YEARS FROM NOW

Years from now, if the neurons in my neocortex
cease to form new connections
and I can't remember what I just said,
may my hippocampus help me retrieve
from the archives of my mind
these selections from my early history:

I swing by my skinned knees
 from the apple tree branch
that straddles the sidewalk leading to the
chicken coop club house in our backyard
and spit watermelon seeds at my sister
on a sticky Jersey summer night
to get back at her for tying me up
to the clothes pole and leaving me there
for the lions.

I run to catch the ball
that drops into the backyard brick BBQ
and busts open my forehead,
 taste blood drip into my mouth,
see my mother's horrified expression,
sit between the EMTs in the cab of the ambulance,
who treat me to the first and last
triple dip ice cream cone of my life
after the doc makes a crosshatch stitch on my forehead.

I sing Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue
to Dad's guitar cords in the big kitchen
while the blue crabs we pulled out of Barnegat Bay earlier that day
try to claw their way out of the pot of boiling water
and save themselves from my insatiable appetite.

I sit at the dining room table with the lipped edge
on the HMS Queen Mary with my father
and watch our bowls of turtle soup slide
back and forth, back and forth
as the swells of the Atlantic Ocean
heave the ocean liner
and banish the rest of our family to their berths.

I perch on the bus seat next to Sue
who plays forward
with the rest of the Metuchen High School

Girls' Basketball Team
returning from a victorious out of town game,
as we ride past the gigantic, mortifying
sign that reads, "MODESS……. Because"
and we all shout in unison, "You can't use a cork!"

I sneak out of the women's dorm at midnight,
slide in close to my boyfriend Pete in his VW bug,
ride over to the nearby swamp,
park, get out, pull on black rubber hip boots,
grab a flashlight and a bucket,
and join the rest of the ecology grad students
in their labors to catch and study
the threatened Raritan ribbed toad.

I take the student charter flight
for the first plane trip of my life,
stagger off at Gatwick at two am,
drunk from the free in-flight champagne,
and embark on my three month solo
hitchhiking tour of Europe,
subsisting on wine, bread, cheese and fruit,
madly in love with life.

Carol LoCastro, March, 2008