

EVERYBODY CALLED
HIM CEDRIC

By Benedict E. Hardman, Ph.D.

*Twin City Federal Savings and Loan Association
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

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*To
My Wife Murel
and
My Late Parents
Lillian and Harry Hardman*



Cedric Adams

1902 - 1961

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Those who grew up in the “age of radio” remember well the warm and friendly voice of Cedric Adams. With his buoyancy, wit and homespun wisdom, Cedric Adams won the hearts of people in home towns throughout the Midwest.

Twin City Federal is proud to have sponsored Cedric Adams on WCCO radio and television for more than ten years. His programs ranged from news, documentaries and election returns to coverage of special events. During his years of broadcasting, Cedric helped make the name Twin City Federal a household word. And Twin City Federal became the largest savings and loan association in America at that time.

In memory of a good and revered friend, Twin City Federal is publishing the story of Cedric Adams on the tenth anniversary of his death. We believe the legend of Cedric should never die. And we hope our small effort in publishing this book will enhance your memories of a great columnist, journalist and broadcaster . . . the inimitable Cedric Adams.



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Benedict E. Hardman

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CHAPTER I

Everybody Called Him Cedric

Those who never knew Cedric Adams missed meeting a man who could transform any group by his mere presence. He could come into a room, sit in a corner, and without moving become the center of attention and activity. His booming voice, his enfolding smile, his curiosity about everything and everybody, his ability to listen captivated everyone around him.

On the other hand, people were his vortex. He bathed in them, fed on them. Always he was observant—particularly of trivia. Something that the average person would shrug off as an everyday occurrence would blossom into a newspaper column which this average person would read and then realize, “Gee, that’s happened to me many times! I’ve noticed that! And now it’s happened to Cedric!”

Curious. Sentimental. Nostalgic. Folksy. Corny. Pixie. Blithe. Fun-loving. Perceptive. Practical joker.

Do those words capture the spirit, the reality of Cedric Adams, the boy and man from Magnolia? Of course not. Are words ever enough to recreate a man’s life into the vital reality that it was? Probably not. But a writer must try.

My goal in this book is to bring the spirit of Cedric Adams back to those who knew him, read him, heard him. And to introduce this nationally renowned newspaper columnist, radio and television newscaster, and personality

to those who never knew him. I was one of the fortunate who knew and worked with him.

Words—especially written words—are relatively static. They do not have the overtones, the dimensions, the elbow-room of the spoken word. In turn, the spoken word needs the facial expressions, the gestures, the nonverbal dimension for at least a partial perception of another person.

As a communicator I am most conscious of this and was when I searched for the facts that added up to the life of Cedric Adams. But a bare recital of facts are not enough. By themselves they are stale and lifeless.

How to infuse life into facts? In the case of Cedric Adams I have revealed him through his own newspaper columns, broadcasts, and recorded practical jokes, as well as from the testimony of those who knew him, in order to recapture his luminous spirit. I have gathered anecdotes about Cedric to illustrate, to illumine, to revivify.

The famous Hollywood movie columnist, Hedda Hopper, once wrote in a letter to Cedric, "Your province is to make something out of nothing." And it was this ability that largely accounted for his popularity, his success, his impact.

No contemporary excelled as he did in a nostalgic paragraph like the following: "I have one picture of my mother that never leaves. Strangely enough, she was bent over the oven of our kitchen range. She had in her hand one of those little holders that the Ladies' Aid Society used to sell at their bazaars and she was pulling from the oven a hot pan of fresh cinnamon rolls. There was my mother at her best."

Or, his distinctive, delicate writing touch might emerge in a slightly naughty-nice vein with a timely tip which had universal application: "You girlies can save time getting

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into your girdles by applying a dash of talcum to the hips just before you begin the squeeze play.” Then he mused, “Can you think of a human emotion any more gratifying than the pleasure a woman must get from the scratch she gives herself the minute she gets her girdle off?”

It was this gift of sounding slightly devilish that endeared Cedric. He could sound spicy in print, yet not offend. In person, his remarks and his teasing were accompanied by his deep, genuine, from-the-toes belly laugh. Always he could get away with “murder” where someone else would be accused of bad taste or over-sentimentality.

