

# ZIONSVILLE TIMES SENTINEL

Wednesday

www.timesentinel.com

June 11, 2008

## A Connecticut Yankee in love with Indiana

*I have fallen in love with American names,  
The sharp names that never get fat,  
The snakeskin-titles of mining-claims,  
The plumed war-bonnet of Medicine Hat,  
Tucson and Deadwood and Lost Mule Flat.*

— Stephen Vincent Benet

I was born and raised in New Haven, Conn. My husband, Michael, was born and raised in Brownsburg. Two years ago this month, we sold our Connecticut home, packed our bags, grabbed our son, Joe, and moved to Zionsville to be near my husband's family.

Since then, I've discovered that even a life-long New Englander can become smitten with a new beau. I've fallen in love with Indiana and its names.

Did you know you can travel the world and not leave Indiana? You can visit Algiers, Belfast, Brazil, Geneva, Athens, China, Edinburgh, Lebanon, Peru, Milan and Mexico without a trip to the airport.

With fuel prices so high, I wonder if Hoosiers living in Gas City and Petroleum are helping out. To live in Idaville, Judyland and Lesterville, must you bear

those first names? What of the folks in Farmland, Farmersburg and Wheatfield? Do they plow and plant all day?

And if at mid-day, those in Beech Grove lounge under cooling beech trees and those in Walnut Grove feast on walnuts, do those in Cottage Grove curl up with a good book in their tiny homes?

Are the people in Economy cheap? Do the ones in Fickle find it hard to stick to decisions? Do the residents of Cyclone scan the skies more often than we do? Are those in Valentine in love? Those in Surprise forever perplexed? And those in Solitude lonely?

Here in Boone County, do the gardeners in Thorntown have scratched hands because of such prickly roses? And although there's a Hatfield in Spencer County; alas, there's no McCoy to fight with.

I've discovered Indiana is a religious state, too. Towns named St. Anthony, St. Bernice, St. Joe, St. John, St. Louis Crossing, St. Meinrad and St. Paul bless us daily. Forget the North Pole and those pesky elves. Christmas toys clearly come from Santa Claus, Ind.

Truth to tell, I've even fallen in love with the names of your dead (forgive me,

Father). I turn to the obituaries, pausing and smiling at the names which lie there (oops!). I read of Nellie and Dorothy and Maude, Olive and Ronella, Donna Sue and Cora Belle. Of Vernon and Harold, Delbert and Raymond, Earl and Ira and George. And of the lives that late they led.

Many of the Midwestern names I love are sturdy and old-fashioned. They're also like an Art Deco pendant or an Eames chair — never old, only classic.

But change is also afoot. New faces from new places contribute to the Indiana tapestry now. The 2008 winner of the National Spelling Bee is Sameer Mishra of West Lafayette. My son goes to school with Safwan and Barack and Yushi. At the Indy 500, Hoosiers could root for Hideki Mutoh, Helio Castroneves or Milka Duno. And the National Islamic Society of North America has been located in Plainfield since 1979.

All of this suggests a meeting of the old and new, a spirit of welcome that gives credence to the term "heartland," and a happy awareness that Indiana may have arms as wide as its skies are big. That's certainly been my experience in Zionsville.

Stephen Vincent Benet ends his poem, "American Names," with the line "Bury my heart at Wounded Knee."

The closest I've found is Floyd's Knob. I'll keep looking.



**CYNTHIA STARKS**

new view