

COMMENTS

There is a great line in a song written by Graham Sharp of the Steep Canyon Rangers - "I can find the house, but I can't get home." I think that sums it up eloquently. I grew up in the home my grandparents had built. It did become truly multi-generational when my daughter came along. Time moves on and it was sold. I visit it in the attic of my mind, happy to spend a few moments, happier not to pay the upkeep.

I was able to take a virtual tour of my childhood home by going to a real estate website and looking at the pictures left up online after it had been listed for sale by someone who owned it after my mother. My mother had continued to live there for decades. It badly needed renovation when she moved out. I found it fascinating to look at the renovations visible in the online photos. Most rooms I could recognize, but the kitchen had been so thoroughly changed I would not have known it was the same house.

Through the years, I have had startlingly realistic dreams of walking through the home I grew up in, the home my father designed and built in 1947. It has only changed hands once, when my parents sold it in 1972. I hope I live long enough to ask the listing agent for permission to walk through it IRL when the widow living there eventually puts it on the market.

I've often thought about this, both regarding my grandparents' old home and whether I'd move into my childhood home once my stepfather has passed on (hopefully many years in the future). Both have their charms, but I think what made both "home" was the memories of the people in those places rather than the structures themselves. Without the people, I'm not sure those houses would feel like home, regardless of my history with them.

I entertained idle thoughts about buying the house in which I spent my first 12 years, but I gratefully fled the house my parents built over a four-year period in the mid-70s. It was supposedly my father's dream home, but he cut so many corners during construction that it was more of a nightmare. Neither parent was willing to invest in maintenance, so by the time my mother died in 2019, it was a shambling mess perched on the corner of nearly 40 acres — and there was no money left for repairs after my parents' elder care. The taxes were crippling. My daughter and I sold it this past September for less than its assessed value, but we were both so tired of it that we were just glad to be released. I always hated it and never want to see it again.

The owner of my old childhood house blocked us out on Google. I can see my block but not my house. I am currently in the unenviable or enviable position of wondering what I am going to do with the house I grew up in. My parents never left it, my father is insistent that he, like my mother, will die in it. Even though the condition that will trigger it hasn't happened, I sometimes wake up with crushing anxiety in the middle of the night with the same sentiments expressed by the author: a new family won't love it as we did, won't care for it as we did...coupled with, it will never be the same home.

Interestingly enough, my partner and I bought our home in our dream neighborhood for a realistic price solely due to the prior owner's love for the house and what it was for her. We were living in a tiny apartment in the dream neighborhood at the time. The magic night was in January, several years ago. I was walking my dog in the park at about 10:30PM when this neighbor scurried across the street to see me. In a hushed tone, like the cartoon New York watch fence, "Do you want to buy a house?" In a brief conversation, a pact was made. Because she liked us, thought we fit in the neighborhood perfectly, and, most importantly, believed we would love the home as much as she had, she agreed that we would know when it went on the market before anyone else. The actual sale was whirlwind and shrouded by secrecy. No one in the neighborhood knew they had sold the home until we had keys in hand. The house is very small, very old, has myriad quirks, but it is our home. And if we decide to leave, we have already agreed, it has to go to someone who loves it.

Pro tip: Zillow will have all the current interior photos you want. An astute search will turn up previous listings photos.

Just followed my own counsel. We moved away from my childhood home 55 years ago. The double-sided fireplace, and the breakfast bar/pass through where we'd stand on the living room chairs to watch ma's meal prep ... still there, all greiged and Pergoed up. Attached carport is now an enclosed family room, with a two-car garage added. There's even a floor plan. (Whoever designed the access from the garage evidently never carried in several bags of groceries.)

I had this experience when I visited an old apartment that I used to live in. I thought that I would have lots of memories of good times, along with the people who lived there with me. But visiting it so many decades later, I just felt an odd

silence, no ghosts, no presences, just the sunlight coming in the windows & making patterns on the wood floors. The rooms looked larger; I kept watching the front door to see who might be coming in. I left, feeling vaguely unsettled. But I'll continue to haunt those old rooms, searching for life in another time.

I have had this urge all my life, driving by places I have lived, places I was happy at. My father was the same. We used to occasionally go on a tour of his childhood homes, while he wistfully described to me who he was then, and who his family was then. Places may somehow contain echoes of past times, that's what many people think of ghosts as being. But those are just phantasms, things of the mind. You really cannot, in any real way, go home again. All you can do is make a new one.

In a way, you're lucky the house is still there. My childhood home -- which was a very special house designed in the prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright -- was seriously damaged by an arson fire when I was away at college. My parents then made the decision to sell it, as it was too big for them, the area was becoming more commercial, and the value of the land was an enticing incentive. All the dozens of trees my father had planted were bulldozed. Today, it's the site of a large CVS and an even larger parking lot.

