



Not just an order taker, Sices advises—sometimes *tells*—stores what to stock. Here he is with a buyer (at table) of new fall suits

LITTLE WOMEN are GOLDEN

By COLLIE SMALL

For years most suit makers slighted the "half-pints." That gave Murray Sices an idea. Now the trade calls him a genius

BEING a success in the rough-and-tumble New York garment business requires that a man operate on a continuous dead run or perish by the side of the road. Murray Sices, who at thirty-one is definitely a success, is no exception. He has little time for self-appraisal. On certain rare occasions when the machines are idle, however, he likes to think of himself as the savior of thousands of American women who, being short, fat or otherwise at variance from the norm, have been left stranded by the women's ready-to-wear industry.

The figures of perhaps 75 per cent of the women in America, it appears, are not "normal." The majority, in other words, cannot wear regular sizes without extensive alterations, and Sices has taken spectacular advantage of this parlous situation. Because he is the largest exclusive manufacturer of half-size, or off-size, women's suits, which he calls Murray Sices Originals, he actually *has* rescued

within the short space of six years any number of disillusioned women who had sorrowfully concluded there was something wrong with them.

Sices' concern over the predicament of the modern woman speaks well for his motives, although they naturally are not altogether altruistic, and in addition it has given him, at his tender age, the status of genius in New York's frenzied garment center. It does not, however, speak so well for the garment industry. In its haste to get to market, the industry obviously lost sight of some universal truths.

According to the Department of Agriculture, the average American woman is slightly more than five feet, three inches tall. About one per cent are "quarter-pints" under four feet nine and nearly 65 per cent are "half-pints" between four feet nine and five feet four. Statistics like these should have made things fairly clear to the people supplying

America's women with their ready-made suits, but the industry apparently sized things for what *it* considered the average woman. Unfortunately, the difference between the industry's conception of the average woman and the woman herself turned out to be considerable.

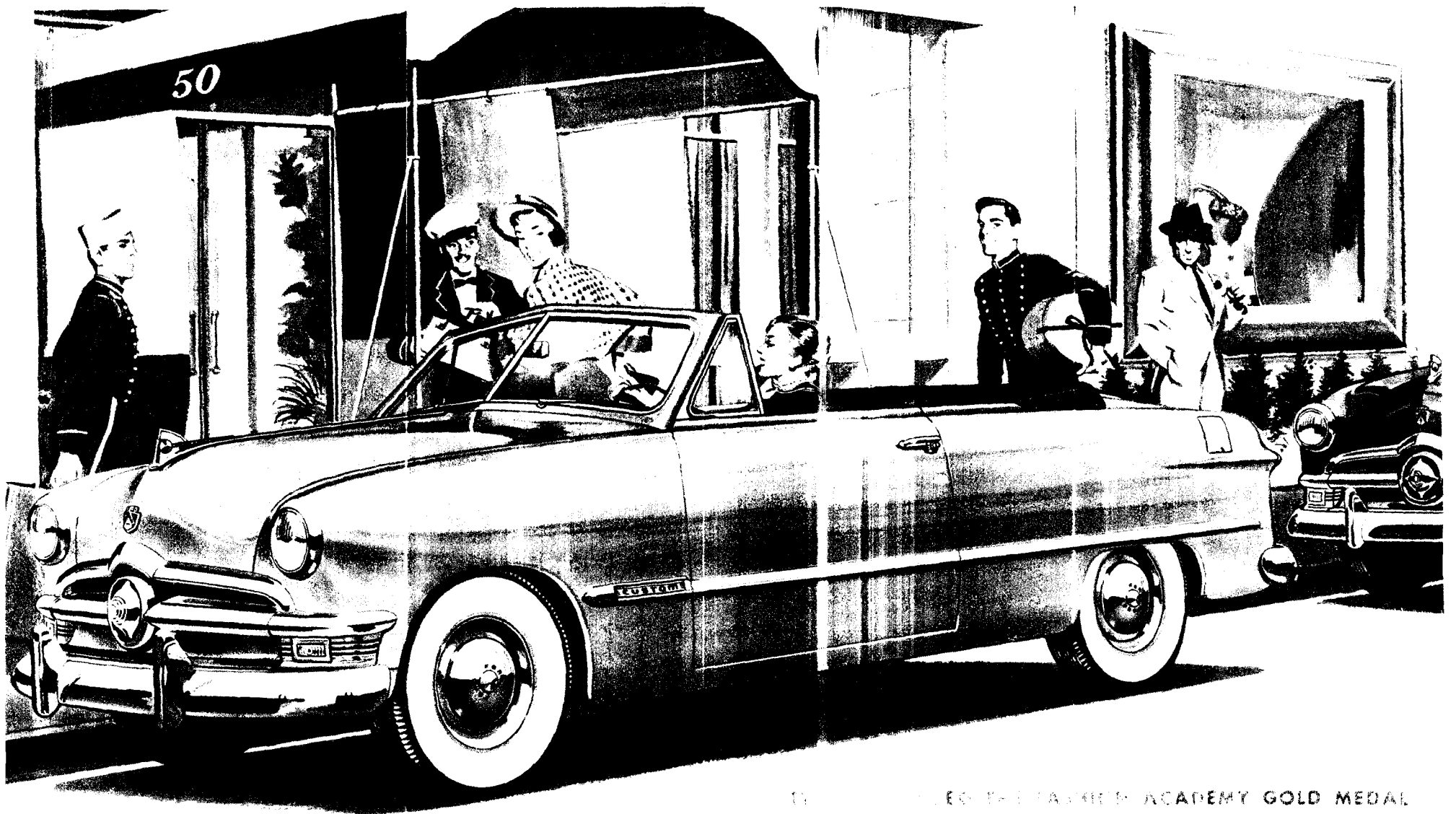
The industry, moreover, cannot explain how it got so far off the track that the majority of ready-to-wear clothes should be sized for the minority. There has always been a half-size business, but it was merely a side line with most manufacturers until Sices took his long and breathless leap into half-sizes only and sprinted away to a commanding lead over his nonplused competitors.

Thanks largely to Sices, the half-size business has now grown to formidable proportions. Russeks, the New York specialty store, does 65 per cent of its women's suit business in half-sizes; before the war, it sold only 15 per cent in the so-called off-sizes. Since 1944, by his own estimate, Sices has manufactured and sold some 600,000 half-size suits and has entrenched himself in such other stores as Lane Bryant in St. Louis and Lord & Taylor in New York, Marshall Field in Chicago, the City of Paris in San Francisco and the May Company in Los Angeles. All told, more than 4,000 stores handle his apparel and more than 400 of them maintain departments which are devoted exclusively to Sices Originals at prices ranging from \$39 to \$69.

All this has naturally had a healthy effect on the books of the Murray Sices Corporation. In 1944, the first year of his geniushood, Sices grossed a mere \$300,000. By 1946, he was up to the safer level of \$900,000. In 1948, he topped \$3,000,000. Last year was not an auspicious year for most manufacturers, but Sices swam confidently upstream and emerged with a gross of some \$4,500,000. This year, he expects to do a business in excess of \$6,000,000.

