

Mehring Avenue

by Skipperdoodle Productions

The bulk of my young, impressionable memories of several lifelong friendships started and/or ended there.

A meeting

The two boys timidly inspect one another,

One, a seven-year-old emigree from Midlothian, a near southwest side suburb of Chicago.

The other, one year his senior, an Irish-Protestant outsider in the German-Catholic burg.

Each at his mother's apron strings, they size each other up, subconsciously assessing their relative positions on the pecking order.

Both the sons of ex-military men (God rest their souls).

"Bet I'm faster than you," the offered test of childhood ability and neighborhood status.

"Uh-uhh," the clever retort.

A race decides it, the last time I bested the lad, who owned me in the other sports that defined our youthful neighborhood worth.

The bike spokes

His 5'2" mother tears down the street to rescue her youngest.

Perched on his brother's handlebars,

His canvas Chuck Taylor-shod foot has become wedged between a spoke and the fork securing wheel to briskly pedaled bike.

Running bases

The collision was so loud and stomach-turning that my mom left her post at the kitchen sink to come down the back walk to the side yard to see what was the matter.

The brother stumbled,

Holding his head and wincing in pain.

The sister responded to my mom's inquiry about whether she was O.K.

With glassy eyes, and some vague babble about needing to get home to help her mom with the dishes.

The game-interrupting spectacle having reached its end,

We resumed, bemused, though largely unconcerned about this new addition to the lore of Jak Anna Heights.