

# A REPORTER AT LARGE

## THE WALKERS

EARLY one Sunday morning a few weeks ago, I phoned an acquaintance of mine named Thomas Storie to find out how he and his wife, Catharine, were coming along with a project that has dominated their leisure time for the past thirty years. "Why, we're doing right nicely," Storie, a transplanted Tennessean who has spent most of his adult life in New York, told me. "Today we'll finish up Fort Lee, and then I guess we'll take on Englewood Cliffs." Having had previous progress reports from the Stories, I was able to decode this one without any trouble. It meant simply that the couple would that day conclude a walking tour of one New Jersey suburb, and the following weekend would start a similar campaign in another, both efforts, I understood, being part of a master plan to cover every inch of sidewalk—or, in the absence of sidewalk, every inch of street—in the metropolitan area and as much of the rest of the world as possible. The Stories, in short, are systematic walkers, and their records show that, in pursuit of this singular hobby, they have covered seventeen thousand different miles of pavement. A quarter of a century ago, they finished up Manhattan, and by 1950 they had polished off the other boroughs. During their long and mobile life together, they have also taken on, during vacations, most of the major and a good many of the minor cities of the United States, along with such foreign redoubts as London, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid, Mexico City, Montreal, Halifax, and Tangier, and while time has not permitted them to do a thorough job on all of these, they have finished up Wilmington, Yonkers, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, and large portions of Philadelphia and St. Louis. And over the last couple of years, a number of modest-sized communities in northern New Jersey have been falling *in toto* beneath their inexorable tread.

The systematic walking of Tom and Catharine, as I have come to call them (we got to know each other last winter, when some researches of mine into the vanishing art of walking led me to them), is confined strictly to towns—a restriction that is Tom's idea rather than Catharine's. He is a purist. As passionately as Thoreau avoided towns, Tom Storie avoids the spaces between them. Bosky dells and hiking trails depress him, and he would as soon step on a third rail as on a country road. The Stories' *modus ambulandi* is to walk the main thoroughfares, or, as they put



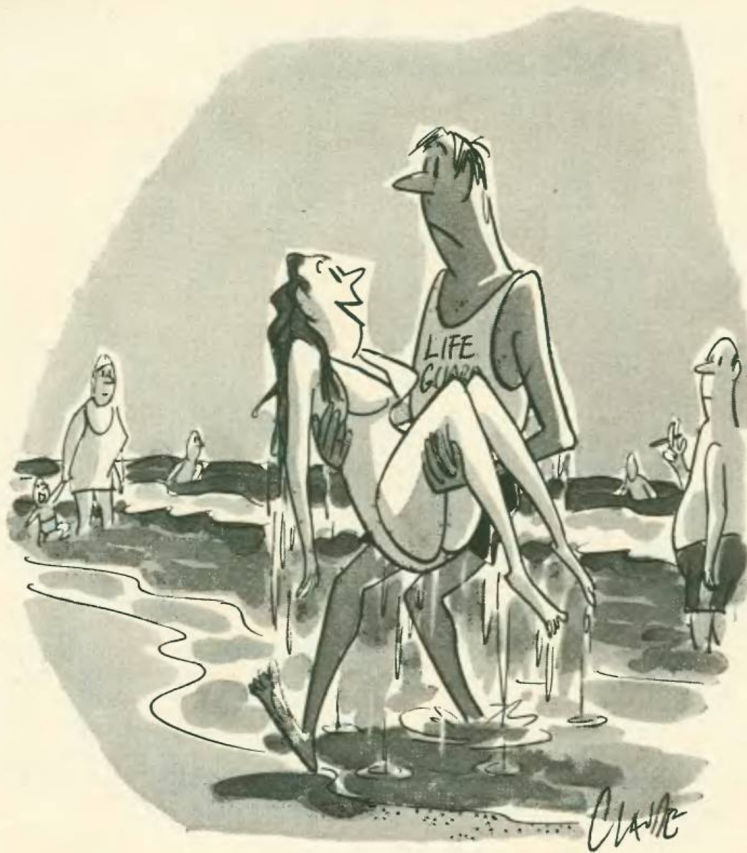
it, the "skeleton streets," of a city first, then go back—years later, if necessary—and fill in the side streets. Tom is a civil engineer, but he started out as a draftsman, and it was with a draftsman's eye that he evolved this procedure back in 1928, when he was working for the Mississippi River Commission in St. Louis. Before that, he had unsystematically walked at great length the streets of Chattanooga, his home town; of Boston, where he spent a year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shortly after what he calls World War the First; and of New York City, where he worked briefly in the early twenties. Between walks in St. Louis, he met Catharine, a local Wellesley graduate and then, as now, a librarian, and soon convinced her that they should stroll through life together within limits—city limits, that is. The only time they have been forced to do much walking outside them was during World War the Second, when Tom, as an Army officer, was stationed for two years at Fort Du Pont, in Delaware. After knocking off the relatively pint-sized metropolis of Wilmington, seventeen miles away, in a couple of dozen weekends, they had to fall back on the local countryside. While the experience left Tom more jaundiced than ever about non-urban rambles, it had the opposite effect on Catharine, and now she insists that he take her for a walk in the country twice a year.

