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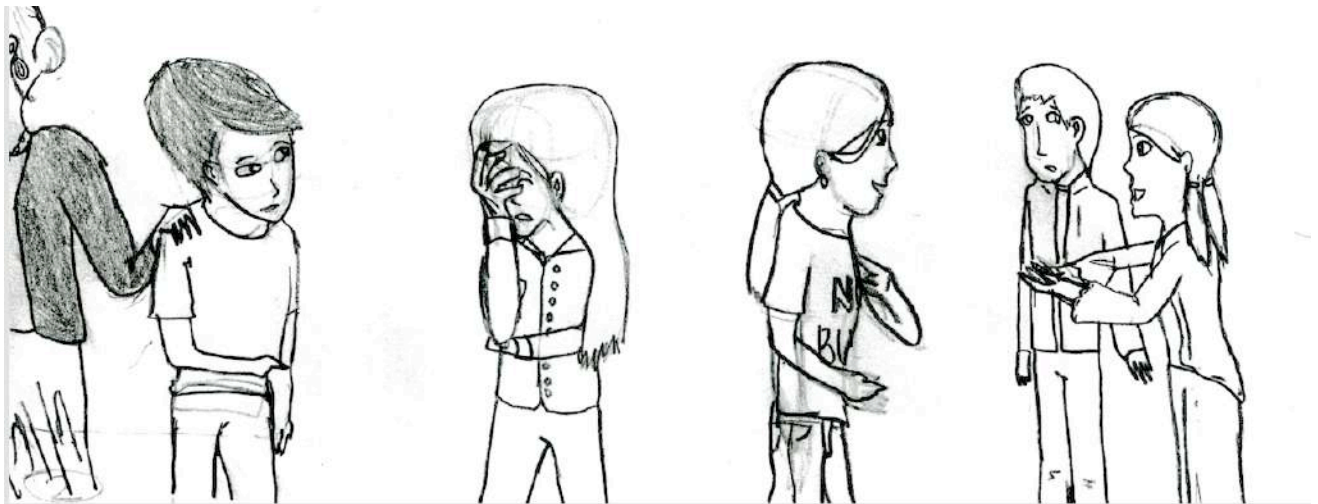# YES, THAT'S MY MOTHER!

Story by Marsha Landau

Illustrated by S.D. Monahan

https://mathmarsha.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_17.html

Here she goes again, I thought. That was Saturday.

You'd think it would be safe to stand in line for movie tickets.

But no such luck. My mother just HAD to INTERVIEW the whole family in front of us while we waited. By the time she finished she knew that they had relatives in Brazil, a dog named Fish (I'm NOT making this up!), and that they had already seen the movie twice.

I was wishing for a place to hide, as usual. Also as usual, someone--this time it was the boy behind us--asked, "Is that your mother?"

"Yes, that's my mother," I replied, rolling my eyes.

Now, don't get me wrong--I love my mother. But she's just so INTERESTED in everything. It's embarrassing.

And then there are all the things that other people don't even NOTICE but really get HER going.

I can give you a perfect example--grocery shopping. What could be simpler? You write out your list, go up and down the aisles filling your cart with stuff you need, pay, and leave. Ha! Not with MY mother.

We went to the supermarket Tuesday just before dinner. We didn't even have a list—we only needed a dozen large eggs, a quart of skim milk, and a cantaloupe.

We got the milk first. No problem. I was getting hopeful that this would be just an ordinary shopping event, like the ones that happen in other families.

Next the eggs. There was an old woman taking 2 dozen small eggs for 69 cents a dozen when the 1½ dozen carton of large eggs was $1.19.

Oh, no! Trouble! I thought.

You see, my mother worries about old people wasting money in the supermarket. She thinks it's her job to help them get the best value. The embarrassing part is—and it happens every time—my mother just stands there and explains the best price to the shoppers! Sometimes I think they don't even believe her. They just take the better buy so she'll leave them alone.

Mom tells me, "Many older people are on a tight budget. They have to get the most nutrition for the least money. It is my civic duty to help."

Yikes!!

In the meantime, I try to look like I'm with someone else. It never works.

Anyway, the lady Tuesday was pretty nice. She listened patiently and followed Mom's advice to buy the 1½ dozen carton of large eggs for $1.19. Then she thanked Mom and turned to me.

"Is that your mother?" she asked.

"Yes, that's my mother," I sighed.

