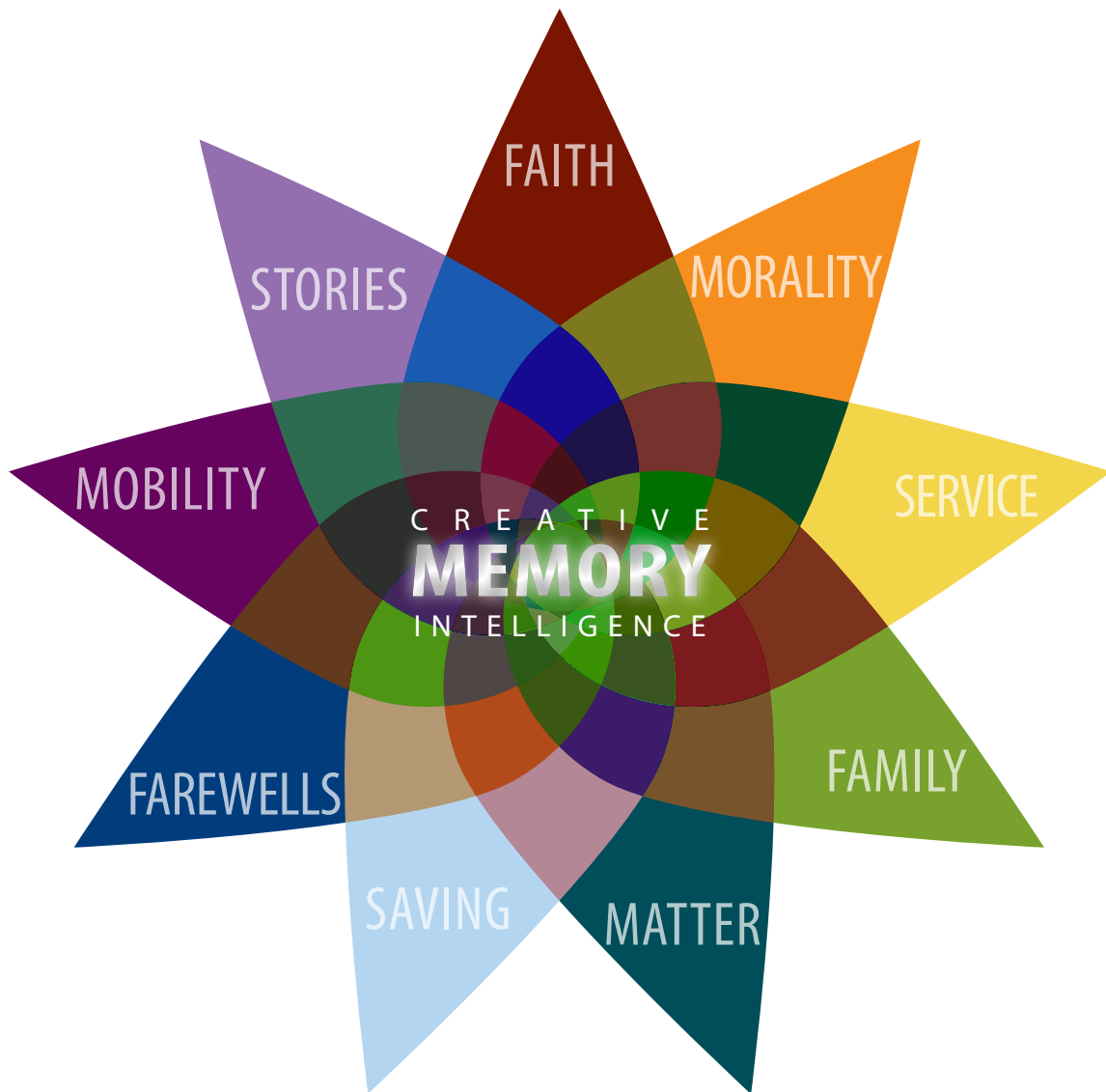


Faith, Family, and Farewells:

Locating Memory in Morality, Matter, and Mobility
through Service, Saving, and Stories



By Brittany Lynk

Teachers College, Columbia University

Family as Educator

Professor Hope Leichter

1 December 2010



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THREADS OF LOVE

Weave your tapestry of life,
weave your tapestry of love

Choose your threads and pattern
with guidance from Above

Threads of patience, threads of caring,
threads of lofty goals and daring

Threads of colors
your parents never thought of,

Threads of love

Weave your tapestry of life,
unique to just you two

The warp and woof are given,
but the pattern's up to you

Weave with patience, weave with caring,
weave with lofty goals and daring

Weave with colors
your parents never thought of,

Weave with love

And when your tapestry
gets knotted up you'll find

Strength in selfless service to
each other and mankind

As your tapestry is blessed
and children come along

Nurture them with Love and Light
so they may grow up strong

To be patient, kind and caring,
with lofty goals and daring

Using colors
their parents never thought of,

All with love,

Weave your tapestry with threads of love,

Weave with guidance from Above.

Weave your tapestry with threads of love,

Weave with threads of love.

By Matty Thimm

August 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before starting graduate studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, I began doing my homework—asking about professors, classes, and general tips. In one email, the response was, “The BEST advice I can give you about TC courses is DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO TAKE A CLASS WITH HOPE LEICHTER. Seriously. Those classes are life-changing!!!” So I did, and it was—the product of that class is before you.

As part of our Family as Educator class, I had the delightful opportunity to carry out a number of interviews not only with my own family, but also with a surrogate family that is very dear to me, the Thimms.

I am deeply grateful to Matty, Hans, and Jess for opening their hearts, reaching into their minds, and enjoining upon me love, wisdom, and heartwarming stories and insights both as a part of this project and in life, shared over numerous breakfasts, teas, laughs, and walks.

I am also indebted to my parents, Allan and Karen, for providing me with heaps of information—some new, some refreshed—as well as directing me for further searches. Additionally, they deserve great thanks for being terrific and purposeful parents.

My sincere regrets for not having the time, access, and perseverance to include the family voices of Jess’ and my siblings. Their stories, no doubt, would enrich the discussion.

Thanks also to my Grandma Ruby and Aunt Bev for sharing their family stories, as well as to my Aunt Linda, who took me in over Thanksgiving and shared with me fun family insights, as well as talking with me about her process as the “family historian.”

Lastly, thank you to the wonderful women of our class—for your stories, sincerity, and friendship.

Undertaking the task of collecting stories, probing for information, and then reporting on it is daunting. As with any writing of lives, there is always the possibility of the writer taking things out of context for the purpose of a narrative. I have done my best to maintain the integrity of the stories with as little distortion as possible. My apologies for anything that has been misconstrued or left out of my analysis or description.

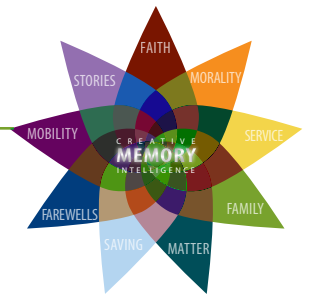
I feel it important to include Hans’ words, sent following his reply to the final probe: “I feel it was very important to me that I was allowed to participate in this, Brittany’s project, and I am eternally grateful to her. It provided me an occasion for looking back, analyzing, evaluating, and refocusing. It was illuminating, at times very emotional, and overall inspiring. I hope that the events listed are somehow applicable to the project, and are not too loaded with faith-based items. Last not least, thanks also to Professor Hope Leichter for having given this project to the student!”

In conclusion, I chose the metaphor of a memory tapestry because it descriptively ties together the importance of weaving in my own family, and the beautiful words of the song, “Tapestry of Love,” which Matty wrote for the wedding of Jeremy and Tahiri. Indeed, weave on!



FAITH, FAMILY, AND FAREWELLS:

LOCATING MEMORY IN MORALITY, MATTER, AND MOBILITY THROUGH SERVICE, SAVING, AND STORIES



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Where is memory located? How is memory constructed? What factors affect memory and memory transference? How is memory passed down in families, and how is creative intelligence nurtured and encouraged?

