

WILSONIAN SUMMERS IN RURAL NEW ENGLAND

By ROLAND VAN ZANDT

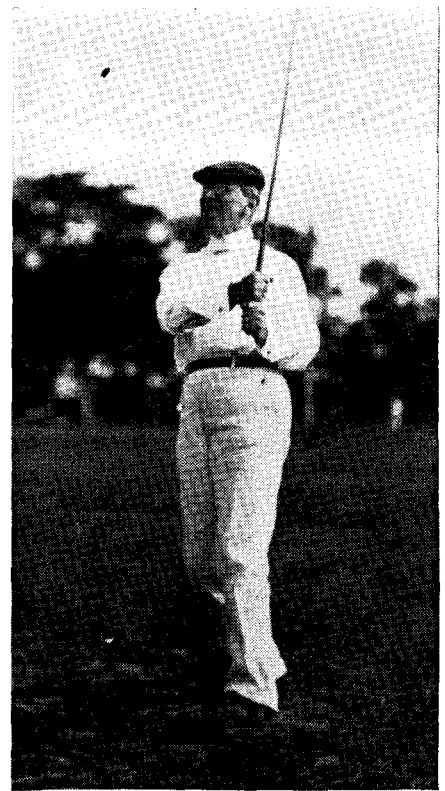
IT didn't take Woodrow Wilson long to realize the value of fleeing Washington in the summer, if only for a week. Thus he confided to a friend during the summer of 1913: "The eight days I spent in New Hampshire with that happy, adorable family did me a lot of good. I had grown stale down here. Washington is, I should judge, the worst place in America to keep normal. . . . The amount of work a President is expected to do is preposterous."

In the last years of his office, Wilson's worsening health and the crush of world events bound him more closely to Washington, but during the summers of 1913-14-15 he rented a house at Cornish, New Hampshire, in the very heart of rural New England. "Harlakenden," as the estate was called, was the summer residence of Winston Churchill, the American novelist. It was (until it burned down in 1921) a rambling, sedate Georgian mansion built of pressed brick, gray granite, and white marble, with spacious loggias and terraces that afforded magnificent views of the low-lying Connecticut River and the distant mass of Mount Ascutney near Windsor, Vermont.

Wilson was not unacquainted with the therapeutic value of travel and a summer holiday. A man of extraordinary energy and determination, he nonetheless

less possessed one of the frailest constitutions of all our Chief Executives. Wilson had suffered a complete breakdown of health and spirit while still a young man in college; he suffered three more breakdowns during the years at Princeton. He was in such bad health when he first entered the White House that one of the leading physicians in America prophesied that he would not survive his first term in office. That he did survive was due in no small measure to the care and wisdom of Cary T. Grayson, the President's private physician from 1913 to the final breakdown of 1924. Grayson saw the need for a strict regimen of "preventive medicine" implemented by a daily round of golf (which the non-athletic Wilson learned how to play out of a sense of "duty," though he came to enjoy the game); plenty of fresh air; almost daily motor rides (to which Wilson became addicted, sitting bundled up in a big open car and becoming intimately acquainted with all the roads and byways around Washington); occasional outings on the Presidential yacht *Mayflower* (down the Potomac, up the Hudson, along the New England coast); and the rest and recreation afforded by travel and an occasional summer vacation.

In earlier years before entering politics he benefited greatly from several bicycling tours of his favorite regions in the Lake District of England. While governor of New Jersey he sought the sanctuary of the governor's mansion at Sea Girt. He also visited Bermuda on several occasions in quest of good health, both alone



—Brown Brothers.
Wilson trying "to put an elusive ball into an obscure hole."

and with his family. And after becoming President, he spent a Christmas vacation at Pass Christian on the Gulf of Mexico and an Easter vacation at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. During the crucial summer of 1916 when Wilson wished to conduct a political campaign outside the hallowed precincts of the White House and still be close enough to Washington to give immediate attention to the crisis with Germany, he spent as much time as he could at Shadow Lawn in Long Branch, New Jersey.

