

MEMORIES OF A FORMER HOME

By Sarah Holloway

“Writer’s Corner”

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A few years ago I walked through the rooms of the house where I grew up. Unlike so many remembered things that have disappeared in my hometown, our old house, which was built in the ‘30s, still stood and was being maintained as a real estate office. I had seen it on previous visits, once when it was an antique shop and a couple of times when we found it in a long-abandoned state, grown up in weeds – totally forlorn.



With permission from the owner, I wandered through the rooms, gazed eagerly out of windows and looked in closets, trying to capture some vestige of the long years our family had lived there. The glass panes in the windows were original, according to the owner, and the kitchen cabinets, now full of books and office supplies, remained along with a pull-down, built-in ironing board on a wall there. I opened this cupboard and pulled it down and thought of my father who must have had it put in – an innovative convenience for the time.

The fireplace in the living room was still there, but the dark mantle board had been removed. One of the earliest and happiest memories is of being rocked by my mother before a fire as she sang in a soft, high voice “the Last Rose of Summer” and haunting verses of an old Civil War song:

“Tenting tonight, tenting tonight.

We’re tenting on the old campground.

Many are the hearts that are weary tonight.

Wishing for the war to cease.

Many are the hearts that are searching for the right,

To see the dawn of peace.”

Has there been a day before or since those words were written when hearts somewhere didn’t echo this longing?

The daylight hours of my early childhood were spent out of doors. I don’t remember being uncomfortably warm during the endless, hot summers – just the joy of racing about our yard with the neighbor children as we played tag, hide-and-go-seek, marble and

jacks. Our seesaws were young saplings that we bent over and rode up and down. We climbed trees and made secret hideouts in our back woods under a jungle of grapevines. I remember the sweet scents of earth and weeds and supper cooking in the early dusk when our neighbors were called home and my brother and I had to go in, wreathed in dirt necklaces of sweat, still filled with energy and excitement.

Most of the trees that once surrounded the house were gone, but one large oak in the backyard remained. We had spent hours playing under its shade or swinging on a knotted rope that hung from one of its long limbs. Another huge oak in a front field by the highway still stood. It had a low, forked crotch that I could climb into to read a book or to observe the world from its leafy sanctuary. These two were like old friends, changed, but still there.

But the house was different inside and out, and there was really nothing there to recall our parents and the scenes and scents of the days my brother and I raced barefooted through its rooms, banged the screen doors and filled the air with our tears and tantrums and shrieks of laughter as we sprinted unaware through a vanishing childhood.

The visit left me with fading memories and a piercing nostalgia, but nothing that evoked the essences of a place I once called home.

“Writer’s Corner” accepts any family-friendly poetry, essays or narratives of 700 words or fewer from local writers. To submit materials for possible publication, e-mail arts@herald-citizen, c/o Arts Editor, 1300 Neal Street, Cookeville, TN 38501. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse submittals.

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