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November 2008



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Autumn Colors

## Voices from your Valley

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### A Note from your Publisher

Stephen Hassler

November is the month of thanksgiving, and I want to thank you for picking up *Your Country Neighbor*, for giving feedback to our writers, and for all the kind words you have given me. I especially want to thank friends for listening and helping me through a hard time earlier this year. I feel welcome, at home, and your kindness has brought me peace.

After some rain and wind in October, the colorful season peaked around Halloween. Warm temperatures and calm days have retained Autumn's glory through early November. I even saw a butterfly on November 1st.

Now here come the holidays! Why do so many people get stressed or frustrated during a time of giving and family sharing? There is something oxymoronic about all of that, and it should be a signal to renew friendships, mend family divisions, or change one's life in some other way. But I know change is hard; good luck with that.

Please don't forget my advertisers who renew month after month in order to bring you this publication. Please thank them and tell them that you appreciate *Your Country Neighbor*.

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Scenic color photos of our October Autumn will be posted to my web site:

[www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

### Your COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

#### Writers this month

Devon Adams  
Jody Anderson  
Sheri Mayhew Dowding  
Vicki Harger  
Merri Johnson  
Karen Ott  
Joe Smith  
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#### Editor's note:

More than three years of this publication are online at:

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# Country

# Scenes



Campus of a Thousand Oaks has its share of Maples, too.



South of Nebraska City on H-75



North of Hamburg, Iowa



Canada Geese enjoy the little lake in Auburn, their stop-over on their way southward.



Familiar Scene on H-67 South of Peru



No Comment

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BY DEVON ADAMS



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## TWELVE POINTS

by Devon Adams

I saw him walking through the grass,  
but he didn't know that I was near.  
Standing still was all the cover  
that I needed to be invisible.  
I wasn't stalking, and, in fact,  
I'd been watching clouds  
growing into storms in the  
northwest quadrant of the sky.  
My vantage point was high  
and the view was long and keen.  
By chance, the well worn path  
followed the top of the hill  
before it jumped a fence and  
twisted through the trees.  
As he passed my lookout point,  
I tried to count his antler points.  
He was moving fast and focused  
toward the object of his search,  
the pretty doe that was standing  
under the old oak tree,  
waiting to be found.

## FIRES WITHOUT SMOKE

by Devon Adams

A strong south wind shimmied  
through the long grass  
on the hill above the river,  
breaking the sun shafts  
into diamond chips that  
bounced off green blades.  
Clouds were low cotton balls  
racing north to meet  
the edge of winter.  
Frost was lurking in low spots,  
waiting for a chance to kill  
the last dreams of summer,  
but thermometers were blind  
to the calendar date, and temperatures  
soared to sweaty heights,  
until the day was done and  
night turned out the light.  
Then damp, cold drafts crept  
through all the cracks,  
and leaves shivered with the chill  
of promised death.  
The funeral pyres would soon  
be burning with unrepentant fury,  
as the growing season died  
in blazing colored fires without smoke.

## SNOW WITCH

by Devon Adams

There was a year that didn't  
have a Halloween.  
Instead of treats, we all  
were tricked into believing  
that warm weather would  
continue until Christmas.  
But the troll that crawled  
out from under the ice  
at the north pole, came  
to remind us that it truly  
was time for a horror show.  
It was noisy, as branches  
crashed to the ground  
with their heavy loads of  
ice coated over green leaves.  
It was cold, because the power  
was out, and it stayed out  
for several long, long days.  
Weeks later, when Christmas  
came and snowmen frolicked  
on the lawn, there was a witch  
out there with them, laughing  
at the black humor of the situation.

## OCTOBER BLUE

by Devon Adams

There is something in the sky  
that haunts the edge of winter.  
It is deep and true and infinite,  
and comes only in autumn.  
Like a last look at life  
before the door is closed,  
it is a glimpse of warmth  
that will die like the embers  
of the burned out log that  
turns to ashes before morning.  
It is the blue of October skies  
that reflects the blazing hearth  
of earth, as life is sacrificed  
on the altar of tomorrow.

