

HOLIDAY

SEPTEMBER 1962 ■ 60c

JOURNEY THROUGH TURKEY

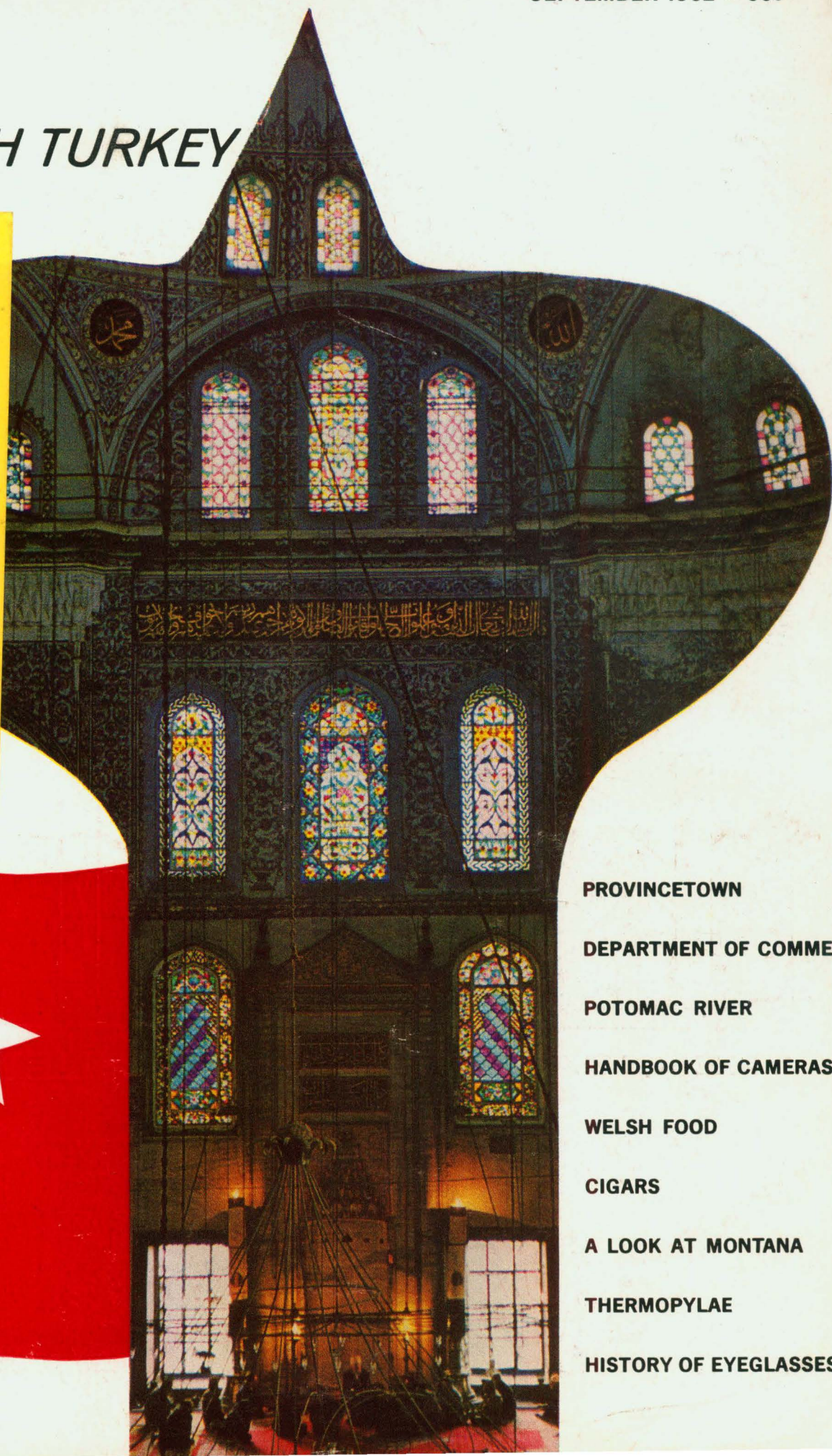
Beaches and Beatniks

Provincetown

Autumn Tour of

VERMONT

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PROVINCETOWN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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CIGARS

A LOOK AT MONTANA

THERMOPYLAE

HISTORY OF EYEGASSES



Ronald Searle



The colorful "paseo," or march of the summer boarders, enlivens Provincetown from May to September. The gentleman dragging his anchor is not a fisherman but an escaped artist; all the fishermen were up at 4 A.M., fishing, and are now home trying to get some sleep.

A View of Provincetown

by Peter Lyon

DRAWINGS BY RONALD SEARLE

● Nobody knows exactly when Provincetown, down at the tip end of Cape Cod, was first nicknamed P-town. I can remember a night back in 1937 when a group of youngsters, pleasantly lubricated with beer, linked arms as they left Mac's Bar or the Beach Club or some other tap of sainted memory, and careened down Commercial Street singing:

*New York may be all right,
But P-town's paved with gold,
I said it's paved with go-old . . .*

but the nickname was probably venerable even then.

At all events, P is positively the appropriate letter for Provincetown. P stands for the Pilgrims, whose progeny first peopled the place. P also stands for the Portuguese fisherfolk who have given the town its substance and its vitality. P stands for the poets and painters and playwrights who added their special splash of color and often became part-time proprietors. And finally, P stands for the college professors and for the physicians (of whom it will be noted that the P is silent, as in psychoanalysis) who now potter about in this Puritan playground.

