



**SEGUNDO EJERCICIO DEL PROCESO SELECTIVO PARA EL INGRESO EN LA  
ESCALA DE TÉCNICOS FACULTATIVOS SUPERIORES DE ORGANISMOS  
AUTÓNOMOS DEL MINISTERIO DE MEDIO AMBIENTE**

**PARTE A - IDIOMA INGLÉS**

**TEXTO NÚMERO 1:**

***TOTAL RECALL***

If you ask Jill Price to remember any day of her life, she can come up with an answer in a heartbeat. What was she doing on 29 August 1980? “It was a Friday, I went to Palm Springs with my friends, twins, Nina and Michelle, and their family for Labour Day weekend,” she says. “And before we went to Palm Springs, we went to get our nails done.”

What about the third time she drove a car? “The third time I drove a car was 10 January 1981. A Saturday” She was 15 years and two weeks old.

The first time she heard the Rick Springfield song *Jessie’s Girl*? “7 March 1981.” She was driving in a car with her mother, who was yelling at her. She was 16 years old.

Price was born on 30 December 1965 in New York City. Her first clear memories start from around the age of 18 months. Back then, she lived with her parents in an apartment in Midtown Manhattan. She remembers the screaming ambulances and traffic, how she used to love climbing on the living room couch and staring out of the window down 9th Avenue.

When she was five years old, her family – her father, a talent agent with William Morris; her mother, a former variety show dancer, and her baby brother – moved to South Orange, New Jersey. They lived in a three-storey, red brick colonial house with a big backyard and huge trees, the kind of place people left the city for. Jill loved it.

When she was seven years old, her father was offered a job with Columbia Pictures Television in Los Angeles. He spent a year commuting back and forth from California to New Jersey, until they decided to move the family out there in the spring of 1974. By 1 July 1974, when Jill was eight and a half, they were living in Los Angeles. That was the day, she says, her “brain snapped”.



MINISTERIO  
PARA LA TRANSICIÓN  
ECOLÓGICA Y EL RETO DEMOGRÁFICO

She had always had a talent for remembering. She had also always dreaded change. Knowing that after they left New Jersey, nothing could ever be the same, Price tried to commit to memory the world she was being ripped away from. She made lists, took pictures, kept every artefact, every passed note and ticket stub. If this was a conscious effort to train her memory, it worked, perhaps better than she ever imagined.

Price was the first person ever to be diagnosed with what is now known as highly superior autobiographical memory, or HSAM, a condition she shares with around 60 other known people. She can remember most of the days of her life as clearly as the rest of us remember the recent past, with a mixture of broad strokes and sharp detail. Now 51, Price remembers the day of the week for every date since 1980; she remembers what she was doing, who she was with, where she was on each of these days-

It is, she says, like living with a split screen: on the left side is the present, on the right is a constantly rolling reel of memories, each one sparked by the appearance of present-day stimuli.

Before Price, HSAM was a completely unknown condition. So what about the day she sent an email to a Dr James McGaugh at the University of California? That was 8 June 2000, a Thursday.

Dr James McGaugh remembers that day too. At the time, he was the director of the University of California's Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory, the research institute that he founded in 1983. In her email, Jill Price said that she had a problem with her memory. McGaugh responded almost immediately, explaining that he worked at a research institute and not a clinic, and that he'd be happy to direct her to somewhere she could find help.

Price's reply was swift and unexpected. "Whenever I see a date flash on the television, I automatically go back to that day and remember where I was, what I was doing, what day it fell on and on and on and on and on. It is non-stop, uncontrollable and totally exhausting... Most have called it a gift but I call it a burden. I run my entire life through my head every day and it drives me crazy!!!"

McGaugh invited her to his office to talk. On the morning of Saturday, 24 June 2000, Price woke up "so, so, so excited". She watched Apple's Way, an obscure, short-lived 1970s series being re-run on TV, and felt, for the first time in ages, relaxed. She asked her father whether she should take all of the diaries that she had been keeping. "No,



MINISTERIO  
PARA LA TRANSICIÓN  
ECOLÓGICA Y EL RETO DEMOGRÁFICO

he said, don't take them all – you'll freak him out." She packed a bag with six years' worth, stowed it in the boot of her car, and set off to meet McGaugh.

She drove the hour south from her home, and met McGaugh at the University of California campus. McGaugh had received a massive coffee-table book called *20th Century Day by Day*, featuring photographs and brief accounts of the biggest news stories of the past 100 years. To test Price's memory, he and his assistant used the book to come up with questions that someone with amazing powers of recall might plausibly be able to answer.