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## SPIN THE BOTTLE

by Devon Adams

Like water draining out of a bathtub,  
the massive hurricane spun  
across the planet, eating everything  
in its extended, fatal path.  
Most ordinary people haven't had  
enough experience of actually  
living through the force  
of these demonic twists of  
random, poison fate to  
recognize death on the wind.  
Weather channels blast out  
warnings to run away, but no one  
wants to leave everything behind.  
They want to believe that it  
couldn't possibly be a killer.  
Their own history is the only past  
they know, and all they know  
is that their community has always  
been there, safe and solid.  
Other places are destroyed,  
but it couldn't happen here.  
And that is all it takes to tip the scales.  
No second guesses are available,  
No rescues or reprieves are for sale.  
Time is over, and the past is drowned.

## Heaven

by Jody Anderson

The Earth  
Warms my back  
Silky grass, my protection  
Clouds in shapes  
Peace  
Heaven  
I want-to-go-there-  
So far - away  
Or  
Is it?

## Autumn ("Let Me Stay")

by Jody Anderson

The blissful days of Autumn – Ah –  
Autumn – her role is well-known  
The air is warm, the wind is kind,  
and a peace pervades.  
So "Let me stay a little while."  
The frost will dance on pumpkins.  
Soon, flowers will lowly nod, shaking  
their icy petals.  
The day will take on a new face, but –  
"Please let me stay!"  
The leaves are scurrying to places unknown,  
their frolicking, whirling makes me joyful!  
Colors are reflecting hues of reds, yellows, oranges  
as they anticipate the coming changes.  
"Let me stay a little while."  
The smoldering leaves tell a tale –  
the curling smoke gives a sigh.  
Shuffling feet attack mounds of leaves.  
Limber bodies leap and fall among  
beckoning leaves –  
Outstretched arms point to far above,  
reaching into Autumn's beautiful heaven.  
"Let me stay, ah."  
Soon leaves disintegrate, decaying into  
lonely, drab pieces.  
Quivering flowers sob their sad goodbyes.  
Chilling winds swirl and state a  
new presence.  
Sleet, as piercing darts, embellishes the  
gray countryside.  
Nature is weeping.  
"Please take me away!!"

## DOWN IN THE VALLEY

by Devon Adams

Down in the valley,  
the street was crowded  
with people walking past  
tables full of objects shining  
in the sun of autumn.  
Cut glass caught  
the liquid light pouring  
from the endless sky and  
split it into prisms.  
Antique dishes socialized with  
items from a lower class,  
and newly manufactured  
collectors items mimicked the  
original versions, but were affordable.  
The crowd was a conglomeration  
of old and new, hip and nerd,  
rich and poor, arty and red neck,  
bald and hairy, talkers and thinkers,  
drinkers and smokers, big dogs,  
small dogs, parents and children,  
readers and listeners, and those  
who simply came to see the sights  
and sample kettle corn and candy,  
gyros and hot dogs, funnel cakes  
and barbecue and blues.  
The old houses sleeping in the sun,  
and dreaming of the past,  
watched the action in the streets,  
and then sighed with the evening breeze,  
their old joints aching with the chill  
of autumn's frosty breath.

## THE ARTIST

by Sheri Mayhew Dowding

An artist canvas  
Isn't canvas at all  
It's children and snow  
And making angels as they fall

It's the driveway  
Of the house next door  
Where sidewalk chalk  
Gives way to scenes never imagined before

It's the edge of the church bulletin  
Where small children draw  
Their images of God  
And we look on in awe

It's frosty picture windows  
And steamed up mirrors  
Where these young Rembrandts  
Likenesses appear

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## Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

A few nights ago, I sat down on the sofa beside my husband, pencil and notebook in hand, preparing to write this article. "What shall I write about, honey?"

"Well, let's see," he pondered, "I must have done some bone-headed thing in the last month that would entertain your readers."

Normally, he'd be right. But being out of town almost half of the past four weeks, I wasn't around to catch him in the act. In reality, he performed quite admirably in the "thoughtful" husband category in October. For my birthday, he gave me a new waffle iron. I thanked him, teasing that it was the most romantic gift he'd ever given me. The next day – my actual birthday – I left on my third trip to northwest Iowa to help my mom, who is recovering from a broken arm. When I arrived, a lovely birthday bouquet from my husband was waiting for me. What a guy! Even if he *had* done something bone-headed, the flowers earned him a pass this month.

But here's the thing: I'm not sure I want the new waffle iron. It's a modern Cuisinart model with "elegant flaired styling" and even "gourmet recipes inside." Plus, the finish matches our kitchen cabinet hardware – satin nickel. What's not to like?

