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THE PHOENIX NEST

Edited by Martin Levin

Before the Act

THE controversy surrounding a certain New York drama critic, who has been attending previews rather than opening nights so as to have more time to write his reviews, brings to mind past journalists who followed this method. Swatches of their work follow:

ROME, Feb. 6, 1512—Though the paint was still wet and the scaffolding had not yet been removed when seen last week, Michelangelo's new ceiling at the Sistine Chapel seems a promising, if somewhat cluttered work . . .

HONOLULU, Dec. 8, 1941—Pearl Harbor (which I visited on Saturday) had an uneventful Sunday yesterday, as . . .

CALLENDER, ONT., May 29, 1934—On the basis of preliminary labor pains, Mrs. Oliva Dionne gave birth to either a boy or girl last night . . .

WASHINGTON, April 15, 1865—President Lincoln heartily enjoyed last night's performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre, judging by audience response to the play two nights ago . . . —ARNOLD M. AUERBACH.

A Taxing Problem Solved

WHILE looking to Albany and Washington for help in solving the city's financial problems, New York's Mayor Lindsay is overlooking a large pot of gold right in his own back yard. A window tax.

Just look at the endless vistas of soaring glass along the avenues, and then turn to history.

An *impost des fenêtres et des ouvertures* has been a traditional form of taxation in France since the days of the Valois rulers some 400 years ago. A Bourbon King, Louis XIV, was still levying a window tax when King William III of England adopted it for England to help pay for his costly war against that French monarch.

King William ordered a levy of a shilling a window on all houses in England having more than six windows and a value of more than five pounds' yearly rental. Mayor Lindsay can take heart from the fact that Englishmen accepted the new tax placidly, and the mayor might also benefit from the example of

Of Cabbages and Kings

their monarch. A short time before, he had cannily repealed the ancient "hearth tax," the yearly tribute of a shilling per hearth per house, which was highly unpopular. Taxpayers had come to resent the tax principally on account of the collectors, who, over the centuries, had taken to demanding, in addition to a tax on the hearth in the house, large amounts of food and drink, and hospitality of quite a different sort from the women in it as well.

In the first year, the new tax brought to the Crown a tripled revenue of £1,200,000, or roughly \$6,000,000. This amount, in terms of today's values, would be more than twenty times larger.

Unfortunately for its future, and ultimately the English treasury, the window tax was raised in 1702, forty-five years after King William's death. This time there was loud grumbling. Throughout London, householders commenced to block or brick up windows, and in turn the tax was raised. Eventually, after six increases, the grumbings increased. Anguished howls swelled into threatening roars until, in 1851, Queen Victoria's government repealed the window tax forever.

If there is any lesson to be learned by Mayor Lindsay and his successors from the history of the window tax in England, it is: Don't kill that goose! Instead, look toward France!

In that country, the window tax has outlasted three ruling dynasties, a sweeping revolution, and two world wars. And always, it has lagged a discreet distance behind the inflationary spiral.

If Mayor Lindsay succeeds in levying a window glass tax, the city is bound to prosper wildly. The only possible loophole may be that some of the glassier buildings may claim just four windows: north, south, east, and west.

—ADELE AND
MITCHELL KENNERLY, JR.

My Blood Is Brassicaceous

I WAS one of the few who failed to get excited over the addition of chlorophyll to chewing gum, toothpaste, and our daily diet. I'm quite sure my system has always contained more than the necessary quota.

It's foolish, I know, to think the average reader would be interested in the autobiography of a nonentity. In fact it might be better for the literary world if a lot of *celebrated* individuals passed up such an impulse. I'm aware there would



The weather won't always be full of such unpleasant surprises.

Her day began fair and clear. Soon she'll be soaking wet.

Recent ITT developments can one day help change this. For one way to get ahead of the weather is to stay on top of it with a satellite like NASA's Nimbus.

On board the Nimbus weather satellite was an ITT-developed infrared camera system that photographed cloud formations worldwide at night.

This space "first" gave meteorologists

a dramatic new means for analysis of Earth's atmosphere. For this achievement the American Meteorological Society subsequently cited ITT Industrial Laboratories with the Award for Outstanding Services to Meteorology.

The next Nimbus will carry an advanced nighttime camera as well as a newer ITT daytime camera for 24-hour, round-the-world weather data from space.