The Stories have been called America's Walkingest Couple by picture-cap-

tion writers, and they bear this title with a modesty befitting their appearance, which might be described as markedly unobtrusive. Despite their long residence here, they would seem right at home among a group of out-of-town tourists on a Manhattan sightseeing bus—to raise a ludicrously unlikely possibility. By the same token, they have decidedly stood out from some of the indigenes they have encountered in the less-travelled quarters of Greater New York—the Portuguese settlers near Newark's Ballantine brewery, the Red Hook dock hands, the Arabs of Brooklyn's Pacific Street, the Harlemites, the Hasidim and Sephardim, the babushkaed old Slavic women and the *boccie*-playing old Italian men. The Stories, who have no children, live quietly in an apartment building on Morningside Heights. They have gentle, placid faces, his tending toward length and hers toward a roundness and pinkness of cheek that, like the slim firmness of her calves, and in spite of her steel-gray hair, belie her middle years. At fifty-six, her husband still has youthful black hair, which he parts old-fashionedly in the middle, and his calves are firm, too. Rugged as a pair of shillelaghs, in fact. When, as an Army reserve officer, he took his physical before going on active duty in 1940, the examining doctor, upon letting his eye sweep down to the region of Tom's fibulae, almost dropped his knee mallet in astonishment. Never, he said, had he observed a knottier collection of flexors and extensors, and he went on to speculate that Tom could only be a postman with an exceptionally large and hilly territory to cover. "I didn't let on otherwise," Tom has told me. "I was afraid that if I tried to explain how I *really* got muscles like that, I might have been turned down on psychological grounds."

When in motion, the Stories look deceptively like run-of-the-mill Sunday strollers. On bright days, Catharine wears a wide-peaked sun cap, but otherwise there is nothing remarkable about their dress—just comfortable street clothes, suited to the season and the Sabbath, which is when they usually do their walking. They employ no equipment more complicated than rubber-soled or crêpe-soled shoes, and have no special theories about how to walk. Their pace appears to be easy, but their infrequent companions have found it surprisingly taxing, and they have inadvertently shaken a number of leg men who were assigned to interview them. (I must confess that I—twenty years their junior and, I had fancied, a sea-





*"...and then our old house on Chestnut Street flashed before my eyes. My Aunt Martha was standing in the yard, and my dog Rex was there..."*

soned city walker myself—have failed to go the route with them on occasion.) Their single-day record is nineteen miles, set in New Orleans, their favorite city (after New York) for walking, and their average speed is three miles an hour. Neither distance, as such, nor speed is their object, however. What concerns them is *where* they walk. When they set out on Sunday morning, they take a bus or subway to some carefully chosen starting point and proceed to polish off the surrounding area. Once they set foot on a street, their aim is to walk its literal length, regardless of its condition. "Anything a jeep could drive over, as long as it's on the map, is what we tackle," Tom has said, and this criterion of passability has led them into some difficult places—for instance, certain briar-tangled stretches of Staten Island that exist as streets only on charts or in the dreams of subdividers. Considering some of the neighborhoods they have penetrated, their walking has been amazingly free of unpleasant incidents. "Unfriendly

dogs have given us some bad turns," Tom told me, "but people have never bothered us, even in the so-called tough sections of towns. Why, the only street violence we've ever even *seen* was in Paris, on the Rue Mouffetard—a man beating up a woman. It always puzzles us when we hear folks say there are parts of New York where it isn't safe to walk. As far as we're concerned, it's a very peaceful city."

**MEDICAL** men, from Hippocrates, who prescribed brisk strolls to avert obesity and hallucinations, to Paul Dudley White, have proclaimed the therapeutic benefits of walking, even at the risk of having the services of their profession dispensed with. (The historian George Macaulay Trevelyan once said, "I have two doctors, my left leg and my right.") Pathologically speaking, the Stories, too, as Tom has put it, "make out a pretty fair case for shanks' mare," for neither has had a serious illness in all their years of walking. Catharine *has* had a couple of

