

A Woman's Eye on New York

Talk Stories, by Lillian Ross (Simon & Schuster. 301 pp. \$5.95), collects a spectrum of the author's Talk of the Town "casuals" for *The New Yorker*. Murrah Gattis, an engineering manager, writes free-lance articles, reviews, and short stories.

By MURRAH GATTIS

TO SOFTEN the harsh truth of "It's a man's world," that proliferating old bore Hackneyed Phrase begat the feministic "Anything a man can do, a woman can do better," which is one of the many adages Lillian Ross, in her first *New Yorker* profile, reported that the American matador, Sidney Franklin, the son of a Flatbush policeman, claims he originated. The profile appeared in 1947, when Miss Ross was twenty-one. Since then she has handled, better than most men, feature assignments in the tradition of cool, detached reporting perfected by Thurber, White, Maloney, Hellman, Behrman, McKelway, *et al.* Seven of her profiles—some of the magazine's finest—were collected in *Reporting*.

Now, in *Talk Stories*, her seventh book, Miss Ross offers sixty of her anonymous Talk of the Town "casuals." They range from an interview with the late Governor Stevenson, about whom she has published a separate, affectionate portrait, to a talk with Lassie, her favorite television star. Lacking the breadth though not the depth of her profiles, these casuals remind the reader of the champagne and caviar in her celebrated profile of Ernest Hemingway, her idol. They are the hors d'oeuvres—the tempting appetizers that leave you wanting more: "the harder ones" that Papa told her she would someday have to write. Neatly compressed gems, they are noteworthy for their comprehensibility, a quality the late Harold Ross, the magazine's founder, demanded.

At once humorous and serious, *Talk Stories* includes such diverse topics as cycling, discothèque, television commercials, public-school folk dancing, Telestar, Salk vaccine, Aqueduct, and Petrocelli clothes. Twice Miss Ross visits Mr. Kenneth, the hair stylist—in the guise of "the wild-haired secretary Miss Rogers, who sits across the hall from our man Stanley," whose identity

she also assumes on several assignments. There are features in the book about such notables as Nelson Rockefeller, Soviet Ambassador Fedorenko, Dag Hammarskjöld, and the late President Kennedy. The author, however, achieves her best, which is incomparable, when she sketches people in the entertainment world: Edward Albee, Noël Coward, Joan Plowright, Eddie Condon, Dame Edith Evans, among others.

Miss Ross, who must have the theater in her blood, accepts artists, writers, actors, producers, and playwrights as human beings; instead of ogling the famous with glowing idiocy, she treats them in her stories with objectivity, warmth, and respect.

Her style is always modest, elliptical, precise, for she knows well Twain's allusion to the difference between lightning and the lightning bug. Her eye and ear are perfect:

"Miss Rutherford had on black strap shoes with sensible heels, a blue-green cotton frock, a man's wrist watch on a leather strap, a necklace of Chinese stones, and four rings, two on each hand.

"We've been to your Jones Beach and we did get colored up a bit, but we loved it," Miss Rutherford told us."

Miss Ross's irony is free of acid and poison.

WISELY, she omitted the delicious parody she wrote of Tom Wolfe's jet prose during the heat of the dirty little war he started with *New Yorker* editor Ted Shawn last spring.

Talk Stories is a solid, polished work that every student of journalism should first read and then study, for it is, as Hemingway said of her portrait of him, "funny and good."

Pop Poems

By Nancy Sullivan

1. soup

LET it be minestrone
Slithery with spaghetti,
Uncondensed,
Progresso perhaps.
What isn't in it?
The can is a garden;
Do not dilute it.

2. beans

Let the insides show,
All the little brown beans
Oozy in molasses.
On top, a knob of streaky hog.
How humble it tastes.

3. butter

Let it be soft after it's hard.
Pats, blocks, quarters
Yellow in the middle, the edges too.
All golden, unctuous blond,
Filling me up, filling me out.
Land o' Lakes, sweetly churned.

4. sandwich

Let it be pastrami on rye,
Lox on a bagel,
Bacon, tomato, and lettuce
In between toast.
It's one thing on top of another
Thing on top of another thing
With a top on.

5. soap

Let it be green or blue or white.
This one is white, a pure block of Ivory.
It floats, white raft in the tub.
Smaller and smaller it goes.

6. Brillo

Let these prickly pads,
Some dry, some pink with soap,
Shine up the scene. Polish
Pot, pan, and griddle.
They work,
But at the very end crumble all up,
Into ironic little failures.

7. toothpaste

Let the tube be like skin;
To bruise it, press hard.
Now watch the paste spurt
Icing the brush with fat
green chemistry.
Foaming at the mouth, she spat.

8. martini

In a clear glass, its surface
Smooth as a trampoline.
Just a hint of gold shivers around.
Down, down there the olive
Rests lumpily, lustfully hoarding
Gin and vermouth in its meaty cave.

