



# Jailhouse Stories: Memories of a Smalltown Sheriff

*Neil Haugerud*

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## **Jailhouse Stories: Memories of a Smalltown Sheriff** Neil Haugerud

In the 1950s and '60s Neil Haugerud served as sheriff of Fillmore County in southeastern Minnesota. During this time, he and his wife and their four small children made their home in the building that housed the county jail. In *Jailhouse Stories*, Haugerud describes what it was like to live above a prison, where jailbirds and jailbreaks were part of family life. These are the reminiscences of a real-life Andy Griffith character, a man dedicated to maintaining order during both peaceful and turbulent days in rural America.

Through the author we meet colorful characters on both sides of the law: for example, Doc Nehring, the county coroner, who uses dark humor to get through the grim duties of his job, and Irvin Johnson, who becomes the sheriff's friend despite his constant drinking and incarceration. Stories of domestic squabbles and infidelity are mixed with those of church functions and child rearing.

Throughout the stories runs Haugerud's compassionate outlook on human nature. "I came to understand how people make a lot of mistakes, but in my view there are very few bad people," he writes.

The town where Haugerud lives is part Mayberry, part *Twin Peaks*. We get a glimpse into the lives of the town's citizens, whose problems range from the ordinary to the offbeat to the downright bizarre. In stories that are by turns heartwarming and sad, humorous and humane, *Jailhouse Stories* tells of the trials, tribulations, and pleasures of rural law enforcement during a bygone era.

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