I still have dreams that take place in that house, but they involve people who were never there. I dreamed about being there with my husband, although the house was demolished years before I met him. I think that if I'm dreaming about my parents, the scene is always that house, even though the other people in the dream may not even folks my parents knew.

If I could visit that house today, I'm sure that it would not seem as magical as it did to me growing up, so in a way, I'm lucky that I have only memories.

I have these same dreams all the time, and like you our house was destroyed (by developers, not arsonists, I'm sorry for your loss). I often think of the scene at the end of *The Titanic* where Rose dies and "heaven" is her coming down the stairs to a full Titanic party. I see my family's kitchen with everyone around the island, every night in my dreams.

I have felt many of the same emotions as described by the author.

I'm in a unique situation that my brother lives in our childhood home. Purchased from our parents amid their divorce in early 1990s. The home was built in 1904 and has only had 2 family (names) own it; small town Ohio. He has done much needed updates and an expansion. Four of the five people I lived with are alive. Our father died, 20 years ago from cancer, now I am the same age (55) and have incurable cancer. There are ghosts...several rough years in the 70s and 80s. But when I visit, I feel the good times.

We bought a sad, vandalized, vacant old house nobody else would touch, and dragged it back from the brink. Ten years later we noticed two people standing out front with a photo album. They were looking for grandma's (and great grandma's) house, and were thrilled to discover its second act. They got a tour, took photos, gave us copies of their family photos, and went home happy.

My parents bought an old farm when I was two. It was a weekend and vacation place. The land was "corned out" with deep erosion gullies. But the back of the farm was magical with infinite pools in a wide rock-bottomed creek and huge trees and old limestone bluffs. They sold it in 1970 and the family mourns it still. I often dream that someone bought the whole creek and turned the land into a commercial nightmare. But it was my childhood and my memories are still bright.

I have fond memories of the rental we lived in for the first eight years of my life. It was sold and we moved on. The internal visual of a lawn full of trees and the pretty house with the bright blue shingles is from long ago. The maple trees I climbed were over tapped and left to die by the new owners. The house looks like it is falling apart, and there's a toilet along the fence line that shows up even in Google Maps. The second yard is full of junkers. It's best to stay with memories.

So interesting!! I've thought this way about my grandparents' house, and my mom, in her dementia, spends long hours thinking about our family home in Bethesda in the 1960s and 1970s. Thanks for sharing this feeling/experience.

I've driven by the cape-style house I grew up in a Detroit suburb on occasion when I visit. It looks mostly the same as it did after my dad put siding and a new roof on it years ago and otherwise hasn't changed very much. I wonder whether the knotty pine walls he used to finish the upstairs for my three brothers and me are still there.

The house that breaks my heart to see (online) belonged to my aunt and uncle. It was my aunt's childhood home in the city (yes Detroit). Beautiful big old porch, booth and bench seating in the kitchen, wonderful old dark wood trim and molding inside. Easter dinner with my grandmother and the entire family there every year. My truckdriver dad had a painting business on the side and painted the outside of that house when I was little. My deranged cousin got it after my aunt/uncle passed away, ran it into the ground, it eventually became vacant and was a sad sight. Eventually it burned, not completely down, but enough that the elements finally reclaimed it. Dust to dust.

I did buy my grandparents' beloved home and lived in it for some years. The house was very old; living in it again was a complete joy, and a tremendous expense, and a huge burden of labor. Eventually we had to sell it, but I will never regret having had those years. The emotional resonance of just walking down the hall provided a deep satisfaction and pleasure.

What a lovely essay, thank you for writing it Ms McCabe and Washington Post for printing it. We sold the house my Dad built to pay for my Mom's assisted living care none of us would have wanted to live there, but yet it was the house of my parents' dreams. The house contained the memory of 50 years of raising five kids and all the meals my mom served us while we gathered around the table. I think it's the memory of the lives of the people who grew up within those walls that draws us back.

Ugh. I can't believe how many people do this.

Thank you for this lovely article that beautifully evokes the feeling of a home. I was singing the Miranda Lambert song to myself well before I got to the paragraph where you mentioned it.

My family home in Ohio built by my folks in 1951, sold just over a year ago. My eldest brother bought it in 2002 from my mom's estate and proceeded to trash it and hoard all manner of junk in it. When he died in 2020 from lung cancer it fell to us to clear it out and witness the destruction. Flippers bought it for a song and made a tidy profit on it. It now has its second owner. For myself, the house I bought and lived in for 28 yrs was just sold again and I got to see from the realtor photos the changes made. It's never easy, it's just life going on.

The joy of what we love is lost by wanting more.

