

PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS THERE

Stories about the best neighbors you could ever have



Asking you to tell us about “the finest neighbor you ever had” hit a chord. More than 200 stories came in. Virtually all of them were about the neighbors who are “always there for us.”

At a time when people in many communities hardly see their neighbors, it’s encouraging to know that in rural North Carolina there are so many generous, helpful, loving people who care about the neighbors near them. They are people who simply enjoy your company, and who stand by you in the good times and during times of need. They are people you are happy to see any time of the day or night, and they are just as happy to see you.

My wife, Susan, and I have known such neighbors for many years, including Tideland EMC members Dallas Gray, Horace Twiford, the R.D. Prices, the late Ralph O’Neal and others in Stumpy Point.

Another nice thing about being a member of a cooperative is that you’re all neighbors, too.

Thanks to everyone who sent in stories and pictures. You can see more on our Web site: www.carolinacountry.com

Next month, we’ll publish your ideas on “How to Live a Long and Happy Life.” (Deadline was Oct. 15.) See page 18 for the “Nothing Could Be Finer” themes and deadlines.

—Michael E.C. Gery

Pictured right to left: Mrs. Gladys Creed Harvey (at 18), Mrs. Dora Vaughn, Joan Redfield, Harley Martin.

ROCKING WITH GLADYS

The finest neighbor I ever had was also one of my best friends. She lived right next door. In the summer after work, I would take my cup of coffee and walk across the yard to her house and we would sit on the porch in the rocking chairs and talk about everything. We would giggle and gossip and have a good time. Often times she would call me up and tell me all about her church meetings which were big events. She was Primitive Baptist, and they always had meals, foot washings or big singing. These meetings were very special to her.

Every Thanksgiving I would fix dinner for her and she would always bring me a little hostess gift. She would come early and we would sit at the table and just talk and talk while everything was cooking. She babysat all three of my girls at my house, and many times I would come home to a wonderful dinner she had cooked for us.

This neighbor was my mother-in-law, Mrs. Gladys Creed Harvey. We lost her last September. Every time I go by her house I will always remember those summer evenings setting on her porch and just rocking away the day.

*Janet Harvey
Siloam
Surry Yadkin EMC*

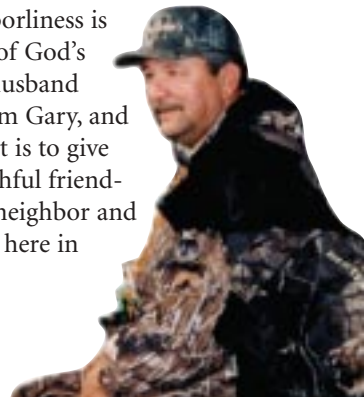
TIRELESS AND READY TO HELP

Folks can be friendly in the North where I was raised, but no one could have prepared me for the true neighborliness of Southerners. My husband lived in Chapel Hill when we first met, but his lifelong dream had always been to move to the land he had hunted on in boyhood with his grandfather and farm it.

Eagerly agreeing to the move, I packed our belongings. We built our home miles from other homes. Our closest neighbor, Gary Martin, soon became our dearest friend. Never have I met a more caring soul. When my husband is away, Gary never fails to drive over and check on me. When Steve needs help plowing fields, learning how to be a better pine straw farmer, fixing anything around our growing farm, Gary is there, tireless, ready to help regardless of the hour or his own workload.

His neighborliness is genuine proof of God’s existence. My husband learns daily from Gary, and we learn what it is to give and receive faithful friendship from our neighbor and our true friend here in Atkinson.

*Kate Birgel
Atkinson
Four County EMC*



Gary Martin with his dog.

WATCHING OUT FOR US

Henry Carter, age 84, is a very fine neighbor. I can give many reasons, but here are two.

