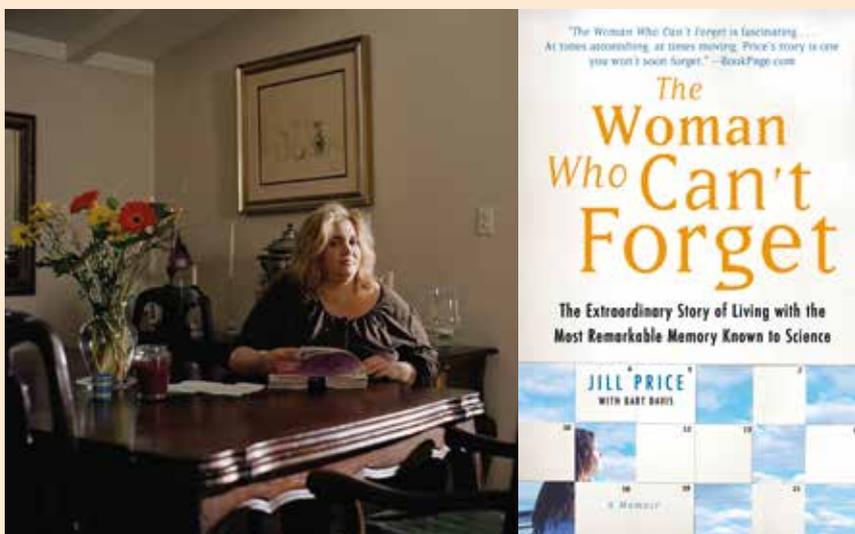


The woman who remembers everything

Can you remember exactly what you did, who you saw, and what you said, on any day, at any time 10, 20 or even 30 years ago? Jill Price can. But is it a gift or a curse?



Jill Price asks me my date of birth and I tell her: January 24, 1968. 'Okay – 1986 you were 18. I could tell you on January 24, 1986, I was working in an ice cream shop, it was a Friday. I had turned 20. We were four days away from the Challenger explosion. I hated my job and Saturday night I went out with Tim and Candace.' She could probably tell me what she ate, what they ordered, and what time she got home.

We have met for dinner at a restaurant in Beverly Hills. 'As I sit here with you, it's 6.30 on Wednesday night,' she says. 'Today would have been the 22nd wedding anniversary of Prince Andrew and Fergie. That was also on a Wednesday. It was a friend's birthday and he got some balloons that he didn't want so he gave them to me. And then I went to see a friend of mine who worked at the Hard Rock Cafe.'



Jill Price doesn't try to remember these things; she simply isn't able to forget them. She was born in New Jersey on December 30, 1965. When she was eight, she thinks her brain '**snapped**' due to the move the family made from New Jersey to California, and she began to remember in great detail. By the time she was 12, she **realized** she could remember every single day of the previous year. Since 1980, her memory has been near perfect. Any date she is given from that year onward she can instantly **recall**.

There is a downside to this: painful and unpleasant memories are as vivid as if they had just **occurred**. Awkward moments from school, battles with her weight, or hurtful comments from her childhood never **fade** in her memory. 'I can't forget,' she says. Crying helps her to **cope** with the unhappiness that her memory can cause. 'I cry all the time. Up to 10 times a day. I cry in the shower every morning.'

Doctors have been studying Jill since 2000. At first, they didn't know how to **classify** her, and have only recently given a name to her condition – superior autobiographical memory. They have only found three other people in the world who share the condition.

No one else in Jill's family has a memory like hers. Her brother, Michael, is happy not to remember everything. Jill has recently published her memoirs, *The Woman Who Can't Forget*, but Michael hasn't read it yet because there might be things in it he doesn't want to know. When I asked him what he would do if he was the one who had this memory, he answered, 'I would be making a fortune counting cards in Vegas.'



Glossary

The Challenger explosion

a US space shuttle exploded in 1986 shortly after taking off, killing all seven astronauts on board

Beverly Hills

a famous district of Los Angeles where many celebrities live

Prince Andrew and Fergie

Queen Elizabeth II's second son and his ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson

New Jersey

the state south of New York

Vegas

Las Vegas, the famous US casino city in Nevada

Adapted from The Sunday Times

Mabel

Part 1



George was working in Burma for the British colonial government. He and Mabel became engaged when he was back in England. When he returned to Burma, it was arranged that she would join him there in six months. But one difficulty came up after another. Mabel's father died, the war came, then George was sent to a district which was unsuitable for a white woman. In the end it was seven years before she was able to start. He made all the arrangements for the marriage, which was going to take place on the day of her arrival, and went down to Rangoon to meet her. Then, suddenly, without warning, his nerve failed him. He had not seen Mabel for seven years. He had forgotten what she was like. She was a total stranger. He felt a terrible feeling in his stomach. He couldn't go through with it. He must tell Mabel that he was very sorry, but he couldn't, he really couldn't marry her. But how could a man tell a girl a thing like that when she had been engaged to him for seven years and had come six thousand miles to marry him? He didn't have the nerve for that either. There was a boat just about to sail for Singapore; he wrote a letter to Mabel, and without any luggage, just in the clothes he was wearing, he boarded the boat. The letter Mabel received said:



Dearest Mabel,

I have been suddenly called away on business and do not know when I will be back. I think it would be much wiser if you returned to England. My plans are very uncertain.

Your loving George.

Glossary

Burma is now called Myanmar.

Rangoon is now called Yangon, and is the country's largest port.

The '**war**' is the First World War, which started in 1914.

Part 3

No, no, she wasn't going to catch him so easily. He had **(1) already** made his plans. He could catch the last ship along the Yangtze river to Chungking. **(2)** _____, no one could get there until the following spring. He arrived at Chungking, but he was desperate **(3)** _____. He was not going to take any risks. There was a place called Cheng-tu, the capital of Szechuan, and it was 400 miles away. It could **(4)** _____ be reached by road, and the area was full of thieves. A man would be safe there.

George set out. He sighed with relief when he saw the walls of the lonely Chinese city. He could rest at last. Mabel would **(5)** _____ find him there. The British consul was a friend of his and he stayed with him in his luxurious house. The weeks passed **(6)** _____ one after the other.

(7) _____ George and the consul were in the courtyard when there was a loud knock at the door.