

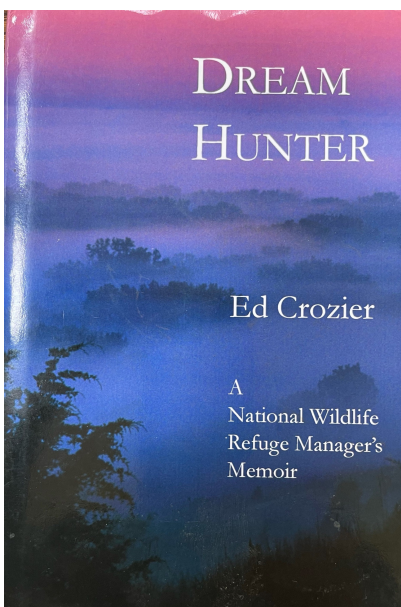
LIFE AS A YOUTH ON JASPER, MINNESOTA'S MAIN STREET



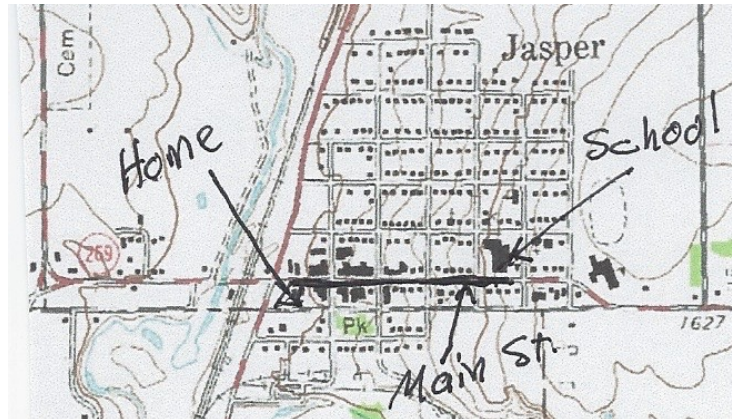
**A short essay about the nurturing of a young lad
in the small town of Jasper, Minnesota**

and

**A chapter about living on Jasper's Main Street taken from
Ed Crozier's Memoir - "Dream Hunter"
Published in 2006**



This short essay is about the nurturing of a young lad in the small town of Jasper, Minnesota.



My youth home was a house in the lumberyard at the lower business-end of Jasper's Main Street next to the RR. Consequently I walked up the Main Street hill to the town school and the merchants saw me every school day for 12 years.

They knew about my outdoor interests and contributed to them. The car dealer across the street gave me a shotgun and an Irish Setter pup sired by his dog that was a great hunting dog. On the next block, was the local banker who loaned me his duck hunting boat. Further up the block, a beer-joint owner gave me a huge cage for pigeons and later, a pet raccoon. Across the street was the druggist who gave me his absent son's kayak. Other local townspeople were also aware of my outdoor activities and reputation and that of my upstanding parents, particularly my good mother.

My friends and I were into making outdoor camp shelters and once we stole RR car grain doors to make our shelter. They were heavy, double thick 2 ft by 6 ft wood pieces that were inserted in the RR car doors to hold the grain and were frequently laying by the RR tracks waiting to be used. Some friends and I picked up several, one at a time, and struggled to carry them down the RR and over the pasture fence to the camp site on the bank of Split Rock Creek. We made the burdensome trip several times. The Depot Agent watched us the whole time from his depot office and did nothing at the time. Later he spoke to my Dad and we had to carry those heavy doors back. That was the punishment!

Another time, some friends and I stole a chicken from a creek-side farmstead at the edge of town. The bird was cooked over a campfire, but was too tough to eat. We thought no one saw us but later the owner spoke to my Dad who paid a premium price for the old hen, said by the owner to be a prize bird. Again, no punishment!

Eventually, I probably warranted my parent's and the townspeople's tolerance and expectations - by getting a college degree, serving overseas with a US Army Marksman Detachment and then having a rewarding career with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The small town newspaper, informed of my whereabouts by my proud mother, kept the townspeople up to date which hopefully gave them satisfaction for their past tolerance and support.

Life on Jasper Minnesota's Main Street

Excerpt from Ed Crozier's 2006 Memoir – "Dream Hunter"

The Crozier family lived in Jasper, Minnesota, from 1937 to the time my father died in 1986. I suppose it was not any different from thousands of other small towns in America's Upper Midwest. Life was slow moving, quiet, safe, and by today's standards, a life of constancy on a landscape of plainness.

The southwestern part of Minnesota, where Jasper is located, was the last part of Minnesota prairie homesteaded in the 1800s because it was known as Indian country. This was due to the presence of the sacred stone near the town of Pipestone, just 12 miles north of Jasper. Indians quarried the stone there for carving of the ceremonial smoke pipes. Thus it was not until 1888 that Jasper was incorporated. Its population never exceeded 1,000 and varied little during the years we lived there, ranging between 700 and 800 people.

There was little opportunity to find work, so few new people moved to town. Typically, most young adults moved away after finishing high school to find jobs in larger towns or, less frequently, going on to colleges and universities. Consequently, the remaining population of older adults and younger children formed a very stable population with everyone becoming quite familiar with each other.

When I was a child there, most people knew just about everyone's social status in town, including where they lived, where they worked, where they went to church, and what they did in their spare time. As a result, there was a feeling of safety among one another. The children were free to roam the town at will and make or find their own excitement. We did just about anything that pleased us, provided it did not cause mayhem to others or to property. Except for fights between drunks behind the city-owned liquor store, or an automobile accident, or a damaging storm, there was little excitement, either physical or moral except for a little sexual hanky-panky among the adults.

Our house, surrounded by lumberyard sheds, was at the west end of the Main Street business area. Further to the west, across the adjacent highway and beyond the town ice-skating rink was the Great Northern Railroad track, a major element in much of my life as a kid for it provided both adventure and dreams of untold adventures beyond the bleak prairie environment of southwestern Minnesota. Besides several freight trains going through town every day (sometimes stopping), there was the morning and evening passenger train of the Great Northern Railroad.

From Jasper you could go south on the train to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for the day and return in the evening. Or you could take the same train north to Willmar, Minnesota, and then east to the Twin Cities without changing, although it stopped at all the towns along the way.

Many days, my friends and I could be found on or near the railroad track and around the freight cars on the sidetracks. Sometimes we played Cowboys and Indians at the stockyards where cattle were loaded on the trains, or crawled under the railroad bridges where we could be just inches under the tracks when the trains passed so loudly and scarily overhead.