All of those memories are beautiful and a deep part of you. Anchor them to your heart instead of to a place. In this wistful essay, Ms. McCabe touches fingertips with and gazes into the eyes of readers who enjoy, or are cursed with, a sense of place. Or at least she has done so with me by alluding eloquently to how a structure of wood and masonry plays its part in evoking the security and perceived sense of permanence peculiar to childhood. Having that place close at hand invites McCabe to spy on her own past, as it were, only now she finds it guarded by strangers. The face she saw in the window might have been calling out: *leave your damn past alone lady, there's nothing to see here anyway.*

You can't go home again, so they say. But that house, that *home*, remains inviolate against time and the elements. Her parents and sister could not endure, but the house that will forever be part of them continues to keep the faith. If I were McCabe, I would let the house do its job in peace.

My mother still lives in my childhood home and she's 100 years old. I have only a few good memories and have such an aversion to those midcentury houses with squinty windows. My mother says it will be a tear down and that is A-Ok with me. It was my grandparents' homes where I was happy. When one of my grandmothers died I went around and photographed every inch of that beloved house. I wish I had done that for the other grandparents' house which is gone and replaced with condos. I've imagined making a dollhouse based on that lovely tudor house. There's a victorian house my own family lived in for 45 years which is now someone else's home, which I peek at from time to time on Zillow but I'm less and less interested. Once, when visiting the town, we almost pulled into the driveway by accident! I think Thomas Wolfe had it right--you can't go home again!!

So what did you learn? That your neighbors were spying on you and no the new owners do not have any obligation to keep things the way you did. Another useless article brought to you by WaPo.

Another lazy no news article.

There is plenty of hard news in other sections of the paper, why did you choose to read this if you weren't interested? Oh no!!! Someone wrote a piece and it wasn't about politics??? Where will this ever end???

My childhood home is gone but I've lived across the street in our small community for years. When I was in my early teens my father began building (with all the family's help) a much larger replacement home on the same triple lot. The summer I graduated high school Mom, Dad and younger sister moved into the new home. Years later I briefly lived there for 6 months while building my home. For 10 years I worked full time while providing care for my parents, preparing meals, supervising medical care, providing transportation etc. while living in my home. When my parents moved into a full time care home their home was immediately sold; grand-kids grieved, not me. I've had to watch all the changes various new owners have made to the home and landscaping, some good, some awful, just like my new neighbors.

The home I drive by is the OLD family generational homestead in a nearby state where my aunts, uncles and cousins lived and loved me and my siblings. On that ranch live my memories of a home and families I loved and cherished. My sister and I watched hours of HGTV as she neared death and spent more hours discussing how future owners must have made needed renovations. It was in a now highly valued neighborhood but we never could figure out what could be done with the kitchen and bathroom to make them workable for current generations.

I drive by my grandparent's house on every trip to town. It is another deeply loved house that I know was extensively renovated sixty years ago but is obviously run down by the current owners.

My memories are better for me I think than the actual reality of seeing inside them now.

I experienced a peace every time I entered my parents home as my brother and I were preparing it to go on the market. My parents had been deceased for some time. After it sold and had been lived in by others it came onto the market again. It was gone! I walked in the house and the peaceful feeling was gone! Those loving spirits had moved on. I will always love you Momma and Daddy, until we meet again.

Ohhhh...your comment moved me.

Thank you, Ms. McCabe. Place matters so much.

When my husband and I first got serious and moved in together, we rented a converted carriage house. We fell in love at first sight--- exposed brick, soaring beams, neat little original fixtures. We lived there for three years, often talking about making the owner an offer to buy, and then a job transfer caused us to move to another state. We were so sad to leave the little beloved carriage house! Ten years, a wedding, a baby and another transfer back to where we came from had us driving past the little carriage house often, wondering who was living in it and whether it had ever been sold. We had purchased another house, but we never really loved it. Imagine our joy on the day we happened to be in that town, decided to drive past and saw a For Sale sign on it! That same day, we devised a plan. We got our financial ducks in a row, put our house on the market and made a full-price offer to the owner, who remembered us! Sixteen years later, a lot of money sunk into new systems and a new roof, and all of the other expenses that add up over time, we are still smitten with the little house where our love grew. Now our adult daughter talks about living here someday.... It was meant to be.

I was born in Caracas. I moved to the US when I was 10, with my then very young parents. While I was a child, we moved apartments quite a bit and eventually ended up in a house. However, we never lived in any of these places for very long—we never really spent a lot of time in any one home until we moved to the US. My parents owned a house that I moved into at 14 for 20+ years and that is considered the family home. Yet. It's my grandmother's apartment in Caracas that haunts me. It was a large apartment with a big balcony in a mid-century building on a leafy street. The noises and smells of that apartment have stayed with me my whole life. I was in Tel Aviv on vacation one time, and I woke up in our AirBNB and for a second I was back in Caracas—the same smells, the same sounds, the same breeze

coming with the same mix of scents made of tropical flowers and urbanity. With my eyes shut, I was in Caracas, waking up in my grandmother's bedroom with everyone I loved still alive. I kept my eyes closed for as long as I could, breathing in my past, suspending my reality for a few more minutes, delaying the inevitable slam on the past. When at last my eyes opened, poof, it was all gone. I have not been back to Caracas since Chavez took over and I may never go back. Even so, for years, (decades?) I would fall asleep retracing every detail in that apartment—the feel of the cool marble floors, the breeze coming in from the open tiled kitchen, the texture of the carved wooden furniture my grandmother imported from Spain. One night, I had a dream that I was a giant, walking gingerly all over Caracas, from my parents place across town, to the little enclave at the mountain's shadow where she lived. After that, I would dream that every few months. So it was startling beyond belief to find myself doing exactly that with Google Earth—my fingers playing the part of giant legs, zooming and expanding, like a God. If only they had streets view.....oh how I would rejoice.