Cedric Adams’ province was not global affairs and politics. His reflex curiosity was on the folksy, the everyday events which he could transform with his common touch into the topic of the day for readers of his column and listeners of his broadcasts and conversations. Children, health, weight, diets, sleep, weather, marriage, food, houses, clothing, movies, taxes, automobiles, boats, insurance. The everyday concerns of us all. His columns invariably had at least one provocative item aimed at women which would be fodder for over-the-fence or bridge-table conversation.

Arthur Godfrey, the CBS personality, once remarked, “Cedric’s the most inquisitive guy I’ve ever known—sixty questions an hour is a slow rate for him. And his appetite tops his curiosity. I had him down at my Virginia farm for two days and it took two weeks to replenish the Godfrey cupboard.”

Cedric was gregarious. He smiled and spoke to everyone. In the best sense, people were his business. His love of people was genuine. When he walked down almost any street in Minnesota it would be an exercise in slow motion.

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Everyone greeted him. They would ask for advice or help from how to control their children to disposing of a litter of kittens. His ear was available. His mail bulged and his telephone jangled with requests, solicitations, and advice.

Cedric's widow, Niocy, who was the former Bernice Lenont and is now the wife of Dr. Harry A. Tinker, a prominent Minneapolis dentist, once told an interviewer, "Although I am eight years younger than he, strangers and casual acquaintances invariably call my husband by his first name. I, sedately, am 'Mrs. Adams.'"



Everybody called him Cedric.

"Everybody Calls Him Cedric" was even the title of an article on him in *Collier's* magazine. This was the mark of affection people had for him. They would boast, "I'm a friend of Cedric's." And a survey revealed that some

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ninety-eight per cent of the people in Minnesota knew who Cedric Adams was.

“Bill” Stewart, president of WPBC, a Twin Cities radio station, who was a former colleague of Cedric’s in radio, believes that the name “Cedric” itself had some relation to his popularity. “Cedric” was different, catchy, easy to say and remember. It had a ring.

Cedric’s manner and appearance made him approachable. This was as true when he was a handsome collegian who weighed one hundred thirty-nine pounds as when he was a successful Northwest personality at two hundred forty-four pounds. His resonant voice, his guileless smile, his head cocked rakishly to the left, and his contagious laugh burst through social barriers. In later years, no matter how expensive his suits, he would have an unpressed appearance which made him one of us. He looked as though he were enjoying every ounce of life and wanted to share it with us.

His black hair, bushy eyebrows, and long lashes were frames for his penetrating, yet twinkling blue eyes. His widow, Niecy, remembers that it was his eyes and their magnetic quality which first attracted her to him. Yet despite his handsomeness Cedric was in no way effeminate. He was admired by women and accepted by men as the proverbial “man’s man.” He could be by turns urbane and folksy. His sharp mind and wit prompted the appropriate reactions to situations. He was the man-next-door. His was the human touch infused with the joy of living, the joy of people. These were his pipelines which led to people.

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People accept or reject ideas because of the people who present them. Listeners and readers trust those who seem sincere, who appear intellectually qualified and display good will. The Greeks had a word for this: *ethos*. Today we speak of a good image, charisma, in relation to someone who is a credible source because of his manner and matter. We trust the person who seems to care about us. Cedric Adams was that person.

Cedric could combine appropriate language with humor and sentimentality and remain credible in his writing and broadcasts, as well as in the projects and causes he backed. As a result, Cedric Adams was indeed the good neighbor to the Northwest.

CHAPTER II

The Duke of Magnolia

As you step off the elevator of the second floor of the WCCO Building at 625 Second Avenue South in Minneapolis and into the lobby of Radio Station WCCO, your eyes focus first on a photograph of Cedric Adams. The photo reveals Cedric's warm, enfolding smile and his penetrating eyes as they look intently at you out of huge, horn-rimmed glasses. You are struck by the heavy eyebrows and the thick, black hair which has receded only slightly.

The words beneath the picture starkly state:

CEDRIC ADAMS

May 27, 1902 — February 18, 1961

WCCO Radio 1931-1961

Long before these thirty years with WCCO, however, there is the life story of an only child born to Ray and Josephine Adams in Adrian, Minnesota. Adrian is a town of 1,200 near the Iowa border in southwestern Minnesota. Ray Adams worked at the Adrian bank.

In 1904, when Cedric was two years old, the Adams moved seven miles west to Magnolia.