In my childhood days there were still hobos riding the freight trains. Since our house was the nearest to the railroad tracks, some of them would stop at our house and ask for food, which my mother always provided. Most were just unemployed men, just a step or two below our own economic level, traveling around the country looking for work.

In the early days there was a hobo camp near the railroad bridge on the south edge of town where a small stream joined Split Rock Creek. There the hobos built makeshift sleeping shelters from scraps of wood and cardboard or slept under the trestle. They cooked their food over campfires, using creative cookware made out of coffee cans and soup cans -- something we kids learned to do for use in our own camps around town. Hobos might have pioneered the layered look in clothes, as they seemed to wear all their clothes and carry little. It was very exciting creeping up through the grass on the bank overlooking the camp and gazing down through the layers of evening campfire smoke at the activity of these mysterious people.

One of them, whom we knew just as "Ole," stayed in town for years. On colder nights he slept in the depot where there was an old potbelly coal stove. I suppose the depot agent let him stay there since he would stoke the stove all night for warmth and save work for the agent when he came to work in the morning. I remember once going into the depot after dark to look around. I didn't see Ole sleeping on the bench. He had his several dark coats on and was invisible, so I nearly sat on him. It scared the hell out of me. I ran like blazes out of there!

The wooden doors that helped contain the grain in freight cars were ideal for camp construction. They were very heavy, so it would take two kids to carry only one grain door when we were stealing them to make lean-to camps. One time we worked for hours, making several trips, carting them a block or so down the railroad track, then down the side of the embankment, over a barbed-wire fence then to the creek edge, which was west of the railroad tracks. The whole time the depot agent was watching us. The next day, after we had completed constructing the camp, he spoke to Dad, so of course we had to haul them all back, which seemed like much more work than hauling them away in the first place. This mild kind of reaction to our misdeeds was not unusual. People as a rule were very lenient with us. I don't remember hard punishment for any mischievous behavior of this nature.

When we had an extra coin, which was seldom, we would place them on the railroad rails. After the train passed over them, pressing them flatter and larger, we would find them along the roadbed. Then we would have something really special to show other kids who didn't know how we had reshaped the coins. Another fun diversion was riding in the back of drayman Henry Giese 's freight delivery truck when he made deliveries to the stores in town. Henry also delivered ice to home iceboxes. The ice was cut during the winter from a pond in the creek just north of town and stored in the icehouse behind his home. Covering it with sawdust preserved it throughout the summer.

Living just up the street from the railroad depot, we could see everything and everybody that was leaving and coming to town on the train. I remember seeing a lot of servicemen get off the train during the war years. Grandpa Crosier (William T.), who lived with us, especially enjoyed the trains and often rode the passenger train to Mitchell, South Dakota, to see his sister Jo. Dad didn't enjoy the trains so much — they brought the lumber and coal to town. He had to unload that lumber, but never the coal. That was a stipulation when he took the job: no coal shoveling.

One of my most embarrassing moments as a young man happened on that train. For some reason I was going on the train to Sioux Falls by myself. When I got on the train in Jasper, some girls about my age or a little older, who were from nearby Pipestone, got off the train for a break while the train was stopped at the Jasper Depot. Soon after finding a seat, I had to go to the bathroom and did so on the train. Right after I flushed the toilet I realized that the waste dropped directly to the tracks below in plain view of the girls who were standing beside the train. Through the frosted window of the toilet, I could see the girls were looking down at my toilet waste. When they got back on the train I was the only one on the car so it was obvious it was my poop they had seen. Needless to say, I did not act like a cool guy and try to strike up a conversation on that trip. I probably never would have anyway as I was very shy, but that really destroyed any self-confidence that I might have been able to build up.

If you were to walk up Main Street from the lumberyard, which was on the south side of the street, the next building was the old post office. The postmaster at the time was Mr. Meyer, and his assistant was Mr. Zenor. There wasn't any house-to-house delivery, so everyone in town came to the post office every day, which provided ample opportunity for conversation. Next to the post office was the old Jasper Hotel, that we called the Green Hotel, which was a boarding house for what seemed like the really poor people in town. At one time there were two active hotels, both relatively large. That was a lot of hotel space for a town of no more than 1,000 people. We referred to them by their paint color, the Green Hotel next door to our house, and the White Hotel two blocks up the street.

I don't remember much about either place except the buildings were really decrepit and, aside from the few families of poor folks, were mostly abandoned. We would sneak into them through broken windows on the first floor and play games and search for anything of interest.

The only thing I remember specifically about the people living in them is getting into a fight with one of the boys who lived in the old Green Hotel. I remember having him down and hitting him in the face when my mother came to pull me off. He must have really made me mad as that was completely out of character for me. Although fights were not uncommon among the other boys in town, they were not usually that fierce.

Next on Main Street was the produce building, where one could purchase eggs and chickens that the local farmers had sold to the produce owner. He also sold ice cream and Grandpa Crosier would go hand-in-hand with my younger sister, Candy, up the street to buy ice cream cones. Cubby, the family dog, went along, too, and it was not unusual for him to get into a dog fight as there were a number of dogs that lived on Main Street and there seemed to be a lot of fighting among the male dogs.

Next to the produce store was the telephone office, where the telephone exchange was located. If you didn't own a phone, you could go there to make a call and arrange for long distance calls, too. When I was in the 7th and 8th grades, Sam Arvig owned the phone company and he and his family lived upstairs in the same building. His son, Maurice, was a friend. One summer we worked for his Dad, digging prairie grasses from around the wooden poles that lined the countryside roads to prevent them from being burned by grass fires.

I remember it being hot, boring work going from pole to pole for miles and miles. Back then it seemed like every country road had telephone poles beside it. Evidently, the phone business was not so profitable, as Mr. Arvig soon had to sell and the family moved back to Paynesville, Minnesota, where they had come from originally. During the war he had worked in the Baltimore shipyards, and eventually he and his family moved back there. Years later we met them at Chincoteague Island off the coast of Maryland, where they had a summer trailer house. We were there on a business/vacation trip. We went fishing with them and had a good visit, but with the passage of time we didn't have much in common anymore.

The last building on the block was the Sacks Bros Store, a mercantile or department store. It was a large building made of the local pink, quartzite stone. When you visit Jasper today, about the only buildings still there on Main Street are those made of jasper stone from the quarry at the edge of town.

