

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Fall housecleaning, coupled with its counterpart activity in the spring, was once an annual ritual for every good housekeeper. Together with routine sweeping, mopping, and dusting, it sufficed.

First the straw matting used as floor coverings in summer was taken up; then the carpets were pulled from their moth ball storage, thoroughly aired, and put in place for winter; finally the stoves were set up in parlors and sitting rooms.

Bedding, clothing, everything stored in closets, were hauled out, aired and sunned, and returned to their proper places after cupboards had been washed down and dried.

Fruits and vegetables boiled, simmered, and steamed. Jars of jellies, preserves, relishes, and processed vegetables filled shelves and cabinets. The wood supplies were replenished, barrels of apples, flour, and sugar laid by. It was a busy season.

Not so today. Housecleaning is a weekly business. Electrical appliances lighten the housewife's load, food supplies are available any time at the local supermarket, and heat comes on at a button's touch. Our homes are probably cleaner, day-by-day, than houses were most of the year in the good old days.

Even so, in most homes there are hide-away places that seldom get much attention. Back corners of closets, under cellar stairs, and under-eave attic storage areas may suffer benign neglect. There are a few such places in my own house.

Recently, in a burst of unusual energy, I tackled a long-undisturbed mine of treasure, aiming to eliminate the accumulation of things I hadn't laid eyes on in several years, things I knew I'd never use again. Clean-out time comes to us all every now and then.

I was somewhat surprised to discover, however, hard evidence that it may have been longer than I thought since I'd rooted around at the rear of a seldom-used closet. There came to light a large pile of old newspapers and magazines; among them, issues of The Village Advertiser with dates running back to 1970 and 1971. Why did I save them? I have no idea.

On its way to the recycling van, the stack made a short pause near my desk and, once the housecleaning chores were done, the old Advertisers received undivided attention for an hour or more. While looking through the old issues, a few notes appeared on my writing pad; now I'd like to share a couple of items that seem to put the recent past and the immediate present in fresh perspective.

In October, 1970, 20,000 square foot house lots on paved roads in Osterville were selling for \$6,000; East Bay Lodge was offering Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday luncheons of prime ribs of beef for \$4.95. That was only eleven, not fifty, years ago.

The October 6, 1971 Advertiser carried a For Sale by Owner ad offering a three bedroom ranch in Centerville. It boasted a cathedral-ceilinged living room with fireplace, a full ceramic-tiled bath, family room, large sun deck, and washer and dryer. The half-acre lot carried deeded beach rights to Wequaquet Lake which was only 150 yards away. The asking price? \$35,000.

A week later the paper ran a bank's ad for Certificates of Deposit. In amounts of \$1,000 or more, these C.D.s paid 5% for one to 12 months, 5¼% for one to two years, and 5¾% for two years.

You could buy a 1972 Vega Sedan right off the showroom floor for \$2,136.

One real estate agent advertised a new four-bedroom Colonial with two baths, a full basement, two-car garage, all kitchen appliances including washer and dryer, at the figure of \$39,000. That was located in Centerville in 1971 when mortgage interest was in the neighborhood of 7%.

A news item that same week featured the glass-recycling project conducted every other weekend at Osterville's Community Center. Truckloads of broken glass, smashed into large oil barrels, were carried from the collection point to the Canada Dry Bottling Company premises in Pocasset.

It was a worthwhile effort; village people cooperated enthusiastically, business people donated use of trucks and vans to cart the barrels away; thousands of pounds of glass were diverted from the landfill and eventually ended up in Dayville, Rhode Island, for melt-down and re-use.

Now, of course, the glass bins at the dump replace the volunteer collection. Those bins come under the management of the town's Department of Public Works.

Ten years is quite a short period of time. These last ten

years, though, have brought more changes than are usually seen in a decade. Notable are the prices of necessities like heating fuels and food, as well as for near-necessities such as cars and mortgage money.

In 1971, few of us anticipated any startling increases in either costs or incomes; historically, although rates for both borrowers and savers had been creeping upward, the speed with which they've attained their current levels caught everyone, including economists, by surprise.

While it's difficult to think back and recall all aspects of a particular period in the past, it does help to tie facts and circumstances together. In 1971, Richard Nixon was finishing up the third year of his first term in office; his vice president, Spiro Agnew, had not yet been forced to resign; Henry Kissinger had not yet become Secretary of State. Former President Harry S. Truman was still alive.

Neil Armstrong had walked on the moon two years before and, in July of 1971, 18-year-old Americans became eligible to vote. The Vietnam war was continuing, and you could mail a first class letter for \$.08 or a post card for \$.06.

Those were days of hippies and yuppies; mini-skirts were as popular among middle-aged matrons as they'd been with the Jr. Miss set for a couple of seasons past. Surely, you remember those!

That's what fall housecleaning led me to in 1981. And I can't help pondering, as all these old newspapers and magazines are consigned to the recycling pile, "What do you suppose the next decade will bring?"

With luck, in October, 1991, we'll be looking back ten years and calling this the year that inflation peaked, that solar energy and wind and water power came into their own, that educators strengthened their resolve to put greater emphasis on basics, that the crime rate started to decline, that Detroit's automakers finally recognized Americans can't and won't pay \$10,000 for cars to commute in, and that taxes at both federal and state levels began to drop.

Meanwhile, perhaps I'll pack away a few current issues of The Village Advertiser for reference ten years from now.