HIS first three summers, however, Wilson thought he could go farther away from the seat of government, and since not only his own precarious health but that of Mrs. Wilson demanded a respite from the heat and turmoil of Washington, he went to Cornish. He leased Harlakenden sight unseen, simply through the appeal of photographs and the enthusiasm of friends who knew the area. The Wilsons were also drawn by happy memories of a previous vacation on the Connecticut when they spent some time in the picturesque village of Old Lyme. Another special attraction, particularly to Mrs. Wilson, who was a good amateur painter, was the presence of a sophisticated group of artists and writers, her favorite type of people. The village of Cornish was known locally as "Little New York" and can best be described as an art colony in the pre-Bohemian or Edwardian style, a region of hidden estates and high-minded



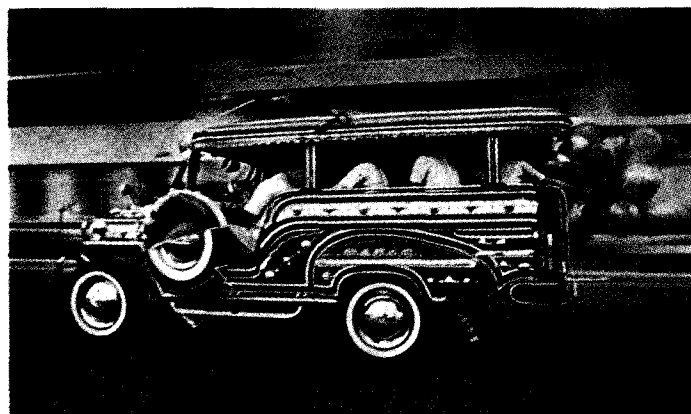
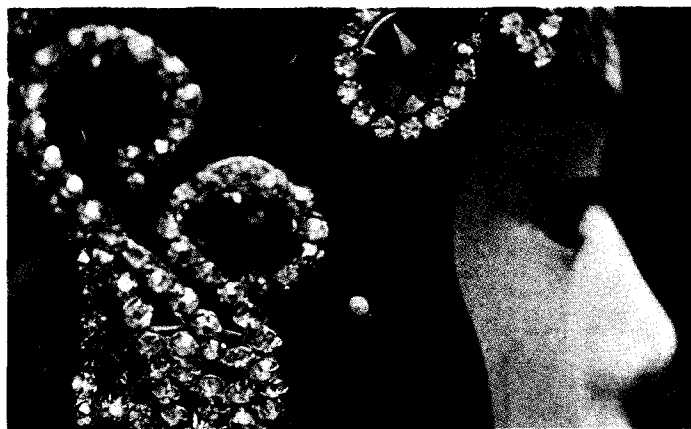
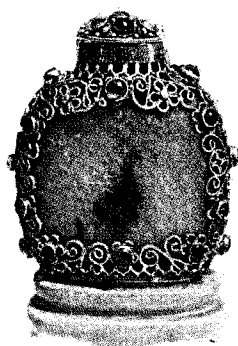
Wilson's Harlakenden — pre-Bohemian artists, bird sanctuaries, and quiet countryside.


—Brown Brothers.

Europe was everything you imagined.
The Orient is everything you cannot.

Singapore can't be confused with Hong Kong. Bali and Bangkok are worlds apart. You won't bump into Fred and Ethel in Zamboanga or Cebu.

Philippine Air Lines' California-Orient Express can take you to more of the Orient than anyone else. And bring you back with more of it, too.



200 STOCKTON ST. at UNION SQUARE		SAN FRANCISCO
NAME		ZIP 94108
ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
TRAVEL AGENT		
<input type="checkbox"/> Here's \$1 (cash or money order) for your wonderful 84-page booklet about the Orient.		
 PHILIPPINE AIR LINES		
SR 3-69		



It makes you want to deport your import. Nova.

Nova Coupe

Some people think that for a car to be economical, it also has to be tiny, sluggish, plain-looking and foreign.

Not true. For one thing, this Chevy Nova's not tiny. The sedan seats six, the coupe five. And you get a trunk instead of a second glove compartment.

Nor is it sluggish. The standard six is 140 horses strong.

Plain-looking? Pshaw.

And Nova certainly isn't foreign. It's as American as Body by Fisher. Quiet. Smooth. Words not usually associated with an economy-minded car.

Yet Nova is as economy-minded as they come. It doesn't take much money to get into it and very little to run it.

Dependable? It's a Chevrolet,

isn't it?

And if you're not too thrilled about clutching, don't. For under \$70, you can order our Torque-Drive transmission. You shift once. You clutch never.

Chevy Nova. It's our way of encouraging foreign trades.



Putting you first, keeps us first.