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the course of the semester, I have been exploring these questions, moving up and down the ladder of abstraction, threading themes, and exploring modes of memory. As a platform of delving into the issues and questions posed above, I have conducted numerous interviews with members of my own family as well as the family of my first-year roommate from Macalester College, Jess Thimm. I elicited responses through the use of probes, or conversation openers, that served to draw out themes related to memory. I conducted interviews through phone calls, Skype conversations, email correspondence, and in-person chats with informants in the United States, Albania, Kosovo, and Thailand. Most of the interviews have been generally transcribed, with slight paraphrasing and selectivity of the researcher. There were minor technological difficulties in a few recordings, resulting in some lost data. However, I was able to extract the integrity of the information contained in the data. For detailed information from the interviews, please refer to the appendix.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In my analysis, I became aware of the great overlap and interplay of the many aspects of memory. Like unto a tapestry, the warp was made of strong threads of faith, family, and farewells. Complimenting and interwoven within the warp was the weft—ideas of locating memory in morality, matter, and mobility through service, saving, and stories.

In order to help illustrate the creation of this memory tapestry, I have created several graphical depictions of the ideas, shown through a nine-pointed star, which is a revered symbol in the Bahá'í Faith. In the Faith, nine is a symbol for unity, comprehensiveness, and culmination as the highest single-integer digit; also, nine “has exact numerical value of ‘Bahá’ (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and ‘Bahá’, [meaning glory,] is the name of the Revealer of the Faith, Bahá'u'lláh” (Effendi, 1973, pp. 51-52). The Thimm family was built on and nurtured in the Bahá'í Faith, and use of this symbolism to better understand where memory is located helps depict the message I am attempting to portray through my words.

INFORMANTS

BRITTANY'S FAMILY



Allan Lynk
Father



Karen Johnson
Mother



Ruby Lynk
Grandmother



Beverly Lynk Komula
Aunt

JESS' FAMILY



Hans Thimm
Father



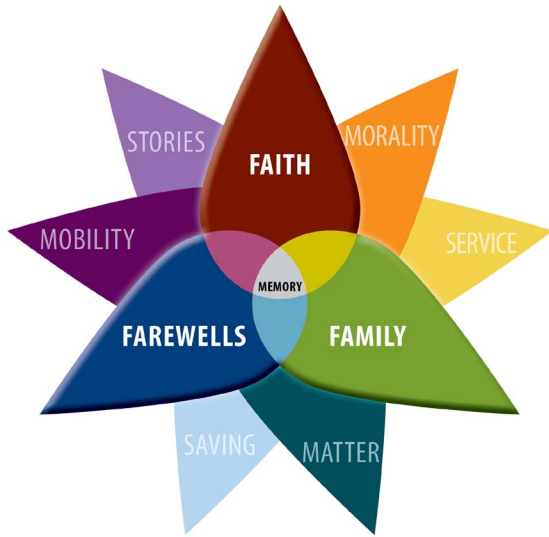
Matty Thimm
Mother



Jess Thimm
Former roommate
and dear friend







FAITH LOCUS

In the Faith Locus, I look at the role a faith base plays in holding and passing on memory through rituals based on a calendric cycle, practices of service in forming and informing identity, and stories told that build and reinforce moral values.

FAMILY LOCUS

In the Family Locus, I focus on values of saving matter or material as a mode of passing on memory and building creative intelligence. Within family spaces, relationships to the objects surrounding us are given meaning, both the outer structure as well as the inner space.

FAREWELL LOCUS

In the final Farewell Locus, I explore the role mobility plays in creating a need for memory, how stories become necessary for connections to the past and the present, and how these and other stories are kept alive.



WHAT IS MEMORY?

In thinking about memory, I will use a definition of cultural memory put forth by Paul Connerton (1989), defined as “those oral, visual, ritual, and bodily practices through which a community’s collective remembrance of the past is produced or sustained” (p. unknown).

WHAT IS CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE?

There are numerous ways to think about creative intelligence, but for the sake of this paper, I draw my concept from the triarchic theory of intelligence proposed by cognitive psychologist Robert Sternberg (1985):

- Analytic Intelligence: the type generally assessed by intelligence tests; measures the ability to break down problems into component parts.
- Creative Intelligence: the ability to cope with new situations and solve problems in new and unusual ways. Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, but imagination circles the world.”
- Practical Intelligence: Common sense. Using and implementing ideas (p. unknown).



When you look at the beautiful designs that result from the overlap of truths, stories, realities, and memories, it becomes difficult to discern one influence from the other. What emerges is a beautiful, coherent, non-linear life-force.



INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH FAMILIES

THE THIMM FAMILY

The Thimm family has lived a mobile and riveting life. This is well illustrated in the story of how I became acquainted with them.

The summer prior to matriculating at Macalester College, I was eagerly checking the mail every day for the orientation packet with my rooming assignment. I chose Macalester for its high academic standards, but even more so for its internationally diverse student body representing over 90 countries and composing over 12% of the student body. All I was asking for was merely one person out of that lot to be my roommate. You can imagine my shock when I opened the envelope, only to see that my roommate, some Jessica Thimm, was from Texas. After convincing myself to shift my perception and imagine Texas *as* a foreign country, I built up the courage to give her a call. Several rings and heart-thumps later, I was greeted by a, “Hello?” Following is our exchange, along with my very clear inner thoughts:

“Is Jessica there?” I asked.

“Who?” the person on the other line asked. *Did I get the wrong number?*

“Jessica?”

“Jessica who? Who are you trying to call?” *Oh no, she thinks I’m making a prank call.*

“Jessica Thimm? She’s supposed to be my roommate at college next year.” *Ugh, I hope I pronounced the name correctly.*

“Huh? Oh, yeah, Jess. Hmm, I don’t actually know where she is.” *Why does it sound like she doesn’t know where this girl is? I wonder if she ran away from home or something. What’s going on?*

“Oh?” I said.

“Yeah, she could either be in Albania or South Africa; maybe even in London where her brother goes to school. I’m just not sure. I’m her mom’s twin sister, and they must have used my U.S. address for the forms.” *Yippee! Jackpot! I have the most international roommate ever! I don’t quite understand what any of those places have to do with one another, but I’ll take it!*

Life was about to get a whole lot more interesting, though I could never know how much that moment would change my life forever, and the role Jess’ family would play in my lifelong development.

It did not take me long, through email and getting to know each other as roommates, to have the main transitional moments of Jess’ life committed to memory and ready to recite in under one minute flat—to go into detail would fill days. I was fascinated by the multiple evacuations, plethora of experiences, and pure eloquence in how she told stories, that I could not resist the urge to know, tell, and re-tell this great story of a girl born and raised for ten years in Haiti to a German father (Hans) and American mother (Matty), who met in Germany. At age ten, Jess and the family (older brother, Jeremy; younger brother, Jeffrey) were evacuated from Haiti due to civil strife. After nine months in Texas, (having arrived on Halloween day), Matty was appointed to be the first Peace Corps Director in Albania, which had just opened up to the world after over fifty years under a cruel Communist dictator. Five years later, they were evacuated again, due to civil strife in Albania, at which point it was decided the kids would go to boarding school in the Czech Republic. As Bahá’ís, after graduating, it is encouraged to do a year of service, which Jess chose to do in South Africa with a dance troupe performing social justice dances. It was then she came to Macalester and our story began.

L-R: Jeremy, Jess, Jeff, Matty, Hans



THE LYNK-JOHNSON FAMILY

Juxtapose this with my life story: I was born and raised in a rural Minnesotan town called Wadena (approximate population 4,242) to parents who also grew up in Wadena—a hard-working family rooted in the community and dedicated to its progress and betterment. I lived out in the country in a house my parents built my whole life, with both sets of grandparents living in town in the same houses my parents grew up in. With a family busy nurturing their roots in our rural village, I had barely left the confines of the state border before starting college, much less stepped foot out of the country! Four continents and twenty-six countries later, you will find me now. Though not small-minded, my dad has only left the country once, and my mom not at all. As a teenager, even going on a 45-minute drive to the neighboring town with a mall took me at least a week of constant persuasive attempts. Our family travel consisted of traveling to various Minnesota State Parks each summer. Mobility and moving were not strong values.

