

Food More Affordable Now Than 25 Years Ago

Ida's Notebook

by

Ida Risser



Every now and then it is interesting to look back and remember things in the past. Recently, I spent several days looking over papers in old boxes. I've always saved a lot of newspaper clippings and letters.

As this is Valentine's Day, I'll tell you about a few that I found. One was a handmade one that I gave my Grandma Landis. She lived with us and helped me out of some predicaments. One Valentine was from a boy in the third grade that I admired. There were also large, fancy stand-up Valentines that I still display on the 14th of February.

Among the things that were in

the box were handkerchiefs and more handkerchiefs as they were given as gifts to children. There was even a list of the money that I was given. Five cents from an aunt and 10 cents from my grandfather. My baby book said that when I was a baby my mother called me her little "Dolly." My tin cup that I used was included along with a box of almost unused crayons. Several books of nursery rhymes were there too.

The past few days I've also looked over hundreds of slides. My cousin took these pictures and some are especially beautiful. They've been sorted into groups

CAMP HILL (Dauphin Co.) — Between Jan. 1 and Feb. 9, the average American has earned enough income to pay for his or her family's entire 1998 food supply, according to Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

As a result, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau commemorated Feb. 9 as Farm Bureau's second annual Food Check-Out Day. Last year, Food Check-Out Day fell on Feb. 10.

According to statistics from the

such as flowers, pets and vacations. Some from the 1950s show the results of a blizzard. Snow drifts 15 feet high closed the roads. Other slides are of groups of people who I cannot identify. Someday they'll probably be destroyed.

Now it is time to get back to the present and accomplish something worthwhile before the winter is gone.

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, American families and individuals spend, on average, 10.9 percent of their disposable income for food. That means the average household will have earned enough disposable income — that portion of income available for spending or saving — to pay for their annual food supply in just 40 days.

"The early occurrence of this date is noteworthy," said Jenny Teeter, chairperson of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's State Women's Committee. "It speaks well of our nation's increasing standard of living, which would certainly be reduced without the affordable, domestic, food supply produced by America's farmers and ranchers."

In comparison to Food Check-Out Day, Tax Freedom Day — the day the average American had earned enough money to pay federal, state and local taxes — was May 9 last year, according to the Tax Foundation.

"I find it amazing that people can pay for their yearly food supply three months earlier than it would take them to satisfy their tax burden," said Teeter. "Rather than being an economic burden,

food remains quite a bargain for shoppers. That's the way it should be."

Teeter hopes Americans will come to understand that affordable food is "a product of our successful food production and distribution system."

The percent of disposable income spent for food has declined over the last 25 years. In 1970, Food Check-Out Day would have been 11 days later — February 20. Food is more affordable today due to a widening gap between growth in per-capita incomes and the amount of money spent for food, according to USDA.

This overall decrease is made more notable by the fact that trends indicate Americans are buying more expensive convenience food items for preparation at home, as well as more food away from home. USDA's latest statistics, compiled for 1996, includes food and non-alcoholic beverages consumed at home and away from home.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is a voluntary, non-governmental organization which represents 25,247 farm and rural families.

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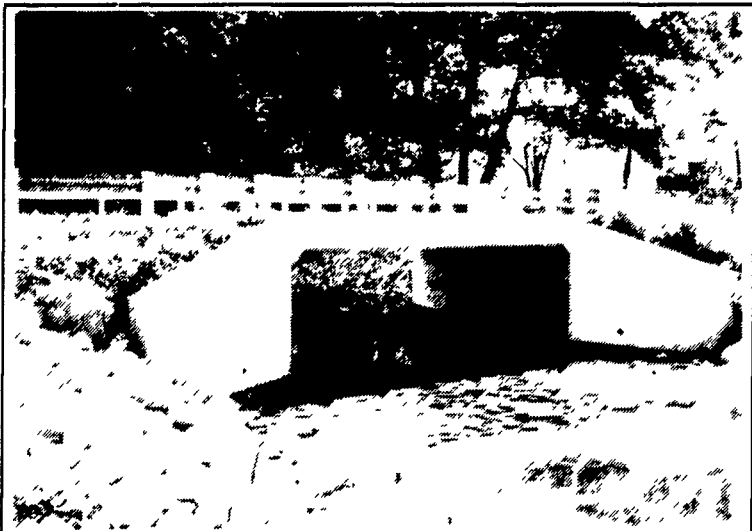
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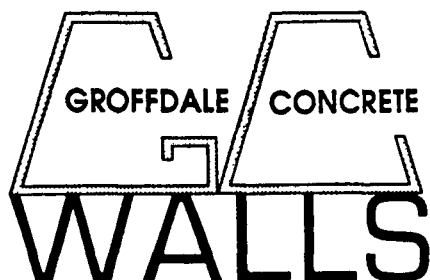


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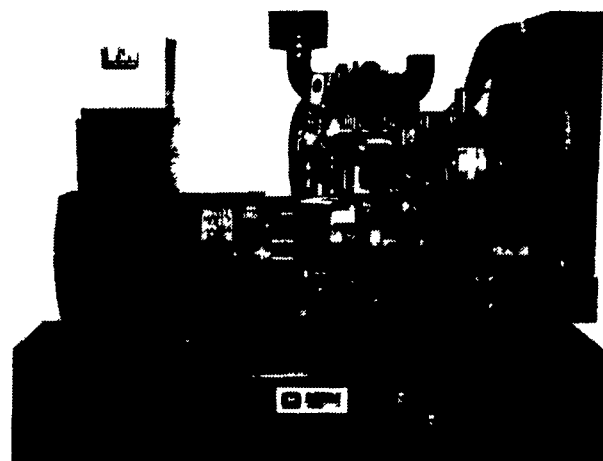
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"Look, Pappy. Let's check this one out," 21-month-old Kyle seems to say as he circles a mailbox market ad. Just like his grandpa Ricki Bashore, Kyle, son of Stacy and Rick Bashore of Lebanon, prefers to study newspaper ads while eating breakfast.

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