See Olympic Gold Medalist Jean-Claude Killy, weekly, CBS-TV. Check your local TV listings.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

studios, presided over by such luminaries as the illustrator Maxfield Parrish, the poet Percy MacKaye, and the playwright Witter Bynner. The area also boasted the presence of the Augustus Saint-Gaudens shrine and museum, administered by his son Homer, who at the time was a stage director for Maude Adams. A few miles north of Cornish, at Meriden, the naturalist and ornithologist Ernest Harold Baynes ran a famous bird sanctuary which for one memorable day in mid-September 1913 became "the center of the world" when the President and a distinguished retinue arrived from Washington to attend a "Bird Masque" given in his honor and featuring two of his daughters as star performers.

Ordinarily when Wilson visited Cornish—a week in early July and occasional weekends thereafter—he arrived without fanfare and tried to avoid large social affairs. Accompanied always by Dr. Grayson and the perforce presence of Secret Service men, he became a familiar figure on the local golf links, happily lost in the game, but obviously not proficient (he once defined golf as "an ineffectual attempt to put an elusive ball into an obscure hole with implements ill-adapted to the purpose"). For total relaxation requiring a minimum of physical exertion he resorted to his favorite pastime of motoring for hours on end through the quiet countryside. Aware of the President's love of driving, as well as his daughters' constant use of an "electric runabout" brought from the White House, and the almost daily appearance of the Presidential limousine in the shopping center of Windsor, the township of Plainfield built eight miles of new road from the covered bridge at Windsor to the stone gates of Harlakenden and dubbed it forthwith "Wilson's Highway."

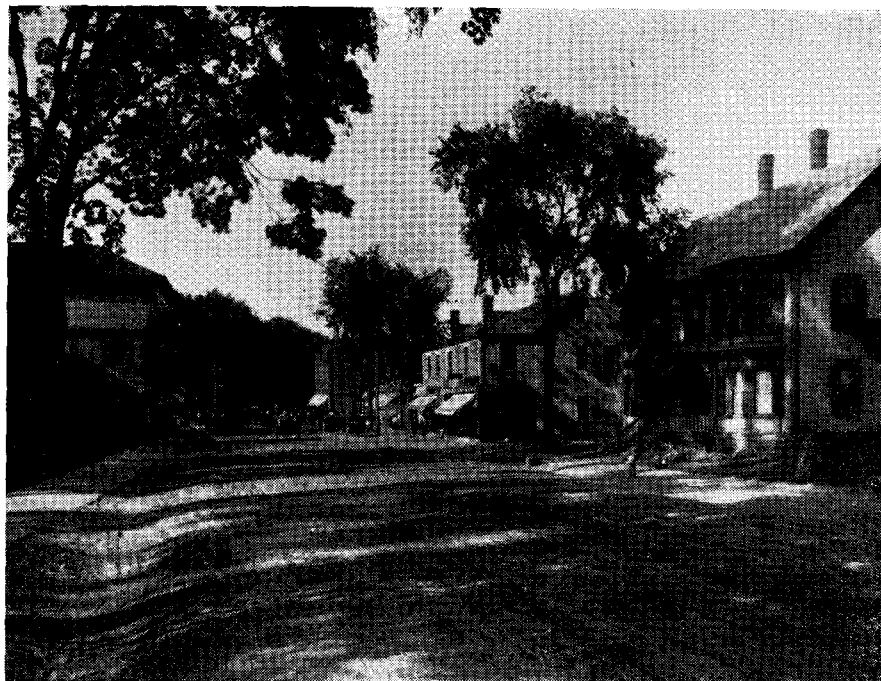
AT the end of the day after touring, playing golf, picnicking, or strolling along the river, the President would catch up on the latest dispatches from the capital and the family would then congregate on the terrace and spend the long twilights and starlit evenings listening to what one of Wilson's daughters called "his vivid and humorous account of what was going on in hectic Washington." On other occasions, friends from "the Colony" would join the Wilsons in an evening of games, songfests, or poetry readings. And on one unusual evening, Marie Dressler, who owned a farm on a hill near Windsor, came to entertain the President, and perhaps fearing that her bawdier style of performance would be inappropriate for the Wilson family, decided to sing a medley of lugubrious ballads and ditties about unrequited love, abandoned mothers, and orphaned children. The effect

was disastrous, and when a last minute attempt at some comedy failed to dispel the gloom of the evening, the star of *Tillie's Nightmare* went back to her farm convinced that of all the Presidents she had met, Wilson was the most serious and unapproachable.

