

Where Did We Shop in 1953?

by Kern Hagg

(#8 in a series)

Being only five-years old at that time, my memory does not serve me well, but I have had a little help from my brother, Steve. We remember that the Arlington Market did not exist when our folks first bought their home on Derbyshire. Mom bought groceries at the A&P in downtown Arlington Heights. We boys remember jumping on and off the rubber mat in front of the electric door to make it pop open and then close and then open and close again. It was the first time we had ever seen an electric door that would open for you, and we greatly enjoyed jumping on the rubber mat. On Campbell Street downtown, there was a series of shops which we frequented in those early years. Closest to Arlington Heights Road was a paint store that also sold a full line of wallpaper. Dad spent a few bucks in that store every time he had the itch to redecorate a room. Just west of that shop was Bowen Hardware. This was our father's favorite spot to shop. They had power tools, hand tools, nuts, bolts, screws, and every imaginable hardware item for that young, ambitious homeowner. Just to the west of Bowen Hardware was Winkleman's bike shop. As children, we would run down to Winkleman's when Dad was in the hardware store. Their full line of Schwinn bikes caused such children to lust for that new three-speed "racer" that one could only dream of ever owning. Further west and downtown was Hagenbrings. Mom would take us to Hagenbrings in the late summer months to stock up on clothes for school. Its business was badly hurt by the appearance of Randhurst a few years later because Randhurst had Montgomery Wards, Wiebolts (Green Stamps), Carson Pirie Scott, and scores of other specialty shops for everything and anything a family could need. Back to downtown Arlington Heights, our dentist, Dr. Lidge, practiced his trade on the south end of the downtown area. I remember Dr. Lidge telling me that most dental pain was caused by heat generated by the drill bit and that his new equipment included a cold-water jet which kept the tooth cool while drilling. I can remember the leather padded arm rests in his dental chair, and I often wondered how many others had dug their nails deeply into that leather just to survive another filling. Painless dentistry didn't happen in the mid-50's, and I can vouch for that.

Sometime in the late 50's, the Arlington Market was built on the land which previously enabled the circus to visit us annually. The Arlington Market was an L-shaped strip mall with the long leg of the L starting near Kensington with a coin shop. It was followed by a barber, a Greek restaurant, the Hi-Low grocery store, Walgreens, SS Kresge's, a dry cleaner, a shoe store, Dannegar's bakery, and a large Jewel grocer. In the short leg of the L was the Bank & Trust Company of Arlington Heights and a large Polk Bros store. I am certain that I have forgotten a couple of smaller stores. It has just been too many years. Everyone in Stonegate shopped at the Arlington Market. They installed a neon sign near the corner of Dryden and Kensington. It was a four-story tall tripod of steel I-beams, and the words, "Arlington Market" were visible in three directions at the top. The parking lot was huge – I never saw it entirely filled for any reason.

Also, at school time, we drove to Des Plaines on Rand Road to find Robert Hall's. It was a clothing store for children which sold shoes as well. Directly across the street, was the original McDonalds. Mom took us over there to buy 15 cent hamburgers with fries and milk shakes. It was always quite a treat. Back to Stonegate, we often visited a pet store three or four blocks south of the railroad tracks on Arlington Heights Road. It was called Noah's Ark. At one point, I had five or six aquariums going at the same time, and I was breeding fish. I could ride my bicycle all the way to Noah's Ark, and the owner would trade fish with me. It was a great deal for a young kid with no money to speak of.