As you drive into Magnolia signs at the east and west ends of the town greet you: "Welcome to Magnolia. Popu-

lation 261. Cedric Adams' Home Town. Please Drive Carefully. We love our children."

Magnolia was Cedric's home for ten years where he shared the small-town life with his beloved parents whom he described in his *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* columns on Fathers' and Mothers' Day in 1957.

"I remember Father," he wrote, "even though he died when I was 12. He was a handsome, six-foot-two gent with his 210 pounds distributed evenly. He looked his best in a stiff, straw skimmer. At work he always wore high, stiff collars into which his tie was always neatly tucked. He was a great vest man, wore them even on the hottest days of summer. I remember so well his cuffs. They were single cuffs and starched. He prided himself on his collection of fancy cuff links. Button shoes were in vogue in Father's day and he had several pairs of them. Keeping track of a buttonhook was a problem in our home in those days. Father was the cashier of the Magnolia State Bank and I often wondered why the bank was never held up. And I wondered, too, what would have happened had a stick-up artist dropped by. Father kept a loaded revolver in an open drawer just below the teller's window.

"Father was quite a hobbyist, but his enthusiasms went in spurts. He'd take off on some tangent and then drop it suddenly. He installed a complete set of carpenter's tools in our woodshed, built himself a carpenter's bench and never touched the tools thereafter. He did a lot of prairie-chicken, quail and duck hunting. Ordinarily, one bird dog would suffice for the average hunter. Father had three.

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When his enthusiasm for hunting waned, Mother, the neighbor's flower beds and I were stuck with the bird dogs.

"One of his greatest enthusiasms was gardening. We had two plots at the back of our house which were divided by a long wooden walk that led to the woodshed and the you-know-what. Each spring, Father hired a neighbor who came in with a horse and single-bladed plow. It took the greater part of the day for this combination to turn last year's garden plots into long furrows of soil. Once that job was accomplished, Father would take an afternoon off from his work at the bank to begin spading, with a four-tined fork, the plowed area. Blisters and backache always hit him about 4 in the afternoon and he'd quit. It then became my unpleasant duty to finish the spading. I drove by these two garden plots three or four years ago and I couldn't get over how small they looked to me. I remembered them as acres and acres which I had measured by the thousands of turnings of the spade. Any distaste which I might have had for vegetables as a kid undoubtedly came from the spading, the weeding and the harvesting of the garden crops.

"These 12 years with Father were interesting years, the garden notwithstanding. We had our occasional encounters in the woodshed, those periodic misunderstandings, but also those father-and-son heart-to-hearts which, fortunately, had a more lasting impression than the whacks I got in the woodshed. There's irony in life. Had Father lived, he probably would like to come out to my house now and weed around in the garden or use the one power tool that I have or maybe even tinker with, shine or polish my car.

“Anyway, I’m glad I found his buttonhook. I’m glad I picked the peas. I’m glad I dug the potatoes. He was a great guy while I had him.”

This sensitive distillation of the essence of love and devotion for a parent was Cedric writing at his best. Cedric etched through anecdote, through the human touch. He did not catalog. He illustrated.

A month earlier Cedric had headlined his column, “I REMEMBER MAMA.”

“She’s been gone over a dozen years, but my memory of her will linger always. Mama as a girl was very pretty. A wavy-haired brunet with hazel eyes and hour-glass figure, she was at her best in a picture hat, elbow-length gloves, a circular skirt that touched her ankles. She was a smiley one, too. There was always laughter in her eyes, a kind of bubbling quality to her speech. She wasn’t the effervescent type. What she said always had meaning. Father was a small-town banker and Mama helped him in the bank. She had been a business girl before she was married. Worked for one of the elder Dayton’s in a store he had in Worthington, Minnesota. She didn’t want to give up all of her business career after she was married, which was why she enjoyed doing some of the book-keeping and a little of the teller work at the bank. Farmers who came in with deposits or checks to cash always remained at the teller window a little longer than was really necessary because they enjoyed talking with her. She seemed to carry on a kind of harmless flirtation with them. It was an act, but they didn’t recognize it as such.