All this is strong catnip for tourists. They swarm down-Cape every summer, as numberless as the bluefin tuna offshore. Provincetown has a year-round population of some thirty-five hundred souls, but on most summer weekends

nearly ten times that many are on hand. It is hard to see how they all find houseroom, for the town, as distinct from the township, is cramped and constricted. The perimeter of the township measures a generous eighteen miles, and it is almost all waterfront: five miles on the ocean, six on Cape Cod Bay and six on Provincetown harbor; but the town is no more than a parallel pair of narrow streets, Commercial Street and Bradford Street, curving for a couple of miles along the harbor. Somebody has estimated that one third of the nation's population lives within a day's drive of Provincetown, and there are times when it seems they are all trying to prove it.

The folk in Truro and Wellfleet, the two towns next up-Cape from Provincetown, have become quite sniffish about the tourists. Provincetown has gone honky-tonk, they say; it's as bad as Coney Island. But the Provincetowners are more tolerant, as befits the citizens of a metropolis (junior grade). They are as delighted to see the new faces arrive in June as they are to see them disappear in September.

As does every summer resort, Provincetown has its caste system, and to the casual summer visitor it seems an admirable division of labor: the natives run the town, the artists ornament it, the tourists pay for it. There are, however, subtle complexities. For one, while it is true that the tourists bring prosperity, Provincetown also has an

Some people will do anything to bring the customers into the store. Next year this couple will go to the Adirondacks.



industry—fishing—that can support it at least marginally, and has for many years. The tourists are welcome, but the natives are independent and never let the tourists forget it. For another thing, the artists cannot be lumped together. A few are year-round residents—owners and voters—helping to run the town; one Cape Codder I know calls them the Live-H'yuh. The others, who come only for the summer months, are dismissed by the natives as Summer Boarders even if they own their own houses. Periodically, over the years, the Summer Boarders have struggled to improve their status with threats of Taxpayers' Associations and similar subversive conventicles, but thus far their plots have foundered on the rock of that splendid democratic device, the town meeting.

Nevertheless, members of all strata commingle in congenial fashion, considering their broad, even ludicrous, incongruities. In one respect, indeed, they are curiously alike. They herd together. Except for the fishermen, who are out on the water by four A.M. every morning, most Provincetown residents, permanent or temporary, stick as close to town as they can. They swim in the water nearest town—the harbor or the bay. They pack into the same bars and restaurants. At night they stroll the streets in the center of town and stare at each other.

Why is this? By day, to be sure, the artists are busy in their studios and the natives are minding their cash registers; but even the summer vacationists, who are as free as butterflies, seem loath to venture beyond the shadow of the Pilgrim Monument. Within that shadow lie night clubs, lobster houses, art gal-

leries, two summer theaters, a foreign-films cinema, sundry historical shrines designed to prove that the Pilgrims were here long before they saw Plymouth Rock, shops offering everything from sandals and bikinis to antique jewelry and high-style millinery, a curve of adequate beach, and swarms of one's friends. Why look further?

It is as though Provincetown has nothing else to offer. But it has. There are the wild, lonely Province Lands north of the town and the great sweep of beach along the Atlantic. For the most part, however, this stretch of solitary splendor is left to the birds. Most visitors to Provincetown seek more sophisticated distractions.

Many of them are after Art. Here, where Nature has been so generous, where the air is light and clean, where every prospect falls into a natural composition, where the colors, assisted by the rhythm of the seasons and the tides, march by, now clear-blue and green and gold, now pale-brown and gray with glints of silver, but always rich and various, here Art has superseded Nature.

There is no doubt that Provincetown is today the omphalos of American art-in-summertime. The Carmels and Woodstocks, the Rockports and Silvermines, these are still only colonies. Provincetown is their unrivaled capital.

At the humblest level there are a half-dozen hole-in-the-wall studios at the center of town where for a dollar you can have yourself prettily portrayed in pastels (the P's of P-town again). Rising one notch, there are shops where you can buy hand-painted oil paintings for as much as ten or fifteen dollars and so become a collec-

tor—after which you can take your seascape home, hang it on a wall, and casually drop the word to your friends that a real Provincetown artist painted it. Enough customers buy, at this modest level, to warrant signs in the windows of these assembly-line ateliers, announcing "Artist Wanted"—and it is no less than the truth.

But it is what Provincetown offers the more assured and more affluent collector that makes the town unusual. Opportunities abound for buying the work of established artists or for gambling on a newcomer. Provincetown illustrates, in microcosm, the postwar boom in art:

In 1946 the Provincetown Art Association, which includes most of the better-known artists in the area, maintained the only gallery in town. That summer, as for thirty summers before, the Association hung its traditional two shows, one in July, one in August. Sales grossed \$10,000. It was a record.

Today there are more than a dozen commercial galleries in town (most of them, naturally, on Commercial Street). This summer they will have hung, all told, more than sixty shows, most of them carefully selected. The owner of the gallery that grosses a trivial \$10,000 will consider his season a failure; judging from past summers, one may venture that the more successful galleries will each ring up at least \$50,000.

This brisk traffic soothes more egos than do the sun and the salt air. Painters are in funds; and so are sculptors. With so many openings, the summer becomes one long festivity; it is not uncommon for three galleries to

Even in Provincetown painters are beset by critics who may not know a lot about art but do know what they like.



offer a new showing, complete with a party, on the same night.

If anything had been needed to round the picture, it was a museum of some consequence; and a few years ago Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., undertook the job. He wafted his chrome-embossed wand and lo! what had been a shabby Methodist Church in the center of town was transformed into an elegant structure of glistening white with terraced lawns and floodlights outside and much of his own excellent private collection inside. Since, when he is not operating his museum, Chrysler enjoys playing the role of a canny, crotchety patron, rumors of his activities have occasionally lofted the market to surrealist levels, usually without regard to his actual purchases. Chrysler's entrance on Provincetown's art scene has added vigor and color.