Lovely piece. And she's lucky it hasn't been torn down to have some massive convention center built in its place. I drive by the house I grew up in every time I'm in my hometown. It's the wrong color now, and the owners put a huge and ugly second garage/shop on the large lot but I still think I'd look at it came on the market. Maybe just to convince myself it wasn't all that special?

If you purchased it and moved in my guess is that it would feel empty. Why we have memories which for me at least, are more important than photos.

I totally relate. The pristine town is now a cannabis haven; the darling red brick house is tired; the perfect manicured green lawn filled with weeds.

Poignant.

But memories of howdy dowdy, musketeers, milk glass, aprons etc. are warming.

Her house looks like my grandmother's house in Chevy Chase. Same roofline, same fireplace and small window next to it! And the family on the couch! My sister and I looked like that! There's a picture of my family on a similar brown couch. Wow. I drive by it every 5 years or so. And even though I don't pine for my childhood home, Miranda Lambert's song always makes me misty. Thanks for sharing.

Interesting timing. On a business trip last week, did a drive-by of our old house that we lived in for almost 15 years (longer than any other house). I was happy to be rid of the old place with really high utility bills and a pool that we never used after the kids got older. The new owner rented it out for a while, and I saw that, by the contractor signs out front, he was getting it remodeled to live in himself.

Was a little wistful seeing not much change in the neighborhood as a whole, with life carrying on as if we had never been there. We never really "own" our houses; we are just caretakers for a bit.

Such lovely writing and such relatable sentiments! My parents abruptly moved out of my childhood home due to terrible damage from Hurricane Katrina. We were so very lucky to not lose any of our people in the storm that I felt guilty mourning a house at the time. We were able to tour it when the house was briefly on the market a few years ago and gosh it brought up a enormous mixture of feelings. Thank you for sharing your memories with us!

I miss the house itself; of course the people are the most important, but most of them are gone, and the house (which my father built) is still there, the lawn and trees are there, and I still think of the times when I could have bought it after my mother died. "Common sense" won out--different times, different neighbors--but it still hurts in my soul.

My parents are still alive, so the house I do the drive-bys for is my grandparents' home. I like seeing what they've done on the outside, sadly note the old shed and doghouse are gone, and observe how the scale of the place has changed for me since childhood. I do not wish to go inside, because I want to keep my memories of the place and the people intact.

I know that when my parents die and we sell the house, it will likely be an immediate teardown to be replaced with a much larger house. I do not know if I will do drive-bys when that happens.

I, too have "revisited" my home where I lived from a year old to when I left for college at 17. I have "visited" it on Google to see that whoever now lives there has changed the facade of the house. They've added on some type of vestibule. Every other house on the short block has stayed the same. My lovely childhood house looks freakish and it pains me that it has been so desecrated. However, it is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder so I hope the present people much happiness within the walls. But, I have driven by and it no longer looks remotely the same. I'll not go back again.

And yet their absence might feel even more profound to me within those walls that had once held us all.

I had the chance to visit my "family home" -- built by great-greats and occupied continually through the generation of my paternal grands, who were there when I was a child and young adult. My curiosity was satisfied, but that empty sadness was my overwhelming reaction. Not sorry I went, but don't want to go again. Nearly everyone I love from within the walls of that house is dead, and the few of us who remain are spread out ... it's not our family place anymore.

For me, the house that got away is the log cottage on the lake in Northern MI where my family spent every summer of my life until young adulthood when my grandparents sold it. Decades later, when my Mother was nearing the end of her life, nostalgia prompted us to undertake the long drive to see the cottage just one more time. Modifications had obliterated it to being unrecognizable and left us both feeling sad and sorry to have seen it. But, you know, it's ok. The vivid memories of what the cottage was to our family live on in me--in my heart--full of every sunny, happy, carefree summer spent there with the people I loved. No matter what, it will always be that beautiful, simple cottage to me.

Of the houses of 1000 years ago, I think how primitive! No windows, no light, only a chimney to let the smoke out! 1000 years from now people will look back and think How primitive! How could they even live like that? They were still building with wood! I bet their basements kept flooding.

