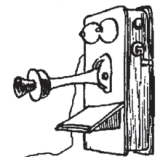


Peoria Partyline



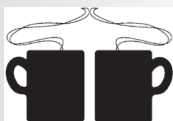
... connecting the extended Peoria community

Volume 8. No. 4

December 2012

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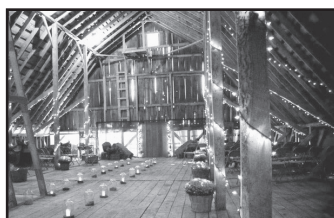
Online issue: www.peoriacrc.org

Old Barn Hosts Country Wedding

On a chilly afternoon in September, 150-200 people began gathering on a farm just west of Peoria. There was an excited expectation in the air as they greeted each other, signed their names on an old barn board with a marker, and placed their gifts on a table in a nearby barn full of hay. It was wedding day for Trent Brackin and Michele Klein, and word was they had planned a true country event.

The big red barn on their acreage had been transformed into a warm, inviting place. An old fashioned country theme was everywhere with purple and gold mums, hay and straw bales, old saddles, wooden shelving, wagon wheels, barn boards, and hints of purple fabric. The haymow sparkled with miniature lights on roof posts and rafters, and tea lights lined some of the horizontal wall boards. Candles in Mason jars formed a center aisle which led to a country themed area which would serve as the "front" for the ceremony. Late afternoon light streamed in through cracks in the old barn siding.

Given the word, guests assembled in the haymow—some on chairs set out, but most simply standing on both sides of the "aisle." Michele's young daughter Jovi set things in motion by pulling an old red wagon—with an old fashioned doll in it—down the aisle.



Trent, dressed in black jacket, white shirt, jeans and cowboy boots stood on the "stage" and watched Michele—dressed in a white knee-length dress and cowboy boots—come down the aisle on the arm of her father. After a brief exchange of vows, the couple headed down to climb into a giant, orange, earth scraper hooked to a bulldozer. With the crowd cheering them on, TeeJay—a young nephew of the groom—drove them out into a nearby pasture for a celebratory wedding ride. Some of the children climbed in as well.

While they were gone, guests were encouraged to check out the lower level of the barn—where they found drinks, popcorn, punch, and coffee served from a "Saloon"—and the old corn crib where a buffet meal of grilled ribeye, buns, potatoes, corn chips and melted cheese, and salads had been prepared by Za Ga Zig Shrine.

While eating at outside tables, it was fun to take in some of the additional country flavor. A sign near the "guest book" said, "I'm in a stable relationship," and there was a photo area where families could don old fashioned clothes and hats for a "wild, wild west" photo. Mingling with the crowd were children cuddling purring cats, playing games, or running in and out of a smaller barn to climb on the hay or pet the miniature ponies.



Once the wedding couple returned, a band began to play and everyone was encouraged to visit the "cake and mint/nuts" area to choose from at least five different flavored cakes.

Visiting and celebrating continued on into the evening. No doubt the nip in the air finally encouraged people to seek out their warm cars, but all would agree the wedding lived up to its expectations—a fun and novel affair—and definitely one that Richland Township hasn't seen for many, many years.

-Marilee Vander Wal

Rebuilding and Forging Ahead

We all know the sight of smoke rising in the distance, but the gut-sinking feeling of finding it is coming from your own burning house is reserved for a precious few. James and Tena Verhoef had spent the weekend camping and after returning home briefly on Sunday morning, they returned to the campground for a bike ride. They were celebrating their twins' third birthday and were excited to get home and decorate cupcakes for a party later on.

From a distance they could see smoke rising and contacted a neighbor, but she hadn't noticed anything suspicious. Then, upon cresting a hill, they saw that their home was on fire. Tena called 911 and they all watched helplessly as the fire licked its way through their beloved home.



Starting on the back patio, the fire showed no discrimination on what it scarred and destroyed. The contents of an upstairs bedroom collapsed into the back yard, pre-

cious treasures were turned into ashes, and pictures and precious keepsakes were now only memories. A family of seven quickly became homeless—all the things they thought important turned into a charred pile of rubble.

Their house had been lovingly transformed over the years from snug and small, to one that stretched lovingly around five children and their parents. Now it was gone. Family and friends spent many hours poking through what was left to help inventory all that had been there. Insurance required it, but it also made the loss that much more biting.

To hear James and Tena was to be reminded of God's faithfulness. In the midst of a crazy Sunday afternoon they could be heard saying, "Thank God we weren't home," and "We always knew that if something took it, it wasn't really where our treasure was."

Then, in the midst of this chaos, they could be seen managing their family's needs. That included calming fears and finding new routines and comfort zones for Caden, Avery, Declan, Macey and Madelyn. For the Verhoef family, this was even more heartwrenching as Caden lives with RTS (Rubinstein Taybi Syndrome) and twins Macey and Madelyn were

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**Neighbors are much more than just names!
Grab a cup of coffee and let's meet the Rapinchuks!**

In the first week of August about a dozen guys helped unload the contents of a rental truck into the Peoria school teacherage at the top of the hill. The Rapinchuk family was moving in, after several days on the road from Lakeland, Florida.

