

## Inaugural Race

Just before her first Indy,  
we took my child to a Penske driver appearance  
because my daughter age six not quite seven  
wanted to see Helio

With absolutely no awe of celebrity  
she bounced right up to him and proudly announced,  
“I’m going to the RACE!”  
He laughed and said, “Is that right?”  
“Yes!” she exclaimed, as he scrawled his name on a card  
and we all grinned into a camera flash

On race morning  
my daughter with her grandpa  
began their tradition of lunching over grandma’s tuna sandwiches  
on the mounds near the infield museum  
before joining the family veterans in the bleachers  
where we have watched leaders dart first out of Turn One  
for the past thirty years

My daughter’s wide open eyes absorbed technicolor balloons overhead  
and a blurry rainbow of speeding chassis on track  
Her Helio flying through the short chute  
an orange and white sponsored streak  
and her ears through protectively plugged  
still pulsed at unmistakable high pitched bellow of Indy engines

My daughter age six not quite seven  
did not grow bored as laps increased  
She wandered the infield with hand firmly curled around her mom’s  
two generations inhaling traces of burgers, stinky beer and coconut sunscreen  
while cheering on race cars

As Mr. Davidson’s history will tell you  
Helio won his third checkered flag that May  
And to this day my daughter claims  
that neither Penske’s engines nor his oil stained, fuel thrusting crew members  
were Helio’s charms to victory  
He won, she says  
because she was there

—Melissa Aughe, Speedway, IN

From the author: *I wrote this because my family has gone to every race since 1986, but some of my best memories are from when my daughter started going with us. It has been a joy to pass on the traditions to her.*

## When the Checkered Flag Comes Down

Three by three...eleven deep...  
A rhythmic roar their engines keep.  
Led by pace car through the turns,  
Anxiety within them burns.

The massive crowd...a mighty throng...  
More than a quarter million strong,  
Are on their feet with watchful eyes  
As thunder fills the blue May skies.

Down the backstretch, through turn three,  
Come the flying thirty-three;  
Then quickly out of number four,  
The green flag drops, and off they roar.

Into the first turn, swinging low,  
Five hundred grueling miles to go;  
These men of steel, a special breed,  
Each one contesting for the lead.

Around and 'round the track they roar,  
Their engines winding more and more.  
A grueling test for car and man,  
Each one performing best he can.

Two hundred laps of Hell on wheels,  
The hand of Death each driver feels.  
One simple error, slip of hand,  
Could send him to the Promised Land.

With speeds of lightning, on they press,  
Each one desirous of success.  
With racing blood inside their veins,  
And thoughts of Vict'ry in their brains.

Ninety-nine times, in the past,  
We've heard those mighty engines blast;  
For the hundredth time men will compete  
In this grueling, grinding, racing feat.

But it should be made understood,  
These men comprise a Brotherhood;  
For on the track they seem like foes,  
Each one contending for the Rose.

(continued on next page)

But when the final lap is run,  
They all befriend the man who won;  
For when the checkered flag comes down,  
They know just one can win the crown.

—Richard Carpenter, Chesterfield, IN

From the author: *I was born on the Southwest side of Indianapolis. The 500 was the biggest event around during my growing years. And it is still “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing”.*

## Moving Towards Orbit

Before I think of the specks of earthy dust  
torn from the seam of the ground  
at the sound of the inaugural starting gun,  
I think of Ray Harroun—the first champion—  
squinting beneath the brim of his goggles  
still plastered to this sweat-logged temples  
while he contemplates movement—  
when to slow the yellow Marmon,  
when to rev and make the pistons grieve  
their lot as middle managers.  
Like all champions who came before  
or since, Ray must have understood  
the debt owed to Copernicus  
and ancient Hominids alike:  
humans who, as they watched the stars  
cartwheel hand-over-toe across the sky,  
slumped a little more each successive time  
they glanced down to find their own feet tethered,  
firm as spokes, to the wheel of the earth.  
Ray must have sensed it, then,  
his own toes aligning with the precipice  
of that yet-unstirred ellipse, that this was more  
than a playground for the instincts growling  
'win! win!' at him from the depths of his gut.  
What he must have seen, instead,  
was an axis—a thin one, and delicate  
as the glass neck of an asteroid belt,  
at least by the standards of the universe.  
But still, a guiding line of revolution  
from which mortals, helped only  
by the gift of well-made goggles,  
could hitch our finite selves to time and space  
and merge with the centripetal beating heart  
lying at the center of the track—  
at the center, too, of all other things.

—Marissa Coon Rose, Muncie, IN

From the author: *In fifth grade, my class took a field trip to the track to explore the physics of racing. Since then, I've been caught up with the idea that the natural laws of the universe that make the race possible also make all other things in the universe possible. The poem was my way of expressing this.*

## Yard Of Bricks

**Y**ou're but a fraction of, a long ago paved past  
**A**ll from local kilns, where hallowed stones were cast  
**R**eddish grey, three feet of bricks, denoting start and finish  
**D**estination for the world, whose lore will not diminish

**O**verhead, twenty feet, the flags wave evermore  
**F**our hundred thousand cheering, above the Doppler roar

**B**earing witness to, automotive innovation  
**R**esounding spectacle, at the crossroads of our nation  
**I**ndy fans, we celebrate, this milestone event  
**C**onsider what these bricks have seen, and what they represent  
**K**neeling kiss and glass of milk, traditions of today  
**S**teadily racing toward, another hundred months of May

—Michael Courtney, Brighthurst, IN

*From the author: As an Indianapolis native and life-long Hoosier, some of my fondest childhood memories were of going to the track with my Dad and weekends spent with the family, listening to qualifications on the radio. Even today, when I fly, I try to sit on the right side of the plane to catch the awesome view of the Speedway as we pass west of downtown Indy on final approach for landing. Inspired by the rich history and legends of the Indianapolis 500, I've often marveled at what the "Yard of Bricks" has witnessed in its lifetime.*

*Michael Courtney is a life-long Hoosier and Purdue University grad. He lives in Carroll County and works for Accenture, a global technology and professional services company. His poem, "Yard of Bricks", has a symbolic one hundred words and is his first poetry submission.*

