

skates

by Pamela Lee Wong

Screeeech. THWAP! Stopped in the nick of time.

It is 1950.

Coasting downhill. A gentle slope but downhill nevertheless.

Accelerating slowly, then faster, then speeding towards the squared-off



curb at the bottom of the block. The grinding, noisy sounds of metallic skate wheels roll over the rough concrete sidewalk. Wind ruffles my pigtails, houses whiz by.

Is this like flying?!

With sudden impact my five year-old palms slap the splintery surface of the immovable, aged brown telephone pole at the foot of the hill. Hugging the wooden post, the force of the downhill trajectory spins me practically around the pole.

Whew. Saved from a spill onto the black asphalt street ... once more!

That was fun! Let's do it again!

I check the brown leather straps on the metal skates to be sure they are still snug. I wiggle my toes to check that the silvery grips still secure the soles of my shoes. Patting my chest to feel for the all-important shiny metal skate key hanging proudly from a strand of yarn, I gingerly negotiate gravity and trudge back up the hill to the launch point in front of our one-car driveway.

It has only been a couple of months since opening the surprise box on Christmas morning and discovering the



wondrous gift from mommy and daddy - my first pair of roller skates! I flew out the door to strap them on!

Times were tight during those post-war years. My sole gift gave me hours of pleasure and made me feel oh-so-powerful.

Rarified warmth of sun rays poke through drizzly skies over the oceanside Sunset neighborhood of urban San Francisco. The tan and green L Streetcar rumbles along metal rails down towards 40th Avenue on that chilly morning. "Sun's coming out," Mommy says. "Let's stop everything and walk to the zoo!"

San Francisco's finest memories.