In the course of his career in half-sizes, Sices has acquired a certain wariness. Women are notori-

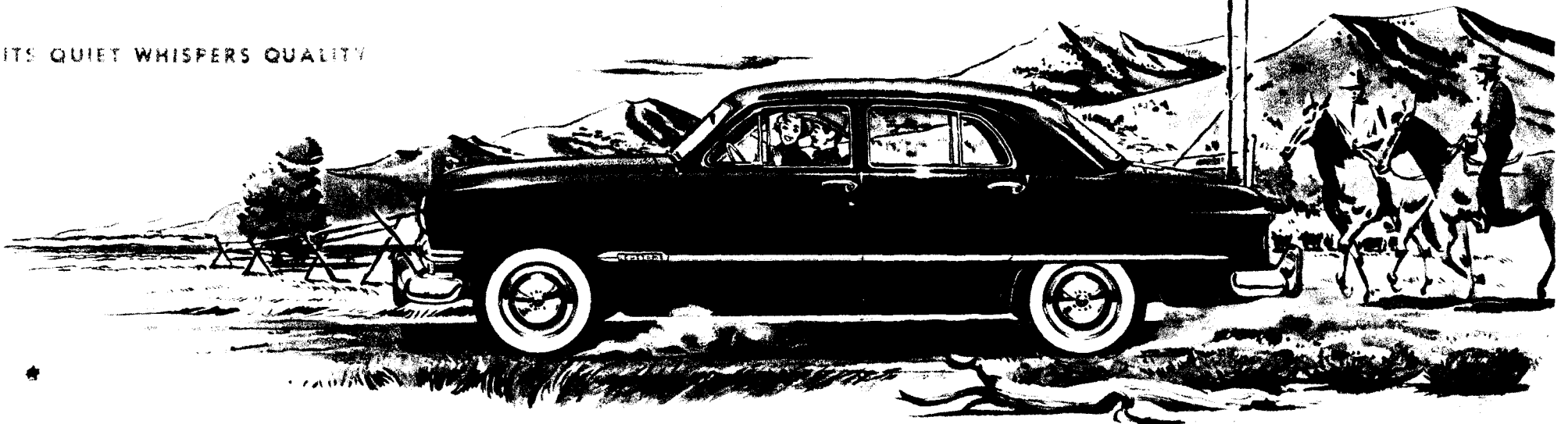
PHOTOGRAPH FOR COLLIER'S BY JOHN HUGELMEYER



AS SELECTED BY THE FASHION ACADEMY GOLD MEDAL

A Beauty on the boulevard A Bearcat in the brush

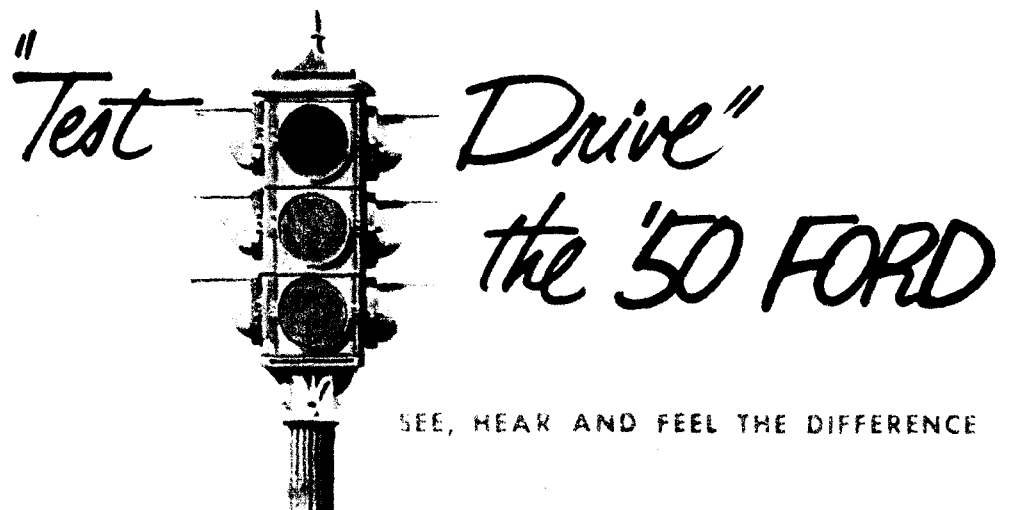
ITS QUIET WHISPERS QUALITY



One look will show you why New York's famed Fashion Academy has chosen Ford as "Fashion Car of the Year" for the second year in a row.

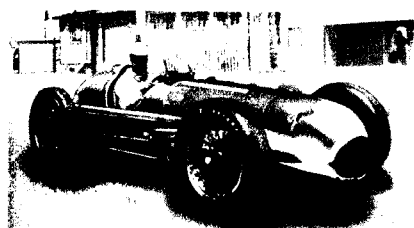
"Test Drive" it and you'll know it's in a class by itself for performance—on back road or boulevard! You'll thrill to the "feel" of the 100 h.p. V-8 engine or its companion in quality, the 95 h.p. Six! And you can measure the economy, mile after mile, in dollars and cents! It's economical to purchase . . . economical to operate . . . economical to maintain . . . and it's high in resale value!

"Test Drive" a '50 Ford at your Ford Dealer's today. It's the one fine car . . . the economy car . . . of the low-price field!

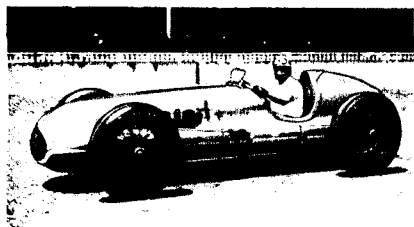


SEE, HEAR AND FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

CHOOSE THE TIRE



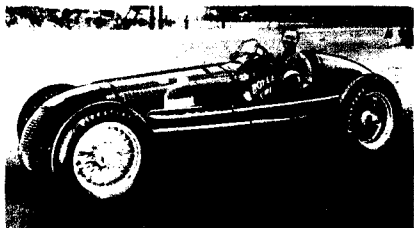
1949 121.377 M.P.H.
BILL HOLLAND



1947 116.33 M.P.H.
MAURI ROSE



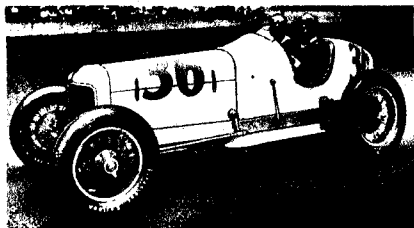
***1941** 115.117 M.P.H.
MAURI ROSE, FLOYD DAVIS



