

I've heard people say that their memories of the past unroll like moving pictures. Not so for me. Instead, I have clear mental snapshots of former years. The pictures are vivid and the rest of the story behind each comes to me more like a printed page. I suppose this is natural, since communication and education are also most easily imparted to me through the written word. But, the mental pictures—in living color—are an essential and rich part of memory.

When I was about twelve, we had a baton twirling group at school. Our mothers made our uniforms—red corduroy skirts and vests and white blouses. We performed at various school events. The gymnasium where many meetings took place had a stage at one end. We twirled our batons there one evening for a parent-teacher meeting, and I can still see what happened when one of the girls lost her baton after a toss in the air, and it landed on the gym floor. I remember her scrambling after it, but can't see the end of the story. Nor can I recall in words if she came back on the stage and finished the routine or not.

Mrs. Mamie Holcomb presided over the school office during all of my school years. I saw her often, because it was to her that I had to turn in the written excuse my mother sent when I had missed a day or more of school, not an uncommon occurrence for me. Also, we bought out pencils and lined notebook paper from Mrs. Holcomb. The Superintendent and Principal were in the same office, but it was Mrs. Holcomb who fulfilled all of our needs. I can still see her sitting behind her desk, perfectly groomed, gray hair neatly styled.

Mental school snapshots are numerous and sharp. I can see my cousin Karen's hands as she scooped up jacks from the hardwood floor in one of our recess or noontime games. She was probably the best jacks player among the girls in our class. Her long fingers, also expert at the piano and later, the typewriter, were perfect at delicately picking up the correct jacks without touching the rest of them.

The school lunchroom was in the basement of the school, probably a bad place to be if a quick exit were necessary. I remember the lunch line snaking through the hall and down that stairs. I always carried my lunch from home, so I didn't often stand in that line, but the picture remains.

And I recall Red Rover. Two long lines of children with tightly gripped hands. It seemed it would be best to call for one of the weaker opponents, since he or she would have difficulty in breaking through the line. "Red Rover, Red Rover, let Jane, or Susie, or Johnny—or some other opponent—come over. That person would run hard and try to break through the clasped hands. But, if one asked for a weak opponent who could not easily break through, the other side would know where to break that link the next time. So, it was a tossup. But, I remember Charlene on the end of the line, hanging on with both hands to the person next to her. And surely, that was the spot the next opponent would try. I can see it yet.

I can also see Mrs. Olson standing behind the desk in the school library. She was an elegant woman, and she stood there and checked out a Carl Sandburg book for me. Since I had exhausted the school library's collection, she also loaned me many books of her own.

I don't know if this "snapshot memory" is inferior to the moving variety,

but it is the way the past looks to me. Needing to access more of my memory, I turn to the print version that exists along with the pictures.