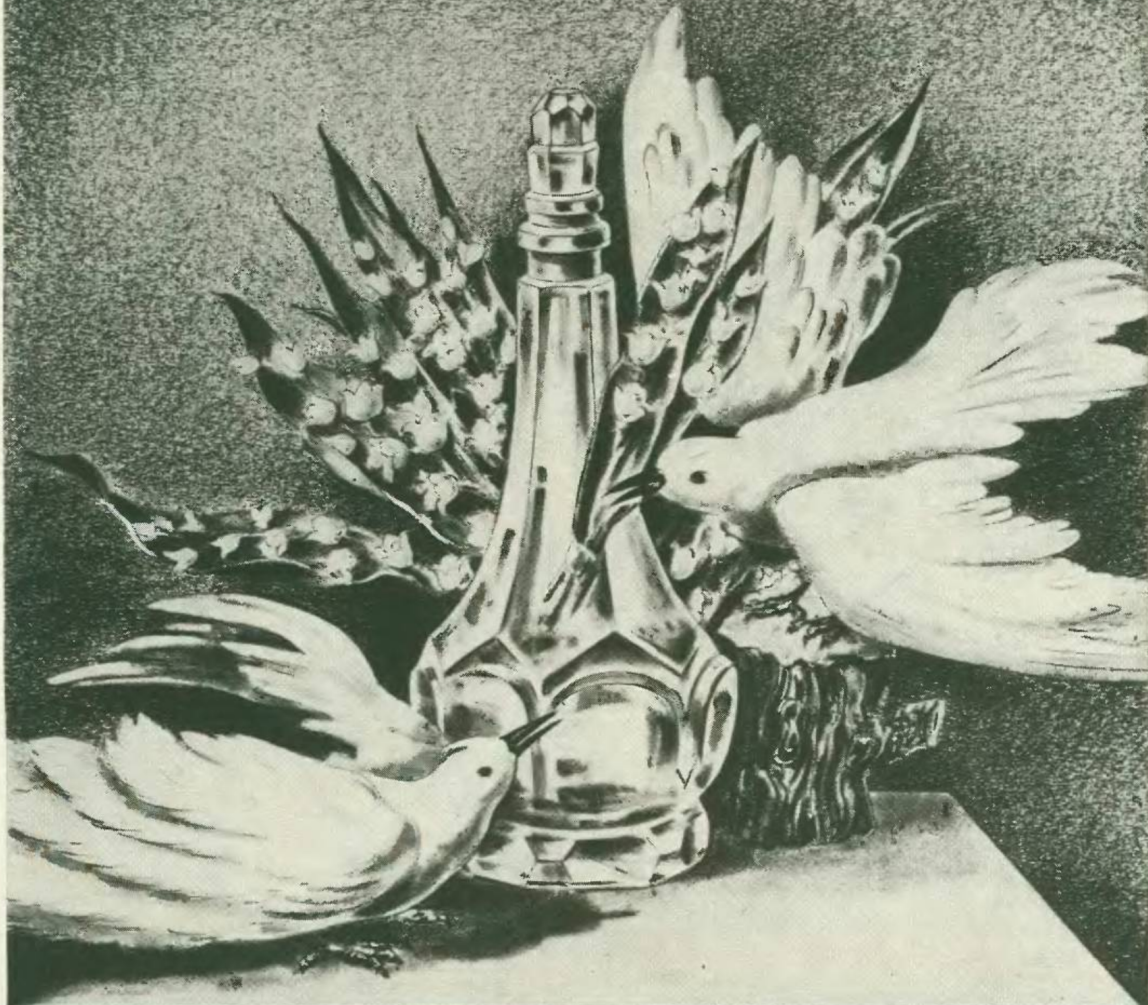
walking injuries, the result of falls. She skinned her shins on a gravel path in the Bois de Boulogne, and she received a nasty cut on the elbow, requiring emergency treatment, after tripping over a curbstone in Paterson, New Jersey. Only once, in all the years, has Tom lost his balance; in 1936 he took a flop on some ice near the Bush Terminal, in Brooklyn. He does have a sciatic condition, but he feels that, if anything, it is vocational rather than avocational in origin; for the last ten years he has been working in the civil-engineering section of the Coast Guard, and has had to spend a lot of his time on all-weather jobs in damp, low-lying seashore areas. The sciatica has undeniably slowed him down somewhat. He and his wife used to walk not only every Sunday but every Saturday, averaging about ten miles per sally.

Practically nothing can dissuade the Stories from their Sunday walk. Certainly, as I have discovered, the weather can't. Last February, I went out with them on the day they were finishing up Edgewater, a challengingly hilly little industrial community across the Hudson, and the temperature was thirteen above, with the wind whipping downriver at thirty-six miles an hour. A few weeks later, on the Sunday of last winter's big two-day snowfall, which immobilized almost everything and everybody in the New York area, the Stories (but not I) could be seen mushing through the drifts of Cliffside Park, a residential suburb atop the Palisades. "Blizzards have never stopped us," Catharine told me later. "We just plan out the walk so that we keep the prevailing winds at our backs most of the time and so that no more than half of it is on the upgrade, and then we sail along, gay as larks." "If you start giving in to the weather, you won't walk at all," Tom chimed in, but went on to concede that this rule has resulted in their spending a good many of their walking hours soaked to the skin. The forty miles of Providence's streets that they credit to themselves were negotiated entirely in the rain. However, Catharine will admit, shamefacedly, that once a downpour did stop *her*. It was on a Sunday in the thirties, when a torrential freshet hit outer Queens just as, bound for Far Rockaway, they were about to set out along Cross Bay Boulevard without rain gear. Catharine suddenly got cold, to say nothing of wet, feet, and ducked into a shelter. Sorrowfully accepting this defection, Tom set his face into the storm and went it alone.

To tell the truth—as Catharine has—she is not quite as much of a stick-



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ler for the rules as her husband is. If it were up to her, for example, she would often be content with *looking* down dead-end streets, whereas Tom insists on walking every inch of the way, even though it means retracing steps. (While the Stories love walking streets, they hate re-walking them, and are at great pains to plan things so as to avoid, as much as possible, streets that they have already covered, particularly skeleton streets.) On at least one occasion, Catharine has flatly refused to abide by the rules. It happened late in our day at Edgewater. We had come upon a stretch of dirt road, deeply covered with snow, that zigzagged crazily up a wooded slope—too steep for buildings—on the town's riverside cliff. Obviously, no cars had been up that way for quite a while, but the road was delineated (though uncertainly) on the Hagstrom street map, and after inspecting it with a practiced eye, Tom ruled that it was jeepable. Catharine then startled us both by declaring that, all the same, she wasn't going along; she didn't have rubbers on, she pointed out quietly but firmly. Neither did we, and I told Tom to go ahead and do his duty, while I kept Catharine company. After he disappeared gamely up the track and into the trees, Catharine turned to me and smiled. "This is my Navajo trick," she said. "You see, when the Navajos make a design in their blanket weaves, they assume it has a soul of its own, and they always leave a break in the pattern—to let the spirit out," they say. Well, every once in a while, I break the pattern and let my spirit out."