“These extra extra-curricular activities of her—I mean

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her working, not her flirtations—interfered somewhat with her duties as a cook. She knew how to cook, but she didn't like to prepare fussy things. There were rarely fancy cakes or gussied-up desserts or lemon chiffon pies in our house. But she could whip up a pot roast, a batch of cinnamon rolls, a platter of pork chops or a stew with the best of them. Magnolia, Minn., was in good beef country but somehow the local butcher shop had never heard of a thick T-bone or sirloin. And had it been available, nobody in town could have pronounced filet mignon. Mama's steaks were always thin and pan-fried and invariably curled at the edges from the frying. Now and then, father complained of their toughness. Mama always got back at him with 'Tougher where there's none.' That routine always shut father up, too.

"Mama was a born organizer. She did a lot with the Ladies' Aid. If I remember correctly, she put herself in charge. I don't think they elected her. Mama was always in there, not only pitching, but directing things.

"In her later years Mama became what the Magnolia set referred to as 'fleshy.' It bothered her, too. She was a fastidious woman. We had what I believe was the first 'dressing table' in town. Bureaus were a common thing, but Mama had a dressing table, under which she could get her legs. There were two little drawers on the side and a tall mirror that showed her from about the waist to the top of her head. She spent considerable time at her dressing table. Atop one of the side drawers was a cup with a little hole in the cover. Into that cup went all of her hair-combings. I can't remember what she ever did with the combings after the cup was full. Atop the other

drawer was a matching cup which contained her face powder and a fluffy, feather-like powder puff. That powder was her only make-up. Rouge and lipstick didn't come for her until years later. Getting into a corset or a camisole was always a task for mama. I'm sure she never uttered a swear word in her life, but I always suspected that perhaps one or two mild ones went through her mind at least during this chore.

"Yes, I remember Mama's cuban heels, her pierced ears, her frilly shirt-waists, her lisle stockings, her first sealskin coat, her alto voice in the choir. But most of all I remember her tenderness, her benevolence, her compassion. And as I place the white carnation in my button-hole on this Mother's day, I shall think upon all of these things and visualize once again the very pretty portrait of the Mama that I remember."

Cedric's wife, Niocy, says Cedric felt his father was a great guy and would refer to him with gentle kindness. He owed much to his mother and was very fond of her. She was a lasting influence on him. She had Cedric's education as one of her primary goals. Cedric and his mother lived together for many years after they moved to Minneapolis from Magnolia. She died in 1940 when Cedric was thirty-eight.

Cedric had a phenomenal memory for the past. One evening after a radio newscast which I had written for him Cedric said, "You know, Beno, I can remember the past as if it were yesterday, while I have a hard time remembering what happened yesterday."

He also stated in his *Cedric Adams Almanac* that "childhood is an esteemed thing for all of us. And have

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you ever noticed how easy it is to recall events and scenes in childhood? Ask me what happened in 1936 or in 1948 and you've stumped me, but I can remember almost every detail of the Magnolia schoolhouse where I attended my first eight grades."

According to your generation the following column will strike you as perhaps "primitive and droll," or as "of course, I remember that." Many of you perhaps remember the dank feeling of your cellar with the earthen walls. So when Cedric takes you back to his memories of his cellar in Magnolia you might go down the cellar stairs with him. "Even the hall," he remembers, "had a sort of romance to it. Some pots and pans and the lantern hung on the wall. On the floor in the hall we kept the five-gallon can of kerosene with the potato in the snout. And if it hadn't been for the cellar stairs in Magnolia's homes, I don't believe the weekly paper would have ever had any front page news. A week that went by without some woman falling down her cellar steps was a pretty dull week. But I loved those cellar stairs. Carpeting? I should say not. The carpenter took a plank and he sawed down and then over and then down and over and put boards where the notches came and that made the steps down into the cellar. You got down there with a little providential help, but that was when you began to enjoy the cellar. It didn't go under the whole house. It was just a hole that was dug under maybe two or three rooms.

"It was the stuff you found down in the cellar that made it interesting. There were always two or three five-gallon crocks of pickles. Each crock had a white slime on

top of it that had bubbles in it, and atop the pickles was a big plate with a rock on it.

“Over in another corner were the potatoes that used to sprout along about April. Some carrots and rutabagas were buried in a box of sand in another corner. There was a table where we used to put the milk. We always kept it in pans so you could skim the cream off easily. Even on the hottest July day it always was fairly cool down there in the cellar.

