

House by the Park

I have no memory before the house by the park. I was one month old when my family moved in. It was where I learned to walk, where I took photos before my first day of school, and where my dog was bitten by a rattlesnake.

My subdivision was carved out of Arno's yard. Arno is a boiler maker from Germany. He sold most of his land to a developer who crammed in a tiny neighborhood. There were just 20 houses, mashed in tight together. We had no other neighbors—just Arno and the park.

Everyone in my neighborhood knew me. I was hired to do a lot of jobs—pet sitting and yard work. And Halloween was spectacular! My neighbors bought special treats for me, like full-size Snickers bars and bags of Famous Amos chocolate chip cookies. There were no secrets in my neighborhood. Everyone knew everything about each other. “Did you hear...” and “I heard...” were commonly whispered over fences.

My parents craved privacy and open space. When I was 12, my family moved to a house on an acre. That was five years ago, and we have not met everyone on our new street yet. And I still miss my old neighborhood.

- Portia C., age 17