When we went out of town, he would usually get our mail and paper for us, and keep an eye on our property. A couple years ago when he knew we were out of town, we had failed to tell him our oldest son would be coming over to feed the dogs this time. So, when Mr. Carter saw a strange vehicle go down our driveway and pull behind our house, he was immediately on the alert. He drove his car over to our driveway, to block the person's exit. My son had to do some talking to convince Mr. Carter he was legal.

The best proof of being a fine neighbor came just a few weeks ago. Mr. Carter had asked if we needed any peas from his garden. I told him no, I just didn't have time to shell them. That evening the doorbell rang. There stood Mr. Carter, with a large Ziploc bag full of peas for me, already shelled. Would he take any money for them? Of course not!

*Vera Sheppard
Fayetteville
South River EMC*

LIKE FAMILY TO US

My neighbor Harley Franklin, 64 years old, is a sweet man. He always comes over to my house so he can talk to someone, and he always brings something with him. He likes to farm and grows a garden. He brings me (his "little'n") bags and bags of tomatoes, corn, squash, beans and everything else he grows. He likes to come over for coffee or to eat popcorn. Harley sometimes comes over on Thursday nights to play bingo with me and my family. He treats us like family, and he says we are like family to him. Sometimes, he takes my brothers and me to the barn in his pickup to watch him feed his cows or his horse. He gives me a Polaroid picture of every newborn calf and makes sure I am the first one to see his newborn puppies. He is the best neighbor I have ever had.

*Kira Farrington, 14
Waynesville
Haywood EMC*



Henry Carter

MS. CALDWELL'S LESSONS

I was young; she was old. I was ignorant; she was wise.

It's amazing how two extreme opposites could get along so well. Ms. Caldwell moved next door when I was 7 years old. When I first learned an old lady was moving in next door, I must admit, I was disappointed. I had wanted a playmate, someone my own age. What I didn't realize then is that this "old lady" would become my best friend.

This kind woman helped me develop the standards of ethical behavior and lessons in etiquette that I would need for the rest of my life. I have not forgotten Ms. Caldwell's kindness.

People would incredulously ask me at a young age, "Who taught you to be so polite and respectful?" These were the times I would proudly answer, "My neighbor, Ms. Caldwell."

Alone, with no grandchildren of her own, she and I and my entire family became good friends. But I don't think anyone truly appreciated and treasured her as I did. I am grateful for everything she's ever done for me and that is why I consider Ms. Caldwell not only the finest neighbor, but also the finest woman I ever knew.

*Mercy Thompson
Matthews
Union Power Cooperative*

MR. JEFF AND HIS FAMILY

He was nothing I expected yet everything I needed. The newly shattered innocence of my childhood could only be renewed by his gentle spirit and nurturing hand. October, my birthday month, marked a time of confusion and distress among my family, and the day my father left was a day that a dark shadow fell over my home. Yet the day that the Kopf family and Mr. Jeff moved in across the street the sun had never shined so brightly.

I remember Kara, the middle child and just my age, grabbing my shaking hand, leading me through her new house, rambling on and skipping up the stairs as if we'd known each other for years. I was only 3 years old and she was only 4, but the moment we saw each other there was an unspoken connection that has never broken and never will.

At that age, when all of my siblings and I seemed to be searching for the presence of a father figure, Mr. Jeff was unbelievable. Even though he's moved away, to this day I can still hear his roaring laugh and corny jokes. I can still smell the slight scent of Bud Light that seemed to linger on him, but was so comforting every time I would crawl up into this lap while he watched football and fell asleep. The countless days of softball games and camping trips, and the way he always knew not just what I was feeling, but exactly who I was. He knew my intentions and my shortcomings. He loved me unconditionally, yet never had to say it. I can't even begin to imagine my childhood without him or the entire Kopf family.

*Hannah Thornton
Butler High School
Matthews*

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Mrs. Dora Vaughan lives in the Carver Park section of Murfreesboro. From 1966 through today, she has been our other mother, friend, neighbor and guardian angel.

