

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

No one needs to be told grocery prices are rising fast; every householder sees and feels it at each trip to market. Where will it all end? There's no crystal ball to provide an answer, but realistic analysts don't hold out much hope for an early levelling off.

What can we do about it? In some areas, not much; we all have to eat. In other areas, we can do quite a lot.

Are you using unit pricing labels when you shop? These prices are posted on the grocer's shelves to assist you in comparison shopping and to save money for you. They can help you help yourself to the better buys, but until you form the habit of comparing unit prices and buying accordingly, you're probably wasting money every time you go through the checkout.

Most of us who do the marketing buy the same size and brand of each item on our lists, week after week, year after year. It's a habit we should change.

Let's look and see why. Come along on a shopping trip.

The price of crackers is up again. Wheat Thins are unit priced at \$1.09 a pound, Triskets at \$1.21, Ritz at .98. Sal-tines, however, are only .73. You do have to break them apart. Isn't it worth it?

Tunafish ranges from \$2.19 to \$2.72 per pound, in 7-½ ounce cans. For tuna salad the more expensive white tuna looks more attractive, but if you're making tunafish sandwiches, there's little difference in flavor and none in food value between white and light chunks.

After pricing breads, crackers, and other baked goods, we find flour is only .23 a pound. A package of cake mix, on the other hand, is 66.2 cents per pound, while muffin and biscuit mixes run 42 cents by the pound. Is the convenience worth the extra cost?

Bug sprays cost \$2.30 and, Good Heavens! mosquito repellent in the smallest available package goes for \$25.44 a pound!

For liquid shampoo we can pay \$5.79 a quart; the same stuff in a tube is admittedly a bit thicker, but the tag reads \$6.98 for 16 ounces. By dissolving soap in a jar of water, shaking it occasionally, we can make our own.

It's an education to find petroleum jelly priced at 99 cents for a one-pound jar, and right beside it on the shelf, Vaseline for \$1.17 in a 7-½ ounce jar. If anyone can justify that difference, I'll be surprised. As far as I know, the two products are identical. Is the name alone worth a dollar of your money?

Antiperspirants are expensive, too. In a spray can, the unit price given is \$7.62 per pound; the stick type costs between \$8.64 and \$9.22 a pound; but roll-on and creams really come high: \$16.64 and \$16.80 per pound, respectively.

We can pick up a package of 10" plastic-coated paper plates, prettied up with colorful patterns, for \$5.72 per 100, or settle for the 100 plain white ones for 92 cents.

While floor wax costs \$9.09 a gallon, furniture polish in a spray can is ticketed at between \$1.64 and \$1.93 a pound. If 16 fluid ounces equals a pint, and if a pint is a pound, and if there are still eight pints to the gallon (as there were when I went to school), then a gallon of spray furniture polish costs between \$13.12 and \$15.44. And we wipe most of it off with our dust cloths.

At the soap display we find plain old fashioned "yellow soap" sells for 56 cents a pound. The kinds most often found at the lavatory or kitchen sink run by the pound, from just under \$1 to \$1.30. Dishwashing and hand laundry liquids range from \$2.20 to \$6.10 per gallon. And they're mostly water. Can there really be that much difference in performance?

Depending upon whether you choose the house brand or bleach or a well-known widely-advertised brand name, you'll pay either 63 cents or \$1.34 for a gallon. Similar price spreads are posted beneath household ammonia, from \$1.06 to \$1.96 a gallon. Since bleach is bleach and ammonia is ammonia, and since these products keep indefinitely, it pays to buy the cheapest and in the largest containers available.

Plastic wrap illustrates the savings to be realized by buying larger sizes: in the 200 square foot roll the marked price is 34 cents for 100 square feet; the 100 square foot roll, however, is plainly stickered 51 cents. Who would buy the smaller roll? Apparently a lot of people do.

Prices of toilet paper vary from 4.1 cents to 11.8 cents per one-ply, 100-sheet measure. Sure, there's a difference in quality. That much?

A half-pound almond-studded chocolate bar can be had for \$1.19. That's approximately the same cost as a good cut of meat. Just for the fun of it, take a good look at that bag of potato chips. For a half-pound bag, filled mostly with air, the posted price: 83 cents.

Could we forego potato chips and chocolate bars? Perhaps we don't need those empty calories anyhow.

There are times when bug sprays may be worth their price, but I think I'd prefer to scratch a mosquito bite than pay \$25.44 a pound for repellent.

All paper plates are an admitted extravagance, but when the gang's coming over for a cookout, throw-away plates save lots of work; I can't for the life of me though see what gaily printed plasticized ones add to the enjoyment of burgers, hot dogs and potato salad.

Furniture polish? The best available is produced by bees; if you've a friend or neighbor with a few hives, get a bit of bee's wax and thin with turpentine. It will do a lovely job and save a bundle.

Years ago, folks made their own soaps, but I know no one who does today. At current prices, maybe the practice should be revived. We all have plenty of waste fats to dispose of because butchers aren't trimming meats as closely as they once did.

Inflation will eventually bring home to us all the need to get the most for our grocery dollars. Unit pricing, if we'll take the time to use this tool, can go a long way toward helping us do that. Unit pricing can make us more aware of how much we're actually spending and what we're getting in return for our dollars.

It's really a matter of habit, isn't it?