

# Pillars of our Spiritual Connection: Memory and Hope

BY MARY KATHERINE MORN, PARISH MINISTER, UU CONGREGATION OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA



About 10 years ago my family and I went to Northern Virginia from Nashville on a four-month sabbatical. (Georgetown University brought us there for my husband John's work.) I couldn't have been happier to come back to a place I remembered. All my life I've moved to new places, leaving behind what is familiar and forming new memories. My mother always said, "How lucky we are to make new friends, to discover new places." I don't disagree.

But in that returning, I got to experience what it is like to be somewhere that holds memories. We actually rented a house only a mile or so from the house I lived in from ages 8 to 12. What a revelation. Sometimes as I was walking through the old neighborhood I would suddenly remember. It's not that I saw something I remembered, exactly—at least I wasn't conscious of that. It was just being there that would cause me to remember. It was a very powerful experience, like remembering who I am.

What are we, but this series of stories that we tell ourselves and these images that we conjure?

The creek where my brothers did their Eagle Scout projects. The girlfriend's house where I experienced Hanukkah for the first time. My piano teacher's downstairs door—I could see the large room where I had my lessons and

played in recitals. On and on, I reclaimed these memories of myself. Nothing profound. Simple memories. But somehow I found confidence in remembering some of my roots, and it felt wonderful and strong.

Our memories serve to create and re-create us all the time. What are we, but this series of stories that we tell ourselves and these images that we conjure? Even our vision of the future is anchored in the stories and images we remember. And the present is some powerful spark, fueled by what we remember and what we imagine about the future.

Marcel Proust wrote that memory comes as "a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being..."

I actually knew a man who lost his memory. David was a colleague of mine. At the time he was the minister of a congregation in Texas. He apparently didn't remember to show up at a church event where he was expected. He wasn't there on Sunday morning either. Months later they found him somewhere in the Northwest, where he had been hired as a janitor in a homeless shelter. They think he experienced some kind of trauma. When I saw him a few years later he was living with his wife again. He had even preached at the UU fellowship near their new home. As far as I know, he has never remembered his earlier life nor what happened that took him so near the abyss of non-being.

Maybe you've heard the story about the holiday ham. For years when a family was preparing for Christmas dinner, the cook would prepare a ham by cutting off about three inches on one end, placing the rest of the ham in the pan and cooking it. Someone new came into the family and asked why they always cut the end off of the ham. No one knew. "That's just what we always do."

# Quest

Vol. LXVIII, No. 10

November 2013

The true art of memory is the art of attention.  
-Samuel Johnson

A monthly for religious liberals

## THINKING ABOUT MEMORY

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Finally, they found a great aunt who remembered. “Oh,” she recalled, “our mother’s pan was too small. We always had to trim off that much to fit it in the pan.” Everyone remembered the ritual of cutting the end off of the ham. But no one remembered that it was only because back then the family didn’t have a big enough pan.

We have to take care with the stories we tell, watch what they are telling us about ourselves, watch that we do not waste perfectly good ham for no reason at all.

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### The challenge with memory is to hold it lightly, to avoid being trapped in the comfort or terror of any of it for too long.

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There are a couple of common ways that memories can hold us back from living fully and well. If we dwell in an idealized vision of our past, we will pass this present hour without notice of its unique and beautiful gifts. We will sleep or day-dream through our lives. If we define everything about this day by means of a memory of abuse or illness or some other terrible thing, we will, likewise, sleep, fitful and troubled, through this day.

In either of these ways we create a kind of non-being.

The challenge with memory is to hold it lightly, to avoid being trapped in the comfort or terror of any of it for too long. Because while memory forms the roots that hold us, it is only a part of what is real now. And it only hints at what is possible in the next moment.

In religious community, we have the gift of our own small stories encountering the larger human story. We have the gift of putting our memory in the context of what is beyond our singular lives; the gift of seeing, and remembering, the connections; of remembering

that we are part of something larger than ourselves—that our stories matter, but that they are not the whole story.

In my experience this perspective makes all the difference in the world. When I forget that I am part of something larger than myself, I can get angry in my loneliness. I despair at how little difference I can make. I focus on disappointment. When I am reminded of the larger human story, of the potential of human community, I discover (re-discover, remember) courage and hope. That is why I consider memory and hope the pillars of our spiritual association with one another.

There’s a wonderful photo going around on Facebook that has been giving me strength.