“There was a dampness to the air, but after you’d been down there a minute you got so you liked it. Our dog used to go down there a lot in the summertime. There was always a sort of mystery as to what was back of our cellar steps. I never did probe around back there. I used to have to clean out the cellar a couple of times a year, but I never got back there. I think maybe it was the cobwebs that kept me out more than anything. We kept a lot of preserves and that kind of stuff on shelves made out of old orange crates.

“There lurks in me a yearning for the simple things. I guess that’s why, in planning my home, I’m going to brush aside any plans for a modern basement. Away with rumpus rooms and machine-run heating plants and square-tubbed laundries. Give me the damp, the earthy smell, the dust-laden crevices of a cellar. Won’t you join me? I’ll help you dig yours.”

Cedric, of course, was only dreaming here. His new home was the ultimate in modernity. And at the time he would have been the first to admit he was not in shape to help you dig!

Cedric as an accomplished communicator had honed

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his senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. Note how many of his senses were involved when he wrote about "other things I haven't thought about for years."

Among them were "the fancy-handled buttonhook that was part of my mother's dresser set . . . Those chimes that were made out of thin pieces of glass suspended on threads and made music when the wind swayed the glass That medicinal smell that old Doc Sullivan always had about his person . . . The green-visored white caps that kids always got free in the spring with a flour ad printed across the front . . . The horse-chawed hitching posts that used to line the main street in Magnolia . . . The soap ad that always asked, 'Have you a little fairy in your home?' . . . The isinglass doors on the old base-burner whose ruddy glow gave the finest welcome in a home you could possibly have . . . The lumps on my long underwear used to make underneath my black-ribbed stockings when I had to fold it around the ankles in wintertime."

Or perhaps there are other flashbacks that you would like to recall or hear about from Cedric such as "the huge coffee grinders with two big wheels and the bell-shaped top into which the coffee beans were poured by the grocer for grinding. Candy hearts with such stirring messages as 'Oh, You Kid!' printed on them. Doorbells with a handle on them you had to turn to make the bell function. The thrill you got when you moved into the third grade and got a desk with an inkwell in it. When the small-time editor met all trains and asked every departing townsman where he was going and when he would return. When after every meal the dishes were washed and put right back in their places on the table ready for the next meal and the 'set'

table was covered with a cloth in the interim. The huge ash pile that collected at the back of every house during the winter. Familiar, aren't they?"

Cedric's life in Magnolia from two until twelve was much like that of the average middle-class boy of the first decade of the twentieth century. He played hard. He wore bib overalls. He had to dress up in knickers and long stockings for Sunday school and on holidays. He wore button shoes with brass toe guards. In the winter he hooked his sled to the bobsleds of the farmers coming into town. He skated at Elk's Slough. He was the typical boy of the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Magnolia natives still remember Cedric as a boy with an impish grin and twinkling eyes. He always had a winning personality.

Old-timer Ben Davis, who used to run the livery barn and then the garage, laughed when he told me how one time Cedric climbed up on a house roof where a man was shingling. The man probably thought that a good object lesson would be to nail Cedric's coat to the roof—which he did.

Davis also remembers that Cedric's first job was sweeping out the hardware store owned by John McLish. For this, he earned fifty cents a week. This willingness to work set the pattern for his whole life.

Cedric's eighth grade report card from the Magnolia Public School in 1913 showed his early interest and bent in the verbal arts. He excelled in spelling, reading, writing, and grammar. And his grades in geography and history were also in the middle 90's in the days when grading was

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numerical. His lowest grade was a respectable 88 in arithmetic.

The young years were the happy years for Cedric as they are for all of us. He wrote, "I remember reading the Katzenjammer Kids, Happy Hooligan, the Newly Weds whose Snookums never got beyond the stage of saying 'Da.' There was another comic strip (and they were comical in those days) called Buster Brown that had quite an effect on my life. I wore Buster Brown suits for five or six years, along with Buster Brown collars—starched they were—that fitted down almost to the edge of my shoulders. I never have forgiven my mother for that applique. A round chinchilla cap and a red-lined chinchilla coat went with the outfit. I'll never know what mother was trying to make of me, but I had bangs that hung down under the chinchilla cap. We never thought of long pants until we were 15 or 16. Many of my short pants were made over from trousers that had been worn by my Uncle Judd. He was a banker and allegedly paid as high as \$35 for a suit which he never wore out completely. Trimming his trousers down to pants-size for me was a job that was never done with great dexterity. For years, I had that droopy look in the back."