Provincetown's odd eminence as a capital of the arts can be traced to the influence of one man. Charles W. Hawthorne died in 1930, but his Cape Cod School of Art, launched in 1899, was the single seed from which this whole gaudy plantation has sprung. (There are now a dozen art schools flourishing in Provincetown.) One might imagine that the townsfolk, happily reflecting on the throngs of summer visitors, would every night remember Hawthorne in their prayers and perhaps even commission a statue in his memory, to be unveiled on the Town Wharf. But at a special town meeting last summer the citizens showed that gratitude is a sometime thing.

The issue before them involved a painting Hawthorne had given the town nearly fifty years ago. It is a big canvas that customarily hangs in the town

hall; it depicts seven or eight fishermen, the crew of the *Philomena Manta*, in from the Grand Banks with part of their catch. Its value in the open market to one side, the painting is clearly worth something extra to a town so mindful of its past and so rightly proud of its present. Last summer Walter Chrysler borrowed the painting from the town so that he might hang it as part of a Hawthorne retrospective he had planned for his museum. Chrysler was dismayed by what time, grime and cigar smoke had done to the painting. He urged Provincetown's selectmen to have it restored. "The town possesses a valuable piece of art," he argued, "and should do something to preserve it." He reckoned the value of the painting at "between five and ten thousand dollars." Together with other paintings owned by the town and also in need of restoration, the Hawthorne could be saved for \$1000. By a vote of thirty-seven to sixteen, the town refused the money. "Wash it with warm water and soap," said one man. "Give it to Chrysler," said a second. "Let it die its natural death," said a third.

Some of the artists, scandalized by what they considered to be Philistinism, at once began discussing the possibilities of raising the money by private subscription.

But if the townsfolk occasionally seem obtuse to the artists, the artists have some fairly muddleheaded notions about the townsfolk. One painter, who has spent ten summers here, and therefore should know better, gravely told me why the fishing business is on the skids. "The fishermen only work twenty-six weeks in the year," this man said. "The other twenty-six weeks they

go on relief. After such a long layoff it naturally costs them a lot of dough to get their boats and their tackle back into shape again, and there go all their profits." He wagged his head sadly.

I reported this weird statement to John Worthington, who runs the Atlantic Coast Fisheries, Provincetown's biggest fish-packing concern. Worthington was not particularly amused. "I wish your friend would come down here," he said, "at four o'clock some morning in mid-winter, say around the end of January or the first week in February, when it's blowing a gale into the harbor and the temperature's below zero. Let him watch the fishermen fighting to get their draggers out to sea. And if they can't make it, if there's too big a sea running, then let him ask them how long they've been on relief. I'd like to see him a few minutes later."

Worthington is a sturdy man with a monk's fringe of white hair, a soft voice, and an encompassing love for the lower Cape, his home for most of his life. He is old enough to have flown combat in 1918 and young enough to have flown transport from 1942 to 1945. He knows about fishing out of Provincetown and he flatly denies the business is on the skids. "Year in, year out," he told me, "the catch has held at the same level. It runs about fifty million pounds a year. It's true that fewer men divide up the money for the catch. Fifty years ago there were more than a hundred sailing vessels out of Provincetown and each of them had a crew of twenty men, on the average. Today there are only thirty boats—seiners, trawlers, and trapboats—but the catch is the same, because they're under power and they carry better gear. Dollar for

Where the nets are lowest and the glasses darkest lurks a spy from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, lightly disguised as an off-Broadway playwright. What he is really after is the alewife (a kind of herring) at the bar; craftily he is feigning indifference.

dollar whiting is the biggest item. Next comes flounder—the blackback and the yellowtail—the fish that turns up on a lot of restaurant menus as sole. Then comes sea herring. There are other fish up here called herring, but actually they're alewives, and the old Cape Codders say the word so that it sounds like al-wyes. They come up by the millions every year to spawn in our fresh-water ponds—there's a Herring River, you may remember, in Wellfleet, that runs from Herring Pond. Most of the sea herring are caught in traps, and they end up kippered or canned. Then come mackerel, bluefin tuna, cod and haddock."

He paused to do some mental arithmetic. "At a guess," he said slowly, "I would put the income to the town from fishing at about thirty thousand dollars a week."

In the town, if you have the equipment, you can eavesdrop on the Provincetown fleet on the inshore short-wave radio band. But you will have to listen for quite a while before the messages make sense, for they are in a bilingual jargon, spiced with pungent Portuguese slang, and usually coded. The skipper of one trawler, for example, may have tipped off the skipper of another that he proposes to sit down in The Gully, or along The Ledges, or at Pollock Rip, in search of flounder, a fish that fetches a good price in the New York market. If his luck is good he will use the code word "disastrous" to summon his friend and, he hopes, to discourage his rivals. Manny Phillips, who owns the seiner *Silver Mink*, hires an airplane pilot to spot schools of tuna and report by radio. Last August Phillips had a record catch, thanks in part to his spotter, and there were some happy homes in the west end of Provincetown.

"It's a beautiful harbor," Worthington said to me. "Isn't it? Can you imagine what it was like, a hundred

years ago, with the masts of three hundred and fifty sailing ships standing like a forest in this harbor? Can you imagine what it would be like if there were nothing but pleasure boats in it?"

Worthington is a sensible man. He knows that change is inevitable. But over the years he has fought mightily to keep the changes within reasonable bounds. He is chairman of the board of selectmen of Truro, the town next to Provincetown, and several years ago he learned that, thanks to the Massachusetts Land Court, someone had got title to seven hundred and thirty-three acres in North Truro, along the Back Side.* Moreover, the owner planned to chop this choice slab of ocean front into fifty-foot lots, each complete with its nasty little cottage. One January day when the snow was sifting over the dunes Worthington took his state senator, Edward Stone, over the back roads up near High Head to Pilgrim Spring. Here, it is alleged, the Pilgrims "found water & refreshed them selves, being ye first New England water they drunke of, and was now in thir great thirste as pleasante unto them as wine or bear had been in fortimes."

