



Edited by Martin Levin

THE PREMURIUS REPORT

OUR poet said it: "All America suffers, but only Sardonian knows it."

America's sickness is that she does not give a prtz (Editor's note: 1/1000 of the Sardonian taler) about the future and cares even less about the past. It all goes back to the Monroe Doctrine. For instance, what do the Americans know about soccer? You might say, "What do we know about American life?" Are you kidding? I have visited America twice. The first time I was an honorary guest-passenger of the WOW Stratocruiser Lines. I flew over the country and had a unique bird's-eye view of the geo-ethno-socio-politico-cultural problems of this infantile country.

On my second visit—on the occasion of the maiden voyage of the *T. S. S. Marie Theresa of the Seas* of our incomparable Sardonian Lines—I totaled

twenty-three hours of ground residence. I covered the 50th Street pier, the surplus stores on 42nd Street, noticed the appalling absence of sidewalk cafés, viewed the finale of the second act in the musical adaptation of *The Suppliants*, and tuned in from 10 to 12 A.M., on a Monday, to evaluate the television output of the country.

I am sorry to say this, but it is difficult to take the Americans seriously. When men and women who profess to be gentlemen and ladies make friends with you at parties openly and treat you to dinner, I cannot avoid comparisons. In Green Horses, Sardonian, I extricate an average of 1.3 treats to absinthe per year, which is slightly too forward, considering that a Sardonian invites you to his home every national jubilee. Perhaps the only country that surpasses America in effervescent hospitality is Hellas. But then Hellas is just another Balkan paradox, *bon pour l'Orient*.

What is the use? America is a cocktail of everything except character.

The Ugly Sardonian

What are the typical facial characteristics of America—Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Scandinavian, Slavic, Oriental—what? Nobody knows, nobody cares. All they care for is money. Most Sardonians make fortunes upon landing in Hoboken. It's in the air.

Yes, America is a sweet little headache for an ancient people like the Sardonians. Our cultural attaché in New York procures for America the best Sardonian artists, writers, actors, and occasional ex-apple-polishers of the Axis who nevertheless have made it clear they are sorry they did it. But our cultural attaché is only one man.

I talked to undertipped waiters at the Waldorf. I hung around the artists' hangouts in Greenwich Village. Shall I smile? They are not artists. Most of them know nothing about the Sardonian Theory of Essential Circumlocution and Circumvolution. Which brings me straight to the point of this report: The American Immigration Service stinks. They told me I have to wait for two years or more for an immigrant's visa. How long, O Lord, how long?

—KIMON LOLOS.

THE MAN WHO KNEW EVERYBODY

THE city room of the Gulfstream, Florida, *Gazette* was presided over at one time by an editor whom we shall call Horace Porous, for that was not his name. Horace, who looked like an amiable basset hound and gargled his words in a mellifluous cornpone-and-molasses drawl, was not only a newspaperman of many years' standing but was also, as he himself was wont to boast to us cub reporters, a Florida Cracker bone and braid. In his day (which by the time I knew him was turning to late afternoon) he had sought, and sometimes found, news in every courthouse and cranny of the state, and had come to regard himself as something of a Baedeker of the bayous. "Hell, I know everybody," he would often say while reminiscing over a bourbon after hours, invariably knitting into his anecdotes a not unimpressive list of Florida notables back to and including Ponce de Leon.

One day near deadline time, after several reporters had tried unsuccessfully to verify a rumor that seemed to have its origin in the state capital at Tallahassee, Horace announced that he himself would take matters in hand. "There is only one solution," he informed us, "and that is for me to telephone directly and personally to my old friend, the governor."

