers.
- Define scope - arrange point people for contact [one point of contact is better than 10]
- Set timeframes in stone - I'll do interviews on X day for Y hours...

Framing

- While respecting emotional boundaries, have volunteers define and think about the story they want to present. Encourage:
- Faith stories, Life turning points, Loss, joy, humor, regret, etc.

Voice

Give participants control over:
- What's included
- What's omitted
- Whether it's public or private

SIGNIFICANT WINS

- The interactions and stories of the volunteers were very special. Just spending some time talking with them opened up the person and their history. We were privileged to hear about their love of family, friends, country, and God. They were open to sharing incredibly personal stories.

- AI did a fantastic job of pulling the stories together. Only one interviewee had a story that didn't translate well in AI. That one had to be rewritten "first," then plugged into the AI again for finalization. But all the others were successful on the first draft. Only 2-3 had any revisions which were limited [spelling of proper nouns (i.e., the name of a person referenced in the story) or a post story request to include one more element].

- Self-publishing a book is pretty easy. I went from not knowing anything to learning how to format the book, load it and print out 25 copies with minimal issues. There are many printers/publishers who can help you get your stories printed in hard copy much easier than you could imagine.

IMPROVEMENTS

- To respect the time of the "compiler" (me or others), it is best to create windows for interviews on 2–3 days and then schedule multiple interviews in those windows. It became difficult to be flexible with volunteer time, as it made the process take significantly longer to collect the stories.

- There should be a way for the compiler to contact storyteller volunteers directly when coordinating times. Our project had a change in staffing, which impacted our ability to arrange for interviews with our original volunteers. Having the ability to connect with the individual directly can minimize impact of staffing changes to the overall project.

- Storyteller volunteers should have a specific story or two "in mind" before beginning the interview. When the interview is undefined, it can take some time to uncover the story within it. That then makes the translation into AI more difficult and less "coherent". It might be wise to do a pre-interview or initiate a requirement to fill out a form with the story idea (topic, timeframe, and lesson).

- Spend enough time getting personalities defined so that the voice that is present in the AI platform most closely resembles the interviewee. Additionally define with the participant whether they want the story in narrative, conversational or another format.
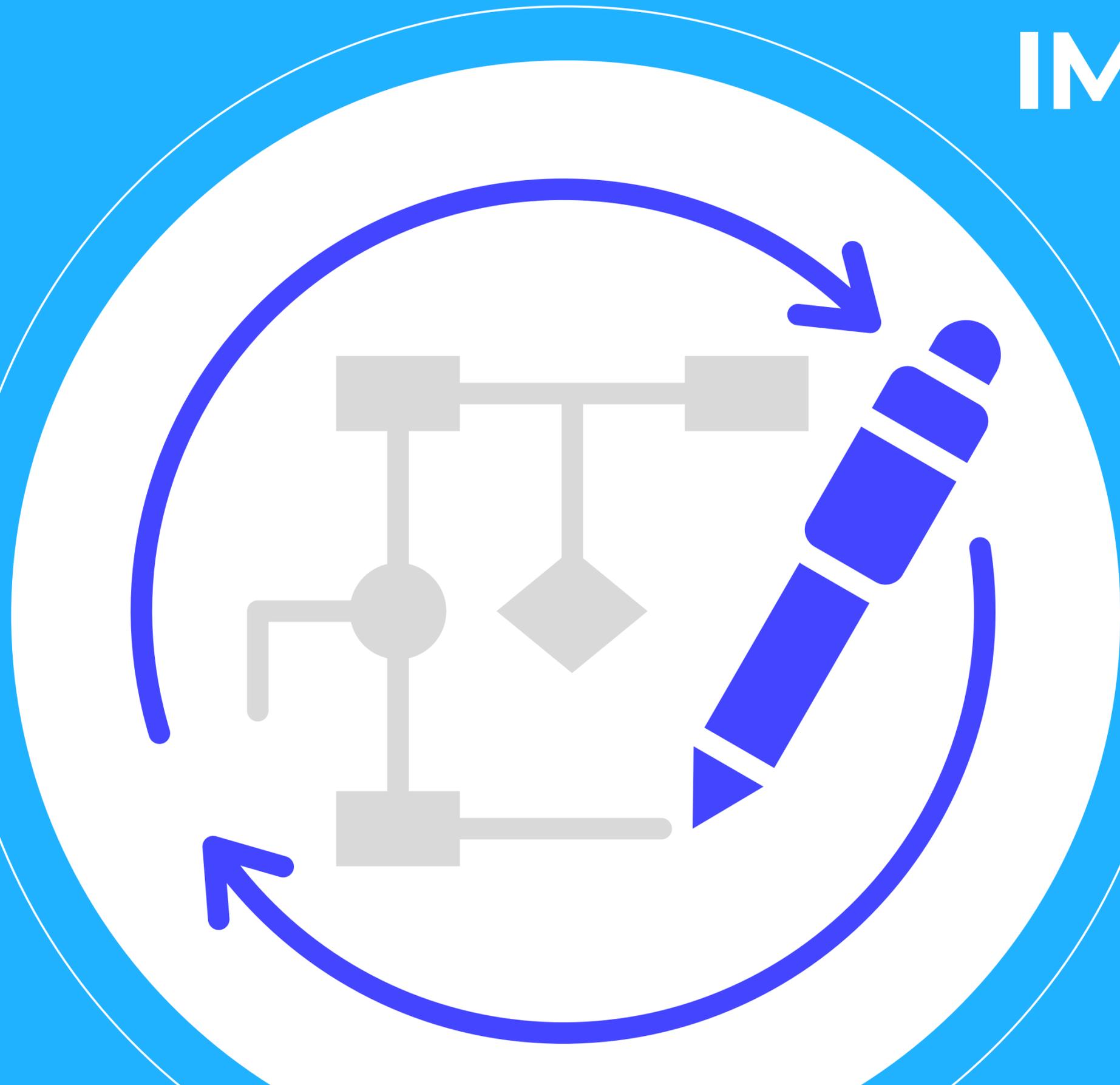
Tools we used

OTTER.AI
Transcription tool - automatically and instantly transcribes an audio interview.

CHATGPT
AI platform used to take the transcripts and put them into story format. It also was used for the illustrations.

CANVA
Used to help create some of the forms that were used to get volunteer approval and their personal interests.

MICROSOFT WORD
Good ol' MS Word was the software used to compile the book and get it "print-ready."

ONPRESS BOOK PUBLISHING
They allow you to self publish. Their site has many resources to help you format your book correctly!

MOVING

FORWARD?

Who *can* or *should* do this?

This can be done by **anyone**, but let's discuss a few places where I think this makes sense.

01   Churches

02   Senior Centers, Senior Living Communities

03   Families

04   Volunteer Groups

05   Non-profits or community organizations

DON'T BE INTIMIDATED

It's easier than you think...

DON'T Need	DO Need
A Book	One Willing Storyteller
AI Expertise	One Listener
Publishing Knowledge	One Recording Device (e.g., phones)
A Partner Organization	Time and Intention

DON'T OVERTHINK IT... START TODAY

If you want to try this yourself:

1. Identify **one person** who wants to share a story
2. Ask for permission to **listen and record**
3. Schedule **60–90 minutes**
4. Prepare **3–5 open-ended prompts** (questions to get more detail)
5. **Record** the conversation
6. **Transcribe** it (Otter.ai records AND transcribes at the same time)
7. Insert it into an **AI platform** to generate a story
8. **Review** the story with them

Thank you

Questions?

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