Another ITT daytime camera is sched-

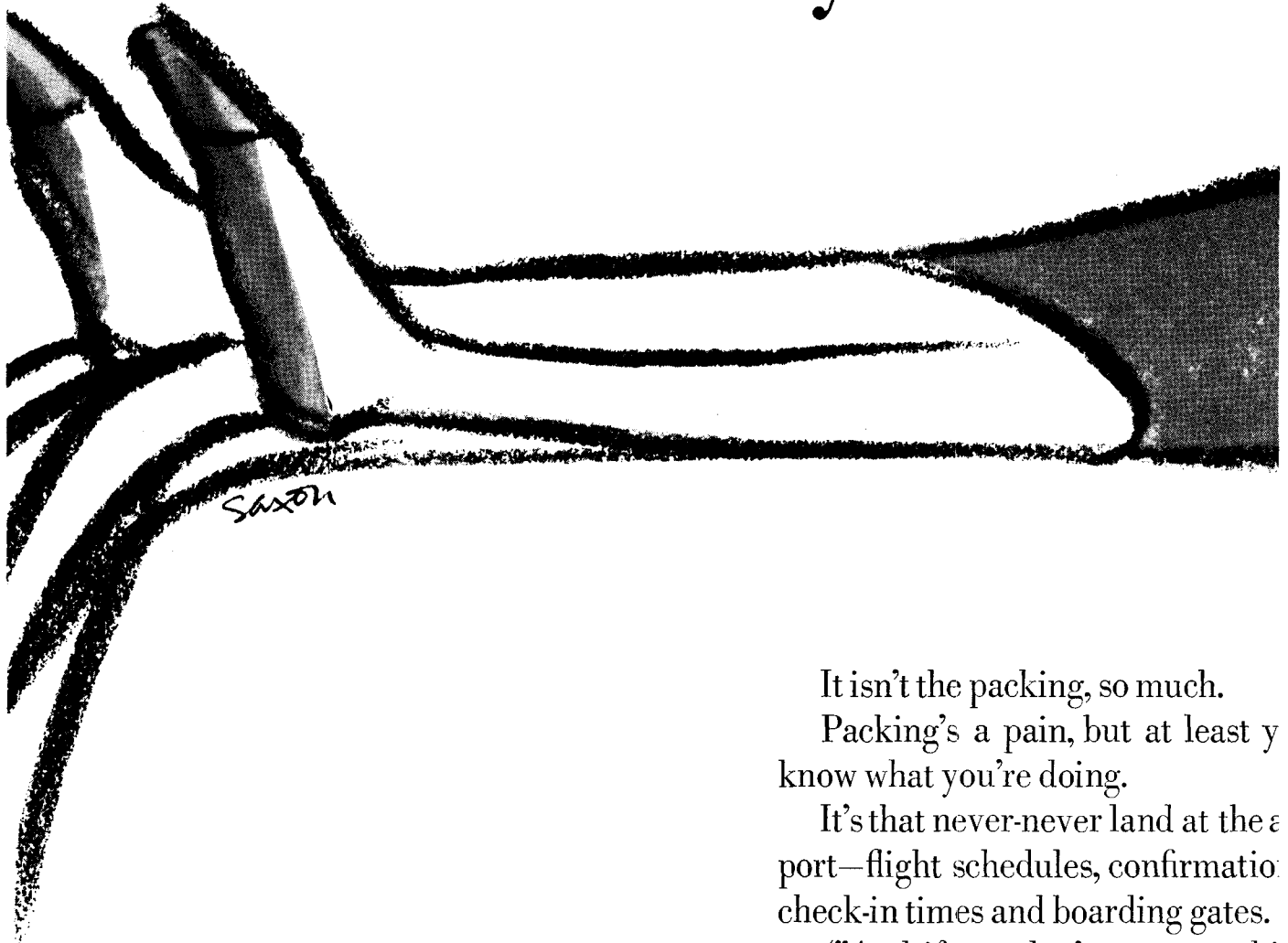
uled for NASA's Applications Technology Satellite (ATS). It will report weather patterns over a large area of Earth from a position 22,300 miles in space, synchronized with Earth's rotation.

Weather eyes in space promise a new dimension of knowledge that will touch the lives of people everywhere.

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If the thought of a trip gives you a headache, we know how you feel.



It isn't the packing, so much.

Packing's a pain, but at least you know what you're doing.