## Your Start

start  
your  
engines  
it's hypnotic, the infrasonic  
bellow of your fellow  
racers  
you're the thunder in spring  
you bring  
a rain of applause  
the awe in their  
faces  
and you were here  
for years  
when the wind would bite  
and you thought it might  
storm  
or when it was warm  
and you could taste the win  
the car was your skin  
no gender, no face  
no labels of love or faith  
the only race, this race  
your only home, the bricks  
the timer tickers  
in this town  
where you got the fire in your heart  
and among the  
engines  
your  
start

—Abi Douglas, Indianapolis, IN

From the author: *In the past year, Indiana took legislative steps that I feared I wouldn't see in my lifetime by legalizing same-sex marriage. I'm in love with the history and culture of my home state, and can finally say, free of uncertainty, that Indiana truly is full of the Hoosier hospitality that my family raised me to believe in. The Indy 500 is a place where that warm and welcoming nature shines through as an incredibly diverse array of people comes together in celebration of the greatest spectacle in racing, and I'm so glad I can call Indianapolis home because of that.*

*Abi Douglas is a Hoosier novelist, poet, and lifelong fan of all things Indiana.*

## Indy 500: The Race to a Dream

*Back Home Again in Indiana*, hundreds of thousands gather,  
starting at sunrise when the glowing sky outlines the pagoda  
and winged-wheel flags wave in the wind, welcome all who enter.  
A hush falls over the Speedway.  
Taps echoes our sadness as we pray and honor fallen soldiers.  
Hands over hearts, we sing the *Star Spangled Banner* before  
military jets fly by and a flock of balloons gives chase.  
“Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!”  
The rumble of the revving cars competes with the roar of the fans in the stands.  
This. Is. It.  
The green flag signals the start and wheels spin round and round the oval track  
as drivers draft and jockey for a sweet spot among the pack of 33.  
Cameras give glimpses behind the wheel down the straightaway and into Turn 1,  
dreaded even by seasoned drivers, going in blind while reining 700 horses.  
Senses come alive in the humid, Hoosier heat  
as ears tingle from the vibrating, buzzing hum of tires on asphalt when cars blur by.  
Eeeyoooooom! Eeeyoooooom!  
A driver breaks away.  
Pit stop. Jack. Tires. Fuel. Push. Seconds matter.  
Fast-fast-fast.  
Friends and family talk of the legends and lore and cheer on the men and women  
who dare to dream of their faces and names on the trophy,  
especially today, the 100th running of the Indy 500.  
The Greatest Spectacle in Racing is all about dreams.  
Dreams built the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, dreams of testing automobiles.  
A century later, it’s still a proving ground.  
And each race day, the drivers dream of  
kissing the brickyard, drinking the milk, and wearing the wreath.  
Now the final few laps.  
In the stands and around the world, millions sit on the edge of their seats,  
hearts racing right along with the cars.  
Who’s going to cross the finish line first?  
The checkered flag waves. Cameras flash.  
And the winner is ...

—Lisa Fipps, Kokomo, IN

From the author: *We all have dreams that lead us to take chances, to work hard, and to not give up. When I watch the race, I see dreams in drivers’ eyes, and at the finish line, everyone witnesses the celebration of a dream come true. The dreams, traditions, and sights and sounds of the Indy 500 inspired me to write “Indy 500: The Race to a Dream.”*

*Lisa Fipps has won 27 awards for writing and editing.*

## 500 Legacy

Four drowsy siblings tangled up together  
in backseat blankets, seatbelt free, we slept  
Dad turned the car toward Indy in the dark  
Sped south on 31 past greening fields and silent barns  
And answered “how much longer?” by promising a day we’d all remember  
He told us tales of Unser, Foyt, Andretti . . .  
Dynasties of racing royalty real to him as brothers  
and cars like works of art pushing all limits of imagination  
Time trials never meant to me as much as him  
Eagerly watching his favorites hit their speed, marveling at possibilities  
He loved the pits, smell of hot tires and oil,  
Honored men who tinkered tirelessly toward success  
Watching him love loud cars that flew around this track too fast to see,  
I found that love myself because of him.

Much later, listening to that deep rich rolling voice  
Sing to me of moonlit sycamores, “new mown hay,” and “fields I used to know,”  
I realized with surprising chills this race is in my Indiana blood  
That “Gentlemen, start your engines” and eerie sounds of speed  
approaching and retreating  
Will always make my heart race in anticipation, send me spinning back home  
To summer-pajama nights watching the race we only heard by day,  
to hold our breath collectively in agony with families  
of courageous drivers pulled from fire  
And pray they’d race again,  
Scan stands packed full of sunburned faces as the checkered flag waved,  
Thrill to the photo finish.

Our Brickyard and pagoda proudly stand the test of time  
And race fans gather here in every May to worship speed and daring  
For a century now, they remind us  
of the hopeful energy of a nation  
tired of war and ready to celebrate bold new designs,  
Machines flying around these curves at speeds unknown  
in thrall to the heroes who drive them,  
Dreaming they might yet send us spinning into the future together  
in one bright brilliant blur.

—Jenny Froehle, Indianapolis, IN

From the author: *The Indy 500 is part of my dad’s legacy to my siblings and me. Race season never comes without memories of Dad’s excitement about time trials beginning each spring and the fervent enthusiasm with which he has always engaged with the race. The bundling of all of us in the car in the dark before dawn to go from South Bend down to Indy to see time trials is a memory from my childhood I cannot forget—along with the excitement every year on race weekend of choosing drivers and listening to the start of the race on the radio together. Recently I was watching footage from early days of auto racing, and I realized how the innovative design of these cars and new speeds they were able to hit excited people about human innovation and the future—something we all still need to keep us hopeful. It inspired me to bring together in the poem my personal memories and what the race symbolizes in so many different ways.*

## Decoration Day — 1964

Race Day was a day crowded with more rituals than Christmas.

Out early to Grandma's, we'd walk  
her long aisle of scarlet and pink peonies,  
cut great armfuls of the heavy blossoms.

Then, up the Jackson Pike to the New Lisbon Cemetery  
with its white church and headstones spreading across the tree-splattered knoll —  
not high, but high enough to see all around the yellow-green fields  
of new corn and soy beans and the blue squares of oats.

Carefully, we'd set the quart jars, exploding with their flowers, upon the old stones.

But already we were rushing towards the green flag.

Dad would click the radio and the rituals would crackle over the airwaves:  
a band playing the national anthem, the crowd singing "Back Home Again  
in Indiana," the eerie trumpet summoning silence around the playing of taps.