Nine-year-old Josef was walking with his mother on the campus of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, when they encountered protesters from Westboro Baptist Church. You remember them? They are the ones who stage hate protests around the country. When they hear of a march for equality, for instance, they will gather with their signs, proclaiming things like, “God Hates Fags.” They have gathered often at Arlington Cemetery as well, to proclaim: “Thank God for dead soldiers.”

When Josef saw the protesters and their hateful signs he asked his mother if he could stage a counter-protest. She didn’t know what he had in mind but she said yes. Josef went to their car and got a small spiral notebook on which he wrote something. He positioned himself across from the protesters and held up his own proclamation: “God Hates No One.”

Where does that hope and courage come from? I haven’t heard his story, so I



## Honor Memories with a Gift to the CLF

Holidays, memorials, weddings, coming of age, birthdays, anniversaries, etc., are important markers in time. Contributions to CLF can be a meaningful way to celebrate or honor the memory of a special person, organization, or occasion while also supporting this inclusive ministry. If you wish, the CLF can send a special note card to the honoree or their family to share your thoughtfulness. We suggest a minimum gift of \$25 for each tribute.

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don’t actually know. But I know in my own life what leads to courage and hope. It’s remembering the struggles and triumphs of the human story. It is remembering how people have stood together against hate, again and again.

It is the memory of seeing so many members of my congregation standing together at the Fairfax County Courthouse, standing on the side of love. It is the stories I’ve learned from elders of the fight for racial justice in the Fairfax County schools. I remember hope and courage whenever we gather to celebrate compassion, love, justice.

It’s no small thing we do, friends, when we remember the best that we are, and when we share that with the world. ■

# Do You Remember When...?

BY DAVID TAKAHASHI MORRIS,  
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CALIFORNIA

The whole time between Thanksgiving and Kwanzaa is filled with days of remembrance. In the weeks around the winter solstice those of us in the Northern Hemisphere remind ourselves that we live in a universe where light will push aside the dark, where seedlings will sprout after their long cold sleep, where hope springs into the world unexpectedly, unlooked-for. It is a season of gathering for many, and a season of memories.

What are some of yours? Spirited family debates over a Hanukkah first-night table, the smell of frying potato latkes in the air? Grateful eyes as a present is opened that tells someone they are truly in your heart? Champagne, chocolates and laughter on a long-ago New Year's Eve? Candles, prayers, and the solemn joyous celebrations of religious holidays?

These are times when stories are told, and old traditions are pulled out of beat-up boxes from attics and garages. We remind each other of details, revising our own memories when someone says: "No, that's not the way it happened...and that was *my* bicycle you crashed." Maybe there's a pause as we speak of those who have died, and they take their place in the web of remembrance we're weaving.

Not all our memories are warm and candlelit, of course. You might remember the hushed year when Mother was so ill just before the holidays. Or the years of bitterness when the family was all too angry to be in the house together. Or that frightening year when your parents' friend who drank all the



time just stayed and stayed. For some of us every childhood holiday was an occasion for tension, for fearing the peace would be broken, for being reminded

of everything we were not. These are memories we don't return to gladly, and yet slowly we come to terms with them, acknowledging that they are what they are, and we can't change them. We forgive where we can, heal as we must.

All of these memories—the images and smells and sounds, joyous or troubled, fond or harsh—all of these are part of each of our stories.

James Hillman, who wrote a book on the spiritual journey of aging, *The Force of Character*, says that we "re-remember" the story of our lives again and again, reinterpreting and even revising old events in the light of new information, experiences, and insights. "Now I see what really happened." "That's what she meant." "I didn't realize until just now what that must have been like for you."

Memory and imagination intertwine, Hillman says, with memory supplying the raw material of our experiences while imagination draws connections and conclusions about the world and about ourselves. Our identity is a narrative we create out of those raw materials and connections over time: What have we seen? What have we done? Who did we seek, or find? Who have we been?

Memory is the key to our ongoing, developing identity. Until it isn't.

It's Christmas morning. Some of the adult children and grandchildren are gathered around the parents' tree. Presents are unwrapped; hugs and kisses and thanks are exchanged. The father watches his wife open presents. He

grows still and withdrawn. He begins to look under the tree; he moves things around, looking under piles of paper, looking under the blanket around the tree stand. He swears softly.

