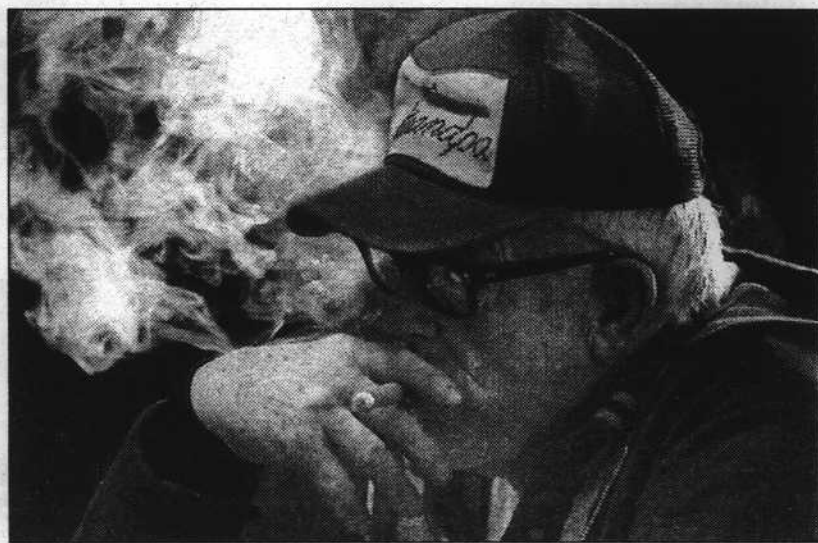




Monowi Tavern. Despite being the only two children in town, the Brockmann siblings seem to find comfort in the junk that litters the remains of the town.



Rudy Eiler, 64, is the unofficial mayor of Monowi. He and his wife Elsie own and run the only business in town, The Monowi Tavern. For 25 years they have taken care of area farmers who stop in for lunch and motorists heading down Highway 12.



Smoke window in a run-down building. The people, Monowi is fading fast. The street outside of town, and with the three children, there doesn't seem to be much left of the town.



Agnes Leamons lies her head down on one of her cats. At 88 years old, Agnes is the oldest citizen of Monowi. She lives alone with 16 cats and has resided in or around Monowi her whole life.

## Monowi

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But the final setback for the town came when the railroad abandoned its route through the town. The old tracks, which once brought in new people and businesses and provided some stability for the town, were ripped up nearly 20 years ago. The train depot, the only evidence of the railroad's existence, now serves as a feeding barn for cattle. Monowi has only two municipal officers. Rudy Eiler serves as mayor, while Elsie is the town clerk and treasurer. She handles paperwork for bridge inspections and pays power bills to the North Valley Rural Electric Association.

Long-term personal ties are common in this Boyd County village. The public servants and those they serve often are personally acquainted, sometimes even related.

Pat Brockmann, who teaches high-school French, English and drama at Lynch Public School, is the mother of Monowi's only students—Amanda, a third-grader, and Clint, in first grade. Both children attend school in Lynch.

Besides the school, other government-supported personnel provide services in the area. Two Boyd County Sheriff's Department deputies serve Monowi. The nearest hospital is in Lynch, seven miles away.

Some residents have learned to appreciate the solitude, while others find ways to combat the loneliness created by isolation.

The village's oldest resident, Agnes Leamons, has a mobile home full of cats. In fact, she has more than twice as many cats as the town has residents.

But her 16 faithful companions make life for this 88-year-old widow worth living.

"I love my cats," she said. "They are so loving, and I love to watch them

sleep. When they sleep, they look so helpless."

The Brockmann family is the most recent addition to the community. Family members moved here 10 years ago from Santee so Roger could be closer to the electrical contracting business that he started with a partner in 1975.

For the only family in this tiny village, there is no other place they want to be.

"I kinda like the peace, not having to live on top of someone else," says Pat, a native of Rapid City, S.D. (pop. 60,000) "I go to Rapid City now, and I see how close the houses are and I would just go nuts. But I didn't realize how everybody was until after we moved out here.

Another benefit of living in a small community is not having to worry about crime, she adds.

"You don't have to worry about your kids," Pat says. "They can go out

and play in the yard, and you don't have to worry about someone stopping to pick them up.

"You don't have to worry about locking your doors. You can do what you want to when you want to do it without worrying about what your neighbors are going to say."

Most Monowi residents have no intention of leaving the town they have come to grow and love.

"People always ask me to get out of here, but I can't go," Leamons says. "People think there is nothing here, but there is a lot.

"It's what's in your mind and in your heart. Each person has to appreciate what they have. You don't have to be a hermit."

This story was compiled by Melanie Brandert, from stories written by Brandert, Tony Moton, Kathryn Ratliff, Greg Rumsey and Brian Sharp.