Such bursts of *nolo contendere* notwithstanding, Catharine has been a notably constant city-walking companion. The family records consist of hundreds of worn maps with the walked streets pencilled in—showing coverage of nine hundred and fifty miles in Philadelphia and its suburbs (where the Stories lived for two years before moving here in 1931), fifteen hundred miles in Westchester County towns, and three thousand miles in northern New Jersey, to say nothing of the six thousand miles of New York City streets and the four thousand or so miles of streets in the cities where they have vacationed. Tom has walked every street mile marked on the city maps, and Catharine, thumbing through them a few weeks ago, estimated that she has gone more than ninety per cent of the

way with him. She even stuck it out through the length and breadth of Se-caucus, the pig-farm town in the Jersey Meadows, which they walked with the temperature hovering at 105 degrees. "It wasn't so bad as long as we kept moving," Catharine, who does her best to look on the bright side of things, recalled.

THE Stories are in an imposing tradition. Starting with *Pithecanthropus erectus*, or Java man (to choose a likely initiator), people have been walking for more than five hundred thousand years. Few members of the species have invested the action with the Stories' kind of enthusiasm, however. In fact, it would seem that no sooner had man learned to walk than he decided that perhaps it wasn't such a good idea after all, and hastened to domesticate the horse, perfect the wheel, and put General Motors on the Big Board. Of course, human feet have covered a staggering amount of ground in their day, what with crusades, pilgrimages, exoduses, hegiras, protest marches, and the occupational ambulations of huntsmen, husbandmen, policemen, postmen, door-to-door salesmen, foot soldiers, wandering minstrels, itinerant divines, and floorwalkers. For that matter, the average American, who probably walks less than any other specimen in the history of the human race, puts in seven and seven-eighths miles a day, according to one survey, and the American Podiatry Association contends that a hospital nurse covers fifteen miles a day, a stenographer four miles (from desk to water cooler, so to speak), and a housewife six miles when she just potters about the home, and another eight when she goes on a shopping tour. However, all of this must be classified as duty

walking and distinguished from pleasure walking, the present state of which, particularly in America, would indicate that given his choice man will go by vehicle every time, else how explain the Golfmobile?

If walking has failed to attract a broad following, the failure can hardly be blamed on poor public relations. Articulate voices have advocated it for millennia. Aristotle—like Harry S. Truman—found it the best medium for dispensing wisdom, whence arose a whole new school of philosophy, the Peripatetic. Thoreau regarded rural pedestrians like himself as a class apart ("the Walker Errant . . . a sort of





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It all happens because of videotape, or more technically, video magnetic tape recording, which makes it possible for a television camera to record an event on tape *at the very moment it is being broadcast*. Thus, as soon as the "live" broadcast is over, the event can be re-broadcast immediately on tape. It also means that the same program can be broadcast at the same clock time in California and New York. Moreover, if there are two events going on at the same time, videotape makes it possible to see them both. For example: this Saturday the CBS Television Network will broadcast (1) *The Game of the Week* between the Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds at 2:30 p.m.; and (2) the famous Whitney Stakes in Saratoga at 4:30 p.m. Now please pay close attention: if the ball game goes beyond 4:30, the horse race will be broadcast on tape the minute the game ends. For while the ball game is going on, the Network's television cameras up at Saratoga will be broadcasting the horse race "live" to New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington (where the ball game won't be shown) and simultaneously recording it on tape. Will television's wonders ever cease?

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# CBS

fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People"), and it might even be proved that the English literary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are entirely traceable to the feet, specifically to those of Coleridge, Carlyle, Stevenson, Scott, Dickens, and—perhaps the most prodigious walker of them all—Wordsworth. (He tramped an estimated hundred and eighty thousand inspirational miles through the Lake Country, according to De Quincey, who was himself addicted to a ten-mile daily walk.) Indeed, British writers have been among the foremost exponents of walking, which may be the reason the British people are the world's most avid pleasure walkers. In England, the pressures to get out and walk have been so great that Max Beerbohm, practically the lone dissenter in the history of British letters, was once moved publicly to denounce the excesses of what he called "walk-mongers." "It is a fact," he stated, in an essay called "Going Out for a Walk," "that not once in all my life have I gone out for a walk. I have been taken out for walks; but that is another matter. Even while I trotted prattling by my nurse's side, I regretted the good old days when I had, and wasn't, a perambulator."

A sizable segment of our own populace once underwent a lengthy seizure of ambulomania, after the Civil War. It took a characteristically American turn, however—a compulsion to watch somebody else walk. For several decades, large crowds of spectators were drawn to sporting arenas that featured six-day walking marathons, involving professional pedestrians, or "peds," as competition walkers (a good many of whom had to be imported from the Old Country) were called. Overland walkers, too, generated a great deal of interest—particularly an American ped named Edward Payson Weston, one of whose feats was a round-trip walk between New York and California that he undertook in 1909 at the age of seventy. (Weston went West in a hundred and five days and came back in seventy-seven; blizzards in the Rockies slowed the old fellow down on the trek out.) Nowadays, though, distance, endurance, and speed walking are all but lost arts in America. Degenerate forms, like the bunion derbies of the twenties and the walkathons, spawned by the dance marathons of the thirties, have had their vogues, and once in a long while the papers will report some anachronistically long walk, such as the one taken a few months ago from Chicago to New York by a middle-aged Utica stockbroker. A

