By: Caroline Wilfong

Trees In My Life

My childhood home in the Philippines had a garden lushly planted with fruit and flowering trees, with only the roof of the house visible from the street. There was always fruit to eat, such as papaya and bananas, and others whose Western names I do not even know—*aratiles*, *santol*, and *kamias.* When I looked out my bedroom window in the summer, I could see an abundance of green and purple *caimito,* with its white, sweet flesh and black, almond-shaped seeds.

There was a plumeria tree from which my grandfather had hung a wire birdcage that he had planted with mosses and ferns. This was a magical place, inhabited by the fairies and spirits of my imagination. Also special to me was a playhouse built by my father with bamboo and coconut fronds.

Now that I live in America, I love the four seasons and the changes they bring. I love autumn with its colors, and taking walks while scouring the ground for perfect leaves to press between the pages of a heavy book. It ushers in the holidays, and is when apples are ripe for the picking. It means cider donuts and hot, fragrant coffee or mulled cider on a crisp day.

In a few weeks an aunt and uncle are moving to warmer climes after living in the same house for 35 years. In their backyard is a Golden Delicious apple tree that was planted by the same grandfather who tended the garden of my childhood.

As I say goodbye to this tree, I realize trees have fed my body, my mind and my spirit. They dwell in my memories and, as I make pies and bread from our last harvest from that tree for my daughter, give me a link to the future.