

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Collection of essays celebrates special places in our past

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Ah, those modest front porch stairs.

They look so plain, just unpainted wood sprinkled with a little salt to keep them from getting icy.

But they mean something more to Schylar Meadows. They lead home.

When the Toledo woman decided to run for city council in 1993, she delivered her first political speech from the second step. And when she wrote an essay on how her life was shaped by her home, she couldn't help but give them a nod.

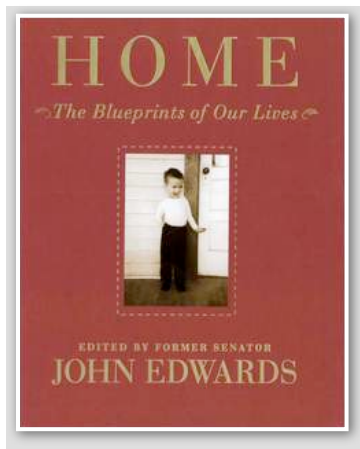
That essay is one of nearly 60 that make up the book, *Home: The Blueprints of Our Lives* (Collins, \$29.95), a collection of personal musings on the meaning and memories of "home."

Edited by former U.S. senator and vice presidential candidate John Edwards, the writings released last month include contributions from numerous celebrities as well as two northwest Ohio residents, Ms. Meadows and Mary Hanson, of Findlay, who wrote about her onetime home in Maumee.

Mr. Edwards, during a recent conference telephone call with members of the press, said he came up with the idea during the presidential primaries of a few years ago when he visited his first, small childhood home in South Carolina.



Toledoan Schylar Meadows stands in front of her home holding the book *Home: The Blueprints of Our Lives*, which contains her essay. (THE BLADE/HERRAL LONG)



"It brought all these memories flooding back," he said.

What's more, he found that his sense of home wasn't limited to a particular building but rather a warm sense of nostalgia and all the little things that make a house a home. He noticed similarities in many of the essays, no matter whether they were written by the rich and famous or everyday people.

"It's clear that whatever our superficial differences are - the wealth with which we grew up, the place we grew up, the circumstances [in] which we grow up - that there is a great similarity in values wherever you grow up in America," he said. "The result is there's a connectedness for all of us."

Mr. Edwards said he personally called the celebrities in the book, including John Glenn, Sugar Ray Leonard, John Mellencamp, and Vera Wang, asking them to contribute. The rest of the participants were picked from between 2,000 and 3,000 nominations, with an eye toward choosing those that would provide the most diversity of circumstances possible.

Ms. Hanson's piece is a look deep into this community's past and the closeness of family.

A former teacher at Maumee Valley Country Day School, she is now 93 and living in a nursing home in Findlay, according to her son, Dave.

But years ago, she wrote all about the large, yellow house on East Broadway in Maumee that belonged to her in-

laws and where she lived for three years while her husband was serving in World War II.

Her essay touches on the happy days when the family would celebrate special occasions there, when the boys, stripped to the waist, would battle it out on the tennis court, and when everyone would gather to celebrate Christmas with a special eggnog party.

As she wrote, "On rare occasions when the house was empty and I walked through it, I found the rooms alive with the feeling of happy living, unlike some rooms and some houses, which are static and lifeless even when their owners are at home."

Mr. Hanson, 60, of Findlay, submitted the story on his mother's behalf. He never lived in the house - whose tennis court he said became a lawn and whose barn became a garage - but remembers fondly his many visits.

"All of the cousins, we all talk about that," he said. "We have incredible, wonderful memories."

Ms. Meadows, a health-care worker and a radio personality for WJUC-FM (107.3), still lives in the home on Parkdale Avenue where she was reared. She resides upstairs and her father lives downstairs.

She used her essay to remark about the fond memories she associates with home, like the aroma of fresh coffee emanating from her mother's old-fashioned percolator in the kitchen and the sound of guests chatting after a holiday meal.

There's also a larger concept of home - of neighborhood and community - that she treasures. Families around her house developed close bonds, celebrating together, worshipping together, and mourning losses together.

"I didn't know it was abnormal for you to be part of your neighbor's lives," Ms. Meadows said.

In the end, it's connections like these that make Toledo such a special place to call home, she said.

"Toledo, despite all of its issues, is a city full of hope."

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Mary Hanson's essay about memories of living in this house on East Broadway in Maumee is in a new book. Ms. Hanson, who now resides in Findlay, lived in the Maumee home for three years while her husband was serving in World War II. (THE BLADE/HERRAL LONG)

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)