

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge

There was once a small boy called Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge and what's more he wasn't very old either.



His house was next door to an old people's home and he knew all the people who lived there.

He liked Mrs Jordan who played the organ.



He listened to Mr Hosking who told him scary stories.

He played with Mr Tippet who was crazy about cricket.

He ran errands for Miss Mitchell who walked with a wooden stick.

He admired Mr Drysdale who had a voice like a giant.



But his favourite person of all was Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper because she had four names just as he did.



He called her Miss Nancy and told her all his secrets.

One day Wilfrid Gordon heard his mother and father talking about Miss Nancy.



“Poor old thing,” said his mother.

“Why is she a poor old thing?” asked Wilfrid Gordon.

“Because she's lost her memory,” said his father.

“It isn't surprising,” said his mother. “After all, she is ninety-six.”

“What's a memory?” asked Wilfrid Gordon.

He was always asking questions.

“It's something you remember,” said his father.

But Wilfrid Gordon wanted to know more, so he called on Mrs Jordan who played the organ.



“What's a memory?” he asked.

“Something warm, my child, something warm.”

He called on Mr Hosking who told him scary stories.

“What's a memory?” he asked.

“Something from long ago, me lad, something from long ago.”

He called on Mr Tippett who was crazy about cricket.

“What's a memory?” he asked.

“Something that makes you cry, my boy, something that makes you cry.”



He called on Miss Mitchell who walked with a wooden stick.

“What’s a memory?” he asked.

“Something that makes you laugh, my darling, something that makes you laugh.”

He called on Mr Drysdale who had a voice like a giant.

“What’s a memory?” he asked.

“Something as precious as gold, young man, something as precious as gold.”



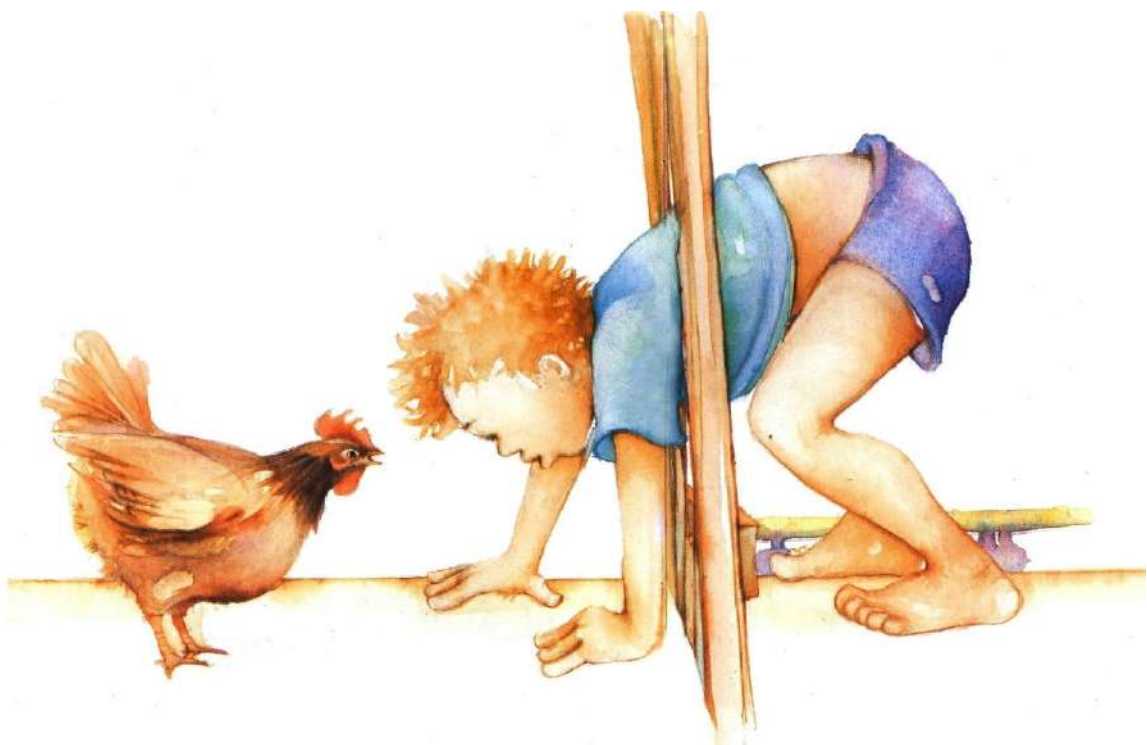
So Wilfrid Gordon went home again to look for memories for Miss Nancy because she had lost her own.



He looked for the shoe-box of shells he had found long ago last summer, and put them gently in a basket.

He found the puppet on strings which always made everyone laugh and he put that in the basket too.

He remembered with sadness the medal which his grandfather had given him and he placed it gently next to the shells.



Next he found his football which was as precious as gold, and last of all, on his way to Miss Nancy's, he went into the hen house and took a fresh, warm egg from under a hen.



Then Wilfrid Gordon called on Miss Nancy and gave her each thing one by one.



“What a dear, strange child to bring me all these wonderful things,” thought Miss Nancy.

Then she started to remember.

She held the warm egg and told Wilfrid Gordon about the tiny speckled blue eggs she had once found in a bird's nest in her aunt's garden.

She put a shell to her ear and remembered going to the beach by tram long ago and how hot she had felt in her button-up boots.

She touched the medal and talked sadly of the big brother she had loved who had gone to the war and never returned.

She smiled at the puppet on strings and remembered the one she had shown to her sister, and how she had laughed with a mouth full of porridge.



She bounced the football to Wilfrid Gordon and remembered the day she had met him and all the secrets they had told.

And the two of them smiled and smiled because Miss Nancy's memory had been found again by a small boy, who wasn't very old either.

Mem Fox, Julie Vivas (ill.)
Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge
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