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Growing up in Los Angeles 1950-80

Andrew Janossy Nov. 3, 1998

As a child of 7 I remembered being taken at an even younger age to a merry-go-round by my mom. We lived in south Los Angeles and the year was about 1954. The merry-go-round was located on Manchester Avenue at Western Avenue, on the southwest corner. These were wide four-lane roads with parking, and there were some stores, houses, and a park nearby. Walking west along Manchester from Halldale Avenue, the street we lived on, we passed vacant fields with a lot of grass and a creek running through. There was also a large old farmhouse

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with a silo at the back; my dad and I explored it once. But these were recollections. By the time I was 7 the merry-go-round was gone, replaced by a Shell gas station, and the vacant lots has become the parking lot for a health clinic that had been constructed. The creek was gone, probably replaced by a drain pipe hidden under paving. The old farmhouse and silo were no more; now a car lot was there. We moved in 1955 to an area several miles to the south, away from a residential street to a busy one, when my dad opened a real estate office and we lived in

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the house behind it. Across the street was an open field. But not for long. Soon, in the middle of the night, a huge truck pulled a whole building down the street. It had been uprooted and set on wheels. The building had been in the way of a new freeway and had been auctioned off. It was rolled down the street and placed on a foundation on the new site. It became a motel. As a teenager my friends and I used to collect frogs from swamps near the high school. We passed open fields and hills on our bikes. One of my uncles lived south of us and a dairy cow pasture was located behind his back fence—less

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than pleasant smells wafted by his place most afternoons. He had got a good deal on the house I guess… By the time I came home from college in the 1970s new housing tracts had filled in between streets and the dairy was gone. In fact two other dairies with cow pastures that had been located close by were also gone—replaced by industrial buildings and the new parking lot for a junior college. Street cars had been

removed and replaced by busses. When I returned to Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympics even the swamps had been filled in and

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shopping centers were there now. Flying in to Los Angeles International Airport south Los Angeles looked, from the plane, like it was filled with buildings and roads and flat industrial buildings. Even the hills in downtown L.A. were gone, as was the old funicular railway there, called Angels Flight—replaced by high rise office buildings. The roads were wider and there were more cars.