



PORTLAND HOFFA

PATRICE WYMORE

FRED ALLEN

MICHAEL TODD

BETTY FIELD

ELMER RICE

MAE WEST

JOE E. LEWIS

HARRY HERSHFIELD

EDDIE CANTOR

By MURRAY ROBINSON

# Corned-Beef

Max Asnas runs a Broadway delicatessen where celebrities go to look at people. Here's his saga,

ON a recent afternoon, Fred Allen, the well-known funnyman, stood waiting for a seat with six other patrons just inside the door of the Stage Delicatessen in New York's theatrical and hotel district. The capacity of the Stage is 72. "With mink coats, 30," says Max Asnas, its founder and most unsilent partner.

Max has been Broadway's delicatessen darling for 25 years, and from the Battery to the Bronx, they'll tell you he's the grandest little guy in the goulash game.

When those ahead of the comic with the baggy blue eyes had been seated, Max went scouting for a seat for him and came back quickly with a report. "Over there," Max said, bobbing his head, "will soon be a table. It should be now, but the man picking up the check is a slow reader."

Soon the table was vacant, and Allen sat down with Max, a dapper, graying little man of middle age with a barrel chest. Max launched into an account of a trip he had taken to Hollywood. As he did so, a stranger squeezed into the seat opposite Allen and said to the waiter: "A pastrami sandwich and a glass tea."

"So," Max was saying, "I get off the train out there with a satchel of salamis for my friends in the movies because, I don't know what it is, but they can't raise good salamis in California, and I go to my hotel. In the lobby, I meet an actor I know for years and I don't have to mention any names, but he starts telling me troubles—his wife is sick, and so on. So I say, 'How much?' and he says two hundred will do, so I give it to him and throw in a salami for good measure . . ."

"Just a minute," the stranger said. "I wanna enjoy right. This is for real or a made opp?"

Max looked at him coldly. "Of course it's for real," he said.

"Don't lemme interrupt," the stranger said. "Go on."

"Well," Max went on to Allen, who was eating an ascetic dish of prunes, "so afterwards I go to another hotel to look around, and I meet another 'broker' from New York. Things is werry tough with him, too, so I say, 'How much?' and he says, 'Fifty,' and I give it to him. Then I say to myself, 'I'm gonna move to this hotel, because here I'm making money.'"

Allen smiled amiably, but the stranger frowned and said crossly: "How could you make money? It cost-es you 50, don't it?"

Collier's for March 31, 1951



EARL WILSON

JOAN BLONDELL

TONY MARTIN

WALTER WINCHELL

FIVE "MADE OPP" CHARACTERS

MILTON BERLE



and it's "for real," as he would say—not "a made opp"

"I'll explain you," Max said. "The first touch cost-es me two hunnert, and the second only \$50, so I'm making \$150, get it?"

"No," the stranger said firmly. Perhaps by way of explanation, he added: "I'm in the pawnbroker line."

He raised his glass of tea and Max pointed to it. The glass nestled in a tiny straw basket which protected the drinker's hand from the heat.

"See that basket?" Max asked Allen. "I invented it."

"Hah," the stranger said. "HE invented it! I seen a basket for a glass tea in Moskowitz & Lupowitz it must be 20 years ago."

"That's down on Second Avenue," Max said grandly, "so it don't count. I still was the first to invent a basket for a glass tea. It was 21 years ago."

The stranger snorted, picked up his check and departed. "Know him?" Allen asked Max.

Max shrugged. "First time I seen him," he said, "and he's already giving me aggements like we was married with a license."

This episode parlayed only two of the many reasons why Max Asnas and the Stage form one of New York's most fascinating restaurant combinations. One is that customers need no introduction to get into arguments—academic or on point of fact—with Max, his waiters, or one another. At any time between 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 A.M., there's at least one debate going on somewhere in the Stage. The other is that the celebrities who eat there in droves are either unrecognized or ignored by the other patrons, as Allen was by the stranger at his table.

