

Laura Sullivan-Hackley

SOAP BOX DERBY QUEEN

I was Soap Box Derby Queen 1971 in a silver pipe cleaner crown,
captive grand marshal leading the boys' procession of pine boxes.

They shoehorned me into a striped go-cart, strapped me down
with a paper sash that read, "QUEEN." I knew nothing of axles,

of inertia, of wanting to win; I was 4 years old, a braided brunette
coached to use one hand for holding my crown in place, the other

for gripping splintery pine as I careened down McCowans Ferry at
30 miles an hour in a race against no one. At the foot of the hill, a stir

of wind-chapped hands managed quiet applause to congratulate
the Queen, not for speed but for arriving, sash and tiara intact.