1939 115.035 M.P.H.
WILBUR SHAW



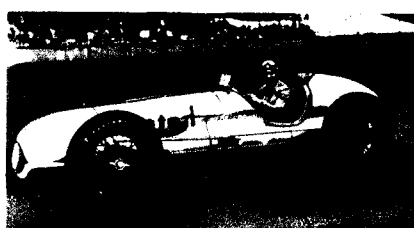
1937 113.58 M.P.H.
WILBUR SHAW



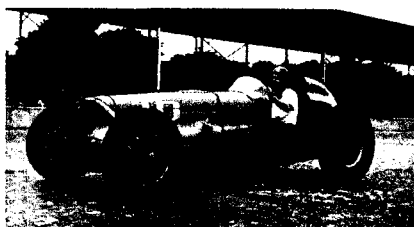
1933 104.16 M.P.H.
LOUIS MEYER



1925 101.13 M.P.H.
PETE DE PAOLO



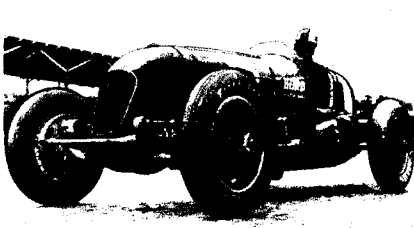
1948 119.813 M.P.H.
MAURI ROSE



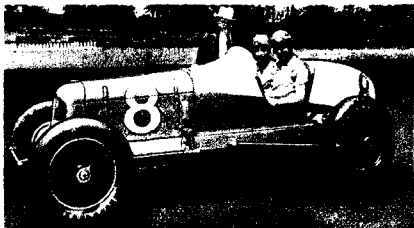
***1946** 114.8 M.P.H.
GEORGE ROBSON



1940 114.277 M.P.H.
WILBUR SHAW



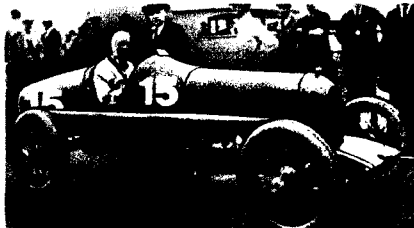
1938 117.20 M.P.H.
FLOYD ROBERTS



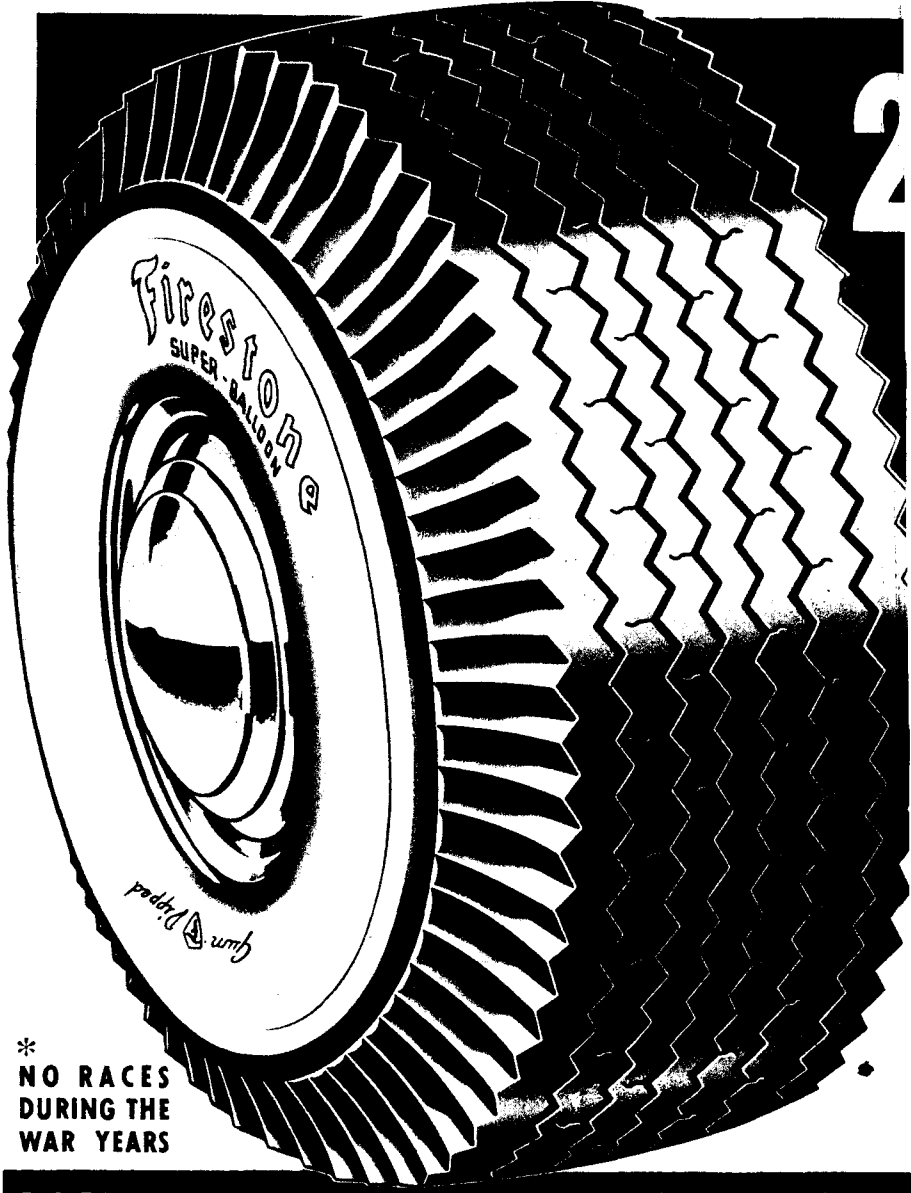
1936 109.06 M.P.H.
LOUIS MEYER



1932 104.14 M.P.H.
FRED FRAME

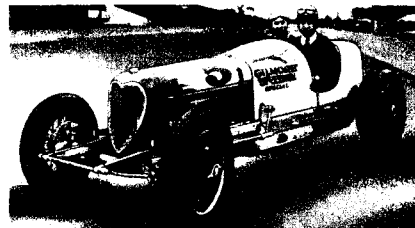


1924 98.23 M.P.H.
JOE BOYER, L. CORUM

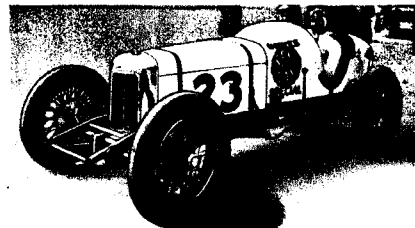


*** NO RACES
DURING THE
WAR YEARS**

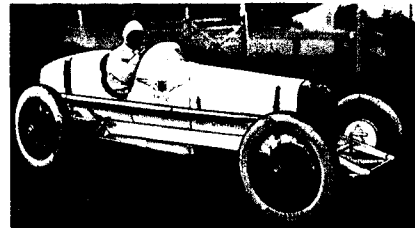
**SAFETY-PROVED ON THE SPEEDWAY
FOR YOUR PROTECTION ON THE HIGHWAY**



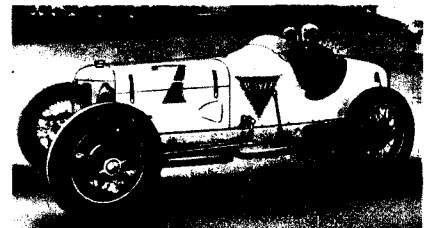
1935 106.24 M.P.H.
KELLY PETILLO



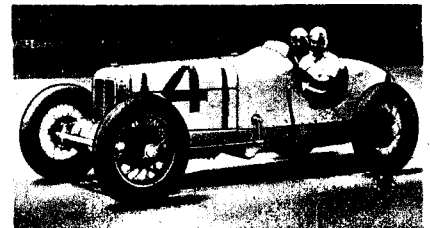
1931 96.62 M.P.H.
LOUIS SCHNEIDER



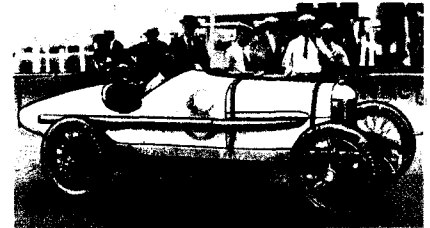
1923 90.95 M.P.H.
TOMMY MILTON



1934 104.86 M.P.H.
WILD BILL CUMMINGS



1930 100.44 M.P.H.
BILLY ARNOLD

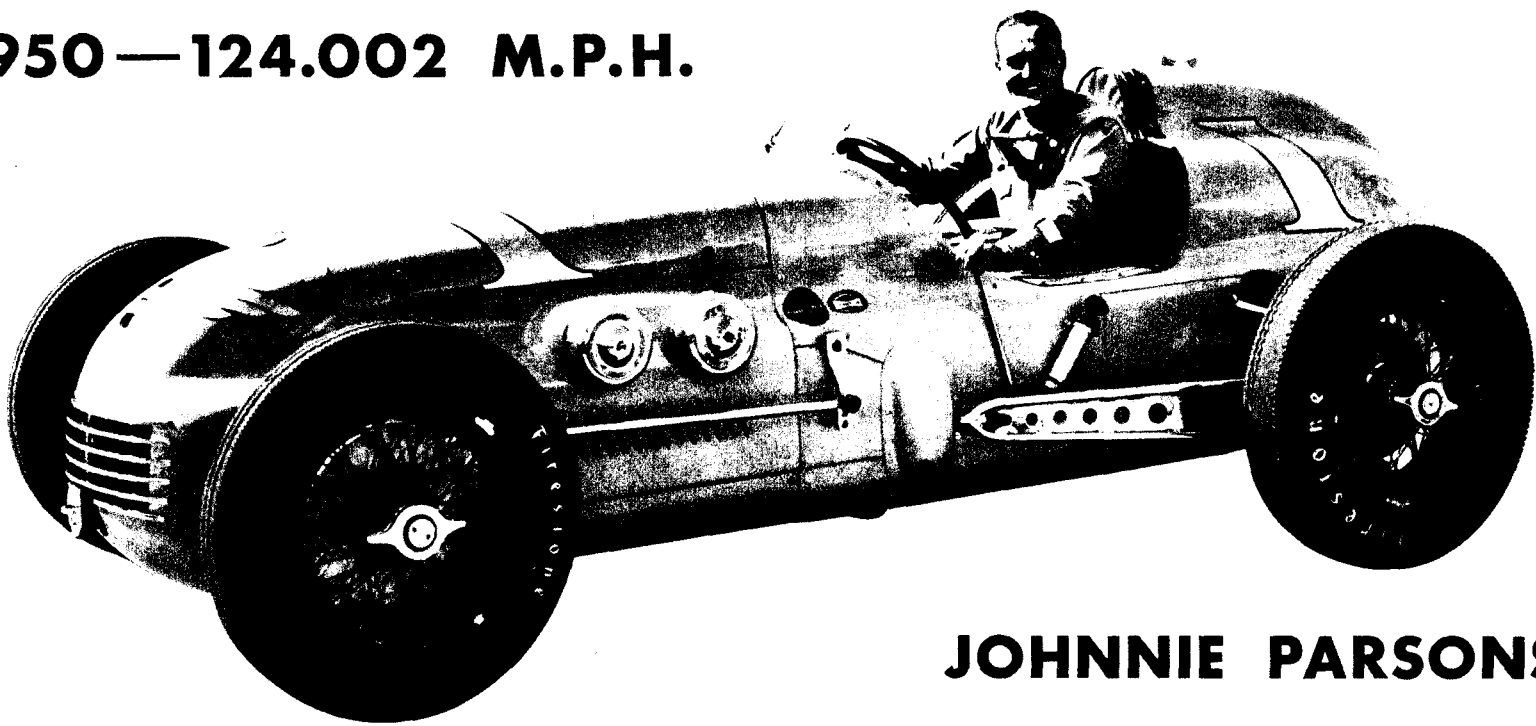


1922 94.48 M.P.H.
JIMMY MURPHY

E OF CHAMPIONS

7 CONSECUTIVE INDIANAPOLIS RACES HAVE BEEN WON ON Firestone TIRES

1950—124.002 M.P.H.



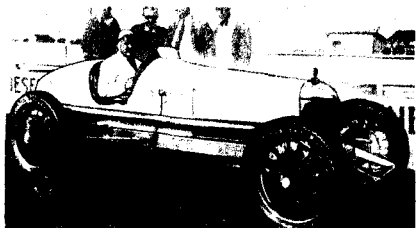
JOHNNIE PARSONS

THE Indianapolis Race is more than a breath-taking spectacle of speed; more than a colorful carnival of thrills and chills. It is not just a stunt. On the contrary, it is a practical, torturous test of new engineering developments before they are adopted

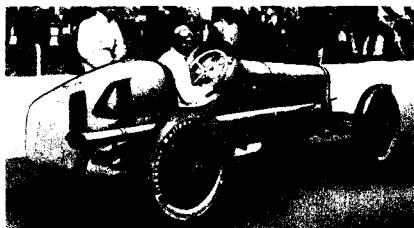
for regular production. Authorities say that 500 miles on the speedway are equal to 50,000 miles of ordinary driving . . . 5 years of average service crowded into less than 4½ hours!

For many years, every driver in the race has *bought* Firestone Tires, be-

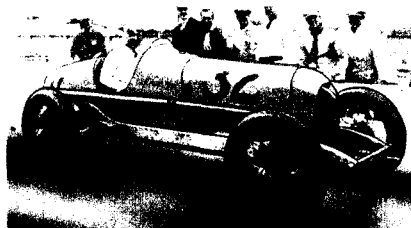
cause no driver is willing to risk his life or chances of victory on anything less than the safest tires that money can buy. Remember *that* fact the next time you buy tires. Protect your life and the lives of others by equipping your car with a set of new Firestone Tires.