Cape-end merchants had been importuning Senator Stone to have the roads to this spring marked more clearly, as bait for more tourists. Now, looking about him, Stone agreed this should be done. He turned to leave. But Worthington asked the senator to climb higher. From the top of a rise he pointed out the seven hundred and thirty-three acres and told Stone how they were to be minced. Stone shuddered. "I'll need a petition," he said.

Continued on Page 112

*These two plain words, Back Side, which Cape Codders have always used to describe their outer, eastern, Atlantic shore, sometimes shock the tourists and even the nicer-Nellie artists. "Please!" one Provincetown painter protested when I used the phrase. "Back Beach, if you like, but we never say Back Side!" On the Cape, however, the best place for sunbathing is still on the Back Side.





Ronald Searle

A VIEW OF PROVINCETOWN

Continued from Page 48

"You shall have it," said Worthington. And before long the Massachusetts legislature had enacted a law and the 733 acres of beaches, dunes and salt meadows had been rescued from the realtors.

Pilgrim Spring State Park guaranteed that at least one road leading into Provincetown would not be hemmed in by a procession of hideous motels; it was also a portent of parks to come. For the pressures on the Cape have been enormous, to change it into—what?

An exurb for New York's better-heeled Bohemians? A tourists' paradise glaring with neon? A gutter for one-day trippers who leave beer cans and sandwich crusts

to litter the beach? Or a seaside wilderness where, as Thoreau wrote, "A man may stand . . . and put all America behind him"?

How best to answer these questions has been most fiercely debated at the lower end of the Cape; gradually all polemics were focused on the Federal bill to create a Cape Cod National Seashore. Factions formed. At town meetings tempers rose.

The bill proposed that parts of six towns—Chatham, Orleans, Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown—should be joined in a vast preserve embracing nearly 27,000 acres. In this tract, which included beaches, dunes, marshes, moors, meadows, woods, ponds, harbors, headlands and tidal flats, all new construction, residential or otherwise, would be forbidden; private property could, at some indefinite time in the future, be taken over for public use.

Naturally, the most anguished squeals of opposition to this legislation came from the real-estate agents and builders for whom the postwar years on the Cape have been pure gravy. The majority of these gentry are conservative; they assailed the bill as socialistic, or, their blood pressure mounting dangerously higher, as communistic. But on the Cape, where there are all kinds, inevitably there are a few real-estate agents and a few builders whose political sympathies are liberal. These few were, for reasons of pocketbook, also opposed to the bill, but they were constrained to express their hostility in more circumspect fashion. The most articulate of them put it with stunning simplicity. "I'm for socialism," this man said, "so long as they don't take away private property."

There was also angry talk of how the bill was going to dispossess old Cape families from their ancestral homes. When I asked him about this, Worthington smiled. "There are about a thousand houses in Truro," he said. "Guess how many are owned by the same family that built them and have been living in them continuously ever since." He held up a finger. "One," he said. "There is only one such house in Truro."

Under the terms of the bill this one man (and every other owner of property in the area affected) may hold his home and, indeed, may bequeath it to his heirs. But heirs do not always love old houses. In the nature of things, most holdings will eventually become Federal property. "Another generation or two," said Worthington serenely, "and beach grass will be growing where a lot of houses now stand. Why not? People around here argued against the idea of a national park. They said if we let 'em pass that law, the Cape would never expand." He snorted. "Who the hell wants to expand?" he demanded.

Most residents, summer and year-round alike, heartily approved when President Kennedy last August signed the bill authorizing the Cape Cod National Seashore. Anything to keep the lovely ponds of Wellfleet from



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exploitation; anything to keep the moors of Truro, clad in their austere cloak of bayberry, huckleberry and bearberry, from being ravaged by bulldozers.

"This part of the Cape is tough," Worthington went on. "Over the years it has managed to stand up under almost everything man could do to it. But after the war, when the bulldozers came, the Cape began to disappear so fast that we had to get a law passed. It was now or never."

Any who believe the Cape can easily expand should spend a couple of hours in Provincetown on a Friday or Saturday night at the height of the summer season. It is a terminal experience, like seeing Naples.

The narrow streets, thickly choked even in midweek, over the weekend can be like an outer circle of hell. The town is swollen with trippers from Boston and college boys curious about love among the artists; cars inch along Commercial Street bumper to bumper while clouds of carbon monoxide drift into every shop and saloon; exasperated wives begin to scold at sweaty, impatient husbands for not having made reservations at the better restaurants in town—The Moors (excellent Portuguese cuisine), Ciro and Sal's (Italian), or S'Il Vous Plaît (French)—and urge them to drive instead to Truro, where they will find Scott's Chowder House and the Blacksmith Shop just as crowded.

As the evening wears on, the town hots up considerably. The parade of cars down Commercial Street creeps even more slowly, for now the sidewalks spill over with vacationists in quest of fun. Dressed for the most part in shorts, halters and rompers of every outrageous hue, they look as though they are bound for some disreputable fancy-dress baby party. From nearly every side street in the center of town—they are only dead-end alleys, most of them—comes the insistent polyrhythmic four-four beat of small jazz bands playing in dim, small, smoky *boîtes de nuit*, nearly every one of which is stuffed to the doors with people smoking, drinking, chattering, laughing and apparently enjoying themselves. A breath of fresh salt air couldn't get into any of these places with a police escort.

