

## Priceless new computer system ready for supermarkets

One of these days you're going to wheel your cart of groceries to the checkout and find that the cash register is gone. Don't panic, says Coral Morris, extension home management specialist at the University of Delaware. And don't think your groceries are free, either! Most likely your supermarket has just gone to "priceless" pricing.

What will this change mean to you? Well, for starters, it's going to make your trip through the checkout line much faster. And second, even though you won't be able to check each price as the checker goes along, you'll find that you

have a much more detailed record of purchased and prices when you get your computer printed slip. Instead of an abbreviation for a department such as "dairy" or "grocery," leaving you to figure out what each item refers to, you'll get a slip which reads OLD FASH VEG .22. This tells you that you paid 22 cents for old fashioned vegetable soup.

This kind of detail will be very helpful after you get home, but many consumers see other problems which will irk the shopper. For instance, depending on the market, priceless pricing may do away with market

prices on each item. A "scanner" can read the bar code now found on many items and conventional numbered pricing really won't be necessary except as a convenience for the shopper. Some markets may provide grease pencils for shoppers to mark their own items from prices CORRECTLY noted on each shelf. (Supermarkets are notorious for listing prices on shelves of items that were moved weeks ago to another aisle. It gets very confusing, but the new pricing may force this issue, for the good of the consumer.)

You may be wondering how the computer is going to

keep up with daily specials and "two-fers" (two or three for a given price). Actually the scanner and computer will be more accurate than the human checker. You will no longer have to group your "three-for-a-dollar" items together so the checker doesn't charge you 34 cents for each of them as she happens upon them in various places. The computer will be programed to charge 34 cents for the first two and 32 cents for the third.

Checkout time can be cut by as much as one-third, says Ms. Morris, and that should put smiles on the faces of even the most

skeptical. Faster lines will result because the checker needs only to bag each item as he/she runs it over the scanner, which will feature a built-in window on the counter.

Another advantage of computer checking in the supermarket is the ease with which a manager can maintain inventory control. The computer will record sales and automatically tell what is needed. With more precise information, ideally the store can operate with smaller quantities of stock in reserve and will have less of its money tied up this way. The computer can signal for reordering when supplies reach a certain minimum, so there will be less chance of running out of things. Thefts and errors on incoming deliveries can be better pinpointed and controlled.

Many consumers groups feel that the new pricing systems are a tremendous investment in equipment and that these costs will get passed on to the consumer in the form of higher food prices. Supermarket managers say that it should cut costs which will show up in the consumers food bill in a positive way.

## Stream map available

UNIVERSITY PARK — Outdoorsmen wanting to study the terrain of Pennsylvania may find handy the Stream Map of the Commonwealth, published by the Agricultural Experiment Station at The Pennsylvania State University.

Geographical features included are 3000 each of streams, towns, and elevations above sea level. The map gives the names and locations of major mountains, valleys, lakes, dams, swamps, and reservoirs. The detailed Stream Map is about 3 feet wide by 5 feet long and the scale is 6 miles to the inch.

The map is available for \$1.06, tax included, from Stream Map, Box 6000, University Park, Pa. 16802. It is mailed in two styles, flat or folded. In ordering, please indicate which type you want. Checks or money orders should be made payable to The Pennsylvania State University. Allow at least two weeks for delivery.

When visiting the Penn State campus at University Park, the Stream Map can be obtained in room 232 of the Agricultural Administration Building. The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The map was produced by Howard W. Higbee, professor emeritus of soil technology.



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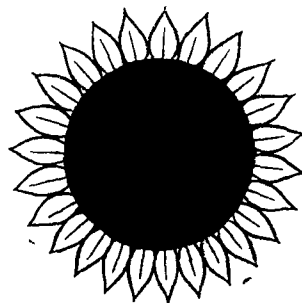


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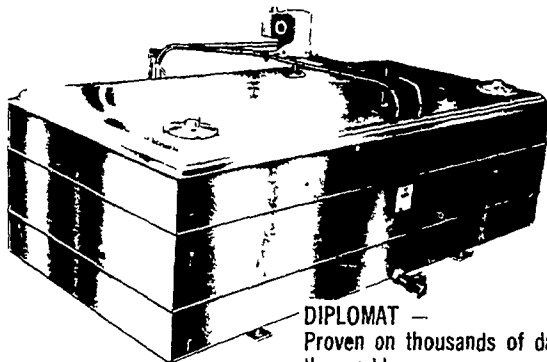
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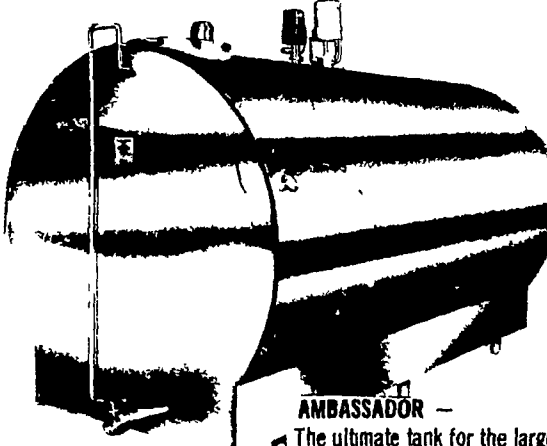
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