Mark's article in last week's paper about our remembrances of gathering places where we discuss significant events. Here are some things I thought of.

Saturday Nights in a small town were big social events. There were throngs of people going up and down the sidewalks on each side of the main street. Anyone was welcome to stop and join any group conversing on any and all events. People were constantly joining and leaving groups as they went up and down the street.

The children would do the same thing but there was a lot more running, chasing, teasing and laughing.

A lot of the men were in the bars. The bars were all crowded and the men would make the rounds up and down each bar. There would be a lot more talk about crops, rain, grain prices and the new models of farm machinery.

My mom would periodically stop and rest in our car. Different women would stand outside the car and visit with her. Some of them would get into the car to sit down and rest and visit with her. Then she would get out and do the same thing with the women in other cars.

By the end of the night I think everyone had probably heard every possible opinion on every subject. Everyone had a good feel for the accuracy of the information they received. Some farmers were always claiming to have the poorest crop they'd ever seen and others claimed to have the best, but we knew who typically exaggerated the most and we always had a pretty good idea of the truth behind it.

The churches were more heavily attended than today. After the service groups of people would visit outside the church and catch up with more news. There were also more church suppers where long rows of tables would be set up and anyone could move from table to table to catch up with anyone they hadn't talked to in a while.

There were lots of reasons why we changed away from this, but I've always put television pretty high on the list. The whole family would look forward to shows like Gunsmoke, Rawhide, Wagon Train, The Ed Sullivan Show, etc. every night of the week. It was a fascinating way to receive news and entertainment and it brought a lot of information to our rural area, but I think it also isolated us a bit more from each other.