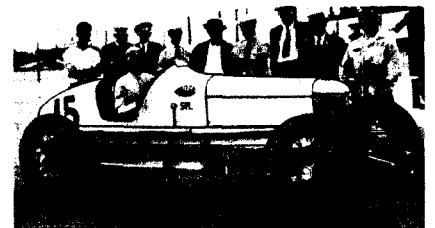
1929 97.58 M.P.H.
RAY KEECH



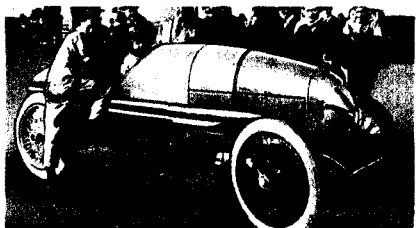
1928 99.48 M.P.H.
LOUIS MEYER



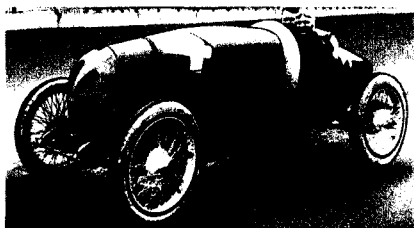
1927 97.54 M.P.H.
GEORGE SOUDERS



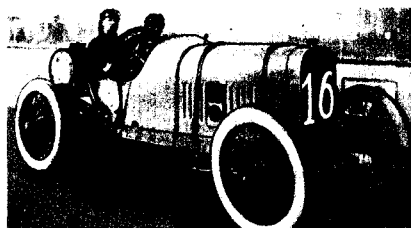
1926 95.88 M.P.H.
FRANK LOCKHART



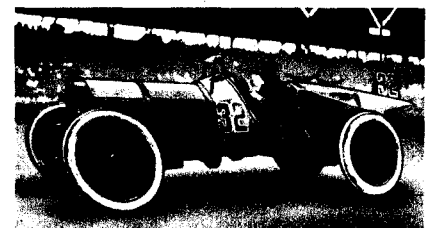
1921 89.62 M.P.H.
TOMMY MILTON



1920 88.55 M.P.H.
GASTON CHEVROLET



1913 76.92 M.P.H.
JULES GOUX



1911 74.59 M.P.H.
RAY HARROUN

ously sensitive about the size of almost everything they wear, and a woman who feels she is an inbetween is likely to be hypersensitive, especially if she thinks the ready-to-wear industry regards her as a freak. Sices is acutely conscious of this and other female reflexes, and if he could think of a suitable substitute he would not even use the term "half-size." So far, however, a more flattering designation has eluded him.

Retail stores have always recognized that there are fundamental weaknesses in lady shoppers. For example, it has been virtually compulsory in many stores to caution new salesgirls never to ask a potential suit buyer what size she wears. For reasons of ego, the woman is almost always tempted to name a size that is too small for her, and when she finds she cannot get into it her disposition suffers accordingly.

A New Form of Flattery

Other stores go a step beyond that and mark everything down one size to begin with. Thus, when even a regular-size woman comes in expecting to have to wear a size 40 and goes out instead with what appears to be a 38, she is, if the store has calculated correctly, teetering dizzily on the brink of pure ecstasy.

Besides making suits that fit the majority of women without the tedium of heavy alterations, Sices has also solved the problem of the psychology of sizes. He uses small numbers. Whereas many manufacturers wittlessly incur the wrath of off-size women by starting their suit sizes at, say 32, Sices Originals begin disarmingly at 12½ and go only as high as an innocent-sounding 24½. The 24½, however, is really equivalent to a short 42.

"These are the gimmicks that Ponce de León was looking for," a buyer friend of Sices said rapturously not long ago. "When Murray found the half-size business, he found the Fountain of Youth."