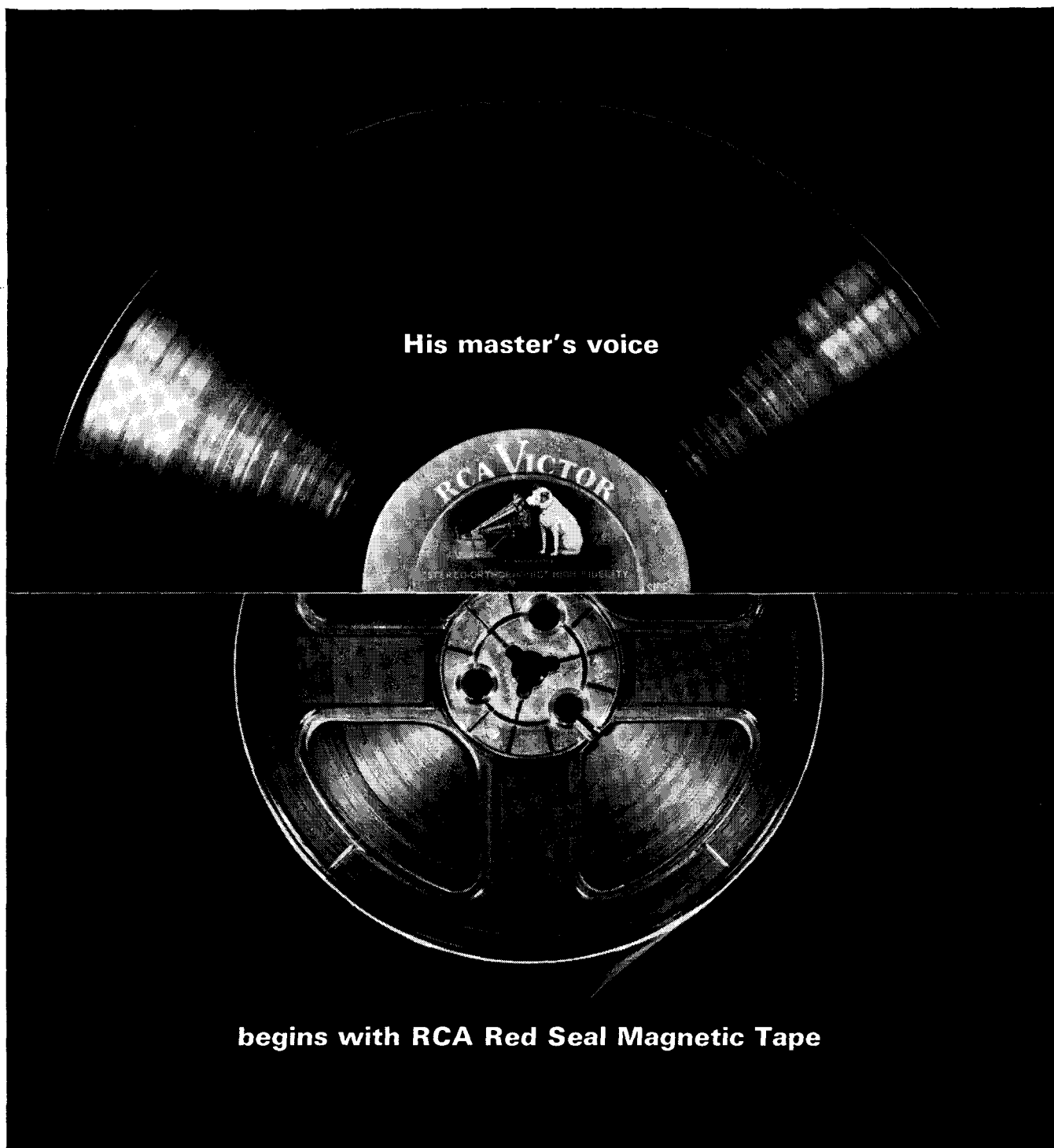
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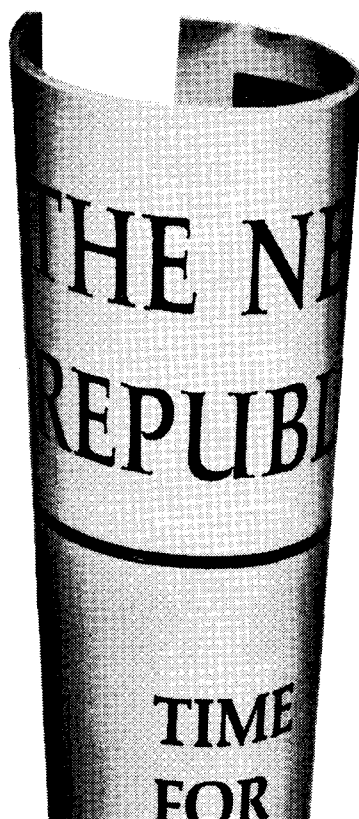
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though it astonished us all, the connection was soon made.

