5. Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Patridge

There once was 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 Ms. Mitchell who walked with a wooden stick. He admired Mr. Drysdale who had a voice like a giant, but his favorite person of all was Ms. Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper because she had 4 names, just as he did. He called her Ms. Nancy and told her all his secrets. One day Wilfred Gordon heard his mother and father talking about Ms. 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 96.” “What’s a memory?” asked Wilfrid Gordon? “He was always asking questions. “It is something you remember” said his father, but Wilfrid Gordon wanted to know more, so he called Mrs. Jordan who played the organ.

“What’s a memory?” he asked. “Something warm, my child, something warm.” He called Mr. Hosking who told him scary stories. “What's a memory?” he asked. “Something from long ago, my lad, something from long ago.” He called on Mr. Tippet 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 Ms. 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 memory?” he said. “Something as precious as gold, young man, something as precious as gold.” So Wilfrid Gordon went home again to look for memories for Ms. Nancy because she had lost her own. He looked for the shoebox 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 precious as gold, and last of all on the way to Ms. Nancy’s he went in to the hen house and took a fresh warm egg from under a hen. Then Wilfrid Gordon called on Mr. Nancy and gave her each thing one by one. “What a strange, dear child, to bring all these wonderful things.” Thought Ms. 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 train long ago and how hot she had felt in her button up boots. She touched the medal and talked sadly about the big brother she had loved who had gone to war and never
returned. She smiled at the puppet on strings and remembered the one she had shown her sister and how she had laughed with a mouthful 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 Ms. Nancy’s memory had been found again by a small boy who wasn’t very old either.