The town was originally started because of the quarries. On the east side of town there is evidence of several other abandoned jasper quartzite quarries within several miles.

The Sacks' store seemed huge inside since the ceilings of the first floor were nearly two stories high. The second floor was a large open space that was used in earlier days for dances, medicine shows, school plays, roller skating and even basketball games. There was a stage and an open space for seating. It had already been abandoned in my time, so I was seldom up there. The store was a full department store with shoes, clothing, fabric, sewing notions and groceries. My sister Maxine worked there when in high school. Then the groceries were sold over the counter; there was no self-service. Gradually, the store emphasized food more and more and finally it became like most small-town grocery stores.

Up the street from Sacks was another block of stores. I say "up" as the lumberyard was at the west end of Main Street at the bottom of the hill and from it the street went up the hill through the two-block business district to where another four blocks of churches and the homes were located. The school was at the top of the hill.

The layout of the town with Main Street, and where we lived on it, may have given me some of my ambition and drive. Our house was at the bottom of the hill and the school, churches and residential area where the doctors, the school superintendent, the banker and the storeowners lived was at the top of the hill. So to me, as a child at the lower end, it was a dream to live at the top of the hill in a better residential area and have more money. Thus, striving to improve my position in life became known metaphorically in our immediate family as "climbing the hill." No one else in the family felt this way.

The most likely reason for any success of the Crozier kids is the example set by our parents. We were influenced heavily by Dad's work. He was always available to the customers, even after work hours. He never refused to help people and was always working, except on Sunday. And even on Sunday he worked because he was on the Methodist church council and was the church treasurer, so after church he had to take care of that business, and he and Mom also took care of the communion setup and takedown. Dad was also a school board member and a fireman. Observing his constant working and high involvement in civic/church duties may have rubbed off on his children. We just assumed what he did was normal.

We never saw Mom sitting around, either. She was active in coffee parties and ladies aid at the church, and the only times she took a break were when she played golf. In the evenings, she wrote letters while Dad read newspapers, and sometimes they played Scrabble. They were never idle. Both Mom and Dad were avid readers - especially Dad. He read two or three daily or weekly newspapers.

Although I was raised in a company house that was at the bottom of the hill near the railroad tracks, my sisters and I thought our house was better than many in the lower part of town. We felt bad for other people who didn't have the home that we did.

It was a real hub of activity, and we felt quite comfortable bringing friends home for meals. Mom and Dad never balked at having impromptu guests at the dinner table.

On the corner of the block across the street from Sacks' store, going from west to east, was the Jasper State Bank. It was another stone building, and it held the meager Crozier funds for 50 years. In the basement was the Model Beauty Shop and upstairs was the doctor's office. When we lived there, Doctors Lohmann and Sorum treated the family.

During my childhood, they took out my tonsils and appendix and once sewed up the palm of my left hand after I tore it up on a sharp fence post. Another time, some stitches were put in above my eye when I went head-to-head with Marjory Sanderson (a classmate) when we ran headlong into each other in the school gym in grade school. She also had to have stitches, so we were in the doctor's office at the same time. Throughout our 12 years together in school, Marjory was a class leader. She got the best grades, was active in extra-curricular activities and was very popular during a time when I was the exact opposite. I was always a bit smitten with her and eventually did work up the courage to ask her out after we graduated. It was only once or twice as I lacked the self-confidence to ask her again, particularly since she went steady more or less throughout high school with one of the varsity athletes whom she later married.

Marjory's father was Hap Sanderson, the president of the local bank. Hap was one of several men in Jasper who were bird hunters, so I considered that we had mutual interests. I admired Hap and the others greatly and in return, they showed an interest in my hunting expeditions because they loved the outdoors and wildlife as much as I did. Hap even loaned me his duck boat, which I now consider quite remarkable, as I doubt I would have done something like that if a boy asked to use a duck boat of my own. I may have even screwed up the courage to ask him for it, since I knew he was not using it at the time. I borrowed Hap's boat for several years, to hunt some large sloughs in eastern South Dakota while I was going to college. It was a fine boat. Because I remember having some great hunts using that boat, I have been looking for a similar boat ever since.

There was one embarrassing incident involving that boat. When I was a college junior and could no longer rely on my friend and former college roommate, John Schluenz, to give me rides back and forth to college, my father bought me a 1939, green, four-door Ford automobile. It was in excellent shape and I used it for travels throughout Minnesota and South Dakota, mostly for hunting during my junior and senior years.

The boat incident happened one Friday night as I was returning home to Jasper with Larry Debates, another friend from Jasper, who was also majoring in wildlife management at South Dakota State University. We were just leaving Brookings, headed south after we had been duck hunting near there. Sometimes we skipped class and went hunting at some of the good duck sloughs that were so close.

As we were leaving Brookings, I realized that we were following a Jasper high school bus that was returning home following an afternoon high school football game at Arlington, South Dakota (a town nearby).

I knew that a Jasper High School senior girl, whom I was dating, was probably on the bus, so I speeded up and passed it, honking as we went around it. There was no mistaking my car as there were no other old Fords of that vintage with duck boats on top around Jasper. Many youth on the bus knew who it was, and I was being a real show-off. Unfortunately, I was speeding — in a no-passing zone — and a city cop soon stopped me. He was giving me a ticket when the school bus passed, giving us the horn. So, much for trying to impress the girl!

This girl was one of the few that I dated more than once. Usually, I was so embarrassed about my awkwardness around girls that I seldom asked for a second date. This girl was particularly attractive, a winsome blonde, just the type I was most attracted to. She was also shy so we had a difficult time communicating. The dates were mostly silent affairs and the romance didn't last long. Years later, I heard that she had died rather young in Mexico. I often wondered what really happened to her. Her beauty was of a quality that could easily draw the attention of men of all kinds, some not so scrupulous and considerate of an innocent blonde from Minnesota.

Next to the bank was the barbershop, owned for many years by Dennis Thompson's grandfather, Tommy Thompson. He really acted as his father when Dennis' father left to join the Navy after his wife died very young and he never returned to stay very long. Roy Meyers (who was also the postmaster) and Shorty Anderson and one or two others also cut hair on Main Street.

There seemed to be a propensity for some barbers in town to drink a lot and one never knew what to expect when you went to get a haircut. Not that it made much difference for the cuts were either simple regular cuts or GI flattop cuts. They only cost about 75 cents.