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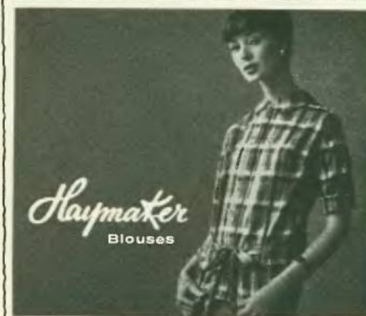
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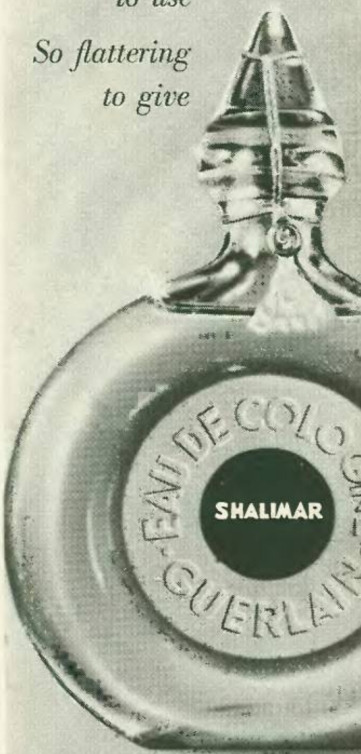
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Newark schoolteacher named Harry Moskowitz, inspired by President Eisenhower's fitness drive, has lately made a little news with his city-to-city walking campaign in the East, but the hard facts are that the United States has only once won an Olympic walking event (the British, the Swedes, and the Italians are normally the victors), and over the past decade, the ranking American competition walker has been Henry H. Laskau, of Mineola, a German-born Jewish refugee.

Even the ordinary stroller has fallen into disrepute in this country, as the Reverend Dr. Algernon Crapsey, of Rochester, New York, a volatile Episcopal clergyman and Socialist who was tried for heresy by his church, discovered as long ago as 1912, when he was marched off to the donjon of a small town on a charge of "walking the streets." ("I learned," he reported, "that in this clime and country, walking is both a disgrace and a crime.... The man who walks is considered an idiot and a pauper.") The situation has hardly improved since then. Indeed, there are sidewalkless communities where the police look with suspicion upon anybody who isn't *riding*, and many a suburban prowler car has pulled up and cruised significantly alongside the Stories.

In spite of everything, however, walking still has a stubborn appeal for some Americans, and New Yorkers, who tend to be backward by American standards of locomotion, are prominent among them; each summer weekend, thousands of people, armed with the "New York Walk Book" or other guides, swarm out of town to hit the large network of trails that surround the megalopolis. City walkers like Tom Storie look upon woodland walkers with a certain condescension, and one city-walking writer has denounced their gentle hobby as "a bastard form of motoring." There must be thousands of city-walkers in New York, too, but they are not a gregarious lot, and the Stories know little about the activities of their fellow-enthusiasts. They have, however, heard of another lady librarian who is doing all of New York's streets in alphabetical order, and they are aware of some of the exploits of their closest rival in this area—a sixty-eight-year-old Boy Scout official named Thomas J. Keane, of Forest Hills, who founded the Sea Scouts. Keane, a peppery little retired Navy commander of Irish extraction, took up city walking late in life, in order to lose weight, and he now refers to himself flatly as "the happiest

man in the world." In December, 1954, he completed a walking tour of Manhattan—cross streets first, then avenues, ending with a triumphant one-day, fourteen-mile swing down the length of Broadway. The Commander now takes a five-mile walk every day in Queens, when he is at home. He swears that he has also walked in every American city of more than fifteen thousand population, plus a good many smaller ones, during his long career as a lecturer on Scout activities. His out-of-town routine is to check in at a downtown hotel, walk as many of the streets surrounding it as he can, in a pattern of ever-widening squares, and later, as guest speaker at official luncheons and banquets, astonish the local Rotarians and city fathers with his intimate knowledge of their community.