We always made home in time to hear Tony Hulman pronounce "Gentleman,  
start your engines" and the piercing ebb and flow whining roar  
would fill the car's small transistor.

Mother's ritual to prepare the day's picnic — potato salad and pies, sugar cream,  
and butterscotch, hamburgers, hot dogs — moved forward unseen.

Mostly, though, the air filled with the race, conjectures about what we'd read  
in the thick *Race* section of the paper, whether  
the Lotus Novi's would take down the front-end Fords,  
and those Europeans, Clark and Hill, and the Aussie Brabham, whether they had  
the stuff to tackle red-blooded Americans like Parnelli Jones and A.J. Foyt.

Myself, I liked the idea of the rebel Scot, his sleek, green Lotus, but perversely,  
I liked more, and chose as my favorite, old-timer Eddie Sachs,  
at the far end of field, thirtieth position, next to last row.

I liked the colors of his Red Ball Special,  
and the fact that he was the jovial old man of the race,  
and I'd always liked long shots, old men, and the color red.

Little did I know the seconds were ticking on luck, that the red today was blood,  
and that old men only ever get older  
or race out of flames into eternity.

—Marc Harshman, Wheeling, WV

*From the author: I was inspired to write this piece for more reasons than I can easily state here. However, that said, I was born and raised in Randolph County, Indiana and "race day" activities were true rituals as partially described in the poem. It was one of those days from my youth that always comes back clearly, beginning with the peonies and ending with the picnic that always followed the race. That I should write a poem about the event seems only natural when I reflect that after I left Indiana for college, I also went on to become a writer and am now the Poet Laureate of West Virginia.*

## Apprentice to the Spectacle

*in honor of the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500*

He took me to a dirt track first. We sipped beer,  
smelled ethanol, felt the grit of the mud in our mouths,  
watched the open wheels spin, the sprint cars' rear-  
ends swing out, straighten, swing out again. *Here is how*

*it began*, he said. Next, we took in time trials—happy hour,  
a couple days of fried chicken, more beer, the museum  
inside the oval: names like Rickenbacker, Meyer,  
Shaw, Chevrolet, Rose, and the first winner, Haroun,

in his Marmon Wasp, Vukovich over the backstretch wall  
in '55, and the ones I already knew: Foyt, Unser,  
Andretti, Rutherford, Mears, Fittipaldi, Castroneves, all  
those faces in bas-relief on the Borg-Warner.

That day of trials we perched in the first turn grandstand  
and listened to each car sail across the strip of brick,  
I learned the nuances of the word *fast*, the sound  
of speed, how tenuous the line each driver takes

around the track to shave a second's fraction off the clock.  
The cars sped by like shooting stars, blinks of color  
blurred across the track's gray pavement. Finally, back  
for my first race, this is what I most remember:

not the cars, the din, the winner, but the silence  
of two hundred thousand plus before the race began,  
stray wax paper twirling across the track against the fence,  
while Jim Nabors sang *Back Home Again*.

—Joseph Heithuas, Greencastle, IN

From the author: *The Indy 500 is embraced by Indiana and Indianapolis in so many ways, but I can't say I've ever read or written a poem about it. I was born in Indiana, moved away as a child, and found my way back almost thirty years ago. As a child, I loved the race, and as an adult, I've now been to many 500's, run the Mini-marathon a few times, and generally soaked in, when I've been able, the way Indianapolis embraces the race in May. After many attempts, I realized my first experience of going to the Speedway was what I wanted to capture. I was an apprentice to a seasoned veteran who'd been to almost every race since he was a kid; that was my truth about the race. As I revised the poem, it went from a somewhat unruly remembrance into a compact set of loosely rhymed quatrains—four lines, four turns, four wheels.*

## For Those Who Love Fast, Loud Things

This poem is for the track folk who just love the smell of Ethanol.

For the Carb Day cut sleeve sporters, the Snake Pit dancers,  
and Coke Lot campers with bald eagle bandanas.

This is an anthem for the hearts that've surged at the scope of the Pagoda.  
For the hands that know the feeling of slapping the North Vista tunnel ceiling.  
For the lips that whisper along with Florence Henderson when she sings,  
yes. This poem is for the 500 fans who love fast, loud things.

The hot dog chompers and buttermilk sippers, and  
granddads with ledger pads in suede cases and locked zippers.

This is for every kid that's stood along the stretch—with toes  
on top of a cooler and their fingers gripping the fence.

For the open-wheel gear heads, parade wavers, and Legends Day fans.  
For the moms smeared with baby sunscreen changing diapers in the stands.

This poem is for the Brickyard pickers, marching band  
clappers, the bucket drummers and gasoline alley cats.  
This is for the pit crews, the announcers, the flyby pilots in the sky.  
For the girl who'd never seen her dad cry until the day Dan Wheldon died.

This poem is for the *Andy Griffith* neighbors, the binocular  
watchers, and the concession yellers hawking cold brews.  
This poem is for every shoulder with a Memorial Day tattoo.

This is for the drivers willing to go bumper to bumper, for the flag  
flappers, and the earbud-in-clutched palm fist pumpers.

This is your poem Indianapolis, taking the turn with direct injection. Race fans,  
thank you for being the sparks that start the engines.

*Dedicated to Evan, and all IndyCar fans, 2016*

—Adam Henze, Bloomington, IN

*From the author: My goal was to write an engaging poem that race fans could really relate to, while employing vivid images and sound devices the arts community could appreciate as well. I believe an energetic performance of this poem has the potential to capture the attention of thousands of audience members who might not know how much poetry can relate to them. Ultimately, the goal of my submission was to create a 500 anthem that all Indy Car fans would be proud to identify with.*

*Adam Henze is an educator and Ph.D. student living in Bloomington. He is an internationally-touring performance poet, and is the director of an academic summer camp for high school writers.*

## Peonies and checkered flags

Peonies and checkered flags,  
radio voices through fluttering  
blades of grass:  
gone racing, the neighbors say.  
Eternal combustion,  
heart across town —  
land rockets' liquid flame  
kissing bricks.  
Children cover their ears  
as colors streak by  
their open eyes: blink,  
you miss it.  
For 100 years  
the world has come here,  
crowded round this oval,  
sun-blasted and alive.  
Amazed at how fast  
the time goes, how fast  
again, and yet again,  
like spring itself, like peonies.

