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The Return of the 17-Year Locusts

Displaced from our city apartment three weeks after the fourth child was born, my parents proudly moved their brood into a new tri-level house in a suburban subdivision. Unpaved gravel driveways obliterated swampy marshland. The 50 children on our block ran onto recently-poured cement sidewalks and into the street to jump rope, hula-hoop, and play baseball; pausing for the occasional car to pass.

On my first sunny afternoon in this foreign landscape, I ran back inside screaming. I didn't like to bother my harried Mom caring for two toddlers and an infant. Our new house reeked with the pervasive stench of ammonia from urine-soaked cloth diapers stacked inside dirty plastic pails.

"There are little helicopters everywhere!"

Outside, airborne creatures whizzed around my head. Noisy greenish-brown, perfectly-shaped miniature alien transports loomed as large as my Dad's Oldsmobile. Frightening, compared to the delight I had spotting helicopters flying low over our old apartment building.

Mom said, "Our neighbor called these locusts. They don't sting; they'll be gone in a month, and won't return for 17 years. Go back outside."

Silently I chanted, "When they come back, I'll be 22; Debby, 19; Nancy, 18; Baby Stevie will be 17. We won't be scared."

—*Della R. Leavitt*

Della R. Leavitt, PhD, lives in Chicago with her husband, Roy. They have one son. Della was an early reader, but didn't embrace a writing life to shape stories of her experiences until the time when many pursue retirement.