Making the trip to "The Cities" to visit his grandparents was one of the highlights in Cedric's boyhood. Years later Cedric related a coincidence in his April 7, 1957, Sunday column:

"May I give you the saga of Second Avenue today? Have you had one street that has played a very important part in your life? Maybe it was the main street in your home town, a lane where you wooed and won your mate, a tree-

arched boulevard where you cycled, an alley that provided a shortcut from your home to down town, a particular street that offered a sliding hill when winter traffic was shut off. I have developed a curious fondness for Second Avenue South in Minneapolis. My love for this street goes back to the days when I, as a 5-year-old, first visited Minneapolis. My grandparents, on my father's side, lived in Minneapolis, and for several years I was the only kid in Magnolia who had ever been to 'The Cities,' as we called them. These visits I made periodically, sometimes as often as twice a year, with either my mother or my father.

"My grandmother lived on Second Avenue South and Seventh Street in what was called 'the old Pillsbury mansion' which had been converted into a rooming house that my grandmother ran. When I traveled with my father, we always took a hack from the Great Northern depot to grandma's house. My mother was a conservative, so the two of us would take a streetcar at quite a saving. This Pillsbury mansion was located on the corner where the parking ramp is now just across the street from the WCCO building and the Minneapolis Athletic Club. Grandpa Adams maintained a beautifully-kept lawn. I remember sitting out on the grass and listening to the Newsboys' band concert in a park where WCCO is now located. I remember, too, the laying of the cornerstone of the Minneapolis Athletic Club.

"On the site of the present Baker Building there was a Greek candy store and ice cream parlor with its huge electric fans hanging from the ceiling, its windows filled with mounds of fresh chocolates and bon bons, its white-

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aproned Greek proprietor behind the soda fountain, its fly-specked menus on the white marble tables. Grandpa Adams and I made it over there two or three times during my visit for a chocolate soda. I haven't tasted chocolate like that since.

"Second Avenue South in those days was a kind of hub for my metropolitan visits. Little did I dream, as I sat on the lawn of grandma's house on Seventh and Second to watch the new Elks Club Building going up, that some day I'd have an office there and do 25 broadcasts a week from that very building. Now and then as I walk out the front door of WCCO and look across the street at the new parking ramp I can still visualize my grandfather's green lawn, my grandmother's well-kept rooming house and the little squirt in bangs and a Buster Brown suit teasing his grandfather for a chocolate soda. Even 50 years haven't blurred the memory. That's why I love Second Avenue."

Cedric's memory of his Magnolia home was not blurred either. When I drove by it recently I tried to see it as he did; but we have to live in a house before we can revisualize it as Cedric did. As usual, he took a humorous-sentimental point of view as he wrote on July 31, 1955, "I had the legend, 'George Washington Slept Here,' brought home to me in a personal and very minor way last week. Somebody sent me a tear-sheet from the *Announcer*, a Luverne, Minnesota, publication. Tucked in the want ad section was this advertisement: 'For Rent—The house that Cedric Adams lived in. Completely furnished, semi-modern, two-bedroom bungalow in Magnolia. Will give year's lease. Available on or before Sept. 1. See Jerry Davis, Magnolia.'

"May I draw from memory today and say just a word

about that house to any prospects that might be considering it. I lived in that house from age 2 until I was 12, so I know it well. And I still love it. I haven't been in it for 43 years, but I imagine the changes in those years have been few. The house is located on the highway that runs from Worthington through Magnolia, Luverne, and on into Sioux Falls. It's just a block from Main Street, so the shopping center is within easy walking distance.

"There's a bay window in the living room. That faces east, so it's a nice place for a fernery. Your plants get that nice morning sun. Off the living room to the south is the larger bedroom. Back of the living room is the dining room and off that, again to the south, is the second bedroom. Neither bedroom has a closet. I guess closets hadn't been invented back there at the turn of the century when the house was built. We had one of those wardrobe things in the front bedroom and that served pretty well. Off my bedroom was the stairway to the attic. That's where my clothes hung. That isn't too satisfactory. In the summertime that stairway was awfully hot and in the winter it was terribly cold. The stairway was littered with boxes, broken crockery and off-season garments that my mother always intended to take up into the attic when she had a spare moment. That time never came, and as a result, you had to kind of pick your way up into the attic. The kitchen is on the west end of the house and that takes about half of the width. The other half is taken up by a pantry and a kind of storage room where we kept the icebox and the kerosene and the ironing board and things like that. The steps to the cellar went down from the room, too.

