

Winning Poems in 2021 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

8. I Remember, Third Place

Memories of 3602 Petaluma Avenue

I.

In 1954,
all the houses were new,
a post-war neighborhood,
streets named alphabetically—
Knoxville, Ladoga, Monogram,
Nipomo, Ostrom, Petaluma—
front lawns seeded,
protected with stakes and string,
the smell of fertilizer strong in the air,
infant trees in the parkways,
wide sidewalks smooth, uncracked—

invitation for roller skates

II.

On chilly mornings,
I liked to stand near the grating
of our floor furnace in the hallway,
warm air ballooning my nightgown

when it rained, Mama set up a rack to dry clothes
near the same furnace;
sheets, towels, shirts, underwear,
draped over thin wooden rods,
decorated our living room,
an unfolded accordion of laundry.

III.

Home for thirteen years,
this is where I learned to ride a bike, drive a car,
went from Barbies to Beatles to real-life boys,
enjoyed kindergarten through high school—

where I grew up.

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