If You Lived Here, I'd Know Your Name - News from Small-Town Alaska

A writer for the local newspaper for tiny Haines, Alaska, provides a series of colorful portraits of the inhabitants, festivals, and activities of this close-knit but remote village, offering reflections on the life and death of local eccentric Speedy Joe who never took off his hat, the Chilkat Bald Eagle Festival, and neighbors, both human and animal.

"Part Annie Dillard, part Anne Lamott, essayist and NPR commentator Heather Lende introduces readers to life in the town of Haines, Alaska . . . subtly reminding readers to embrace each day, each opportunity, each life that touches our own and to note the beauty of it all."

—The Los Angeles Times

Tiny Haines, Alaska, is ninety miles north of Juneau, accessible mainly by water or air—and only when the weather is good. There's no traffic light and no mail delivery; people can vanish without a trace and funerals are a community affair. Heather Lende posts both the obituaries and the social column for her local newspaper. If anyone knows the going-on in this close-knit town—from births to weddings to funerals—she does. Whether contemplating the mysterious death of eccentric Speedy Joe, who wore nothing but a red union suit and a hat he never took off, not even for a haircut; researching the details of a one-legged lady gold miner's adventurous life; worrying about her son's first goat-hunting expedition; observing the awe-inspiring Chilkat Bald Eagle Festival; or ice skating in the shadow of glacier-studded mountains, Lende's warmhearted style brings us inside her small-town life. We meet her husband, Chip, who owns the local lumber yard; their five children; and a colorful assortment of quirky friends and neighbors, including aging hippies, salty fishermen, native Tlingit Indians, and volunteer undertakers—as well as the moose, eagles, sea lions, and bears with whom they share this wild and perilous land. Like Bailey White's tales of Southern life or Garrison Keillor's reports from the Midwest, NPR commentator Heather Lende's take on her offbeat Alaskan hometown celebrates life in a dangerous and breathtakingly beautiful place. Heather Lende's new book, Of Bears and Ballots: An Alaskan Adventure in Small-Town Politics is available now.

Of Bears and Ballots - An Alaskan Adventure in Small-Town Politics
“This book will inspire people to work with and for their neighbors in all kinds of ways!” —Bill McKibben, author of Falter
Heather Lende was one of the thousands of women inspired to take an active role in politics during the past few years. Though her entire campaign for assembly member in Haines, Alaska, cost less than $1,000, she won! And tiny, breathtakingly beautiful Haines isn’t the sleepy town it appears to be. Yes, the assembly must stop bears from rifling through garbage on Main Street, but there is also a bitter debate about the fishing boat harbor and a vicious recall campaign that targets three assembly members, including Lende. In Of Bears and Ballots, we witness the nitty-gritty of passing legislation, the lofty ideals of our republic, and the way our national politics play out in one small town. With her entertaining cast of offbeat but relatable characters, the writer, whom the Los Angeles Times calls “part Annie Dillard, part Anne Lamott” brings us an inspirational tale about what living in a community really means, and what we owe one another.

Find the Good - Unexpected Life Lessons from a Small-Town Obituary Writer

As the obituary writer in a spectacularly beautiful but often dangerous spit of land in Alaska, Heather Lende knows something about last words and lives well lived. Now she’s distilled what she’s learned about how to live a more exhilarating and meaningful life into three words: find the good. It’s that simple--and that hard. Quirky and profound, individual and universal, Find the Good offers up short chapters that help us unlearn the habit--and it is a habit--of seeing only the negatives. Lende reminds us that we can choose to see any event--starting a new job or being laid off from an old one, getting married or getting divorced--as an opportunity to find the good. As she says, “We are all writing our own obituary every day by how we live. The best news is that there’s still time for additions and revisions before it goes to press.” Ever since Algonquin published her first book, the New York Times bestseller If You Lived Here, I’d Know Your Name, Heather Lende has been praised for her storytelling talent and her plainspoken wisdom. The Los Angeles Times called her “part Annie Dillard, part Anne Lamott,” and that comparison has never been more apt as she gives us a fresh, positive perspective from which to view our relationships, our obligations, our priorities, our community, and our world. An antidote to the cynicism and self-centeredness that we are bombarded with every day in the news, in our politics, and even at times in ourselves, Find the Good helps us rediscover what’s right with the world. “Heather Lende’s small town is populated with big hearts--she finds them on the beach, walking her granddaughters, in the stories of ordinary peoples’ lives, and knits them into unforgettable tales. Find the Good is a treasure.” —Jo-Ann Mapson, author of Owen’s Daughter

“Find the Good is excellent company in unsteady times . . . Heather Lende is the kind of person you want to sit across the kitchen table from on a rainy afternoon with a bottomless cup of tea. When things go wrong, when things go right, her quiet, commonsense wisdom, self-examining frankness, and good-natured humor offer a chance to reset, renew, rebalance.” —Pam Houston, author of Contents May Have Shifted “With gentle humor and empathy [Lende] introduces a number of people who provide examples of how to live well . . . [Find the Good] is simple yet profound.” —Booklist “In this cynical world, Find the Good is a tonic, a literary wellspring, which will continue to run, and nurture, even in times of drought. What a brave and beautiful thing Heather Lende has made with this book.” —John Straley, Shamus Award winner and former writer laureate of Alaska “Heather Lende is a terrific writer and terrific company: intimate,
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**Take Good Care of the Garden and the Dogs - A True Story of Bad Breaks and Small Miracles**

