

View by Andrea Leonard



Can you think of anything more fun to read than a old newspaper discovered unexpectedly when you're finally, after months of telling yourself you'll get to it next week, clearing out that storage cabinet, attic or basement?

Happened just last week, at our house.

There are two headlines on page 1. The lead story concerns the retirement of a veteran Town of Barnstable Selectman after 32 years of service in that elective office.

The other banners the news of the Cape's booming real estate market. The paper is an October edition of a weekly, and credits the season's bright autumn foliage with continuing to attract land-buyers to the Cape this late in the year.

Bankers were declaring candidly that an abundance of mortgage business strained, at times, the capacity of their staffs.

The sudden rise in second-home buyers and the soaring year-round population was viewed enthusiastically by Cape banks, commercial developers and, of course, real estate agents.

Year-round golf, increased social activities and privacy are given as some reasons people were purchasing Cape Cod real estate. Also mentioned are low tax rates and efforts to preserve the quaint charm of Cape villages.

Price ranges, for the professional person seeking to buy a home on the Cape, are quoted in the \$20,000 range, up to a maximum of \$40,000. Twenty-year mortgages at 5-½% are advertised. The story speaks of \$10,000 bungalows and a popular price-bracket for a three-bedroom year-round home is between \$16,000 and \$18,000.

Wow! Wouldn't it be something to be able to get such a bargain today?

There's a picture of a couple of youngsters helping to shuck the season's first family-quota of scallops their father had harvested the day before. Those children are adults, and probably have children of their own, now.

A well-known Hyannis store that's still in business advertises a bedding sale at the astonishing price of \$37 each for mattresses and box springs. These are nationally-advertised models with over 800 pocketed coils. Odd-lot mattresses and box springs are specially priced at \$19 apiece.

You could have picked up a Harris tweed sports coat for \$48, or an all wool flannel blazer for \$29.95. Ladies' dress shoes were priced at \$14.99. You could have upholstered one sofa and one chair for \$67.50 plus the cost of the fabric.

The editorial mentions the total assessed valuation of Town of Barnstable real estate as \$70,550,000 and the tax rate as \$49 per thousand of assessed value.

In describing the aforementioned retiring Selectman, the editorial states, "...many things have gone unnoticed... the times when he has taken the Town Meeting floor to urge passage or defeat of an article when the outcome was sure to hurt him politically."

He is described as a persuasive speaker and possessed of confidence and humor, capable of directing his sense of humor upon himself or the problem at hand. He accepted defeats, when he met them, with the resolve to do the best possible job with the tools given him. A good leader, they said of him; he will be missed. He was.

Perhaps the most interesting advertisement in this old newspaper issue is a full-page display of the week's grocery bargains.

Here we find lamb legs at .59 a pound, rib lamb chops for .79 a pound, and bone-in chuck roast for .35 a pound.

Fresh swordfish at .69, sliced white or yellow cheese for .59, and skinless franks at the same price, sound extremely attractive.

Butternut squash is .05 a pound. A large bunch of pascal celery costs .19. A gallon of Prestone antifreeze is \$1.47. You can have seven packages of Birds Eye french cut or wax beans for \$1.00.

Cake mixes - name brands - are a bargain, too, at .29 a package. A 7 oz. can of Chatka Alaska crabmeat sells for .71. At that price, I'll take a couple cases. A 46 oz. can of Libby's pineapple juice is a quarter.

Those were the days, right? So, perhaps the banks, in those long ago days, were paying interest on savings of only 4-½%. So, perhaps if you went out to dinner you'd have to spend \$2.95 for a roast prime rib of beef, au jus.

You could get a restaurant dinner of baby sea scallops, with french fries and cole slaw, for \$1.50, or if that was too rich for your wallet, you might chose the filet of haddock, same vegetables, for \$1.35. Rolls, butter and coffee were served with these meals at no extra cost. It doesn't say so, but I'll bet you could have ordered a beautiful tossed green salad with house dressing for an additional .15.

And on Friday and Saturday nights there was entertainment with

Eddie Smith and Harry Atlas -- whoever they were.

At another Hyannis restaurant a bucket of spaghetti -- enough to serve four -- was ready for take-out for \$2.49. A double-slice of pizza cost a quarter; a hamburger was .49; a cheeseburger, .59.

Sure, it was a long time ago. It's hard for most of us to remember those days, not lost in the foggy past.

It's got nothing to do with what's happening around us right now, today, in this decade.

Does it? Well, that depends on whether you consider this decade part of the one just completed, or part of the one coming up.

The Selectman referred to in the paper's lead article is Victor Adams. He's still around, hale and hearty, and a wiser leader the Town of Barnstable never had.

The Cape real estate boom was only a flicking flame in the fire-pan.

The price of nearly everything has doubled, some things have redoubled, and a few have retripled since then. But not so such items as interest banks pay on savings accounts, for instance.

The newspaper is the Cape Cod News. The date is October 14, 1965. It cost a nickel to buy on the newstand and was delivered free to most people whose names were in the telephone book.

The decade has not yet closed since the publication of that issue of the Cape Cod News. If anyone doubts the prices quoted, I'll be delighted to show them the yellowed pages of that week's issue.