My older brother, Dylan, still lives in Minnesota, and my younger brother, Mason, is currently going to university in North Dakota. I also have an older half-brother, Irvan, and half-sister, Adriana, both of whom live in California with wonderful families. Recently, Mason and I traveled together to see them. It was Mason's first time on an airplane.

FAMILY CONVERGENCE

After graduating from Macalester, Jess moved to Washington, DC, where she worked for three years before starting her masters in London. Before starting her masters, she traveled around southeast Asia, and again after, she returned to Thailand.

After graduating from Macalester, I worked in Minnesota for two years, then moved to Albania, where I lived with the Thimm's for seven months while I worked. Following Albania, I moved to Nepal, back to Minnesota, and back to Albania before starting my masters in New York.

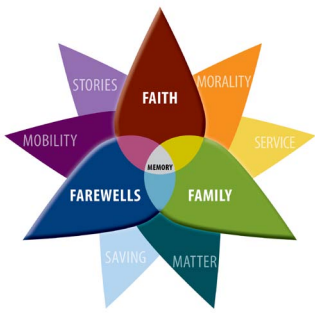


The world is moving faster and faster and getting smaller by the day. Life stories are becoming more complex. How can families continue to stay connected and pass on memories with all the motion?

*L-R:
(Back) Allan, Karen
(Front) Mason,
Brittany, Dylan
(Dogs) Pinschie,
Addie, Brownie*



*L-R: (Back) Adriana, Raul, Ruben, Denise, Irvan, Michael, Mason
(Front) Phyllis, Sarah, Lucas, Annie, Hannah, Leah, Brittany*



FAITH LOCUS

In this Faith Locus, I look at the role a faith base plays in holding and passing on memory through rituals based on a calendric cycle, practices of service in forming and informing identity, and stories told that build and reinforce moral values.

As I analyzed my data, it became apparent that the faith-based communities both Jess and I grew up in were defining in our growth and development as contributing members of society. I became especially interested in the role a family faith base plays as a foundation of creating, nurturing, and passing down memory and building creating intelligence. The answer seemed to be located in stories, rituals, customs, traditions, and holidays. However, I felt my quick answer might be rooted in a Judeo-Christian bias, which I was eager to question. Given that Jess' family was built on a non-Western religion, I wondered what parallels would emerge.

places around the world, a faith without borders or clergy, emphasizing unity of God, religion, and humankind. The Bahá'í Faith became part of her family's foundation with the decision of her parents to become Bahá'í, and for her when she reaffirmed her belief in the Faith at age 15, the age of maturity.

Both of us had varying degrees of personal belief, which formed and informed our lives, but I would reckon to say that the community aspects of our faith communities played nearly as powerful a role as that of faith.

For me, the church community instilled positive values, and imprinted a structure of my week and my year. Every Sunday was church, every Christmas Eve was the big service where our family took up three pews, and every Easter, the youth would prepare the service. On Sundays we were responsible for making our own lunch following church. Irrelevant, but interesting, only once was I able to sneak through with eating what I called, "frozen dinners," also known as ice cream. *See "Allan on Day Markers" for more.*

Within the Bahá'í Faith, there is also a strong sense of community, but ritual has been reduced to an absolute minimum (Hornby, 1983, p. 476). It is written, "This is the day when dogmas must be sacrificed in our search for truth. We must leave behind all save what is necessary for the needs of today, nor attach ourselves to any form or ritual which is in opposition to moral evolution" (Effendi, 1973, pp. 67-68).

Yet there is still a rhythm with Holy Days and holidays.

ALLAN ON DAY MARKERS

Sunday is church day as chief marker; I also have more newspaper to digest that day. Sometimes like to slough more because it just seems right, although when working, Sundays and Saturdays were prime days to accomplish tasks at home. Mondays-Fridays are marked by any "obligations" such as hospice meetings on Tuesday when I try to accomplish other things to do in town. That goes for anything that requires going to town any day: make it efficient. The fact that Mom is still on a weekly schedule naturally determines to some extent that I am also.

FAITH AND COMMUNITY

I grew up in the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Wadena, a liberal Christian tradition, which was the church my father, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and great-grandparents all attended. The church was where I learned to perform in public, teach children's classes, be a part of committees, and contribute to and understand the role and importance of intergenerational community.

Jess grew up in the Bahá'í Faith in various

FAITH AND FUNCTIONS

Zarubavel (2003) looks at the role a "week" plays in the structuring of our lives, and the memory creation that follows. He writes that the "evolution of the week generally coincided with the rise of a market economy" (p. 45), which varies according to culture. "Equating the institution of the week with a seven-day rhythm is the consequence of an ethnocentric bias" (p. 44).



HANS ON NOT BEING LOST IN HISTORY

I think we have celebrations and feasts of historical events to make us feel a part of a chain of events, to make us feel a part of something bigger. I think it's one of our basic needs—not being lost in history.

In the case of the Bahá'í Faith, the year runs on a solar calendar split into nineteen months of nineteen days, followed by remaining Intercalary days, with each month named by a virtue. At the beginning of each month, there is a nineteen-day feast, which brings the community together to consult and socialize. Zarubavel (2003) notes that this nineteen-day weekly cycle, often located within the conventional seven-day weekly rhythm, “adds considerably to their distinctive group solidarity” (p. 49). I would support this claim, having experienced being a part of numerous Bahá'í communities the world over, that this unique calendric pattern reinforced within the community brings people together and continually reinforces important themes and virtues discussed at the feasts. Although these cycles of time are imbued with sacred meaning and revolve around faith, they also contribute to the ways we remember. *See “Hans on Not Being Lost in History” for more.*

PRACTICE OF FAITH

Another way we remember is through practices and service. I grew up with a very strong value of being of service to society. *See “Brittany on Service” for more.* Though thousands of miles away in a variety of directions, Jess was being raised with similar values, though even more specifically prescribed and written in as a core aspect of what it means to be Bahá'í. *See “Jess on Service” for more.* Service focuses on a number of things, including moral development as expressed in the Bahá'í teachings on the oneness of humankind and the unity of the world's religions. As a part of service, Jess spent a year in South Africa after graduating from high school as a part of a social dance troupe called “Beyond Words.”

Su Pak Drummond (1999) addresses the role of practice and repetition of practice of traditions as the locus of identity formation in her dissertation, “Unwrapping Our bo-dba-ri: Memory, Imagination, and Practice in Korean-

American Religious Education”. Quoting Ana María Díaz-Stevens and Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, she writes, “Through the traditions, the community has a temporal affiliation to the past, present and the future. Traditions cannot exist without community” (p. 126).

There is a “way of doing things,” that makes one feel at home in a Bahá'í community, wherever they are in the world. Similar feelings of belonging and connection also happen within other faith communities. The rhythm of the year becomes a driving aspect of Bahá'í culture, which acts transnationally, making the local global and the global local.

No matter what the practice or how the practice is *practiced*, I think it is important to mention education within practice. Quoting Elliot Eisner, Pak Drummond (1999) writes, “Practices educate. Intentionally, and unintentionally, explicitly and implicitly, and even by virtue of not educating, participating in practices educates” (p. 144).

In his book, “How Societies Remember,” Paul Connerton (1989) expands this idea of practice as *educating* to practice as *inscribing* a habit or encoded set of movements, actions, or feelings. Among other examples, this could happen in a particular way of performing daily prayers or a specific approach to celebrating a holiday. In talking about a

JESS ON SERVICE

My Oma passed away when I was a baby, and my Opa when I was 5, but they set up an educational fund. It was important to them. What they passed on to my father is there is formal education through university, but there is also informal education, like going abroad. I'm using some of this fund to develop an alternative healing art form. While it is not my career, it is part of my contribution and what I can give to others.