Whatever it is, Sices agrees he has found something. In fact, the demand for his suits has been such that he is now feeling the first pangs of exhaustion. Although he is six feet tall, and the picture of health, he has ulcers and sustains himself largely on a diet of one-minute eggs. His blood pressure is inclined to register alarming upward swoops on occasion and he visits his physician frequently to have it stabilized. He also consults a psychiatrist regularly in the hope of finding out what makes him run, but the results of these visits have not been altogether satisfactory.

"It's funny about the psychiatrist thing," he said recently. "I went to him in the first place to get my nerves calmed down, and for a while I had an appointment every afternoon at five-thirty for 45 minutes. Well, about three o'clock I would start to worry about whether I was going to be able to get away from the office in time to keep the appointment. First thing I knew the whole idea was getting me jumpier than I was in the first place. Now I'm stuck, and it looks like the only good thing that might come out of this is that if I have a nervous breakdown I'll have it right in my psychiatrist's office."

Sices' friends see no danger of his collapsing soon, but as an inveterate taker of pulses, he flies thousands of miles each year, dropping in at various stores to see how things are going, and this constant shuttling back and forth across the country increases the tension under which he works. Nevertheless, he considers the personal touch important, and as a result he has built up a wide acquaintanceship among buyers, retailers and others in the ready-to-wear business.

David Nemerov, the head of Russeks and a man who is considered something of an oracle among retailers, has been known to get downright rhapsodic at the mention of Sices' name.

"In a short space of time," Nemerov said recently, "this young man has impressed the American market second to no one I know of. He understands the body line of the half-size better than anyone I

know and he is through with one season almost before the next fellow has started. I have seldom seen anyone equal his clear thinking, planning or timing, and it should be remembered that these elements are only valuable if they are co-ordinated. Almost all manufacturers think they possess these qualifications, but the difference is that Murray doesn't flounder. He concentrates more keenly than almost anyone I have ever seen."

Sices' single-mindedness has always been one of his dominant characteristics and he attributes his success in the garment industry to a purposeful and almost insatiable drive for security.

"In other words, money, success or any other term that means security," he said not long ago. "I hated school because it seemed silly to be doing anything without getting paid for it. I could get more security by hustling around poolrooms or playing semipro baseball for five bucks a game than I could get by going to school so I stayed 'on the hook' most of the time. I probably would have wound up being a bookmaker

education, but when I saw he was determined to go into the garment business, I encouraged him," his father says proudly. "The average man in this industry tries to shield his children from it because it's a rough business. I didn't do that. If Murray was going to get into it, I wanted him to be prepared."

The preparation turned out to be more than even Murray's father had envisioned. Murray went to work for a Brooklyn clothing contractor at \$12 a week, sweeping floors, wrestling packing boxes, cutting canvas linings, making out payrolls, matching skirts with jackets, marking tucks and gatherings, and wrapping packages with twine until his hands were bleeding. He often slept on a workbench in the shop because he had missed the last Long Island train home. "I said to the contractor, 'Make it tough for him,'" Harry Sices recalled a few weeks ago. "I never should have said it. The man was a slave driver."

At the end of the spring season, young Sices asked for a \$2 raise. His employer was aghast at his cheek and promptly fired

New York with Harry Flanagan, a buyer for a Detroit store, when Flanagan mentioned Tom Stack, a merchandiser for the Ernst Kern Company in Detroit. "Is he a good merchandiser?" Sices asked.

"The best," Flanagan said.

"Then take me to Detroit tonight and introduce me to him," Sices said. The next morning, he was in Detroit being introduced.

The amenities disposed of, he called on Stack again a few weeks later to try to sell him an order of coats. Stack told Sices to write his own order for 500. When Sices had completed it, Stack looked at the order and said, "Go back to New York and cut the patterns. Only cut them in smaller sizes than the ones you have here."

Sices unquestioningly did Stack's bidding, although he did not understand Stack's insistence on smaller sizes. The coats were delivered to Kern's within two weeks and the store immediately advertised a sale. Over 350 were sold the first day. Sices was in Stack's office, going over the sales slips as they were brought in, and he was astonished to see that 70 per cent of the sales were coming in the smaller-size groups. Stack looked at Sices and grinned. "Write another order," he said.

Sices brooded over the results of the sale at Kern's for some time. The more he thought about it, the more he realized that the garment industry had betrayed the half-pint by not giving her clothes which fit. Since the half-pint was in the majority and since the coat business was something less than thriving, anyway, Sices saw the road ahead suddenly bathed in a great shining light.

The conversion from coats to suits, with its ultimate great effect on the ready-to-wear industry, was accomplished in 1944 in an atmosphere of great conspiracy. The heretical beating in Murray's breast for half-size suits was not evident to his father, who, being a coat manufacturer, would have taken steps immediately to stamp it out if he had detected it.

Father Gets a Severe Shock

In his innocence, however, he went to California for a vacation, secure in the belief that his coat business was in good hands. When he returned two months later, he discovered to his horror that his impetuous son had sold every coat in the establishment, taking a \$30,000 loss in the process, and was busy manufacturing women's half-size suits under the old coat label of "Bobby Burns." He had, in fact, already shipped 5,000 suits and had cornered orders for 15,000 more.

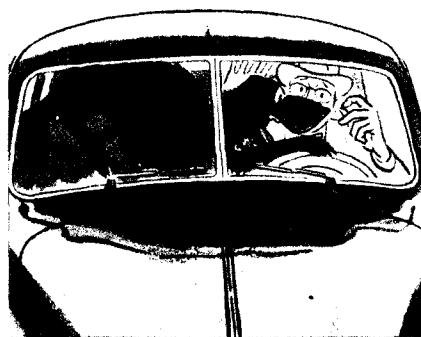
The rest of the Sices saga is written in the bright little footnotes which indicate success. Harry Sices resigned himself to disaster and sold out to his overpoweringly self-confident son for \$50,000. From then on, it was Murray Sices against the field. In 1946, the other manufacturers got a glimmer of what was going on in the suit business, but young Sices had already lapped them. Needless to say, having stolen the lead he is not anxious to give it back.

It is probable that Sices, for all his triumphs, has taken no more from the suit business than he has given it. There have always been women's suits, but because suits took more material and cost more to produce, most manufacturers were happier making coats or dresses.

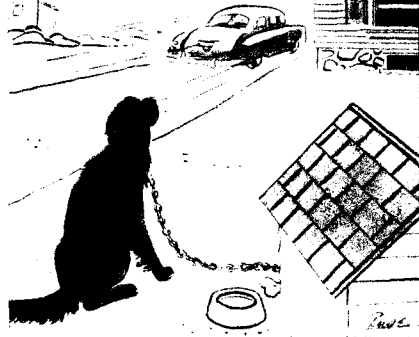
Sices was largely responsible for changing that. He combined both style and fit, using only quality materials, and the end product proved almost irresistible to store owners and customers alike. Style is important to any woman, and he also knew that a tired salesgirl would much rather pick a suit off the rack which fits in the first place than circumnavigate a woman customer several times in a desperate effort to squeeze her into a regular-size suit which does not fit and will not fit until she calls for the tailor. Sices therefore was determined that the suit which fit would be a Sices suit.

To get his first suit, he took the best features from three suits which were already

CLANCY



COLLIER'S



JOHN RUGE

if it hadn't been for my mother and father. They were clean thinkers."

By 1935, when he was sixteen, his scholastic delinquencies had caught up with him. He had played hookey so often that the authorities at Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn decided to make the absence permanent. Sices, in his third year, was expelled. The baseball coach at another high school in Brooklyn saw an opportunity to bolster his team by enrolling Murray at his school, but when the principal took a look at the dismal record he had compiled at Erasmus, he said tersely, "Not here." Inasmuch as there were no further offers from other high schools in New York, Sices' fainthearted pursuit of learning was abandoned.

