

My Hometown, Then and Now

Attending my 45th class reunion, I realized (again) what I gained from my hometown of McPherson, Kansas. It is there my early memories take me. Memories so long ago it is hard to believe I could still have the picture in my mind's eye.

A vision of the new lighting on Main Street being turned on in 1959 (so I was 4!) which turned Mac into the "Light Capital of the World." Whether it really was or not, we believed it and were proud of the notoriety.

A life changing memory of a girl in my grade school who was being bullied, my effort to befriend her and realizing the ripple effect it had on others to be nice.

A memory of my first (and last) baton performance on the stage at the local Band Shell when I dropped my baton on a twirl and it fell in the bushes. Just standing on a stage without a baton, in a baton routine, well, it is awkward.

A feeling of pride when I was asked, "Where are you from?" I loved saying, "I'm from McPherson."

Most people have fond memories of their hometown. It's very evident on Facebook. There are pages dedicated to memories of hometowns, like "You know you grew up in Sabetha, KS when..." and "Things you remember about McPherson when you were a kid" and "You know you're from Sugar Creek, Missouri when..."

A description on one of these "hometown" pages says, "Share your favorite memories of being a Creeker, they will make us laugh, cry and just remember how fortunate we are to grow up in a community where a kid could be a kid..." One description says simply, "We welcome the memories!"

Felicia Sabartinelli wrote an article in *County Living* magazine titled "I Left My Fancy Big City Job to Move Back to My Rural Hometown." Sabartinelli writes, "I graduated high school when I was 17, and I was ready for the next step. I was practically packing my bags as soon as my acceptance letter to an East Coast school came in the mail. I was beyond ready to leave my small rural hometown behind, determined to escape—because the *last thing* I wanted was to be 'stuck' in my farm town in Colorado like

everyone else. When I left for college at the end of summer, I kissed my hometown goodbye! I told everyone, "*I will NEVER come back here!*" I secretly felt that moving back home meant that I'd failed. That I became nothing. That I was nothing. But the older I became, and the closer I got to my 30s, something *changed*. I started to dream about moving back home. I missed friendly faces. I wanted to wave to people—even strangers and smile and engage in conversations. I also wanted to hear birds in the mornings, have shorter commutes, and see the mountains and trees. So, I did it. I moved home, despite all the disapproval. I left my good job, my relationship, my talent agency, and the endless opportunities."

How many of you can name quickly off the top of your head the names of those who have moved back home? Maybe you are one of them.

Sabetha and surrounding small towns offer just about all we need! And, without all the hassle. Don't get me wrong, I love the city and I love to be in the hustle and bustle- for awhile- and then I come home. And then I breathe and feel the calmness of my surroundings. And I drive to town and wave to my neighbor or maybe to a stranger. And I love it.

The Greater Sabetha Community Foundation exists to support local "home towns." The foundation can help you honor a cherished loved one through the GSCF Memorial Fund or help you support local projects through establishing a Designated Fund or through setting up a Donor Advised Fund. GSCF can also help you give to a charitable cause and save on your taxes. If you want to know more about what we do and what projects need your help, log on to our website: www.sabethafoundation.org.

Today, when I am asked "Where are you from?," I am proud to say, "I'm from Sabetha!" And, most often I hear, "Oh, yes, I know where that is!" And, once again I feel a sense of pride.