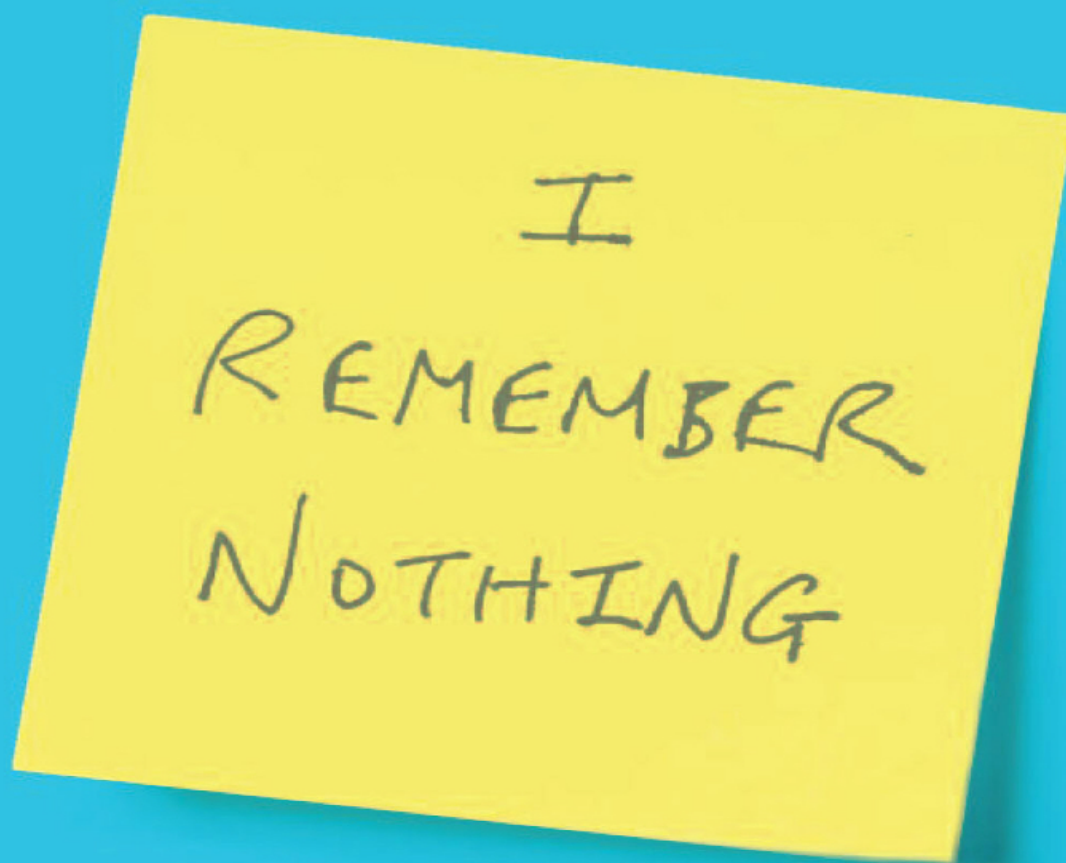


NORA

AUTHOR OF *I Feel Bad About My Neck*

EPHRON



and other reflections

‘Essential reading for anyone who hopes to grow old elegantly and perhaps a little disgracefully’

Mail on Sunday

About the Book

Old friends? We must be. You're delighted to see me. I'm delighted to see you. But who are you? Oh my God, you're Ellen. I can't believe it . . . I'd like to suggest that the reason I didn't recognize you is that you've done something to your hair, but you've done nothing to your hair . . . What you've actually done is gotten older. I don't believe it. You used to be my age, and now you're much, much older than I am. You could be my mother.

If there is any solace in growing older, it is that you will find yourself snorting with laughter in recognition at the situations described by Nora Ephron, the Academy Award-winning creator of *When Harry Met Sally*, *Sleepless in Seattle* and *Julie and Julia*. In this new book, she confronts everything that is frustrating about modern life, from the impossibility of trying to remember people's names at parties, to her struggles with new technology. She will also regale you with witty memories of her life – or at least of everything she hasn't (yet) forgotten.

One thing is for sure: there is no one else who can put her finger so very precisely, so beguilingly, with so much wisdom and so much humour, on everything women who have reached a certain age have been thinking . . . but rarely acknowledge.

CONTENTS

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

I Remember Nothing

Who Are You?