From both parents, I felt the concept of success and failure that is different from many people, asking, “What is the worst thing that can happen? So, you don't get your degree; it's not the end of the world.” Education is of great importance for both of them, but more in the sense of what you can contribute and how one can use their skills to better society.



BRITTANY ON SERVICE

I learned a great deal about education from all four grandparents about being a part of a community, and being of service to others. I grew up with all of them in the rural Minnesotan town of Wadena. Education and learning was incorporated into life. To live was to learn. Growing up, my two brothers and I would spend the summers at our grandparents' house while our parents were at work so we could take advantage of summer recreation activities. When we were not in swimming lessons or playing tennis, we were learning how to sew, make braided rugs, bake bread, create a perfect lefse, or learn a new card game. We were also trained and educated in hosting friends and visitors, as my grandma commonly threw gatherings in her home.

From all my grandparents, I learned to live a life of integrity and intention, a life of service and substance, a life of humility and happiness.

prayer ritual, he writes, "In rites the body is given the appropriate pose and moves through the prescribed actions" (p. 58). Though we all learn that there are many ways to pray or show reverence, we ultimately do learn a certain way of recitation or performance, which becomes a habit. This habit is cultivated, resulting in "understanding" from our body (p. 95).

In a subsequent book, "How Modernity Forgets," Connerton (2009) explores what happens when structures and the habits surrounding them are gone. What does our

body understand then? What and how can we remember at that point? To explain, he writes in reference to the role and loss of buildings: "These vast construction projects were for decades a focal point of activity for hundreds of masons, stonecutters and sculptors... In a handmade world the term 'building' would apply as much to the memory of the continuing transitive activity of construction as to that of the eventual product" (pp. 30-31).

Like unto the Bahá'ís, who are "building" an ever-advancing civilization through core activities of children's classes, devotionals, and study circles focusing on moral development, there is also an emphasis on discovering one's inner nature and practicing the spiritual virtues latent in the human soul. There is the outside and inside transformation of society and individual, these multiple transformations holding a plethora of memories across space and place.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, it seems a faith community forms and informs not only how we structure our year, but how we structure our actions. Through service as a platform for engaging with the world, we are practicing, educating, and learning.

There is no denying the role of faith as a carrier of cultural and collective memory, and a space for building and nurturing creative intelligence.

MATTY ON CALENDRIC FOOD RITUALS

In Haiti, for the fast we would eat granola. Every year I would buy the sunflower seeds, the oatmeal, bring the brown sugar, and get all the ingredients. I told the kids the granola was only for people who were fasting. So when they were 10, 11, or 12, they started doing a mini fast, where they would cut out snacks and just eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They would join us for granola in the morning followed by prayers.

Also in Haiti, on the first of January, we had a special pumpkin soup. It was very good, eaten in the morning for breakfast. That's the time you HAVE to eat it. It's for luck and prosperity all year. People would knock themselves out to get the ingredients to do this. You just had to do it.

Lastly, I had to cook in Haiti on Sundays, because the housekeeper would leave on Saturdays. I cooked the same thing. There was a year or two where it was Chinese every Sunday, and another few years where it was potato salad.



ADDITIONAL STORIES ON FAITH, MORALITY, AND SERVICE

ALLAN ON SMALL TOWN VALUES

Perhaps the small town growing up locale is a prime determinant of who I am. This is not a surprise. A small town is fundamentally different from an urban metropolitan nurturing. The fact that I was gone for 10 years and came back attests to its tug. This is attributable to the connections, relationships, pace, values, communication, and other factors that define small town.

HANS ON MORALITY AND FAMILY SECRETS

For a German there is always the question of what my parents did during the war. Thankfully, my father did not have to hide anything about his past during Nazi times. He worked on the Azores Islands as a telecommunications technician when he was called back to Germany in 1939, and then worked until 1945 in Germany's "Research Office" (he met my mother there). It was the equivalent of today's U.S. National Security Agency, and my father had been instrumental in breaking the British code so they could decipher encrypted radio messages from BBC.

But there were other signs of my father's personal beliefs: I often got bored when he took me on walks through town and then met and had long talks with his evidently Jewish acquaintances (with names like Lehmann). In addition, one of his first jobs after the war was with the "Committee of Liberated Jews in Germany's French Occupation Zone," and he also had a photo of the committee's president with his handwritten note on the back saying "he is my friend"—some kind of document showing that my father could be trusted, and which might have been helpful in opening some doors.

JESS ON STORYTELLING

There were often two types of stories growing up: faith-based stories, which would help guide our actions and stories from Haiti, which we heard once we were in Albania. Those were integral to latching on to attachment to Haiti.

This is a story I heard a lot: When Jeremy was a small kid, he got into trouble. Whenever we got into trouble, we were asked, "What would Bahá'u'lláh say?" The idea was to think about our actions in light of faith and religion—What's the better thing to do. Jeremy said, "Bahá'u'lláh says, 'Don't lie and don't throw peanut butter jelly sandwiches on the floor.'"

ALLAN ON BEING REMEMBERED

Realistically, I may not have grandchildren who will remember me but may only have transmitted information. In any case, I would wish them to know me as having overall traits of sensitivity, awareness of events and people's needs, cooperation and facilitation of process, and service to others.

HANS ON BEING REMEMBERED

During my lifetime, I have written down many stories of dreams, visions, and experiences, also thoughts and ideas which I hope will be part of a collection of stories which convey something of the person I am. The main thing is that they should know I have embraced the Bahá'í Faith with all my heart, and tried to focus on contributing to the oneness of mankind and an ever-advancing civilization during this difficult time of transition. I wish that whatever they remember would inspire them to follow a similar path.

But as Kahlil Gibran said, we should try to become like our children, not try them to become like us. They are like the arrows, and I am like the bow. I only pray that I have not erred too much in aiming in the right direction.

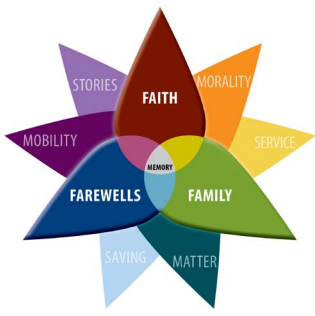
I would like to be remembered as a trustworthy person who loved and appreciated everyone the way they were, without expectations, and who also made children and youth feel comfortable, valued and respected; as a person who loved to be a teacher and help children discover the precious gems present in them. A person who did not avoid tests and difficulties, but conquered them by walking straight through their midst.

MATTY ON BEING REMEMBERED

I want my grandchildren to know me through my music and singing together. It will also be wonderful if they learned some of my songs, and they could know after I'm gone that it's a song grandma wrote.

I want them to know about how we served the Faith, going pioneering, trying to make the world a better place through these wonderful Teachings; of course that would probably only be interesting if they were close to the Faith, but that would be the most important thing. I guess I hope they would know some of the stories from Haiti, and out of Albania there has been a lot of music that has come out.





FAMILY LOCUS

In the Family Locus, I focus on values of saving as a mode of passing on memory and building creative intelligence. Within family spaces, relationships to the objects surrounding us are given meaning, both the outer structure as well as the inner space.

The approach to material things within Jess' family and my own are very different. My family tends to save items and not get rid of much, whereas Jess' family tends to carry little from one location to the next. The things that are carried, however, bear importance in referencing stories of the past or are imbued with spiritual significance. See *"Jess on Memorabilia"* and *"Hans on Letters"* for more.

My interest in looking at the family in response to saving material things is to question the importance of objects in holding memory. Is there a need for things, matter, or material in order to remember? Why does matter matter?

We are at no loss for objects that hold memory, feeling, and emotion within our family space. We have never moved and rarely redecorate, so things are seldom discarded, just re-adjusted to a new place or put in storage. The things that are in the various storage areas are managed in an inventory list my mom compiled some years ago. On a personality, level there is an inability to change and discard objects. See *"Karen on Saving"* for more.

Additionally, my family has a rich history of making and building all kinds of things, from nearly life-sized Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls to pillows to bookcases. Not only did my parents build our house, various family members built or made a great deal of the items within.