Each saloon has its own characteristic, if gradually shifting, clientele. The Old Colony Tap was for a time the haunt of the younger painters. Cookie's Tap, in the West End, is the favorite hangout of the fishermen—and serves good food, too, if the cook is not off on a four-day binge. The barroom of the Atlantic House is stamping ground for the young men who affect an exaggeration of speech and give new life to their hair; they are said to be gay, but whenever I have looked in on them the atmosphere has been glum and dispirited.

Around two o'clock of a typical Saturday or Sunday morning the Provincetown cops are obliged to collar two or three celebrants—more, if the moon is full.

Since the dubious delights of this midway are available elsewhere in their undiluted form, it is refreshing to recall that Provincetown affords, as well, its own special pleasures, along the Back Side. I don't know anyone who is more familiar with this part of the Cape than Herman Tasha, a native of Provincetown who is on the staff of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Tasha is charged, among other things, with keeping an eye

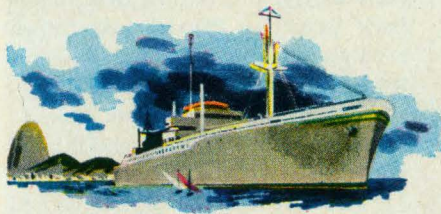
on how wind and wave, drift and tide, are forever changing the profile of the Cape, and when I was last in Provincetown I asked him to take me along on his next tour of inspection.

Tasha is also the owner of a singular establishment called the Hairpin Shop, which is tucked away on a sandy side road off Bradford Street. It is a tiny place, maybe ten feet by eight, and most of the space is taken up by a big worktable

behind which Tasha sits, and by a bench to accommodate the steady stream of his visitors. His gleaming stock in trade—decorative hairpins, chains, necklaces and bracelets, all of which he fashions himself—is displayed on a wall behind the bench. Other items, some commonplace, some exotic, can be dimly seen stacked against walls, stowed in dark corners, hanging from the ceiling, or disposed on and under the worktable. These include

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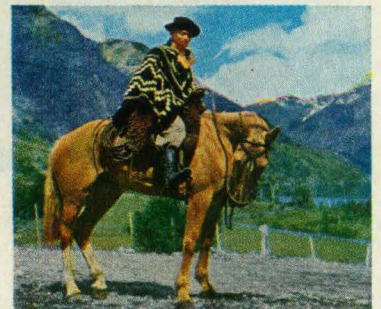
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stained-glass windowpanes, old-fashioned coal scuttles, a pair of binoculars, a Bunsen burner and a big Labrador retriever bitch named Lorna. The shop has the look of a cave inhabited by a whimsical pirate.

This impression is reinforced by the appearance of the owner, a big man with a big unruly mane of black hair, a big unkempt black beard, a low musical voice and no commercial instincts whatsoever.

In the Hairpin Shop no item for sale is price-marked. Should Tasha take a dislike to a potential customer, he may demand an astronomical sum for a hairpin. On the other hand, should a friend show interest in something he has made, Tasha may insist on giving it to her. Even the shop-owner's hours of business are freakish. He is away nine to five, Mondays through Fridays; he is on hand only in the evenings on weekdays, and when the spirit moves

him, over the weekend. Indeed, the Hairpin Shop is less a shop than a salon where Tasha receives his friends when he is not at work. At any one time his guests may include a professor of philosophy, a harpist, a sculptress, a commercial skin diver and the postman.

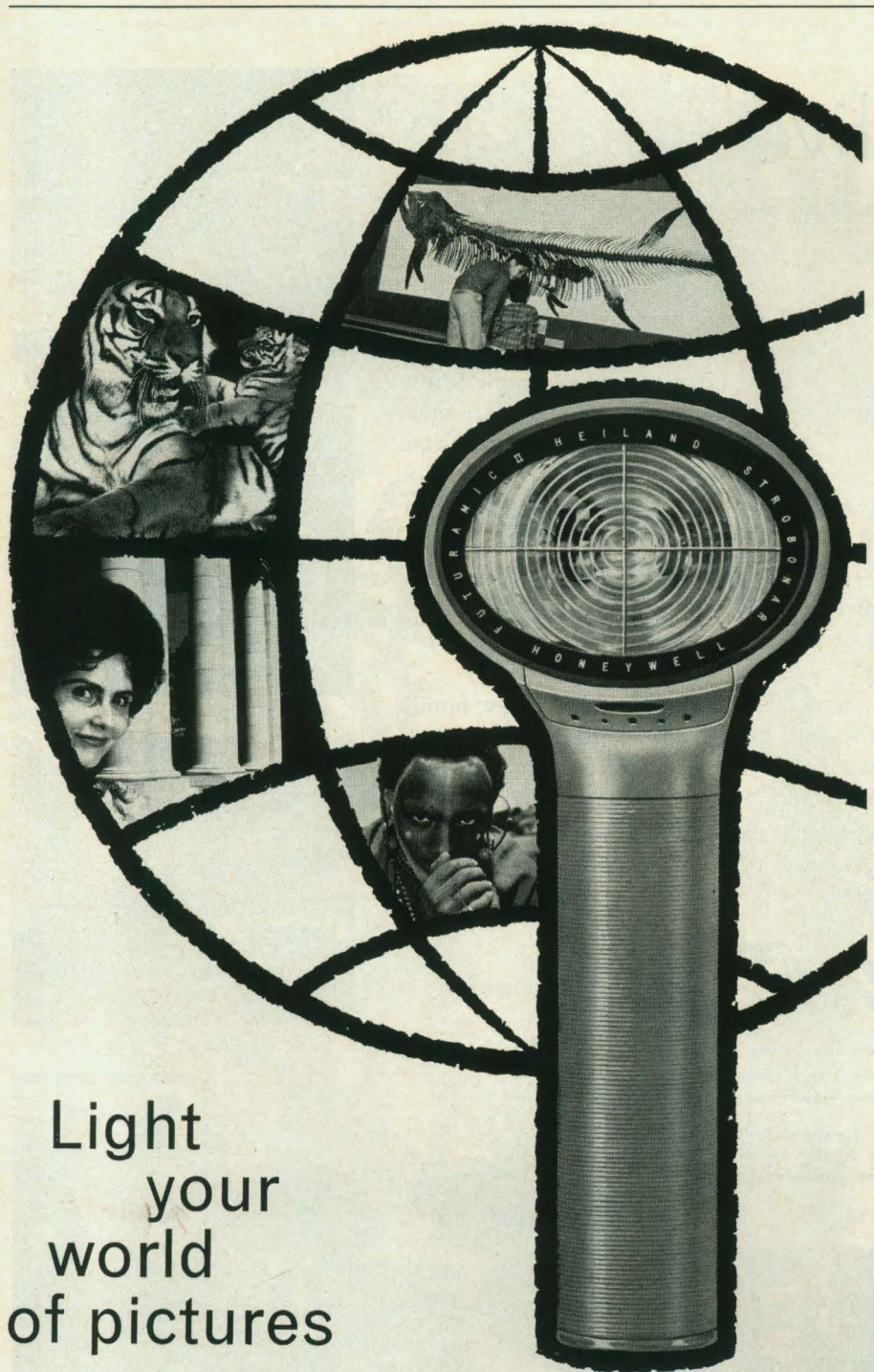
At nine o'clock one Monday morning my wife and I met Tasha at this shop, clambered into his Navy jeep (an apparently decrepit old rattletrap which is in fact a functional whiz) and, after he had started the motor by applying a screwdriver to the ignition switch, drove up the highway toward Truro. It was a magnificent day, bright and cloudless, with a fine, bracing, fifteen-mile-an-hour breeze from the northeast. We drove past the Snail Road, the best path for those who wish to walk from the east end of Provincetown to the Back Side; past Pilgrim Lake, which is only a new name for what Provincetown will always call East Harbor; and past Pilgrim Spring State Park. At length we turned off the highway onto the road that leads to the Highland Light. Before long the jeep reared and bucked on soft sand, until Tasha gave it the whip and turned it onto a course parallel with the waves.

