

## **Excerpt from Hank and Babe's Excellent Adventure by Hank Laun**

### **Mc Neely's Drug Store:**

We always joked about George Mc Neely, the druggist, being the tightest man in town. When walking into the store, immediately on the left was a large white, penny-weighing machine. On the right was a soda fountain originally run by Evelyn Forst and Mickey Caine. Later Ann Stumbris and Mariion Forst, Evelyn's sister, took over. George kept his employees busy and when they weren't making cokes, shakes or sodas they had to clean with soap and water; the bar, all the stainless steel containers, and the mirror behind the bar – they were always spotless. George had rules about how much ice cream could be put in a shake, but the girls cheated for us when George wasn't looking. This was a popular hangout after school or after football or basketball practice to have a malted milk or a shake. No one ever fooled around in the drug store as George was always staring over the top of his glasses at us.

When Bob Laun, my cousin, came home on leave from the Merchant Marine, he took me to the drug store and said I could have as many malts as I wanted. I drank seven and Bob was out \$1.40.

The drug store also sold package liquor that George kept a strict eye on as well as all his other merchandise so no one ever thought of taking anything. If anyone wanted to look around the store, George would follow him, I assume to make sure nothing was stolen. George upped the price of his products by pasting a sticker over the marked price on the object. One of our games was to pull off the stickers.

We snickered when someone came in to buy condoms; it was the only place in town that sold them and they were asked for with a whisper and handed back in a sack and an embarrassed look on George's face.

In the back of the store were four dark walnut booths that were seldom used as most of us hung around on the soda fountain stools. Above the booths were several large paintings of outside scenery done by Ad Kulick, who also had painted large scenes of the Annunciation and Visitation plus angels in the Catholic Church. In the far back was the pharmacy; no one was ever allowed there. I did sneak back once for a look when George was busy but only saw a counter with shelves above filled with all different kinds and sizes of bottles. George mixed most of his prescriptions from scratch; very few pharmacy items came ready-made.

Outside, in front of the store was a ledge that made it a good place to loiter. Bill Caine Sr. who had been in WWI and was divorced from Emma spent a lot of time sitting there. We hung around him and he would tell us WWI stories and off color jokes. On the north side of the building was a big sign with a picture of a banana split with the words that always gave me a chuckle “We have great malts sundaes too.” Babe Krause repainted his sign for George.

The outhouse in back was usually the first tipped over on Halloween; rumor had it that George hid inside on Halloween to scare off the boys and didn't get out in time before it went over. George finally had his outhouse cemented in so as to be tip proof. The first Halloween after that, someone used a truck to push it over.

George and HG had kind of a competition going on autos. HG liked Buicks and George preferred Oldsmobiles. When one got a new car, the other also got a new car. We kids debated which was the better car.

George's wife Alva, was in my mothers bridge club. She had bleached blonde hair always perfectly coffered by Vivian.