

# Harry Golden's "Only In America"

## THE BATHTUB

The bathtub this year was big news. First came the Cornell study which complained that the tubs we use are not only inefficient but dangerous. Neiman-Marcus, the Dallas emporium, was not at all deterred by this scholarly criticism.

Indeed it may have been spurred by it for it offers this Christmas compounded inefficiency and danger in the "his-and-her" tub at a mere \$4,000 for the ensemble plus tax, shipping, and installation. A man's tub may once have been his club, but it looks like he's going to share that with the little lady too.

The tub is manufactured by the Crane Company which professes itself dismayed over the "his-and-her" appellation: it much prefers the "Mr. and Mrs. bathtub." It not only boasts two tubs inseparably joined like most American mates, one five feet long, the other six, but gold-plated faucets, lacquered wood bases, and marble tops. Obviously this is the present for the man who has everything in his bathroom.

On the day that Neiman-Marcus proudly unveiled this ultimate in Babylonian luxury, the acme of sybaritic leisure, the tub was the subject for consideration elsewhere in the world, namely at a writer's conference in Hungary. I know very little about the Hungarians except that a Hungarian movie producer once told me his motto was, "It is not enough to be a Hungarian; one needs talent, too." But I do know something about writers' conferences. The real trouble with writers' conferences

is that everyone attending somehow always makes them resemble a world convention of PTA presidents.

At any rate, the writers were regaled by Gyula Illyes, oft a prize winner, the possessor of impeccable credentials, and a poet of some esteem.

Mr. Illyes, speaking to this convention in Budapest began with, "The division of humanity characterizing our century began with a very prosaic object, the bathtub. Just this. Because the bathtub made its appearance as a champion of universality. One part of humanity bathed and the other did not and these two parts may not sleep in the same bed or eat at the same table."

Just as science, in the guise of the Cornell report, and luxury in the guise of the "his-and-her" tub, have invaded the bathroom, so, too, has dialectical materialism.

Do not think, however, a new day is dawning for the tub, that it emerges now in a pitiless glare of publicity. Ah, no, it has been the subject of contention, union and disunion for lo these many decades. In the mid-1890's, George Bernard Shaw outraged liberals everywhere when, in his play, "Arms and the Man," he struck, what some said was a wanton blow against the cause of liberty in the Balkan Peninsula by intimating it was not a matter of course for a Bulgarian in 1885 to get into a tub any more than he really had to.

All of us who shower should be ashamed. Bathers of the world unite; you have

by Nathan Ziprin

## CHILDREN ARE DELIGHTFUL.....

It is said of the righteous of the world that their courage in confrontation with God in crisis stems not alone from faith but from the ability at a given moment to speak God's language

How does one speak God's language?

Ask any child and you will learn.

Or, more properly, ask Jerome, who seemingly troubled about the difficulty of learning Hebrew sat down and penned a letter to God. "Dear God," he wrote, "Did you have as much trouble learning Hebrew as I am? Are there any easy ways to do it? I know you talk English too so, I am writing in English."

The Lord has many problems, probably as many as there are human beings. But how did he handle this impish little lady who wanted to know. "Why can't you even keep it from raining on Saturday all the time?"

Still another child wanted to know, "What is it like when you die. Nobody will tell me, I just want to know, I don't want to do it."

And a little lady wants to know, "Are boys better than girls. I know you are one but try to be fair."

Then there are the philosophers among the children who want answers to more serious questions. "Are you real?" asks Harriet Ann. "Some people," the young lady reminds the good Lord, "don't believe it. If you are better do something quick." Still another, a somewhat frightened boy, asks God, "How do you feel about people who don't believe in you." Obviously in fear of offending God with the question or else of creating the impression that he himself was among the unbelievers, the youngster advises God that "Somebody else wants to know."

These gems are culled from CHILDREN'S LETTERS TO GOD, by Eric Marshall and Stuart Hample (Simon & Schuster). We adults think we have troubles when in reality they are as nothing as compared with the secret burdens our children carry.



DR. SCHMELCZER

Dr. Menahem Schmelczer, Librarian of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and director of its Library Fire Restoration Committee, is in Florence Italy, as a member of a group of leading American experts on art and book restoration which will advise the Italian Government on methods of salvaging the historic treasures damaged in the recent floods.

nothing to lose but your drains.

## THE OFFICE SAFE

One of the things I happen to own is a safe, an office safe that must be opened with a combination. The safe is as big as I am, and I am 5 feet 6, and 195 pounds. I guess maybe the safe weighs a little more because it is steel.

I store everything in the safe: my charge-a-plate, the office check books, some

municipal sewerage bonds which will mature in 2033--they are worthy their weight in paper--and a list of six telephone numbers which my associate editor would just as soon I didn't show his wife since he may be reached at any of them on a Saturday morning should he still be playing poker.

According to the Wall Street Journal I am one of some three or four million people who own a safe. To the Meilink Steel Safe Company, we safe-owners represent a "great growth area."

Over the years it has been my impression that most of the folks who own safes own them not so much to hide cash from robbers as to hide cash from the Internal Revenue Service. This is not why I own a safe since that weekly payroll effectively shields me from both the robbers and the IRS.

I own a safe because I inherited it. I bought a place some years ago and there was this big safe right in the middle of the office area. It was too expensive to move so I used to lie abed nights thinking of what goodies and treasures it might contain; maybe it held Confederate money; maybe a map of where Bluebeard buried his treasure; maybe a plan of what Lee's strategy would have been had he won at Gettysburg.

My curiosity got the better of me. I called a locksmith and told him to bring a small vial of nitroglycerine with him to blow open a safe in my



CHAPLAIN DAVID B. SALZMAN, JEWISH CHAPLAIN ASSIGNED TO THE FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING, VIETNAM.

reception area. He didn't even have to file his fingertips; the safe wasn't locked. He just opened it.

"Looks like you got a good piece of office furniture here," he advised. "Why not push it in the corner and store all your records here?" he asked.

Which we did. He even fixed the tumblers so we could lock the thing. I didn't really want it. My bookkeeper spends a half hour every morning, seated on a small stool, trying to jiggle the tumblers so she can get at the checkbooks.

I keep the safe for sentimental value. The building I inhabited then burned to the ground in 1958 when I was on a trip to Washington.

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Fortunately the book I had just finished was stored in that same safe, "Only in America," and along with a couple of I.O.U.s were preserved. (We also preserved two gold teeth my associate had won in the game two nights before.)

It has caused me some inconvenience but I love that safe. One day while extracting that telephone list, to summon a well-paid employee, I inadvertently left my bourbon and cigar in the safe. Now I never lose anything except my keys, my credit cards, and my wallet. I spent a desperate afternoon trying to find them, knowing I had a cigar and a drink in my hand at 11:00 and they couldn't have vanished off the face of the earth.

The bookkeeper found them Monday. The cigar had burned down and the drink was flat.

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