—David Hoppe, Long Beach, IN

From the author: *I remember hearing the Indy 500 being broadcast across my backyard the year Graham Hill won the race — yet another branch of the '60s British Invasion. From that time til this, the race has been part dream, part neighborhood block party for me.*

## Before the Stands are Full

Before the stands are full,  
warm coffee in my hands,  
I sit upon the cool bench.

And imagine history before me  
a century ago...

From miles of traveling,  
the incense of motor cars  
hangs in the air;  
The crowd converges.

A sea of brimmed hats  
block the waves of the sun.  
A checkered flag at ease.

The brass sings over the crowd.  
Cheers and fanfare;  
A cacophonous sound.

Suddenly--a rumble in my chest!  
The roar of engines,  
a humming of wasps  
chasing their provoker;  
The danger inherent.

Kicking up into the stands  
grit of sand, smoke and tar.  
Cigars, sweet and earthy.

My senses awake to the present...

The stands are filling;  
my coffee has cooled.  
I savor a Long's glazed,  
its delicate flakes melting.

Someone may imagine me  
100 years from now.  
But for today  
excitement penetrates the air.

This is Indy.  
This is Speedway.  
Welcoming the world.

(continued on next page)

—Lisa Johnson, Brownsburg, IN

*From the author: I was inspired to write this poem because I am fascinated by history--how things once were, how society has evolved and the traditions we carry with us. As I began planning for the poem, I imagined the experience of the Indy 500 with all of my senses. My writing was guided by how would it look, feel, smell, taste, and sound to be sitting in the stands a century ago.*

*Lisa Johnson is a school library media specialist for the Brownsburg Community School Corporation.*

## The Legends and Times of 500 Miles

From backyards and porches,  
in seats and in stands,  
hundreds of thousands of racing fans  
look up to the skies to chant a refrain :  
    hold off the rain,  
        just hold off the rain.

*Back home again in Indiana...*

From legends and lore of past races won,  
to gut and grit, to story and sun;  
where hopes have been shattered  
and dreams have come true --  
where race cars rumble into view.

The formation of jets take to the skies;  
bouquets of balloons billow and rise.  
Cars take their places, row by row  
a whine of engines, and there they go...

a scramble of colors as tire meets track;  
in the blink of an eye they zoom right back.  
Over the fabled Yard of Bricks they fly,  
to crowds roaring cheers beneath a May sky.

The checkered flag falls! A driver has won.  
Rolling into Victory Lane, his race has been run,  
where legend and luck; magic and mirth  
came together to see the greatest racing on Earth.

Now quiet the engine, now silence the throttle,  
with a gulp of cold milk  
    straight from the bottle...

The 100th running will be ringing in ears  
and reverberating for years upon years upon years;  
as famed stories and stats forever echo and roam...

*Then I long for my Indiana home.*

—Rebecca Kai Dotlich, Carmel, IN

*From the author: I grew up in the 1950s in a house very close to the Indianapolis 500 race track. The roar of the cars practicing echoed in our neighborhood while we rode bikes, and through our classroom windows the month of May. From our backyard we used binoculars to catch glimpses of the stands, the flags, the people and the cars. I am now an author of children's books and very recently wrote a picture book called Race Car Count. I still go to the race as often as I can, or have the radio blaring at home while cooking out. I will be attending the 100th running this year!*

## The Heart of the Indianapolis 500

We've hoped for clear blue skies  
For a hundred years  
Waving from the stands  
Our world awash in cheers  
Searching for familiar faces  
This is our beloved race, this is  
The Indianapolis 500

*As Back Home Again in Indiana*  
Is sung straight into our hearts  
I know there's nowhere else I'd rather be.  
Revvng motors in taut lines  
Ache to see that green flag fly  
At the Indianapolis 500

And they're *off!* around the track  
We pray our favorite leads the pack  
Whizzing past us fast and faster than we can see.  
A blur of colors take maneuvers  
Past the stallers and slow-movers  
At the Indianapolis 500

Oh, the joy at the finish line!  
The checkered flag drops and it's over  
A victory lap or two as the crowd goes wild.  
A quart of milk is drunk and spilled  
No greater feeling than that chill  
At the end of the Indianapolis 500

We'll be back again next year  
For the tailgating and cheers  
To see our favorites—those heroes we adore  
Great ghosts of winners long ago  
Watch over race fans, for they know  
They're the heart of the Indianapolis 500

—Jenny Kalahar, Elwood, IN

From the author: *The people who support the racers, from the folks at home listening to their radio with a keen ear to every lane change and zoom, to the tailgaters and folks cheering in the stands -- these are the heart of this Hoosier tradition, and they were my inspiration.*

*Jenny Kalahar is a used & rare bookseller in Elwood with her husband, Patrick. She is the treasurer of the Indiana State Federation of Poetry Clubs, a board member of Brick Street Poetry, and she helms Last Stanza Poetry Association in Elwood. She is the humor columnist for Tails Magazine. Jenny has published two novels set in a used bookshop that fosters cats, and has a collection of poetry titled One Mile North of Normal and Other Poems. Her new novel, This Peculiar Magic, is a fantasy set in central Indiana.*

## Back Home

The month of May in Indiana comes after  
a long cold winter - school's finally out, the pools  
are almost open and the party cups prevail.  
Georgetown camping, Coke Lot, Pagoda,  
the checkered flag, "Back Home Again in Indiana,"  
the trumpets salute and of course Jim Nabors -  
this will always be our home sweet home.

Start your engines with the fly over  
earplugs in the stands, maybe a beer or two  
in your hands - the month of May! Welcome Race Fans!  
always a heart-felt tradition.

Parties everywhere - asphalt driveways painted black and white.  
500 miles around the oval, turn four seats see the best  
with the finish line in sight...

and down the stretch they go! With Indy cars blurring past your  
eyes, the checkered flag waves high  
above the brick finish line.

Crowned winner with his glass of milk so  
fresh it tastes as the new Indy 500 winner.

Indiana home sweet Indiana - the flowering dogwoods  
and blooming peonies - the perfect time of year - so turn on  
your radio, listen from the porch or wake up at the break  
of dawn and pack your car lunch and wait in line on 16th street.

Look around and watch the people for this great month  
comes only once a year, the magic of May the beauty  
of spring and the checkered flag make Indiana the place to be.

Rest in peace all the drivers we've lost in the last 100 years. Cheers  
to the spectators that have sung with us every year. Let us forever dream  
of the Wabash and always long for this Indiana home.