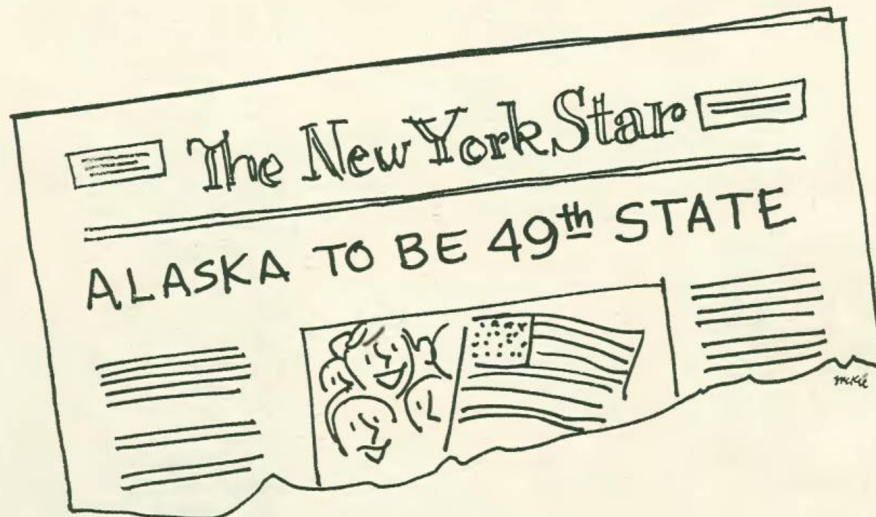
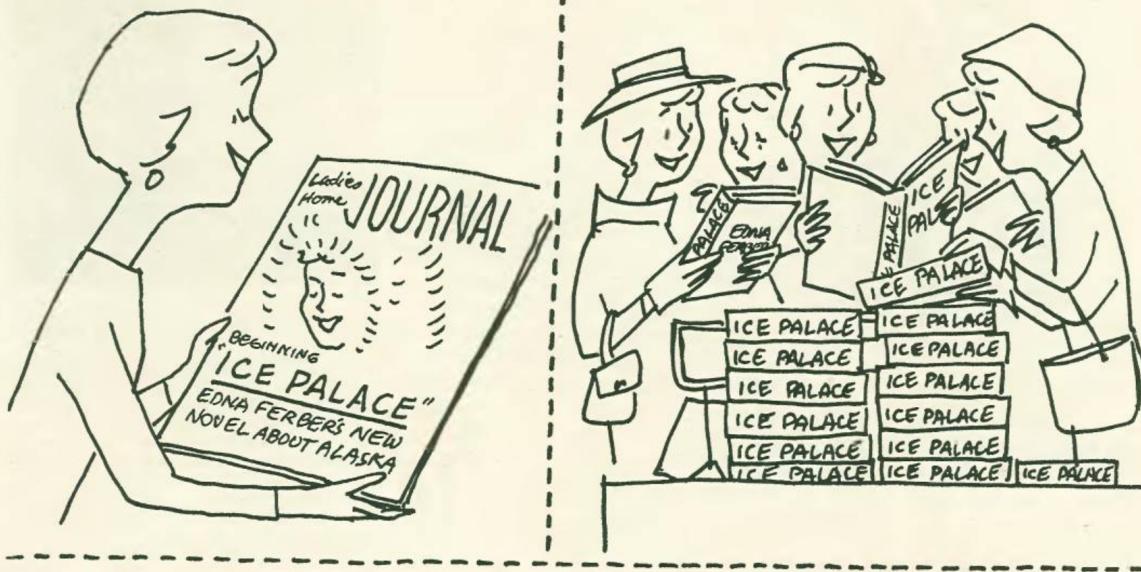
At the moment, Keane is in training for a walk around Manhattan Island, in emulation of the late John H. Finley, former president of City College and long-time editor of the *New York Times*, whose full and awesome weight was often thrown behind the cause of walking. Finley used to make an annual thirty-six-mile circumambulation, an echo of the old Scottish custom of "beating the bounds," whereby the inhabitants of a town conducted a yearly inspection tour of its boundaries, for defensive purposes. Finley himself worked both sides of the city line. He took long country walks, too, and handed out medals to anyone who claimed to have pleasure-walked a thousand miles in a year. (He was such an insatiable walker that when sitting still he took imaginary walks; once he confided to a friend that he had been footing it around the world and could at that moment see himself approaching Vancouver from the north.) Finley's efforts on behalf of ambulation were officially recognized by the city, in the form of the John Finley Walk, an esplanade along the East River from Eighty-first Street to Eighty-ninth that is possibly the only civic memorial to a walker in this country. It is identified by a wrought-iron silhouette of Finley in striding profile, typically coatless but with a muffler streaming behind him, and it was fittingly erected, shortly after his death, in 1940, during the borough presidency of another walking enthusiast and frequent bound-beater—Stanley M. Isaacs, now, at seventy-five, the only Republican on the City Council.

THE last time I made an appointment to walk with the Stories, several weeks ago, they were about to





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take a systematic walk in Manhattan. This surprised me, because I thought that Manhattan had long ago been walked over and done with, but Tom explained that it was a makeup walk for Catharine, who had missed several streets years ago; he had, it seems, sportingly agreed to suffer a day's retracing, perhaps in recognition of all the dead ends that she has accompanied him down and back. As things turned out, it was one of their most memorable walks.

At eleven o'clock on the designated Sunday morning, I met the Stories at their starting point—Little West Twelfth and Greenwich Streets. It was one of those damp, overcast days that we have had so many of lately, and all three of us had brought along raincoats. As we stood on the corner, Catharine briefly outlined the plan: to walk south for most of the length of Greenwich, and then cut eastward into the upper reaches of the financial district and do a one-block lane called Dutch Street, which was a new one to me. After that, the Stories promised, they would have a real surprise for me. We launched vigorously down Greenwich, past the truck terminals, small factories, warehouses, and scattered examples of Old New York residential architecture that characterize its upper end. The long street was deserted as far as the eye could see, and we came across nobody until we reached Barrow Street, where we stopped to stare momentarily (and, I'm afraid, without much compassion) at a decidedly rival enthusiast—a very young man wearing a very small cap, who was trying to coax a vintage car to start.

A few blocks farther on, Tom stopped to pick up a match book from the sidewalk. "For my brother-in-law," he told me. "He collects them, for some strange reason."

I asked him, after we resumed the pace, if they had made any finds of greater value in their years on the streets.

