

Kapok

Light, downy fluff from seed pods of kapok trees,
sound-deadening material, insulated
airplanes, sometimes cushioned cockpit seats.

Prey Nokor, in Khmer, means *forest of kapok trees*,
later called Saigon. My father might have crouched
behind these trees in '68, the branches *crowded*
with robust simple thorns. The leaves like palms
and the pods, the size of soda cans, grow hundreds
to a tree. Their fibre's *light, buoyant,*
resilient, highly flammable, resistant to water.

His favorite drink is root beer. My sisters, blithe
in '82, gulped A&W in the yard
and when an airplane crossed, they'd stretch up their tanned arms
and raise their cans in an unheard toast.

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