“Here is the real thing — good old-fashioned American values coming from small-town Alaska.” —The Boston Globe The Alaskan landscape—so vast, dramatic, and unbelievable—may be the reason the people in Haines, Alaska (population 2,400), so often discuss the meaning of life. Heather Lende thinks it helps make life mean more. Since her bestselling first book, If You Lived Here, I’d Know Your Name, a near-fatal bicycle accident has given Lende a few more reasons
to consider matters both spiritual and temporal. Her idea of spirituality is rooted in community, and here she explores faith and forgiveness, loss and devotion—as well as raising totem poles, canning salmon, and other distinctly Alaskan adventures. Lende’s irrepressible spirit, her wry humor, and her commitment to living a life on the edge of the world resonate on every page.

Like her own mother’s last wish—take good care of the garden and dogs—Lende’s writing, so honest and unadorned, deepens our understanding of what links all humanity. Heather Lende’s new book, Of Bears and Ballots: An Alaskan Adventure in Small-Town Politics is available now.

Blonde Indian - An Alaska Native Memoir

In the spring, the bear returns to the forest, the glacier returns to its source, and the salmon returns to the fresh water where it was spawned. Drawing on the special relationship that the Native people of southeastern Alaska have always had with nature, Blonde Indian is a story about returning. Told in eloquent layers that blend Native stories and metaphor with social and spiritual journeys, this enchanting memoir traces the author’s life from her difficult childhood growing up in the Tlingit community, through her adulthood, during which she lived for some time in Seattle and San Francisco, and eventually to her return home. Neither fully Native American nor Euro-American, Hayes encounters a unique sense of alienation from both her Native community and the dominant culture. We witness her struggles alongside other Tlingit men and women—many of whom never left their Native community but wrestle with their own challenges, including unemployment, prejudice, alcoholism, and poverty. The author’s personal journey, the symbolic stories of contemporary Natives, and the tales and legends that have circulated among the Tlingit people for centuries are all woven together, making Blonde Indian much more than the story of one woman’s life. Filled with anecdotes, descriptions, and histories that are unique to the Tlingit community, this book is a document of cultural heritage, a tribute to the Alaskan landscape, and a moving testament to how going back—in nature and in life—allows movement forward.

Last Letters from Attu - The True Story of Etta Jones, Alaska Pioneer and Japanese POW

Etta Jones was not a World War II soldier or a war time spy. She was an American school teacher who in 1941 who along with her husband, Foster agreed to teach the Natives on the remote Aleutian island of Attu. They were both sixty-two years old when they left Alaska’s mainland for Attu against the advice of friends and family. Etta, and her sister moved to the Territory of Alaska in 1922. She planned to stay only one year as a vacation, but this 40 something year old nurse from back east met Foster Jones and fell in love. She married and for nearly twenty years they taught in remote Alaskan villages including their last posting on Attu Island at the far end of the Aleutian island chain. Etta's life changed forever on that Sunday morning in June 1942 when almost 2,000 Japanese military men invaded Attu Island and Etta became a prisoner of war. She was taken from American soil to Japan and given up for dead. This is the story of a brave American, a woman of courage and resolve with inextinguishable spirit.
Faith of Cranes - Finding Hope and Family in Alaska

Faith of Cranes weaves together three parallel narratives: the plight and beauty of sandhill cranes, one man's effort to recover hope amid destructive climate change, and the birth of a daughter. CLICK HERE to download the first chapter from Faith of Cranes "Faith of Cranes is a love song to the beauty and worth of the lives we are able to lead in the world just as it is, troubled though it be. Lentfer's storytelling achieves its joys and universality not via grand summations but via grounded self-giving, familial intimacy, funny friendships, attentive griefs, and full-bodied immersion in the Alaskan rainforest. The writing is honest, intensely lived, and overflowing with heart: broken, mended, and whole." â€”David James Duncan, author of The Brothers K and God Laughs & Plays Hank Lentfer listened to cranes passing over his home in southeast alaska for twenty years before bothering to figure out where they were going. On a very visceral level, he didn't want to know. After all, cranes gliding through the wide skies of Alaska are the essence of wildness. But the same animals, pecking a living between the cornfields and condos of California's Central Valley, seem trapped and diminished. A former wildlife biologist and longtime conservationist, Lentfer had come to accept that no number of letters to the editor or trips to D.C. could stop the spread of clear cuts, alter the course of climate change, or ensure that his beloved cranes would always appear. And he had no idea that following the paths of cranes would lead him to the very things he was most afraid of: parenthood, responsibility, and actions of hope in a frustrating and warming world. Faith of Cranes is Lentfer's quiet, lyrical memoir of his home and community near Glacier Bay that reveals a family's simple acts -- planting potatoes, watching cranes, hunting deer -- as well as a close and eccentric Alaskan community. It shows how several thousand birds and one little girl teach a new father there is no future imaginable that does not leave room for compassion and grace.