The truth is I'm kind of attached to the old iron. It still works and it's part of our family history. Our now-grown daughter burned her fingers on it when she was about three years old, back when we lived on the farm in Iowa. You may not think that a child's burned fingers are something you'd want to remember, but I say every memory is precious. I might forget that episode without the old waffle iron to remind me.

That old iron has character, too. The handle has been broken off for as long as I can remember. You have to stick the tines of a fork under the remaining lip of the handle to raise and lower the lid. The "ready" light doesn't glow so brightly anymore, either, making it hard to tell when the waffle is done. I generally have to peek a time or two.

I may just have to leave the new iron in the box and put it on the pantry shelf until the old one quits completely.

Or maybe I could return it and get a new mixer instead. I actually *need* that. My old Sunbeam seized up a couple of weeks ago while whipping an especially starchy batch of potatoes. A few days later, I needed to make a dessert and found myself discarding one recipe after another. They all either required a mixer or some ingredient I didn't have on hand. Come to think of it, my favorite waffle recipe calls for stiffly beaten egg whites. No mixer, no stiffly beaten egg whites. No stiffly beaten egg whites, no waffles.

That settles it: I'm exchanging the waffle iron for a new mixer. If I'm lucky, they'll have one in satin nickel finish.

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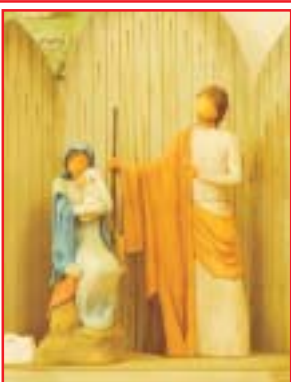
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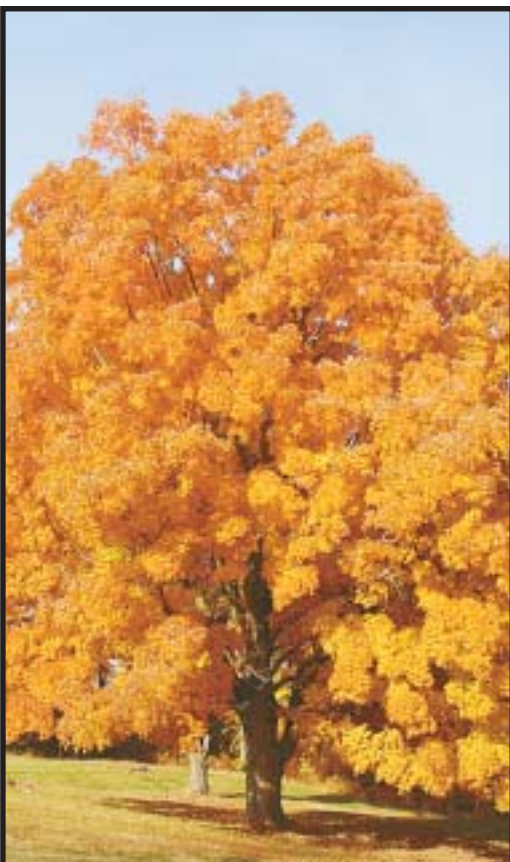
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Another View in Indian Cave State Park



The ice storm missed this one in Peru.

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# Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler  
(Photos provided by Author)

## Fishing:

The Missouri River is running low and clear. The rock formations are a site this time of year. If you have had a boat out on the river during the summer you find yourself saying or at least thinking "I didn't know that was there" although you've been driving over that formation all summer. When these trail dikes, wing dikes, and chevrons show their true form it's incredible to think that that much rock can even be located in or near the river. And to think every bit of it was put there by man and machine to channel the river flow. What these formations do for fish is what is really incredible. They provide protection from the river's current while also providing a food supply and spawning areas for fish reproduction. The river is definitely an environment of survival of the fittest – and most the time the biggest. Yes they are still biting! If you want a big one now is the time to go get one. The action has slowed a little bit with the water temperature but be patient – let them take it a little longer than normal and then let them have it. Set the hook and let the fight begin. They like to mouth the bait a little more as the water cools down but they still want it.

## Hunting:

The leaves are falling and the timber is calling. It's time to scout deer areas for rifle season and the fall turkey season is open. There is a lot of both this fall and as the farmers remove more and more of the crop cover the more your going to see them in the timbers, pastures, and creek basins. Fall Turkey is much like last year where there is NO DRAW for permits – you can buy them over the counter at the Game & Parks or buy them on-line. Fall Turkey permits are statewide and are either sex. Plus, you can bag two turkeys with one permit. Sound like fun – it is but they do not come to a call in the fall. So you have to figure out their routine and ambush them to have any luck. Some times that takes a lot of scouting and moving around to get an opportunity to get a shot.