We were now on the Great Beach.

"The inhabitants rarely visit these sands." This observation is not mine. It was made more than a hundred years ago by Thoreau; but it is still substantially accurate, at least insofar as it describes the Atlantic coast of Provincetown. Tasha had turned off at Highland Beach and here a couple of dozen people were sunning themselves, but this was Truro. Tasha waved a hand toward the dunes at our left. Further up-Cape the dunes are spectacular, soaring as high as two hundred feet above the sea. Here they are only a hundred feet high but they are marked by strata of blue clay. "The Clay Pounds," Tasha said. "The geologists from Woods Hole have found some fossils in that clay and they've been testing them. It may turn out the Cape is older than most geologists thought it was."

The Cape fascinates geologists. They keep picking away at its skin and probing the muck under its offshore waters. The Cape, they say, is a terminal moraine; its clear cool ponds are potholes; its dunes, carved and smoothed by surf and storm, are so much glacial rubble. For their purposes the Cape is a specimen, unexampled on this continent, of how waves of ice and then waves of water can shape a mass of land.

The Cape is also a pretty fair specimen of what man can do to a mass of land. I thought of this as we drove slowly north and west along the Great Beach, out of Truro and back into Provincetown. When Thoreau walked along here, more than a hundred years ago, the thing that most struck him was the "perfect desert of shining sand" that reached as far as a quarter-mile inland from the dunes "without a particle of vegetation." This desert high



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above the beach stretched, he wrote, "twenty-eight miles northwest, from Nauset Harbor to Race Point." By the time he reached Provincetown he was still amazed by the "vast platters of pure sand"; they reminded him of what he had read about Arabia. He described a schoolhouse "filled with sand up to the tops of the desks," wondered how the townsfolk got about in these great drifts, and said flatly: "The sand is the great enemy here."

Thoreau's observation is the more remarkable because what the Pilgrims found was a thickly wooded peninsula, with trees growing down to the tip of the finger of land that curves around Provincetown Harbor. Indeed, they called this tip Wood End. The early Cape Codders took the timber and their cattle ate the grass; and by 1825, sure enough, both the town and the harbor were literally in danger of being destroyed—engulfed by sand. Belatedly a program of conservation was planned: pitch pines were planted and beach grass, tough and deep-rooted, was set out. In Provincetown a young man who desired to get married was required by custom first to plant two bushels of beach grass and kill ten crows.

Today sand is no longer an enemy. The dunes are covered with beach

grass, poverty grass, dusty miller and beach peas; behind them, in the Province Lands, scrubby pines and oaks have taken root; the Cape is once again securely anchored.

We drove slowly, pausing now and again so that Tasha could examine the stakes he has driven into the beach at regular intervals—his checkpoints on the profile of the lower Cape. As we drove, clouds of birds rose before us, circling and

complaining noisily and then settling again after we had passed. The beaches along here are their nesting places; their young were fledged by now and showed what lack of exercise and a high-calorie diet will lead to—they were plump and paunchy, bigger than their parents. They were mostly terns and mackerel gulls and minister gulls, but anyone interested can find many other varieties. John Alexander, who keeps a closer eye on birds than anyone else in

Provincetown and who is never without his Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* when he takes a walk, has so far checked off more than two hundred different kinds of birds positively identified.

