

ISCHUA VALLEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MERLE BULL'S MEMORIES OF MARKET BASKET

I worked at the Market Basket. This was before shopping carts, checkout counters and pre-packaged products. The customer would step up to the counter and exchange a few pleasantries and produce a list. He would say "a can of peas." You walked to the shelf that contained the peas. You brought it back and set it before the customer. This process was repeated time after time after time. Prices were memorized.

Of course this process was slowed when lard, butter, cheese, cookies, sugar, crackers, dried beans and potatoes were ordered. They had to be scooped out of a tub or bin, put in a container, weighed, wrapped and finally tied. Coffee had to be ground. The rich bought butter. The poor bought margarine that had to be mixed with coloring when you got it home. We sold a lot of salt pork. We helped to carry the groceries out to their cars. This gave us a brief break and a breath of fresh air.

The addition was done with paper and pencil. I may not be good at many things, but due to those grocery years I can usually have a column added before our girls can find the calculator. One of the girls recently started to count the contents of the cash register. I grabbed the ones, felt them and said "there are 18." She counted them. There were 18. Her mouth dropped and my wisdom was never again questioned. It was probably dumb luck but I'll never tell her that.

Two of my formative years (when does one stop being formed) were spent in that grocery store. They were fun, educational and a great experience in meeting the public.

I shall never forget the Saturday night that "Two Gun Meachem" from Farmersville would come into the store, always near midnight and produce a list at least 2 feet long. The ensuing encounter was not a joy to contemplate but the presence of his daughter made it a bit more bearable. She recently died in an auto accident on the Thomas curve on Rte. 16.

He wore a long fur coat most of the year. He was a cattle dealer and it was rumored he carried rolls of bills and two guns. I saw the roll of bills but never the two guns. The aroma of the barn was only dulled by the grinding of the coffee.

We would often leave the store after midnight. Two girls would be patiently waiting, (I think). We would then go to the square dance at the farm on the Lyndon Road. Later this was the location of the town dumps.