Though I also place importance and attribute stories to objects, I get overwhelmed by the need to remember, drawing on Richard Terdiman (1993) and the dilemma of having too little or too much memory. He discusses this in his book, *"Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis."* Not only does he write that "the experience of commodification and the process of reification cuts entities off from their own history," he also mentions that the encouragement of 'keepsakes' and 'souvenirs' has "exploited this connection between memories and objects" (p. 13). This is my conundrum, entirely.

My parents have an affinity for antiques, and so our house is full of them, each with a story. They even used to go to auction sales on dates. In some ways, my house reminds me of a museum. Though the stories of the former lives of the objects are not a part of my past, their current placement in my life space makes their story part of my present and my future, since they will not be going anywhere anytime soon.

Alan Radley (1990) writes in his article, *"Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past,"* that museums are "repositories of objects which exist as special artefacts"; through them "people do not remember a series of personal events which touched their own lives but enjoy a 'sense of the past'" (p. 47). In my house, this bears truth: all the objects have a story, and mixed

HANS ON LETTERS

I have a collection of all of my letters to my parents from Haiti to Germany, and of their letters to me. This is a historic precious collection of eight years of our children's time of growing up in Haiti, but as many of my parent's letters are written by hand, and with my children only having a limited grasp of German (though I don't even know if this is correct as they seem to speak and understand better than I think, having been exposed to it at the Czech International school they went to), I wonder how much they would understand. I have thought of translating all the letters into English, but that would be a huge amount of work.

OBJECTS AND MEMORY

No one in my family seems to have a very good memory through the use of stories. Memories are disjointed, and stories require a great deal of probing. We do not seem to talk about the past much, or relive memories and times of the past. Our conversation is focused on what is going on in our lives currently, or the weather, which is a common Minnesotan topic of conversation. I think because we do not reinforce our memories through stories or talk with each other much about the past, the oral stories get lost.



within the objects of others are things from my parents' or grandparents' pasts, which have become very clearly items that have shaped my sense of home and sense of space. These might include the braided rugs adorning the floors made by my grandma, the Fiestaware we use on special occasions, or the picture of my grandpa on his first day of kindergarten on an antique desk under the clock from the old high school (note: integrated memory objects).

This point is taken up by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981) in, "The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self." According to them, these rugs, plates, and pictures "create permanence in the intimate life of a person," and are important in the making of one's identity and establishing a link to the past (p. 17).

I am not a hoarder, but I do have the tendency to save things—ticket stubs, programs, and knickknacks from random places. I often put them all together in a scrapbook, combined with pictures from the various events. Indeed, these items help me place my memories, remember my memories, and bring me back to spaces and emotions my body, mind, and spirit experienced. Indeed, the items I have saved side by side with the domestic symbols scattered throughout our house express major parts of my identity and connect me to the past.

I was not aware of how much Scandinavian influence our house held until my college roommate, who was originally from Lesotho,

JESS ON MEMORABILIA

I do not place much attachment to things, because I'm always moving. But there are two things I place attachment on. One is my prayer book, which is from family always being ready to pray. When there was war, we grabbed a prayer book and prayed. That's what we did. The other is something more recent, a necklace of sandalwood beads Jeff made in India. It is special because my relationship to the Faith has developed in a different way than my parents, which was encouraged and fostered by Jeff, who also had his own interesting relationship to the Faith, so holding that reminds me of my journey. The Faith will always be a part of me, an integral part of my essence. It also reminds me that even though my faith is important, I don't have to follow the ways of other religionists.

When I moved to London, I wore it all the time, reminding myself, "Don't forget who you are. Don't forget your inner essence. That's the most important thing." Then after a few months, I realized I was getting too attached to it, so I took it off to not get attached to the physical. It's more the idea behind it that I want to hold with me.

but had completed high school in Norway came home for a holiday and commented on how instantly she felt transported back to her host family's home. I am reminded of that example because I recently spent Thanksgiving at my aunt's house, which uncannily resembles ours, with similar braided rugs and Fiestaware, as well as near replicas to ours of an antique hutch, coffee grinder, and straw wall decorations.

Slated as the sentimental one, I am the one who will most likely be inheriting this repository of special artefacts. As a twenty-

KAREN ON SAVING

The joke is that once I put something up, it never goes down again. When we first finished the house, I did not want to put anything up on the wall until my sister Su could come and give advice, because I knew that wherever something was put, it would remain. I sometimes worry if it is getting cluttered, at which point I will ask people what they think, especially Su. Then I will make a few changes.

Once I had an angel wall hanging at the base of the stairs. Then I got a picture of the kids to go there, and searched the whole house for a place to put that angel wall hanging. After much thought and deliberation, I decided it had to go into storage. That was hard.

Just recently, I was also able to get rid of a napkin basket in our kitchen nook, which has been there for years. Even though I had never really liked it, I could not find anything better until last week. Now the new napkin basket is up and the old one was sold at the church rummage sale.



something who has been running around the world, completely unsettled, the sheer amount of memory embodied in all this makes me nervous—definitely too much memory.

So, for the moment, I am currently into living memorabilia—using and incorporating special items into my daily life. One item I currently integrate is a necklace I got from my great aunt, who turned 100 in September 2010. She got it in New Zealand when she was younger, and it is special because it holds so much symbolism on its own along with symbolism I have attributed to it. It is carved wood, and is very iconic of New Zealand, symbolizing the creation story of the country, as well as the continuity of life. As an object, it connects me to the idea of family, travel, oneness of humanity, risk, adventure, and interconnectivity. I usually keep it on, though I

try not to be attached to material objects.

However, it cannot be forgotten that we remember within a world of artefacts and things, which play a central role in the memories of individuals (Radley, 1990, p. 57).

For Matty and Hans, though they were able to only save a few artefacts as they traversed the globe, there have been a couple objects that have made it through, holding memories or containing stories of family history, as well as offering motivation and encouragement for the future. Matty saved a ship's clock she received from her father and Hans saved a soapstone figure of Buddha brought back from his great-grandfather's travels as a paramedic on a German ship travelling to the colonies in China. *See "Matty on Memorabilia" for more.*

As I look at both lifestyles, I wonder if being connected to stories through objects is beneficial, or if being free of objects opens the mind to holding stories. Or something else altogether.

MATTY ON MEMORABILIA

One thing that's really important to me is my guitar. It's not an heirloom, but the paycheck after I paid off my masters went to that guitar.

Also, one thing I have from my father is a ship's clock with bells. The bells went off four times an hour, increasing in number each increment. If you knew the general time of the day, you'd know what time it was. It was from 1931 and was in my father's home, then in our dining room growing up.

There was a bit of a battle around that clock, because my brother wanted it. He's kind of a pack rat and also sentimental; tradition is very important to him. But he could take the furniture. Since I was living overseas, furniture was out of the question. So my father gave me that clock. I am very grateful for that. Unfortunately, it stopped chiming. You had to wind it with a key. I did that for years and years in Albania. But then it stopped. I got it repaired and it worked for another few months, and then it stopped. Now, I don't know what to do. It's a sad thing for me that I'm stuck on how to get it repaired. I don't know if it will be something the kids will want. My father died in 2002, so it wasn't something the kids grew up with. I don't think they know how important that clock is to me. I just thought it was really neat that without looking at it, you'd know what time it was. My father would wind it up every Sunday. You had to take very good care of it. It can go for about 9 days. I'm not very good at plants, but I was good with that clock.

Other than that, I'm not really attached to things.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this section on family and matter while also transitioning into the next section on farewells and mobility, I will highlight a point from Marshall Sahlins (1974) in his article, "The Original Affluent Society." He looked at hunting-gathering societies, which had to constantly be on the move. Affluence was exhibited in the *lack* of what modern capitalistic society considers it to be: accumulation of "stuff." This "stuff" became an enslavement and burden to the mover. Movement, itself, was a condition of success, "enough to rapidly depreciate the satisfactions of property" (p. 157). The movers must carry everything themselves, making it clear that "mobility and property are in contradiction (p. 157). He quotes Martin Gusinde (1961, p. 1) saying "extremely limited material possessions relieve them of all cares with regard to daily necessities and permit them to enjoy life" (Sahlins, 1974, p. 159).

