MY SECOND HOME

 In the late 1950s, I got my first library card. It was like a golden passport to a marvelous, new land of imagination and limitless possibilities.

 My family lived on 81st and Muskegon Avenue in Chicago. I rode my green Schwinn bicycle to the South Shore Branch Library on E. 73rd Street every Saturday, year-round, and loaded up my metal handlebar basket with the maximum number of ten books per week. I poured over hundreds of both fiction and non-fiction titles, beginning at age eight. I especially enjoyed adventure stories, the Hardy Boys series, biographies of famous scientists and explorers, anything about U.S. and world history, and colorful picture books on the natural world. It was like a weekly safari of surprise and delight, discovering new treasures on those venerable oak shelves.

 Our modest home unfortunately had very few books -- either for myself or my two sisters -- so going to the classical, Tudor-styled South Shore Library was for me like going to a second, much more stimulating, home. The librarians there were always friendly and helpful, and I sensed that they, too, shared my passion for books. I was starved for information and knowledge, and the library provided it all -- as much as I could absorb -- amazingly, for free!

 After later becoming a teacher and spending thirty years in that fine profession, I became a part-time reference librarian here in Northern California as a second career, going on ten years this October. One might say that I came "full circle," for now it is I who help people of all ages enjoy one of the greatest public institutions ever created -- the wonderful, exciting world of the library!

 THE END

 by Jack Karolewski

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