



Harry Golden's "Only In America"

THE PASSENGER RR

It may well be that in the near future there will be no more passenger trains. The New Haven Railroad is petitioning for the right to stop hauling passengers from Westchester County to New York City. Two other major Eastern railroads have threatened they cannot continue their runs unless they can merge. All over the country the same complaint is heard: the railroad men say they cannot compete with super-highways built with public funds.

Freight still turns a profit

for some lines. A lot of that, however, comes from "piggy-back" hauling--hauling loaded trucks over long distances. Even the companies which manufactured toy electric trains have fallen on hard times, the victims of an age in which children prefer rocketry and spacecraft to pedestrian and wheeled travel.

Imagine an America without trains! Imagine the most mechanical country in the world without locomotives! My father could not conjure so bleak a vision. He was an immigrant from Galicia of the Austro-Hungarian

Empire. He saw very little of America, only the Lower East Side of New York City and in the last decades of his life, the reaches of the Bronx. My mother never saw Grand Central Station. But they knew all about railroads. The elevated trains were all around us in those years. And like most Americans, my father and mother always had a love affair with the romantic trains.

Now the elevated trains are gone. The Third Avenue El came down 10 years ago to make way for the Second Avenue Subway which is still 50 years away.

My father spent five years agitating for rabbi to receive the same consideration on the railroads as the rest of the clergy received--half fare -- and one day the press reported that this privilege had been granted. My father loved President William Howard Taft for the rest of his life.

The railroads will die for lack of profits. Lack of profits is the hallowed American excuse for abolishing anything. Passenger rates, no question about it, do not produce profits, Railroad management argues that if a company doesn't make 4-1/2 per cent on its investment it also loses interest it would receive on that percentage.

It is only when we hear such reasoning that we passengers begin to understand why railroads are hesitant to open their books for public inspection. Conveniently, the trainmen also forget that once upon a time the U.S. Government gave them mile upon mile of free land in exchange for operating a public utility. The utility no longer turns the dollar it once did but the land does. But no one balances the losses of one operation with the profits of another for the simple reason that visionary accountants long ago advised railroad management to divide all its varied holdings into separate corporations. Now everybody's got to make a profit.

Commuters are sure the Government would take over, forgetting the Government didn't hasten to take over the coal mines in West Virginia.

The passenger railroads will probably go. It is a sad thing. It is even sadder to realize, as Lewis Mumford once remarked, that 50 years from now we will have to reinvent them.

Barney Glazer's Glazed Bits



Here's to the Friars, here's to them all

Out on the road, or here in the hall

Raise high your glasses with a cheer that inspires

So drink a deep toast to the ones you love most.

A toast to all jolly good Friars.

-Friars song

When a distinguished member of the entertainment world receives his just dues from the Friars Club, he may get roasted or toasted by George Jessel, at the organization's whim. Either way, he welcomes the homage as a signal honor.

Under the classification of prae o minia fraternities, the Friars toasted publisher Irving Mills for his contribution to American music. Concurrently, they filled the night with songs of love for Friar Mills and his wife Bess on their golden wedding anniversary.

Accepting his tribute, Mills said, "I swore off making speeches years ago when I was Bar Mitzvah. Maybe it was because the rabbi wasn't as funny as Jessel. I am indebted to George for giving up a lot to be here tonight, although I don't know her name."

Undoubtedly the hit of the evening, composer Rudolph Friml, 84, played his classics on the piano with remarkable agility. He included "Rose Marie," "Donkey Serenade" and "Indian Love Call."

With subtle insinuation that someone had stolen his stuff, Friml frequently drifted from his own melody into another bearing a remarkable similarity of note arrangement. Displaying only a fleeting lift of the eyebrows and purse of the lips to

avenge the discord, the veteran composer then segued seriously into his next composition.

Gathered to recognize Mills' achievements, in the music publishing business, the following famous lyricists and composers played and sang (sic!) their donations to a universal language:

Composers Benny Oakland, Joseph Myrow, Gene De Paul, Haru Ruby, Henry Tobias, Harry Warren, Sammy Fain and Rudolf Friml. Lyricists Harry Tobias, Leo Robin, Harold Adamson and Woolfie Gilbert.

George Jessel announced a donation of \$5,000 for the evening to the City of Hope. "Since 1946," said the

club's roastmaster/toastmaster, "the Friars have paid \$2,000,000 to worthy causes. Our closest competitor, another theatrical club, lists as its main contribution to charity a picture of Sophie Tucker's father."

Jessel read telegrams from Calvin Coolidge and Stephen Foster regretting their inability to attend the testimonial. He recalled the time when he was a member of the Imperial Trio consisting of three fellows named Leonard, Lawrence and McKinley. Walter Winchell was Lawrence and Jessel was McKinley. Although Jessel failed to announce Leonard's identity, it is believed Leonard was Jesse James who was holding the other two for ransom.

"Benny Oakland was married recently," said Jessel. "I hope he'll be as happy as I might have been many times."

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