—Sarah K. Ginter, Indianapolis, IN

*From the author: I wrote this poem for anyone and everyone who loves the Indianapolis 500 - whether they are 3 or 103 - I tried to write this piece as something that a person of any age could relate to. Indiana has been my home for a long time, and the Indianapolis 500 always proves as a sweet spring reminder of why I've loved it here so much. The checkered flags and parties - everything about May in Indiana is the 500, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world but here in May!*

*Sarah K. Ginter is a writer and photographer working on a middle grade novel and a book of poetry. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from Butler University and her BA in English from Indiana University. She is currently teaching writing at a private school in Indianapolis.*

## You're at the Bricks, Janet Guthrie

Upon learning to ride a bike at 5-years-old  
you journeyed 15 miles from home. As a teenager,  
you took up parachuting. You saw a lot.

The first coupe was what the villains drove: it cast shadows  
in moonlight like knives, drawn. In a barn  
near the water, you worked engines and bodies—you got dirty.

The long nose of the Jag got Atlantic Blue, like your nails  
and lashes. When you hit 185 at Indy, the roundy-round boys  
told you women didn't belong on their track.

You programmed your watch to run counterclockwise. You readied  
your wrists for the cheer that was coming.

—Micah Ling, New York, NY

From the author: *Janet Guthrie is a reminder that while the Indy 500 is steeped in tradition, it's also constantly changing, and adapting, to include all people.*

## A Poem for the Track

My grandparents used someone's rain checks in '73.  
For my dad's first race, my mom found tickets on Pit Road,  
knowing the action would bring him back. In '89  
when we finally landed three renewable seats in Northeast Vista,  
I scoped the infield with binoculars and also Emerson Fittipaldi  
as he waved from the convertible. Fittipaldi won again  
when my sister first came. I always marveled at the symmetry  
of the repeat winners, of the Unsers, Bettenhausens, Rahals, Foyts,  
of the track's curved rectangle, of parking along Lafayette Road  
or in the same yard since Mario Andretti won in '69 in a ritual  
to break the curse, of walking to the same seats next to  
the same people who always brought box lunches or only beer  
or lunchmeat sandwiches packed back in to Wonder Bread bags.  
When Nabors sang "Back Home Again," everyone's tears  
could have filled the Wabash. Engines started up like a choir.  
Cars paraded by in a low thrall, three abreast in the grid  
I memorized in May. Cars weaved tight waves to warm the tires.  
Tom Carnegie announced the green flag dropped  
and all we could see from Turn 3 was a quarter million people  
looking at Turn 2 awaiting cars to catapult onto the backstretch  
and fan three or four wide for 5/8 of a mile  
before diving the Turn 3 line to old apron or new rumble strip,  
the cars pulsing like blood from the heart.  
Over 200 laps, I played games, let cars blur across my still eyes,  
swung my neck to sight cars through the apex.  
I marveled at physics, downforce, aerodynamics, momentum,  
at keeping the pedal down. I stared at the short chute to glimpse  
a rare pass, regretted my hopes that a driver would overcook  
the entrance to 3 like they did coming out of 2.  
On the white-flag lap, I squinted at the glimmer of Turn 4  
we could see from our seats and closed my eyes,  
imagined winning and waving the checkered flag over the winner,  
the yard of bricks we all would kneel down to kiss.

—Kevin McKelvey, Indianapolis, IN

*From the author: I was full-on obsessed with the Indy 500 all through my childhood and teenage years. Attending the race and later the Brickyard 400 was something my family, especially my mother, loved to do. I'm excited to see the renewed tradition of a poem published in the program.*

## Pole Position

I.  
Mom packs fried chicken and cold beer  
in the cooler for Dad and Mr. Riggs to take  
to the race. I beg to go next year.

Engines scream on the radio. I hear  
A.J. Foyt win his fourth drink of milk.  
Gordon Johncock jumps in the creek.

It's a good time to be a girl. I can be  
Janet Guthrie, blazing the straightaway,  
grinning full throttle. I can be anything.

II.  
I could have been born in a car on Race Day.  
My parents were new to Speedway, thought  
it was a good day for a drive.

Forty weeks pregnant, my mother watched  
my father maneuver the Studebaker  
around the block. It took three hours.

III.  
Back home again in Indiana, I marry  
a race fan, learn the names of drivers born  
since I moved away. Where is Tom Sneva?

On Community Day, John Andretti  
chats with us, signs the album filled  
with photographs. Lyn St. James is smiling.

Rick Mears has a Facebook page. Janet Guthrie  
is the same age as my mom. Jim Nabors still  
belts out the sycamores and new-mown hay.

We spend Carb Day getting sunburned  
in the bleachers, eating chips and queso.  
Team Helio wins the Pit Stop Challenge.

IV.  
The 100th running is the year I turn 50—  
older than Al Unser, who took the checkered  
flag at 47. Foyt's grandson has retired.

Ladies and gentlemen have started more than  
three thousand engines. The bricks look good  
for their age. And I feel young. I feel like racing.

—Tracy Mishkin, Indianapolis, IN

From the author: *My childhood memories of listening to the Indy 500 on the radio, as well as more recent memories of my husband's race day enthusiasm, inspired this poem. I enjoyed talking to my mother about her memories of Race Day 1966.*

## A City Without Horses

Show me the ones who can imagine  
a hundred-thousand moons from now  
a city on this prairie of Big Bluestem grass  
purple coneflower, bird and wasp  
forged between these two rivers  
built of crushed rock and black tar  
soft clay fired to a million red bricks  
buttermilk churned to white cream.

Show me the ones who can see  
factories filled with steel horses  
thirty-three machines in rows  
pulsing with rod and piston  
filled with wingless men and women  
breaking hard against earth's bounds  
of wind  
gravity  
torque.

Show me the ones who can hear  
the scream of engine and crowd  
the smell of rubber and gasoline  
chequered flags  
ones who ride faster than the fastest braves  
of the Miami and the Lenape  
striving to become more than mortal  
striving to live forever  
in this fabled city without horses

and I shall call them victors.