Someone asks him what's wrong, and reluctantly he says, "Did anybody see a little box wrapped in silver paper? I know I put it under the tree last night. I can't find it." It's a necklace he's looking for, the perfect necklace he found weeks ago. He's hidden the box from her...somewhere. Everyone searches. It's nowhere to be found. His face is stiff as everyone tries to help him get past this moment, let go of the search, give the memory time to come back to him.

It never does.

Years later, I know all too intimately what my father was feeling in those excruciating moments. Where could that thing be? Is it possible I didn't bring it out last night? Am I sure I remember wrapping it? How could I have possibly forgotten this?

Medical testing has assured me that I'm not—currently—on the same trajectory that eventually left both my parents debilitated and dependent on others for their every need. I am not an expert on the topic of memory loss. But I do know what that kind of moment feels like. I know some of you do, too. And I suspect everyone is close to someone who does.

It is extraordinarily frustrating, that moment when the thought, the word, the recollection we're looking for just won't come. It's frustrating and it's frightening. I know intellectually that in my mid-50s I am a very far cry from where my parents were in their eighties. Still, emotionally, I am confronted by the specter of my own diminishment. Amnesia is my family legacy.

One year I took my father out for a drive. I talked to him about places we'd been, things we'd seen, memories such as this one: My parents, my sister and I

are standing on the edge of the market square in Nürnberg, looking through a cold evening mist at the oldest *Christ-kindlesmarkt* in Germany. It's an annual event that's part bazaar, part Christmas party, part street fair. We are deciding we won't go into the market itself in spite of the half-hour my father spent finding a place to park, because my mother and sister are miserable in the freezing damp.

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I believe we are surrounded and sustained by an abiding power that urges everything toward connection and creative possibility, a power I call love.

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To this day I know exactly what roasting *bratwurst* on a foggy night in a busy city smells like, mingled with cinnamon and nostalgia for a half-invisible five-hundred-year-old Christmas carnival I don't think I ever really visited. I'd like to say "I'll always remember that night," but it probably isn't true.

It seems especially poignant to think of holiday memories fading, the precious images and experiences slipping away. "Do you remember when the baby took her first steps right into the Christmas tree?" "Do you remember when Uncle Michael told that joke in Yiddish and all the old folks were howling and we never could get them to say it in English?" "Do you remember that year when it was so warm right through December that the daffodils started coming up in January?" Think of your own memories; think of how special they are for you.

If memory is the key to our identity, then loss of memory feels like a loss of self. Blessed and cursed with a vivid imagination, I can picture my holiday memories along with all the others

fading like photographs in sunlight. I know this is a long way off; I even know it may never happen at all. Still, who will I be if I'm no longer the teller of my own story?

In his book, *Remembering Whose We Are*, pastoral counseling scholar David Keck writes about religion in the context of Alzheimer's disease. Religion relies on memory, he says, because religions narrate a coherent story of existence and offer us a way to find ourselves in that story. The memory religion relies on, though, is more than what each of us remembers. Our personal memory is just as fragile and fleeting as our individual life, but our community's memory is long and strong. Keck invites us to imagine the community gradually *becoming* the memory of the Alzheimer's patient. He calls this keeping faith with memory. We are held in the community and in the world because the community and our loved ones *know who we are*. They *remember* us into the world.

I believe we are surrounded and sustained by an abiding power that urges everything toward connection and creative possibility, a power I call love. That abiding power is our faithful companion, always accessible to us. Love does not forsake us, no matter what the circumstances of our lives. Even when we forsake love ourselves. Even when we can't remember what it is.

If you want to know where to find that abiding love, look into communities of faith like this one, look to partners and children and parents and caregivers. Look anywhere people are caring for one another, anywhere people are holding their loved ones in the world by keeping their memories alive.

"Remember that you are all people and that all people are you," Joy Harjo writes on the back page of this issue. "Remember that you are this universe and that this universe is you."

And if you can't remember, don't be afraid. It will still be true. And we will remember for you. ■

## Pie with Spirits

by **Mary Wellemeyer**, accredited interim minister, Glacier UU Fellowship, Kalispell, Montana

This is the very pumpkin pie my grandmother made—almost. She was a modern woman who knew how to follow recipes. *Receipts*, she called them, because they had been received. She had a rule for pie crust that was constant until, from time to time, it changed.

I have that rule, in turn, and it has moved on, just a bit, from where she left it.

This is my special shared moment with her, departed a quarter century.

