

WHAT'S GOING ON???

Can We Get Your Dog Food Any More?

Once upon a time, 'way back in 1975, before many of our staffers were born, we came to Lucerne Valley to operate this store, to serve this community in obedience to God. That was 44 years ago!

At that time, independent supermarkets were a major factor in Southern California, and mostly supplied by the largest wholesaler in the area, Certified Grocers of California. Since Certified was a co-op, we bought shares and we retailers jointly owned the company. Certified staff treated us with the respect due owners, and since the company board was composed of retailers, the company developed programs and services sorely needed by stores that couldn't afford them alone.

Over the decades, market conditions changed, and as the big gorilla supermarket chains consolidated and invaded, Certified had to respond in order to survive. It merged with a Portland wholesaler and became Unified Western Grocers, and then later, merged again with a Seattle wholesaler and became Unified Grocers.

All during that time, through ups and downs, Unified remained focused on the retailer/owners, and with wise leadership, adopted Best Practices from wherever in the company they originated, and spread the Best Practices to the rest of the company without regard to injured egos.

Then the Amazon.com and Walmart factors developed to the point that the entire model of retail business has been disrupted, causing bankruptcies (e.g. Toys R Us), mergers (e.g. Sears and Kmart), and more consolidations. A couple of years ago, it happened to us, too. Unified Grocers had lost its wise leadership, and the shrinking number of independents put it in a loss position so that they were essentially forced to sell out to Supervalu, a mega-wholesaler stretching across much of the U.S.

We members were fortunate that Supervalu cashed us out of our co-op for the dollars we had in it, but now we were dealing with a mega-corporation, not a local co-op. For two years, we were left alone to operate much as we always did as Unified. As we later

discovered, the two peaceful years were the result of more consolidation in the works, and one year into it, a company called UNFI bought Supervalu! Our heads were spinning as we waited to see what would happen!

We find ourselves customers of



an impersonal, huge publicly traded entity whose headquarters is 3000 miles away, on the East Coast. They have proceeded with all haste to "standardize" all of us recently acquired customers into their procedures and electronic services. That means all of the services that Unified developed with retailers' needs in mind have been stripped down to bare bones and subjected to rigid procedure.

I have been a near-basket case during the last few weeks as we have tried to learn their systems using webinars and a (very) little hands-on training. We have watched as these anonymous UNFI executives have gutted our formerly great company, terminating at least half or ¾ of the Unified staff with whom we had developed great working relationships and even friendships. We now have to try to do our jobs without key functions that once were part of our regular daily routines.

I really don't mind learning something new, realizing all along that change is painful. What makes change bearable, though, is if it results in improvement, and if it reflects thoughtful concern and intelligent design.

Well, no. None of the above is apparent in our new procedures, and in fact, some of it is so stupid as to be outrageous. We were promised that Unified's great retail technology might be retained due to the quality and utility delivered to us retailers. It seems that was an empty promise.

What does all of this have to do with dog food? Well, dog food is a good example of the different relationship and spirit of the wholesaler. Have you noticed the lined up pallets of large bags of



Alpo, Come n Get It, Dog Chow, Gravy Train, Maintain, and Special Value Dog Foods opposite the bread? Most of those are items Unified arranged to get for just this one Lucerne Valley store, since our big desert doggies eat LOTS of dog food, and we wanted to have these large bags available.

All of a sudden, when ordering these pallets, they were labelled "Restricted", and we couldn't order them. Now UNFI requires us to fill out paperwork requesting these pallets a week in advance. We will have to predict the sales and pre-order a couple of weeks ahead, which increases the risk of running out or overloading our back room if we misjudge. And with the attitude

RESTRICTED!

we are getting, we don't even know if they are willing to continue doing this for us (for you!)

What distresses us the most is not the disruption caused by change. It's the attitude, the spirit, the arrogant demand "our way or the highway" that we detect. And the "our way" we are being forced to use isn't even done with intelligence! It's multiple steps backwards from what we had with Unified.