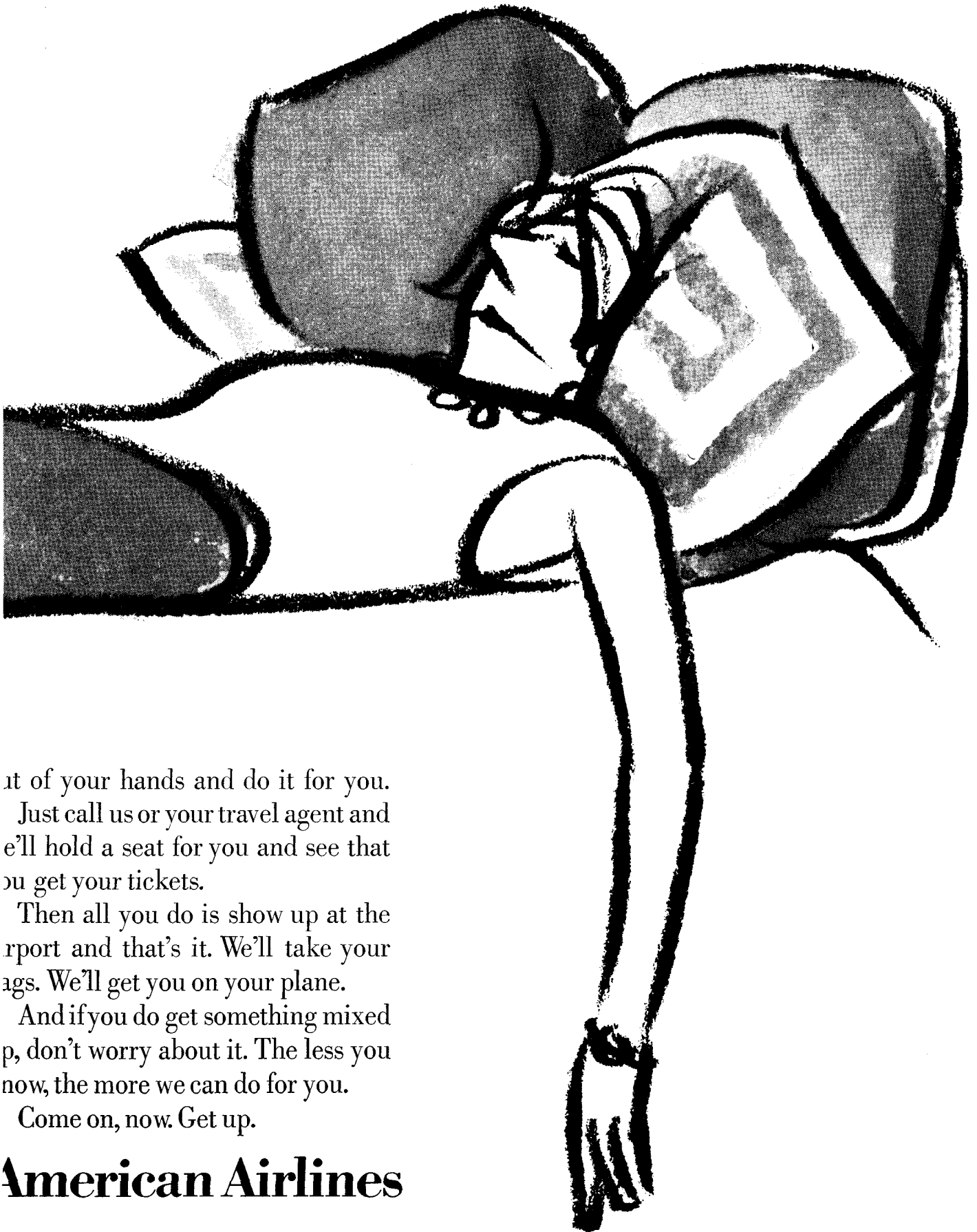
It's that never-never land at the airport—flight schedules, confirmation, check-in times and boarding gates.

("And if you don't get everything just right, they yell at you.")

We know how you feel.

And we don't expect you to know everything about something you've never done before.

We have people who take everything



it of your hands and do it for you.

Just call us or your travel agent and we'll hold a seat for you and see that you get your tickets.

Then all you do is show up at the airport and that's it. We'll take your bags. We'll get you on your plane.