9. beer

For those who drink deep.
The silky can
Fills the whole hand.
Its top pops
And out it bubbles, a
Stream of amber and white.
Schlitz, Bud, Piel's—
Like the merriest Christmas.

SR's Check List of the Week's New Books

Art, Archeology

HENRY MOORE: The Life and Work of a Great Sculptor. By Donald Hall. Harper & Row. \$7.50.

MICHELANGELO DRAWINGS. Edited by Ludwig Goldscheider. New York Graphic Society. \$12.50.

NIMRUD AND ITS REMAINS. By M. E. L. Mallowan. Dodd, Mead. Two volumes. \$60.

THE RESTLESS ART: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760-1960. By Alan Gowsan. Lippincott. \$9.95.

Crime, Suspense

A CANDLE FOR THE DEAD. By Hugh Marlowe. Abelard-Schuman. \$3.50.

THE PEDESTAL. By George Lanning. Harper & Row. \$4.50.

THE SECRET SOLDIER. By John Quigley. New American Library. \$4.95.

SHOOTING SCRIPT. By Gavin Lyall. Scribners. \$4.95.

THIRTEEN WAYS TO DISPOSE OF A BODY: An Anthology. Edited by Basil Davenport. Dodd, Mead. \$4.

THE TOFF IN WAX. By John Creasey. Walker. \$3.50.

WILD NIGHT. By Rae Foley. Dodd, Mead. \$3.50.

YOU WANT TO DIE, JOHNNY? By Gavin Black. Harper & Row. \$4.50.

Current Affairs

COLUMBIA ESSAYS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. By Andrew W. Cordier. Columbia Univ. Press. \$7.95.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE NEW AFRICA. By I. William Zartman. Prentice-Hall. Hardbound, \$5.95. Paperback, \$2.45.

THE MARTYRS: Sixteen Who Gave Their Lives for Racial Justice. By Jack Mendelsohn. Harper & Row. \$5.

MARKISM IN MODERN FRANCE. By George Lichtheim. Columbia Univ. Press. \$6.75.

NATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA. By Arthur P. Whitaker and David C. Jordan. Macmillan. \$6.95.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF POWER: American Diplomacy in the Search for Peace. By Harlan Cleveland. Harper & Row. \$4.50.

SOUTHERNER. By Charles Longstreet Weltner. Lippincott. \$3.95.

SPACESHIP EARTH. By Barbara Ward. Columbia Univ. Press. \$5.95.

STRATEGIC POWER AND SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. By Arnold L. Horelick and Myron Rush. Univ. of Chicago Press. \$5.95.

THREE WORLDS IN DEVELOPMENT: The Theory and Practice of International Stratification. By Irving Louis Horowitz. Oxford Univ. Press. \$8.50.

THE TROUBLED CAMPUS. By the editors of *The Atlantic*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. Paperback, \$1.95.

THE WAR AGAINST GOD IN LITHUANIA. By Dr. J. Savasis. Manyland Books. \$3.

WAR WITHOUT GUNS: American Civilians in Rural Vietnam. By George K. Tanham. Praeger. \$4.95.

Essays

HOME: Social Essays. By LeRoi Jones. Morrow. \$4.

THE INSECURITY OF FREEDOM: Essays on Human Existence. By Abraham J. Heschel. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$5.95.

Fiction

AREN'T YOU EVEN GONNA KISS ME GOOD-BY? By William Richert. McKay. \$4.50.

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS. By Leonard Cohen. Viking. \$5.75.

BEEN DOWN SO LONG IT LOOKS LIKE UP TO ME. By Richard Farina. Random House. \$5.95.

THE BEST IS YET TO BE. By Bentz Plagemann. Morrow. \$4.50.

THE CALL OF THE SEA: Including *The Lost Sea*, *The Distant Shore*, *A Sailor's Life*. By Jan de Hartog. Atheneum. \$6.95.

A CIRCLE OF SAND. By Richard Karlan. Bobbs-Merrill. \$5.

DEATH IN MIDSUMMER AND OTHER STORIES. By Yukio Mishima. New Directions. Hardbound, \$5.50. Paperback, \$2.25.

THE DIARY OF A RAPIST. By Evan S. Connell, Jr. Simon & Schuster. \$4.95.

THE DOCTOR IS SICK. By Anthony Burgess. Norton. \$4.50.

THE FLUTE ACROSS THE POND. By Frederic Wakeman. World. \$4.95.

GENTLEMEN IN THEIR SEASON. By Gabriel Fielding. Morrow. \$5.95.

THE JANUS LOVERS. By Miggs Pomeroy. Norton. \$4.95.

LOVE LETTER IN THE DEAD-LETTER OFFICE. By Nora Johnson. Delacorte. \$4.95.

