

# CONNECTICUT POST

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2004

## Valley author finds you can go home again

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**Valley gal:** Connie Biewald, who grew up in Ansonia, will read from her new novel, "Digging in Indochina" Nov. 26 at 6 p.m. at Snookers Billiard Club in Ansonia.

It may be called Rivertown, but the Connecticut burg described in Connie Biewald's novel, "Digging in Indochina" (iUniverse, \$15.95) bears a striking resemblance to the one she grew up in --- Ansonia.

Biewald, 47, now lives in Cambridge Mass., but Ansonia and its haunts remain a vivid part of her life.

"I do feel like I'm still living with it inside of me," she said. "I doubt that I will ever write anything that 'Rivertown' won't be a part of."

Though she is the winner of a Massachusetts Cultural Council fiction grant and a PEN New England Discovery Award, "Indochina" is Biewald's first published novel. It

tells the story of 17-year old Ivy MacKenzie, a rebellious young woman who spends most of her time at the local pool hall that her dead father, a Vietnam veteran, also frequented.

Hoping to see the world, she runs off to Florida with an abusive stranger.

Other characters include Ivy's 15-year-old brother Bryan and her mother, Carol. "it's very much a family struggle," Biewald said. "though a lot of parts of it aren't from my real life, there's a lot of emotional truth to it."

One part about the novel is somewhat true---Biewald admits to having a fondness for pool halls as a teen. Her next appearance to promote her book, which takes place Nov. 26, will actually be at Snookers Billiard Club in Ansonia.

Biewald thinks that's great---even though Snookers wasn't the basis of Rivertown Billiards, the hall in her book.

"I've never even been to Snookers," she said. "But I always like playing pool and hanging out. I was a wild girl in my youth"

Ivy, also a wild girl, which gave Biewald's [arents pause when they read her first draft. "I showed it to my parents and they were kind of taken aback," Biewald said. "My mother especially said 'Who wants to read about such an angry girl?'"

Biewald was upset, and put the novel away for a couple of years.

When she returned to it, her two sons, who had been children when she presented her parents with the first draft, were teenagers. That gave her new perspective on the character of Ivy's mother, whom she made more sympathetic. She showed this new version to her parents, and they loved it. "Now, my mother is my biggest marketer and fan," Biewald said.

In addition to her writing, Biewald is a librarian and teacher at the Fayerweather Street School in Cambridge.

Though Biewald left Ansonia after graduating high school and her parents have since moved to Hamden, the city is still a major part of her family history. Her grandmother emigrated there from Germany in the 1920's, and Biewald said that story will likely be the subject of her next novel.

And, expect the city of Rivertown to be a big part of it.

"No matter what, I think you always stay close to where you grow up," Biewald said.

*Biewald will do a reading of her book at 6 p.m. Nov. 26 at Snookers Billiard Club, East Main Street, Ansonia. Call 734-5103. For details or to purchase "Digging to Indochina." Visit her Web site at [www.conniebiewald.com](http://www.conniebiewald.com).*