

No place like home for Kirksville native

BY JULIE WILLIAMS
Editor in Chief

Spend a moment talking with Jill McCord, and some of the first things that become apparent are her frequent laugh, the slightest hint of a Southern accent and an intense love for her hometown.

McCord, a City Council member and owner of Cottage Grove Bed and Breakfast, can talk about Kirksville — a place she found her way back to on accident after nearly 40 years away — for hours, almost letting the details of the city overshadow the details of her own adventures.

"I can go on and on about how much I love Kirksville," McCord said with a smile. "[My husband and I] love the blend of the education aspect of it, the medical aspect, the rural aspect. We know talented people. It's the best — my high school friends here are the best you'd ever meet. It's just such a pleasure to be here."

McCord spent the first 18 years of her life in Kirksville before moving away after a summer semester at Truman (then Northeast Missouri State Teacher's College) to continue her nursing degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Upon graduation, she followed her first husband to St. Charles, Mo., where the couple had three children. After a divorce, McCord met her current husband Mac, whom she would follow to Memphis, Tenn. There the McCords created their own version of the Brady Bunch, as each had three children.

"We blended those children together — wonderful kids, I just can't tell you," she said. "... The kids really did well and really held us together, I think, because it was a lot of strain to do that."

While in Tennessee, McCord earned a master's degree in business from the University of Memphis and worked as a nurse coordinator.

Then it came time to think about retirement.

"We're both very active and decided we just couldn't retire, so we started looking," McCord said.

“The only thing we miss are our children, and I think that’s why we love the Truman students so much and feel privileged that we get to know them like we do. You can just find so much to do here.”



All Eyes on Jill McCord

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Local Kirksville resident Jill McCord stays busy by working with her husband at their bed and breakfast as well as volunteering for organizations such as the Chariton Valley Association.

"We thought about a restaurant — that lasted about two seconds. ... We started staying at some bed and breakfasts and thought, 'Hey, this looks like something that might work for us.'"

At the time, McCord said the couple had no intention of returning to her hometown of Kirksville, but their real estate agent had a couple of houses in mind for the couple here. McCord said that after some coercion, she and Mac decided to at least take a look at their current house on Cottage Grove Street — a house resembling a California ranch that was complete with bathrooms in every room, a full attic and basement and plenty of space.

"We walked in the front door and Mac and I both looked at each other and said, 'Yeah, this is good,'" she

said.

It took two more visits for the McCords to be completely sold, but almost nine years later they haven't looked back. Guests from around the country and the world frequent their four bedrooms, including speakers, parents, sales representatives, authors and candidates for open positions at Truman and A.T. Still University.

"The only thing we miss are our children, and I think that's why we love the Truman students so much and feel privileged that we get to know them like we do," she said. "You can just find so much to do here."

And McCord certainly is not lacking in things to do. It takes two hands for her to list the activities that occupy the majority of her time, and all have a common theme: service.

"We're joiners, I'll admit it," McCord said with a laugh. "But we love to join things that we can work in — not just totally social."

Of all the organizations she is a part of, the one closest to McCord's heart is the Chariton Valley Association for Handicapped Citizens. Perhaps her most public endeavor was a term on the City Council, which expires in April. The decision to run was spurred by McCord's sense of protection for her hometown.

"This water issue came up with Hazel Creek, and I'm a great preserver of natural resources, and I was just sick when that happened," she said. "I participated in the group that protested that, and as a result of that, I decided to run for Council."

Although she will not seek a second term, McCord was a part of

the Council for such projects as the smoking ban, the completion of Spur Pond and the historic walk through Kirksville, the addition of a skate park and the restriction of alcohol use in city parks.

Even as she lets one commitment drop from her calendar, it's unlikely that McCord will find herself at a loss for things to do. In addition to her love for cooking, reading and sewing — and her obligation to the laundry and cleaning it takes to maintain a bed and breakfast — McCord said she always can find something to do around town.

"I get disappointed in people who say there's nothing to do in Kirksville," she said. "There are so many things to do — we could be out every night, all day doing things in Kirksville. It's just a wonderful place."

Cooking with Julia: Black Forest Cake



Julia Hansen

Once a year we all have the chance to take a big breath, blow out the candles, make a wish and eat a big piece of cake on our birthday. Growing up I hated having to share my birthday with my sister, who is exactly four years older than I am. Yes, the day when I was supposed to receive the biggest piece of cake and all the attention was cut in half to share with my sister. Nowadays I enjoy sharing a birthday with her, and because I'm terrible at remembering birthdays, having the same one is an added bonus because I never will forget hers.

Last weekend I went to Kansas City because it was my boyfriend's mom's

(undisclosed age) birthday. For a special birthday lunch we had grilled salmon, asparagus, potatoes, salad and bread, which all were delicious. The meal wasn't quite complete, however, without the birthday cake. For her birthday I made this recipe, one of my family's favorite cakes, and it was a hit. While driving back to Kirksville from Kansas City, I began to wonder about birthday cakes. I've grown up with cakes at every birthday celebration, but I never really questioned where the tradition came from.

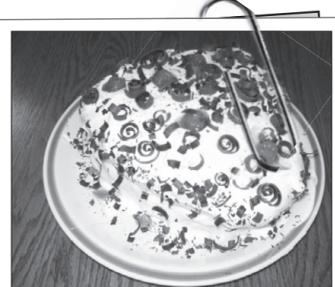
With a little help from whatscookingamerican.org I found that cakes became a traditional part of birthdays in the Western world in the 1800s, but that the combination of a cake — or a cake-like food — and a birthday dates back to ancient Rome (though they were typically more of a bread that was sweetened with honey and had nuts in it). By the 15th century, cakes became more ornate and often were multi-layered. Cakes were very special, and typically only wealthy people could afford one. Birthday cakes became more common around the Industrial Revolution, and in 1920 the boxed cake was invented. Nowadays cake baking and decorating is a delicious art form that includes multi-tiered cakes, intricate designs and wacky flavors. This cake, however, is easy to bake, simple and beautiful at the same time.

Ingredients:

- 1 box chocolate cake mix (with additional ingredients needed according to box)
- 1 21-oz. can cherry pie filling
- 2 cups whipping cream
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 bar chocolate (Hershey's milk or dark chocolate)
- Maraschino cherries

Directions:

1. Generously grease and flour two 9-inch round layer pans. Mix cake batter according to box directions, and pour batter into the two pans. Bake according to box directions. When inserted toothpicks come out clean, take cakes out, and let them cool completely in the pans.
2. Place whipping cream, sugar and vanilla in a medium bowl. Beat ingredients with a mixer until stiff peaks form. Cover, and refrigerate whipped cream until you are ready to assemble the cake. Next, with a vegetable peeler, slice along chocolate bar to form chocolate curls for cake garnishing.
3. Assembling the cake: Place one cake layer upside down on serving plate. Spread a little more than half of the can of cherry pie filling and 1 cup of the whipped cream across the bottom cake layer. Next, place the second cake layer top-side up on first layer of cake. Spread top of the cake with remaining cherry pie filling. Frost side and top of cake with remaining whipped cream.
4. Garnish cake with chocolate curls and maraschino cherries. Refrigerate until serving time.



Read the Index the **easy** way

www.trumanindex.com

- Breaking News
- Web Polls
- Additional stories



- E-mail stories
- Access archive
- Post Comments

... all accessible from the comfort of your room