Harlakenden saw very little of Wilson during the tragic summer of 1914. Mrs. Wilson, who had been desperately sick throughout the spring, died in the first week of August just before the European nations went to war. The grief-stricken President lost himself in the narcotic of work and diplomatic turmoil, and spent each Sunday afternoon driving into the far country around Washington, dozing and silent. When he did finally visit Cornish in the middle of September it was mainly to spend forty-

weathering the storm that had been created by the sinking of the *Lusitania* in early May; a lull had settled over German-American relations, and Wilson saw the respite as a vindication of his policy of neutrality. He was thus free to get the rest he needed and to make the most of a long vacation in the hills of New Hampshire. But perhaps the true secret of Wilson's happiness at Cornish during the summer of 1915 may be found in the following words penned many years later by a frequent female visitor of that summer:

Whenever my thoughts turn back to that wonderful summer, there seems about it all a halo of gorgeous colour from the flowers, and music made by the river where nearly every day we



—Brown Brothers.

Wilson, an incurable motorist, stopped in Windsor almost every day.

eight hours with his daughter Margaret, whom he had prevailed upon to go to Harlakenden after Mrs. Wilson's funeral.

The next year saw a remarkable change. In early July, Wilson wrote from Cornish: "I am faring famously. I have not had such a period of comparative rest and freedom for four years." The following month he wrote a friend: "We are spending the summer here in New Hampshire, in the same house we had last summer and the summer before, and become more and more attached to the place every year." The enthusiasm stemmed in part from the presence of all his children to the third generation, for Wilson could never be happy for long, separated from his family. He had also found new hope and energy in successfully

walked when the President was there. He was like a boy home from school, when he could steal a week-end away from Washington and come there to the peace and quiet of the hills. When we walked we would try to forget that lurking behind every tree was a Secret Service man. We would go, always a car full of us, on long motor rides through that lovely country, exploring new roads and sometimes very bad ones, getting back in the late twilight for tea on the terrace, or stopping at a picturesque little teahouse en route . . .

On such days as these Edith Bolling Galt became convinced of her love for Woodrow Wilson and consented, some three months later, to become First Lady of the land.