—Mike Murphy, Baltimore, MD

From the author: *The Indianapolis 500 is an American icon, both the race itself and the place, and symbolizes the striving and friendly competition of men and women to go farther and faster, something that, along with concepts of 'victory', while universal and unchanged since ancient times, can also be viewed differently depending on one's perspective. The title comes from the original Speedway developer's vision of '...a city without horses.'*

*Mike Murphy is a writer and poet who once raced a canary yellow 1970 Volvo 1800 through the streets of small Appalachian towns, dreaming he was Mario Andretti. He now lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife Stacie and two cats named Daisy and Zelda.*

## The Oval

Under the same Indiana sun  
that brought up the crops

The glittering cars shoot by  
like that first Model T assembly line

And the roar of noise  
like the steel works  
forging the parts

And the haze wavering above the track  
like the wind trailing the steam engine  
as it rushed the raw materials  
to the factories

And the hearts and minds in the grandstand  
like the hearts and minds  
of the men and the women  
who cleared the stumps,  
and planted the crops,

Under the same Indiana sun.  
—Adam Phillips, Boise, ID

*From the author: I've always been fascinated by the huge spectacle, whatever the genre. And the Indy 500 definitely matches that description!*

1969

Paul Newman, Indy 500 champ,  
(Hollywood edition)  
Feasts on a thousand eyes  
While Underwood and Sharp  
Pace the Brickyards' racecar.

Their all-American prototype  
Runs shunt to shunt with surgical  
Precision, each bite of fame  
Crisp as kale. Drafting like the devil's  
In his carbon fiber body,

And dressed in a kinetic smile,  
Their driver bends the track  
Into a sublime palindrome  
Secure in the knowledge that distances  
—like legends—are measured by speed.

—Anna Saikin, Missouri City, TX

From the author: *I was inspired to write this poem for my father, who has been a fan of racing since the 1960s. I grew up with movies such as Steve McQueen "Le Mans" and Paul Newman's "Winning" playing in the background. The domestic imagery is in part an homage to my mom, a Hoosier, who always kept a bottle of Newman's Own dressing in the fridge.*

## We Are Indy

We are Indy: We are Harroun and Dawson  
And Thomas and Goux. We are history!  
We are Indy: We are Hunter-Reay and Franchitti  
And Kanaan and Montoya. We are now!  
We master going faster! We are Indy!  
We are Indy: In sync in a blink and burn  
Is our only energy drink! Pure motorsport spirit!  
We are the greatest spectacle in racing,  
The triple crown of motorsport, 300,000 strong!  
We are Indy: Dialed in, tuned in; locked,  
Ready to begin; on the limit in a New York minute!  
We master going faster! We are Indy!  
We are Indy: In a single-seat, open cockpit car,  
With a 2.2 liter, twin-turbocharged,  
Direct-injected V-6 engine, optimized to run  
500 to 700 horsepower, 235 miles per hour.  
We master going faster! We are Indy!  
We are Indy: Stoked and ready; rocking steady,  
One breath; burning rubber without spinning wheels;  
Running the fastest lap; we are pole position.  
We are Indy: We come, sporting colors, backing teams;  
Then suddenly, we all forget; our favored car,  
Each vain regret; as we are Indy, as we master  
Going faster; we all win when the checkered  
Flag is waved! We all reach for a bottle of milk!  
And we will always master going faster! We are Indy!

—G.E. Schwartz, West Henrietta, NY

From the author: *There are many thrills to fill the senses when you experience an Indy 500 race-- even if you can only watch it on TV! After all, it's incredible: And even if you don't know who you're pulling for, the last 100 laps are nerve-wracking! But the biggest thrill of an Indy 500 race is the crowd, and how for a while during the race, we are all one.*

## Urgency

Here are the tires with one purpose: to spin until  
Their quick end, swapped out in seconds. Here is  
The Parade of Bands, the RVs, propped tents,  
Food vendors hawking tenderloins large  
As your father's open hand. Here are fly-bys  
Screaming welcome overhead. Here is Gasoline Alley,  
The Snake Pit, the Coke lot. No one can deny  
We are sovereign in this land. Eternity waits  
Beyond the next turn, and the next. Here is where  
The engines start. Who is in the last row?  
Hear the starting command, spring's furious last rite.  
The first turn is the hardest. Don't be fooled by TV.  
Try it at 225 m.p.h., with downforce more than double  
That of gravity. Anticipation is a driver's hallmark.  
Why radio exists: To hear the call that, wherever  
You are, brings you back home again to Indiana,  
To the Indianapolis of your heart. 500 miles  
With no destination except the world.  
Your favorite driver is here. And the rookie  
Who will become your favorite next year.

—Andrew Scott, Indianapolis, IN

From the author: *I wanted to capture a fan's experience not from the infield, but from afar. Growing up in central Indiana, I almost never watched the race on TV, but my family always listened to the radio—which, of course, is far more poetic.*

## The Beauty of Uncertainty

Stay tuned for the greatest spectacle in racing!  
Always expect the unexpected:  
dazzling comets of metal-crushing contacts,  
half-shafts breaking like dry twigs in deep woods,  
the quiet sigh of a piston failing,  
the simple slowing, ever-slowing yet somehow still  
shocking Stop! when gas burns too swiftly,  
refueling mechanisms detaching as birds taking flight,  
turbines that have always provided power failing into hush,  
brakes beginning to fade like the brightness  
of autumn leaves just before they fall  
the roundness of tires instantly flat as the earth.

The perils are many, the rewards great  
for driver and spectator alike.  
Control is momentarily lost and we all wait to exhale,  
a universal prayer of deliverance for those  
who only want to fly on this solid ground we share.  
This verge is where we congregate.

The beauty of uncertainty powers us on.  
Someone gets the jump, blistering through the opening laps  
while others wait, save it all for later  
to fly down the backstretch, chasing our mutual reveries.  
Winning the pole satisfies in the moment, yet guarantees nothing.  
Leaders barely hold off slingshot challenges, advantages  
swapped like so many whispers between friends.  
Yellows flash to hinder the chase,  
reds to cease all haste, care for those in need.

How many of us have frantically tried to catch  
what always remains just out of reach?  
Then one comes out of nowhere, the nowhere of infinite hope,  
the possibility present in every instant,  
to snatch the win, take the checkered one for the storybook finish  
fueling everyone's dreams until next we gather in Circle City  
to celebrate the majesty of man and machine.

—Joanna Oltman Smith, Brooklyn, NY

From the author: *I was inspired to write the poem because I want to better understand the mystery of what draws so many of us to racing and the Indy500 in particular. There must be something universal, foundational, natural in our fascination with this sport, and I hope I have touched on some of those things in my poem, "The Beauty of Uncertainty."*

## On This 100th Running of The Indianapolis 500

The world turns its face to us, Indiana's sprawling heart  
of a capital, to the small town within it,  
its two and a half miles long paved oval, and yet

we are more than a day in May, more than sycamores,  
moonlight and hay. We are more than the Wabash, than the White.  
We are giddy and a little depraved, we've come to see speed  
and machine, and be perfumed in fuel.

