

DO YOU REMEMBER?

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Do you remember being six? Do you remember getting ready for the new school year and getting new crayons and a Big Chief tablet? Do you remember agonizing over which lunch box to choose and being worried about getting on the wrong bus? Do you remember the night before the first day and how hard it was to go to sleep?



Do you remember being ten and getting new shoes? Do you remember being worried about who you would have to sit next to on the bus? Do you remember spelling bees and the names of your three best friends?

Can you recall being "almost thirteen" and how long that year was? Can you remember wondering if HE (or SHE) noticed you and if he/she would call? Do you remember angora sweaters and saddle shoes and spending hours practicing dancing ... "just in case ..."

Does being sixteen ring a bell somewhere in your memory? Can you remember how to find the circumference of a circle or the area of a rectangle? Can you still conjugate Spanish verbs and diagram sentences? Do the lines of the Gettysburg Address or something from Shakespeare still dance across your mind?

Can you remember your address then, or your phone number, or the color of your first corsage? Do you remember holding hands, your first kiss, the moment you knew it was SOMETHING SPECIAL? Do you remember trying out for the football team, the cheer leading squad, the lead in the class play? Do you remember being nervous about giving a speech or asking someone to dance?

Do names and places and events sometimes still float across your memory? Do you find yourself transported somewhere else in time when a special song comes on the radio? Do you remember records and the Beatles and the years before panty hose?

Do you remember a favorite teddy bear and what color lollipop you loved and your favorite flavor of ice cream? Can you remember watching clouds drift by on summer days and knowing there was an endless string of tomorrows? Can you remember running barefoot through the grass and sledding down the big hill alone for the first time?



What do you remember? Can you recall the first time you ever "fell in love" and how you thought the stars were just for you? Do you remember the way to the grocery store and the secret handshake? Did you have a magic decoder ring, and how many jars of Ovaltine did you have to consume just to get the prize? Did your mom save Green Stamps? (Did you?) How often did you trade baseball cards?

Can you remember raking leaves and mowing the grass and pulling dandelions? Can you remember carving pumpkins and working hard to create the VERY SCARIEST COSTUME? Do you remember when Trick or Treat was more treat than trick and we could eat the goodies we received? Do you remember the taste of candied apples and caramel corn?

Can you still smell the smoky scent of burning leaves and feel the crisp fall breeze on your face?

Do you remember Winter, Spring and Summer? Do you remember what you did when the thunder grew really loud and the lights flickered? Do you remember how you managed to survive the first break-up, and then the second one, and the

third? Do you remember swearing you would never fall in love again? And then you did

Do you remember anything or everything? Are your memories treasure or trash? Do they bring comfort or pain or a little of both? What do you remember and what are we going to do with all those memories?

Fall is the gathering time, and just as the animals begin to stock pile their hideaways with nuts and berries (and Oreos?) in preparation for a long winter's sleep, we too, seem to be gathering. When the air turns cool and the leaves begin to color, our thoughts seem to turn to yesterday, and we begin to take inventory of ourselves and our lives. What have we accomplished? Where have we been and what have we done? We begin to gather in our memories and sort them, one by one, living and reliving the events that have shaped our lives.

How come memories aren't very accurate? How come we remember things as being far worse or far better than they were? Why does time change the memories we carry with us into now? Why do some things begin to fade from view while other pictures remain etched forever on our soul? How come I can remember the pain, but sometimes have trouble remembering the smiles?

Are squirrels selective in their gathering of nuts, or do they simply want to get as many stored away as possible? Do bears take a personal inventory of their thoughts and memories before turning in for the winter? Why can't we be more like the animals and just take it all in and let it all go whenever it is necessary? Why do we have to hold onto some things and toss others away? Isn't there room for all of our experiences? Isn't the human mind and heart and spirit large enough, flexible enough, strong enough to hold all of our thoughts, fears, guilts and happiness, at the same time? Why do we have to be selective in our memories? I want to remember it all!



Every moment I have lived has been worth something. Some were obviously better than others, but I do not want to lose anything that I have experienced. I want to remember looking for elves under leaves and Grandma's special cookie recipe. I want to remember Grandpa's stories and the smell of my first bottle of perfume. I want to remember the warmth of being held, and I want to remember the joy of being loved.

And if that means I will have to carry with me all of my memories, because I am too tired to sort them into the proper categories, then I will claim them all.

I will remember being scared, of being the new kid again and again and again. I will remember the fears, the guilt, the funeral, the gloom, the thunder and the rain, because I want to remember the sun, and the joy and the love. I cannot separate my life into neat little compartments, each designed to hold only selected memories.

I'm more like the squirrel, I guess. I will simply cram as many memories as I can into whatever moments I have and then I will stash them away for some cold winter's night when the fire is low and the night is dark. Then I can pull out some of the glorious moments of summertime, youth-time, love time and remember again, the joy of giving and receiving love.

Fall is the gathering time and I have spent my life gathering in memories. I intend to gather in some more, too ...

So let the squirrels and the bears gather in their nuts and berries and prepare for a long nap. I'm not tired (yet) and there are still a lot of miles to go before I sleep. Who knows, something incredible may be just around the next corner, and I just might find a use for that algebra that I learned so many years ago! I might find love again, too ... and that is worth remembering!