Craig grew up in Westchester, a suburb of Chicago. He attended both public and Christian schools, and was even home-schooled for a while. After graduating from high school, Craig chose to attend Clearwater Christian College in Clearwater, Florida, where he majored in elementary education with a minor in Bible and special education.

During his freshman year Craig met Crystal, who grew up in nearby Tampa. She started out majoring in music—which she has always loved—but then changed her major to biology.

After they were married, Craig and Crystal moved to Chicago, where both worked in labs—Craig in virology and Crystal in research and development. Several years later they moved back to Florida, where Craig taught 2nd and 3rd grades in a community school. In time he began searching for something new, particularly administrative work in a school system.

During a nationwide search, Craig came upon Peoria Christian School, which had an opening for a principal. In June the family traveled to Chicago, and while grandparents took care of their children, the couple checked out Peoria and the school. After some interviews, and some reflecting and praying, Craig accepted the offer to become the principal—along with a number of other duties—in Peoria's small school.

Craig and Crystal have been blessed with two boys. "One of the reasons we wanted to move, was to provide affordable Christian education for our boys," said Crystal. Dakota is five years old and enrolled in kindergarten; he loves learning. Landon is three years old and enjoys any activity with a ball. Both of them

are typical boys, active and rambunctious. They enjoy playing outdoors or in their house in the basement—something new for them.



Crystal is committed to continuing with her occupation as a blogger. Her blog is an educationally geared site—focusing on how to save money and promote quality education and family time. You can find her site at www.survivingateacherssalary.com. She has gathered a large following. As a result she receives many offers and opportunities from companies that want her to mention their products and services. She also has been playing piano since she was four years old.

For fun, in Florida, Craig watched or participated in sports and the family did geocaching for a while. They also enjoyed showing movies outdoors during the summer. "We would invite children and families from school and the neighborhood over to our house," said Craig. "They'd sit on blankets, and after starting up a fire in a fire pit, we pass out popcorn and drink."

Craig and Crystal love the beautiful scenery in this area, particularly the rolling hills. They appreciate the peace and quiet—and the relative absence of mosquitoes, which were pests in Florida. The family has had a number of pets over the years, which included a pot-bellied pig, chickens, and cats. They did not take any pets on the long trip north, but they remedied that by obtaining a couple of kittens in the first couple weeks after moving in.

Welcome, Rapinchuks, to the Peoria area! We hope that you enjoy your new home for many years to come.

-John Gorter

Helping Stretches Those Who Serve

For more than twenty years, a work group from the Pella area has been participating in work trips to Texas and Mexico. “It is an opportunity to help God’s people who are less fortunate than we are,” says long time volunteer Wayne Van Dyke. He, and three others from our township—Jerry and Nancy Van Wyk, and Sharon Blom—got involved through their church, Trinity Reformed.

The roots of this outreach go back to a 1984 mission trip with an Oskaloosa/Barnes City group to construct a large church in Roma, TX. A couple of years later Wayne joined, and when work began at an orphanage in Mier, Mexico, Jerry Van Wyk joined. There they used their expertise in plumbing, construction, cement work, fencing, roofing, woodworking, and painting to improve life for thankful orphans.

Trinity began organizing such a work group for the Pella area in 1989. Since then the program has grown steadily, expanded to other venues in Texas and Mexico, and tackled anything and everything needing attention, including meals for workers and building a dorm now known as the Iowa House.

“Five years ago we returned to the orphanage in Mier,” said Nancy Van Wyk, “and the directors welcomed us with open arms.” In addition to many remodeling and maintenance projects, the group worked on building a church on a bramble-infested tract of land where children, without close family themselves, could worship in future years. “Our group installed siding,

windows, doors, and electricity,” said Nancy, “but drug cartel violence all too soon put our work on hold.” The orphanage was moved to a larger town for the safety of the children.

“Though our heart is in Mexico,” says Nancy, “we have continued with projects in Texas.” The poor Hispanics of south Texas have great needs—like a small congregation using a house as a place of worship. “They were growing by ten people per week,” continues Nancy, “but desperately needed a new roof. So we raised the walls by two feet, replaced all of the rafters and gave them a new shingled roof.” While the men did that, the ladies of the group painted a large, two story sanctuary at a second church. “The only way we were able to do this,” said

Nancy, “was with the longest extension pole we had ever seen.” One of the ladies even did all the trim work up on a ladder over 20 feet above the floor.

“Our group hates to admit it,” says Nancy, “but we are getting older. We used to drive straight through—22 hours, in 2 vans, pulling trailers full of supplies—but we finally came to our senses and now stop overnight near Dallas.