And if you do get something mixed up, don't worry about it. The less you know now, the more we can do for you.

Come on, now. Get up.

American Airlines



ALWAYS LISTEN TO YOUR GRANDFATHER!

When Grandfather Miller began brewing Miller High Life beer in America, after being a famous brewmaster in the royal Hohenzollern castle in Europe, he prophesied, "There will always be enough people who want the very finest . . ." Grandfather was right!

In fact, today, Miller High Life's exceptional quality and costlier ingredients are so much in demand our sales have set all records . . . increasing over 32% in the past two years.

This should teach us three things:

- ... The tradition of quality is good to protect and guard;*
- ... The standard of living is growing tremendously as people want the best; and,*
- ... Always listen to your Grandfather.*

The Champagne of Bottle Beer



be absolutely no interest in mine, if my beginning hadn't been so unusual. The amazing truth is that I didn't arrive by way of a stork's claws or a doctor's satchel—I was found in a head of cabbage.

Mrs. Wallace made the discovery. The setting was a small mining village in Pennsylvania where Mrs. Wallace performed as midwife when not too busy in her confectionery shop. The woman and my mother were close neighbors. The lone doctor in the vicinity, hired by the mining company at a monthly salary, was naturally rather difficult to locate in an emergency, so it had been pre-arranged for Mrs. Wallace to be summoned. When the crucial moment arrived, my sisters, ages eight and ten, were dispatched to tell the midwife she was wanted. That was the era when innocence made the younger set more acceptable.

Before setting out on her errand Mrs. Wallace snipped a huge head of cabbage from her garden. The girls were impressed by its size. They were told it was being taken to my mother and they were made to feel important by being put in charge of the shop during the owner's absence. It was also suggested they might entertain themselves by doing some housecleaning, which was a tricky way of getting the ashes removed from the coal stove.

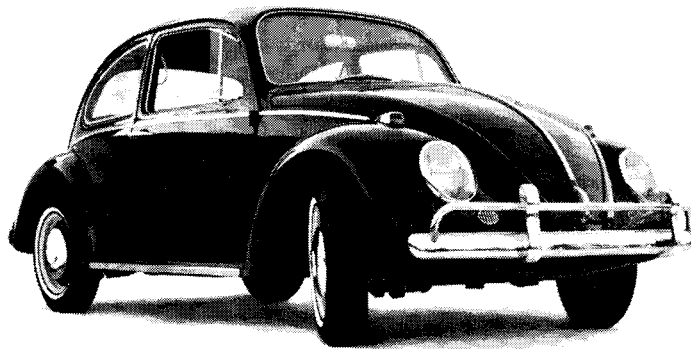
An hour or so later my father arrived at the Wallace house to tell my sisters they had a new brother. Back in their own kitchen they wondered why a lot of cabbage leaves had been left on the table. Mrs. Wallace explained how she had found a baby in the cabbage and she escorted them to my mother's room to see for themselves. She said my wizened appearance was caused by being crowded against the hard veins of the cabbage leaves. That was the final proof—there was no reason to doubt a tale so obviously authentic.

Throughout my childhood I was a cabbage-head baby who never questioned the miracle. If I chanced to overhear the matter being doubtfully discussed I would promptly set out for the candy shop and ask Mrs. Wallace to repeat the story. Her descriptions never varied. She always said I was very fortunate to be covered with skin instead of leaves. I wholeheartedly agreed. Who would want to look like an Irish armadillo?

To this very day I am bored by people who insist the procedure was a hoax. Mirrors convince me they are wrong. I'm frequently green around the gills, a condition I can readily associate with my watered and hoed ancestry.

And I shudder when I think of the many reckless cooks who throw untested cabbages into pots of steaming corned beef. It's downright cannibalistic.

—WILLIAM W. PRATT.



Don't let the low price scare you off.

\$1574.*

That's the price of a new Volkswagen.

But some people won't buy one: They feel they deserve something costlier. That's the price we pay for the price we charge.

And some people are afraid to buy one: They don't see how we can turn out a cheap car without having it turn out cheap.

This is how:

Since the factory doesn't change the

bug's shape every year, we don't have to change the factory every year.

What we don't spend on looks, we spend on improvements to make more people buy the car.

Mass production cuts costs. And VWs have been produced in a greater mass (over 10 million to date) than any car model in history.