Next was Stordahl's Meat Market that the family owned and operated for several generations until they sold it in 1972. Another friend, Bob Stordahl, followed his father's line of work, but as a buyer in a large meat packing company instead of in the store. The Stordahls had meat displayed in the front of the store and did their own butchering in the back, which was always quite a sight for grade school age kids like us. We saw first-hand how animals were killed and then cut up in pieces that were sold at the counter in the front of the store. Our family bought all of our meat there, one meal at a time, so our visits were frequent.

Next door was a hardware store that I don't remember much about. Next was Leischner's grocery store, which was always strange territory, as our family always traded at Sacks. That was probably because Leischner's was another half-block away or it may have been because they were Germans and probably went to the German Lutheran Church. In my family there were some unspoken prejudices even though my mother was of German descent herself.

Then there was the municipal liquor store, into which, to my knowledge, my father never stepped foot out of respect to my mother. She remembered her father drinking too much and, consequently, she was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union at one time.

Next was a cafe and bar that was owned by the Messeners, who had two sons. They both became orthopedic surgeons in Colorado. It still surprises me how people from those humble beginnings did so well later in life. I don't remember anyone who didn't eventually become at least a comfortable middle class citizen. Some of them did extremely well financially. Much of it was due to the wonderful opportunities of the good old USA and the hard work ethic of their parents that set an example.

One of the Messeners, Duane, was Maxine's age. Duane told Maxine that he really resented the treatment that his mother received from the ladies in town because she owned a restaurant that served beer. He was right. We never went in there. When I was in high school the place was owned by Dud Ahrendt and his father. Dud Ahrendt had been a paratrooper in WW II and had seen combat in Europe. That automatically made him a hero to me. He once gave me a young raccoon, which we raised and kept as a pet. He always asked my parents what I was doing in my career, as he was always interested in wildlife conservation too.

Next door was the pool hall called Zenor's Amusement Parlor, a place I seldom visited since it was an evil place by my mother's standards. All that was there were some pool tables, some card tables, and a bar for beer drinking. Still it seemed sort of forbidding, with the smoke, the loud voices of the beer drinkers, and card players who really seemed to get excited about what they were doing. I could never figure out how my mother knew when I did go in there, but it is pretty obvious now. She could just smell the smoke on my clothes and knew immediately. The last building was the old Le Sueur Hotel, the one we called White Hotel, which was demolished and replaced by a gas station in later years. Now, nearly 60 years later, most of the wooden buildings are gone on Main Street; only the jasper stone buildings have lasted into the twenty-first century. The bank, the municipal liquor store and one wood-frame building still remain in that block.

In the next block was the town hall, one of the larger buildings. The main floor was a community room or hall where there might be dancing, roller skating, community movies and, before the high school was built in 1939 or 1940, the high school basketball games were played there with barely enough room for the playing floor. There was one basket on the wall above the entrance doors and the other was on the front side of an elevated stage with two rows of bench seating on the sides. There must have been rest rooms, but I don't remember where. Downstairs there were a number of city government rooms. The city jail was there as well as the city council meeting room, and a town library. I remember dusty bookshelves and no librarian, although there must have been some way to check out books. I think Dennis Thompson and I were the only ones that ever used the library.

The jail was always of interest to us kids, although I never remember anyone ever being jailed there. I suppose some drunks, and there were plenty of them in town, were held there until they sobered up.

The fire barn was there too. Dad was a member of the fire department for many years and for a while the Assistant Chief. When the fire whistle blew, Dad would run two blocks up the street to the fire barn and frequently be the first one there. People would come out on the sidewalk to see Ed. He did this into his forties and everyone thought it was quite a feat for someone that age. It was at the time, although not so unusual these days.

The last business before the homes began was Shella's Home Light and Power Company, one of the smallest utilities in the nation. It is hard to imagine a family-owned power company in today's world of mega energy companies and power networks, but they supplied the electrical power for the town from 1917 (when Jasper was one of two towns in southwestern Minnesota that did not have electricity and still had gas lights) until it was sold to Northern States Power Company in 1986. They also did all of the electrical installation and maintenance work in town, plus sold appliances.

The Shellas lived in the back of their store, similar to some of the other storeowners who lived in apartments above their places of business. The entrances to these second floor living places were doorways and stairs just off the Main Street sidewalk. Those living spaces not occupied by owners were used by families that seemed to me to be near the bottom of the economic ladder. Still, they lived side by side with some business owners, so for the most part class distinctions were not established by where you lived, at least in that part of town.

Across the street from the lumberyard on the north side of Main Street, other stores lined the street. The first was Bill Steinberg's Gas Station, which was situated diagonally across the interchange of Main Street and State Highway 23, a highway that must not have been very busy at that time because I don't remember a stop sign on Main Street.

I always thought the highway was sort of special because it started practically at our doorstep, and for many years the blacktop ended there. It went all the way north to Duluth, on Lake Superior. It beckoned me to a world of north woods adventure.

Although my Dad was not friendly with Bill Steinberg when I was a child, Bill and his wife, Mary, were friendly to us kids then as well as in later years when I worked summers at the lumberyard with Jim and Bill Sexton. The Steinberg gas station is where we bought our cold soda pops and candy bars during rest breaks, and the Steinbergs were always teasing us.

Directly across the street was Wayne DeSart's Chevrolet Garage. Wayne sold Chevrolet cars there from 1935 until 1950, except for two years during World War II. Wayne was a sometime golfing partner of my father's. His wife, Alice, was a good friend of my mother's.

They had three daughters. Billie, the one my age, held my romantic interest throughout grade school. An older sister, Lois, as the same age as Maxine and was a good friend. The younger sister, Betty, was the same age as Dennis Thompson so together we pursued those grade school girls. At the time they lived on their grandfather's farm east of town about a mile.

Dennis and I would walk out there to try and see them. I say, "try" — for some reason their grandfather would invariably chase us off. I remember using the cornfield as cover to approach the farm, and then when we were seen we used it to escape. I expect that aspect of the would-be romance was the most exciting. I also remember when I began to lose favor with her. It was one evening when the four of us were smooching in one of the lumberyard sheds on a Saturday night. Although I was too naïve at the time to know why, another friend of mine who was a year or two older accompanied us. Later, it became very obvious why he wanted to come along. Soon he and Billie were an item of their own. They were both more mature than I and were growing up much faster, leaving me behind in a more clueless world.

