I’m from the memories of generations before me

The roots of my maternal family formed in Youngstown where my

mother and aunt grew up on Meadowbrook and went to school at

Paul C. Bunn, Adams, and Woodrow Wilson which stood tall until

it was torn down after 80 years. Our lives wound their way around

the city. My maternal grandparents lived on Tudor Lane when I was

born, and we played on the shuffleboard painted on the basement

floor of their house on Smithfield when I was older. Family reunions

were held each summer at Bears Den Cabin where we shared dishes

and stories and found our courage climbing the huge rocks while

making friends with cousins forever. My life wound its way around

the city as I grew older. As a teen I took worship dance lessons at

the church on Fifth Avenue, but I wasn’t pure enough to become a

member of the troupe. I worked as a corrections officer at the

Supermax for less than a year where some of the inmates were nicer

than many of the staff. I earned my second graduate degree from

Youngstown State where I taught my all-time favorite classes as an

adjunct and then hit a deer and totaled my car on Belmont on my

way home one night. Each December, my mom, aunt, and I

attended Carols and Cocoa at Stambaugh to embrace the holiday

season. The roots of my nuclear family were meant to be formed

in Boardman. My ex-fiancé and I were supposed to find our

happily ever after in a colonial with built-ins on Withers Drive in

Ridgewood Estates. Instead, he destroyed the history and integrity

of the house and our relationship. My Navy grandfather’s ship never

came in either—Papa and Grammy are now buried at Green

Haven. The legacy and memories they left behind of familial

nicknames, corny jokes, homemade pizza night, butterscotch pie,

and their faith, are celebrations we share regularly with laughter,

love, and tears. My favorite cousin, who lives off Midloathian

where you can smell the bread baking at Schwebel’s and hear the

crows caw, took my now husband’s and my engagement pictures

on the hottest day of the year in Mill Creek Park. After we married,

we adopted my soulmate beagle / dachshund Hickory from New

Lease on Life. The branches of my family are now outside of

Mahoning County, but the region is woven into our remembrances

and genealogy. I’m from the memories of generations before me.