

New City, New Life

When I was a little girl growing up in San Diego, I idolized Laura Ingalls Wilder the way today's kid's do of Taylor Swift. There was nothing I loved more than watching the "Little House on the Prairie" television series, and reading in her books about the Ingalls family adventures as they moved from the Big Woods to Kansas to Plum Creek. I was in awe of her bravery, compassion, and her dream of becoming a writer. Laura was my hero, and I wanted to be just like her (even going so far as wearing a bonnet to school a few times). What I didn't realize at the time, however, is that eventually, I would be just like Laura and her family leaving home to start a new life in a "new land."

In July 2016, I left San Diego – the place I've known since childhood – and moved to a new life in Terre Haute. My husband, Bryan Lubic, accepted an amazing leadership opportunity at Indiana State University. So we decided to pack up our 8-year-old daughter, Sophie, two dogs, a cat, and all our belongings, and move to the Midwest.

In many ways, our journey was much like that of the Ingalls family as they ventured from one home to create a new life elsewhere. Of course we travelled by car and not covered wagon, and didn't encounter bison along the way. But the experience of packing everything you have and leaving all your family, friends and community behind resonated deeply with me.

While I was excited to start a new adventure in the Midwest, I was sad to leave behind the life I'd known for 40 years. When I told my dad we were making the move, he said it's great to make this move while I'm young. I had confessed to him that perhaps I was too old to make such a life change. He laughed it off, and reminded me I had an entire life ahead of me (dads seem to put these things in perspective).

As the months went by, I sorted through my entire house – from books to holiday decorations to kitchen

appliances. I packed what was meaningful and donated the rest. The feeling of taking only what we needed was liberating and I was growing more excited to embark on this new journey.

When I moved to Terre Haute, I didn't know a soul in town. While it was scary to (literally) pull up to my driveway and not know the location of the closest grocery store, there existed a feeling of possibility that I hadn't experienced since I was in college, when the world seemed young and full of hope. There is something to be said for going somewhere completely different and starting anew – being forced to find your tribe, and make new discoveries.

Since that day, every person I've met in Terre Haute has been welcoming and warm. Strangers have treated me with kindness. I welcome the slower, less crowded pace. I like that Terre Haute is made up of so many small businesses and entrepreneurs – people, like me, wanting to make their own destiny. I'm in awe when I see all the greenery surrounding me – the lush parks, gorgeous trees and open space – things that just don't exist in Southern California these days. I love that I can experience a real fall and visit the pumpkin patch when it's not 90-degrees outside, and that Sophie can play in the snow for the first time in her life.

When I tell people I moved to Terre Haute from San Diego, they say two things. First, "Why would you do that?", or "If I lived in San Diego, I would never leave." It is certainly true that San Diego is beautiful with its year-around sunny temperatures, and having the Pacific Ocean only a short drive away is a luxury... but I've found this new life to be a gift. Like Laura Ingalls Wilder, I already see how these new experiences will make me the person and writer I am destined to be. And I can say with absolute certainty that this is exactly where I am supposed to be in life.

- Leah R. Singer



Photography by Grace Sarris