

The Raid on Frank's Cigar Store

A True Story of Ice Cream and Justice

by Alan Harris

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WOOD FRAGMENTS FELL from the door frame as I pushed open the door of Frank's Cigar Store Wednesday noon. The lock had been broken off.

"What is the nature of your business?" demanded an authoritative voice from behind the cigar counter. It belonged to a tall man with horn-rimmed glasses who wore a cardigan sweater.

"They're raiding the place," explained Frank, longtime owner and operator, who was visibly agitated.

"Ice cream," I blurted out finally. "I always come over here at noon to buy some ice cream."

The store was a confused muddle, with plainclothes detectives pulling cabinets open, flashing their cameras, ordering people around. A United Parcel deliveryman brought in a package and was hurriedly escorted back out by detectives.

Frank's wife Dorothy was protesting loudly over the way they were pulling the place apart. "Just calm down," a detective told her. "We're trying to keep this as impersonal as possible. We have to look at everything."

"Ice cream?" I was asked.

"I work across the street," I explained.

Frank's Cigar Store on 8th Street in LaSalle catered to all types of people. It contained a soda fountain, pinball machines, candy, cigars, cigarettes, lottery tickets, and books and magazines of "all kinds."

"Anything that's been printed, we got it," Frank once told me.

"I've got to have your ID," the detective told me. "Come on over here." He led me to the soda fountain.

As he copied things down from my driver's license, he demanded, "Where's Earlville?"

I told him where I lived. Beside my name and address he carefully wrote the words "ice cream."

Suddenly he turned friendly. "This place will be open tomorrow. Come back then for your ice cream. We're a little indisposed right now."

I walked out, stunned.

Later that afternoon, after the raid was over, I walked back over to Frank's to buy my ice cream. Dorothy was there but Frank was gone.

"They arrested him and put him under \$500 bond for having gambling paraphernalia," she explained as she dipped the ice cream with trembling hands. "They were going to take me too, but I was too ornery. They were afraid I'd cause trouble. Besides, they didn't want me to have a police record. I said I didn't care--as old as I am, it wouldn't make any difference anyway."

Asked where they took Frank, she said, "Out to District 5-A on I-80. He's never been arrested before."

It was butter pecan ice cream.

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