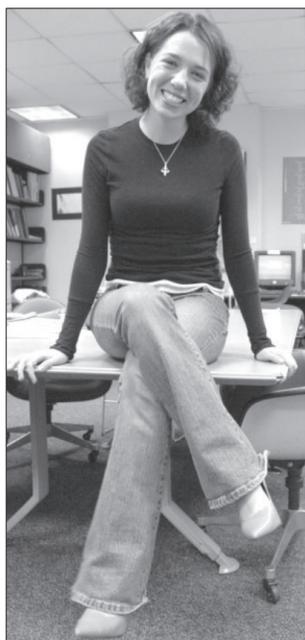


Happiness requires love for self



Lauren Miller

sex and the 'ville

I am not really sure why this column is taking me so long to write. Sitting in my friend's apartment, I realize there is just too much to discuss, ponder, question, judge and all the other things you can do with life. All I know is that life really is a compilation of randomly wonderful moments and randomly low moments.

And I have a lot on my mind. The see-saw motion that is life smacked me in the face back in high school.

My life back then largely was defined by my running, back when I loved mile repeats and 400 workouts. I looked forward to 3:30 practices, Friday night pasta parties and Saturday morning meets.

Running became a way to better myself. My body became a machine that I constantly strove to make better, faster.

I started to obsess about how fast I could go, and it became an obsession

that quietly took over my life. Running had started as a joyful five-mile run with teammates, and approaching senior year, it was ending as an unhealthy amount of mileage alone on a track. I had reached a low point where my body had trouble carrying me.

Silently, I was struggling with depression, unhealthy eating and constantly feeling guilty and not good enough.

These feelings made me hate what I had once loved. Not just running, but myself.

After so much time in this state, I decided to turn it all around. This is why bitter people bother me. Because I was once one of them, and I found it got nothing accomplished. Hating yourself or the world isn't the answer. Bitterness seems to make people end up alone with wrinkles and cats.

I hate wrinkles and cats. It took a long time for me to remember the reason I had loved running.

It wasn't about the mileage, it wasn't about the time, and it certainly wasn't about being thin.

It was about the basic simplicity of placing one foot in front of the other.

Today I follow that rule: appreciate the simple things.

It can be really hard to follow it at

“My bank account is almost empty, but I still buy peanut M&Ms every time I walk into a gas station.”

school. Life is no longer simple: It is constantly changing. We all must learn to deal with changes in our family life, school life, social life and personal life.

Life can be hard. But why frown if you can turn it around?

The best part of keeping it simple is how easy it is to find good things in life.

The highlight of my weekend was someone giving me ketchup in a plastic bag because McDonald's forgot to give me some with my large fries.

No one should have to eat fries without ketchup.

I smiled, not just because it was a nice gesture, but because it reiterated the fact that I am past the times when fries made me want to throw up. The compulsive, skinny runner has been replaced permanently by the true me.

I might not be outstanding, but I'm real, and that's what's important to me.

Maybe these can be my confessions of a materialistic, slightly anal, fairly awkward and always random girl.

One of the best moments of my life was when my best friend and I saved Horace the seal in California. I never will forget days on the Hill with Papa Pete, and I never will forget the day he died.

I compulsively drink coffee in large, unhealthy amounts.

I love red nail polish and diamonds because they remind me of my mom.

My bank account is almost empty, but I still buy peanut M&Ms every time I walk into a gas station.

I drink everything I can out of a straw.

I have a tendency to change my life plan about once a month and spur a mini-crisis.

I love cherry chapstick.

After a lot of time worrying about my materialism, anal, awkward and random tendencies, I have decided I will not apologize for it any longer.

I like me ... a lot. It took a lot of hardships to get to that point, but I am glad I finally am here.

I am pretty sure I have said it before, but you have to love yourself before others can love you.

Bed & breakfast combines charm and hospitality

Ashley Williams
for the Index

When junior Danielle Asal and senior Nicole Asal returned to Kirksville after winter break, a soaking-wet disaster greeted them.

The women said they unlocked their door to find water seeping into their walls, all over their carpeted floors and even into the kitchen cabinets.

“We knew we had to do a lot of fixing,” Danielle Asal said.

