



RESIDENT OF THE MONTH

Eileen Prose

With two brothers and a sister, Eileen was the second of four children of Bill and Mary Kazmer in East Chicago, Indiana. Her father was the son of immigrants from Hungary and worked as a bricklayer for Sinclair Refinery while her mother's ancestors came from what is now Slovakia. By the time she was born, East Chicago had become the most industrialized city in the United States, known during World War I as the "Arsenal of America" and the "Workshop of America." Such work opportunities had brought immigrants not only from Eastern Europe but also Italy, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, as well as Black Americans from the South. A 1959 demographic study counted over 70 nationalities, and Eileen's youth was filled with experiences of different cultures, foods, and customs through which she learned acceptance of others and was inspired toward broad travel as an adult.

Her joy from music and reading developed early, too. She played violin in her elementary school's orchestra and bass in high school. Her earliest teachers noted her love of reading, and one of the challenges of downsizing before moving to Westminster was—along with her sizable collection of unique Christmas ornaments and vintage Czech Slovak pottery—her sizable book collection including over a thousand cookbooks that were donated to the Vigo County Library. Asked what she would choose if she could only have one book, she immediately replied, "historical fiction."

While attending East Chicago's Roosevelt High School, two student teachers from what was then still called Indiana State Teachers College led her to attend the Terre Haute university where she became a member of Alpha Omicron

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Pi (AOII), and, in turn, one of them led to her choosing a career in special education and speech and language pathology. She taught for four years in Gary, Indiana, during which time she married Bob Lantz. Their son, Rob, is a Mechanical Engineer at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Bob's job offer at Indiana State and Eileen's with the Vigo County School Corporation brought them back to Terre Haute. She first taught at Fuqua Elementary and later became the Corporation's first learning disability instructor. Joining the staff of the Covered Bridge Special Education District cooperative after its formation in 1980 to serve area school districts, she worked as an itinerant teacher and supervisor, eventually retiring as the Assistant Director of Preschool/Elementary Education. In 1990, Indiana's Council for Exceptional Children named her Outstanding Special Education Administrator. After retirement, she returned to university for certification as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor, becoming particularly close to one student: a nun from Korea assigned to Terre Haute's Carmelite Monastery. She was employed for three years by Interlink whose ESL classes help prepare international students for enrollment at Indiana State. She and her late second husband, Ted Prose, personally hosted two students from Greece in their home. One of them facilitated Eileen's involvement in a program to enable students and teachers from the school for the blind in Thessaloniki, Greece, to participate in a summer program at the Indiana School for the Blind in Indianapolis. One of the students became like a member of their family, and returned to Terre Haute after the summer program ended and stayed with Eileen and Ted on weekends for two years; returning to the Indianapolis school each week.

Eileen and Ted visited him and his actual family in Greece several times as well as taking trips to Austria, Germany, Slovakia, and Turkey bringing home several Turkish weavings. She accompanied Ted on church-related missions to Arizona, Mexico, and Puerto Rico where he used his skills as a professional electrician and project manager. For several years, they summered on a small island in Canada originally purchased by Ted's parents from the British Crown.

Wherever she's roamed she's always returned to the banks of the Wabash, her devotion to education, and her lifelong mission of celebrating Terre Haute and making it better. In addition to involvement in professional organizations such as the Vigo County Retired Teachers Association and the National Education Association, she's been a member of multiple community organizations, leading more fundraisers than one could count, and often becoming an officer and/or serving on their boards. They include PEO (Chapter Z), Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra, Ivy Tech Community College, Friends of Historic Allen Chapel, Newcomers Club, Womens Department Club, YWCA, Altrusa, Service League of Union Hospital, Friends of the Vigo County Public Library, Friends of Indiana Libraries, First Hungarian Working Men's Benefit and Death Society, German Oberlander Club, national philanthropic sorority Psi Iota Xi, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Indiana State University. A particular passion for several years has been the Swope Art Museum earning her the annual Marilyn Wheeler Pendergast Award for Outstanding Dedication.

Of the many benefits of living at Westminster, I especially appreciate the group fitness classes, poetry, and the variety of programs that are brought to our community.