"If you have a lot of furniture I wouldn't consider this

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house. In the living room, we had a Morris chair, a black leather rocker, a library table and our player piano, and that was just about all you could get in. On occasions we dragged in some of the dining room chairs for company.

"You'd better have a fairly small dining room set because you have to leave room enough in the dining room for the hard coal heater. We had our china closet in there. And mother found room enough for the sewing machine. She liked to sew alongside the hard coal stove in the winter time. We used linoleum on the dining room floor. Out in the kitchen there's room enough for a fair-size range and kerosene stove, if you like to use one of those in the summertime. Over on the opposite wall you can put a kitchen cabinet. I suppose if I were to go back into the pantry now, the shelves wouldn't seem very high, but as a kid, it was quite a climb up to the top. That's where mother always kept such choice things as Nabiscos, walnuts or choice cakes before they were cut.

"I can't say too much in favor of the cellar, but there's a kick waiting for you up in the attic. You'll find but two windows up there. But they don't move up and down. They're solid. But they're bordered with little panes of stained glass in red and blue and green and orange and purple. It's fun to look through those various tints to the outdoors. Be careful of the portion of the attic over the kitchen. There are no boards over that. If you step between the two by fours, you'd go right through the plaster and probably land on the kitchen range. I found a lot of gems up there, including the love letters my mother and father sent to each other, my mother's wedding dress and a 'Doctor's Book.' That was pretty spicy reading for a kid

under 12. You'll run into some spider webs up there and also some of those green-backed flies.

"If the walls of the woodshed could talk, you'd hear tales of how my father whacked my behinder out there and how I fell off the grindstone and landed beneath it but managed to wiggle out after 10 minutes of prayer and how I made my first darts and split kindling every Saturday morning and filled a bucket of hard coal and soft coal out there every afternoon after school. I could mention a few things about the privy, but maybe that's gone now. I'm not sure what that ad meant when it said 'semi-modern.' I don't know where they'd put it inside unless it was back there where we kept the ice box. I haven't any idea what they're asking for rent now, but we paid \$15 a month."

A profile written on Cedric in a national magazine which overdrew, but underlined, his small town image claimed that he still felt the all-night train ride to Minneapolis from Magnolia to see the State Fair was his most exciting trip. And that no matter what glamorous places he visited later, he was always happy to return home.

Incidentally, according to Niecy, Cedric was proud of his uninterrupted record of attending the State Fair for fifty-six of his fifty-eight years.

On August 14, 1914, *The Nobles County Review*, published in Adrian, Minnesota, reported that "Mrs. Josephine Adams left last Thursday for Minneapolis, where she will make her future home. Her son, Cedric, will stay here with relatives until school starts, when he will join her."

Cedric attended Emerson School in Minneapolis and was graduated from Central High School. During this time he worked as a soda jerk at the Chamber of Commerce for

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twelve dollars a week. He also was an office boy at the Gretchell-Tanton Grain Company, McCarthy Brothers Grain Company, and Washburn Crosby Company. (Washburn Crosby Company years later bought Radio Station WLAG and changed the call letters to WCCO!)

Cedric recalled on August 10, 1958, in his *Sunday Tribune* column some of the characters “who seem to be missing from our scene these days. We aren’t completely without them, but today’s persons of distinguishing attributes fall short of the collection we had in Minneapolis three or four decades ago. My exposure to the characters whom I’m about to chronicle started during my early boyhood visits to ‘the Cities.’ One of my first fascinations was a train caller in the old Union Station. His career began long before the public address system or even the use of a megaphone. Tones tumbled out of his gravel throat completely unaided to fill the high-ceilinged waiting room of the depot. It was always a joy to stand bug-eyed in front of him to watch his mobile mouth as he so magnificently announced the towns through which the next departing train would go.

