

third dimension | smalltown, nebraska

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"Automobiles are very essential," said a high school senior in Smalltown.

Sometimes you can find a small theater of sorts in similar towns, often open only Thursday to Sunday night. Films take a little longer getting to the small towns, but they usually beat the edited television versions.

The pre-16 group usually can persuade their parents to let them drive, some of the Smalltown high school students said.

"In a city, the chances of driving an automobile before 16 are zilch," one student added.

Besides driving, Smalltown residents can find bowling, tennis, baseball and swimming to occupy their time. Some towns are lucky to have all of them, others are lucky to have a couple of the recreation facilities.

The older crowd usually finds its way to one of the local bars with such attractive names as Joe's or Millie's or The Lucky Lounge.

High school students do their share of tipping, too. "You can usually find someone, usually a good friend, who is old enough to buy," the students said.

If you stay out of town the police don't bother you, they said. This calls for evening excursions into the rolling countryside. There is nothing like cold beer on a warm summer evening to provide that perfect, pastoral feeling.

On the other hand, the Smalltown students themselves

said they know a few of their friends who are nearing alcoholism.

"Sometimes there isn't anything to do but drink."

Some high schoolers said marijuana has been popular as an alternative to drinking and isn't confined just to the city.

"If there is a party, everyone knows about it and alcohol and grass both are around."

Most of the parents don't know about all that is going on, or else they refuse to believe it, one high school student said.

They still are living in the relatively quiet mid-American towns where barbers are not yet stylists, businessmen know their customers (and their tastes), main street or the main square is only a few blocks long and computers are confined to the bank—if the town has one.

Haircuts are \$2.50 and drinks are 65 cents. The Smalltown bakery is not adorned with sanitary chrome, but has comfortable wood and glass with a soda fountain in the same building. The cup of coffee, be it in the bakery or in the local cafe, still costs a dime, with all the refills free.

The local library might not have the French versions of all of Jean Paul Sartre's works, but it has the basic books to fill Smalltown's needs. And the library might not be a glass enclosed structure—it usually is in the only available building—but it still serves its purpose.

The local hardware store has all your gardening, home

improvement, household and everyday needs. And what the hardware store doesn't have, the dime store will have. Social life centers around a variety of clubs, lodges and churches, and in most cases, the school plays a big part in everyday life.

Several Smalltown students complained that the curriculum offered in the school (population never more than a few hundred) doesn't stand up to what they need, which may be true, but they said they like the personal attention available in smaller classes.

Most of the Smalltown residents interviewed said they liked being raised in a small town, but added they don't think they will be staying around.

"There isn't much chance to get ahead in a small town like this."

"When you don't have all the luxuries the city gives," one high school student said, "you appreciate things more."

"People that live in a big city all their life believe the world ends at the edge of their city."

"Out here you learn to respect the opinion of other people and come out with an all around better attitude."

Another high school student from Smalltown said he really didn't mind being raised there.

"I don't think I've turned out that bad," he added modestly.



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