Sices' father, Harry Sices, a women's coat manufacturer who himself had been forced to quit school when he was in the seventh grade to go to work, was understandably dismayed by the turn of events, but as he says now, "The apples did not fall far from the tree." Murray and his two younger brothers, Reuben and David, have all gone into the garment business with their father's blessing, although David's participation is still limited to summer vacations, since he is in school, and all of them, including the elder Sices, are now working for Murray toward the greater glory of the Murray Sices Corporation.

"I wanted Murray to get a little more

him. Sices then experimented briefly with selling neon signs and window lettering at \$8 a week, plus commissions. For several months he diligently patrolled the streets of Brooklyn, watching out for new businesses which had moved into empty lofts and were in need of some sort of identification. His success here, however, was something less than stimulating. Finally, when he discovered that his new employer, who took him out to lunch occasionally, was deducting the price of the lunch from his commissions, he quit in high disgust and went to work selling business suits to elevator operators.

This was obviously specialization to a precarious degree. He not only had to show the elevator operators swatches and convince them that they needed new suits, but he had to measure them between floors. If the maneuver was successful, he would take a dollar down. Within two weeks, the owners of the business had been arrested for not producing any suits and Sices was again at liberty. With something akin to relief, he went to work for his father as a shipping clerk at \$15 a week.

By 1943, Sices had become the top salesman of women's coats for his father's firm and he found himself running at full speed. It was in that same year that he met a merchandising expert in Detroit who, he feels now, did more to shape his career than any other person.

Sices had been talking one afternoon in



"Cooling Off In The Country," by Douglass Crockwell. Number 44 in the series "Home Life in America."

Beer belongs...enjoy it

In this home-loving land of ours . . . in this America of kindness, of friendship, of good-humored tolerance . . . perhaps no beverages are more "at home" on more occasions than good American beer and ale.

For beer and ale are the kinds of beverages Americans like. They belong—to pleasant living, to good fellowship, to sensible moderation. And our right to enjoy them, this too belongs—to our own American heritage of personal freedom.

AMERICA'S BEVERAGE OF MODERATION

The United States Brewers Foundation . . . Chartered 1862



At mealtime, too!



on the market and combined them into a plain, one-button suit which he hoped would flatter the short-waisted figure. Somewhat tentatively, he cut 400 of them and shipped the first allotment of eight to Logan's, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Logan's sold seven of the eight the first day, and at five o'clock that afternoon, the store owner phoned the twenty-five-year-old neophyte and said, "Young man, you've got something here." For Sices that was the clincher.

The garment business is naturally engaged in a never-ending plot to trick the American woman into buying new clothes, and Sices is now, inevitably, one of the leading conspirators. The general idea seems to be to produce new clothes as far in advance of the new styles as possible and then make them obsolete as quickly as possible.

Longer Jackets Are Outmoded

This past season, for example, the length of women's skirts was pretty well established and it was necessary to destylize the existing suits somehow. To accomplish this devilish aim, Sices made the jackets shorter this year. Thus, suits with longer jackets were suddenly last year's suits, and milady was trapped again.

There are other reasons, of course, why Sices Originals sell, although Sices' reputation is presumably a fragile commodity. "Reputation in this business doesn't mean a thing," a veteran buyer said not long ago. "Every season, every manufacturer is on his own again, and if you don't think so, look at the figures. I'd be surprised if 10 per cent of the suit manufacturers in America are in business consistently. Most of them are in business this year and out of business next year. A couple of years ago a manufacturer I know was going great. All of a sudden his line last year wasn't quite right and he's bankrupt already."

Sices has encountered some fairly rough storms himself, but he has invariably weathered them with admirable aplomb. Last year he bought enough plaid material for 17,500 suits and then found they weren't selling. Faced with a \$40,000 loss, he patiently waited for his spot and then literally hurled the plaid suits at the market. Fortunately, they stuck. "I figure," he said blandly, a few weeks later, "that I can af-

ford one mistake a season. After that, call the doctor."

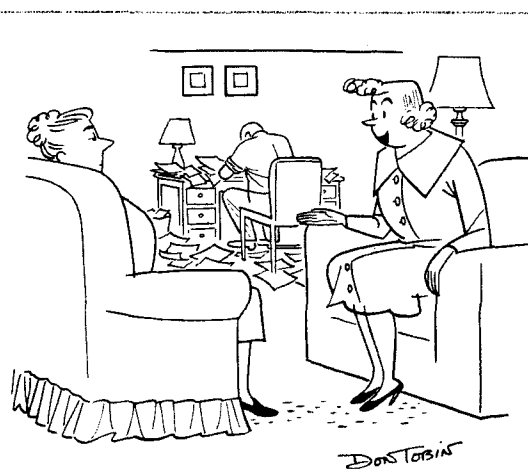
Sices does his own styling with the aid of two professional pattern-makers. He also employs two sketchers whose identities he guards from the rest of the industry with the jealous zeal of a man who has discovered uranium and is fearful of a rush. These mysterious operators turn out sketches under Sices' direction which he then personally dissects, borrowing from one, adding to another, until he has arrived at the finished style. By using his own designs he feels he gets a jump on the other manufacturers who visit various model houses to see the new designs and then rush back to their shops, all with the same idea.

Sices knows he has to follow the general trend up to a certain point, and it is a rather ticklish operation to depart on his own at precisely the proper moment, but whereas the other manufacturers frequently come up with a common design, Sices usually manages to turn out a style distinctive enough to set him apart. Generally speaking, to give the illusion of height, he employs unbroken lines wherever feasible, avoids sudden skirt flares, deftly raises waistlines, and performs other feats of magic which are calculated to take years off a half-size woman's figure.

Sices' sense of anticipation is widely held to be one of the marvels of the garment industry, although actually he works more by concentrated common sense than by anything else. Last August, for example, in planning for the spring line this year, he shrewdly ordered 80 per cent of his fabrics in navy blue. So far, it has been navy four to one.

"There was nothing mysterious about it," he says. "Navy had been out of the market for several years because of a dye shortage and it figured to be popular again. It also finished strong last fall. Besides, it's a good all-purpose color. Why wouldn't I use navy?"

Sices is keenly aware of how his suits are selling in every store and he is quick to uncover soft spots. Perhaps the only phase of the suit business which really baffles him is the way his suits sell among the Pennsyl-



"Joe has a well-balanced program of sound investments planned for our future security, but it all hinges on a long shot in the seventh race tomorrow at Aqueduct"

COLLIER'S

DON TOBIN

vanians. For some reason, which so far he has been unable to explain, that section of Pennsylvania embracing such cities as York, Allentown and Lancaster, the site of his first triumph, is the only section of the United States where the suit business is rigidly seasonal. Whereas the women in the rest of the country buy suits the year around, the women in that part of Pennsylvania seem to confine their buying sprees to the spring, and this naturally worries Sices, although he has given up trying to do anything about it. He simply hopes the idea doesn't spread.

Sices is also extremely conscious of the value of good will and high-powered promotion. Frequently he is able to combine the two with excellent results. If, for example, he gets an emergency call from a store in Dayton, Ohio, which needs more suits in a hurry, he is apt to throw a pile of them into the rear of his private plane and take off for the disaster area personally.

Such service naturally pleases the store owner, and since Sices' plane is identified by "the Flying Suit Label" on the fuselage and has the words, "Murray Sices Originals," boldly lettered under the wing, it is also entirely possible that a half-size woman will see it and in her curiosity will inquire for a Sices Original the next time she visits her store. If, by chance, the store does not sell Sices Originals and she writes him to complain, he will send her a card by return mail directing her to the nearest store which does sell them. Taking no chances, he will also write the store to alert them that there is a prospective customer loose in Dayton. He then supplies the store with her name, address and other pertinent details, and leaves the rest to fate.