This may be the last chance to get fishing in on the river this year due to the fast approaching winter. But it's still available right now. Hunting has busted wide open and you can pick your sport. You need to get out and enjoy the weather while it holds. You won't be sorry you did. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time, "Happy Hunting & Fishing."




This month's Fishing Picture is: Jamie Reeves with a 49 pound Blue Cat taken near Peru on the Missouri River.



This month's Hunting Picture is: Myself with a nice Fall Tom Turkey harvested from the hills near Peru.



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## Memories...Moods...Rumors and More

by Vicki Harger

While the rest of the world seems to be falling apart—economically and otherwise—I myself have been living in a world of wonder...a Pacific paradise, of sorts.

How did it all happen? Well, I'm not even sure, myself.

It started last spring. I came to Northern California seeking a soul mate, only to discover that my internet-romance left much to be desired. I tried to fit into the wacky world of my city-bred suitor, but it just didn't work.

Remember my apartment balcony garden? And the Great Soil Heist? And the piles of beachcombing treasures I accumulated? What a mess that was!

I prepared to leave this wonderful paradise in NorCal...But then the good Lord intervened, and I met a country gentleman—a prince of a man whom I'd met once before when he was traveling in the Midwest.

Michael was overjoyed to see me again, and said he'd been thinking of flying back to the Midwest to find me. He couldn't believe that I was here on the West Coast, living in his own locale.

We both discovered that we have much in common...Beachcombing and gardening and camping and berry-picking. Listening to crickets. Hearing a meadowlark sing. It's so much better than hearing the racket from city-dwellers. (Michael calls them "Flatlanders".) We often discuss their city-slickin' ways as we explore the countryside...or while working together in Mike's fall garden...

Our garden, I should say.

We're proud of that lush garden—but sometimes Michael views the veggie jungle with wry concern. "I don't dare send anybody in there after a tomato," he says with a sigh. "Those plants are monsters. They'll climb on you if you don't watch out."

Then he smiles at me and his eyebrow quirks in its special way. At that point, I have to hug him, of course—for he is the dearest man on earth. He is my soul mate and we get along famously...

Speaking of famous—my Michael has become rather well-known on the West Coast. He stumbled into stardom without meaning to, of course.

Michael lives in one of the most beautiful places in the world...at the entrance to the Avenue of the Giants. The ancient redwood

groves have been spared from the ravages of logging companies. But high on the mountaintop, the clear-cutting of timber produced erosion and a nightmare scenario.

One rainy night, a tsunami of mud and stumps roared down the mountainside...a deadly avalanche descending on a sleeping town. Fortunately, Michael heard it coming, and ran to warn the community.

No one was killed, and Mike's home was spared—but many other houses vanished in a moment, and the battle against the logging company began. Mike became the lead plaintiff, fighting the huge corporation in court.

It's a dreadfully long story and it happened over a decade ago—but the publicity continues to this day.

The Environmental Community needed a hero and they found one in Michael O'neal. Flatlanders descended on Mike's home from every corner of the world...

One particular day 7000 people, including the Governor and movie stars, marched in a procession to Michael's doorstep. They all pitched in to help protect his home from future mudslides. Celebrities like Woody Harrelson and Bonnie Raitt shoveled dirt and tossed sandbags. Joan Baez and Winona Ryder chatted with Michael and invited him to dinner.

CBS was there. Fox News. National Public Radio.

The "debris torrent" of flatlanders soon equaled the devastation brought on by the avalanche. Reporters and authors and singers. Indian chiefs and Buddhist monks. National Geographic writers. EPIC and Earth Talk...

Michael's life had become a jumble of noise, cameras, press releases, and screenings.

You've heard of Julia Butterfly Hill?...the gal who lived for two years in a huge Redwood,

without once coming down...? Well, that whole episode took place on the mountain above Mike's property, near the mudslide. Julia used Michael's telephone as a transmitter, linking the Redwood Tree to the world.

It brought even more folks to Michael's doorstep.

His story has been told in books, documentaries, on TV, and on dozens of radio programs. His words have been heard by tens of millions, and his life has been profiled in a book called Hope and Heroes, (London St. Press) along with more famous folks like Billy Graham, Art Linkletter, and Nelson Mandela.

