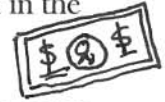


ON A SERIOUS QUEST

Your life is taking shape.

enduring quality.

One of the things I'd like to study -- with more time than I have today -- is how much discretionary income existed in the average household.



Maybe people could *afford* relatively expensive ice cream because they weren't paying for cable TV or a high-speed Internet connection, cellphones and clothing with visible logos.

Electric and heating bills were probably far lower, even if I adjust for inflation. Well, maybe. That's what I'm not sure about. ?

People certainly had less to give them a high electric bill... didn't they? I'm wondering at the efficiency of refrigerators and stoves. I remember when we bought a window air conditioner, and everyone in the neighborhood came to our house to see it.

We were also one of the few homes on our block with a modern dishwasher, a clothes washer and a dryer. (We *weren't* poor. In fact, we lived in one of the more affluent suburbs of Boston, MA.)

But, looking just at proportions... how much of my dad's paycheck was consumed by the electric bill and our oil bill? How much did my parents have for clothing, keeping our cars running, and summer vacations?

I'm realizing that *I have no idea*. That seems so very *odd*.

I remember that "grown up" parties meant moving our living room furniture out of the way, and couples dancing ballroom-style through our living room to our screened porch. I thought it was *so* elegant...