"No," he answered, after some reflection, "we haven't exactly got rich from walking. The most money we ever found was a roll of nine one-pound notes, lying in the Strand, in London. Another time, we retrieved a few singed dollar bills from an untended bonfire in Queens. Oh, of course we've come across a few other odds and ends, while walking past vacant lots and excavation sites—an unopened bottle of maraschino liqueur once, and even some real Indian arrowheads. We don't hunt for treasure, though. The truth is, our most satisfactory discoveries

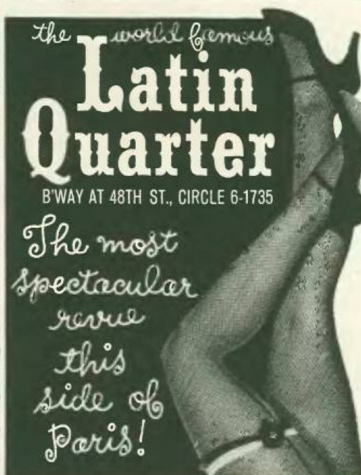


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## THE NEW YORKER

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are the little things we learn about a city. Take New York. Did you ever notice that the houses in Italian sections will very often have sleeping stone lions on the front lawns? And that gravestones in Jewish cemeteries will have pebbles placed on them? Did you know that, by golly, there's a *Scotch* neighborhood in Brooklyn, over in the Owl's Head Park section, or at least there used to be? And we found another one not long ago in Kearny, New Jersey. The bakery shops over there even feature scones and haggis. In Paterson one time, we came on a street called Gasoline Alley—it's just for racing cars—and we've seen people eel-fishing through the ice in Hook Creek, over near Idlewild. Eels are a big Italian Christmas Eve dish. Things like that."

"What about the solitary tea rose we found blooming in that patch of dried grass over in New Jersey somewhere?" said Catharine, a glow in her eyes. "A true last rose of summer. And the wild geese, honking their way south over that Newark tenement district. And the tiny old lady who suddenly came up over the rise of that field in Flatbush. Remember? It was just at sunset, and she was leading a little child and a goat."

"Yes," said Tom, "that's the sort of sight you don't forget, somehow. And the time I saw the dead rat in the pheasant cage at the Bridgeport Zoo and reported it."

The Stories pondered these private wonders for a few minutes, and then Catharine asked me if I knew where the best view of Manhattan could be found. "Laurel Hill, in the Jersey Meadows, right next to the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks," she said, with a victorious smile, when I asked her where. "We call it our mountain. We went up there one Sunday because the map showed that it had a few streets on it, around an old people's hospital. It turned out to have the most breathtaking vista of the skyline we'd ever seen. You can take in the whole sweep of it from over the back of the Palisades." She considered the hill in her mind's eye, and then—as if it were a prominence in the Pyrenees—said, "Someday we'll have to go back there."

As we talked, we had been plunging deeper into the old part of the borough. Greenwich was now an annex of Washington, the produce-market street that runs parallel to it a block to the west, and its sidewalks were overhung by the weathered tin canopies of wholesale food warehouses. Some life was stirring down there, and some was not. A few market hands weaved about

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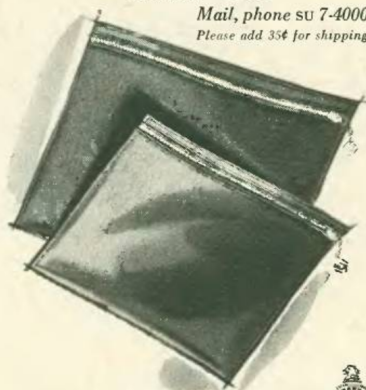


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the streets, red-eyed and ragged, and a few others were sprawled out, sound asleep, on the sidewalks. The cross streets were characterized more by smells than by sights. There was chocolate in the air at Charlton, thyme at Desbrosses, coffee at Watts, vinegar at Hubert, nutmeg at Moore, cheese at Chambers, and greenery—from the shrub and seed shops, about the only enterprises we had seen open for Sunday business—around the plaza-like confluence of Greenwich, West Broadway, Vesey, Fulton, and Dey. A couple of blocks below, Catharine announced that she had fulfilled her Greenwich Street obligations, and we turned into the empty canyons toward Dutch Street, which, the Hagstrom map showed, was a bit north of us. We headed uptown on Nassau, and just after we passed Liberty Street, Catharine asked us to stop and wait while she went back around the corner for a closer look at a stately old building.

She was back in a jiffy, wide-eyed. "There was a man robbing a haberdashery over there," she whispered.

We looked at her blankly.

"A pane of the store window was broken," she went on slowly, "and just as I came around the corner, this shabbily dressed man, who was standing in front of it, snapped shut an attaché case he was holding, and walked away with it. He had a pair of shoes, I think, in his other hand. I didn't get a good look at his face, and I didn't actually see him taking anything from the window, but—well, what else could it be?"

"The man might still be around here somewhere," she added, looking about uneasily, at which point we all acted on a single impulse and got the devil out of there. We headed due north at quickstep, but didn't see a policeman, or anyone else, until we came out on City Hall Park, four blocks away. Then, spotting a bluecoat crossing Park Row, we rushed up to intercept him. He was a young policeman, and he politely stopped to listen to Catharine's story. Before she had got very far, he broke in with a response that I have heard myself as an occasional reporter of troubles to the police.

"That store's not in this precinct," he said.

We stood there, fretting over the problem, and finally he came up with a solution.

"I'll phone the precinct it is in," he said brightly, "and they'll have a car there in five minutes."

He rushed over to a Nedick's in a

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nearby building, but the door was locked and a counterman inside signalled peremptorily that the place wasn't open for business. The officer just shrugged and rushed around the corner, presumably to find another phone. I figured that he must be new to the force.

I realized that I had been present at a historic event: the first case of robbery, or apparent robbery, in the Stories' long career as witnesses to the street life of Greater New York. They took it quite in stride, however. Quickly reorienting ourselves with the help of the map, we headed back south to pick up the course. Dutch Street was only three blocks away, and it did not prove to be exactly a lost Appian Way; it was simply an alley between office buildings, linking John and Fulton Streets. After we had traversed it, the Stories suggested that we go east to Pearl Street and follow that north to Chinatown, where we would lunch. A Chinese lunch, I gathered, was the surprise they had promised, and a glance at the map showed me that we would certainly be ready for it. The Pearl Street trek would be the better part of a winding mile.

