

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

Easter Sunday afternoon was a time for paying calls to a branch of the family living just beyond the Cape Cod Canal. As the sun came around to the western sky, but well before dark, we headed for home again.

We'd taken Route 6-A up-Cape and returned via Route 6. As we left the highway at Exit 5 and followed twisting West Barnstable Road toward Osterville, the roadside litter was the most eye-catching aspect of the familiar old path.

From the Exit 5 Route 6 interchange to the corner of Route 28 and West Barnstable Road, I counted 138 discarded beverage containers on only one side of the road.

Those were the ones I could see while riding as a passenger in a car traveling at an average speed of 30-35 miles an hour. Had I been afoot, I should doubtless have spotted three times that number. Had there been time to count those visible on the opposite side of the road, it's reasonable to suppose an equal amount of trash had been tossed there as well.

It was all I could do to keep up the count on the right hand shoulder. Bottles and cans, bottles and cans, bottles and cans.

Each weekend throughout the year when the ground isn't covered with a blanket of snow, I patrol approximately 1,000 feet of roadside near my home. I bring a basket to carry the collected rubbish and have never come home empty-handed. Usually my basket overflows. Bottles and cans. Bottles and cans.

Recently more and more containers are aluminum beer cans. There's a fair proportion of Coca Cola, Mountain Dew and Fresca cans, too, of course; but most are beer cans.

The bottles bear labels of all types of beverages ranging from soft drinks, through the varieties of beer, to wine and hard liquor. I can only hope any observant person passing through my garage on some errand doesn't assume I'm the consumer of its contents. Were this the case, I'd surely never draw a sober breath.

The collection stored there awaits the next trip to the recycling center at the Town Disposal Area, and that trip awaits the end of the Mud Season. Flies, heat and dust I'll risk, but miring in a foot of mud is more of a challenge than I can accept.

Also stored in the garage are piles of newspapers that have gathered through the winter. Now, however, the bottom's dropped out of the used paper market, so those must wait 'til the price goes up again and the recycling center can accept newspapers again.

In February, 1978, each ton of newspaper brought \$17. Now the price is zero. Mary Hagler of Dennis, a long-time recycling advocate on the Cape, is launching an investigation of this price fluctuation. She deserves our wholehearted support in her endeavors.

Meanwhile, we'll store newspapers; but some beautiful spring day when the frost and dampness are gone from the ground, we'll take a trip to the dump. The car will be loaded to the gun'les with cartons of glass bottles, and bags of aluminum cans, aluminum foil scraps, aluminum plates and pans in which baked goods and other goodies have come home from the grocery.

Why bother?

energy accounting. The study shows that a national ban on throwaway bottles and cans could save up to 80 million barrels of oil a day. Such a ban would save millions of tons of aluminum, steel and glass each year. It would also reduce soft-drink and beer prices by more than \$1.8 billion every year. That's what we throw away.

Banning throwaway bottles would reduce the consumption of raw material and energy. Requiring a five cent deposit on all beverage containers would be an incentive, small though it may be, to eliminate the waste all too many of us are still habitually conditioned to continue.

Brewers, soft-drink bottlers, can and bottle manufacturers oppose such legislation and employ every tool to head off legislation to curb the throw-away pattern of no deposit-no return.

While the argument that the use of refillable bottles would result in job losses in the container producing industry is undoubtedly true, it's also true this would be more than offset by increased employment in beverage production, distribution and retailing, resulting in a net gain, according to the General Accounting Office Study, of 37,000 jobs.

Some of those 37,000 jobs might absorb some of the man-hours now draining tax dollars spent for highway crews to clean up litter.

There's ample evidence to support the GAO study. Washing bottles and recycling cans uses far less energy than making new containers from scratch. If every empty beer can or soda bottle were returned for a nickel deposit, highways and byways would soon be free of them.

America would look better. America would be richer.

Four previous federal studies have recommended a federal deposit law. In the four states that now have deposit law - Oregon, Vermont, Michigan, and Maine- all report they're working as promised. Connecticut has become the fifth state with a deposit law only within the last month. And yet, the can and bottle industry continues to spend heavily on clever public relations campaigns, some carried out through its deceptively named front organization, "Keep America Beautiful". Ha!

The industry blitzed Dade County, Florida, in 1974 when a proposed bottle bill was defeated. Public relations experts later bragged about spending \$180,000 on the Dade County campaign to kill that bill. The entire State of Massachusetts was similarly hoodwinked a couple of years ago.

After the battles, the industry offered local environmentalists a consolation prize, but then failed to deliver it. Promised was a new type beverage can with pop-tops that remain attached, but only a few such cans have appeared.

Some time ago an article in the Washington Post reported President Carter was expected to ask Congress for a tax on disposable bottles and on cans as a way of discouraging the one-time use of containers and the waste of energy going into their manufacture.

Carter, according to the article, was also expected to request a tax on virgin glass and metal used to manufacture disposable bottles and cans as a further means of discouraging their use. He was said to be considering a tax reduction for manufacturers who use recycled materials to make containers.

My question is: What happens to such plans? We hear they are in the works and breathe a sigh of relief - but then nothing happens.

Despite industry's self-defeating opposition, the deposit campaign has not only survived but is gradually progressing. Presidential support would give it more impetus. Bear in mind, however, that Atlanta, Georgia, is the home of the Coca Cola empire.

Does that explain the Presidential pause that's not so refreshing for the national welfare?