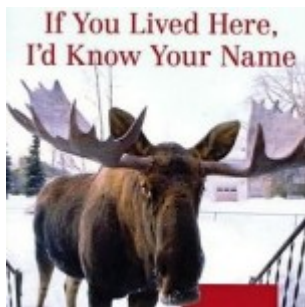


Life in tiny Alaskan town comes to life in fun book

By Kathryn Reed

An obituary writer and social columnist in a small town writing about her experiences might not seem like a book worth reading. Think again.

Heather Lende's "If You Lived Here, I'd Know Your Name" is a delightful and entertaining glimpse into life in Alaska as well as the characters filling the town.



Lende delves into the struggles of living in such a remote location. Though she doesn't glamorize the ruggedness, she doesn't whine about the hardships either. They just are what they are.

When one person goes out for a long skate on a frozen pond the drama created makes you wonder if the man will survive. There's just enough suspense to make you forget for a moment this is non-fiction. It proves that real life is so much richer than anything anyone can make up.

Lende is able to capture life in Haines, Alaska, in a way that brings the town and its people to life. It's almost like I felt as though I became friends with these people. And then as the pages turn she is writing about one of their deaths. It's poignant.

Writing a good obituary is a bit like creating good art. It's hard. But she makes these people real. She shows that their lives mattered.

My friend Susan gave me the book before moving to Chicago,

saying I would find it entertaining. She was correct. This was published in 2005. I would imagine Lende would have enough fodder to publish a sequel or something else about her world 90 miles north of Juneau.

Besides writing for the local paper, Lende also contributes to the *Christian Science Monitor* and NPR's *Morning Edition*. She also writes a column for the *Anchorage Daily News*.