

Salem's Lighter Side

The Memoirs of Betty Ronco

By Liz McGehee

Another Depression grips America.

It all started way back in 1984 when the first Roncovilles began to spring up in the slums of the nation's largest cities. Soon, one could find Roncovilles in Amerca's farmlands, on the beaches, and even in Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia...

Nineteen eighty-four was an election year. President Ronald Reagan, the Republican incumbent, was running against a field of eight Democratic presidential candidates, almost all of whom were named Fritz. There was no candidate I particularly hoped would be elected.

During his four years in the White House, President Reagan had managed to increase the federal budget deficit; decrease federal aid for such social programs as welfare, social security, and student loans; increase defense spending; void the contitution's guarantee of freedom of speech when he prohibited press coverage of the initial stages of the invasion of Grenada; endanger the lives of thousands of U.S. marines in Lebanon and the credibility of the nation's credulous foreign policy.

Meanwhile, in Iowa and in New Hampshire, the Democratic presidential contenders were busy trying to discredit each other. In several televised debates, the Democrats spent more time criticizing one another than they did attacking President Reagan.

All Hell broke loose that year. Many peace treties were made only to be broken as soon as the various diplomats had given away their complimentary official treaty-signing pens and had flown back to their respective countries; the United States had just finished deploying new nuclear missiles in Europe during the previous year; the Soviets walked out of a strategic arms reduction talk held in Geneva, and my subscription to T.V. Guide ran out. If it weren't for my husband, Nick Ronco, the world would have been torn apart at its seams.

Nick suggested that instead of griping about the current world situation, everybody should do something to push world events in a more positive direction. Voting in local and in presidential election, writing letters to our Congressional leaders, and joining politically active civic groups were just a few ways we could influence "the system." Or, we could all become salesmen for Ronco, a mail-order company founded by Nick's father in the early 1950's.

Ever since 1980, when I first saw Nick in his handsome mauve and olive green polyester suit, I knew that I could never love anyone the

way I loved Nick—except, of course, someone who had more money than Nick. Nick said that Ronco could cure the world's problems for only \$19.95, (That was another thing I liked about Nick—his realistic perception of the world around him.) so he sent President Reagan the following modest Ronco proposals:

•FOREIGN POLICY/DEFENSE SPENDING

Tell the Russians that for each nuclear missile they allow the United States to deploy in Europe, you will send them absolutely free a Slim Whitman Christmas album, a pair of Ginsu steak knives, and a gadget that slices, dices, and juliennes fries.

•DOMESTIC POLICY/UNEMPLOYMENT/THE ARTS

The increased use of Ronco products in the process of protecting America's security will provide millions of jobs for the nation's unemployed. In addition, sir, think of how much money you could give to P.B.S. if you ran Ronco/Reagan commercials between Sesame Street and Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. Promise P.B.S. such sophisticated sound equipment as our Mr. Microphone, and I'm sure they won't turn you down.

P.B.S. and the Soviet Union accepted Mr. Reagan's proposals; Nick's plans were activated on January 1, 1984. The wars in Lebanon and in Afghanistan ended; the United States pulled its military advisors out of Central America; America and Russia created a bilateral nuclear freeze, and Nick renewed my T.V. Guide subscription. There was peace in our time.

Once the nuclear freeze began, however, the markets for Ronco merchandise started to dwindle. By December of 1984, everyone who had been unemployed B.R. (Before Ronco) found himself pounding the pavement again for a job—just for someplace, anyplace, that had food and a floor to sleep on.

Some people created their own shelter by forming Roncovilles, small settlements made of cardboard and flattened metal cans. When it rained, they had to move to Roncovilles in other towns. Some went to Arizona and to other Sunbelt states where they could stay dry and warm all year. One man used to sleep on a park bench with a newspaper over him to ward off the pigeons until some men who lived in the railroad terminal stole his shoes. In 1986, after hiding in the underground for a while, Nick booked a flight for Brazil.

Letters

continued from page 2

are sent out, why are they not paid attention to? What has been done? I ask other Soldierettes for the Public Good to join with me in voicing their much needed opinions on this issue of flaming controversy.

Nastily,
Penelope Q. McSnoot

DID YOU KNOW?

Owners of personal and small computers are now getting a big hand when it comes to ordering diskettes. For example, one major company, 3M, has completely done away with numbers to identify its most popular diskettes. Instead, it uses simple codes and colors.

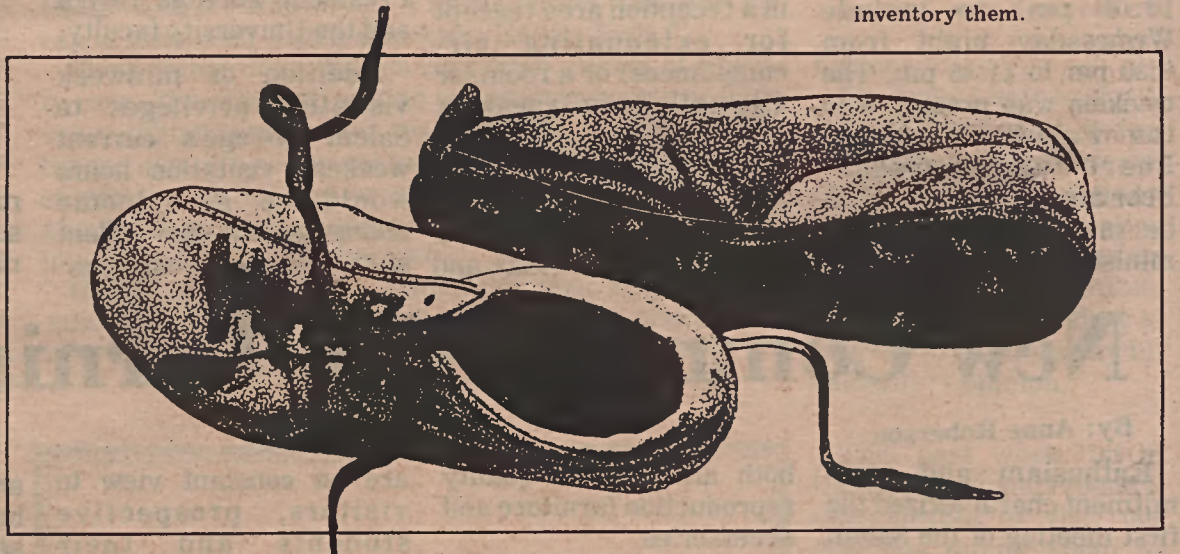


This dramatic simplification of diskette designation has been achieved by 3M with a complete revamping of its line. Diskettes now are simply defined by diameter, density, and number of sides used.

This makes it faster and easier for owners of mini-computers to buy diskettes, and for dealers to order and inventory them.



Name the Famed Salem Alumna



Are You Ready for the 10K?

THIS SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THINGS FOR A WHILE!



GHONEIM '84