I live about a mile from this track, for a month every year the rhythm  
of my days spin in and out with the echo from this aluminum canyon—  
the zoom, the whine, the buzz—that sound that gets into your blood  
and brings up a memory, a memory like the ancient hum of bees—  
a human race memory, one of competition and courage—  
how humanity in all of our thousands of years has risked life  
for advancement, often by acts of bravery made alone,

“each driver now alone, now being reduced to this singular conflict, knowing  
others are pitting their resources against them.” Sid Collins, voice of the 500,  
who named this Greatest Spectacle, said it best, “if you succeed, you're a hero,  
and if you fail, you've tried... We are all speeding toward death  
at a rate of 60 minutes every hour.”

This is more than milk and kissing the bricks,  
more than Gasoline Alley. More than nostalgia  
And Back Home Again. This is more than a wreath of lilies  
and cash. For the 400,000 souls who trekked here,  
you are more than a crowd, drinking in the sights  
and drinking down your cups. Whether you're aware of it or not,  
you meeting at this point on the Earth today  
has more to do with Henry David Thoreau's words  
that Sid Collins once signed off with,  
“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams and endeavor  
to live the life which you have imagined, and you  
will meet with greatness unexpected.”

—Natalie Solmer, Speedway, IN

*From the author: I have long had emotional connections to the Indy 500, and have lived in Speedway, about a mile from the track, for several years now. When I first started writing this poem, I got very into researching the race. I even visited the Hall of Fame Museum with my sons. This isn't the 'type' of poetry I usually write, but I was particularly inspired by the information I found on Sid Collins. His way with words and love of poetry helped complete this poem for me, as I tried to capture the drama and spirit of this event, which draws together thousands upon thousands of people every year.*

*Natalie Solmer was born in South Bend, and has a BS in horticulture (with a minor in poetry!) from Clemson University. She has been working as a florist for twelve years at Marsh Supermarkets. She earned her MFA in poetry from Butler University and is also an adjunct English instructor at Ivy Tech Community College. She lives*

*a mile from the famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway with her two young sons. Her poetry has been published in various journals such as Dunes Review, Chicago Quarterly Review, Punchnet's, The Louisville Review, Willow Springs, Heron Tree and forthcoming from Tinderbox.*

## The Brickyard

In 1909, on three hundred acres of Indiana farmland, Carl Fisher built a two-and-a-half mile banked oval using thirty-two million pounds of bricks--a worldwide challenge for cars and drivers to come to Indianapolis and prove themselves, at the Brickyard.

Five minutes before 10 o'clock on Memorial Day in 1911, a series of aerial bombs announced the beginning of the first Indianapolis 500, a grueling 500-mile race won by Ray Harroun in a sleek six-cylinder Wasp, at the Brickyard.

For fifty years, cars in rows of three kept pace, awaiting the wave of the green flag. Unmatched in their eras: Duesenberg, Miller, Gilmore, Maserati, Offenhauser, Cooper--accelerated into history by the wave of the checkered flag at the Brickyard.

In 1965, the Lotus 38 revolutionized racing, followed by Pratt & Whitney, Offenhauser, Cosworth, Penske, Reynard-Ford--elegant engineering feats, reaching speeds of almost 240 per hour, at the Brickyard.

Lap by lap, win by win, drivers kissed the bricks and became legends; drivers like Harroun, Shaw, Foyt, Mears, Unser, Franchitti, Castroneves. Yet, the ones who lost everything are not forgotten. Stories of fallen heroes are told in houses, barrooms, newspapers, film, and at the Brickyard.

This year, when the grenade sounds and the Purdue band plays, fans in the Snake Pit, at parties, in the grandstands, or watching television back home again in Indiana will check their rearview mirrors and remember 100 years at the Brickyard.

—Nanette South Clark, Italy, TX

*From the author: Having been a space shuttle rocket motor engineer and a designer on the 5-segment rocket motor team for the ARES project, I am always interested in the sleek, fast cars of the Indy 500. I would love to see the race in person someday.*

## Home Again

It's the Indy Five Hundred, we're back home again  
At the one single race, each driver must win  
For the one hundredth time, we meet in the spring  
Ghosts roam the Brickyard, tradition is king.

In a voice near immortal, we might hear Heeezonit!  
"It's a newww traaack record," somebody's done it  
Carburation Day, for parts now long gone  
Gasoline Alley? Not what they run on

Pulled from an old song, Andretti's sure proud  
Should have asked why, but he's way past the crowd  
Too many to mention, have ruled through the years  
Like Foyt and Petillo and Unser and Mears

Victory's cup, with milk waiting in her  
An uncommon toast, awaiting a winner  
Line-ups have varied, but one's passed the test  
Thirty-three drivers, aligned three abreast

Memories plague them, of races near won  
Blocked out, bumped out, sometimes outgunned  
Thirty-three poised, to get their revenge in  
Launched by "Gentlemen, start your engines"

Thirty-three drivers, impatient racers  
Held back for one lap, by much slower pacers  
For the one hundredth time, two hundred times round  
Those two point five miles of fury and sound

It's the one single race,  
Each driver must win  
It's the Indy Five Hundred  
We're back home again

—Paul Spite, Valparaiso, IN

*From the author: Though I have been to time trials a couple times, I have never been to the race itself. And your event is by far my wife's favorite sporting event. It would be nice to be able to take her at least once. Especially since we have just moved back to Indiana after spending fourteen years in Tennessee. It's good to be back home.*

## Racing Thoughts

The race has long since ceased to be  
What in its early years it must have been –  
The question of identity blurred in continuation.

All our advances in technology  
Erase the aspect of physical labor,  
Give the race an abstract flavor.

The cars drive for hours round in circles  
Performing in truth their own little version  
Of the formerly hypothetical eternal recurrence.

What time made thusly visible, we contemplate  
The continuum and its subsequent division  
Into two hundred quanta of two point five.

How is it on the racetrack we can say,  
“We’ve been here before,” and be precise?  
I’d suppose you could not run the same lap twice.

