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Foggy Memories

What can I do with a collection of maddeningly evasive memories? When I try to capture them in words, either spoken or written, they slither away. Sometimes I can recapture them orally with someone who originally shared what were more like happenings than experiences. I've tried several times to put down on paper two unconnected events from to our Chapel Hill days. At least, one of them belongs to Chapel Hill; I'm not too sure about the other one.

The doubtfully dated memory has elusive connections with U.S. Highway 1 somewhere between Richmond and Washington, D.C. Paul and I were going somewhere, possibly Washington, from Chapel Hill, maybe. The day was hot, the car had no air conditioning, and we had that uncomfortable, gritty, wind-blown feeling that, thanks to automobile air conditioning, no longer is a part of summer traveling. We spied a small stream at the side of the road. On impulse we stopped and found our way to the bank of a lovely clear stream flowing over water-rounded rocks. There was only one thing to do - off came our shoes and into the water we went, wading up and down, to and fro, or just standing while the cool water flowed across our feet and ankles. We felt no compulsion to get on with our driving. Refreshed and cool, we sat on the grassy ground talking inconsequentially while our feet dried. It's a lovely moment lost in time which we mention occasionally as we speed up I-95 on the way to Washington. We idly wonder where our stream is, but none of the ones we cross look inviting. Just the memory is here - and still refreshing. Actually, I fear that we would be disappointed if we should find that stream, thanks to pollution. But more probably it now flows through an underground conduit beneath some new bedroom community built for frantic commuters to the inner beltway.

We had other small but important moments in those days - many others - but few so enduring as that one. An exception is one I probably should reserve for a "where-we-lived" section. We had an apartment in Victory Village in Chapel Hill in an ex-army barracks. Our bedroom shared two walls with the bathroom and bedroom of the next-door law school student and his wife. Before our first spring break in that location, we were sure that they didn't know how thin the walls were because we were super-quiet when we knew they were home. Usually, they didn't really disturb us except on rare weekend evenings when they returned later than we did from some party. Then, their rehashing of their party was rather intrusive into our bedroom. But their late-evening packing for their spring-break morning trip made quite a racket well into the night. On the other hand, we were last-minute packers - still are. We rose long before dawn to gather and pack our vacation necessities. We weren't the least bit quiet about our activities, just as they had not been in the earlier night hours. They never said anything about that night, and neither did we. Their travel must have been as sleep-deprived as ours, but we never again heard their conversations. And we did remain good, if casual, friends, even after they indulged themselves in a piano for after-school relaxation, sometimes into the A.M..

Maybe this is the way to handle such memories. Just jot them down and don't worry about connecting them. Who knows; I may someday have just the inspiration that will

hang a whole story around one or the other, and that idea encourages me to resurrect additional isolated, inconsequential memories.

Fodder for other memories: my last martini at the Bull and Bear, Daddy's theory of the internal combustion engine as being necessary for any driver, Trumans in Constitution Hall, snow in D.C.