



By Jennifer Heyns

One of the most exciting days of my vicarious life is quickly approaching. On October 7 *Confessions of a Counterfeit Farm Girl* graces the shelves of Borders and other fabulous bookstores across the nation and its author, Susan McCorkindale, is a Fauquier County gem and one of my dearest friends.

In fact, not only is she a local and personal treasure, her book is all about her experiences learning how to live the country lifestyle right here in our fair county. She moved to rural Upperville about three and a half years ago after spending half a lifetime and a glamorous career in the very bustling metropolises of New Jersey and New York, leading her to believe (at least at first) that she could only be, at best, a farmer faker.

Her book is 350 pages of fall-down-funny anecdotes of her adventures on the 500-acre cattle farm she and her family now run. It's hard to explain without giving it all away, but Susan's sense of humor is as divine on paper as it is in person. Her style is unique and elevating and can best be described as Nora Ephron, only closer to home.

I remember when she first moved here, she looked rather frightened and pale - I believe she was in a state of shock for the first several months. She gave up a high-powered executive position with a national magazine to move to "the sticks" with her husband and two sons. Not only did she give up her career, but she also left behind

her extended family, dear friends and a lifestyle never to be duplicated here.

What she gained, however, was a new set of friends, a completely new set of skills including how to wrangle cattle, gather chickens and navigate cow pies in pumps, not to mention some much needed daily exposure to the sun.

I can recall several outings with our friends - and to be sure, we are a raucous group (proof in chapter 37) -



having a grand time, laughing all the while and Susan would suddenly shout, "Stop - I have to write this down!" And she would.

As I sped through *Confessions*,

poring over every page, it was like reliving the first couple of years of knowing Susan, but this time I get to see what she was thinking during her trials and tribulations on the farm. And I have to tell you, she is a riot both outwardly and inwardly.

Confessions begins with an accounting of what Susan's life was like in New Jersey, with her crazy hectic commute to her hoity-toity job in New York. She had quite the life up north. Although I must admit, it sounded like she was involved in just as many shenanigans up there as she is down here. It turns out, though, that as suited as she was for the fast-paced city life of power lunches, ad deadlines and marketing programs, it just didn't suit her, despite her penchant for looking pretty in haute couture pinstripes.

All burnt out and nowhere to go, Susan's husband convinced her to pack up the Durango and head south in the winter of 2005, where the couple agreed to live on and manage her brother-in-law's cattle farm. Something she never in her wildest dreams expected she would be doing....something she never expected she would continue to do even after she got here. It was like a whole new world for her here and Susan uses her quick wit and well-placed alliteration to recount all of her faux pas and new discoveries on every page of her book.

Now that she has been properly embedded into our community and culture she admits that she has found

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life on the farm really does agree with her and there are several things about life in northern Virginia that she could never live without now.

"I couldn't give up the beautiful views," she mused, "I love it here, which is something I didn't really expect. I fought moving here tooth and nail."

What she lovingly (or maybe it was laughingly) describes in her book as "Country Time" is also something Susan has come to cherish. It took a good while for her to slow down to the more tortoise-like pace we natives have come to know as second nature.

"I love the space and the pace of life here," she confessed, "You don't really appreciate it until you leave here for a while, but then you start to feel closed-in and claustrophobic."

While New York City is known as the city that never sleeps and is famous for its exciting night life, Susan admits that it's got nothing on the planetarium show she enjoys nearly every night outside her 110-year old farm house that she calls Nate's Place (not giving this one away - if you want to know who Nate is, you'll have to read the book. Hint: it's not her husband, kids or brother-in-law.) She and her husband, who she calls Hemingway in her book, like to sit outside under the stars and just stare at the night sky.

"It really is like diamonds in the sky," she noted, "In New York all of the buildings are lit up and they're pretty but you can't really see the sky."

Naturally, learning to appreciate the beauty that surrounds her took some time and some obstacle navigating. For a city girl, it was difficult for Susan to

get over the lack of shopping options, cell service and Internet speed that the rest of us have long since resolved ourselves to.

For those of you who are like me, it's very comical to see this beautiful fish out of water swim up upon our shores and flop about for a while trying to learn how to walk upon the land (watch out for that cow patty) like the rest of us. And, trust me, she doesn't mind. Confessions is all about Susan laughing at herself over all of the things

on the farm, from which the book was born. Whether you've met her or not, her high-pitched hilariousness comes through her writing loud and clear and you'll soon find yourself feeling like you were there, too, at each of her Confessions.

One of the best things about having a local author is that you can get to meet her and have a friendly, smiling face and sweet city twang to bring to mind as you peruse the pages of her book. Susan has planned several book signings in the immediate area including The Galloping Grape on October 9th from 5 - 7 p.m., Borders Books and Café on the 18th from noon to 3 p.m., and Salon Emage on November 6 from 5 - 7p.m.

"I am looking forward to my book signings as much as I am to the book's premier," Susan gushed, "they're just like little parties, and I love a party."

While Susan will be galloping about the country on a book tour and God (or Oprah) willing, television and radio interviews later this year, she will also be working on her second

set of Confessions. As exciting as all of this is for Susan, she confessed to me that she's losing sleep lately just waiting to hear more good news.

Confessions of a Counterfeit Farm Girl is being reviewed in the movie production arena and has the possibility of becoming a film. So... I had to ask the age old question:

"In the movie about your life, who plays you?"

Without a second's hesitation she bellows, "Kate Hudson!" and when asked why, she explained very seriously, "Because in all of my dreams, I look just like her."

And Hemingway? Which hunk should have the privilege of playing



The author posing with one of her many new friends.

she just didn't get when she first came to Fauquier County, like the allure of The Tractor Supply, the country-casual fashions and the integration of horse and hound into our daily lives.

For those of you more like Susan, who are fairly new to living in a rural setting, her stories may be like a walk down memory lane, reminding you of the zooming pace of city life and all of the bizarre things you found upon first arriving here.

Some of you may already be familiar with Susan's work. She's had several Guest Column spots in the weekend section of the Fauquier Times-Democrat over the past couple of years and has a hilarious blog about living



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your dutiful McHusband, Mrs. McCorkindale? Could it be McDreamy or McSteamy from Grey's Anatomy? Would it be Matthew McConaughey? George Clooney? Robert Downey, Jr.? No. No. Mrs. McCorkindale has her eye on one Mark Wahlberg.

Although I have no doubt that every Hollywood studio will be fighting over the rights to Susan's book, I know there's no way anyone could say what she has to say any better than she can. And, I may be a little biased, but I think everyone should go buy the book - one for yourself, one for your sister, your mom, your co-workers, your cousins, your friends. But I digress, to put it as Susan would.

Now, for the really important matter: in Confessions - The Movie, who will play me? ■

For more about Confessions of a Counterfeit Farm Girl and upcoming book signings, go to www.susammccorkindale.com.



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