

## **I Remember Essay for OBOT 2021**

### **Saying Goodbye to the New Haven Years**

*by Lonnie Friedman*

A few years before Mom died, she came to live with me, and I had to empty and sell the New Haven house. Mom had lived at 419 Norton Parkway for over 50 years.

In the house's dusty corners lay the detritus of her full life, and of her five kids, who'd long since flown the coop, leaving behind outdated clothing and antiquated electronics. Only a few boxes of precious mementos came with Mom to my house.

One item I'd hoped to find was an old reel-to-reel tape of us kids: my little brother, Jerry, making a sticky mess of his first peanut butter and jelly sandwich; me doing the hokey pokey dance; all five of us at the beach, building sand castles; birthday parties and holidays. Sadly, we never did find that tape.

When the house was empty, I went upstairs for one last look at the backyard. The yard had been a magnet for the neighborhood kids, a magical place where it was easy to find a friend amongst us five kids, whose ages spanned a decade, and where there was always good-natured squabbling over games.

The shadow of a baseball diamond was still just visible where the grass had never quite recovered from the stampeding feet of hundreds of baseball games.

The sycamore tree in the center of the yard had spread its branches past the edges of the yard, and the bushes along the edges had grown in toward the center. The playground in paradise of our youth had become small and neglected.

All that was left of the tree swing, where I had spent so many happy hours, were two corroded bolts, swallowed up by tree growth. Even the swing's chains had rusted away over the years.

It had been decades since we'd chased butterflies, cartwheeled across the lawn, and came thundering in for dinner at the sound of the dinner bell.

Downstairs, and one last look at the silent living room, where there'd been so much singing, guitar and piano playing. The long window seat that had held four or five of us was empty, and the shades that had always been open were pulled shut.

I locked the door for the last time. It had been a home and a yard full of life and love, but the time had come for another family to call it "home".