The real question, though, comes at the end:  
Having no room for eternity on the Westside  
We must ask what it means to win,

And what to do with that absurdity  
The checkered flag? It must be true like poetry:  
A race is never finished, only abandoned.

—Andrew Stautz, Indianapolis, IN

From the author: *I enjoy writing poetry and welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the Indianapolis 500 and its influence on me personally. Whenever people learn that Indianapolis is my hometown, they immediately start talking about the race.*

## The Greatest Spectacle

*“Stay tuned for the greatest spectacle in racing...”*

The All-American Marching Band echoes Far  
Away and Forever, the car begins pacing  
Around and through where the wonderful masses are.

The All-American Marching Band echoes far  
God Bless, the Beautiful and Anthem, the voice soars  
Around and through where the wonderful masses are.  
All goes still as the trumpet weeps with gaps of wars.

God bless the beautiful and anthem—the voice soars  
Back Home Again; red, white, and blue fills the May sky.  
All goes still as the trumpet weeps with gaps of wars—  
Families’ Soldiers and the day—then jets fly by.

Back home again—Red White and Blue fills the May sky.  
*“Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!”* ignites  
Families, Soldiers, and the Day, then jets fly by  
In spellbinding fits of speed at once untouched heights.

*“Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!”* ignites  
The Eleven Rows of Three, gearing up to rage  
In spellbinding fits of speed at once untouched heights.  
The flag goes green with a mighty gust to the page.

The Eleven Rows of Three, gearing up to rage  
Away and forever...the car beings pacing.  
The flag goes green with a mighty gust to the page;  
Stay tuned for the Greatest Spectacle in Racing...

—Matt Tapp, Westfield, IN

From the author: *Matt Tapp lives in Westfield with his wife and two daughters. One of Matt’s favorite traditions is Race Day at the Track with his two older brothers. His favorite part of the 500 is the incredible build-up and anticipation leading up to the Green Flag, which Matt tries to capture in this poem.*

## Victory Lane

*Upon the 100th Running of the Indy 500*

The green flag waves and they're off in a blur—  
a spectrum of light darting past us. They almost break  
the barrier of sound, whipping round in the high whir  
hummingbirds make magnified a million times. So much  
rides on the rim, the cusp they cling to each treacherous  
turn. Like charioteers circling the sun, they hold  
steady their nerve to test how close they can edge  
to snatch the spark that sets their name aflame.  
For a hundred years it's been the same, but faster  
and faster they course through the ether, passing us  
like the flow of the years, and now we're drafting  
*Meyer, Rose, Foyt, Unser, Mears, Castroneves*, legends  
that surpass the speed of their shadow and bring us  
to the finish line—to swig the milk and kiss the bricks.

—Shari Wagner, Westfield, IN

*From the author: I was inspired to write this poem after watching a video of last year's Indy 500 drivers talking about why they race and listening to a podcast on Nelson Price's Indiana History Live radio show. I realized I had written poems about historical sites all over Indiana but not about one of the state's most famous places.*

## The Hundredth Checkered Flag

You chase the checkered flag, as we observe you pass.  
Adrenaline pumping fuel... the crowd comes to their feet.  
The hundredth time around, on bricks, on oil, on gas.

Men who chase their dreams, as bold as polished brass,  
Ride thunder on the wind, while strapped into their seats.  
You chase the checkered flag, as we observe you pass.

Acceleration force is moving balanced mass.  
Ball bearings... grease... rods and crank shaft meet.  
The hundredth time around, on bricks, on oil, on gas.

We pause to bow our heads, for racing's ruling class,  
A hundred times we've come to watch the speed elite,  
You chase the checkered flag, as we observe you pass.

We cheer our favorite sons, and toast you with a glass.  
"God's speed" to you all, who give this special treat.  
You chase the checkered flag, as we observe you pass.  
The hundredth time around, on bricks, on oil, on gas.

—S. Evan Walters, Lebanon, IN

*From the author: I wrote this poem in memory of Bob Harkey, who recently passed away. He was so looking forward to the 100th running of the race. I will long treasure the day he and I spent at the track together.*

## No Mean City

Today, a dusty cooler from the attic, a mile walk from a yard-turned parking lot, thick streak of sunscreen down the nose, crisp cut of a summer burn along the neck—Bookwalter's *no mean city* is our shared story. We forget that yesterday we might've quarreled. Even might've mocked the neighbor now sharing her bottled water as we've neglected to pack our own. Together we watch the future flash and roar before us. Are we not at the mercy of what's next? Do we not all imagine ourselves slung low in the driver's seat? Taking that third turn a bit tighter, holding one more lap before the pit, crossing the bricks. After today, tomorrow may not recognize you. A warmer face, the scent of wonder trailing behind.

—Jennifer Walton

*From the author: Of course, there's the history and technological innovation, the excitement and adrenaline, but I think it's the community that emerges that's the most remarkable about this race. I imagine it's what holidays used to be like when the entire towns actually celebrated together. Everyone sits at the same table. I don't think we have much of that anymore.*

## Brickyard Baptism

His backyard is his Brickyard.  
He kneels in the garden's soil and  
With small hands, clears an oval,  
Tamps the straights.  
He leans above the track, a blimp's-eye view,  
One hand in the infield, and  
Lines up a starting grid of die-cast racers.  
*Drivers to your cars!* he shouts.  
Dust flies; the race is on.  
Here, he is announcer, driver, fan,  
Guiding favorites over Finish:  
A tiny band of stones pressed into dirt.  
He calls our drivers' names  
As he pushes cars through Turn Four and across:  
*A.J.! Mario! Parnelli! Bobby!*  
The red car spins; he calls *Danny Sullivan!*  
Cheering as he gives the car the win.  
Wheels touch, drivers battle,  
Noisy replays full of spirit and spit fill the air  
Of every sunny backyard afternoon.

Until this late-May early morning  
When this race, this place, turns real.  
He watches out the window for a sign,  
Thrill in every muscle and a ticket in his hand.  
Finally, his heart races as he reads:  
*Indianapolis. Motor. Speedway.*  
The car dips into the shadows of the tunnel,  
Rises inside into sunlight, sight and sound.  
The boy falls silent, baptized,  
And knows that he will never be the same.

—Brandy Wilkinson, Fishers, IN

From the author: *My husband grew up playing with Hot Wheels in his mother's flowerbed, often imitating memorable Indy 500 races. He has often described the feeling of entering the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and how, even after many years, it's still an emotional experience. I wanted to capture this spirit in a poem.*