My sister and I, neither of whom lives in the DC area anymore, recently went through a huge collection of old family photos. In the course of this we looked up our old house (which we left in 1958 as children) on Zillow and found it was for sale. Not only that, but it looked barely different from what we remembered and saw in the old photos, except, of course, older and shabbier. We have wondered if the family that bought it from our parents in 1960 after renting it for two years, remained in it all that time, raised their children, grew older and gradually became unable to care for the house until it finally went on sale after their deaths.

It has now been bought, and, based on Google Street View, spruced up and painted and the yard looks cared for. We hope its occupants enjoy many happy years there.

I can never go back to most of the places where we lived when I was a child. We were Army brats. As soon as I was old enough to be out on my own, I lacked the paperwork to visit any of our old quarters. Several of our old posts were overseas. The South Post of Ft. Meyer has been largely swallowed by Arlington Cemetery. If you have the ability to drive past your childhood home, go back and drive by. I envy you.

I grew up in a Craftsman style house built in 1927. Shortly after we moved around '64, my folks added a 2nd floor addition expanding the attic. Turning what was once a 2 bedroom, 1 bath house into a 4 bedroom, 2 bath house. The house had a lot of charm from the full roof covered front porch with a swing that I spent many summers on swinging back and forth with my 3 siblings, to the cedar shake siding outside and the oak flooring and tiny hexagonal black and white tile in the downstairs bathroom and brass ceiling light fixtures. The kitchen was spacious with custom built in cabinetry. I have fond memories sitting on the radiator at the kitchen table to look out the window at the birds while eating breakfast as a child. I recently saw it on Zillow and it had been 'updated'. The beautiful old oak flooring was covered in bamboo. A pass through opening was cut into the kitchen/dining room wall and the kitchen cabinets that had been hung on that wall were gone. Also gone was the little pantry under the stairs in the kitchen. That whole wall was torn down and the stairway opened up. (The upstairs was accessed from a door in the kitchen on one side or a door from the back bedroom on the other side). The kitchen storage was gutted and reduced to just the upper and lower cabinet where the oven used to be and the lower cabinet where they put the pass through. And the absolute worse offense was the bathrooms. They covered up the original enameled/cast iron tubs and tile with that cheap awful plastic 'liner' crap. They also covered the black and white tile. Sometimes you just shouldn't go back and look at your childhood home.

In clearing out 'stuff' from my home I came across a packet of my dad's papers. They included paperwork for car purchases, home and land purchase, some old legal issues, family letters and cards, and some of his thoughts he put on paper. It was a welcome trip down memory lane. Now... what do I do with them?

Those sorts of things are the hardest to get rid of. Our solution was to gather family members around a campfire and go through boxes together. As each piece was pulled from the box, we asked, "stay, or go?" If it was "stay," the item was passed to that family member to keep. If it was, "go," we gently consigned it to the fire.

Scan them! Share them and your memories of those things/events with everyone in the family.

My childhood home was torn down in the 1980s, along with the larger homes on either side, and replaced with a condo tower. (This was before San Diego started valuing its Craftsman neighborhoods.) I still feel a sense of dislocation and a loss of roots.

"Life is what happens, when you're busy making other plans." - John Lennon

Or maybe thinking about the past...?

When I was a kid, I looked forward to one day traveling like my fairly young, widowed grandmother did. My favorite Barbie outfit was called "London Tour".

Now, at about her age then, I always say that my dream vacation would be to be eight again, for a couple of weeks. :) And with my grandmother visiting.

It's not the house. It's the people that you miss. Focus on the people that are *here*, now.

And I say this as someone who has spent countless hours on the internet looking at my old house and town. I agree completely. I loved my childhood home and occasionally drive by it with my husband or grandchildren. However, they and the rest of my family are where my heart lies now. I'm grateful my brother is still alive, and we do sometimes reminisce but we both focus our lives on the here and now.

For years, I would mentally redecorate the tiny studio apartment overlooking a gas station I had rented during a transitional year. When I lived there, I had no money to buy anything, so it was furnished with my childhood dresser, other people's castoffs, ancient fiberglass drapes, and a pullout sofa my mother lent me the money to buy. But envisioning that apartment with actual furniture, wood blinds, and nice accessories was a bedtime escape from the anxieties of a later and very different life.

I so relate to this. I have driven by both of my childhood homes quite a few times when I've gone back to the DC area to visit (I moved to CA in 1988.) and I still look at pics online from time to time to see what changes people have made to them. Some changes are quite significant, as owners have modernized both the interiors and exteriors. But the neighborhoods have stood up beautifully, too, and I am super nostalgic for them.

Once someone caught me looking at the house, so I jumped out of the car and chatted with him. He remembered my dad--even his name--and shared stories about the purchase process. It tugged at my heart big time.

I think if I were to see either of these homes in the snow I would desperately want to buy them. There is something about snow that makes a home feel like a hug to me. (The photo of your house in snow got my attention instantly.)

Thanks so much for writing this piece. I'm so glad I'm not alone!