I crossed my fingers on the way to the cantaloupes, hoping, hoping, hoping we'd just grab one and go home.

My heart sank when I saw the hand-written ".99¢ " sign above the cantaloupe display.

This is it! I thought, frantic about what my mother would do. *I can feel it! She's going to make them sell it to us for the posted price!*

When I heard my mother politely ask to speak with the manager, I tried to tuck myself into the potato bin. I didn't fit.
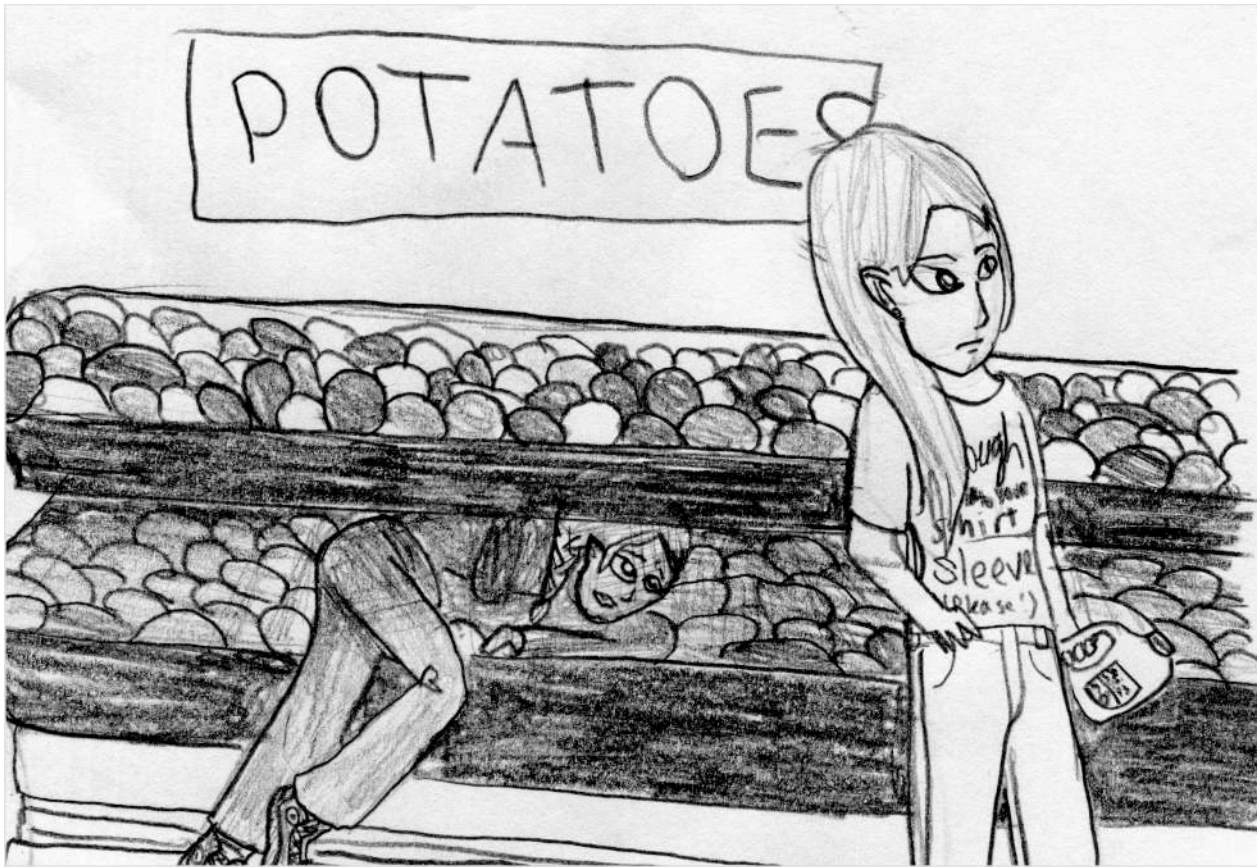
Next I heard Mom telling the manager, "I know you think it doesn't matter what you write on the signs, that people know what you mean. But people bring CHILDREN in here, and I can't have children believing this truly means '99 cents' just because they saw it in the supermarket. How will they ever learn how to write decimals and amounts of money correctly?"

The manager just stared at Mom.

Mom stared back. "I spoke to you about this problem last week when the same sign was on the head lettuce. I told you that if you keep putting up signs with these BARGAIN PRICES,

one day, instead of begging you to fix the sign, I'd just buy the item at the posted price--and suggest that other shoppers do the same!"

