

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kevin Thomas: “N Sumner & Interstate”

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N Sumner & Interstate

Under the swing set in our backyard there were two puddles. One we used to muddy our hands, the other to clean them. Our hair hung towards the ground, knees hooked over the monkey bars. We swept rain from the driveway, during the rain, so we could keep playing basketball. Miss Creto, across the street, put milk in a saucer for all the cats in the neighborhood. Later, science told us that milk was bad for cats. Three houses down on the right the German Shepherd had been fed gunpowder by its owner. We never stopped shooting hoops if it was still light out, until the ball slammed into our fingers because it was too dark; until Brandon & Josh’s dad whistled from their porch at the end of the block. And we bought jojo’s at Sunny’s, across Interstate Avenue, and candy at the white building kitty-corner. And we rode our bikes to Jantzen Beach. We rode our bikes to Video Chest. We rode our bikes to Overlook Park. And in school we thought if you called Shotgun before saying hike it meant the receivers could start running already. But the water tower near school, in the miniature park down a side street, overflowed after the city refilled it, and water cascaded from the seams in the green metal. Big bolts riveted along its belly. When my oldest sister, Christina, babysat she made a hamburger patty and put it on a white plate and shook salt onto it and told me to eat it. I used to open the fridge and drink the half-and-half my mom kept in the side door for her coffee. Jennifer, the middle kid, told me to read her the numbers off the top of the stove from left to right so that she could tell me what time it was. The stairway that led to the basement was next to the kitchen. The backdoor’s window pushed light down the stairwell. I put Rambo in Chuck Norris’s corvette and rolled them down the stairs to see who fell out and who stayed in. We zipped ourselves in sleeping bags and slid down the stairs, two per bag. When my mom told me to get in the car, fast, and to lock the door, in the parking lot of Fred Meyer, she slammed her door shut and elbowed it locked and started the car and we drove away from the man trying to open her door. Our neighbor chased an opossum from his trash can out onto the sidewalk in front of our house and beat its head in with a bat. Brandon & Josh and I lit matches and tossed them down their stairwell. We turned out the lights in the basement and shot a bow and arrow at an unseen target, turned the lights on to see the damage. But you could slam on your bike’s brakes and if you were going fast enough, and cranked the handlebars just right, you could leave a full circle of a skidmark in the middle of the street.

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