I am in my eighth decade, and I still dream about the beautiful English Tudor that was my home until I went to college and my parents sold it and beat it to retirement at the beach as soon as they dropped me off at my dorm.

I miss that house and my dreams are always bittersweet. I am wandering from room to room, opening closets, looking in drawers and noticing details from 50 years ago that I wouldn't recall while awake.

I'm glad I'm not the only one.

I enjoyed reading this story. I don't miss my childhood home. Instead, I have driven past the home from which I downsized. That's the home that holds all my best memories. It is there that my husband and I layered so much love and care year after year for our kids to our garden. Those are my most precious days.

Absolutely beautiful...As a young adult, I was able to tour the home I lived in through 4th grade...It was very special...I would like to do it again. Fortunately, my brother bought our parents house where I lived from 8th grade onward so I go there regularly. Our family farm, in the family from 1742 until 2008 holds many of these same longings for me that are mentioned in the article. It was the one constant in my life for 50 years...It broke my heart when it went out of the family. I have been back through it once in the intervening years...I hope to again...

What a lovely piece of writing. I admit that I have no nostalgia for the childhood house or the neighborhood. Like others, I only miss the people.

Recently got my five sibs together for a reunion. Our family home was built by my grandparents in 1939 and at one time 11 family members lived there. My Dad sold it in 1988.

I contacted the family that bought it and we all visited to take pictures outside (they didn't want people inside). The now adult children were there visiting. It was wonderful to share our childhood memories with them as they had many of the same experiences as they grew up in the home. I know my parents and grandparents would be happy to know that family life lives on in that home, even though it is not our family.

What a beautiful and moving piece of writing. Thank you for sharing your exploration of this big, big question, one that haunts so many of us

My childhood home is on the south side of Chicago. Three generations raised in it. When my aunt died there in the winter a few years back, the pipes burst. I bought it bc no one in my family could afford the cost of a gut rehab.

Unlike the writer, mine was a dysfunctional lonely childhood. Rooms hold horrible memories, longing.... as a child I was often afraid. Especially of the basement and attic.

I was unsure of how I would feel but over the last 3 years as I have seen the home come back to life; my inner child is so grateful! That child now knows she is safe. She is happy and hopeful when she sees these rooms. Seeing my 6 year old daughter have the childhood I never did.

Thank you so much for sharing this piece. I am grateful for my past no matter how painful. I can own it literally and figuratively; to make the future my own.

While my teenage granddaughter was visiting last summer, I took her past the house I grew up in. There was a woman outside so I stopped and asked her if I could see the inside. Even though it had been updated, there were still beautiful memories. But the heart of the house was missing--my family's presence was gone. People are right-- you can never go home again.

I feel extremely fortunate that my brother now lives in the house we grew up in. His gardens are as beautiful as my mother's. I can visit anytime, and the memories are always there.

Hiraeth is often likened to nostalgia in English and it shares qualities with the German concept of sehnsucht, but none quite match exactly. It combines elements of homesickness, nostalgia and longing. Interlaced, however, is the subtle acknowledgment of an irretrievable loss – a unique blend of place, time and people that can never be recreated. This unreachable nature adds an element of grief, but somehow it is not entirely unwelcome.

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20210214-the-welsh-word-you-cant-translate>

My background is not Welsh but many things in life are universal and I have long been haunted by the concept of hiraeth. This beautifully written essay left me comforted but also unsettled. Thank you for the memories.

Thank you. The link you provided is a perfect read for me at this moment in my life.

Thank you. I very much enjoyed reading it.

I would happily move back into any of my childhood homes. None are in the same part of the country where I currently live, so it won't happen, but I daydream about it. It's not really the building that I feel nostalgic about, though. This was a wonderful piece.

Although I knew quite well every fiber, brick, and board of the house, something had changed. ... I came to the sad realization that home wasn't home anymore. The warmth that made that house a home was strangely absent now and I knew it. ... The heart of that home was those dear people who are no longer there."

Just cleaned out and sold a two-generation home in our family after a death, owned since 1961. Was the main caretaker for it for almost a decade. I got lost there in my thoughts dusting treasurers of long departed and beloved family members. But it never brought them back. Great writing here, thank you.

But what about your life NOW? What about the people in your life now? What about everything ELSE that made you the person that you are today? You don't mention anything about now so much, that it feels disrespectful to yourself and anyone close to you now.

The past is a part of you, but it becomes a smaller part of you every day as new people, places, and events fill in the whole of your life experience.

My closest cousin bought his grandparents' house. It had been precious to him in his childhood. His letters became filled with things long past, now lost. He became a hoarder. Whenever anyone died, he gathered all their photos in boxes eventually filling what was supposed to be his dining room. He said that he decided to take early retirement to escape from office politics, but later I learned that he was caught drunk on the job and was offered early retirement to avoid being fired.

He was hospitalized for alcohol poisoning more than once and finally died from it. It took most of a year to clean out the house before it was fit to sell.