Well, Tuesday was the day.

Mom took a cantaloupe and off we went to the checkout line. The clerk put in the code for the cantaloupe. The register showed $ .99.

Mom said, "I'm sorry, but your store policy says that if an unmarked item scans at a price greater than the shelf price, the item is free. The sign says the price of the cantaloupe is ninety-nine HUNDREDTHS cents, NOT 99 cents. You'll have to give it to me for free. And I hope everyone else in the store gets a free cantaloupe, too."

Other people in our line were looking impatient. Fortunately, most of them couldn't hear what was going on. But the man right behind us COULD hear. He scrunched his face and asked, "Is that your mother?"

"Yes, that's my mother," I mumbled.

"I'm a reporter for the *Sentinel*," he announced, in a loud voice. "This woman is absolutely right--we should all buy cantaloupe! I'm going to write about this for my paper. Maybe then we can get the store to write prices correctly."

Shoppers darted back to the produce aisle for their free cantaloupe.

The store manager ripped up the " .99¢ " sign.

The reporter really did write an article--all about consumers' rights and how stores shouldn't be so careless about the prices they post. It was in today's paper.

THE SENTINEL

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S FAVORITE NEWSPAPER

CANTALOUPES FOR UNDER 1¢

Shopper confronts store manager about incorrect decimals in handwritten signs.

Ms. Merry Cantor is a regular customer at Dave's Market.

"I've been shopping here for years," she said yesterday when interviewed for this article. "I like the manageable size of the store and the usually friendly employees. But lately I've noticed that the handwritten signs throughout the store are written incorrectly, using both a decimal point AND a cents sign."

After alerting the store manager to the problem on several occasions, Ms. Cantor finally insisted on buying a cantaloupe at the display price--

.99¢, that is, 99 hundredths of a cent. And she encouraged other shoppers to do the same.

"That got the manager's attention," she said triumphantly, after he agreed to be more careful about signage in the future. "It's important for people to see amounts of money written correctly, especially young children who are just learning how to write dollars and cents."

The other shoppers were happy to take home bargain-priced cantaloupes. One woman, who asked that her name be withheld, said she will go to other grocery stores, look for "bargains" to buy, and then get each store to pledge to correct its signs.

Thank you, Ms. Cantor!

When I got to school, Ms. Mathis said, "Girls and boys—I found an interesting story in the *Sentinel* this morning. We're going to use it to help us learn about writing amounts of money

correctly. By the way, I see that the hero in the story has the same last name as you, Caroline. Is that your mother?"

I answered proudly, "Yes! That's my mother!"

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Learn More about the Mathematics in the Story

Comparing prices of eggs:

Because eggs are sold in different sizes, it doesn't always make sense to look at the "price per

egg" for comparisons. Weight must be part of the calculation:

Size	Weight of a dozen eggs
Jumbo	30 ounces
Extra Large	27 ounces
Large	24 ounces
Medium	21 ounces
Small	18 ounces

Two dozen small eggs weigh 36 ounces; in the story they cost $1.38.

The 1½ dozen carton of large eggs also weighs 36 ounces, so, at $1.19, it's a better buy.

Misplaced decimal in prices using the ¢ sign:

Stop reading immediately after looking at the sign above the cantaloupes. Ask your child(ren) to

read the amount of money shown on the sign. Unfortunately, the response is likely to be "99

cents," which is NOT what the sign says.

99 cents can be written correctly in one of two ways: $ .99 or 99¢.

The SIGN says the price is "ninety-nine hundredths cents." A penny is one whole cent, or one

hundred hundredths cents. So .99¢ is less than one penny!

A field trip to any supermarket is likely to reveal many occurrences of errors similar to

the one shown in the story. Watch for hand-written signs throughout the store, but especially in

the Produce Department and on items that are on "special" at the ends of the aisles. See what

happens when you try to buy the items at the posted price!

Here are some recent examples.

First, two images from toll booths on the Illinois toll road (Reagan):

Two from a market in Skokie:

Note that in some places there are laws to protect the consumer. For example, in Connecticut the regulation states:

In the event that any consumer commodity electronically scans at the cash register or checkout terminal at a retail price which is higher than the posted retail price, one item of such consumer commodity, up to a value of twenty dollars, shall be given to the consumer at no cost. (from http://ts.nist.gov/WeightsAndMeasures/upload/CONNECTICUT.pdf)