

Now and Then

Erma J. Miller

IT RESEMBLED most modern drugstores with its buff brick front, plate glass windows with metal sashes, and a neon sign the length of the building. As I came through the heavy door, a wave of cool air engulfed me. Could this be the same drugstore where my family traded for most of the twelve years I was in grade and high school, the one with the green paint cracking and peeling a little on its weatherboarding, the one whose windows rattled if you rapped on them, and whose screen door banged several times before closing? Was this where I ran errands for family and neighbors and where I spent many afternoons after school eating bon-bons (banana splits without bananas) or drinking lemon-lime soda, if the gang happened to be following a diet fad?

To the left of the door was the fountain and to the right was the magazine rack where I used to spend hours selecting just the right movie magazine or song-hit sheet. Next to it was the tobacco counter where I bought cigars for my dad for his birthday or Father's Day nearly every year that I was in elementary school. The cases and displays were a little more modern, but the cigars and cigarettes (with a few more brands added), key chains, coin purses, wallets, nail clippers, cigarette holders and lighters were the same as then. Next in line was the candy counter—boxed candy, bar candy, and chewing gum. I wondered how the druggist (known to all as "Doc") ever had the patience to cope with all the small children, noses pressed to the case, with their pennies for candy. The new counter conspicuously lacked the penny candy and "Doc."

I ordered a coke at the fountain and started to carry it to a table in the back, but there were no tables, just metal display cases with tooth paste, shaving cream, deoderant, hand lotion, tissues, bubble bath, and other items which are necessary for modern living. They added no glamour to the memories of the small round tables and chairs with wire backs and legs which formerly occupied the space. I sat down on a stool at the fountain to drink my coke and noticed the boy behind the counter. He was young, awkward, unkempt, and certainly could not fill the shoes of the boy who worked there when I was a sophomore. The boy I remembered was tall, but not too tall. His lovely blue eyes and blond wavy hair matched a grin that could melt any girl's heart and did, even though my father did not share this opinion with me or my friends. If this particular boy were working at the fountain when Daddy went into the store, he would not order anything because he said the boy left dishwasher in the glassware.

New metal cabinets with glass sliding doors had replaced the old wooden ones along one side of the store. However, the same

assortment of patented medicines stood neatly on the upper shelves, and the lower shelves held everything from bright colored crayons to hot water bottles. The back of the store still houses the pharmacy with its rows of apothecary jars full of miracle potions.

A flickering light attracted my attention to the ceiling where acoustical tile and fluorescent fixtures had taken the place of the large incandescent lights with chain pulls and the overhead suspension fans that cast shadows like great winged birds.

I finished my coke and noticed that the squeaking wooden floors that I used to walk on had been covered with gray asphalt tile. As I walked out the door, I saw my reflection in a mirror and knew, wistfully, that not only the store had changed.

Snow

David Fruits

THE TRUE measure of an individual can be determined by the number of people who are sorry when he passes away. Snow was not widely known, but all who knew her were grieved, even the undertaker.

Snow was blind and partially deaf, but her hands were both her eyes and ears. When she reached out to touch, it seemed as if she were reaching for sight. By putting her finger tips on one's lips, she could understand every word that was said. Being blind was no handicap to Snow.

Snow lived alone and she had to take care of her home. One never saw a house as clean, shiny and nice as Snow's. To test the flame of her gas stove, she would stick her hand directly over the fire. If it was too high she would turn it down, and if it was too low she would turn it up, and test the flame again. The flame never made her cry out or show any pain.

Her smile never told one that she was blind. Her white hair and wrinkled skin showed that she was aging, but her voice was still as cheerful as a child's.

Snow knew every inch of her home, even the exact location of every piece of furniture, and she could reach her destination without running into anything. Her blindness never stopped her from going to church, and on church holidays she would decorate her walking cane. If there was a knock at her door for volunteers or for any type of aid, she always helped in any way she could. As she became more hard of hearing, she could not even hear the knock on the door, and there was the time that she was knocking on a door herself.

When Snow was born, her mother wanted to call her Snow Frost, but her father thought that Snow was bad enough. She lived up to her name, a name that most found charming. Winter in her hair, and summer in her heart, Snow was to her family, what Helen Keller is to the entire world.