

# By The Way

by ALAN MARSHALL

In a world increasingly dominated by economic consideration, huge institutions of capital and labor, government bureaucracies of expeditors and co-ordinators, fears of wars, depressions and other earthquakes in which individual persons count for little, there are still things to be done in which the human spirit counts for a great deal. Last year, the world was pleasantly surprised to discover that it had not completely surrendered to the calculations and considerations of material advantage. In short, a group of men set out on a task in which material interest was entirely absent (which made it completely inexplicable to many of those who heard about it), and climbed Mt. Everest. No other reason than the classical one was offered: "Because it is there." A refreshing business altogether, for now we know that practical worries have not completely smothered us. No wonder those climbers were such a cheerful lot; and a cheerful lot they certainly were. Three of them spoke in Halifax last week, describing how they got to Everest, and how they succeeded in the eleventh expedition on the mountain. The house was packed for the lecture. I doubt if there were any mountaineers there, or even many armchair mountaineers. People turned out in a crowd, though, to hear what they had to say.

The old question about why people go and climb mountains came up, of course (unofficially). The lecture was a long time starting, and in the meantime, two women were discussing the problem a couple of seats behind me. One of them said:

"I don't know what they see in it," while the other one pointed out that it was different from climbing small hills. She could see nothing in just climbing a hill (no hiker) but was willing to concede that a big mountain is certainly different (as it certainly is). The spirit that hangs over a high mountain, especially over the timber line, is startlingly different from the atmosphere of a comfortable woodland path. It is like trespassing in an alien land; but those who like it leave it with regret.

The three climbers who gave the talk were introduced by a member of the Junior Board of Trade, who sponsored it: George Lowe, Charles Evans, who took part in the first attempt, and Sir Edmund Hillary, who made it to the top.

They had slides to go along with the talk. They divided the lecture into three parts, and spoke in turn, while the slides were shown continuously. The slides began in Katmandu, capital of Nepal, with a distant view of the Himalayas. Pictures of the men in the expedition were scattered through the series. The slides showed the country they travelled through, the animals they met, and the flowers they saw: gorgeous magnolias, azaleas and rhododendrons. Certainly the newer Nepal approach had the advantage over the old Tibetan one in scenery. Arriving at the last village, they practised their skill and the use of their equipment on some of the nearby peaks, before tackling Mt. Everest itself. The way to Everest led through a valley filled with a glacier that moved continuously down stream. As the ice came out of the valley, it was broken up into great blocks, up to a 100 feet high, often unstable, which occasionally moved and sometimes fell. They had to pick their way through this mass of ice: a job which took several weeks. The sides of the valley were so exposed to avalanches that they had to go straight up the middle. Every time they went through it, they found that part of the path had been destroyed, and had to be made over again. The climbers made their way through this region, which they called the icefall, fixed rope supports, brought in ladders (one of them developed quite a sag, when laid across a crevasse, but they had to use it just the same). Now it was ready for the porters to carry the equipment through it for the higher camps.

Once in the upper valley itself, they had to pick their way across the glacier, establish a route across the crevasses and establish their camps. At the head of the valley came a steep slope, over 5000 feet high. Two more camps were necessary on the slope and another at the top. This place was called the South Col: a dip in the ridge between the peak of Everest and its nearest neighbor to the South. The eighth camp was pitched on the Col, at a height of 27,000 feet. It was from here; a place so windy that

very little snow would settle on it, that Evans and Bourdillon made their first attempt. This failed to reach the top: 2000 feet were just too much at that altitude. Hillary and Tenzing, on their attempt, succeeded in pushing a camp up to nearly 28,000 feet: a record height for a camp. The slides showed them bent over and laden like pack mules at this stage. The extra distance allowed them to make it to the top.

Hillary and Tenzing thumped each other on the back (no slides of this, unfortunately), and fixed a flag staff on the summit with the flags of Britain, Nepal, and the United Nations. They also took pictures in all directions, including one from the North, showing the route that the earlier expeditions used. They found no sign of Mallory and Irvine, who were last seen near the top, in 1924, and who never returned, so their death is still a mystery. Hillary and Tenzing came down, received the congratulations of all the others in the party, and listened on the radio to the announcement from the BBC that they had climbed Everest. Even as far away as Nepal the BBC still has the last word.

The men themselves were not particularly of the athletic type. Nor were their occupations what you would expect: one beekeeper, one school teacher, one Army staff colonel, and so on. Very unassuming men, wearing dark business suits (though not on Everest) they gave their talk with a light touch.