This left the women with no place to call home. Danielle Asal said they immediately began searching for somewhere to stay with their parents' help. First, they tried hotels, but then her mother found Cottage Grove Bed & Breakfast in the phone book, she said.

“It's more homey – it's not like going home to a hotel room,” Danielle Asal said.

And so the Asal sisters became just one more family to revel in the comforts of Cottage Grove, located near the end of East Jefferson Street at 301 S. Cottage Grove. The bed and breakfast is owned and operated by Mac and city councilwoman Jill Wimp McCord.

“They were the nicest people we'd ever met,” Nicole Asal said. “They took us in immediately.”

Although the women had only planned to reside at Cottage Grove for a month, their stay lasted nearly three months. Danielle Asal said the McCords, whom the Asal sisters call Mr. Mac and Ms. Jill, remained professional in providing for all of their needs – yet the relationship became like a family.

“They're kind of our adopted parents in Kirksville,” Nicole Asal said.

The Asals stay in touch with the McCords by sharing meals and visiting Cottage Grove.

A New Beginning in a Familiar Place

The McCords opened Cottage Grove in September 2001. Rooms are available for \$79 for a single and \$89 for a double, according to their Web site.

“When we came here, we thought, ‘If we rent one room a month, we will be so fortunate,’” Jill McCord said cheerfully. “It's been much better than that.”

She said Cottage Grove is not



Chris Waller/Index

The Cottage Grove Bed & Breakfast has provided Kirksville with an alternative to hotels since its establishment in 2001.

extremely busy, but it keeps her and her husband occupied.

“We were getting close to retirement and were very active,” she said. “We didn't want to stop that.”

Yet Jill McCord said she never expected to return to her hometown after nearly 40 years of absence. She attributed their choice of Kirksville to the friendly people, the medical center, the colleges and the Square.

“Kirksville can't be beat,” she said.

The McCords stayed in a number of bed and breakfasts before deciding to open their own.

“I've always loved cooking and cleaning,” Jill McCord said. “It just seemed like a match for us.”

As Mac McCord fiddled in the kitchen in the background, she quickly added, “And my husband is an excellent cook.”

The McCords offer their guests a variety of dishes made from scratch, ranging from eggs Benedict to crème brûlée french

toast, Jill McCord said.

“Mac does walloping omelets,” she said. “I guess I'm the baker.”

She said that each night, guests choose from a rotating menu what they would like for breakfast and where they would like to enjoy it.

Every morning, guests open their doors to a tray with a pastry and a beverage of their choice. Then, the guests may eat the food they selected the night before in the dining area or wherever they chose.

A Place to Call Home ... Away from Home

The McCords' realtor had a better idea of where to locate their bed and breakfast than they did. Their realtor kept asking them to visit a certain property, Jill McCord said.

“I thought it wasn't old enough,” she said.

Finally, they agreed to view the home situated on 1.5 acres of land.

“We walked in, looked at each other and said, ‘This is it!’” Jill McCord said.

The flow of the house, with its spacious hallways, large doorways and open floor plan convinced the McCords that the home would be the perfect location for their bed and breakfast, Jill McCord said. The McCords also were fond of the informal dining area, which is a part of the kitchen. Jill McCord said the last thing they wanted was a formal dining room.

“We love to talk to guests, and it doesn't bother us for them to see us cooking,” she said.

A “Terrific” Guest List

Guests mingle and wander throughout Cottage Grove.

“They sit down, and they talk to each other,” Jill McCord said. “There are all sorts of different views, and they all get along. That's been a miracle, I think.”

Jill McCord said guests range from salespeople to hunters to University students' parents. She

Cottage Grove Amenities

- morning trays
- 1.5 acres
- wireless Internet
- bathrobes
- large common room and piano area
- evening snacks and beverages
- arrangements for pets in on-site kennel



Design by Lindsay Koski

said students always are invited to join their parents for a free breakfast.

“We've just had terrific guests,” Jill McCord said.

Many guests are return visitors, Jill McCord said. Nancy Lowery, mother of sophomore Sean Lowery, said she and her husband have lodged at Cottage

Grove four times.

“The last time I was there, it was like being with old friends,” Nancy Lowery said.

She said she enjoys visiting with other guests and hearing the McCords' stories.

“They are such nice people,” Nancy Lowery said. “They make it fun.”

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