Through the years we have shared hand-made toys, quilts, Bibles, mission tracts,

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Pothoven Farm Sale

Saturday, September 8, 2012, was a beautiful, late-summer day. That, on its own, was more than enough to make it memorable for a farm boy who hadn’t been on the farm—in September—for more than 30 years. It was also the day of my parents’ farm/estate sale.

My wife and I arrived Thursday morning—expecting a relatively leisurely few days of watching and “supervising” the proceedings. Boy, were we wrong! An Iowa farm/estate sale is kind of like an intricate dance with everyone having defined roles. The only problem was that everyone knew the dance except us.

Ken & Zach Vander Linden had the farm sale side of things completely under control—a relief—but the house was another story. Darl and I had emptied the closets and sorted things in July, but Cheryl and I soon learned that it was our job to box everything up in some semblance of order. It all had to be ready to take outside Saturday morning. So much for those leisurely few days! After some serious panic, Sue Van Ee arrived on the scene. Problem solved.

For someone who has never attended an Iowa farm/estate sale, Saturday was quite the spectacle. People meandered past tables filled with old toys, and cardboard boxes overflowing with household goods on the lawn. Others poked through tools and old farm “stuff” on hayracks or reached up to inspect things hanging on machine shed walls. Tractors and other machinery drew curious onlookers as well. More than 200 family members, neighbors, friends and bargain hunters attended with cars and pickups lining the road—and some even on the

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Buckley Creek So Low—Can’t Flow

Until the timely rains that came mid October, our township shriveled under a severe drought. Even the Buckley Creek stopped flowing. Water pooled between sand bars and down where it flows into the Skunk River, it dried up altogether.

In spite of the dry conditions, area farmers were pleased to find more grain in their fields than expected. Yield was spotty but many reported their monitors registering anywhere from zero to 230 bushel per acre. It also seems that this area was relatively free of the Aflatoxin fungus that has affected harvest in other areas of the state.





... heard about it on the partyline ...

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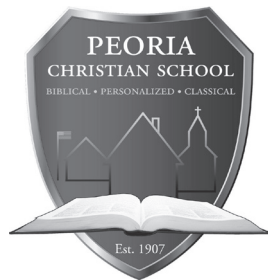


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- Rebuilding continued

facing some unresolved health issues as well. So, in addition to the loss of their home, the family was making numerous trips to doctors to assess what was affecting the twins' health. Several weeks after the fire some questions were answered—a diagnosis for Macey and Madelyn of LGMD (Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy)—and once again the family found their faith being tested in new ways.

Since the July 8 fire, James and Tena have found temporary housing in Pella. They've started to dream again about what their home could be, have decided to rebuild on the same property, and will break ground this fall. They are working with a builder and trying to think of every thing they could ever want or need in a home. It is important that whatever they build, it be accessible and user friendly for the whole family for years to come.



It's a reminder to let go and let God guide the way—rebuilding and forging ahead along this path that only God fully understands.

-Nicki Veenstra

- Pothoven Sale con't.

lawn! Quite a sight. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended and helped out.

And then it was over. Everything gone—except memories.



The JD 520 heads back to its old home.

Keith VanEe and Ben Lefevre bought my father's JD 520. When Ben won the bid, it was impossible to tell whose grin was wider, Ben's or mine. Ben and Krystal live on the farm where we lived when I was young—and where we lived when Dad bought that JD 520. It was going home.

-Dennis Pothoven

- Helping Stretches con't.

candy, balloon animals, wheelbarrow rides for the kids, smiles, uproarious laughter, quiet tears, lots of hugs, and many prayers. Over the years strong bonds have been formed among our group, and with the fellow believers."

What is it that brings this group together? Sharon Blom feels it is something she read in Rick Warren's book *40 Days of Purpose*. "His words, 'It's not about you,' led me to join the Texas/Mexico Work Trip group," she shares. "It is seeing the difference that our group's small efforts make in people's lives that has kept me coming back."

Members of the group have been stretched—in their mind sets, their creativity, their skills, and their spirituality. They have tried new things they never dreamed of in their quiet lives in Iowa, built a new confidence, and broadened their outlook. Most of all they have felt the hand of God—in the smile of a child with a lovingly crocheted baby cradle in her hand, in the simple words



"we prayed that you would come," in so many years without injury, in safe journeys, in answered prayers, in safe border crossings, in the joy of seeing a family in their new home, in seeing others enjoy electricity, and in the delivery of quilts the day before a pastor is heading to the poor in the mountains.

"It is a great blessing to know that God can use our skills to answer the prayers of His people," said Nancy. "The faith demonstrated by the believers we have worked with over the years sometimes overwhelms us. Though they have little in material possessions, they have an enormous amount of faith that God will supply what they are in need of. Worshipping with them at the close of our projects gives a glimpse of worshipping with the saints in heaven. To God be the glory!"

-Nancy Van Wyk