



**Letha Hock, Tiskilwa Drug Store**

Photo courtesy of the Tiskilwa Historical Society, Bureau County, "*The Way We Were 57*" collection

## A Main Street Memory

By **Monica Jamison Morris**  
Tiskilwa, Bureau County, Illinois

No way did we want to go to Girl Scouts. No way! Nothing against our erstwhile leader, but talk of badges and cookies and camp-outs was, well.....boring. But what to do?

Recess was over and as I watched another assignment make its way to the chalkboard, a reckless idea occurred to me. I quickly folded a note into a triangle and passed it two aisles over to Eileen while the teacher was still adding to our homework. Eileen's nod and slow grin assured me that she thought my plan was a good one. No more Girl Scouts! Letha's Drugstore instead!

Letha's was directly across Main Street from the Baptist Church, where the Tiskilwa chapter of juniors and cadets held their weekly meeting. Hanging back from a group of more earnest troop members, Eileen and I waited until the last Girl Scout had gone through the side door of the church before making our getaway.

Dashing across the street, we entered Letha's, a set of bells hanging in the doorway jangling and announcing our arrival. We each had a whole dime that had been meant for our Girl Scout dues, but was destined for the large old-fashioned cash register to pay for a double scoop of the tastiest ice cream in all of Tiskilwa, Illinois.

"A double scoop of -- umm..." I paused. Vanilla was too bland, and I had never cared a whole lot for chocolate. And this day called for a flavor much more special than strawberry.

Letha was behind the counter that was so high I could hardly see over it. The expression on her face indicated that maybe, just maybe, she knew what we were up to.

“I want...” I started over, but felt a little scared. What if she told our mothers? Letha knew everyone in town. I raised my eyes to gaze into hers. Was that a wink? Suddenly I knew our secret was safe with her.

“Peppermint!” Eileen slapped down her dime, tired of my dithering. “We both want a double scoop of peppermint stick!”

Ice cream cones in hand, we made our way to the magazine rack. Lurid headlines from the tabloids tempted us and racy titles from the romance magazines beckoned. Elizabeth Taylor’s violet eyes stared up at me from the latest issue of *Photoplay*, when another magazine caught my attention.

“Ooohh!” I squealed, reaching for the current *Tiger Beat* magazine. “Look, Eileen, it’s Bobby Sherman!”

“I think Mickey Dolenz is so dreamy,” she peeked over my shoulder.

“Davy Jones is cuter.”

One *Tiger Beat* and one *Sixteen* magazine later, we had slurped the last dregs of our ice cream and had crunched away on the cones, wishing this afternoon would never end. A glance out the large window facing the Baptist Church, however, told us that our time was over as cars filed into the church parking lot.

“Thanks, Letha!” As we scooted out of the drugstore and across the street to the far side of the church, we congratulated ourselves on our covert actions.

“Next week?” Eileen called before getting into her Mother’s car.

“Of course!”

We probably would have continued our ice cream eating, magazine-reading adventure until the end of the school year and an entire month did go by before we were caught. Tiskilwa being a small town after all, it wasn’t long before a neighbor accosted my Mom in the meat department of Al’s Grocery Store and informed her of our high-jinks. We were forced to apologize to our Girl Scout leader and pay our back dues, all 40cents of them.

Letha’s Drugstore is now the home of the Tiskilwa Historical Society’s museum. It is a treasure trove of town memories: schoolbooks are lined up in bookcases from every era, and school memorabilia decorates the walls, including uniforms from every sport, and cheerleader outfits. There is a beautiful section dedicated to our veterans, with military uniforms, letters to loved ones and photographs of those who bravely served our country. Stepping into another gallery is like stepping back into time with its old-fashioned furniture,

period clothes and dishes that have survived the years. When Christmas-time arrives, the members of the Society will once again decorate the museum with ornaments from long ago.

The marble counter is gone, and the soda fountain has vanished. The magazine rack that so fascinated me as a child has disappeared, and there aren't any booths to hide in, whether from another Girl Scout or a nosy neighbor.

What remains, is just the memory of a quiet, brown-haired lady with a twinkle in her eye for two Girl Scout escapees and the best peppermint stick ice cream in the world.

**Editor's Note:** To learn more about Monica Jamison Morris and her Illinois novel, **Rory's Song**, click on to her web site: [www.monicahteresemorris.com](http://www.monicahteresemorris.com)