Where we once worked with our wholesaler and knew the people we worked with, now we are another blip on their map of store locations. I am a person who is focused on spirit (and the Holy Spirit), so these insidious steps toward dehumanization show up brightly on my radar. Big Retail, Big Banks, Big Government have all moved in that direction, largely leaving human contact and relationship out of their business plans. It's up to us grassroots little guys to serve and care about you customers. We can't hide in big office buildings behind computer screens and don't want to treat you like a statistic.

And may we never do that. May we stay faithful to our calling to serve this community with spirit and with Spirit!

Linda Gammel

To be continued . . .

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Contributed. From the Web.

IN THE BEGINNING— CORPORATE STYLE

In the Beginning, there was The Plan; but The Plan was without form; and man created The Procedure.

Darkness was upon the face of the employees; and they were sore afraid; and they looked upon their supervisors and cried:

"It is a crock of dung and stinks to High Heaven!"

And the supervisors spake unto the project supervisors, saying:

"It is a bucket of manure and intolerably malodorous."

And the project administrators spake unto the section managers, saying: "It is a vessel of fertilizer and exceedingly strong."

And the section managers spake unto the department directors, saying: "It promoteth growth and is very powerful."

And the department directors spake unto the company president, saying: "It augmenteth development and productivity."

And the company president looked down on The Procedure and declared: "AND IT WAS GOOD!" And so the Plan became Policy. This is how S--- Happens.

TURBULENT TIMES

A plane hit a patch of severe turbulence and the passengers were holding on tight as it rocked and reeled through the night.



A lady turned to a minister who was sitting behind her and said, "You're a man of God. Can't you do something about this?"

He replied, "Sorry, I can't. I'm in sales, not management."

A PRAYER SUITABLE FOR THE WORK DAY

Dear Lord, so far today, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, and I haven't lost my temper. I haven't been grumpy, nasty or selfish, and I'm really glad of that! But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot of help. Thank you! Amen.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

L.V. School Board Meeting

Thursday, June 13, starts at 5:30PM.
At the Alternative Education Center,
8560 Alioto Rd up Highway 18.

SERVICES AT CROSSROADS CENTER

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& HARDWARE**

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DR. ASHOK MELVANI M.D.

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- PAYMENT STATION SCE, Frontier & Verizon

PRESCRIPTION DELIVERY

242-4900

Rancho Drugs - Tues. 11AM, Wed. & Fri. 3PM

ST. MARY HEALTH VAN

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Every Thursday except December
8:30AM - 3:30PM in our parking lot.

ON THE PORCHES

AT THE STORE

**WED, May 22, 7A-9A, BIBLE
LITERATURE, by Jehovah's
Witnesses.**

- Lucerne Valley Market
- "Do it Best" Hardware
- Wash n Shop
- Crossroads Center

LIMITS & MULTIPLE PRICING

Please, unless otherwise indicated, **ON AD ITEMS NO MORE THAN 6 TOTAL** (including all flavors or varieties) **OF ANY ITEM, PER FAMILY, DURING THE AD PERIOD, AT THE SALE PRICE**, except in produce and meat, which are limited to normal retail quantities, or which carry limits specifically stated. Sorry, we must reserve the right to further limit or refuse sales.

ON MULTIPLE PRICING, when purchasing items in quantities more or less than the multiple stated, the register is built automatically to charge the "each" price times the quantity. (Example: Price of item is 3/\$1. The price of: one = 34¢, two = 68¢, three = \$1, four = \$1.34, five = \$1.68, six = \$2.00).

ECHO RECYCLING
760-617-5404

On the Northeast side of the parking lot.

Open Mon. - Sat. 9AM - 4PM

Closed for Lunch Noon to 1PM.

Closed Sunday

Aluminum CRV **\$1.70lb**

#1 Plastic CRV **\$1.29lb**

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