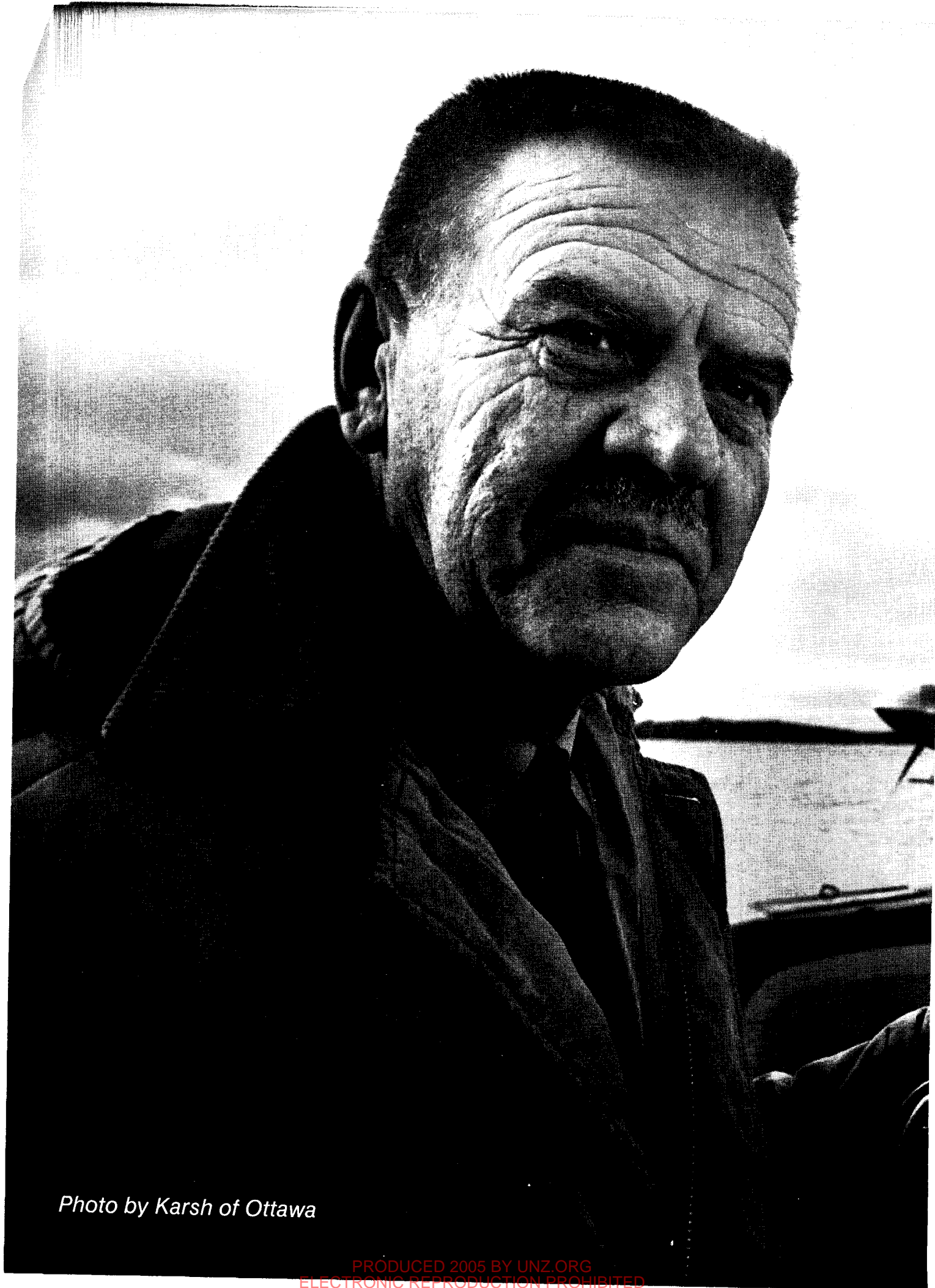
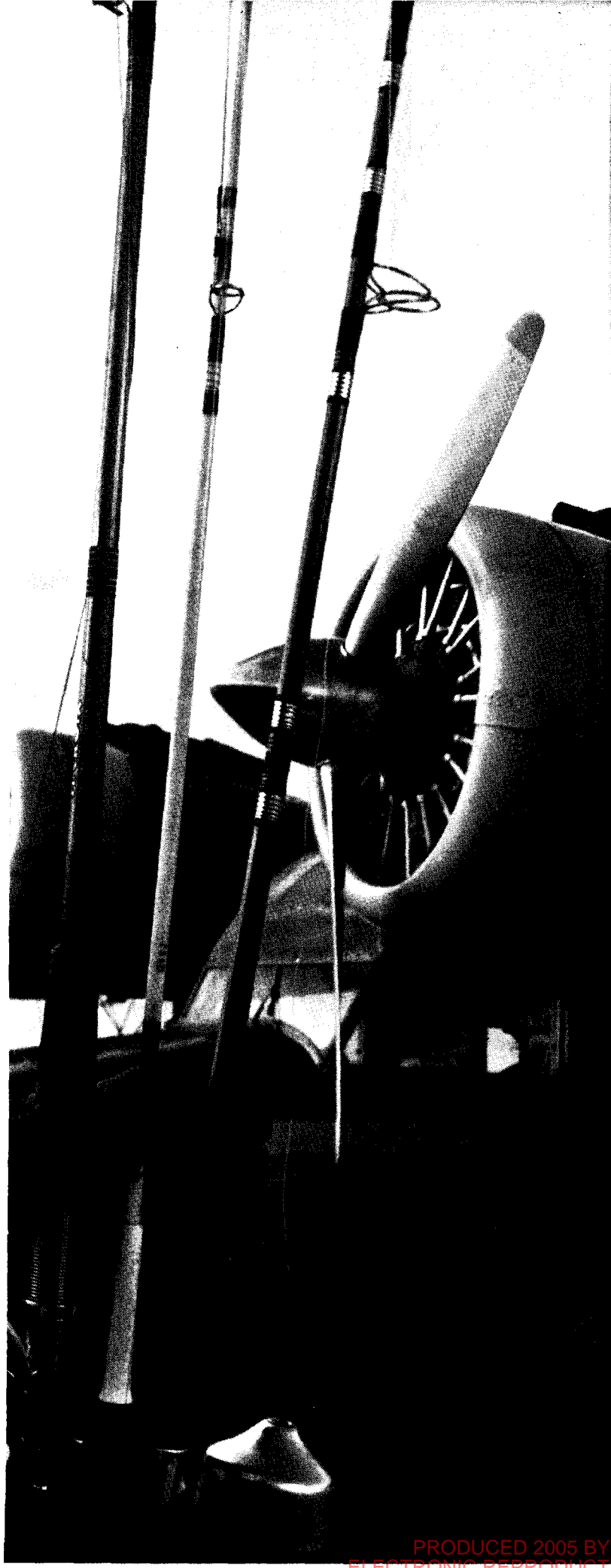