"Keep an eye out to sea," Tasha said. "There's a big whale out there somewhere. We saw him last week when we were out taking borings. He circled the boat—came so close we could see the barnacles on his head." We looked, but all we could see was

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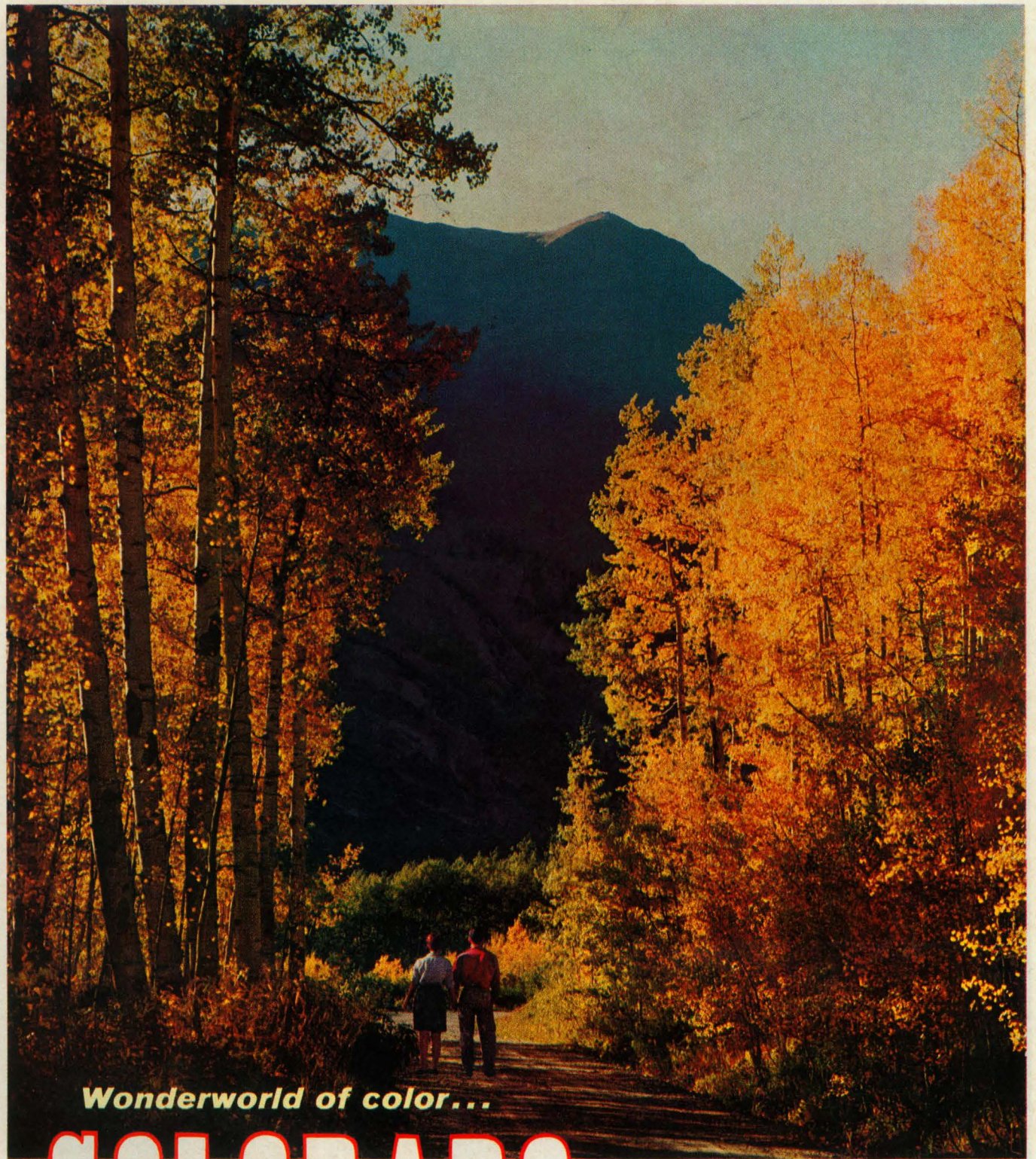
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how the sea changed color, from green to an ominous purple. "Peaked Hill," said Tasha, pointing out to sea.

The sand bars of Peaked Hill are the wickedest of Cape Cod's ocean perils. No one knows how many hulls lie rotting in this graveyard, nor how many times the cry has gone up in Provincetown, "Ship aground!"

Northeasterly gales have been driving ships onto Peaked Hill for three hundred

years, and smashing them to splinters once they ground there.

The suspicion exists that, many years ago, at least a few of these wrecks were provoked by the ancient and dishonorable fraternity of "mooncussers," but this is no easier to prove than it is to make a fisherman tell the truth. Mooncussing, which could be worked only on dark nights, called for swinging a lamp in a slow, wide arc from atop a dune so as to per-

suaude some unwary skipper that he was following a pilot contemptuously familiar with local shoals and tides. (Some mooncussers would hang a lantern athwart a horse and then slowly pace the animal along a dune.) The skipper that followed such a light would of course founder, and the mooncussers would descend upon his wreck for the loot, laughing like hyenas.

After a northeast storm, treasures still occasionally wash up on this beach, becom-

ing more valuable as the tale of them is told. Pat Patrick, who owns The Flagship, a Provincetown restaurant, is reputed to have found a canvas bag crammed with money. Not long ago I listened to three Provincetowners talking about this trove. The first said, "It was fifty thousand dollars." The second said, "It was seventy-five thousand dollars." The third said, "You'll believe anything. There was no money at all." A thoughtful look came over his face. During the long Cape Cod winter, when there is plenty of time for storytelling, a knack becomes a skill, and the skill is buffed into a velvety, flawless art which turns out only smooth plausibility. "If you want to know what Patrick *really* found," said the third man, "I'll tell you. It was a —" But I cut him off, for my credulity has been so severely strained by Provincetown inventions that I was afraid this time it would snap.