If my parents had to leave their house tomorrow, there would be no way for them to carry 99% of what's important. Would there be a way to "successfully" pass on memory if that were to happen?



ADDITIONAL STORIES ON FAMILY, MATTER, AND SAVING

KAREN ON PHOTOGRAPHS

After my mother died, all the photos and albums were put in boxes. I keep most of them, though some were sent to Linda, who is the family historian. Some of the slides are at Arlen's house. Someday my sisters and I are going to go through all the photos and decide what to do with them, but they are sacred, so no one wants to do it alone.

JESS ON PHOTOGRAPHS

My family doesn't really hang many photographs, as neither of my parents are decoratively inclined. However, my father is the main photographer. Even way back in the day he used to have a little camera before it got popular. Every time the family gets together, my mom wants to take photos, saying 100 times, "Get together. Family PHOTO! We don't know when we'll get the next picture." Although that time might come, right now it's like, "Oh, my gosh! We've already taken 10 million pictures."

MATTY ON PHOTOGRAPHS

Hans is the photographer in the family and I always insist on the family photos when we get together. Mom just wants the family photos, okay? There are some really nice family photos.

MATTY ON LETTERS

I have a letter from my great grandmother from 1856, when my grandfather was a two-year-old. Her husband had died of typhoid after they went out to prairie. She also died a few years later in 1858 of typhoid. She left four boys and one girl, Ana. A friend of the family took them in. All four boys ended up going to Oberlin College, and they were orphans. I think that's incredible. A man named Amandus Blake in Weeping Water, Nebraska, took them in. I don't know much more about him. I went with my father on a trip to Weeping Water in 1984 and looked in some of the city records and the town registry and I remember being surprised that only men were mentioned. We must have gone because my sister got married that summer. Hans took the two kids to Germany to spend the summer—we were living in Haiti at the time—so with my father we drove, saw the Grand Canyon, visited some friends, visited Durango. He was very interested in tradition.

HANS ON IMPORTANCE OF SPACE

I always had my own room as far as I remember—it always had a desk to work on and many bookshelves. Those two items were the most important parts in the room. It is similar to my office in our current home. Being an extreme introvert, this room also serves as the place where I reflect, pray, cry, meditate, take account—in short, where I re-energize.

MATTY ON SPECIAL SPACES

The space I remember most is my bedroom in our Pittsburgh house. My twin sister had her bed next to mine. I suppose it looked like a college room. I remember that room warmly. And her being in the space was nice. I remember sitting on the bed and reading, or something. I think she'd spend time in there, writing in her diary, and we'd talk. Maybe it was the time we spent talking that gives it the feeling.

I'm not too big on space in general. Space doesn't mean so much to me. I don't make my space really nice. People say our house looks like it comes from the Communist time. We've only lived here for 17 years. You think I would have decorated it more by now.

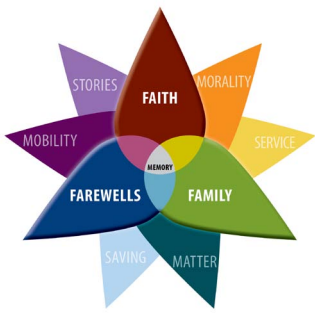
JESS ON SPECIAL SPACES

I don't have much attachment to physical space, but I do remember the bedroom I shared with Jeremy and Jeff in Haiti. It was a cement room with little circles cut into wall covered with mesh for light to come in. I would lie on the bed, looking at light in the dust. I never had the concept that it was "my room." The room was transient; there was lots of movement. Whoever was passing through got that room.

Now my rooms can still be a bit spartan, but I insist on a very comfortable bed and massive blankets. It took me many years to learn to sleep alone; it was always such a bizarre thing. I went from sharing a room with my brothers to sharing rooms at boarding school, so the concept of personal space was different. Even as a young professional, I shared a room because it was cheaper. Then at one point when living in DC, I thought, "Oh it might be nice to have my own room." What a different concept.

I enjoy the closeness and intimacy of loved ones where you're in your own company even if others are around.





FAREWELL LOCUS

In the final Farewell Locus, I explore the role mobility plays in creating a need for memory, how stories become necessary for connections to the past and the present, and how these and other stories are kept alive.

MOBILITY AND STORIES

One of the most interesting observations I had during this study was the great divergence in the role stories played in our families around memory.

Storytelling is not a big part of my upbringing, though I wish it was. My uncle once told me a story about my dad building a boat with his friend when they were younger. When I questioned my dad about why he never told this great story, his response was, “Well, you never asked.” I never knew what to ask, and if nothing triggered the memory, it remained hidden. *See “Allan on Boat-building” for more.*

their lives together, and the impact and trajectory choices made have had on the family unit. As Hope Jensen Leichter (1978) writes in reference to Gregory Bateson, “Stories and the connections between one story to another are basic for thinking” (p. 31). It is the repetitive behavior of telling a story that is the strength of learning (p. 35). For the Thimms, the learning is strong when it comes to storytelling, which came up several times in conversations with Jess. *See “Jess on Family Storytelling,” “Jess on Building Family Memory,” “Jess on Tapping in Through Stories,” and “Jess on Story Threads” for more.*

I have wondered if the fact that we have always lived in the same space has contributed to the perceived need to pass on stories or not. Another suggestion offered by my aunt was that it is more than likely cultural, as well as personal. Even with relatives who immigrated to the United States, it seems stories were intentionally avoided, perhaps due to the difficult nature of leaving and the possibility of never seeing one’s family again.

Linking back to the previous section of role of objects, David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (2009) address the issue of the hidden loss of possessions in high mobility families, and why it matters. “Evacuations during political crises

ALLAN ON BOAT-BUILDING

When I was in high school, I took some plans out of Popular Mechanics and built a boat with Gene-o, but I did most of the work, building it in the garage. Gene had a motor because he grew up on a lake, so we used that. It was a really fast boat, which floated and didn’t leak. It was quite a deal for a kid with virtually no woodworking experience to build a boat. I did have tools, but I remember that it took a lot of screws. I used a Yankee screwdriver and an early version of a clutch, and glue that was made by mixing it with water, as it was the only waterproof glue.

One strategy I have used to illicit stories from my parents is to bring friends home over breaks, and inevitably over the dinner table, new stories emerge due to the variation of conversations that trigger stories, as well as the questions my friends think to ask.

In the Thimm family, stories hold great importance and relevance. I have found it fascinating that over the years, I have heard many similar stories told by different family

members with little variation. Each person recites the story in their own style, with the message and details remaining quite accurate, and the storytelling sounding it as if was being told for the first time. There is such a unity within the family, which comes through clearly in the stories. The stories also create an overall family narrative of

JESS ON FAMILY STORYTELLING

Storytelling became stronger for our family after we left Haiti and we had a lot of good stories we needed to remember as a family. In Haiti, I’m sure there were stories we’d say sometimes, but everything was happening then. It became the story of the family experience. It’s the same thing with the story of us being evacuated from Albania. It’s a great story, but at the time, it was just a string of events. It is only later on, looking back, when you see there’s something we wanted to remember that was important to pass on that you think, “Oh yes, that is a story.” And then you have to create it into a story.



JESS ON TAPPING IN THROUGH STORIES

I often think how similar I am to my parents in modes of remembering. I can space out like my dad, not thinking about concrete ideas, sinking into an untapped resource in myself, drawing parallels between humanity and meanings. I don't even want to call it abstract. I'm just going down. In those moments, I gather the connections I make and see the way things work together, yet it's not formulated. When I tell stories, it reaches toward the deeper spiritual meaning.