Photo by Karsh of Ottawa



A million-miler, several times over, Rex Kiteley knows his northern skies. From Kenora, on legendary Lake of the Woods, he flies prospectors, Indian guides, anglers and supplies, mail and mining gear — above the sprawling beauty of a vast land whose riches still wait for explorers to come. Northern Ontario. It has lakes unnamed and uncounted, whose deepest intimacy with man is the rare kiss of a floatplane's pontoons. Its fish grow huge, in tranquil seclusion. Its thousand-mile forests are the bailiwick of moose and bear, beaver and deer. Its gold and silver, uranium, copper, nickel, iron and lead bulge the seams of the great Canadian Shield — the continent's oldest, richest treasure store. Here's the place for your *different* vacation experience: Northern Ontario . . . a place little changed since three centuries ago, when the first voyageurs paddled through it, westward to open up the New World. The unique satisfactions of a Great Ontario Adventure Vacation, such as few of your friends have ever enjoyed, will be described for you when you write:

Rex Kiteley, C/O Department
of Tourism & Information,
Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

ONTARIO 
Canada

Friendly, Familiar, Foreign & Near



—Bettmann Archive.

Cleveland hooks a big one—"He made a business of pleasure."

CLEVELAND ON THE CAPE

By TREVOR L. CHRISTIE

STEPHEN Grover Cleveland, the twenty-second and twenty-fourth President of the United States, passed the happiest days of his life on Buzzards Bay at the foot of the Cape Cod peninsula. He lived there in peaceful seclusion for fourteen summers amid its wild and lovely land-and-sea-scapes and found it a welcome respite from national politics. But it was not the sparkling waters or sheltered coves or wooded glades that drew him—it was the fishing.

In 1891, three years after his defeat by Benjamin Harrison for a second term in the White House, the former President bought a "cottage" on Monument Point near the village of Buzzards Bay (named after the flocks of fish hawks that filled its skies). He rechristened the cottage Gray Gables in token of its six gables. It was a rambling, two-story, clapboard structure, almost encircled by broad, shaded piazzas, built on the edge of a rocky beach. The interior was dominated by a great hall rising almost to the roof, with a mammoth stone fireplace at one end. Around the house roamed several acres of woodland and pasture dotted with huge boulders. On the lawn

was an American flag with forty-four stars.

As a contemporary writer in *Harper's Weekly* described it: "Gray Gables is a pleasant house and is most admirably situated for people who care little for the society of summer places and a good deal for the sports and opportunities which nature bestows upon the sons and daughters of men."



—Bettmann Archive.

Cleveland and friend—"I never saw a place I liked so well."

While practicing law in New York, the state's former governor took the Fall River Line every Friday afternoon to Boston and switched to the cars of the Old Colonial Railroad for the rest of the journey to his summer place. His good friend Richard Watson Gilder, then editor of *Century* magazine, recalled in "A Record of Friendship" that on one sweltering day he discovered Cleveland sitting in the baggage car "on a rough chair under a shelf" because he had given up his seat to a woman in the crowded passenger compartment. When he reached his station he had to drive four miles through the woods to his home, but the railroad later set up a flag stop near his gates to accommodate his many visitors.

Invariably, Cleveland—a stout man with a bulging paunch, wearing old trousers, a flannel shirt, and a floppy straw hat—was up at dawn the next morning to begin fishing. (He fished Saturdays and Mondays but never on Sunday.) On these outings he was usually accompanied by Gilder or actor Joseph Jefferson of *Rip Van Winkle* acclaim, who had a summer home called "Crow's Nest" about two miles away. All day they angled for bluefish or sea bass, taking time only for a sandwich at noon. While his companions sought the shade in mid-afternoon, he would stick doggedly to his lines throughout the

(Continued on page 58)

Trevor L. Christie, who lives in New York City, is a frequent contributor to *SR*.