Anyway, Wayne was a very charming guy and a real character that provided some good gossip. Once he appeared on our porch at 3 a.m., muddy from head to foot. He told Dad that he had lost his car and his billfold. Dad had seen him at the Pipestone Country Club earlier in the evening, so he figured the car must be somewhere between Jasper and Pipestone. Together, in Dad's 1941 Ford, they drove 12 miles north to Pipestone and didn't see anything, but on the return trip Dad saw the car in the creek a couple miles north of town. They waded in and found the billfold and then Dad took him home.

Wayne was special to me because he was a bird hunter. He owned the best trained bird dog I have ever seen: a beautiful Irish Setter. That was before the breeders had bred the brains out of that breed. Wayne also trained the dog to do a number of tricks. The one I remember best was having the dog hold a bottle of whisky in his mouth for long periods of time on top of a table in the local liquor store.

Wayne told me that the dog saved his life in a duck marsh. Wayne was wading to shore through deep mud and became exhausted. He thought he was going to have a heart attack from exertion until Irish came. Wayne grabbed his tail and the dog pulled him to shore.

Wayne also sold me my first double-barreled shotgun at a bargain rate, nearly giving it to me. I used that gun through high school and into college and shot many ducks and pheasants with it. He also gave me one of the first breechloading shotguns (from the Civil War era) and today, a quite-valuable antique. One evening Wayne came to our house saying he had a surprise for me. We were all in the living room looking at the box he put on the floor. He asked me to open the box and inside was a little Irish Setter puppy, which Wayne said he was giving to me! It was a male puppy out of his dog "Irish." We called our dog "Red," and he, too, was a good hunter, although I knew nothing at the time about training a dog. We had Red until I went into the Army.

Then the folks had to give him away as he had become a bit too aggressive to have in the lumberyard. I don't think I, or anyone in my family, ever really appreciated the significance of what Wayne had done for me. I recognize now that giving a valuable hunting dog pup and a shotgun to a young friend is a significant expression of fondness and something I view with greater understanding and gratefulness. I recently read a novel called *Jenny Willow* by Mike Gaddis. It is a very good novel for wing shooters and bird dog lovers. It is about the final years in the life of two elderly gentlemen. One, who lives a country life, finds a setter pup in need of a home. After wrestling with the decision of whether or not a man of his age should start a new dog, decides to give it one more go. Eventually he dies and his friend ends up with the dog. At the end, the second fellow gives the dog and his shotgun to a local youth, an act of kindness similar to what Wayne DeSart did for me. Reading the novel moved me deeply. I wish I had possessed that understanding and maturity at the time of Wayne's thoughtfulness.

Going up the street from Wayne DeSart's Chevrolet Garage was the Monger Trucking business, which had several trucks used to haul grain and livestock for the local farmers. Next were the Case Implement Dealer, Frackman's Plumbing, and the International Harvester Company (later the Tunnel Shield Metal Shop),

Next was another Jasper stone building that housed a bar and card room, a dry cleaner, and Shorty Anderson's barbershop. It was above these stores that some of my friends and their families lived in apartments. They were poor, too. The friends were Burdell Lund, Dickey Benson, his cousin Orton Benson and his sister, Karen. Orton and Karen's mother was frequently sick and died quite young. The fathers of the Benson boys were truck drivers, as I remember, and sometimes unemployed. I remember that Bert Lund, Burdell's dad, had a beautiful garden on state land between the highway and the railroad tracks. Curtis Benson, another cousin, lived above the barbershop or hardware store up the block on the other side of the street. All of these kids became successful in their adult lives, despite the hard times of childhood. Burdell became a school principal, Orton an administrator in the San Francisco school system. I heard that Dickey did well in Denver and I believe Curtis had an army career.

Next was Macker's Funeral Home. The Macker family also lived above their business, as did Bob Foster when he bought the business in 1953. On the corner was the most famous building on the block: Rae's Cafe. Windy Rae owned and operated this combination cafe-hotel for many years. It used to be the primary hangout for high school kids as there was a soda fountain in the early days. After the high school football and basketball games, we all went there for hamburgers and sodas, although I was only on the edge of that crowd. In the basement was an old barroom that must have dated back before Prohibition and was never used in my time.

Stonecutters who worked in the local stone quarry at the south edge of town were usually Swedish bachelors. They lived in the single rooms upstairs above Rae's and ate meals in the cafe.

As far as I know, all they did is work and maybe drink a little. For the most part, they were quiet men who worked hard in the quarry, sending their money back home to relatives in Sweden. I think most died before they were ever able to return to their homeland as they inhaled rock dust that eventually killed them with lung disease. Some married locally. One was a good large-mouth bass fisherman. He trolled the creek bank with a long cane pole. It was through watching him that we kids started bass fishing in the creek.

Just outside of the café on the northwest corner of the intersection was Lizzie's Popcorn Stand. It was always open on Saturday nights when the town was crowded with farm families that came to buy supplies and enjoy some entertainment. On those nights a parking space on Main Street was hard to find, even in front of the lumberyard.

Across the street to the east was another stone building that was first a bank then combined with the building next door and occupied by Our Own Hardware, owned by Otto and Carl Friedrich at first, then by the Schluenz family. John Schluenz, the son of the owner, was a friend and my college roommate for two years and the best man at our wedding. Jack, as he was known to his friends, was studying to be an engineer and worked hard at it while I seemed to be lying around the dormitory room reading novels mostly. I expect our grades reflected the level of effort. Jack went into the Air Force after two years of college and then returned to Jasper where he worked in his father's store eventually taking over the business. But by that time, the town was declining economically like most farming communities of that size and the hardware store is now closed.

Upstairs was the mysterious Masonic Lodge. We didn't know much about it except when Dad was asked to join. He went only once, and then never went back as it was too much hocus-pocus for him.

On up the street were the bowling alley, a variety store, and then the bakery and movie theater. We attended Saturday matinees of the then-popular Douglas Fairbanks adventure movies, westerns, etc., for 25 cents or less.

I'm told Dennis Thompson's grandmother used to play the piano there before the "talkies" came along. The atmosphere in the movie theater seemed to be loud and boisterous, particularly during the Saturday matinee, as there were few adults attending that I can remember. Once we released fireflies in the theater where they glowed in the dark, which is a special effect for a theater. Next there was a drugstore owned by the Reinhart family, who lived upstairs. Then there was a vacant lot that was always a neat lawn and garden cared for by one of the adjacent storeowners.

The last store was Boe's grocery and they lived in the back of the store. We never went in there either. I am guessing that is where the Norwegian Lutherans shopped.