To cap it all off, just the other day a production crew came out to film Michael for a new documentary. They wanted to film the house, and our garden jungle and——

Oh, I know. I know. It's unbelievable. I'm not sure I'd believe it myself, except I'm looking at stacks of news-clippings, and photos and books and——

My, oh my! It's all rather overwhelming to a country gal from the Barada Hills! Who would ever dream that my West Coast escapades would lead to an adventure such as this?

But enough of that! I'm done prattling, folks. I've got to run. I hear some rustling outside near the garden.

It might be those monster tomatoes on the attack. Or maybe it's the Country Girl's pumpkin turning into a coach. I'd better go see.

Take care, my country neighbor. Keep on hoping and praying and dreaming. You never know what kind of challenge you'll find around the next corner.

'Til next time...!

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# The

# Face of Drought



by Karen Ott

In the child's adaptation of a well-known Greek myth a youthful Pandora was given a beautifully decorated box along with express instructions from the god Zeus to never, under any circumstance, open it. When curiosity got the better of the young woman she cracked the lid and the evils within escaped. Revisiting the box Pandora found hope still inside, and in an attempt to assuage her guilt allows it to fly free, a panacea for a troubled world.

In an older, more arcane version....the one not prettied up for children.....the box isn't a box at all but a clay container called the lucky jar. Pandora, who had been bestowed on mankind as punishment for their theft of fire, opens the jar and sets free the evil winged creatures trapped inside, Hope, the weakest of all evils, finds itself ensnared after the horrified Pandora, seeing the misery she has set loose on the human race, closes the lid before it can make a getaway.

As a young girl I questioned why hope was in a box crafted to house evil, and remember asking one of my teachers about it. She gave me a look which said, "You ask too many questions," then offered some nonsensical answer, and sent me back to my desk confused and dissatisfied. Years later, during a philosophical discussion in a college literature course, I stumbled across an explanation which finally made sense: to the ancient Greek hope wore two familiar faces: the more common 'expectation of evil,' and the less familiar 'expectation of good.'

Both were considered a curse, for if man's life held only the promise of sorrow and suffering his existence would be nothing less than a constant torment, and yet, if he believed things would eventually get better without concrete evidence they would, he'd

never accept his destiny and was fated to live a life filled with discontent and disappointment.

Ask a farmer to put into plain words the real-life consequences of hope's dual nature and he more than likely will say, "Huh?" But don't let that country-bumpkin answer fool you, he has an intimate relationship with Hope, and has had since he first fell in love with the land.

In the dead of winter she kneels beside him as he tries to breathe life into a stillborn calf, knowing it's no use but fully aware he has to try. He hears her voice in the soft whisper of summer rain, and in the hard sound of hail beating against the roof.... good and bad from the same sky.... two answers to a single prayer. She's there beside him

in his pickup when he turns on the radio to catch the closing markets, and again when he crawls up into the combine for the opening day of harvest.

She was there when it seemed the long awaited agricultural renaissance had finally come to pass, but even then he knew better than to believe all her pretty promises; through the years he'd learned to lean on her when times were bad, but distrust her honesty when they were good.

She's with him now, looking over his shoulder as he reads news stories of collapsing commodities markets, bankrupt banks, recession and depression, inflation and deflation.

And she's holding an open Lucky Jar.  
Karen

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*Editor's note:*

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## Kindred Spirits

Anonymous

Consider two kindred spirits, soul mates, embarking from heaven on a journey to earth where they have agreed to forget their godliness, so that they can meet, love, and live a fresh, new beginning and end in earthly bodies, exploring joy and happiness in between.

Consider that both are born near each other, but their families move away, one westward, the other moves around the country and returns. They brush by one another at some latitude and longitude. But another circle brings them together, perhaps at a dance, or a dinner. Maybe in a music class they meet, and lyrics and tune unite in harmony and love. They dance, they have children; some luckier ones have grandchildren. And then they leave to go home again, usually one before the other, perhaps to do it all over again, or to just sit in a heavenly porch swing and smile down on the earth.

But suppose now and then, during that instant of transfer through the dimensions, a ripple in time, or some flaw between realities causes them not to be born on the same "side of the tracks", perhaps not even in the same decade. But by the rules of the Game, their lives must be "played out", even if it means one or more dreams will go unrealized. One soul in tune awaits its harmony, but if the other is off key, the song will not sing.