Worried About an Allergy

The honesty of Murray Sices is often spoken of in the industry with something approaching awe. Sices himself is especially proud of the fact that he uses only the best fabrics in his suits. Recently, he developed an allergy and decided to visit a doctor. Before departing, he confided nervously to a friend, "I hope he doesn't tell me I'm allergic to wool. I couldn't think of using a cheaper fabric."

His honesty expresses itself in other phases of the business. He not only refuses to skimp on material but he refuses to sell his suits to stores which make a habit of underselling other stores he sells to. This, of course, is eminently sensible. Other manufacturers have tried to play both ends against the middle and have wound up in another business.

On the other hand, he will never be accused of knuckling under to buyers, retailers or anyone else. He is, in fact, a particularly rugged individualist who can be belligerent on almost any issue if he thinks he is right. Last November, for example, a

store in Birmingham, Alabama, bought 300 Sices Originals from one of Sices' salesmen. At the same time, it disregarded the short-jacket line which Sices himself thought was the best of all. Since he puts no special confidence in the judgment of salesmen in the first place, he suspected the salesman was pushing the wrong models. He therefore wrote the store and summarily canceled its order. He then wrote a second letter, telling the manager of the store how he, Murray Sices, wanted him to order.

Adopted by almost any other manufacturer, this cavalier attitude would be tantamount to bankruptcy. Not, however, with Sices. A day or two later in a letter to Sices, the store manager congratulated him on "the way you stood up for short-jacket suits" and confessed that "it's not too much on my part to tell you how wrong we were."

Similarly, several weeks ago, Sices dispatched telegrams to 600 buyers, informing them that he had an especially good buy in a fabric called Milateen. The response was overwhelming, with nearly 10,000 suits being sold in one day, but a store in Des Moines, Iowa, declined the offer. Sices was outraged and immediately sent the head of the store an angry wire: "Cannot understand how any store can pass up this terrific Milateen promotion at \$33.75 for consumer consumption, overstocked or otherwise." Startled by this blast, the store quickly replied with an order and Sices was mollified.

Boosting Two-Button Suits

He admitted later, however, that perhaps the store had been overstocked and that perhaps he had been a bit highhanded. "I got mad, though," he said. "That store wasn't looking out for the consumer." Only recently, when a New York store refused to buy one of his two-button suits, Sices lost his temper again. He badgered the president of the store so unmercifully that the latter, in desperation, finally ordered several dozen two-button suits and apologized.

A buyer who represents some 200 stores has explained this phenomenon. "Murray thinks for retailers who can't think for themselves," he says.

Sices himself agrees with this. In view of his success, he considers it only meet and right that he should help those retailers who cannot help themselves. Toward this end he publishes a newsletter which he distributes to all his clients and which he describes as a "monthly assemblage of important trends and factual information about your business, analyzed by Murray Sices."

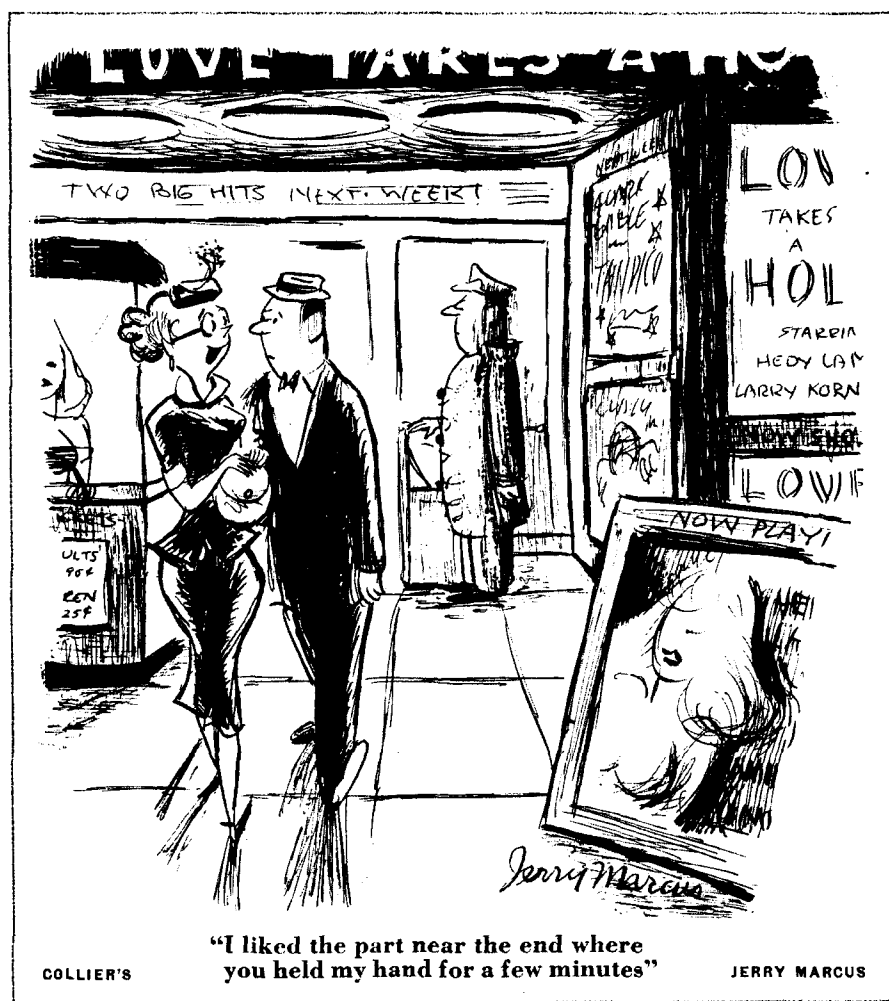
In it he advises on the desirability of putting advertising messages atop parking meters, for instance, or considers the various aspects of pension plans. He criticizes the garment industry for being backward, warns it when he thinks it is going too far in one direction or another, suggests what he feels would be beneficial changes, and otherwise tries to shepherd it along the smoothest path to prosperity for all.

Recently, he became particularly aggravated at the thought that many stores sell furs in August and mess up his suit sales when they might very well wait to sell their furs when it gets cold and people are more prone to buy them.

Sices is not so naïve as to assume that the stores of America will immediately stop their August fur sales simply because Murray Sices thinks they should, but he thinks that if he reminds them often enough that they are getting in his way they might do something about it. This is the sort of blow he would like to strike for the half-size woman and the Murray Sices Corporation together.

"After all, somebody has to stay awake in this industry," he said not long ago. "And it may as well be Murray Sices." THE END

Collier's for July 1, 1950



"I liked the part near the end where you held my hand for a few minutes"

COLLIER'S

JERRY MARCUS



PAYLOAD LEADERS

Chevrolet P•L trucks earn their keep. Rugged Advance-Design construction enables owners to cut the cost of maintenance . . . keep them rolling to rigid schedules. Chevrolet trucks are economical to buy and operate. They're low in

price and go light on the gas and oil. Owners figure to save on every trip and every job, for these trucks really trim the cost per ton per mile. That's why they're America's fastest sellers. That's why they're America's Payload Leaders.

CHEVROLET MOTOR DIVISION, General Motors Corporation, DETROIT 2, MICHIGAN

PERFORMANCE LEADERS

The new Chevrolet P•L trucks are the most powerful in Chevrolet history. Two great Valve-in-Head engines give you high pulling power over a wide range of usable road speeds—high acceleration to cut down total trip time.

POPULARITY LEADERS

Chevrolet trucks, for the last full year, have outsold the next two makes combined—convincing proof of the owner satisfaction they have earned through the years—proof that Chevrolet is America's most wanted truck.

PRICE LEADERS

From low selling price to high resale value, you're money ahead with Chevrolet trucks. Their rock-bottom initial cost—outstandingly low cost of operation and upkeep—and high trade-in value, all add up to the lowest price for you.



