



Search Winona Post:

GO X

[Advanced Search](#)

Friday August 14th, 2009

Home Classifieds Columns Community News Editorials Employment Legals Letters To Editor Obituaries Outdoors Sports

Submit Your Event

August 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

[PLACE CLASSIFIED AD](#) | [PLACE EMPLOYMENT AD](#) |

[Home](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Circulation](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Send a Letter to the Editor](#) |

[Contact Us](#) to Advertise in the Winona Post!

AccuWeather.com
Winona, MN

Hourly Info | 15 Days



Sunny
90°F

RealFeel®: 94°F
Winds: SW at 7 mph

Weather Forecast | Weather Maps

[Hotels in Winona MN](#)

Great Hotels in Winona
Free Internet & Kids Eat Free!

www.HolidayInn.com

[Minnesota College](#)

Minnesota School of Business. Training For Today's In-Demand Jobs

www.MSBCollege.edu

[Going to Winona?](#)

Get the Scoop from Travelers Who Know Winona!

www.TripAdvisor.com

[Winona Jobs](#)

Job Listings in Your City Submit Your Resume & Profile- Free

www.Job.com

[Winona Car Insurance](#)

Get Winona Car Insurance. Free Quotes Online. Save Today!

www.CarInsuranceRates.com/MN

Author finds muse in rural Winona (08/02/2009)

By Cynthia Porter

In a little yellow farmhouse perched high in the bluffs, creative inspiration flows like the gentle breeze that makes the curtains flutter and the cornstalks rustle.

It is here in this unassuming place that Charlene Ann Baumbich finds her muse in the unlikely form of grazing cows and preening songbirds, a muse that brings her from five hours away for the zen of the farm she calls her writing home.

Baumbich is best known for her Dearest Dorothy series of books that weave humorous and insightful stories into the lives of characters living in a small town.

But Baumbich's wings have spread far from that six-book series into inspirational books and a new fiction series set to launch in September, and Winonans might be surprised to see glimpses of their beloved river town peeking from the pages they'll soon find on the shelves.

Stray Affections, Baumbich's novel about to be released as the first part of the Snow Globe series, is staged in a town called Wanonishaw, MN. It even has a Polish Institute.

It is unquestionably, Baumbich said, a natural expression of her attachment to this place that goes back almost two decades after an unexpected photograph caught her eye.

In 1990, Baumbich, her husband, George, and their son, Brian, were at a college fair near their home in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Wandering through an endless sea of displays and flyers, a giant mural of a breathtaking view caught their eye. The view was from high up of two lakes, a pretty city and a river winding past in the distance. "We stopped dead in our tracks," Baumbich said, "and said 'Where is that?'"

They had never heard of Winona before, but Brian was soon headed for his freshman year here at Winona State University.

His parents visited often and came to fall in love with the the charm and beauty they found here.

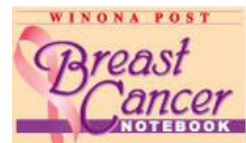
Back home, Charlene, a former award winning newspaper community columnist and feature writer for the Chicago Tribune, was busy penning books and magazine articles and making a name for herself.

The work would come with her during their visits to Winona, and something magical



Photo by Cynthia Porter

Author Charlene Ann Baumbich pens her masterpieces from a charming little farmhouse high on the bluffs near Winona.



happened when Baumbich sat down in her son's rented farm house to write. "Instantly there was something about this sense of place," she said.

Words flowed as Baumbich sipped her tea and watched the cows munch pastures nearby. The only sound at the farm is the chirp of happy birds and the rustle of crops in the field, and the serenity of it all became the fuel behind thousands and thousands of words.

Six Dearest Dorothy books, Don't Miss Your Life, and Stray Affections each found much of their substance during her days at the farm. The follow-up to Stray Affections is being hammered out on her laptop this moment.

Baumbich has proven her prowess as a fiction writer, but recent nonfiction work is earning her gold stars and kind words too.

A collection of humorous, faith-filled and introspective observations for living with freedom, laughter and grace, Baumbich's most recent book is a window into the thinking of the woman herself, thinking that has brought her far and kept her whole.

Called Don't Miss Your Life, Baumbich's most recent book on living well rolled onto book shelves in early summer to rave reviews.

Publishers Weekly could not say enough about it in a review that went on and on, beginning with, "Baumbich, an award-winning journalist and author of the Dearest Dorothy fiction series, has set out to accomplish what few Christian humorists have succeeded in achieving: making her readers laugh deep from the belly while simultaneously trouncing on their faulty "religious" beliefs. Baumbich's writing style is such that readers will feel as though she's conversing with herself and they are her most fortunate eavesdropping audience."

To sit across from her at a farmhouse table, it's easy to see the woman behind the stories in Don't Miss Your Life. "I can only credit it to God's greater plan and Irish storytelling," she joked. "People ask me where do I get my material, and I tell them I wake up and it follows me around."

As Brian's college days drew to a close and he gradually grew out of the farmhouse, Baumbich found that she simply could not.

Her son married a girl and got a job in Winona, giving the Baumbichs the perfect excuse to continue splitting time between their home in Illinois and here. But Baumbich could not bear the thought of letting the farmhouse go, so she and her husband arranged to lease it long-term from the family that owns the neighboring farm.

Her muse is here, and now her grandchild is here, and Baumbich will always call Winona her home away from home. Grateful for its coffee shops, its beauty, its people and the inspiration to write that she finds here, Baumbich feels like she knows a secret about a place, a secret she lets slip out in her books from time to time but one she knows you have to see to truly appreciate. "People who come here or live here get it, the beauty and power of the river or pulling over to watch an eagle," she said. "If you've seen this place, you don't forget it."

Copyright © 2009, Winona Post, All Rights Reserved.

Send this article to a friend:

Your Email: *

Friend's Email: *

[Back](#)

[Next Page >>](#)



Winona Post Info:

Phone: 507-452-1262
 Toll Free: 1-800-353-2126
 Fax: 507-454-6409
 Email: winpost@winonapost.com

| [PLACE CLASSIFIED AD](#) | [PLACE EMPLOYMENT AD](#) |

| [Home](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Circulation](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Send a Letter to the Editor](#) |

Copyright © 2009, Winona Post, All Rights Reserved.