



—Dallas News Staff Photo by Erick Lenert.

Wheels sees the now-grown grandchildren of original customers.

Pharmacy Still Prospering

Store Holdover From Old Dallas

By TERRY KIEWER

Back in 1917, when trolley cars still clattered dustily across the length and breadth of Dallas and much of today's sprawling city was still planted in cotton, young R. E. (Phillip) Wheels came here from Grapevine to go to work.

His soda jerk's job promised little and paid less—about \$65 monthly. Today, he heads the store that gave him his start. And the store, Highland Park Pharmacy, has become an intriguing and prosperous holdover from Dallas' past.

"We started across the street," the 71-year-old Wheels said Monday, waving to the other side of Knox Street's 3200-block. "Ours was the first drive-in in Dallas."

KNOX STREET then was a dirt roadway, alternately dusty or muddy, and the site for Dallas' first "shopping center." In 1923, the pharmacy's present building went up along with several other structures.

Aggravation at the dust kicked up by passing trolleys in those days

wrinkled his brow as Wheels recalled the early years in the new store. "Every time one passed, the dirt came right in our door." Overhead air circulation fans, now collector's items, did little but keep the dust from settling.

The fans, the dust and even the trolley car "dinkie" that ran from Knox Street's trolley stop to Southern Methodist University are long gone. The street remains picturesque by modern standards, but the old buildings now house pubs, theaters and the like.

Knox Street's citizens are changed too. Street people (the last decade's hippies) now mingle daily with their Highland Park well-to-do. The pharmacy has prospered through the years of transition.

WHEELS PAUSED to ring up a sale on his cash register, a mechanical monstrosity that has somehow held up since the store opened.

"Today, we have the third and fourth generations of our original cus-

tomers," he smiled. "This is basically a family pharmacy and hasn't tried to change."

Focal point of the store is the soda fountain, which still draws crowds on hot afternoons. Inflation has driven yesterday's banana split price up from 15c to 60c, but Wheels says proudly the dish is just as big and rich and good as 50 years ago.

What is not so plentiful as before is seating. The old booths and tables, where SMU football fans used to gather after each game, are now gone to provide more display space.

AS CUSTOMERS milled about the store, Wheels mused about his future at the business. "I have no plans to retire. This store has become part of my life."

Knox Street and the pharmacy are also a key part of three other employes' lives—part owner Charlie T. Day, with the store 31 years; deliveryman Cuney Hayes, there 45 years, and secretary-treasurer Mrs. Lillie Mae Maple, who joined the firm in 1919.