P•L*

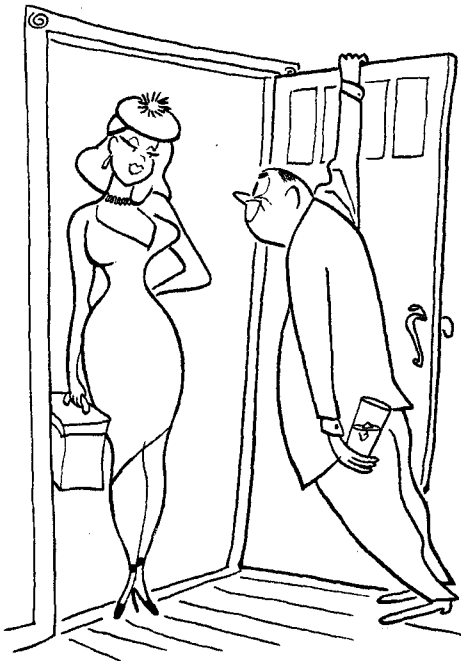
ADVANCE-DESIGN TRUCKS

"COME OFF IT, SISTER!"

By DON TOBIN

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

The whodunits will get you sooner or later



Standing in the doorway was a dame

MY WIFE shouted, "For Heaven's sake! If you'd turn off that radio maybe you could hear what I was saying!" I got up, twisted the dial on The Pink Beret Caper, and the voice of Sam Speed, greatest private detective of them all, sliced off the air like a knife cutting through a taut jugular vein.

"And put down that trashy book, too," she added.

Resignedly, I laid down *Murder Is a Hang-over*, latest adventure of Michael McGee, New York's toughest private investigator—"he's rough on rats but a wow with classy dames."

"That's better," she said. "Now tell me, where is my bread knife? I'll bet you've been using it to sharpen pencils again."

My eyes narrowed to slits and I gulped down two fast shots of rye before I got to my feet and pushed my face into hers. She smelled of onions.

"Come off it, sister," I barked, blowing a fast hunk of cigarette smoke in her eyes. "Who you coverin' up for?"

"Why," my wife muttered, "can't you leave those silly detect—" A shrill ringing bounced around between my ears and I knew it was the doorbell.

"In there—quick!" I said, pointing to the bathroom door.

Standing in the doorway was a dame. And what a dame! My heart did a back-flip against my spine, nose-dived into my solar plexus and zoomed up to my throat. I downed two quick hookers of brandy and she smiled—a slow, meaningful smile.

"Is the lady of the house in? I'm demonstrating a nice new line of . . ."

Sister, I thought, you've got the lines all right. Solid. Like the George Washington Bridge. But I didn't say anything. I looked into her eyes and she looked into my eyes and it was real cozy for a while. Then she swayed slowly toward me and her eyes clouded over. Her perfume filled the room and I did what any red-blooded American man would do. I pulled her close to me with my left hand and let her have it full against the mouth with my right. Smack!

"... of cosmetics," she said.

"Okay," I said. "Play it your own way! But

what about that night in Jersey? The First National heist. Fifty G's it was. And the guard was sprawled there with a bread knife sticking out of his back like a toothpick in a stuffed olive."

I could see her face blanch, but you got to hand it to her. She was a real dame.

"I just wanted to see the lady of the house. New line of cosmetics. If she's not in . . ."

"Okay, okay," I said wearily. "If you won't talk, you won't. Maybe you'll sing the cops a different tune."

Just then the guy in the uniform slid around the porch corner. Not fast, but like he knew where he was going. My gorgeous dame sneaked a quick look in his direction and was down the steps and into the street. Quick.

"I'll call again later," she said over her shoulder.

I leaned against the doorjamb, grabbed the bottle off the hall table, mixed myself a double Scotch and water, downed it in one quick gulp, spit out the ice cube on the floor, and said casually, "Hi, Duffy."

He was fumbling at a pouch by his side, and I braced myself against the door. My stomach muscles tightened—the way they always do when they know a .45 slug's going to tear them apart any minute. If you never had a .45 slug tear into your stomach, you won't know what I mean. But it ain't like eating marshmallows, brother. Definitely, it ain't like eating marshmallows.

"Not much today," he said. "Couple of bills and a post card from Jimmy. Wants you to increase his allowance. Algebra books cost like the devil."

His hand was out of the pouch and he held out the letters to me. But I was too fast for him. I grabbed the outstretched hand with my left, pulled hard, twisted, and threw my right shoulder into his groin quick at the same time. He flew over my shoulder, banged the door hard with his head and sprawled there loosely, like soggy macaroni.

"Don't get cute with me, copper," I snarled, pulling him to his feet.

"By Joe, I don't have to put up with this!" he said. "If you want any more mail . . . We got regulations at the Post Office . . ."

"Listen, Duffy, and listen good," my nose was boring into his eye. "I'm one P.I. with P-U-L-L around this town. I got connections, see. And I don't want you messing around here just when I've about got this case wrapped up. Stick to escorting those school kids across the street and you'll stay healthy."

"Just try and get any more mail around this house," he was saying. "You find your letters in the gutter some dark morning, don't come crying to me."

And suddenly I realized I was tired. Dead beat. My head felt like the inside of a shaker full of Martinis and questions splashed around in it like small boys paddling in a millpond.

Sixty-five days and nights without sleep. I can't take much more. Like a broken shoelace. I groped my way to the desk and slapped six aspirins and a handful of Benzedrines in my mouth and chased them down with a half magnum of champagne. After that my tongue felt less like an old bathrobe and more like a pair of new nylons, and I felt pretty good.

Good.

She was standing in the doorway and her starched white uniform couldn't conceal the full, lush curves of her body. Some guys might call her fat, but they'd be guys with 20-20 vision. She was like the Venus de Milo and weighed about the same. I pulled her to me and her lips were soft like hollandaise sauce. I felt better. This was getting to be a good case.

"Your wife wants to know if salmon croquettes will be all right for dinner," she murmured.

And right then it hit me, like twelve Manhattans on an empty stomach, and I wondered how I could have been so stupid. Of course this was it! The missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle. And it had been right there in front of me all the time. Like the Waldorf in front of Astoria. But I had to play it cagey.

"Can you cut 'em," I said and I mouthed each word slow and easy like it was fine old brandy, "can you cut 'em with a bread knife?"

I had hit home and I knew it and her eyes widened and her mouth sagged and I knew I had the case right in the palm of my hand. She was staring into space over my left shoulder and then I heard it, a faint scuffling on the carpet behind me, and I twisted fast but it was too late. Too late.

Wham! I felt a searing pain in my head and there I was floating down a deep dark river with ten million blackbirds screeching in my ears and, bang, the moon went down behind a black cloud. I was out. . . . But out!

I WAS swimming up through the dark water and the sun was shining and I thought how wonderful a Tom Collins would taste right now. A double with a rum float. I reached out my hand to mix one and I couldn't move. I was paralyzed. I was dead.

"When did you first notice these—ah—peculiar actions?" It was a strange voice.

"He was a good man at heart, Doctor," my wife answered. "And I've tried, *Heaven knows I've tried*, but I can't get him to leave the stuff alone. Years ago, when they were two dollars apiece, he wasn't so bad, but then he found out about those rental places. You know, five cents a day. I used to bribe the librarians not to give him any. You'll never know . . . it was awful . . ." She broke off sobbing. "Then for a long time he was a lot better—just magazines and the radio, you know, and that wasn't so bad—but then . . . but then . . ." She shuddered. "But then they came out with those pocket books for a quarter each. On every newsstand. He was a good man, Doctor, but he was weak—just weak."

"I know, madam," he said cheerily, "it's an old story nowadays. But a little rest, proper medication, a few shock treatments, and we'll pull him around. And don't you worry about that strait jacket. Really, it doesn't hurt him a bit."

It didn't.

THE END



He sprawled loosely

Collier's for July 1, 1950