

Chicago Tribune

LIFESTYLES

IN THE LOOP. SIDEWALKS.

An ode to baloney

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No one can remember seeing Richard J. Daley and Carl Sandburg together discussing the relative merits of smoked ham or sausages, but the mayor and the poet were both loyal customers of Drier's Meat Market, an ancient and thriving purveyor of smoked meats and cheeses in Three Oaks, Mich., and likely the only meat market in the country to be designated a National Historic Site.

Drier's was originally a wagon repair shop taken over in 1875 by an Englishman named Alec Watson and transformed into The Union Meat Market. He hired 10-year-old Ed Drier as a delivery boy and later elevated the lad to the position of clerk. In 1913, Drier bought the store.

Drier's son, Ed Jr., ran the place for decades before his death in 1994. It was he who in the 1960s decided not to compete with supermarkets in the fresh meat game and offered his own smoked hams, liver sausage, bratwurst and the legendary bologna, which Drier always spelled "baloney." And it was he who gathered pals such as Daley, Sandburg, clothing designer Bill Blass, artists Ivan Albright and Bill Mauldin, actor Larry Hagman and critic Roger Ebert, who lived or vacationed in the area.

Drier was an affable man, filled with lore and gossip that he was eager to share, often along with a shot from the bottle of Scotch he kept handy.

The store is now run by Ed Jr.'s daughter, Carolyn Drier, and her nephew, David Wooley. In Osgood's photo, they are wearing and standing near some hats worn by the railroad men who once patronized the place.

Ask about the hats, and about the many other items that make the store seem almost like a museum. And do buy some food. It's great, and don't take our word for it. Take Sandburg's.

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*"Thank you, dear Eddie
For your bottles and basket.
We've only one question
And now we will ask it.
We know cheese in a tub
And liver's not bony.
But how in the world
Do you make your baloney?"*

Perhaps that's not one of Sandburg's finest efforts, but it's heartfelt nonetheless.

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