

A 'Typical' Food Checker Sometimes Bites Tongue

BY JOHN BIGHAM

Thousands of Columbians daily wend their way through the city's supermarkets and eventually wind up at the cash register.

What kind of person is the individual who plays a merry tune on the cash register? Why do purchasers sometimes make less than charitable remarks to the checker, who usually is a woman?

For answers to these and other questions, an attempt was made to find the city's typical supermarket checker, and determine what type of person she might

be, and what thoughts pass through her mind as she daily serves hundreds of grocery shoppers.

A petite and personable young woman named Mrs. Louise Bradley, 23, seems to be typical of scores of checkers in Columbia.

Louise Bradley works behind the cash register of a supermarket on Millwood Avenue. Her husband Tommy is a senior in the School of Pharmacy at the University. He is getting his education under the GI bill. The Bradleys have two sons, age two and four, and they live in Gonzales Gardens.



SUPERMARKET CHECKER

Mrs. Louise Bradley checks a customer's order in the supermarket where she works. (Record staff photo)

Originally from the upstate town of Pelzer, the Bradleys have not decided where they will ultimately settle. But until such time as her husband finishes school, Louise will continue to work and add to the family income.

"When we came to Columbia," she tells, "I wanted secretarial work but my lack of experience was a handicap. I had worked in a store at home so I was able to secure my present job. That's why I'm here in this store."

According to her manager, Louise Bradley has the personality and desire to work necessary in a checker. She meets people easily and enjoys the many contacts she makes in the store. She considers her take-home pay of \$45 a week to be fair wages, and two days a week off enables her to spend time with her family.

"Furthermore, the fact that my week day off is Monday enables me to catch up with the washing," she declares.

The price of food is of major concern to Louise Bradley, as it is to many of her customers.

"Sometimes when they are fussing about high prices," she says, "I find myself agreeing with them."

"But they shouldn't blame me," she adds.

Contrary and cantankerous customers also prove a bane to Louise, although she admits she finds few in this category.

"Sometimes I have had to bite my tongue," she tells, "but so far I've been able to grin and bear it." She confides that when upset by a customer she waits until the disagreeable party has left the store. Then she unloads her customer relation problems on the manager. He, being sympathetic and often a target of criticism himself, is usually able to restore his checker's balance.

Louise Bradley finds much common ground upon which she can talk with customers.

"When they find I have two small children," she says, "we usually find a lot to talk about."

She finds supermarket visitors to be an interesting lot. She points out that many times women will wander around the store and end up bringing more to the cash register than they are able to pay for.

"I have also found," she advises, "that women will stick to a budget more closely than a man. Men are inclined to splurge. One of our women customers says she hates to bring her husband to the store because he wants to buy so many things they won't actually need."

Louise Bradley has some definite ideas about her work. She believes she should be as cheerful as possible. She is a strong advocate of the kind word.

"Being of a cheerful nature," she says, "can work in two ways. I can sometimes pick up the customer, and other times a friendly visitor in the store can give me a lift."

After a hard day's work and a steady pounding on the cash register, Louise Bradley finds that she can go home to husband and children and leave all the cares of the long day locked behind the doors of the store.

So breadwinner Bradley works on, hopeful that some day she and her family can settle down permanently. She also hopes that customers at the store will always remember that Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Bradley and sons also have to buy groceries at the same prices about which they sometimes thoughtlessly complain to her.

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