"We came to a crevasse, with a bridge of snow across it: very old and weak. We had crossed it several times, always very carefully. This time, Tom Bourdillon was with us, and he weighed 200 pounds. He looked at the snow bridge very doubtfully, and stopped. 'Go on,' we said, 'we've gone across it several times.' He still hesitated, and we told him 'Don't worry, it's safe enough, and we're holding the ropes tight, just in case.' Well, he finally walked out on the snow bridge . . . When we had hauled

Leopard, believe it or not, is an amalgam of the words "lion" and "panther", as the beast was originally believed to be a cross between the two.

A "milliner" was once a milliner, from the name of the Italian city of Milan, once the fashion centre of Europe.

## MED CORNER

This past week was a week of upsets in Med Sports. The hockey team was upset by Engineers. The A basketball team upset Arts and Science and the volleyball squad upset Commerce.

Possibly the best individual performance was that turned in by Dave Fraser in the volleyball tilt which saw the Meds come from behind to edge Commerce 2 games to 1. Coach Bob Parkin, Cruikshanks, Riske, Turner and Lesser were the other members of the squad which turned out the first win of the volleyball season.

The Hockey Team lost to Engineers 5 to 2. The Engineers outplayed us by a large margin the first two periods and then put up a stout defense in the third period to check a determined Med drive. Miller and MacCulloch counted the Med markers while the line of Morris, MacKenzie and MacCulloch turned in the best play up front. This, by the way, was the first time the hockey team has been beaten in two years. We were defeated by a good, fast Engineers' team which deserved the victory.

The A basketball team upset Arts and Science 46-40 in a very close game. Bob Miller and Doug Brown turned in fine games to lead the team to victory, while the remainder of the Arpy Robertson coached squad played their best yet. The B team lost two close games, one to Commerce, 39-36, and the other to Law 25-22. Both games were in doubt until the final whistle, due to the ball-handling and team play of the B team. Both A and B teams were playing good ball now, win or lose.

The ping-pong team meanwhile turned back Pinehill 4 games to 1 with Bonuik and Morris sweeping the singles and Presutti and Goldberg sweeping the doubles. Dimock lost a hard-fought singles match. The team has now won 13 and lost 2, leaving them in a first place tie with Arts and Science. This Saturday this tie will be broken when the two teams set off in a best of 5 affair.

Don't forget the Med Ball, Fri., March 5th, with Don Warner's orchestra at the Nova Scotian. Admission is three dollars a couple and no corsages.

## STRING QUARTET PRAISED

A recital of chamber-music is a rare and often unappreciated privilege. Fortunately, the audience at the February 11th recital by the Griller String Quartet was aware of the merit of the performing group. The chamber group has a distinct advantage over other groups of instruments. Its music lacks both the turgid blatancy of the orchestra and the restrictions of the solo instrument. Its beauty lies in the successful combination of the intimacy of the latter with the greater expressive qualities of the former.

The program of the recital was excellent, consisting as it did of Haydn, Mozart and Dvorak. Chamber music was admirably suited to the temperaments of both Haydn and Mozart. The Haydn quartet in G major, opus 33, no. 5, is the fifth of six quartets composed in 1781 when Haydn was 49. Like its companions, this quartet is typical eighteenth century Austrian music, graceful, fluid and charming. Haydn's natural ebullience is reflected on every page. All four movements are characterized by airy gaiety with only occasional touches of the poignancy so prevalent in Mozart. The Griller Quartet played it to perfection, overstating nothing. There was only a slight uncertainty of pitch in the first violin, but this was more than compensated by the unusually fine blending of the four instruments into one harmonious whole.

The Mozart was the coup de grace of the evening. The B flat quartet, "The Hunt," is Mozart at his best. No. 458 in the Koche catalogue, this quartet is also one of six. In fact, it was composed just four years after the Haydn quartet, and was indeed dedicated to that composer. All six of these Mozart quartets are examples of consummate artistry, and they are among the finest quartets ever written. The Allegro is built on the jaunty motif of the opening bars. The Minuet imitates the mood of the first movement, but the agitated rhythm of the Trio forecasts the passion of the last two movements. The

Adagio is a masterpiece of subtle modulations and shifting harmonies in minor keys. Finally, in the last movement, the underlying pattern of suppressed feeling found in the third movement is displayed by bursts of passion intermingled with passages of exquisite peace. If anything, the performance tended to reflect too much the romanticist method of interpretation of the nineteenth century. Every phrase and dynamic mark was stretched and molded, but the whole of that memorable performance was

characterized by complete control.

