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Fantastic Figures Mean Something

WE Americans have the world's best and most prolific communications systems, but we have a hard time assimilating all we learn.

One reason is the sheer volume of data input we receive daily. Another is the frequent use of fantastic figures so large that they seem to be impersonal, with no application to us.

Many of them do have meaning. A news story points out that a house priced at \$45,000 actually costs \$100,000, if the buyer pays \$9,000 down and finances the balance at 9 per cent for 25 years.

Revolving charge accounts and bank credit are conveniences that cost 18 per cent per year. Dr. Robert Fite of Oklahoma State University notes that one dollar (just \$1) invested at 18 per cent interest, compounded, would amount to \$15,608,031 in 100 years.

Economist John Kendrick has estimated our net national wealth at \$5.7 trillion. This averages out to \$26,530 for each man, woman and child. An-

other economist figured the total public and private debt at around \$3 trillion, so we may be solvent.

The federal debt, expected to exceed \$710 billion in the coming fiscal year, amounts to about \$3,380 per capita.

How much is a billion dollars? A speaker at a farm credit meeting stated that if you had started farming in the year 1 A.D. with a billion dollars and had lost \$1,000 a day ever since, you still would have to lose \$275 million before you would be flat broke.

U.S. News & World Report says the federal spending target of \$413.3 billion, stacked in one dollar bills, would fill a warehouse three miles long, 20 feet high and 52 feet wide.

Wall Street Journal calculates that the amount of unfunded liability of the Social Security system, which figures in nearly everybody's retirement plans, now amounts to around \$4 trillion.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City reports that the amount of

currency held by the public doubled between 1965 and 1975, to reach \$73.7 billion, with most of the increase in large denomination bills.

National welfare costs are estimated at \$39.1 billion, with about one in 12 Americans receiving some assistance.

An article in Fortune magazine states that in just one year solar radiation reaching the surface of the United States exceeds the total amount of fossil energy that ever will be extracted from the earth in this country.

Not all of the fantastic figures are of such monstrous proportions. Medical reports indicate that if you are of average weight, in a 24 hour period your heart will beat 103,680 times, your blood will travel 168,000 miles, you will breathe 23,040 times.

In a year, your eyes will move up, down and sideways some 36 million times, and you will blink 36 million times. When you read some of these fantastic figures, it may be time to blink!