Across the street on the corner was the Jasper Journal Building, owned and operated by John Davidson and his family. They, too, lived upstairs. The Journal was a typical small-town paper that would report who had coffee at whose house, who was a guest where, and other such gossip. It was a weekly, so not much news was really current. I guess it survived by selling advertisements. Printing was by hot metal type that had to be melted down and recast each issue, which was a tremendous amount of work compared to the computers of today. Maxine “rolled” newspapers there for military servicemen who were away from home. She was working on a Thursday in 1945 when Otto Friedrich came rushing in to relay the news that President Franklin Roosevelt had died. Everyone there was stunned.

Next door was the American Legion Hall, which was always sort of interesting to us boys because inside there were military rifles in racks, and other old military equipment. In the backyard of the Legion Hall was the town bell. It was mounted in a tall steel tower, much like the old windmills, except it had a tin roof on top. It was rung by the town cop at 9 p.m. as a town curfew. I’m not sure if it had any legal meaning, but we knew that it was probably time to head for home when it rang. Ringing it ourselves was always a great prank, but a little bit tricky as one had to climb up a tower leg to get past the locked portion of the ladder, then get down quickly before anyone could see who had done it.

East of the Legion Hall was Dr. Perrizo’s dentist’s office, and the last business was a blacksmith shop. Dr. Perrizo was the only dentist to treat our family although I don’t remember my parents ever going to a dentist and we kids rarely did. We haven’t suffered much from it but should have had more preventive care and orthodontia.

The rest of Main Street, as it went up the hill, was houses, churches, the school and, in the field beyond, the football field and track. In total, the street was six blocks long, from the railroad tracks to the school athletic fields.

On the blocks just off Main Street there were other businesses such as gas stations, a creamery, a veterinary clinic, car and implement dealers, the stockyards, and the grain elevator, all of which we roamed in and out of as children. I have a memory of hearing the fire whistle, then looking out my bedroom window and seeing flames leaping out of the window of the implement shop. The local volunteer fire department, including my dad, put out the fire before the building was completely destroyed, but it was badly damaged. Childhood memories like that last forever.

The school was four blocks from our house, up the hill on Main Street. It was a beautiful building made from quartzite quarried from the Jasper Stone Quarry. My sisters (Maxine and Candy) and I all went to school there, Candy and I from first grade through high school graduation.

I wasn’t much of a scholar, as my old report cards will testify. Since I had scarlet fever in grade school and missed the period when phonics was taught to my class I always use that as my excuse for being such a poor speller. I did love to read, though.

The school library was my favorite place, and Abigail Shay, the librarian, was a favorite high school teacher of mine. She taught English and literature which interested me (although not enough to try to excel in those courses). On several occasions I think she gave me a D – as a courtesy. Over time, reading a lot has made up for my poor performance in both high school and college.

I was not much of an athlete either. I never made a varsity team, although I did participate in second-string basketball and track. One year, however, I was the student manager and got to travel with the varsity teams. My musical abilities were even less. Neither Maxine nor I joined the school band. Maxine was too intimidated by the band director, Mr. Petsch. She was, however, an excellent student and graduated at the top of her class academically. My younger sister, Candy, was the one who made high school an “event.” She was a drummer when the high school band competed as a marching band. She topped off her years by becoming Homecoming Queen. She was also a pianist and singer. Candy was sixteen years younger than Maxine and twelve years younger than me, so we had been gone from Jasper for several years by the time Candy graduated from high school in the early 1960s.

The grade school and the high school were all in the same building. The old part of the building, which was mainly the grade school when I attended, opened in 1911. In 1939, a larger addition was built and it included more classrooms, which were mainly for the high school and a gymnasium/auditorium, which at the time was one of the finest in the state.

My earliest memory is of being on the construction site with my father when the new addition was being built. We walked on single planks that were strung from wall to wall. To a little boy, they seemed suspended high in the air and scared me enough to leave a memory for life.

When I returned for a visit as an adult, the gym looked pretty small, but when I was in school I thought the combination gym and auditorium was very special because of the way the gym floor could be turned into an auditorium. With the use of moveable curtains, a reasonable theater stage could be created where our class plays were held. Since our class was so small (26 people) even I had small roles in the plays.

Once, I was even going to be in an operetta, but I knew I couldn't sing so I quit soon after rehearsals started. The music teacher, who doubled as the theater director, evidently agreed with me: when he asked another student to replace me, the kid said he couldn't sing. The teacher said, “That isn't a problem, neither could Crozier.” He was right about that. I still can't carry a tune and even have trouble remembering words to songs. I later found out that there is actually a medical term for that affliction called “amusia,” which is a form of aphasia characterized by an inability to recognize music. It also makes it difficult for me to recognize bird songs, which is a real handicap for someone in wildlife management. I think amusia might be genetic. I don't remember either Mom or Dad singing. Except Dad would sing “I love to go swimming with bare-naked women and dive between their legs” — mostly to tease my mother, I think. I never saw him swim, either.

I remember one high school incident with regret. It was a case where my inclination for honesty conflicts with a hindsight sense of appropriate conduct. In a science class, Norm Hoyme, the science teacher who was also the principal, asked if anyone had seen a truant student smoking on school grounds. Not thinking it through and being too honest, I said sure, I had seen him smoking on the sidewalk near an entrance to the school. I am not sure what the repercussion was to the student, but I always remember myself as a snitch in that case. It was a good example of mixed ethics.

The churches were also up on the hill. In town there was an Evangelical Lutheran Church where the Norwegians worshipped. Until 1928, the services were conducted in Norwegian. Further up the hill was a Trinity Lutheran that the Germans attended. St Joseph's Catholic Church was also a large church in town that the Belgians seemed to attend. The smaller churches were the United Methodist and the Presbyterian. The latter closed in 1962, but the Methodist Church, which our family attended, still continues to be active. When we last visited in the late 1990s, the number of people attending was probably less than 25.

For some reason, our family has changed denominations a number of times through the years; probably, it was the proximity or availability of the church building. The Croziers have switched from Presbyterian faith in New York and Illinois to Baptist in Iowa and Russell, Minnesota, then in Montgomery, Iowa, and Jasper we were Methodists.

Now Caryl and I, along with one daughter and her family, are members of a very liberal Congregational Church in Minneapolis. Caryl and I could very easily drift over to the Unitarian Church. For the most part, I have become very discouraged and disappointed with organized religion because it seems much of the world's conflicts and troubles are caused by the religions of the world. On the other hand, if it weren't for Mom and Dad's Christian faith and our upbringing, my sisters and I wouldn't be the people we are today.