Love yourself as you are now.

Love your life as it is now.

Escape this trap that you have built for yourself. That house is not yours. The yard is not yours. The past is gone, filled in by more recent past and present, with the future patiently waiting for you to appreciate its possibilities.

Make it your mission to build your own happiness out of the resources in your life within your reach right now.

It's your only important job. Do it.

Depression is not a doorway to enlightenment. It has no fulfillment achieved by continuing fixation to some blissful end.

The only way to happiness is facing forward, not backward.

Mentally, I will never let go of the memories of my childhood home. Physically, I want to see it passed to other families who will create the same atmosphere for themselves. I could never go back, though, because it would be like looking at the corpse of a family member -- a body without the soul I knew and loved. However, the house *can* be given new life with other people -- but never the people who lived in it with me, in the time we lived in it together.

On the other hand, if those people could come back to me (minus the unintended consequences *a la* Stephen King), I could recreate those days in any house. I could relive breakfast with them in any kitchen. The joys of my life were with them in the rooms they furnished (in all senses of the word), not the building.

I'm terrified of seeing the actual building now, out of fear that it's *not* inhabited by another happy family.

And I'd never want to own it and reoccupy it, because every moment would remind me of who's missing, whom I could never get back (physically) at any price.

An army brat, born before Pearl Harbor, I grew up with so many homes -- eighteen before I graduated high school. My very first home was (from how it looks in photos) an early version of a kind of Airstream -- it had been my parent's home before my birth as my Dad prepared for war, roaming the US, transitioning from cavalry to air artillery and officer's school. He would pull up some where from Colorado to Texas and up and down the southeastern states, asking random people to rent space on their property. When Dad went to Europe, we spent the war years tethered to my Grandparent's home for the duration. To this day I find myself drawn to tiny homes or RV living. I have photos of almost every one of the houses we called home, including two tours living in occupied Germany. But it's that silver trailer that will forever remain home.

Thank you so much for this beautifully written essay. It provoked so many memories of my own as it illuminated you. Much of this is nostalgia for what we perceived to be a better time, a safer time. When we could laugh about "duck and cover," while the nuclear threat, and all other threats, (fascism, pandemic, climate...a product of over population) loom so much larger now. I advised my children (now in their mid 40's) not to have children... was I wrong to do this? I said, please don't think I long to be a grandpa; the world is becoming so inhospitable now, but it's your call. I now have a beautiful little one year old grandson and I am totally charmed, yet dreading what he must face.

And there is the urgent threat of the return to the white house of a living horror. I can only hope that somewhere there is(are) someone('s) who will deliver us from this evil.

Ours was only the third family to own the 1737 abandoned farmhouse: a cow skeleton in the parlour and the inquisitive megalopolis of skunks under the porch told the tale. Not a night went by that I didn't pause on the handcrafted staircase, imaging holding up a skirt hem and a candle on the way to bed. Not a year went by that family descendants didn't write hesitant letters, or show up at the door, hoping for a glimpse. We always welcomed them, had them stay for a candlelit supper, walked them down to the river and the old mill trace.

Sadly, the state had ripped out the family cemetery years before, but so many traces remained: An etched window with a date inside a wobbly heart, exactly 100 years to the day before our own wedding. The names of the enslaved, noted in wills, and inscribed on a plaque by us to honour their souls and lives. A notation by Jefferson in his letters, urging an ill daughter to consult the owner for help.

Many, many ghosts.

I am haunting it now.

Sounds as if you've done a fair amount of research regarding past occupants of the historic home. During what eras was it vacant/abandoned? During those times many homes are lost to decay and vandals.

I don't even drive past my childhood home. I don't want memories of the current house to replace the ones I remember. It is still the house I dream most about and, in those dreams, it's huge, bright and airy, full of the family. No actual visit will be the same.

This is creepy,car idling by the curb while writer is looking in the windows..... how would you like it if a stranger was stalking your house at night?

We sold our house 5 years ago, they cut down the Crepe Myrtle's and shear the azaleas into boxes. It's their right to. They own it.

I drive by occasionally because I have friends in the neighborhood to visit. I have no desire to go inside, I have my memories, and that is enough. I don't need to see if they painted the beautiful oak cabinets.

It's not healthy to live in the past.

It has been said in many ways that you can't go home again.

I go to Zillow frequently and look at homes for sale in the neighborhood where I grew up. My childhood home has not, yet, been put on market but I hope to catch it, if it does. Sometimes I go to Google street view and walk the streets of my older neighborhood too! Glad to know I'm not crazy!

I don't know where "Vernon Street" is but this looks very much like the house I lived in when I lived in Northwest Seattle during my high school years.

I don't think I would like to buy that house, even though I could afford it. Too many not-so-great memories. There are two houses that draw me back. One in San Diego, CA where I grew up, one locally.

