

LOTTIE'S LOVE

“Boy, I bet you’re glad he got all that out of his system before you take him home!” That was the first time I ever spoke to Lottie. Her young son had just made the windows and rafters of Faith United Methodist Church in Freeport, IL rattle with his piano solo, an incredible performance. She just grinned and we went our separate ways.

Years later, one snowy Sunday afternoon, both of our husbands were snowmobiling and she showed up at my door. A pot of coffee later, we were pals and it was the start of some fun times --- and some sad times, too.

Her daughter, Angie, spent one summer, between college semesters, working for a plant nursery near Brodhead, WI. Angie made arrangements to stay in the home of a family near there so Lottie and I helped Angie move in for the summer. On our way home, we were laughing so hard that we actually had to pull off the road. Little did we know at the time the other “Thelma and Louise” adventures that were in our future. (Ask her sometime about going to see the Chippendales in Loran one night.)

Lottie’s two kitties, Brandy and Lacy, developed a penchant for ripping up the house while Lottie was at work. The decision was made to “take Lacy for a ride”. One afternoon Lottie and I took the errant kitty to my nephew’s farmette near Mt. Morris, IL and, oh, how the tears flowed as we headed back to Freeport, even though Gary assured us that he would watch over Lacy. Brandy became much better behaved and still is ruler at her Whistler Avenue home.

The time came when Lottie’s personal life changed greatly. She spun her wheels a bit but became extremely independent after the initial impact of the situation faded. She even sold her house and moved on, learned investment tactics, and took charge of her own life.

One July Saturday evening in 1998 I delivered a belated wedding gift for Angie and Brad to Lottie’s home and shared that I needed a place to live **SOON** - like within a week! - because my personal life, too, was changing greatly. By 6:30 the next morning, she called to tell me that she had contacted her landlord and he had one duplex unit that had just become available. By 9AM, Lottie, Jack Hammond, and I were standing in that duplex and I could just feel the peace drifting over me.



The place was perfect. Thanks, Lottie!

The day I moved away from the farm, Lottie was right there, helping with whatever needed to be done. The next day she brought me nails and screws so I could hang pictures. She was such a help and a good friend.

For the next 17 ½ months, Lottie and I were usually together at least one day of most weekends. We continued our “Thelma and Louise” adventures, sometimes cruising the aisles of Wal-Mart “just because”, laughing and enjoying our fellowship. She took me to Thorp, WI one weekend to visit her daughter and son-in-law, Angie and Brad Mattheson.



That was the first time I ever saw Belted Galloway cattle.



And I loved the remodeled barn we saw there too.



There were several trips to apple orchards, the Winslow artesian well, going on a hayride near Shannon, and wherever else our whims directed us.





One Saturday evening it was imperative that we escape thinking about current events in Freeport so we headed south, first enjoying supper in Dixon, IL, then roaming the Ashton, IL vicinity, Lottie's childhood home. Well I remember being parked at 10PM across from the grade school as Lottie happily tromped around the playground, re-living her days of youth. I thought for sure Officer Friendly would soon turn his spotlight on us! We then sat near the parsonage back lawn as she mentally played there so many years ago.

Another time she took me to her Newell Christmas party. We both decided that an evening at Wal-Mart would have been just as good. The picture they took of us wasn't exactly a winner either.



Sometimes we simply spent the day at one or the other's house and solved all the world's problems over a pot of coffee.

Then came my decision to move to Virginia. Lottie rose to the occasion and kept me focused on the job of sorting, packing, and organizing the houseful of "stuff" that needed to be condensed into a 24' Ryder. She spent hours helping me sort sequins and beads into separate vials. Personally, I think she would have been happy to trash the whole mess, but, she humored me and kept at it till the table was clear of craft supplies. She devised the "tear factor" method of discerning which collectables and memorabilia were kept and which went to Good Will or to the For Sale pile. If I picked up an item and tears welled in my eyes, she immediately placed it in the "going to Virginia" heap. Hey, don't knock something that worked infallibly!

In the midst of all the "sortin' and snortin'", she took off a day of work to accompany me to

divorce court. Who could ask for a better friend?

Christmas night that year she invited me over to her home while her family was there. We spent the evening assembling a jig saw puzzle picture of Toronto. She later had the completed puzzle matted and framed and gave it to me as a farewell gift. Each time I see that picture, I remember the warm love in her home that cold winter night.



Distance and time have caused our contact to dim, but, in my heart, I know Lottie is my true friend. She is a good Christian woman who lives her faith, loves her children and grandchildren, and can be an absolute “NUT” when she throws back her red-haired head and cuts loose with laughter. I love you, Lottie!