While many dance to the music, others sit on opposite sides of the dance floor while their souls scream, and point, and plead, to no avail. So in one life some are like bookends on an empty shelf, no story between their coming and going.

And yet some pairs of cultural misfits somehow fool fate and find one another. Perhaps one is black and the other white, or one Native American and the other European, or one is young, the other not so young. They overcome earthly odds and taboos, wrapping their existence with perfect love which shields their lives from scorn and fear. From their lives sprout new ideas and the universe expands a little; a little bigger, a little better. Heaven rejoices, angels sing; two kindred spirits have reincarnated creation, and God is pleased.

## Sugar Baby

by Joe Smith

Our Cocker Spaniel, Sugar, is quite a pup. We decided that we wouldn't get another dog because we travel so much going to dowsing conferences. But Marta saw Sugar one day and fell in love with the pup. I was against it but we got her anyway. A pup gives as much love as it can. Their love is unconditional. We have many enjoyable hours playing with her. She is a ball freak; she will pester you 'til you throw it for her, and then be right back for you to throw it again. We would put the ball away for awhile, so Sugar would go out to the apple tree and bring a big apple for me to throw. If I go to the shop she would run ahead a little and drop what ever she is chasing at the time and look up with those big eyes as if to say, "Throw it please." She is a real con artist; she knows how to get you to do what she wants you to. We have a small mattress that she lays on while we eat and she is pretty good at doing that. Of course all dogs have some things they do that aggravate you. If I put her ball up on my desk, she will jump in my chair and then on to the desk to get it. For some reason she wants to be as close to people as she can get. I have two office chairs in the office and she jumps up in

one while I'm typing on the computer. Fact is, that is where she is now sleeping right now. We let her out first thing in the morning and she takes care of business. When I let her in, she makes a beeline for the stairs. If I haven't put the gate up, she bounds up the stairs and jumps in bed with Marta. It isn't long 'til Marta is ready to get up. If I lay in bed in the morning, Marta sends her up the stairs to get me up.

When the neighbors come over for cards, she goes nuts showing off. She really likes some people, and ends up leaving puddles on the floor. She loves to chase the cats, not to hurt them but just to aggravate them. Most ran at first, now very few do. She tries to herd them like a bunch of sheep. Some of the older cats seem to love the whole thing. They swat at her as she flies by. Some times she will roll them with her shoulder. When she is playing with us, her bite is real soft. She has a squeaking ball and loves to sing a song with it just about the time you want to talk to someone on the phone. I need to have the camera out some morning when Marta goes to feed the cats. There are about 20 of them, all barn cats. It would make a good short movie like the ones on TV about pets. Joe Smith

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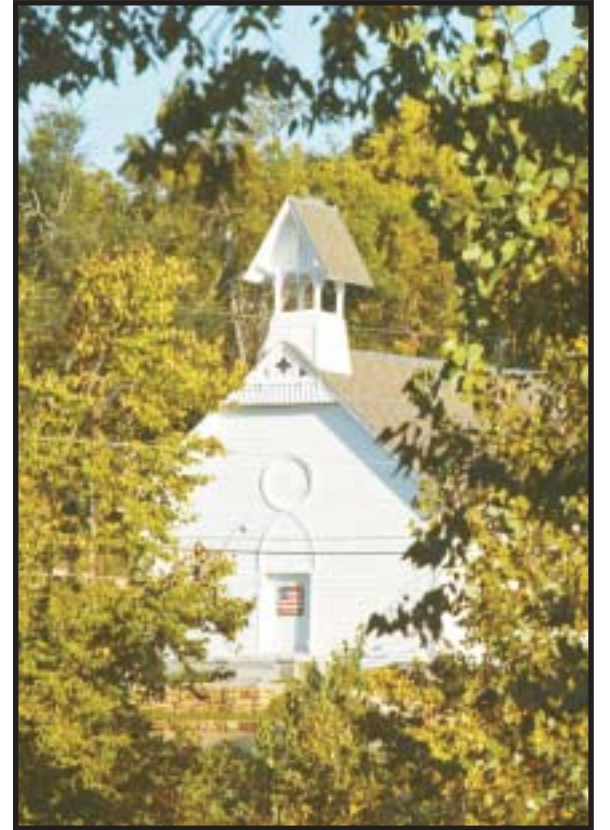
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