During my time in Jasper, I lived in what could be called a company house, as it was part of the lumberyard at the lower end of Main Street. When my parents were first married on March 7, 1928, they lived in Russell, Minnesota. Although the chronology of their early years is murky, we know that they were poor and tried farming, either on their own or in partnership with my grandfather William on what we think was rental land.

Anyway, it was the Great Depression, and their farming efforts were a failure. They moved off the farm, never to return. We were told that William always hated farming, so it is likely his heart was never in it. They seemed to move every March (March 1st was "moving day" for tenant farmers).

When they left the farm in the early 1930s, Mom and Dad moved into the town of Russell, where Dad worked for one of the federal programs that had been established to help poor people during the Depression, probably the Work Projects Administration (WPA). It was at that time, December 1934, when I was born in a former Presbyterian Church parsonage that was located on the west end of Russell's Main Street. My parents must have been renting it at the time. The building is now long gone. During that same period my Dad worked in the lumberyard in Russell. It was owned by the H. W. Ross Lumber Co., then managed by Frank Sexton, who later would employ Dad in Jasper.

Sometime in 1935, our family moved to Montgomery, Iowa, where Dad was employed in the lumberyard as foreman or assistant manager. This really meant "do everything that the yard manager does not want to do," such as unload coal from railroad cars, which Dad soon learned to hate because it was very hard labor. At that time, Maxine and I were the only children. Candy was born in Jasper, when my mother was 42 years old. Candy was quite unexpected and caused a bit of embarrassment to Mom at the time.

Since I had the same name as my father, Edward Sherman Crozier, I was known throughout my childhood by my middle name, Sherman or more commonly, "Sherm". I used that name until the beginning of my work career when I discovered that "Ed" was an easier name for people to remember, and more politically correct across the nation.

The name "Sherman" came into the family after my great grandfather supposedly marched to the sea with General Sherman in the Civil War. I say "supposedly," because when I researched the history of his military unit, the Illinois Ninth Calvary, I could find no record of it being attached to General Sherman's army. But Dad must have believed it or he wouldn't have called himself a "Yankee." In Scotland, where our surname originated, the family name was Crozier. Later, it was changed to Crosier, then my father changed it back to the original, thus he had a different name from my grandfather.

In Montgomery, IA, the family rented a small house on the edge of town. The only other thing I remember about Montgomery was the Tuttle girls. They must have been teenagers at the time, and lived on a farm across the road, also at the edge of town. Maxine played with them, and Mom bought eggs, milk and cream from their parents.

We were poor, as were most people, and Dad did hard manual labor for a small wage. But he had a job and provided a home, which was better than many at the time.

In the late 1930s Frank Sexton purchased partial ownership in the lumberyard in Jasper. He asked Dad to move up from Montgomery to be Frank's assistant manager/bookkeeper/foreman. It was called, simply, "Jasper Yards." According to a family story, Mom was elated when she saw the house where we would live. Though lumber storage buildings surrounded it and it was the last business on the end of Main Street before the railroad tracks, it was "wondrous" to her.

It was a spacious two-story, had an indoor bath, and the whole house was warmed by a central furnace. In Iowa, wood or coal-burning stoves that only heated the rooms where they were located had heated our houses. The Jasper house had a small grass yard, a few trees and a garden space in back, all surrounded on three sides by huge lumber sheds. I lived there with my parents until I left for college in 1952.

The yard's office was part of the house structure, but had a separate entrance from the main street sidewalk. My father worked in that office nearly forty years. For much of that time he worked alongside Frank Sexton, until Frank's death in 1955, and then with Frank's son, Richard, until Dad retired in his seventies. The basement under the office was connected to the house basement, so you could go underground from the office to the house. When I had scarlet fever and the house was under quarantine, Dad was supposed to be sleeping in the office but used that unseen passage as a way to visit Mom.

The basement was spooky to us kids — a former owner of the lumberyard had committed suicide there by hanging himself! It was sort of dark and dirty, but it made a great place to hide out during childhood games. There was also a short tunnel that provided access from the basement to the underside of a drive-on-scale that was embedded in Main Street. By using it we could be under the overhead street traffic. The scale is long gone now. At the time, the scale provided a mysterious place to play.

On the east side of the house there was a living room and a sun porch. By running across the living room through the French doors, we could slide clear across the porch wood floor in our stocking feet. Above the porch, there was a matching room on the second floor that was my bedroom. It had windows on three sides with no heat. During Minnesota winters, it became very cold, but with several quilts over me, I don't remember ever being cold in bed although my breath created frost on the bedcovers.

When you entered the kitchen from the sun porch there was a wall of cupboards on the left. There was a space between the top of the cupboard and the ceiling where Dad kept the .22 Marlin lever-action rifle. He got it by trading a wedding gift of live turkeys for it, which didn't make much sense since he never hunted much. When you came in the back door of the house there was an option of going down the stairs to the basement or up three steps into the kitchen. Maxine remembers being pulled up those steps and spanked because she was late for supper. The town whistle always blew at noon and 6 pm, and could be heard for miles around. As being on time for meals was one rule Mom rigidly enforced, the whistle was our warning to run for home.

The dining room was on the west side of the house. From it, there was access to a storage area underneath the stairway to the upper floor. Mom generously set this aside as a "hideout" for the children, which I remember as being a great place to imagine all kinds of scenarios. Both my Grandmother and Grandfather used to sit in the dining room to warm their feet on a floor register.

Grandfather Crosier lived with my parents for nearly 30 years while Grandmother Litka only lived with us about a year. Although my mother never spoke of it, she thought her mother should have been treated the same as her father-in-law.

Our telephone was also in dining room. The town's switchboard was just three buildings up the street. The telephone system was locally owned and operated. Phone numbers were simple. Our number was 47R and the Yard's number was 47B (R for residence, B for business). When you rang the operator to connect you with another house, the operator was quite likely to tell you that the party you were calling was not at home as they were out of town for the day. The operator probably listened in on many of the phone conversations. There wasn't much in town that everyone did not know about everyone else. The four bedrooms were all upstairs, along with the only bathroom.

The bathroom wasn't fancy, but compared to the toilets of our friends who lived in second-story apartments across the street, it was great. They had only outside biffs in the alley. In fact, on some cold nights, one of the kids, who lived across the street over a retail store, would come over to visit just so he could use our inside bathroom, then promptly go home.