The Dvorak quartet in F, opus 96, "The American," is Slavonic music, pulsating with beauty and emotion. This is highly charged music with little of the subtlety and understatement of the music of the earlier composers. For that reason, the performing quartet was overburdened. Dvorak delights in snatches of melodies performed by single instruments with a humming accompaniment in the background. Nevertheless, when the turbulence of the music increases as it did in the last movement, a quartet, unable to cope with the frenzied splendour

that demands a full orchestra, is compelled to go beyond its dynamic depth. Consequently, harshness can be the result. It was well-played, however, and any inadequacy in the performance was due to the music, not the performers.

The outstanding characteristic of the Griller String Quartet is its unity, both in method of interpretation and in performance. The four members play as one man, and the entire recital was governed by that remarkable restraint that makes the difference between a good and a mediocre performance.

—I.W.

## Book Review

THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH by Saul Bellow  
536 pages, \$4.50. Viking

With this work Mr. Bellow has pushed himself to the forefront of the postwar U.S. novelists. "The Adventures of Augie March" has been awarded the National Book Award as the best prose fiction work of 1953. This alone may be sufficient recommendation but a quick glance at its successes and failures is not out of order.

It is a modern picaresque novel which does for Chicago's Jewish element what James T. Farrell did for the Irish there. The author has gone back to the earliest form of the novel; the long crowded narrative of ups and downs of fortune, letting the hero tell his own life history in the first person.

Augie March leads quite a life—up from the depths of poverty to the heights of success, back down, back up. A panorama has been formed for Augie; crime and college, labor unions and athletic clubs; slums and society, thievery and high honor. There are adventures, if anything, too many, though mostly convincing and they not essence make up the book.

If this book is great it is great because its author dares to let go; because its style makes events seem real even when one knows they couldn't be; because it is a comprehensive survey of the modern world wisely inconclusive in its presentation of everyday problems.

It many respects it represents the best and worst in contemporary American fiction—it is both searching and aimless, both humble and pretentious, both intelligent and stupid, in small things often witty and in great things utterly humorless.

Mr. Bellow has written a good book, perhaps not a great book, but he has shown promise that he will perhaps be a great novelist. The great merit of this work is not in the story, which has been told before, but in the development of a young novelist who may stand the test of time and become one of our leading novelists.

—George B. Hallett.

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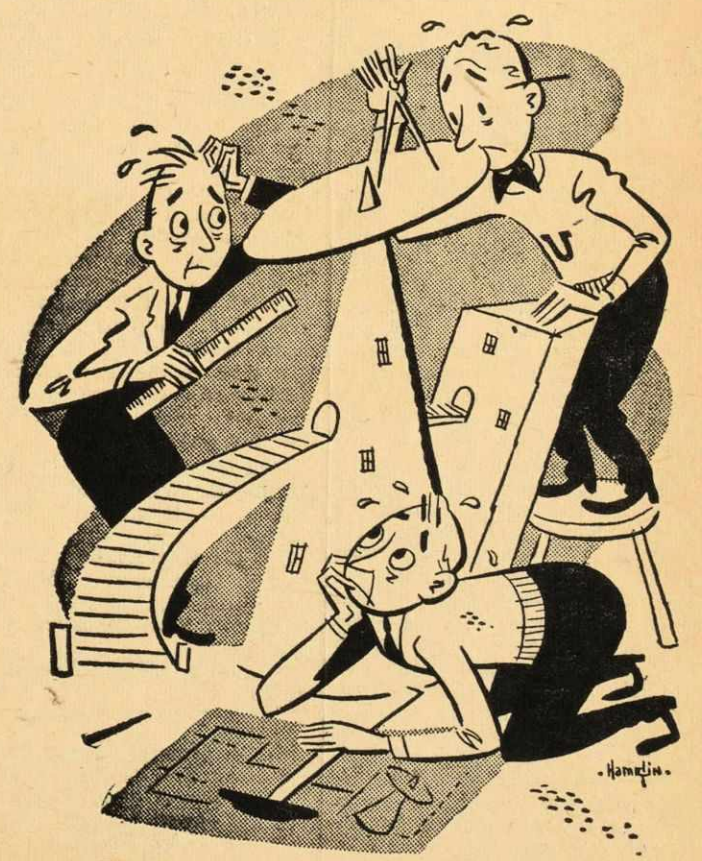


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