



## John Anders

# Charlie's day

NOLA JONES WAS in a fret.

"Who's going to make my pimento cheese sandwiches? Charlie's been making them for me for 32 years."

Others are worried, too.

The regulars at the Highland Park Pharmacy are apt to call before they come. "Is Charlie working today? No? Well, I'll come in tomorrow, then."

"Now listen," says Charlie Day, the fixture behind the soda fountain for 52 years. "They'll go on right the same without me. There won't be no changes. I've been training a young lady, she's been standing there right beside me watching how I make up everything. She knows how to bake hams. We've got a good crew, they know how to make the sodas and fountain drinks. It will be just like it was."

Only it won't be. When Charlie retires Aug. 16, a Dallas institution will vanish from this city, and another landmark will be gone.

**DAY IS MOVING** to Batesville, Ark. where he has kinfolk, and where he plans to fish, and raise a small garden, and mind his own delicate health.

"I had a heart attack last year and I don't want to gamble on that happening again," says the tall, white haired man of 68. "I've had people ask 'why do you want to quit?' If I don't, they'll carry me out feet first.

But he adds, "I went in for a checkup today and my heart doctor says I'm in good shape. He says I can travel if I stop and rest up during those trips. I'm taking good care of myself."

Day has made a career of taking care of others. "I've got the best customers in the world," he is fond of saying. "And I try to treat them right. You've got to give them quality food, you've got to thank them, and you've got to invite them back. I tell our people at the soda fountain, 'Treat 'em nice. These customers are the ones who are paying our salaries.' I don't pay their salaries."

Charlie Day has worked all of his life on the oft-forgotten principle that good will is good business. His clientele reads like a social register of

Dallas. Some of the most prominent and wealthy people in this city drop by for a lime freeze and a chat with Charlie. A construction worker or a 5-year-old can expect the same amiable treatment.

**STEADY CUSTOMER** Nola Jones has marveled at Charlie's graciousness since her childhood. She and some others are honoring him with a 3-day party Aug. 11-13 (8:30 to 10:30 a.m., 4-8 p.m. each day) prior to his retirement.

"Charlie's a humble man," Mrs. Jones says. "But many of his friends are the ones in high places. They're the ones we're calling to invite to the Pharmacy, and they all say, 'I'm flattered to be on the list.'"

Those who know Charlie consider him a drugstore psychologist. He is like a neighborhood bartender who gives out good advice. Charlie tells them simple things; that things could be worse, that every problem has a solution, that things might be better tomorrow. And his most quoted axiom is, "Everyday is a beautiful day."

"You know, I've had a lot of people ask me about that," says Charlie. "They say what if it's snowing or raining or cold and gray. I think everyday is a beautiful day because every time I wake up I think it's another day that I've made it. I'm glad to be alive."

**"IT'S NOT WHAT** he says so much," says another regular customer. "It's his optimism. There's some sanity and tradition in that pharmacy. It just makes you feel better to sit there awhile on a stool, sip a soda and watch Charlie work and joke with the customers. You always feel a little better when you leave than when you came in."

"I try to sympathize," Charlie says. "I try to do something to help people. They have their problems, too, even the little fellers."

Only now that he's leaving, a lot of people in this town will have to work out their problems on their own.

Charlie will be minding his own store.