But I'm also like my mother in many ways. I like the little cool details of what makes things different, what makes one shift their perspective, how people and things are different, what that means, and if it will always be like that.

narrative structure in maintaining memory. He writes: "[Narrative as a natural vehicle for folk psychology] mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and homes.... It can even teach, conserve memory, or alter the past" (p. 52). See "Jess on Preparing Stories for

mean all possessions are left behind" (p. 77). For the Thimm's, it was not just one evacuation, but two. For my ancestors, it was a one-way ticket across the ocean. In both, the mover could only keep what fit into two suitcases or a trunk. Even though objects hold the connection to past and opportunities to hold the future, another strategy can be adopted by which to maintain that connection, and for the Thimm's and many other families, that was through storytelling.

Jess says this so succinctly, acknowledging that, "Storytelling became stronger for our family after we left Haiti and we had a lot of good stories we needed to remember as a family." The stories held the place of objects, providing the connection to the past and the future. The stories themselves held importance, but the time sharing the stories was also necessary.

MEMORY AND MEANING

William Last Heat-Moon (2008) writes: "Since each day lived gets subtracted from our allotted total, recollections may be our highest recompense: to live one moment a score of times... The meaning begins in and proceeds from memory" (p. 7).

Meaning can be found in personal stories as well as through folktales, which can be found in all cultures around the world. These folktales offer explanatory tales, fun tales, or moral tales, all structured narratively. The pervasive nature of storytelling through folktales testifies to what Jerome Bruner (1990) talks about as the necessary

the Future" for more.

CONCLUSION

Narrative plays an important role in telling stories, and stories play an important part in creating memory. Leichter (1978) writes, "Stories are fundamental to the learning process.... Stories are a vehicle through which learning is revisited, reexamined, and passed on" (p. 36). Within families, stories are one powerful way that learning is facilitated, as you have seen in the excerpts and discussion in this section.

JESS ON PREPARING STORIES FOR THE FUTURE

I have a good memory for details, but I have to repeat a story several times. Like Thai massage, the first time I'd do it, it would probably be bad, but the second time it would be quite good.

I just bought a book of Haitian folktales and some are really bizarre. Some I absolutely know even though I don't remember hearing them! I do not remember the details, but I know I have heard the story and I know the feeling associated with it. If I ever want to repeat some of these stories, I just have to start practicing. I know the basic thread, but in order to actually make a story you have to put in all the little details in the right order to convey something either meaningful or fun for whoever is listening.

In Haiti, storytelling is absolutely part of the culture. On top of that, my mom has always been quite a good storyteller. That is something I not only respected, but really appreciated as a mode of communication. It is a very beautiful part of our humanity. I am interested in the narrative of things.



ADDITIONAL STORIES ON FAREWELLS, MOBILITY, AND STORIES

JESS ON BUILDING FAMILY MEMORY

A massive life change was being forced out of Haiti to Albania. We never would have left Haiti on our own accord, though we needed to leave—for my parents, for their relationship, for the family—but they never would have. They were exhausted. Moving from Haiti to Albania was so different and it gave a chance to renew things.

My father was always busy. He was a teacher, and he was working endlessly. He would never really have to look after us, which kind of gave him permission to just be in his workroom and work and work and work. When we were evacuated, we had to spend some time in Texas, and during that time, he became our primary caretaker. He was the main parent; he would be there from the moment we'd wake up, get us off to school. Since he didn't have a green card, he couldn't work in the U.S., which was very frustrating for him. But it was also a special time, because it was the first time he was totally in charge of taking care of the kids. That changed the dynamics of the family a bit, which was very good and very healthy.

HANS ON MARRIAGE

A crucial event was to get married. I had never looked forward to the event. The German words for getting married (*heiraten*), wedding (*hochzeit*) and marriage (*ehe*) always had a harsh, cold, rigid sound to me, and looking at the stores with their huge showcases of black tuxedos and cylinders, and white robes and veils made my stomach turn—so black and white, so lifeless, so formal—no joy of living, not a little colorful.

A good friend of mine, responding to what I thought a marriage partner should be like said jokingly, “with your expectations, a woman has to come all the way from America.” And I thought, well, then so be it.... Funny that my father used to say, “Just don’t bring an American wife into the house.” This was meant in a humorous way because the perception of an American woman in those times was, well, not very princess-like and submissive. But then, that was exactly what I didn’t want either. So, getting “married” and having a “wedding” sounded much warmer and colorful and full of life.

If not for pioneering, I would not have met my American wife in Germany. By the way, my father and mother were also very happy in the end. :)

JESS ON STORY THREADS

A common thread that runs through the stories in my family is not the importance, more the reality of trusting in the higher power to guide you and to take care of you.

For example, for both my brothers’ operations, they were going to do Jeremy’s operation in Haiti, and then my mom had a sense that she had to do it in Germany. And it sounds crazy, but it just so happened that it was the last day he was covered on my father’s health insurance, so they were able to afford it, which they wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise. With Jeff’s, which was a much worse operation, or it seemed to be, she knew she had to do it in Haiti. There was a 36-hour prayer chain.

For other people, they ask, “How could your parents have raised you in Haiti?” They just see the civil war and dangerous situations. But for my parents there was such a deep faith in our being protected. And in many ways, anyone who understands the situation would think, “There must have been some protecting around you and your family.”

That’s the assumption at the foundation of the story.

HANS ON REMEMBERING

So, my personal style of remembering is like looking at life as if it was a work of art, or a painting, and then trying to imagine what the author wanted to say with it. It serves to find the deeper purpose of what “family” meant to my family, and to immerse myself into that family spirit. It also helps to re-live what other family members experienced, thereby coming closer to each other. History is remembering. A people without history disappears in darkness. I guess remembering to me is to increase my awareness of my family’s history, is to feel embedded in it, to be part of a chain of lives, and thereby connecting past, present and future.

We never had any secrets in our family. However, as I never asked my parents enough questions about their lives while they were alive, I have a hard time finding out more about what they actually did before I was born, and have to piece together information from old photos, salary statements, letters, cables, especially regarding family history.



JESS ON CALL TO HAITI

The story of how my parents ended up going to Haiti is funny, because they really didn't want to go to a French-speaking place. They wanted to go to somewhere maybe Spanish-speaking; well, they were open, but didn't want to go to a French-speaking place. So they crossed off most of Africa, and other French-speaking places, and the only one they forgot was Haiti. And so the message came saying, "Wonderful. If you could go to Haiti." And they were like, "NO! The one country we forgot to cross off." It was kind of like a play from a spiritual religious aspect. God is testing and playing with them. God loves laughter.

HANS ON PIONEERING

Another crucial event (which led us to live most of our lives in Haiti and Albania) was when I went to the first Bahá'í summer school on the Shetland Islands while hitchhiking through Scotland in 1974. Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhajir happened to be present, and one evening I came to sit on the floor directly beside his chair. He talked about pioneering, and then said, "The German friends as well have far-reaching goals in front of them, but have not yet quite developed that spirit of pioneering"—while putting his hand on my shoulders. Before I accepted the Bahá'í Faith during the European Youth Conference in Fiesch/Switzerland in 1971, I had been wondering what all these people were doing who volunteered to go to other countries to settle there, and why in the world they would leave everything behind. But somehow I felt that I may be hearing the surge of my own future. Five years later I heard that Dr. Muhajir had passed, and I knew that now was really the time when I had to go. Within that year we ended up in Haiti, and only because of that I was able to attend the International Bahá'í Conference in Quito in August 1982, where I could visit the resting place of Dr. Muhajir because that's where he was buried.

HANS ON RETURNING TO HAITI

The trip to Haiti a few years ago was a necessity to come to terms with the grief and sadness, which our forced departure had caused, and to reconnect with our friends there. Maybe it also helped to realign our children's memories, which otherwise could easily have become legends during their own life times, and deviate from reality.

JESS ON RETURNING TO HAITI

The trip back to Haiti in January 2009 was the first time in 17 years the family had been back to Haiti together. I was born and raised in Haiti until age 10, at which point we were forced to leave and evacuated due to civil strife. We always thought we would be returning, so we never said proper good-byes. After moving to Texas for about 10 months, it became clear that the situation was not going to clear up, at which point my mom took a job with Peace Corps/Albania as the first country director there.