Our air-cooled rear engine cuts costs,

too, by eliminating the need for a radiator, water pump, and drive shaft.

There are no fancy gadgets, run by push buttons.

(The only push buttons are on the doors. And those gadgets are run by you.)

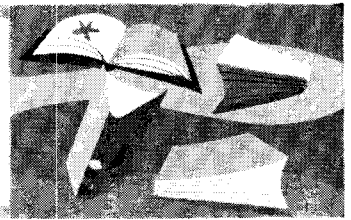
When you buy a VW, you get what you pay for. What you don't get is frills. And you don't pay for what you don't get.



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If you really want to be well-rounded in this best of all possible worlds, it's your duty to keep informed about showbiz, and there's no better place to do this than in the pages of *Variety*. It's a simple and quick job, too, because no journalistic organ extant can squeeze as much information into its headlines, provided of course, you have a *Variety*-English dictionary close at hand.

Ever since this venerable publication headlined the story about rural theaters that turn down rural-subject films with STIX NIX HIX PIX, *Variety* has stood at



the head of the class in headline-writing. The tradition is still very much alive today, to the enrichment of the English and journalese languages.

Pick up any issue, and you'll not only be kept abreast of the showbiz times, but you'll have an easy lesson in headline writing.

In a recent issue, for example, you could catch up on the scene in no time flat. A sampling of how films were going in various parts of the country was typified by the headline: 'OSCAR' MIGHTY \$30,000, DET.; 'FLINT' SMASHEROO 18G, 'RACE' SHARP 14G. For the uninitiated, this simply meant that in Detroit the film *The Oscar* had grossed a neat \$30,000 for the week, while *Our Man Flint* was a socko boff with a gross of \$18,000. *The Great Race* wasn't doing too badly either, with a box office take of \$14,000.

'DACHSHUND' BOFFO 30G, K.C.; 'JULIET' FAT \$3500 didn't need much translation, merely indicating how the films *The Ugly Dachshund* and *Juliet of the Spirits* were courting the box office in Kansas City.

You might have taken a little more time to decipher the news that 'MFL' PASSES '10 C.' On the other hand, if you thought deeply, you could easily figure out that *My Fair Lady*'s film version had just succeeded in passing the lengthy run of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*. The latter film ran seventy

weeks at New York's Criterion Theater, but *Lady* moved into its seventy-first week on February 23, with the end of the run still not in sight. Some 950,000 people have seen it at this theater alone.

Less cryptic was NON-FAVE SISTER SAYS SHE'LL SUE. It was *Variety*'s way of announcing that a less-favored sister of the late showman Billy Rose is not altogether happy about the division of the estate he left.

If you wanted to learn more about director Arthur Penn's confused flare-up with Columbia Pictures, you could follow through by reading ONE MAN'S POISON PENN IS ANOTHER MAN'S MISQUOTE IN 'CHASE' BROUHAHA. The news story went on to explain that the preem week (opening week) for the film *The Chase* was threatened by an article Penn wrote for the *New York Times* about the interference he encountered while directing the picture in Hollywood. Nobody is reported very happy about the film, especially screenwriter Lillian Hellman, who was planning her own blast in the *Times* at Director Penn.

When your eye fell on CLASS-UP, SPEED-UP PASTURES (with a subhead reading OZONERS QUEST: 'LIGHT'SCREEN'), you'd really not be with it unless you recognized that 'pastures' are shoddy drive-in theaters (D-Ins, *Variety* calls them). There's a big move on to upgrade the image of the D-Ins, while the subhead refers to the problem of making films visible and clear while there's still daylight. Ozoners, of course, are outdoor theaters.

On the television rating scene, the headline ARB'S PHILLY 'OOPS!' UHF DOES SHOW UP was no joking matter for two Philadelphia ultra-high-frequency stations that were accidentally skipped in the American Research Bureau's latest rating reports. The rating service announced that their audiences were too low to show up in their reports, but later acknowledged its mistake. The correction, according to *Variety*, cost them "a sum in five," meaning five figures. You can see how touchy things are in the showbiz world.

Moving along to the rapidly deteriorating world of music, the headline RAZZBERRIES FOR GRAMMY'S (Subhead: BLAST BRUSHOFF OF R&B GROOVE) referred to the awards known as Grammy's, the record industry equivalent of the Emmy and Oscar awards. The brou-