

# Eagle 'drugstore' isn't one anymore, but the special old-time flavor remains

The other day, before first light, I kept a rendezvous in Eagle, but I was a little early, which turned out just fine, for I got to hear the good round tones of The Angelus slip down the hill from St. Theresa's Catholic Church and settle in the village.

It seems like a long time since I have heard The Angelus, and it is certainly a long time since I have heard it in such a setting. Eagle at 6 a.m. is quiet, a little patch of scattered lights in the Kettle Moraine State Forest. It is small. It wouldn't take all that long to count the street lights. There are

seven from the north village limits on Highway 67 to the intersection with Highway 59.

My rendezvous was at Eagle Variety and Coffee Shop, 109 E. Main St. I had made it in my mind months ago. I was with Dale Marsh on his milk route and he told me that what I learned to be an Eagle institution made its sundaes, malts and milkshakes with real, genuine, honest-to-God ice cream and had a real, genuine, honest-to-God, certified soda fountain inside.

This was not a place to be lightly dismissed.

One day last week, so that I would have a reasonable excuse not to bring a tuna sandwich here, I decided to have lunch at the Eagle Variety and Coffee Shop, where you can also get a hot dog, a ham and cheese or an Italian sausage sandwich to go with your hot fudge or pineapple sundae.

Frances Kramer was on duty. She is 77 and has worked three half days a week for the 15 years Jim and Kathleen Chapman have had the store. Kramer shares part-time duties with Helene Nielsen, who Jim Chapman says is about the same age as is Kramer, and has also been at the store the full 15 years.

Now, I found out that first afternoon, that I had not come at the wrong time, but that prime time is on Saturday and Sunday mornings. I found out, too, that the Chapmans' store is a time capsule, as current as the wait for the firemen to return safely from a mutual aid call to Palmyra, and as the stacks of morning and evening papers customers regularly parade in for.

The time tunnel goes from today's concerns and gossip to as long ago as the Chapmans and their friends care to remember, when Jim Chapman's ancestors arrived.

When Eagle was big enough and isolated enough to be able to support a doctor, the store they are in was a drugstore. "It is still called 'the drugstore' by some of the older people in town," Kathleen Chapman said. "The pharmacist



John Engelbert

raised five children upstairs here." It's used for storage now. The Chapmans live a half block from the store, Jim Chapman said.

The Chapman clan arrived in Eagle in about 1848, Chapman said, and his wife Kathleen's grandfather, Charles Cruver, was on the Eagle town board for 50 years. Chapman comes from a long-lived family who can, if provoked, provide a good deal of the town's history. His father, Frank, is 88, and lives alone on the family farm. A couple of uncles are in their 90s.

At the other end of the generational scale and in between, kids stop in for candy and what not on their way to and from school, and it is just possible that some of the businessmen who begin to stop at about 7:30 a.m. to get their heart started with Jim Chapman's coffee were stopping there as teens.

There is a pretty fair magazine rack, but don't worry folks, you won't find any corrupting porn there.

Saturday morning I just listened to find out where the walleyes were biting on the Rock River, and learned you just can't drift it, not through a maze of 100 boats, and I learned that the fish are mostly males and running small.

The Saturday crowd was small by Saturday standards, Chapman said, because the firemen had been called out about 4 a.m. to Palmyra. It had been a busy week for the firemen who were called to help also on the Mukwonago horse barn fire.

It seems that all of Eagle's history could be put on tape there. Why, Frances Kramer herself worked next door at Sherman's place for 32 years before she came to Chapman. That store itself was a warehouse of antiques.

There are a couple of old pictures from the Sherman store taped to the cash register. One shows Main Street in the 1920s with a hitching rail for horses. The second shows 1930s automobiles, and electric light poles missing from the '20s photo.

On the wall is an old picture in an ornate, gilded oval frame of a young lad leaning on a baseball bat. "We found that in a house we moved into. His name was Wilton," Jim Chapman said. "He was supposed to be a good ballplayer who died in about 1910. I think he has a nephew living here yet. I don't remember his first name."

Kathleen Chapman takes over most afternoons. The part-timers do the morning shift 8 a.m. to noon or a little later. Jim Chapman is

there at 6 a.m., but he is a busy fellow who leaves about 8 a.m. He hauls cattle five days a week. Saturdays and Sundays he is there most of the day to greet everyone by name who enters. That is the case with almost everyone, including most of the children. It's a place of overwhelming friendliness.

The needs of some customers are known and filled before their shadow reaches the L-shaped counter.

Kathleen Chapman said that until a year ago the store had a fountain in place that had been in use since the 1930s. It finally gave out, but a fairly authentic substitute is in its place.

There is a real easiness about Eagle and about the variety store. "I thought I'd try it for five years, and that became 10 and now it's 15," Chapman said. It's not as though he doesn't have enough to keep him busy. He has a 100-acre farm, that he bought, "I guess because the land was for sale."

Now, if I wanted to know anything about Eagle, past or present, or find out how to fix something, or the worth of different brands of riding mowers, or discover, and not be astonished by the fact that some Russian engineers are supposed to visit," that's where I'd go.

And if I wanted a chocolate milkshake made with good, honest-to-God ice cream, or a sundae served in one of those nice fluted sundae dishes, that's where I'd go, for sure.

