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Editorial..

The Magic Of Memory Lane.....

Here I am sitting at my desk wanting to send Birthday greetings to an old friend in hospital suffering from terminal cancer. What message can I add next to the "Happy Birthday" printed? What can I say to brighten the day of the recipient without sounding hollow? I have to ward off some feelings of guilt, since I am healthy and am able to enjoy the day sitting near the window enjoying the view of the country side drenched in warm sunlight....

I think I have to settle for 'best wishes for a day with little or no pain' and the hope that the birthday celebrant will find some joy in the memory of good times in days gone by. And is not "the magic of memory lane" one of the most treasured possessions for all people of advanced

years? How happy we can be when sharing common memories with a loved one as we look through an old photo collection.

Does it matter if we fall victim to a welcome self-induced 'memory-loss' and mainly remember the good times only?

This may not be easy for my cancer-riddled friend in hospital and he may well ask himself "Why me?"

I can only hope that this is not the case, but at the same time I would admit that life is a bitter-sweet affair and if we are to enjoy it we must forget the bitterness and remember the sweetness. The power of the mind to reject what is sad and painful in looking backwards is both wonderful and beautiful.

- Perhaps you have undergone some serious illness yourself and endured weeks of acute pain. But maybe you can vividly recall the

gratitude you felt towards those who nursed you. One of our daughters had such a difficult time when her first child was born that she swore she would never go through it again: two years later, because the memory of the pain had faded and the joy of having a baby remained, she decided to have another and is now expecting her fourth.

- The mellowing effect that memory has on us is true of every obstacle or disappointment that we meet.

- Suppose that you were unhappy at School or in your first job situation - isn't it often true that when you look back you tend to remember the fun you had with school friends, the harmless pranks that made you laugh (*I had such a wonderful time at a School reunion in Switzerland last year!*), the colleagues with whom you struck up a friendship?

- Isn't it true, too, that when someone you have known is no longer with you, you remember best what was likeable about them?

There may well have been times in my life and in yours when we have faced a seemingly insurmountable obstacle which was terrifying and overpowering while we were close to it, but later, in retrospect, we see that it was just a temporary setback - a small hiccup on the way. However I think we do have to help along the natural healing process which softens a hurt. It is no good to keep alive some grievance, refresh some sorrow, or dwell upon some loss, Thank God, there is this saving grace for our human nature that allows us to look back, not in anger, but in love. No matter how acute the physical or emotional pain, time will soften the sharpness, and memory will eventually cast its mellowing sweetness over things past. We must keep on hoping for the day when we can look back and recall the happy times more vividly than the bad.

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