THE MONEY HUNTERS. By Cothburn O'Neal. Crown. \$4.50.

PROMISE MORNING. By Charles Mercer. Putnam. \$4.95.

PUBLIC FACES IN PRIVATE PLACES. By Joseph Rosner. Delacorte. \$4.95.

REBECCA'S DAUGHTERS. By Dylan Thomas. Little, Brown. \$4.50.

RETREAT AND RECALL. By Joseph G. E. Hopkins. Scribners. \$4.50.

A SQUARE CALLED SILENCE. By Desmond Meiring. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.95.

A SUNDAY WORLD. By Camilla R. Bittle. Coward-McCann. \$4.50.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MRS. ARTHUR. By Flora Armitage. Dodd, Mead. \$3.75.

History

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. By Ralph L. Ketchem. Washington Square Press. \$3.95.

THE DAY OF THE AMERICANS. By Nerin E. Gun. Fleet. \$6.95.

THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER I. By E. M. Almedingen. Vanguard. \$4.95.

THE EUROPEAN POWERS 1900-1945. By Martin Gilbert. New American Library. \$5.95.

JOHN C. CALHOUN. By Richard N. Current. Washington Square Press. \$3.95.

NAT TURNER'S SLAVE REBELLION. By Herbert Aptheker. Humanities Press. \$4.

PANAMA: 400 Years of Dreams and Cruelty. By David Howarth. McGraw-Hill. \$6.50.

THE PROBLEM OF BOSTON: Some Readings in Cultural History. By Martin Green. Norton. \$6.

THE SILK ROAD. By Luce Boulnois. Dutton. \$5.95.

THOMAS JEFFERSON. By Stuart Gerry

Brown. Washington Square Press. \$3.95.

THE VIKING EXPLORERS. By Frederick J. Pohl. Crowell. \$5.95.

THE WOMEN INCENDIARIES. By Edith Thomas. Braziller. \$7.95.

Literary Criticism, History

THE COLLOQUIAL STYLE IN AMERICA. By Richard Bridgman. Oxford Univ. Press. \$6.50.

MILTON'S BRIEF EPIC: The Genre, Meaning and Art of *Paradise Lost*. By Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. Brown Univ. Press. \$6.50.

REFRACTIONS: Essays in Comparative Literature. By Harry Levin. Oxford Univ. Press. \$7.50.

THE SATIRIC ART OF EVELYN WAUGH. By James F. Carens. Univ. of Washington Press. \$5.

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes. By Frederick C. Crews. Oxford Univ. Press. \$6.75.

VOICES OF DESPAIR: Four Motifs in American Literature. By Edward Stone. Ohio State Univ. Press. \$5.

Miscellany

THE CHALLENGE TO WOMEN. Edited by Seymour M. Farber and Roger H. L. Wilson. Basic Books. \$4.95.

CHILDREN OF THE UPROOTED. Edited by Oscar Handlin. Braziller. \$8.50.

THE FASTEST MEN ON EARTH. By Paul Clifton. John Day. \$5.

THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT. By W. Eugene Hollon. Oxford Univ. Press. \$6.

THE HAPHAZARD GOURMET. By Richard Gehman. Scribners. \$6.95.

THE HIDDEN ASSASSINS. By Booth Mooney. Follett. \$4.95.

HOME BOOK OF ANIMAL CARE. By Esther L. Guthrie. Harper & Row. \$5.95.

500 MILES TO GO: The History of the Indianapolis Speedway. By Al Bloemker. Coward-McCann. \$5.95.

POLITICAL HANDBOOK AND ATLAS OF THE WORLD 1966. Edited by Walter H. Mallory. Harper & Row. \$8.50.

RELIGION IN WOOD: A Book of Shaker Furniture. By Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews. Indiana Univ. Press. \$5.95.

THE RESEARCH HANDBOOK: A Guide to Reference Sources. By Adrian A. Paradis. Funk & Wagnalls. \$4.95.

SLEEP. By Gay Gaer Luce and Julius Segal. Coward-McCann. \$6.95.

THE SPANISH COOKBOOK. By Barbara Norman. Atheneum. \$5.95.

Personal History

CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN. By Sven Stolpe. Macmillan. \$6.95.

DE GAULLE: Implacable Ally. Edited by Roy C. Macridis. Harper & Row. \$6.

HESKETH PEARSON. By Himself. Harper & Row. \$6.95.

IN SEARCH OF PARADISE: The Nordhoff-Hall Story. By Paul L. Briand, Jr. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$6.95.

MOTHER OF THE QUEEN: The Life Story of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Elizabeth. By David Duff. Hawthorn. \$5.95.

PLEASANT RIVER. By Dale Rex Coman. Norton. \$4.95.

SHORT DRIVE, SWEET CHARIOT. By William Saroyan. Trident. \$4.95.