

Wal-dreams

Teaneck might be getting a Walgreens – next door to my beloved CVS across the street from my flower shop. I'm feeling emotionally compromised. I love CVS.

When I lived in New York, my true love was Duane Reed, but, as you can see, I can move on. I think I could fall in love with Walgreens, but they will have to woo me. Their developers are making their eager pitch to Teaneck's Zoning Board tonight. I wish I could be there.

What is it about CVS that speaks to me? What is that shopping pheromone that keeps me coming back, CVS card in hand? I don't believe I've ever actually used the pharmacy to purchase prescriptions, but I'm there, 6, 7 times a week. The shelves of old Halloween candy that magically morph into old Easter candy, the greeting card section that replaced the old stationery store, the aisles of convenience processed and canned food that can be found right down the aisle from the nutritional supplements, the "As Seen On TV" aisle, the racks of Snickers bars positioned strategically beneath the nutritional guides with titles like, "You Can Beat Diabetes."

I forgive them for selling roses on Valentine's Day. I forgive them for selling potted plants for Mother's Day. I have my CVS card. I could get a discount on something I've bought in the past. They're keeping track for me. They know what I like. They know what I *need*. Their computer knows my most intimate consumer tendencies. Can I trust Walgreens to do the same?

It would be so sad to see CVS close. Empty boxes are only fun for children to play with on Christmas morning, and cats, of course. What would replace it? Could we be so lucky to see a Starbucks come in on that site?

As much as I abhor their overpriced Nike/Apple/Prius yuppie aesthetic and their attempts to sidestep Fair Trade principles by creating their own "ethically traded" brand, Starbucks is *the* symbol of hip cultural achievement. All the better towns have one. Why can't Teaneck? There is a Starbucks on the corner opposite the Vienna Opera House. Mozart would go there if he were alive today for his morning cappuccino. Kenny Garrett and the hip jazz folks who live in Montclair have several to choose from. But we in Teaneck can only savor a quintuple mark-up coffee from exploited Ethiopians if we go to the kiosk at Holy Name Hospital. Or buy a bag from the convenience food aisle at CVS.

The Starbucks Corporation is vicious, but their people are smart. Their strategic managers have done their homework. It would never work in Teaneck, they have concluded. It is surely not because Teaneck already has beautiful Fair Trade coffee shops where people can relax and enjoy a tasty brew and freshly baked pastry. No, Starbucks has thrived on ruining small coffees shops using the same strategy as CVS and Walgreens: they position themselves opposite the mom-and-pop coffee shop - in New

York they sometimes have taken two corners on the same intersection - until the non-corporate not-so-hip cave in to the espresso-dark economic reality.

No, this is not why Starbucks has forsaken Teaneck. They understand what we have failed to recognize: we are already occupied by IHOP; we have submitted to Kentucky Fried; we have knelt before Dunkin' and we *adore* Amazing Savings. Starbucks will not rub shoulders with their ilk – especially when the streets are empty from Friday sundown until Saturday night, and when the blue laws have eviscerated shopping possibilities throughout the county on Sunday. (God bless Paramus and their love affair with boxes.) Which leaves us with CVS. Or Walgreens.

But perhaps I could love Walgreens, too. The consumer in me is fickle that way. I am giddy with the prospect of a rendezvous with a new corporate lover.

I'm betting they would have what I need there, plus some new Walgreens generic brands of skin creams and over-the-counter pain medications that I haven't seen at CVS. Would my CVS card work there? Will there be parking? My heart is pounding.