"Hey there," Horace said to the governor. "This is Horace."

During the pause that followed, the typewriters in the city room fell silent as the reporters strained to hear Horace's conversation with his old friend.

Then Horace said into the phone: "Horace Porous."

There was another pause.

"Horace Porous in *Gulfstream*."

Pause.

"At the *Gulfstream Gazette*."

Pause.

"That's it—it's a *newspaper*."

As it finally turned out, the governor knew nothing, or perhaps would say nothing, to confirm the rumor. But by this time that hardly mattered. For when he had hung up, Horace was able to turn to us and report, loudly enough for all to hear, and with a broad, satisfied grin:

"Well, there is nothing at all to the rumor, gentlemen. My old friend the governor has told me so himself."

—JAMES F. FIXX.

• • •

THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE

IN my revolutionary days when I was planning a trip to Russia, my friend, the Communist Jim Cannon, came to me with some advice. I would have a better entrée among the ruling circles in Moscow if I carried a card of membership in the American Communist Party—then called the "Worker's Party." He would enroll me and supply me with the card if I would drop around to headquarters. Although I am not by temperament a joiner, this seemed a permissive maneuver, since the "Worker's Party" then professed to be a "mass party" and its control by a conspiratorial underground organization had—formally at least—been abandoned.

So in March, 1922, I boarded the Cunard Liner S.S. *Olympia* with a rather subversory testimonial in my pocket. I had hardly arrived in my stateroom when a steward came around with an invitation to sit at the captain's table. Thinking the literary aspect of my career must be experiencing a boom, I joyfully accepted and took my place at dinner with what I hoped was a poetic as well as a patriotic expression.

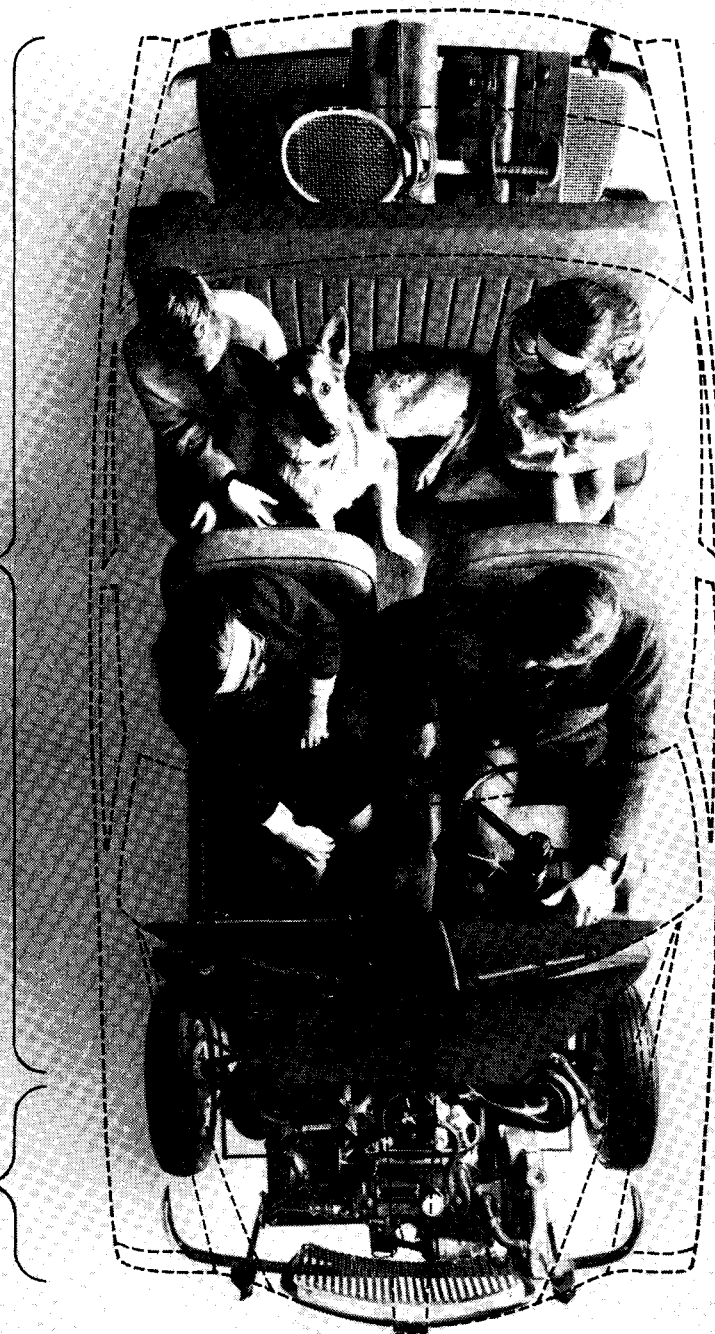
When the coffee was being served, the captain leaned across the table and remarked:

