

memories

DON'T FORGET

We do not know the true value of our moments until they have undergone the test of memory.

--Georges Duhamel

Back before moral relativism shoved its way into our lives like a drunk uncle wearing socks and sandals at a barbeque, what's right and good had a seat at the head of the table.

You remember. You go back there sometimes now, when it's quiet. The memories whisper to you as you're falling asleep at night.

Sitting on the porch on a summer's evening under the buzz of the bug light or promising to adjust the rabbit ears or to change the TV channel all night long tomorrow, without complaint, if you could stay up just **TEN MORE MINUTES** now..... pleeeeeeze?

You passed the time on long car trips by fighting over the imaginary line in the backseat, asking your parents over and over if you were there yet, and talking, yes talking -- to each other.

Kids didn't decide what was right or wrong because they were kids and kids didn't decide that kind of stuff.

Besides teaching us who we are - and the tragedy of plaid pants - our memories make us stop just a minute and examine what's important to us. Centuries move forward with amazing speed and even more amazing advancements. But technology that changes the way we talk to each other shouldn't change what we value.

It's strange how we don't reminisce about the big moments so much as the small ones. The holiday gatherings, weddings, graduations -- sure, those are filed away, but they don't tickle the hair on the back of your neck like remembering how warm your mom's words felt on the first day of school, or the security of your dad's arms around you as you stood and talked to the preacher after church.

These sights, sounds and smells of the little moments catch our hearts because they are unexpected. They move us because they are good without trying to be good. They just are. We didn't know it at the time, but thirty, forty years later we can still hear the squeak and bang of the screen door closing behind us.

These aren't things you toss in a paper bag in the back of the closet.

It's interesting how each generation remembers their childhood as the most innocent time, the safest time, the most hopeful time. It probably was. Mom and Dad had our backs. We were hopeful and untainted. We knew our parents didn't always have the right answers, but they had the ones we respected.

Now we plow forward at lightning speed, often forgetting what really matters. But when we quiet ourselves down, we remember: When men at gas stations pumped our gas and washed our windshields; when we knew all our neighbors and all our neighbors knew us; when accidentally leaving our doors unlocked was just a simple mistake and not a crisis. These were times when doing the right thing was expected whether it was paying for a broken window, taking food to the sick, or writing a thank you note.

We like to remember, we just don't like to turn off our cable TVs, computers and cell phones long enough to do it. And doubt starts to creep in, because the media tells us we're wrong. They tell us life isn't the way we remember. We don't want to

believe them, but their words look legitimate when splashed across the screen in fancy graphics and reported in somber tones. But we know better. It just doesn't feel right.

They pretend that watching cartoons on Saturday morning, eating cereal in our Spiderman or Wonder Woman pajamas, was not the best time of our lives. But we know it was.

We realize we may never feel as free as we did the night we drove our first car all over town, or as happy as we did running barefoot in the cool tickle of freshly-cut grass. Our hearts hold on to these memories because we understand we may never feel as satisfied as we did on Friday evenings, sitting on the curb eating ice cream, watching the truck drive away.

These are the moments that define our memories, the memories that define a life.

We lived our lives the way we were raised, by showing people that it's okay to help a person in need, hold a door open for someone, or say "nice to see you today." We were genuine. We were decent. We stood up for what we believed in, and in the rights of others to stand up for themselves. And we believed in God and we let Him into our homes and schools.

We were hard-working. The job your dad went to when you were five was probably the same job he went to when you were sixteen. That's what dads did. And you never heard him complain about it. That's also what dads did.

And despite the fact that you'd been a complete pain in the butt to your mother all day, she still managed to put a hot meal on the table every night. And you never heard her complain about it. That's what moms did.

As our hair gets grayer, we still recognize ourselves in the mirror. We know who we are because of our memories. We remember who held our hand, wiped our tears, and cheered us on. We understand what matters.

What would you give to hear your mom's warm words again, feel your dad's arms around you, or have your grandmother slip you a piece of candy on the sly, just because you "look like you need one." What would you give? Would you at least give those memories to your kids?

Don't forget to remember. Oh, and every chance you get, run through the freshly-cut grass, barefoot.