Journalism: A Love Story

The Legend

My Aruba

My Life as an Heiress

Going to the Movies

Twenty-three Things People Have a Shocking Capacity to
Be Surprised by Over and Over Again

I Just Want to Say: The Egg-White Omelette

I Just Want to Say: Teflon

I Just Want to Say: No, I Do Not Want Another Bottle of
Pellegrino

I Just Want to Say: The World Is Not Flat

I Just Want to Say: Chicken Soup

Pentimento

My Life as a Meat Loaf

Addicted to L-U-V

The Six Stages of E-Mail

Flops

Christmas Dinner

The D Word

The O Word

What I Won't Miss

What I Will Miss

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Also by Nora Ephron

Copyright

I Remember Nothing

AND OTHER REFLECTIONS

Nora Ephron

For Richard and Mona

I REMEMBER NOTHING

I HAVE BEEN forgetting things for years—at least since I was in my thirties. I know this because I wrote something about it at the time. I have proof. Of course, I can't remember exactly where I wrote about it, or when, but I could probably hunt it up if I had to.

In my early days of forgetting things, words would slip away, and names. I did what you normally do when this happens: I scrolled through a mental dictionary, trying to figure out what letter the word began with, and how many syllables were involved. Eventually the lost thing would float back into my head, recaptured. I never took such lapses as harbingers of doom, or old age, or actual senescence. I always knew that whatever I'd forgotten was going to come back to me sooner or later. Once I went to a store to buy a book about Alzheimer's disease and forgot the name of it. I thought it was funny. And it was, at the time.

Here's a thing I've never been able to remember: the title of that movie with Jeremy Irons. The one about Claus von Bülow. You know the one. All I ever succeeded in remembering was that it was three words long, and the middle word was "of." For many years, this did not bother me at all, because no one I knew could ever think of the title either. One night, eight of us were at the theater together, and not one of us could retrieve it. Finally, at intermission, someone went out to the street and Googled it; we were all informed of the title and we all vowed to remember it forever. For all I know, the other seven did. I, on the other hand, am back to remembering that it's three words long with an "of" in the middle.

By the way, when we finally learned the title that night, we all agreed it was a bad title. No wonder we didn't remember it.

I am going to Google for the name of that movie. Be right back. . . .

It's *Reversal of Fortune*.

How is one to remember that title? It has nothing to do with anything.

But here's the point: I have been forgetting things for years, but now I forget in a new way. I used to believe I could eventually retrieve whatever was lost and then commit it to memory. Now I know I can't possibly. Whatever's gone is hopelessly gone. And what's new doesn't stick.

The other night I met a man who informed me that he had a neurological disorder and couldn't remember the faces of people he'd met. He said that sometimes he looked at himself in a mirror and had no idea whom he was looking at. I don't mean to minimize this man's ailment, which I'm sure is a bona fide syndrome with a long name that's capitalized, but all I could think was, Welcome to my world. A couple of years ago, the actor Ryan O'Neal confessed that he'd recently failed to recognize his own daughter, Tatum, at a funeral and had accidentally made a pass at her. Everyone was judgmental about this, but not me. A month earlier, I'd found myself in a mall in Las Vegas when I saw a very pleasant-looking woman coming toward me, smiling, her arms outstretched, and I thought, Who is this woman? Where do I know her from? Then she spoke and I realized it was my sister Amy.

You might think, Well, how was she to know her sister would be in Las Vegas? I'm sorry to report that not only did I know, but she was the person I was meeting in the mall.

All this makes me feel sad, and wistful, but mostly it makes me feel old. I have many symptoms of old age, aside from the physical. I occasionally repeat myself. I use the expression, "When I was young." Often I don't get the joke,

although I pretend that I do. If I go see a play or a movie for a second time, it's as if I didn't see it at all the first time, even if the first time was just recently. I have no idea who anyone in *People* magazine is.

I used to think my problem was that my disk was full; now I'm forced to conclude that the opposite is true: it's becoming empty.

I have not yet reached the nadir of old age, the Land of Anecdote, but I'm approaching it.

I know, I know, I should have kept a journal. I should have saved the love letters. I should have taken a storage room somewhere in Long Island City for all the papers I thought I'd never need to look at again.

But I didn't.

And sometimes I'm forced to conclude that I remember nothing.