I took my adult children out to San Diego with me after my oldest son died. If ever there was a time to run away home, that was it. In my growing up years, there used to be a huge star on the mountain that I could see from that house and I just needed to see if it was still there. I needed something that still existed after the loss of my son. We rented a car late one night and honestly I was afraid that I wouldn't see it so I kept my eyes down. Until we got closer and the interior of the car lit up. The star was there, we stopped in front of my childhood home and just stared at the star and the house which happened to be the most decorated of all the homes on that street, as though it were welcoming us. I felt like a piece of my heart healed at that moment.

I drive by the house locally because I see my mom in it. The house next door was a safe place for me, a place I went to when my dad, a very vindictive man was making my life a living, well you know. All those dear people are gone now, but I can see them in my mind's eye when I look at those houses.

Those are the memories I cherish.

I love your story about the star and your heart. Peace to you.
And to you as well.

That house is very similar to my childhood home. My brother once got to see the inside much as this author. All of us (his siblings) envied him.

I frequently look at the tiny row house I grew up in on Google maps. It's 75 years and a thousand miles away but looks largely unchanged.

Agree with this beautiful essay.. my childhood home has a generous front porch and two beautiful trees in front yard. I live here in VA but when I can I drive by. As a teen my friends would gather on the porch as a hangout even if we were not home. My dad, since passed, was a combat Vietnam vet who spent some time with my friends on the porch as well— every now and then a friend texts me a photo from their own drive by. I would buy the house again if I could— but no practical reason for this— just lots of happy memories

My childhood home—also my father's childhood home—was torn down shortly after we moved out of it, and honestly, I have often been grateful for this for just this reason. I know I'd be endlessly nostalgic for something I couldn't relive. The houses around it were also torn down, and there's a parking lot there. So I really do have to rely on photos and memories, and I'm kind of happy I "can't go home again." I didn't have to witness their slow decline over time, or vast alterations to their exteriors.

We just tore down the old farmhouse and it bothered me not because of the loss of that house, it really had to go, but I know there is still family of the original farmers here who will really miss it when they realize it is gone.
This is a beautifully written piece, Ms. McCabe.

Respondent suffers total recall of his midwestern boyhood 93 summers ago: blind ignorance, stifling heat, shotgun terror, pending empyrean. All denizens long dead. Entropy gives life & dissolves the kosmos. Alles ist gelossen.

My youngest brother bought the house we grew up in from our parents and raises his family there. I moved away years ago and the house has been updated but it still feels the same, only much smaller.

You know you can look online and see the photos that were posted the last time it was sold.

I have had similar experiences and similar thoughts about the old family home and my grandmother's beautiful home. However, I know it would be mistake to go back. The home is a place in space-time, not a place in space. Such emptiness one would feel there now. You must find a new place in space-time. You can freely visit your memories. I now live nearly six hours from the house where I lived as a child. Yet, I must drive by it every time I go back to my hometown. I, too, pause on the road in front of the house. I long to go inside. Neither the house nor the grounds look anything like they did when my family lived there. I long to buy it, a crazy idea, and return it to what it was when we all lived there. At one time, there were 12 people, 10 children and my parents, in this small, three bedroom house with a kitchen, living room, and dining room, a house quite different from the 4500 square foot house my husband and I now live in. My nostalgia overcomes me.

I spent so many happy summers in my grandparents' house. When we traveled back East I took my daughters by to see it. Empty lot grown over with grass.

I returned to Michigan on business last year and decided to drive by the house I grew up in, in Detroit in the 70's. It's now just a vacant lot. I can't describe the disappointment of seeing it gone.

My grandmother's house in Alabama was fronted by several dozen pecan trees planted right after the war. { her family was burned out of their Georgia farm}. There were pigs, chickens and cows. They still grew cotton and it was picked by hand. In the spring you couldn't sleep for all the frog music. Now the whole damn county is flattened and destroyed by development. I dream that one day in the far future it will once again be the fields and woods of my boyhood.

I loved our cosy bungalow. My parents bought it for around \$7,000 in the 50s while it was still a pile of bricks. My father finished the basement and we have many old 8mm of house parties with my parents, and grandparents twisting away. There were 6 of us, various cats and one beloved Labrador. It was small for 6 so Dad sectioned off space for two small bedrooms for his growing girls to have our own rooms. After the last of the kids moved out, they sold and bought a house twice the size an hour away. (The Labrador was disinterred and reinterred at the cottage) It was never home although we all still gathered there every Sunday for dinner. I now live just a few miles away from the old one, I often drive by and slow down for a look. Some of my Dad's work is still visible as is an iron scrollwork on the porch done by a late uncle. I adore the house but it's not ours. I wonder if my name is still scratched into the front windowsill?

Remarkable. Nostalgic life seems to be a haven this week. My partner and I were tired of the dumb movie choices and then the power was lost. So a detailed verbal tour of our childhood abodes ensued. Now this.

Coincidental or Fate?