

*Am I A Philadelphian?*

By Steven Donahue

When people ask me where I'm from, I pause and try to think of the simplest way to explain it. I like to believe that I'm from Philadelphia. But am I really?

My family lived in Kensington when I was born in 1969, but we moved to Wayne a year later following my parents' divorce. After a short stint in Wayne, my mom, my siblings and I moved to Fairless Hills, then to Warminster where I spent most of my youth.

I grew up a die-hard Eagles fan. I was in the stands at the Vet when Ron Jaworski threw a 99-yard touchdown pass to Mike Quick in 1985 to beat the Atlanta Falcons in overtime. I watched the Birds on television every week of every season and my emotional state usually depended on the outcome of Sunday's game. I cheered when the Sixers won the NBA title in 1983, and I was happy to see the Phillies win the World Series in 1980 and 2008.

I also watched Osage Ave burn on the local news after then-mayor Wilson Goode ordered the bombing of a MOVE compound. I couldn't believe the devastation.

And I still get choked up when I think of Pelle Lindberg smashing his Porsche into that New Jersey wall, and the *Daily News* reporting that he was brain-dead.

I shared all of those events and more with those around me, and the one thing we had in common was our close proximity to the City of Brotherly Love.

After high school, I attended Temple University and earned a BA in Journalism in 1991. For four years I commuted from my home in Bucks County to the main campus on Broad Street. I bought

food from the vendors, I laughed with my friends, and I studied outside on sunny days as the sea of students continually flowed past me. I attended a town-hall meeting with Mayor Goode as part of a school assignment and I had hoped to get a chance to ask him some questions, but that didn't pan out. It was probably for the best. Knowing me, I would have given into the temptation to ask him about the MOVE bombing and I would have been shown the door.

Sadly though, it wasn't all Cherry Red for me at Temple, for I was also mugged near Diamond Street during my junior year. I spent the night in the hospital and my battered face drew lots of unwanted attention for several days. They never caught the three guys that did it. It took some time before I felt safe on campus again.

I edged closer to my birthplace in my early twenties. I moved into a Northeast apartment with a girlfriend and lived there for a few years. Then I got sick of paying the city-wage tax, so I moved back into Bucks County, where I have lived ever since.

I do get to visit the city from time to time. I have run up the Art Museum steps on several occasions, and stopped at the top to jump around. I once took a girlfriend on a date to the landmark in a vain attempt to show her that I had some class. Sadly, we were both a bit bored by the end of the visit. I've hung out on South Street, shopped at the Reading Terminal Market, and I've strolled through Independence Hall and marveled at the Liberty Bell.

The city has had a significant influence on my life. As a writer, I've used Philadelphia as a setting in two of my novels. My first book, *Amanda Rio*, takes place in a fictional town just outside the city, with some of the action occurring in Philly. My fifth novel, *The Manila Strangler* (Rainstorm Press 2013), focuses on a serial killer preying on area victims as a Philadelphia homicide detective and a PI try to catch the culprit. *Strangler* allowed me to

highlight some of the city's unique flavor, including the debate over who has the better cheesesteaks, Geno's or Pat's King of Steaks. That is a tough call.

Although I haven't lived in Philadelphia for many years, I have stayed close to the city, both physically and emotionally. I still live and die with the Eagles, and I'm glad to see the Owls making strides with their football program. So I might not technically be a city resident, but I have a strong sense of what it means to be one. Maybe I can tell people that I am an honorary Philadelphian. I think that works.