For example: I met Eleanor Roosevelt. It was June 1961, and I was on my way to a political internship at the Kennedy White House. All the Wellesley/Vassar interns drove to Hyde Park to meet the former first lady. I was dying to meet her. I'd grown up with a photograph in our den of her standing with my parents backstage at a play they'd written. My mother was wearing a corsage and Eleanor wore pearls. It was a photograph I always thought of as iconic, if I'm using the word correctly, which, if I am, it will be for the first time. We were among the thousands of Americans (mostly Jews) who had dens, and, in their dens, photos of Eleanor Roosevelt. I idolized the woman. I couldn't believe I was going to be in the same room with her. So what was she like that day in Hyde Park, you may wonder. I HAVE NO IDEA. I can't remember what she said or what she wore; I can barely summon up a mental picture of the room where we met her, although I have a very vague memory of drapes. But here's what I do remember: I got lost on the way. And ever since, every time I've been on the Taconic State Parkway, I'm reminded that I got lost

there on the way to meet Eleanor Roosevelt. But I don't remember a thing about Eleanor Roosevelt herself.

In 1964 the Beatles came to New York for the first time. I was a newspaper reporter and I was sent to the airport to cover their arrival. It was a Friday. I spent the weekend following them around. Sunday night they appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. You could make an argument that the sixties began that night, on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It was a historic night. I was there. I stood in the back of the Ed Sullivan Theater and watched. I remember how amazingly obnoxious the fans were—the teenage girls who screamed and yelled and behaved like idiots. But how were the Beatles, you may ask. Well, you are asking the wrong person. I could barely hear them.

I marched on Washington to protest the war in Vietnam. This was in 1967, and it was the most significant event of the antiwar movement. Thousands and thousands of people were there. I went with a lawyer I was dating. We spent most of the day in a hotel room having sex. I am not proud of this, but I mention it because it explains why I honestly cannot remember anything about the protest, including whether I ever even got to the Pentagon. I don't think I did. I don't think I've ever been to the Pentagon. But I wouldn't bet a nickel on it one way or the other.

Norman Mailer wrote an entire book about this march, called *The Armies of the Night*. It was 288 pages long. It won the Pulitzer Prize. And I can barely write two paragraphs about it. If you knew Norman Mailer and me and were asked to guess which of us cared more about sex, you would, of course, pick Norman Mailer. How wrong you would be.

Here are some people I met that I remember nothing about:

Groucho Marx

Ethel Merman
Jimmy Stewart
Alger Hiss
Senator Hubert Humphrey
Cary Grant
Benny Goodman
Peter Ustinov
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
Robert Morley
Dorothy Parker

I went to the legendary Battle of the Sexes tennis match between Billy Jean King and Bobby Riggs and couldn't really see anything from where I was sitting.

I went to stand in front of the White House the night Nixon resigned and here's what I have to tell you about it: my wallet was stolen.

I went to many legendary rock concerts and spent them wondering when they would end and where we would eat afterward and whether the restaurant would still be open and what I would order.

I went to cover the war in Israel in 1973 but my therapist absolutely forbid me to go to the front.

I was not at Woodstock, but I might as well have been because I wouldn't remember it anyway.

On some level, my life has been wasted on me. After all, if I can't remember it, who can?

The past is slipping away and the present is a constant affront. I can't possibly keep up. When I was younger, I managed to overcome my resistance to new things. After a short period of negativity, I flung myself at the Cuisinart food processor. I was curious about technology. I became a champion of e-mail and blogs—I found them romantic; I even made movies about them. But now I believe that almost anything new has been put on the earth in order to

make me feel bad about my dwindling memory, and I've erected a wall to protect myself from most of it.

On the other side of that wall are many things, pinging. For the most part I pay no attention. For a long time, I didn't know the difference between the Sunnis and the Shias, but there were so many pings I was finally forced to learn. But I can't help wondering, Why did I bother? Wasn't it enough to know they didn't like each other? And in any case, I have now forgotten.

At this moment, some of the things I'm refusing to know anything about include:

The former Soviet republics

The Kardashians

Twitter

All Housewives, Survivors, American Idols, and Bachelors

Karzai's brother

Soccer

Monkfish

Jay-Z

Every drink invented since the Cosmopolitan

Especially the drink made with crushed mint leaves. You know the one.

I am going to Google the name of that drink. Be right back. . . .

The Mojito.

I am living in the Google years, no question of that. And there are advantages to it. When you forget something, you can whip out your iPhone and go to Google. The Senior Moment has become the Google moment, and it has a much nicer, hipper, younger, more contemporary sound, doesn't