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Purpose

- ⦿ **The purpose of this talk is to reflect back on my lifetime of stuttering (so far).**
- ⦿ **The reason for choosing this topic is that as I get older, and stuttering is longer that much of an issue for me, it's easy to forget that it was once THE issue for me.**
- ⦿ **In doing so I would hope to show younger people that, even though I still stutter, stuttering is not forever.**

Looking back

- ◎ **It can be easy to forget experiences in the past, even though those experiences helped shape who we are.**



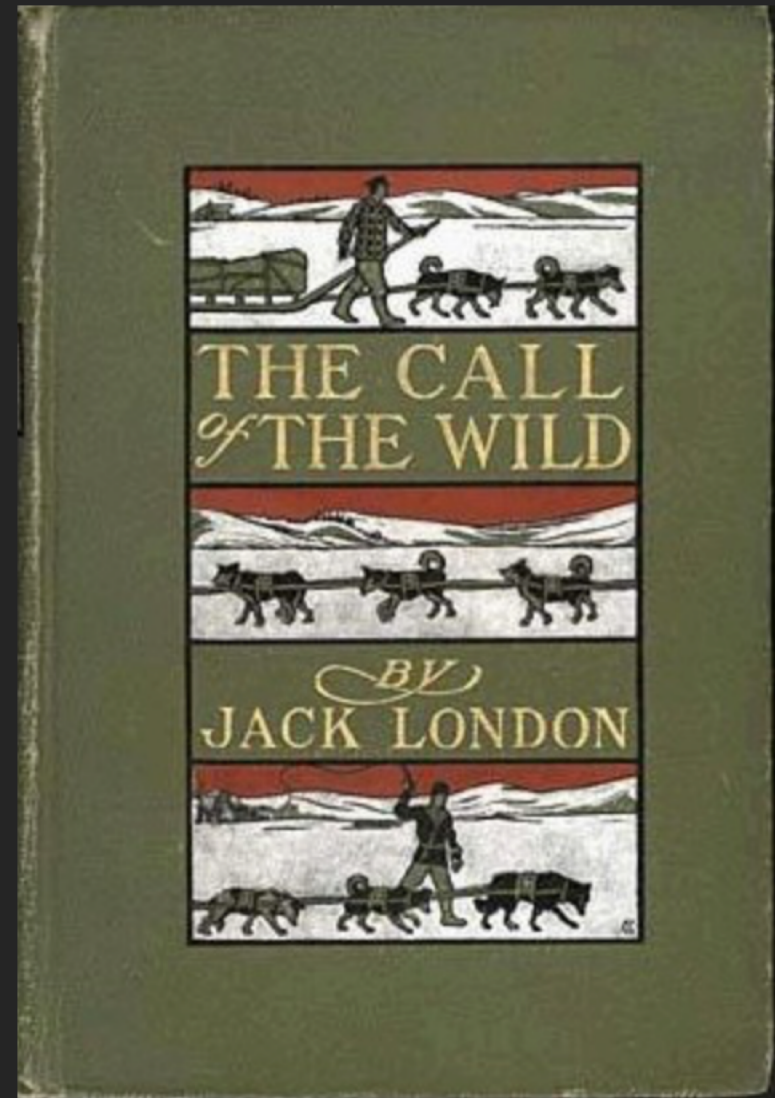
- ◎ **But they are important to remember, so that you can gain some perspective on the present, and perhaps share that perspective with others.**

Looking back

- ① **When I was younger, stuttering was always there. It kept the good moments from ever being truly great.**
- ② **About the only time I didn't think of stuttering was when I was by myself. But even then, I could worry about the future.**

Looking back

- ⦿ In high school I had my first real “stuttering” experience.
- ⦿ I had to give a book report in my sophomore Speech class on “Call of the Wild” by Jack London.
- ⦿ I knew a week in advance I wouldn’t be able to say the “L” in London.



Looking back

- ◎ **I can't say that this early experience was traumatic.**
- ◎ **After I finished the speech, I actually wanted to give the speech again! Because I knew I could do better.**
- ◎ **But leading up to the talk was weeks of dread.**

Looking back

- ◎ **By the time I got to college, I wasn't merely worrying about the next time I would have to speak.**
- ◎ **I was thinking about being a "stutterer" for the rest of my life.**

Looking back

- ◎ **So what changed?**
- ◎ **When I got to grad school, I finally found a close group of friends who didn't seem to care that I stuttered.**
- ◎ **Or more accurately, they created the space so that I could stop caring.**
- ◎ **I could finally start to leave the identity of "stutterer" behind.**

Looking back

- As I have continued to get older, those things in the past that seemed to carry so much weight don't seem to matter that much anymore.



- This is actually a gift of living; youth is traded for wisdom.

Looking back

- ◎ **Recently I revisited some video my grandfather had taken of me when I was about 13.**
- ◎ **My Grandfather had been filming the family since the 1950s, for “posterity” as he put it.**
- ◎ **On one occasion, he brought his camcorder to the driving range.**



Looking back

- ⦿ I didn't really know what the term "posterity" meant at the time, but I didn't imagine that I would ever look back at this video. But he knew that I probably would.



- ⦿ **Posterity:** for the benefit of future generations.

Looking back

- ◎ **I remember thinking how embarrassed I would be if anyone ever saw this video of me stuttering. Usually, I was able to avoid it or hide it.**
- ◎ **But on tape it would last forever, stored on a VHS in my Grandfather's basement.**

Looking back

- ⦿ **My Grandfather passed away from Alzheimer's in 2015.**
- ⦿ **Alzheimer's is a neurological disease in which one is robbed of memories. Without memories, who are we?**
- ⦿ **The last few years of his life he was a different person. The fun-loving personality was still there, but he could no longer look back.**

Looking back

- ⦿ **It's fascinating to watch video of yourself in the distant past. Only you know what is going on in that head of yours.**
- ⦿ **And this will always be the case if you don't let anyone in.**
- ⦿ **Being willing to display vulnerability is the key to letting others in, as I learned years later.**

Looking back

- ◎ My grandfather coached/encouraged me on occasion when I stuttered. To let me know that he wasn't avoiding it.



- ◎ He knew that someday I would look back at these times. And that when I did, he just wanted to let me know that he loved me.