
Small Town Living Is Not For Everyone

I grew up in a town that holds barely six thousand people. While I enjoyed growing up in Hope, British Columbia, it was far from easy. People who struggle with having no chance at a private life, having to make fun out of nothing, and having to drive over forty minutes for a Taco Bell Crunchwrap Supreme will never be able to live in a small town. In Hope, everyone knows my name, and unfortunately, that means they also know all my business. My grocery store checkout lady not only knows me by name but also knows that I bought a pregnancy test last week and will be sure to ask me, exceptionally loudly, how the test went.

Living the wilding teenage life of sneaking around with dates, stealing alcohol, and racing old cars by the airport, were all dampened when I inevitably spotted my principal, mayor or boss on late night outings. Teenagers are often the talk of the town because they're the only ones who ever bring anything interesting into the streets. In a small town, people must choose either to talk or to have people talk about them. People who can't conform to either of these choices won't make it very long in any district. As a teenager growing up in Hope, there wasn't much for me to do to keep myself entertained, so my friends kept me busy by doing every single thing my parents asked me not to do. We all got drunk, had sex, did drugs, and climbed to the top of our local high school. The supply of alcohol was from our older siblings or the only boy in our class who looked old enough not to get his identification checked at the liquor store. If someone's parents were planning on being out of town for the weekend, their house would be the victim of our weekend binge party. We all knew that our parents gave us these rules and lectures, so they could say they were good parents, but we also knew that they were hellions in their high school years too. Unless people who live here are willing to participate in the acceptable hobby of driving in circles around town until the streetlights come on at night, they must break the rules that are in place. Most small town new-comers have difficulties with this; however, they learn to adapt quickly, or they move away. Having a car is a necessity in Hope because the nearest "anything" is at least a half an hour drive down highway.

Driving in Hope has become such a routine that whenever a large chain store opens remotely near-by Hope, my entire town goes crazy. The store becomes the talk of the district for years. Of course, I have to drive a long distance to get to the store, but if I have to drive to the city to get dog food next week anyways, the drive means nothing to me. If I were to rate the most memorable things to happen in my life on a list, it would go like this:

1. My high school graduation.
2. The birth of my first niece.
3. The grand opening of Walmart, which is forty minutes away from my home.

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Although living in Hope as a teenager forced me to become a reckless person that no one could take seriously for a long while, I would never change a thing about how my life was when I was growing up. My small town has given me something no city person will ever have. I will always have an entire district standing behind me. The support and the kindness I receive every single day from those who live here with me will still be worth preconceived perceptions others will form of me. While most people would not be able to withstand having their private life posted on the town's bulletin board, having empty streets to make their own at night, and having no resources a short walk away from them, I am forever glad that I remained here in Hope.

My town could not give me everything, but it has given me everything I am appreciative for in my life today. Small town living is not for everyone, but I am most certain that small towns are meant for me.

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