

A Cozy Place

By Pete Clark

A long time ago when my bones didn't creak with every attempt at moving, the southeast corner of U.S. 26 and Main Street marked the beginning of Shoshoni, Wyoming's business district. The Shawver Hotel's entrance faced out on 26 and the part of the hotel's floor facing Main Street housed the Yellowstone Drug Store. On the other side of Main Street was the Golden Rule Store. The upper floor of that building contained Wind River Lodge No. 25 AF&AM along with Eastern Star and Job's Daughters. My father was a member of the Lodge.

The Yellowstone Drug Store was my favorite place in Shoshoni. The drug store was composed of a soda fountain with a counter and a few booths, surrounded by walls, glass display cases and counters filled with general merchandise including over-the-counter drugs and books. If the pharmacist saw something in a book salesman's inventory that he thought I might like, he would buy a copy and hold it under the counter until I came into the store.

The Yellowstone Drugstore served the best malts and milkshakes in the country. During the winter when the temperature was way below zero, sometimes I would go into the drugstore during school lunch hour and buy a double-dip black walnut ice cream cone. Every bite would find the ice cream more frozen and nobody asked for bites.

Sputnik's reaching Earth Orbit in October, 1957 sparked a huge interest in amateur rocketry among high school students. I was no exception and was able to get the components for rocket fuel through the drug store. My father taught me to use household products to create fuzzes and explosive propellants. Rocket building and launching was safe and exciting when handled with care.

The drugstore was owned and operated by a Registered Pharmacist who lived in Shoshoni and was a Naval Veteran of World War II. He had served as a Pharmacist's Mate and had gone ashore with the Marines as a medic when they assaulted Japanese-held islands. He told me that during the battle for control of one of the islands, a native came to the Marine position and asked him to go to a village and help the chief's daughter who was enduring a difficult child birth. He went to the village and performed midwife services that brought a strong healthy child into the world without undue harm to the mother. When everything was finished and he was ready to return to the Marine camp he was informed that if things had gone wrong, the islanders had planned to kill him.

Today's chain drugstores come up short in almost all categories when compared with the Yellowstone Drugstore, which has been gone for decades. Today the corners of U.S. 26 and Main Street, except for the above mentioned Masonic Lodge, are abandoned. The only business left on Shoshoni's Main Street is the Wagon Wheel Bar. It is sad to see the block filled with empty windows staring across at each other, but I am part of the problem. I left and never moved back.