

Bargh's Drug Store
By Helen (Robb) Garrett

George and Mildred Bargh took over Bargh's Drug Store from its founder, George's father, E.C. Bargh. The elder Bargh's health was failing and his increasing age became a problem. The drug store stocked schoolbooks for the area's country one-room grade schools. Those schools taught all 8 grades. As students moved up a grade, (hopefully!) last year's books could be traded in for the current ones. That meant a considerable saving for the parents.

At the front of the store, on the right, were shelves with the latest magazines – “Look”, “Life”, “Modem Screen”, “Better Homes & Gardens”, “True Love”, “Modern Romance”. We read them each and every one as they arrived and never bought a one! “Meet me at Bargh's” was the thing to do for all of us. Perhaps we would buy one lemon or cherry Coke from the fountain for a nickel - get a booth, wait for friends to arrive, and sit all evening until closing time listening to other people's nickels in the juke-box! George and “Mid” had so much patience with the young people in town, we will never forget them.

The candy counter was on the left as we came in and featured all the popular candy bars and also suckers--5 for one cent!! Lots of other penny candy and gum, too. Much later on “Mid” stocked baseball cards with bubble gum, and many collections were begun. Think what those cards would be worth now! There was also a big glass counter with lots of gift ideas-boxed candy, “Evening in Paris,” cosmetics and perfume packaged beautifully. “Blue Waltz Perfume” was a popular one.

George and “Mid” hired workers who were special people, too. Wydell Pigg was one of them. He worked at Bargh's from 1938 until 1941. Wydell and his wife Eva (Everyone called her “Tootie”) were parents of four children. When World War II began, Wydell served in the Army Air Force at Scott Field from March 10, 1942 until 1945. Wydell's wife and children remained in Kinmundy while he was gone. The family moved to Carbondale in 1950, where Wydell attended Southern Illinois University from 1950 to 1954. Getting an education with a wife and 4 children would have been quite a struggle for them all and quite a success story. His career later included being a librarian at Cairo, and then the family moved to Beardstown where Wydell was employed as a librarian from 1963 until his retirement June 2, 1981. During his days at Bargh's, he always had a smile for everyone. Working where teens hung out day and at night until closing time, a good sense of humor was a must! Wanda Schooley and Jean Gray were also two special ladies working there. Through the years, lots of high school girls had jobs there behind the soda counter.

During World War II years, gas and tires were rationed, and very few young people had access to their parent's car. The ones who did, especially from the country, would pick up their friends, bring them into Kinmundy, to Bargh's, of course! And later pick them up after their dates or whatever. Many times George Bargh stayed open until very late until everyone had his or her ride home.

Today almost every young person has his or her own car-most even drive to school! Another example of Then and Now!

During all those early years, there was no school cafeteria. Some students who lived in town walked home over the lunch hour. Some walked so many blocks there and back it took the whole time! Some brought their lunch in brown sacks, which the students who had gone the eight years to country schools were already used to doing. (Those

students were also used to walking miles to school, too, instead of blocks!) A lot of us were the lucky ones, who walked uptown from the old high school across the "dump" (railroad tracks) and ate lunch at Bargh's Drug Store! They made the best hamburgers! That was my first taste of "Brook's Catsup!" Most of us had never tasted "boughten" catsup - just the kind our mothers made from tomatoes in the garden! Dill slices were also on the plate. For twenty-five cents we could get a hamburger and a milk shake! Remember-in those days there were no paper plates or plastic cups and glasses. Every dish, glass, and all the silverware had to be washed and dried by hand. So many good memories of Bargh's Drug Store we will never forget.