"'Crooked as Pearl Street,'" Tom remarked. "That's an old New York saying. Another one is 'smelly as Barren Island.' Barren Island is now part of Floyd Bennett Field, and there used to be a glue works on it."

The words had not long been out of his mouth—just long enough for us to get over to Pearl and start for the underpass that takes it through the stone approach to the Brooklyn Bridge—when the air became as smelly as Barren Island. The odor was of smoke, though, not glue, and soon fire trucks began screaming through the area. When we reached Frankfort Street, which runs along the base of the bridge approach on the southerly side, we saw a concentration of fire equipment three blocks to the west, and we veered off to have a look. The blaze was in an ancient three-story loft on Gold Street, and it was a dandy. Clouds of ugly brown smoke were belching from the loft windows as bursts from the fire hoses smashed deep inside, and firemen with hooks and axes were scurrying up the iron fire escapes of the adjacent buildings, through the poisonous waves. (I read next day that the loft contained leather remnants, and that one of the firemen had been overcome.) Gold Street itself was a corridor of opaque, whirling smoke that rolled up to the top of an eight-story building across from the fire. More and more equipment kept arriving, some of it being diverted to



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extinguish a totally unrelated fire that had broken out just around the corner, in some storage rooms under the bridge approach. With smoke drifting out of the storage rooms, and huge fingers of flame starting to thrust upward through the roof of the loft building, it seemed as if the whole neighborhood were being touched off.

We had now, within half an hour, enjoyed what I would have thought was a city walker's bonanza—first a robbery, then an extra-alarm fire—but Tom soon got restless, and made it clear that we had best stop wasting time on the sideshows and get down to walking. "After lunch," he said, springing another surprise, "Catharine's going to do the Manhattan Bridge for the first time."

Our objective for lunch, it turned out, was the Nom Wah Tea Parlor, on Doyers Street, a so-called "blob joint," which serves blobs, or balls, of meat, fish, vegetables, and dough, prepared in the Nom Wah Bakery, next door. The tea parlor was a large, tile-floored room with booths, tables, and a counter, and it was patronized largely by Chinese families. The moment we sat down, a waitress brought over several plates of blobs, which, as the name hardly implies, were delicious—bud-shaped gray dough balls stuffed with spiced vegetables, white steamed dumplings with chunks of roast pork inside, delicate pieces of shrimp and tender balls of meat surfaced with peppers, mushrooms, or noodles. By the time I had finished popping a dozen into my mouth, I was beginning to feel as if I, too, might be up to the East River crossing. After paying the check, we made for the Manhattan Bridge plaza, at Canal Street, two blocks away, and there Catharine was suddenly stricken with a case of *déjà vu*.

"I have the distinct impression that I once *did* walk this bridge," she said. "Now that I think of it, I've walked all the bridges down here. Anyway, I'm not taking a chance on walking a bridge that I've already crossed."

That seemed to settle that, much to my relief and Tom's disappointment.

"By golly, I did hope to make a bridge today," he said.

There was to be no respite, though, for the Stories unaccountably decided to throw their prejudice against retracing to the winds and revisit one of their first stamping grounds—the old Jewish district of the lower East Side. They were just in time, it appeared. As we pushed across East Broadway, past the neighborhood cultural center, with its newspaper offices, bookstores, fraternal asso-

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## THE NEW YORKER

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ciations, and store-front temples (alternating nowadays with the store-front *iglesias* of the Puerto Ricans), we could see that the ubiquitous hand of the slum razer had been fast dismantling the area. It was a familiar scene to the Stories, who explained that whole districts of the New York they once had known and walked had been torn down behind them and replaced. They regarded the trend as a poor augury for city walking.

"What fun will it be when the whole town is housing projects?" Catharine asked, as we moved past a venerable structure housing the Kamenitzer Yeshivah, a rabbinical college, some of whose students were in recess on the sidewalk, engaged in a disputation on the fine points of baseball.

Pressing on, we cut back west on Grand Street, the Stories now and then stopping to take what I regarded as a disquieting interest, so soon after lunch, in the wares of the *knish* shops, or Jewish blob joints. By now, I was beginning to feel like a dragging anchor, and when, after turning north on Clinton Street, we emerged on the broad sweep of Delancey, my legs gave out. It had been four hours since we started, and Tom calculated that we had covered about eight miles. The Stories solicitously helped me aboard an Avenue B bus, but they continued north on foot themselves. The last I saw of them, they were still going strong, legging it easily but swiftly through the neighborhood Sunday shopping crush, past the dairy stores and cut-rate dress emporiums, and looking every bit as interested as tourists on their first visit to New York. —J. M. FLAGLER

The elements of Aristophanic Greek drama are present in the saga of Sherman Adams. He was perhaps too caustic in his political criticisms, too self-righteous in his judgments of political enemies. He became the sitting duck for the buckshot of those he had peppered. He lived by the platitude and the censure. Now he is unhorsed by the same.—*Stamford (Conn.) Advocate*.

Either that or the horse tripped on the duck.

What can Khrushchev do to arrest this disturbing decline in growth? It is clear that he can no longer expect much help from increases in the total labor force. The young men and women now coming into the labor force were born during the war years—which means that not many of them were born.—*Fortune*.

You'll never get 'em to admit it, though.



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