As I work, I am all ages of myself, and the thought of my tall son comes to join us, though he hardly knew her.

He makes pies with wild abandon, sculpting them from material and artistry.

He has received pie somehow at the level of soul.

The three of us make pie together, preheating the oven, cutting butter into flour, adding water,

flouring a board, rolling the crust. To honor her, I follow the recipe. To honor him, I change just one thing.

To honor myself, I take my time and smile.



From  
Mary

*Wellemeyer's 2004 meditation manual Admire the Moon. Published by Skinner House, and available through the UUA bookstore (www.uuabookstore.org or 800-215-9076.)* ■



Phyllis and Gordon McKeeman

## Tie Tack

BY GORDON MCKEEMAN, MINISTER EMERITUS, UU CHURCH OF AKRON, OHIO

There are many relics in our home—objects to which important memories are attached. You probably have some, too. Each recalls some journey, event, or person that is a part of your life's experience. They're precious on that account—religious objects that summon up powerful recollections. One of my favorites is my tie tack. It's an opal, full of fiery iridescence.

The tie tack was an unexpected gift. Its former owner, the donor, came out of the church's worship one Sunday. As I greeted him, I noticed his tie tack and I said to him, "What a beautiful opal!" On the spot he took it off and gave it to me. I was both delighted and chagrined. I took off my tie tack, a UUSC flaming chalice, and gave it to him. It was far from an equal exchange.

More important, what he did in that fleeting moment was very typical of him. He was a person of whom it could be said without exaggeration, "He'd give you the shirt off his back." He lived quite an ordinary life. He was a salesman of advertising novelties, so he spent much time in his car traveling from client to client. He spent a significant portion of his driving time thinking of ways to improve the community. He could be counted on to suggest some modest and simple change that would make a positive and real difference in people's lives. Some of his ideas were real winners, saving much public money and touching many lives with joy and opportunity. My life was one of those.

One of my joys associated with wearing a necktie is to put on my tie tack. I have quite a few of them, but the opal is always my choice. It's a ritual. I put it on and remember the man who gave it to me, and I resolve to find in this day some opportunity to continue what was his real life's work: doing something simple, modest, and useful to improve the life of the community.

Over the many years I have worn my tie tack, many people have admired it. To many of them I have told the story of my acquisition of it and of what it means to me. With each telling I have confessed that I ought to give it away since that's how I obtained it—by admiring it. Some day I know I will give it away, together with its story. Meanwhile I say that I'm keeping a list of its admirers and offer to add the name of another possible recipient. Meanwhile, I keep wearing it and keep reminding myself of its meaning in my life.

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### Reflecting on one's relics now and then is a useful spiritual discipline....

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Reflecting on one's relics now and then is a useful spiritual discipline—remembering the events, the person, the occasions when ordinary things were somehow transformed into religious objects. All around us are the reminders of the days of our lives, the people whose touch was a blessing, a balm, and invitation, a beckoning to be a better person—deeper, more secure, more daring, more generous, more caring. My tie tack does more—much, much more—than hold my tie. On some ordinary day like today I invite you to consider your relics.

*From Singing in the Night: Collected Meditations, Vol. 5. Edited by Mary Benard, and published by Skinner House in 2004. Available from the UUA bookstore (www.uuabookstore.org or 800-215-9076). ■*

## CLF Nominating Committee Seeks Leaders



FROM THE CLF NOMINATING COMMITTEE:  
**WENDY WOODEN, CHAIR;**  
**A.W. "BRAD" BRADBURD;**  
**REBECCA SCOTT**

The Church of the Larger Fellowship Nominating Committee seeks CLF members to run for positions on the Board of Directors beginning June 2014:

- **Directors** three for three-year terms
- **Treasurer** for a one-year term
- **Clerk** for a one-year term

Board members set CLF policy and approve the budget. The Board meets in Boston twice annually and periodically by conference calls.

The nominating committee meets periodically by conference calls.

Please contact the CLF office at [nominating@clfu.org](mailto:nominating@clfu.org) or 617-948-6166 by **January 15, 2014**, with your nominations. ■





## From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY  
SENIOR MINISTER,  
CHURCH OF THE  
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Lately, as my Labrador retriever has been reaching the final days of a long, happy life, I have felt moved to sit with her and share, sometimes aloud and sometimes in my mind, memories of our 14 years together. Stroking her arthritic, sleeping body, speaking to a dog—so deaf I now sometimes have to tap her even to tell her to get up to eat dinner—I walk back through our times together.

