

## Rose Park 1955-1963

### I O Pioneers

There were no roses, there were no parks, just new houses, new streets, new sidewalks and white alkaline dirt left from the receding Great Salt Lake or more likely a dumping of inorganic waste. We hauled in topsoil, sowed grass seed and our first crop was crabgrass we dug out all that second summer. We persevered, planted a living Christmas tree—a Ponderosa—and my father grew tomatoes. We had been sent into the wilderness to make the desert blossom like a rose.

### II Demographics

All white, all young families, almost all veterans, and children everywhere, the big boom in babies. As I had been born during the War and was one of the oldest children in the neighborhood, my work was cut out for me—babysitting: the next door neighbors two toddlers in a constant state of potty training, the five sisters across the street, the three kids a couple from our church had adopted who would never go to bed. Schools were crowded: double sessions, bused to other neighborhoods until new schools were built, the first year of Newman Elementary, the first year of Northwest Junior High with one lone black student, the daughter of the janitor.

### III Our Own Reservation

My brother found a book in the old Spenser Library, the Indian Tipi, by Reginald and Gladys Laubin, with detailed instructions for the creation of an authentic Sioux tipi. It took us one whole summer: scraping the bark off 17 lodge pole pines, 25 feet tall, cutting out the cover of Auserberg canvas and my grandmother sewing it together on the big professional machine she used at her work in the drapery factory. We painted a buffalo on the canvas and stretched it over the beautiful white poles pitched in the backyard and pegged it to the ground. It stood higher than our house and when we stepped through the round door we were out of the summer heat and into a quiet world in our otherwise ordinary backyard.

### IV The World

West High was liberating with all kinds of people: Hispanic, Japanese, immigrant Germans, kids from the Avenues, jazz musicians with Beatnik goatees, and black football players. One fall night in 1959 my father took my brother and me to hear the Democratic presidential candidate speak in the Tabernacle. It was crowded and we had to sit in the choir behind the podium. After his speech John Kennedy turned around smiling. He shook my hand. We were moving inevitably toward the sixties and I was fourteen years old.

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