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Max is a mild boss, but he fired a waiter who, asked for hot mustard, shoved the mustard jar in the oven

ILLUSTRATED BY AL HIRSCHFELD



LILLO HESS

**Spotted skunk**—to supplement its regulation skunk spray, it startles most potential enemies with a fandango performed on its two front legs

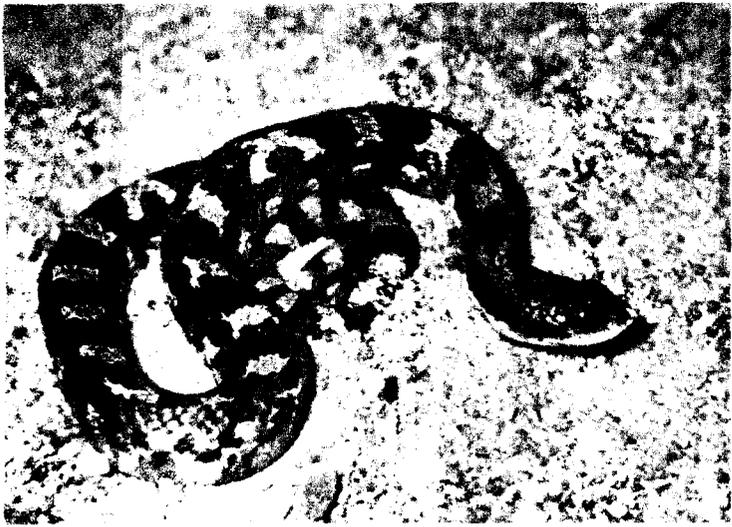


LILLO HESS

**Water ouzel**—this strange little bird keeps itself submerged in swift streams by holding its wings like fins, at an angle to the water's flow

**Hognose snake**—able to pretend it is dead, the innocent hognose, also called a puff adder, is often killed by unnecessarily alarmed people

HAL H. HARRISON—N. A. S.



**Collared lizard**—when startled, this critter scoots for a hole on its hind legs, a feat only a few of its 2,500 lizard-relatives can achieve

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



L. W. WALKER—N. A. S.

**Elf owl**—a shy, pocket-sized owl, the elf lives in holes in saguaro cactus trees on our Southwestern deserts. But it does no excavating for itself, prefers holes made by obliging Gila woodpeckers

# America's Ten

**M**ANDRILLS, mambas, pandas, okapis, kangaroos and gnus come from faraway places with strange-sounding names. In America's zoos, on any sunny Sunday, the folks and their kids stand six deep in front of the cages of these curios from other lands and gape in awe-struck amazement. Usually few of them give a second look to the critters with labels that read, "Habitat: U.S.A." Nevertheless, the United States of America can lay exclusive claim to some of the most bizarre, most wonderful animals on earth.

Scores of odd kinds of creatures make their homes in the U.S., and a student of zoology could make a list as long as an elephant's trunk. But to make it easier for the average zoo visitor to enjoy and appreciate America's claim to zoological distinction, Collier's asked John O'Reilly, author and amateur zoologist, to consult with a panel of zoological experts and prepare a list of the weirdest animals in America. Here are the 10 which took top honors.

First, to prove that the judges were not influenced by size, gaudiness or noisemaking ability, there's the tiny, popeyed elf owl that lives in the deserts of the Southwest. The smallest owl in the world, this one is no bigger than a common English sparrow. What's more the elf owl literally doesn't give a hoot. But while elf owls are hootless, they are not voiceless. Their call is a curious, high-pitched chatter, described by ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson

as "chew-chew-chew-check-chewk-chewk"—a sound that's enough to embarrass more ordinary owls.

Second of the big ten is the good old American rattlesnake—an animal more accustomed to cussing than kudos. Though practically everybody knows the rattler for its nasty character, few grant it the respect it deserves for being unique, even among the extraordinary monsters which abound in the world of reptiles. The rattler, for instance, is the only snake in the world with jiggers which can make music on the end of its tail. And it's one of the few snakes that can produce any sort of noise at all worth listening to. It is also the cause of interminable arguments among herpetologists. Some say it stabs with its hypodermic fangs, bringing up its lower jaw after the damage is done. Others claim it does not stab but bites like a dog, both jaws closing at the same time. Collier's picture, according to Clifford Pope of the Chicago Natural History Museum, proves the snake bites, leaving tooth marks as well as fang marks.

But sparrow-sized owls and musical snakes are only the beginning of the weird list. In the South and Southwest there's a fur-coated varmint that stands on its forelegs and gives warning to its enemies by dancing. This engaging personality is the little spotted skunk. Like common, everyday skunks it possesses a spray gun, but it also possesses a sense of courtesy. Instead of just letting go, it

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