

Spruce Street: Showing My Buddy Around

By Dennis Payton Knight

I think the cottonwood trees on Spruce Street are the tallest in Laramie. That's because we live right on the Laramie River. Bet I can beat you to that big limb up there. You get a head start, 'cause you're new around here.

Hey, you're pretty good, Sam. Whew! But I think that's high enough because it's a whole lot trickier getting down. I don't know why, I guess it's harder to see where you're going. You've got to trust your footing, and that can be risky. Go slow and hang on tight.

Later, let's explore in the willow bushes along the river. We just call them the willows.

Not trees, just thick old bushes, but when you're in there, you're like lost deep in a forest. 'Cept nothing to climb. There are some hidden trails we can take our bikes around. But be careful you don't steer into a bog or you may never get out.

My little brother hid in the willows once when he didn't want to go to school. Dad hollered and stomped all over down there looking for him. Finally got him cornered, then had a heck of a time getting him in the car. Never did find out why he didn't want to go, but you've got to give him credit. Believe me, those nuns can give you plenty reason not to want to go to school.

Did you notice the red rock pond my Dad built under a cottonwood in the back? He says he made it to keep fish in. Ha! I think it's beautiful, but now Dad's afraid to keep water in it figuring one of us is going to get drowned. I meant drowned. Here I am, talking like a kid again.

I know it was crazy for him to spend all that time building a pool he can't fill, but I'm proud of it just the same. Nobody else has one, that's for sure. I remember, he did put water in it once to cool down a big old watermelon. We made ice cream that day, too. I got to crank the churn, but it's a lot of work. He says he's building a fireplace out there, too. For barbecuin'.

Mom's hanging the sheets on the clothesline right now. They dry fast around here. It's the wind. Sometimes they get to flapping so hard Mom comes running out to take them down, figuring they're gonna wind up in the willows. Man, there's nothing better than sleeping on sheets that have been hung out to dry. 'Specially right after a bath.

Some day the city is going to pave Spruce, but Dad says he's in no hurry, because they'll just raise the taxes. We didn't have sidewalks either until last year, when Dad and our neighbor joined up and put them. They built the forms and mixed the cement themselves.

Come on, I'll show you where I left my initials.