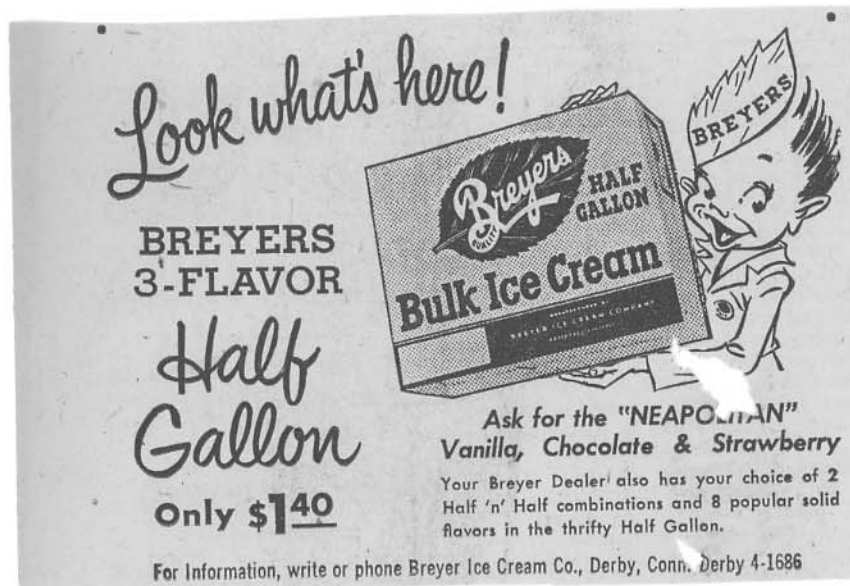


1951 food prices took me by surprise, in proportion to wages. It gave me a much clearer picture of what was a luxury then.

For example, this ad for Breyer's ice creams at \$1.40 a half gallon. That must have been a *great* price, for them to take out a display ad. However, with people earning an average of \$55/week, someone would work for an hour (before taxes) to pay for that \$1.40 half gallon.

In 2010 dollars, based on an average income of \$40-50k/year, that'd be like paying \$20 for a half gallon of Breyer's. Instead, I can usually buy it for about \$2.50.

No wonder taking a date to the ice cream parlor was such a big deal. (I'm remembering *Back to the Future* and *Pleasantville*.)



I think I'm going to consciously appreciate ice cream more.

After considerable musing, I'm realizing how much I take for granted today, and how *differently* my parents and grandparents must have looked at how their lives improved.

I wonder how much of that was interpreted as increasing wealth, as opposed to the general availability (and affordability) of things that were once luxuries reserved for the upper classes.

I also look at all that I *have*, and how much more I *want*, or *wanted* before I began this process and this zine.

I'm realizing how much the media – particularly TV – immerse us in the cult of materialism...and it is a cult, complete with loaded language and nearly mindless obedience to the commands of our leaders. Or commercials. Or “how everyone else lives,” as represented in *The Housewives of*

_____.
It's easy to say, “No, that's a joke and I *don't* take those shows or commercials seriously.” However... don't we *all* let the “buy this” messages get to us, to some degree? Don't we *all* feel a little shabby when we don't have the newest/coolest whatever-it-is, when we're surrounded by people who *did* buy (literally) into the subliminal sales pitches?

Every time we get up from the sofa and look around our homes... well, they rarely look like what we see on the TV. Sure, we might have a better sofa, but how can we avoid noticing that our refrigerator or stove or curtains aren't quite as nice as what we've just seen on TV?

Are we *really* so much happier with a TV in our homes? Does it uplift us, educate us, or lead us to more fulfilling lives?