Sitting across from Price, McGaugh asked, "When did the Iranian hostage crisis begin?"

After a brief pause, she answered, "4 November 1979."

"No, that's not right," he said. "It was 5 November."

"It was 4 November," she said.

He checked another source: Price was right; the book was wrong.

The rest of Price's responses came just as quickly, confidently, and for the most part, correctly. What day did the Los Angeles police beat taxi driver Rodney King? Sunday, 3 March 1991. What happened on 16 August 1977? Elvis Presley died in his Graceland bathroom. It was a Tuesday. When did Bing Crosby die? Friday, 14 October 1977, on a golf course in Spain.

McGaugh had been studying memory and learning for decades and he had never seen or heard of anything like this. After they had eaten lunch, Price remembers saying goodbye to McGaugh as he stood on the curb outside the restaurant, "literally scratching his head".



## **TEXTO NÚMERO 2:**

### ***CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES***

Citizens' assemblies are as ancient as democracy itself, yet, they have received increasing attention in recent years. Assemblies are repeatedly mentioned as a solution for the most troublesome policy debates and the decreasing trust in democratic institutions.

A citizens' assembly is a group of people brought together to learn about a specific policy challenge, deliberate on possible action and eventually formulate a policy recommendation for the government. This method of deliberative democracy stems from circa 500s B.C: in ancient Athens, men from all classes were randomly selected to participate in large debates on public policy.

Nowadays, citizens' assemblies are used to involve citizens in sensitive societal debates. Participants are chosen randomly, but weighting is then applied to ensure that the selection is representative of the wider population in terms of age, ethnicity, education level, geographic location, and gender. As these citizens are not necessarily experts on the issues at hand, they receive assistance to examine them from different perspectives. The inquiry phase contains meetings with competing interest groups, hearing the voices of those affected by the issue and Q&As with experts. Over the course of time, they move into the deliberation phase using both small-group discussions and larger debates. In the final phase, the citizens' assembly is expected to make a clear policy recommendation to the government.

Due to the eroding trust in democratic institutions, our system desperately needs to modernize its ways. Many governments are turning to methods of citizen participation, among which assemblies are becoming increasingly popular. The most well-known and impactful case, without a doubt, is Ireland's citizens' assembly: it led to a (successful) referendum on same-sex marriage in 2014 and the removal of the 8th amendment on abortion in 2017. These two constitutional changes dealt with nationally sensitive topics and exemplify the possible impact assemblies can have on profound policy discussions.

As a result, people have called for more citizens' assemblies on other dividing policy questions, like the climate crisis and Brexit. And with success: the UK and France have already used citizens' assemblies to identify innovative and fair solutions to the climate crisis. As for Brexit: after the referendum, Scotland established an assembly to address the topic of independence and multiple Brits have called for a citizens' assembly as



MINISTERIO  
PARA LA TRANSICIÓN  
ECOLÓGICA Y EL RETO DEMOGRÁFICO

well. Ironically, there was already a citizens' assembly on Brexit before the referendum. A representative sample of 50 citizens met in Manchester to discuss the issue in September 2017. Their conclusion? A soft Brexit or no Brexit at all.

The Brexit citizens' assembly immediately illustrates the method's biggest limitation: the execution of recommendations is dependent on politicians. Fruitless citizens' assemblies are defined by governments that neglected policy proposals, like the electoral reform recommendations of a 2006 Dutch citizens' assembly.

The real problem we need to solve is thus politicians' willingness to establish assemblies and implement their recommendations. Luckily, it's exactly those politicians who can benefit hugely from citizens' assemblies. Here's how:

Popularity isn't part of the equation: whether they like it or not, politicians have to take re-election into account. Consequently, they're constrained by these short-term goals, which can conflict with long-term decision making. Assemblies thus provide a real opportunity: citizens deliberate without caring about the popular vote and can easily take unpopular decisions if needed. Afterward, politicians can even refer to the fact that representative citizens have come to this conclusion in case a decision needs to be justified.

Taking participation to the next level: careful citizen deliberations help citizens understand the complexity and trade-offs in policy dilemmas. The combination of ownership and education empowers them to become invested and knowledgeable in a certain policy field. Other forms of participation, like online consultation and referenda, may have the potential to reach more citizens directly, but they can suffer from uninformed opinions, a low turn-out rate or end up not being representative. Does that make them useless? Absolutely not. It's not about finding one way for citizens to participate; it's about creating multiple opportunities for them to do so.