"Mr. Eastman, I think your invention of the Kodak was one of the major events of this century."

—MAX EASTMAN.

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engine room ...



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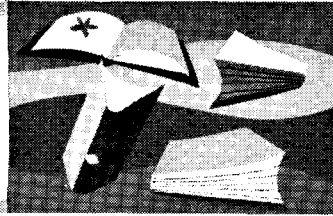


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Trade Winds



TWO MORE LIBRARY STORIES. one from an Omaha fellow who doesn't want his name used. By mistake he carried off a pencil belonging to the library. When he returned it with apologies he said to the librarian, "You probably lose a great many pencils this way."

She replied, "One day last week we



found we had fifty pencils that didn't belong to us."

At the information desk of the Chicago Public Library, two sophisticated-looking teen-age girls approached Monica Schwartz, one asking, "Where can we find that book called *Oedipus*

Complex, or if you don't have that one, *Oedipus Rex*?"

Mrs. Schwartz sent them to Sophocles, hoping their major interest was literary. But the question has been echoing through her head ever since, for the gal had accented both the "ex's" and it made a singsong verse that Mrs. Schwartz hopes to exorcise by having me print it here.

I AM MORE THAN HAPPY to get this one out of the way, too. It's from Thomas W. Palmer, a Tuckahoe, New York, dentist who tells of two monks who set up a fish 'n' chips stand outside their monastery. One morning a lady came to the stand and asked the one in charge, "Are you the fish friar?"

He answered, "No, ma'am, I'm the chip monk."

WHEN MRS. SAM ALSCHULER of Aurora, Illinois, heard about the Post Office admonition, "Keep harmful objects out

of your letters," she realized immediately at whom it was directed: her daughter, Terri. In her nineteen years Terri has sent the following objects home by letter: a horseshoe nail (from camp), a rose branch with thorns, a fish skeleton, a porcupine quill, hair clips she wanted duplicated, a corsage pin, and a cocktail pick.

Terri is a sophomore at Pembroke College in Providence. She recently wrote home that she was looking for a present for her mother. Then Mrs. Alschuler learned of the Post Office campaign against harmful objects. She shot off a wire to her daughter: APPRECIATE THOUGHT BUT DON'T MAIL WHATEVER IT IS. Too late. The postman had just delivered a beat-up envelope containing a two-pronged fork from a Providence antique shop.

WHILE ON THE SUBJECT of teen-age girls, I must put in a plug for *The Seventeen Book of Etiquette and Entertaining* (McKay). It's the second by Enid A. Haupt, the editor of *Seventeen*, and she offers a lot of helpful advice for the kids. The book tells all sorts of things, like how to write a letter to the White House, which fork to use, when to wear gloves, how to get someone to cut in when you're dancing with someone you don't like (you look as though you're having a wonderful time), how to avoid being kissed and how to get a boy to kiss you.

I felt like a real boor as I read all these rules of behavior. I decided that if a girl observed one-tenth of them, she'd be a knockout. I didn't find out how to stop a girl from taking twenty-minute showers and using up all the hot water, however.



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WANT TO HEAR a story about the American Way? A few months ago a high school girl named Judith Paggen wrote from Silver Lake, Minnesota, to the chairmen of twelve New York advertising agencies. She said she was doing a paper on "Corrupt Advertising" and wanted help.

Not surprisingly, she barely got the time of day from eleven of them. But Robert Lusk, head of Benton & Bowles, rose to the occasion. He invited Judy, her sister, her teacher Roger Erskine, and Mrs. Erskine to visit the agency as his guests.

It wasn't long before the four of them had seen the inside of B&B,