My old dog is happiest sleeping now, and while she enjoys being petted, it doesn't cause her to do much more than stretch in her sleep when I sit by her. I am doing this not for her joy but for my own, using memory to channel my grief about her slow and steady departure. I tell myself that even now,



Photo by Jie Wronski-Riley

as she is no longer that frisky puppy I used to know, as she can no longer jump or swim or go on long hikes, she is still the same dog she has been, and I will always get to have our memories.

When my mother died I made a photo album for my then-six-year-old daughter, telling her the story of how much her grandmother loved her. Telling her that story (which interested me far more than it did her) allowed me to cherish specific memories, to create meaning with them, to claim them going forward into an unknown life without my mother, to shape her presence in my new life in particular ways that would give me comfort.

My old friend Chris lost his wife to a completely unexpected heart attack. He had been with her since their freshman year in college and suddenly, almost forty years later, he was making his way without her. Chris begged us to tell him stories about his beloved that he might not have heard before, things she said or did with us when he wasn't there, things unremarkable enough that neither she nor we might have felt compelled to mention them before. He didn't say so, but it felt like as long as he was having new experiences of her, through hearing the memories of other people, she was still in some way alive.

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### Memory...is a gift for connection, and healing, and living fully in the present day.

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I come from a long line of southern storytellers, who would sit around the dinner table for hours and talk about things that had happened decades before. (Or kind of happened. The events described that I had been present for

were often told very differently than I would have described them myself, but I learned by elementary school not to argue with the storyteller.) Now, with all of those older relatives gone, I have become the keeper of some of those passed-down memories, and I wonder how reliable I am as a witness, how much the stories I tell might deviate from what "actually happened."

When my daughter was young, her favorite bedtime stories were the "tell me about when you were a little girl" variety. Through long nights in the rocking chair, I remembered countless bits of my childhood that had lain untouched for decades. No one had ever expressed such interest before; I had never had cause to remember them. And yet there they were, folded up in a dusty old suitcase just waiting for me

to shake them out and put them on again. Slipping into them helped me to see the world through my daughter's eyes, to remember what it was to be small and new on the planet.

Years ago, when my then-partner and I moved from Minnesota to Boston, we took special care to help the three-year-old next door say goodbye. Arthur had run in and out of our house as if it were his own, relied on us as extra parents, knew that he could always count on a snack or a game or a snuggle in our house. We brought Arthur over as we packed, had him help with the cleanup of the house, held him while we waved together at the moving van pulling away from our house.

Yet, his mom told me, later that night he said he'd like to go over and have dinner with us. She reminded him that we were gone, and when that didn't sink in, she walked him over to show him the now-empty house. When they walked in he began to wail. "Where's the REAL house? I want to go to the REAL house!"

Sometimes memory is more real than the present. I know that when my old dog is no longer on this earth, there will be times when I will still see her around the corners of the house, still feel her walking beside me or leaning on me, still hear her stirring in her sleep. Those moments will be bitter-sweet, but they will be affirmation of our life together.

When my daughter was three, and I was leaving on yet another business trip, she cried and said she didn't want me to go. "I will be right here, in your heart," I promised, touching her heart. "But my heart can't smell you, or hold your hand!" she responded.

Memory has its limitations, to be sure. We can't smell it, or hold its hand. And yet, its presence brings depth and texture to our days that would not otherwise be there. Used well, it is a gift for connection, and healing, and living fully in the present day. ■

## REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



What's your favorite Thanksgiving memory? I think about being a kid, and watching the Thanksgiving Day parade while the house filled with delicious smells, followed by making "turkeys" that had an apple for a body, and tail feathers constructed of raisins threaded onto toothpicks. More recently, I remember the Thanksgiving that the whole family gathered at my brother's house, how we all crowded into his kitchen to make four kinds of pie and five kinds of cranberry sauce as well as the turkey and sundry other fixings.

But memory, by nature, is never complete. Some things always stick more than others. I can easily call to mind the cranberry relish, cranberry sauce with ginger, cranberry chutney, cranberry sauce with pear and cranberry sorbet that we happily constructed in my brother's kitchen. But it takes an effort of will to come up with the piece of that memory where I had a tiff with my partner about my family's persistent desire to tell one another a better way to do whatever it was that person was doing. Far easier to just go with the memories that "belong."