Whenever I needed something, she gave it to me or made it possible. I grew up next door to her. And my children were not only raised by me, but also by Mrs. Vaughan, who was there with food,

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clothing, heat and love, as she did for her own family.

We had a family pet named Bosco who would wait for the kids to go to school in the morning. Then he'd go next door for a biscuit from Mrs. Vaughan. He would knock on the door and she'd hand him a biscuit, then he'd come home. On weekends, or if the kids were out of school, he wouldn't go for his biscuits. She is not only a neighbor to people, but also to Bosco.

Today she checks on the family as though they were still kids, calling me twice daily. Mrs. Vaughan is ill, but she finds the time to make sure that when you come to visit, you can carry home a bag of goodies.

Bettie Jordan-Bishop
Murfreesboro
Roanoke Electric Cooperative

ZIONVILLE'S BEST

The best neighbors ever, Reene Ann and Pat, welcomed this flatlander with open arms when we built our cabin near them in North Carolina. What an introduction to mountain life! In short order they taught me to play "Boil That Cabbage Down" on the dulcimer; showed me the new baby calves down the road; told me which kinds of rhododendron grew best on what side of the mountain; introduced me to the Roan Valley Auction and the local blue-



Renee Ann Slack, holding "Miss Caramel," and Pat Taber.

grass joint; took me to Sweet Aromas restaurant where the dinner hour is a version of the heavenly banquet; helped me put up a porch swing, tried it out, fell to the ground, got up cheerful; and regaled me with a play-by-play account of preparations for the arrival of their 27 baby chicks. Next thing you know I'll be getting dozens of the freshest eggs around. Now, are they amazing or what?

Sue Spirit
Zionville
Blue Ridge Electric

DENNIS AND JOAN REDFIELD ARE WINNERS

When my parents moved to another community, they played Neighbor Roulette. You never know what kind of neighbor you'll have. But they couldn't have found better neighbors than Dennis and Joan Redfield.

Dennis mowed the lawn, pruned trees and shoveled the driveway. When Dad fell, Dennis was there in a minute to help him up. And when the heavy glass sliding door went off track, Dennis played Samson and fixed it. He even blacktopped the driveway, free.

Joan brings her pleasant humor, attentive ear and sometimes something from her kitchen. She's taken Mom to concerts and planted her flowers. She has helped Mom choose furniture and wallpaper.

Emergencies happen when one is 90-something, but during Mom's four-week hospital stay, Joan took care of paying bills and the mail and groceries. I called her Miss Meals on Wheels.

Dennis and Joan painted Mom's house but wouldn't accept as much as offered.

They love her and she loves them, which means everything to me since I'm several states away. Neighbor Roulette paid off for my parents as the Lord graciously provided the best.

Barbara Daningburg
Mount Pleasant
Union Power Cooperative

Send us your best

Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

JANUARY 2004

"How I Got My Name"

First name, last name, nickname, any name.

Deadline: Nov. 15

FEBRUARY 2004

"Home Improvement Horror Stories"

That remodeling job that went crazy. Send pictures.

Deadline: Dec. 15

MARCH 2004

"My Gardening Secrets"

What have you tried that really works?

Deadline: Jan. 15

APRIL 2004

"The Camping Trip I Will Never Forget"

Where was it and what happened? Send pictures.

Deadline: Feb. 15

MAY 2004

"What We Did When the Power Went Out"

Smart – and maybe not-so-smart – ways to cope during an outage.

Deadline: March 15

JUNE 2004

"Being a Teenager Today"

What are you going through? Or: How does it compare to when you were one?

Deadline: April 15

JULY 2004

"Our Money Pit"

What was the biggest waste of money you remember?

Deadline: May 15

AUGUST 2004

"Was I Wrong!"

Lessons you learned the hard way.

Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2004

"My Favorite Photo"

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2004

"If I Were Governor of North Carolina"

What would you do?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2004

"Mama's Cooking Was Always the Best"

Send a recipe, if you have one, and photos.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2004

"Meeting Your Grandparents"

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com