It was an incredible experience and an important trip. We had been pulled out so suddenly and unexpectedly, never saying good-bye. We were able to visit community members, and I could so tangibly see the effects of the sacrifice my parents made for the 10 years in the village and the few years in the city working with the school. People kept coming up saying thank you and catching up; people came from all over. One guy who was 15 when we left came back and took them all around without hesitation. There was no fear of insecurity going back at that time when there were many kidnappings taking place. We were so well taken care of, as we always were in Haiti because of neighbors and friends. Family trips always have the difficulties as well, but it was a very special time to cement what happened in Haiti.

It was also important to realize that, yes, Haiti's moved on. Haiti could be part of our future, but it's definitely part of our past. I realized maybe it doesn't need to be part of my future, but it can be. My parents always told me that I took it the hardest, maybe because of age or sensitivities. My older brother still remembers Creole, and uses it with his patients. And I still have the feeling, but with less to prove that, "I've got Haitian soul, too." And I do.

MATTY ON RETURNING TO HAITI

This wonderful guy I knew as a youth, who is now over 40—he only speaks Creole and when I returned, he was speaking like I hadn't been gone for any time, speaking a mile a minute. The language mostly came back to me, but I had to understand with my heart. I remember at the beginning, thinking, "Oh God, let me understand the essentials." And somehow I always seemed to.



CONCLUSION

As the final tracks of threaded themes get woven into the tapestry, let us take a step back and look at the patterns and designs that have been created.

Themes of morality and service, matter and saving, and mobility and stories have come to the fore in our analysis of locating memory. There were a many similar factors incorporating these themes between the Thimm family and the Lynk-Johnson family, as well as numerous variations, attributable to family history, personal variation, and life circumstance.

All approaches are valid, and all analyses meaningful.

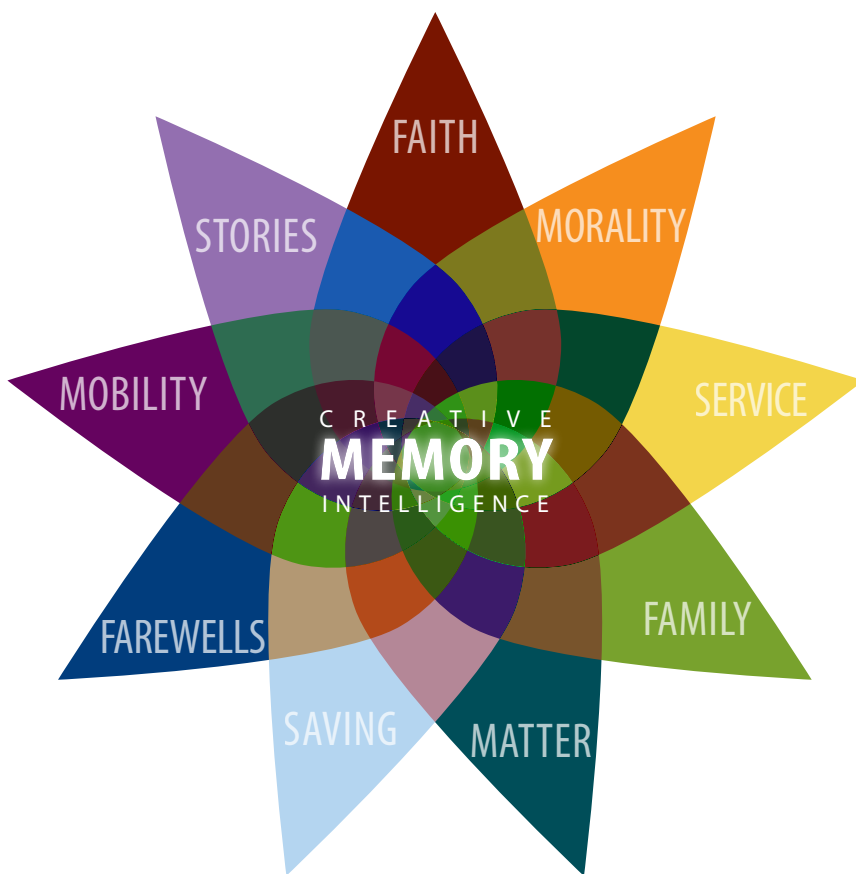
Thinking deeper of the family as educator has been an insightful exercise, causing me to take a step back from my reality as a graduate student to probe my life, musing on who I am and how I arrived at this point. More importantly, it has allowed me the space to probe the lives of dear and influential people *in* my life. This query included locating where my approach to life and education formed and the influence of immediate family and friends, who have become family.

In moving forward and continuing to question the role of memory, I think it is important to highlight the words of Peter Berger (1963): “Memory itself is a reiterated act of interpretation. As we remember the past, we reconstruct it in accordance with our present ideas of what is important and what is not” (p. 55). Once we acknowledge that memory is constantly changing and being interpreted, that narratives may or may not be true, and that learning is forever, we can rest assured that no matter our style or background, we each are beautiful tapestries of creative intelligence and memories that matter.

I would like to end with a quote by Elie Wiesel (1990) on memory:

Memory is a blessing; it creates bonds rather than destroys them. Bonds between present and past, between individuals and groups. It is because I remember our common beginnings that I move close to my fellow human beings. It is because I refuse to forget that their future is as important as my own. What would the future of [humanity] be if it were devoid of memory? (p. 9).

Great question. Ask on!

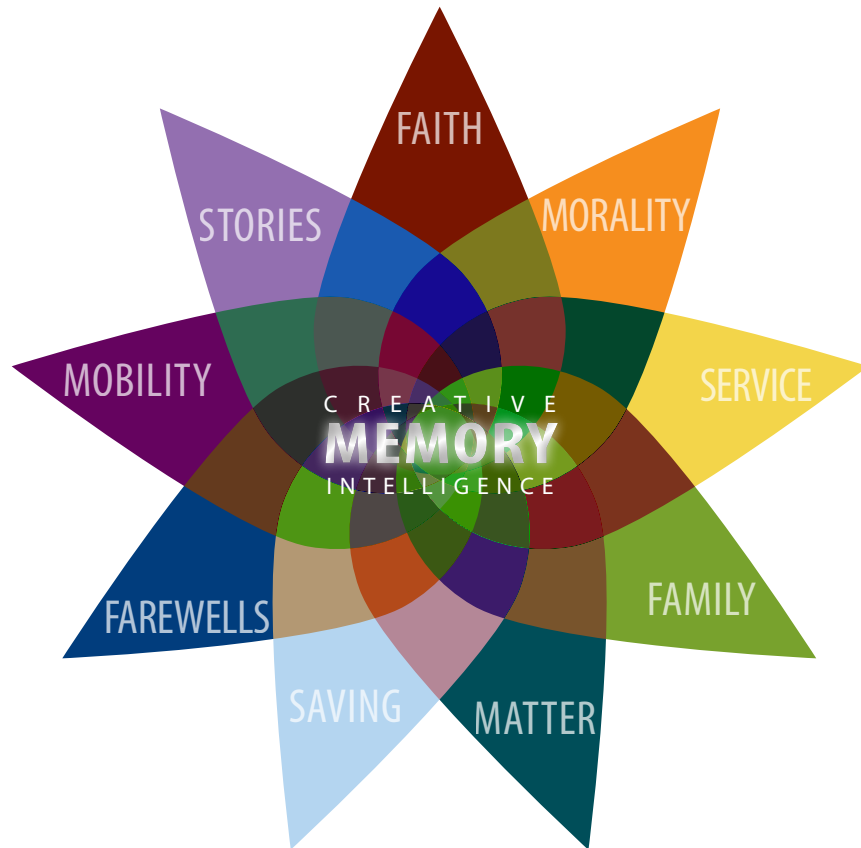


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*On a loom we are created and have our span of days;
our web fashioned by unseen weaver's hands.*



*Deftly spun we become the woof,
now the warp,
slowly turned into tapestry.*



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