The immediate area around the house was like most small town backyards except that beyond our yard was the lumberyard. We had a small area of lawn on the street side and another on the east of the house. There were several mature elm trees, where we eventually built tree houses. Dad planted two matching apple trees and a spruce tree in the front yard. Behind the house there were two garden areas that were edged with stone pavers made of jasper quartzite. It was my chore to spade up the garden for planting. But for the most part, Mom and Dad did the garden work. They continued gardening late into their lives at their home, which they had built on North Sherman Ave. in the northwest residential part of Jasper.

The lumberyard was nearly half a city block in size. On three sides there were huge roofed sheds where lumber was stacked. The sheds on the south and west were open on the interior side, with closed walls on the sides facing the adjacent streets. The north end of the west shed was completely enclosed with several entry doors opening into the yard. It was here that the nails and other hardware were kept.

On the south end of the same shed was a similar arrangement for storing sacks of cement and other materials that needed to be kept dry. On the west side (or the Highway 23 side) of the shed there was a huge "Jasper Yards" sign painted on the base grey paint of the shed. Later, when I worked summers in the yard, I helped paint that shed including the 10-foot high black letters. On the side facing Main Street there was a welded wire fence with large swing gates for the three driveways into the yard. Every evening Dad would close the shed doors and chain the gates.

To a child, after 6 pm, the yard became a huge make-believe fort or castle. It was entirely our domain. Several of the sheds had upper levels where lumber, insulation and other building materials were kept. It was a wonderful place to climb and imagine all kinds of environments, from jungles to pirate ships. Some of the lumber stacks were quite high and might easily tip over, so Frank, Dad and the carpenters in the yard (Lud Stegelvik and Ted Cleveland, among others) would yell at us to get out of the sheds. Sometimes the piles did tumble over, but without serious injury to any of us that I can remember. I remember we used to play most of the time in the shed east of the house. I am not sure why, except for the adventure it provided. You could climb high in its timber beams and rafters with the possibility of a two-story fall beneath you.

Underneath the stacked lumber there was a series of tunnel-like spaces between the foundations that were over 100 feet long. You could crawl through them, popping up to shoot someone with an imaginary gun or later, with a BB gun. Most of the games were simulating some sort of movie we had just seen or story just read. Most of the time we were cowboys or Indians, pirates or knights.

The only time I smoked a cigarette was in one of these shed tunnels. It was after church and a friend, now forgotten, brought some cigs over, and together we smoked one. For some reason I still had on my church clothes even though I was under the lumber piles, sitting on the dirt. Somehow I managed to burn a small hole in the cuff of my good shirt. Needless to say, Mom found the hole. I never smoked again, unless you count the one or two I had during beer-drinking nights in college and a cigar while dressed as a hobo in the college homecoming parade.

Other games played by the town kids in the lumberyard were “Kick the Can,” “Prisoners Base” and tackle football. These were played most frequently on a small plot of grass located between the brick piles in front of the east shed and the wire fence next to the sidewalk. The can was placed there for “Kick the Can” and that little piece of grass was the entire football field with the bricks and fence being the boundary markers. The football games were rough with hard tackling, blocking, etc. A good knock on the head that brought stars was not unusual nor was leaving the game to recover unusual. As I became older, the games in the lumberyard stopped, except for occasional pickup games of basketball. We had a hoop on the old garage. The playing surface was poor since it was on the cinder-sand roadbed.

Living and playing in the lumberyard was great for us kids, even though some girls in town weren't allowed to play with Maxine in the yards, as it was too rough. They didn't know what they were missing as crawling over and below the lumber piles was great fun, even for my sister. And not many kids had the carnival with all of its amusement rides and carney booths right in their front yard (Main St.) when the town held its summer celebration.

The family entertainment centered on going to the county seats of Pipestone and Luverne, where both Mom and Dad golfed. We kids went along and had the option of swimming in pools in those towns if we didn't want to walk the round of golf. There were lots of picnics. Relatives from Iowa and Minnesota would often visit us on a Sunday afternoon. Those were the days when "company" might come completely without advance notice. I don't know how Mom fed them but she always did.

During the summers I worked in the lumberyard with Frank Sexton's sons, Jim and Bill. We unloaded lumber and other merchandise from railroad cars. Nearly everything the yard sold came into town by railroad. Sometimes it was bags of cement at 90 pounds per bag and unloading them was very hard work.

The last job I had there was unloading 40 tons of coal from railroad cars by hand (shovel). I learned to appreciate why my Dad hated that particular task and never wanted to do it again. Nor did I. It was a good stimulus for me to go off to college and to pursue my dreams.

Dad worked at the Jasper Yards until he was 70. From age 65 to 70, he worked a shorter day (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). In the late 1950s, Mom and Dad built a new home on North Sherman Street. After more than twenty years, the family home was no longer in the lumberyard.

Mom made her new house a real home. She always had baked goods on hand, particularly "Ella's Dark Bread," for her drop-in visitors. Their home, their good friends and the Jasper Methodist Church were important factors in my parent's decision to spend retirement right there in Jasper. Dad always thought he'd like to live in Arizona. They did spend one winter there, but it didn't take.

Their garden, their golf (which they continue long after Mom's eyesight was mainly gone and Dad was her ball spotter), their friends, their church and their independence were all important to them.

Cancer was the cause of both of their deaths. Mom died in 1985, at the age of 79. At her funeral, a cousin of hers said that Dad without Mom would be dead within the year and she was right. He died in 1986, aged 82.

I attended elementary and high school in Jasper, all twelve years. I walked up and down Main Street twice a day, going home for the noon meal rather than participating in the hot lunch program, which seemed to be mostly for the country kids. As a result, I knew every merchant along the street. I imagine they must have known me, too, as they watched me go by every day. In a town the size of Jasper not much is missed and everyone knows everyone else and their business.

In its own, isolated small-town way, Jasper provided a wonderful education about the real world outside of what one learns in school. My granddaughters, Rachel and Claire Barnes, are in special "Discovery" programs in their grade schools. And now, my newly born grandson, Nathan, will have that same opportunity. Living in Jasper was my Discovery education. It was a great place to be introduced to the society of the common man, with all of its strengths and imperfections. Living there was a happy time. I could traipse freely through the backyards and alleys, race around on my bike, joust with sticks, build camps and shoot guns, all with a benign tolerance by adults. Jasper's Main Street was a wonderful place for a boy to grow up.