Tasha, driving along in his jeep, pointed out the very spot where Patrick had found the canvas bag. "It was eighty-five thousand dollars," he said, "and all of it in five- and ten-dollar bills."

Tasha swung the jeep sharply to the left and pulled up in front of a shack, half-hidden high up in the dunes. His wife, Sunnie, came out to meet us. Evidently it was time for the coffee break in Tasha's working day.

This shack had been built by Harry Kemp, the poet; he lived here for many years, and when he died he left it to the Tashas, his friends. Not far off is the site of the abandoned Coast Guard station where Eugene O'Neill lived and wrote his first short plays of the sea, back in 1916. Those were the days when Provincetown won its first national celebrity; when George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, Mary Heaton Vorse, John Reed, Wilbur Daniel Steele and Robert Edmond Jones—Provincetown residents all—summoned up the theatrical excitement called the Provincetown Players.

There are still perhaps a dozen shacks on the Back Side. They are, in a narrow sense, illegal; but Provincetown authorities are forbearing so long as the squatters observe the decencies and keep within reasonable limits; perhaps the authorities are gambling that another O'Neill is summering today in one of those shacks.

Mrs. Tasha invited us to come in and drink a cup of her magnificent strong black Martinique coffee. It was good to stand on the doorsill for a moment and look out to where, as Kemp wrote—

*The ocean shines like many disks of brass,
Or between white hollows it lapses, great and green
Where solitude sifts slowly in between
The hills of sparkling waste and rise and fall—
Hills whose one music is the sea bird's call! . . .
And here is all space that ever eye can see:
The ocean completing all immensity,
And the sky, mother of infinity—*

A Remarkable New Eating Experience

"One of the finest things we've ever tasted," was the way the St. Louis Globe Democrat greeted a group of the world's legendary banquet dishes as they appeared in grocery stores in ready to heat and serve form. But all over America, people were agreeing enthusiastically with Californians who rated these Famous Foods of the World in cans so highly that they took three of the coveted Gold Medal awards at the 1961 California State Fair.

In describing Swedish Köttbullar the Oakland Tribune raved, "Each can serves three generously and is crowded to the brim with plump, tender meatballs—drenched in sour cream sauce, seasoned in dill." And the Washington, D.C., Evening Star recommended the "elegant little meat balls" as a main course with parsley potatoes and red cabbage, or as appetizers on picks.

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*Yet greatness on smallness jostles till
both are one
And a grain of sand stands doorkeeper to
the sun.*

The shack is as trim and tidy as a ship's cabin: a bunk along one wall, the galley set against another, and books all about, some of them even chocked against the rafters to keep out the weather. The two younger Tasha children, Paula and Paul, had spent the weekend here with their mother; they took us up on the dune to show us where they had slept. Their bed was a mattress on the sand; above them, as a shield against the dew, there was a frame of glass canted toward the beach and nailed to four posts driven into the sand. Their canopy, then, was the sky, afire with stars; the sigh and rustle of the waves at their feet had lulled them to sleep; they had waked when the doorkeeper let in the sun.

Back in the jeep, we now drove due west. Presently we came upon the first visitors to the beach we had seen since we had left Truro: a dozen fishermen, casting their lines into the surf. "I can tell you why they're here," Tasha said, confidently. "Somebody brought a big striped bass into town last night, and they all guessed this was where it was caught."

But there were traces of other visitors. As we came closer to the public beach at Race Point, Tasha had to swerve to avoid a rubbish heap—sixty or seventy beer cans and the other refuse of some swinish revel were scattered in a big, ugly circle over the sand.

"People who do that should be fined," said my wife.

"They should be sent to jail for ten days without the option," said I.

Tasha growled, "They should be barred from public beaches for life." He was in a bad humor all the while we were driving past the sunbathers on the beach at Race Point, but once we were headed southwest around the far curve of the Back Side his spirits revived. The jeep slithered and then bounced on the firmer sand of a tidal flat. The tide was out; we were driving into a natural amphitheater half a mile wide; ahead of us a stream purled across the shallows. Tasha braked the jeep. "This is Race Run," he said. He rummaged around in back and came up with an old rusty pail. He kicked off his sneakers, turned up his trouser ends, and picked his way across a wide bed of mussel shells into the stream. His big hands raked the bottom. In a minute he had enough mussels to feed a family of ten. He straightened up. "The bounty of the flats," he said happily. He began picking over his mussels, throwing out those that were broken. "I don't know what it is," he

said, "whether it's the plankton they feed on here or what, but I've eaten mussels all up and down the Atlantic Coast, and these are the best there are." I pried one open, washed the sand out in the running water, and ate the meat. It was delicious.

The sun was high now and warm, and where we stood we were sheltered from the breeze. It was very still. A long way off I saw a tiny splash of red against the yellow sand. My binoculars brought it close: it

was a girl's jacket, spread over a bush. A moment later I found the girl in my glasses. Her skirts hiked up high on her legs, she stood, graceful, absorbed, alone. She was clamming. There was nobody else in sight.

It seemed incredible. There, very near against the sky, was the Pilgrim Monument, a slender pile of masonry that brought to mind crowded streets and throngs of hot, contentious people strug-

gling for tables in restaurants, and snarls of traffic, and all the problems of a perplexing present—in short, the pandemoniac P's of P-town. Very near, and very far away.

Here was Herman Tasha, leaning relaxed and unruffled against a fender of his jeep, gazing serenely at the August splendor of Race Run. It occurred to me that, if you look hard enough, you will find that the P in P-town can also stand for peace.

THE END

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