

Remember Me

It's easy to forget who I am. My past is just as much a part of me as the future. Both define me, telling me how I got here and who I expect or want to be. The present, while a moment to cherish, is only a splash on the water.

Some people think it's not a good idea to entertain memories. I celebrate them. I look at them and better understand the person that is me. And I believe my memories are like a vessel that contains my life.

I'm nine years old and standing on the sandy edge of an Adirondack lake somewhere up Route 8 on a cool, crisp late summer day with a chilly wind blowing up the waves in front of me and the smell of hot dogs cooking up somewhere behind me. The water splashes around my legs as I shiver and run into the lake, eager for its relative warmth to engulf me.

I'm thirteen years old, sitting under a tree along the side of the fairway on Utica's Parkway, thinking of everything I'll do in life, now that I'm a man. The sky is a blazing splash of blue, with a few white puffy October clouds blowing across to the horizon. Someday, I'm sure I'll fly up there among the clouds.

I'm fifteen years old and walking along Riverside Drive on Saturday night with a real girl on our way to the movies. She has the smell of perfume and the wind and the rain in her hair. I'm the happiest teen alive. I sometimes say a prayer that she had a very happy life. I've never had the opportunity to tell her I'm grateful for our time as teenagers.

I'm twenty two years old and standing at the altar in a church as the most beautiful woman I've ever met comes down the aisle. I will cherish her. Regrettably, I will sometimes make her cry. I will always love her. She is my life.

I'm 23 years old and I'm looking at my first born, a son, my pride and my occasional challenge. And then I'm 25 years old at the birth of the second most beautiful woman in the world, my daughter, who might someday be displaced in that role by her two daughters. You could not have convinced me that children were that important before I became a father. You cannot convince me otherwise today.

I remember standing at the side of each of my children as they were married. On each of their wedding days, I was the most dazed of the guests. I can't believe what I started.

Then, too quickly it seems, I'm sitting here at the keyboard, older now, but happy for the way my life has played out. I can't see what's up ahead on the highway, but I can see where I've been, where I came from. I know who I am when I remember me.

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