For instance, in the U.S. we remember the Thanksgiving holiday as honoring the anniversary of the "First Thanksgiving" in 1621, when Pilgrims and the local Wampanoag people gathered for a feast of thanksgiving, in honor of the Pilgrims' first successful harvest. But the letter describing that original feast talks about a harvest festival, not a day of thanksgiving, and certainly there was no description of any plans to make this an annual celebration.

Besides, that First Thanksgiving wasn't really the first. Setting aside feasts of thanksgiving held by Native Americans long before Europeans came on the scene, our memories have generally missed the fact that

in 1541 Spaniard Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and his troops celebrated a "Thanksgiving" while searching for New

World gold in what is now the Texas Panhandle. We also forget that thanksgiving feasts were held by French Huguenot colonists in present-day Jacksonville, Florida in 1564, by English colonists and Abenaki at Maine's Kennebec River in 1607, and by other settlers in Jamestown, Virginia in 1610, when the arrival of a ship carrying food ended a brutal famine.

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### The stories we tell will always affect the way we remember.

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As individuals and as a society we tend to "forget" things that don't match up with how we envision the story, whether it's the screaming and squabbling of the precious children at our holiday celebration or the ways in which our heroes turn out to have their own deep flaws. But beyond that, we're even quite capable of remembering things that simply never happened. Now, if we're sure that Uncle Jim saved the day when the oven caught fire during Thanksgiving of 1972, even though it turns out he was living overseas at the time and couldn't possibly have been there, not much harm is done. But sometimes the need to remember things in a way they never happened takes a more dangerous turn.

Following George Zimmerman's acquittal for killing Trayvon Martin in Florida, someone posted on a friend's Facebook page declaring that the justice system was not racist, and that the racism belonged to the masses of African Americans who rioted and looted following the verdict. Only... *there were no massive riots and looting*. There were some smashed windows in Oakland and Los Angeles, but the vast majority of protests following the verdict were

entirely peaceful. This person managed to remember the event in a way that matched his story that Black people are dangerous and violent, thereby letting himself, and all other White people, off the hook for systems of oppression.

The stories we tell will always affect the way we remember. Our minds are simply wired that way. Sometimes those stories help us to be better people, calling us to be like the heroes who were never quite as perfect as we remember them. Sometimes those stories allow us to weasel out of responsibility by assuring us that there was nothing we could have done, that the problem was entirely someone else's fault. The only solution to our unreliable memories may be to accept that our memories can't just belong to ourselves alone.

We need to hear other people's stories, to gather up as broad a range of memories as we can. If I want to know what happened to those long-ago apple-turkeys I could start by asking my mom. My brother's recollection of the massive Ungar family invasion of his house might be quite different than my own, and his wife's very different still. But more than that, I need to experience the world by hearing the memories of those whose lives are different from my own: people who live on Iowa farms and in urban Detroit, people who immigrated as children and people whose families have lived in the same place for generations, people who are barely scraping by and people who have inherited wealth, people of different ages and races, with different educations and interests, people who come with a whole range of stories of how we go about being human.

Our own memories are precious, and they deserve to be cherished. But they cannot be relied on to tell the whole story. I suppose there never really is any such thing as the whole story, the One True Way It Happened. But when we take the time to listen, and listen broadly, our stories get richer, more complex and more interesting than any one story can be on its own. ■



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## Remember

BY JOY HARJO

Remember the sky that you were born under,  
know each of the star's stories.  
Remember the moon, know who she is. I met her  
in a bar once in Iowa City.  
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the  
strongest point of time. Remember sundown  
and the giving away to night.  
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled  
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of  
her life, and her mother's, and hers.  
Remember your father. He is your life also.  
Remember the earth whose skin you are:  
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth  
brown earth, we are earth.  
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their  
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,  
listen to them. They are alive poems.  
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the  
origin of this universe. I heard her singing Kiowa war  
dance songs at the corner of Fourth and Central once.

Remember that you are all people and that  
all people are you.  
Remember that you are this universe and that  
this universe is you.  
Remember that all is in motion, is growing, is you.  
Remember that language comes from this.  
Remember the dance that language is, that life is.  
Remember. ■



*From How We  
Became Human: New  
and Selected Poems  
1975-2001 by Joy  
Harjo. Published by  
W. W. Norton and  
Company in 2004.*

