

# Cattle Crossing

*by* Kitty Boots

Seven days a week Harry Waltz, Sr. drove 150 Holsteins from the wooden milking barn a quarter mile down a state road to the pasture. In the evening he drove them back. It was a noisy, smelly parade, their veiny udders swinging in time to the clip-clop of hooves on the paved road, manure-caked haunches bumping in the hustle. Harry, Sr. was a small, mean man with a wife twice his size, four burr-headed sons and a daughter named Debbie.

I wasn't allowed to go to Debbie's house. I'd ride my bike by it, stop and fiddle with the streamers on the handle bars. There were usually dogs and cats in the yard. Mom wouldn't let us have any pets and the Waltz's animals were an attraction I couldn't resist.

Debbie called out to me. "Hey, I got a puppy. You wanna see him?" I skidded to a stop, laid the bike on the ground and ran up to the yard. She handed me a fluffy white puppy. Soft and squirmy, I held him to my face, let him lick my nose and smelled his puppy breath.

"Momma got a new dog, too. You wanna come see it?", Debbie asked. Mrs. Waltz was sitting in a recliner watching television, a small Pekingnese in her lap. "Momma, [Kitty] wants to see Ming," Debbie said. Mrs. Waltz let me pet Ming. "Harry, Sr. got her for me as a surprise birthday present, " she said. "He went over to Fishersville to get her. I'm gonna raise puppies from her when she gets old enough. You know people'll pay fidty [sic] dollars for a Pik-a-neece?"

"We got a Siamese cat." Debbie said. "She has kittens in the shed. You wanna see them?" Did I ever. I'd seen pictures of a Siamese cat and wanted to see for myself if their eyes were really blue. "Sure," I said. Debbie asked Mrs. Waltz if we could have a Dr. Pepper. "Go on out to the shed and I'll get the Dr. Pepper," Debbie said and disappeared into the kitchen.

Harry, Jr. was in the shed cleaning tools. "Whaddya you want?", he asked. I told him I wanted to see the Siamese kittens. He laughed and said, "You wantin' one of them kittens?" I nodded, too excited to speak. "Might as well take one," he said. "If we can't give 'em away we're gonna drown 'em. We got too many."

"Can I see them? " Harry, Jr. put down his cleaning rag, crossed his arms and looked at me. "Sure," he said. "I'll even give you one if you pull down your panties and let me take a look." My throat closed up. I backed out of the shed and walked my bike home, front wheel wobbling because I was too weak to steer it straight. Looking down at my feet I saw I'd stepped in dog shit. It was smeared all over my new red Keds.