“One of the frequent journeys grandma and I made together was to Donaldson’s Glass Block. I enjoyed watching the huge steam engines in the basement with fly wheels which extended to the ceiling as they drove generators for the store’s electricity. But the store had a character I’ll never forget. His name was Sadler and his title was superintendent, a post most department stores have abandoned. Mr. Sadler officed on the balcony, had a waxed moustache, dressed meticulously, was never without a red carnation in the buttonhole of his lapel. He toured the store twice daily

to check on operation and personnel. But his route and timing varied daily. As he strolled through each department his presence sent out a kind of wave. Saleswomen would tidy up their hair, their counters, their stock.

“When father and I visited ‘the Cities,’ there was always one occasion when we dined out together and it was usually at Schiek’s. When mother and I ate out, it was in some tearoom. Mother was an avowed ‘dry.’ Father liked to nip now and then. That’s why we so often went to Schiek’s and that’s how I met another character, the charming and delightful Louis Schiek. It was Louis who taught me first how to drink a toast properly. He had a stein of dark beer, I had water. He said, ‘When you drink a toast you must look each other in the eyes, raise your glasses, touch them gently, never taking your eyes off one another, and then drink.’

“The traffic cop at 7th and Nicollet was another character known to thousands. He had a Santa Claus shape, red veins that showed in his cheeks, a waxed moustache, wore his uniform exceedingly well. The traffic semaphores in those days were mobile affairs that were moved to the middle of the intersection and were operated by hand. A quarter turn set the flow in one direction, changed it to the other. In the summertime the semaphores had spreading umbrellas to protect the officer. It was always a production when this rotund policeman rolled out his semaphore for the rush hour traffic.

“The loop knew another man of distinction—Fish Jones, owner-operator of the famed Longfellow Gardens. Fish appeared periodically in the loop in stovepipe hat, cutaway coat, white gloves, striped trousers. Now and then he had

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a seal trailing him. At other times he led a couple of swans on a leash. Yes, characters all.”

There were “characters” in Magnolia also whom Cedric remembered well. He had a chance to meet these and his other friends again in his hometown when the dream which nearly all of us have had was realized for Cedric on May 15, 1953. Many of us have imagined the day when we would be honored by the home folks—the day “local boy or girl makes good.”



The Duke and Duchess of Magnolia in their regal coach.

Cedric’s honored day in Magnolia was festive and as formal as the folks could make it. On that day there was a coronation of the Duke and Duchess of Magnolia—of Cedric and Niocy. Before receiving their crowns they were invested in royal robes and received the plaudits of their

“subjects.” Then they were given an official proclamation signed by the mayor.

A few days before “the coronation” Claire Dispanet, proprietor of the Magnolia Steak House, had a large handbill printed. It proclaimed: “ALL HAIL TO ‘SIR CEDRIC’ THE ‘DUKE OF MAGNOLIA.’”

Among other complimentary words, the handbill read: “A man can win all kinds of honors and wealth. He can meet kings and princes, he can make a lot of money, but the real honor that few men achieve is to hold the admiration and affection, yes and the love of the ‘home folks.’ That you have, ‘Sir Cedric.’ We’re proud of you. We’re not being flowery or full of blarney when we say you’re pretty much in the hero class for the folks of Magnolia. Every time you went a bit further up the ladder to fame everybody said ‘isn’t that swell.’ Not any jealousy about it, either, Sir Cedric. Everybody took off their hats to you because you won success under your own power. We’re happy that you never forgot the town of Magnolia, where you spent your boyhood. We’re happy, too, that even though you knew all the ‘greats’ in the world of business, news and entertainment you have never lost that ‘folksy’, down-to-earth touch.”

Cedric and Niecy’s coronation as the Duke and Duchess of Magnolia was as regal as the tiny hometown could make it. The couple wore what one reporter described as “ermine-or-rabbit-trimmed” robes as Ben Davis drove them in the royal buggy to the schoolhouse. There they received their crowns. Not surprisingly, Cedric was misty-eyed as the memories of the past flooded over him.

CHAPTER III

Cedric Goes Collegiate

Every dedicated University of Minnesota football fan either remembers or has heard of what happened on November 15, 1924. Not all remember that there were three spectacular events that day. First, the University of Minnesota Memorial Stadium was dedicated. That was also the day that the Golden Gophers stopped the University of Illinois and All-America halfback, "Red" Grange, 20 to 7.

At half-time on this historic occasion there was a third event. Very few noted nor long remembered a "horse" that galloped upon the field. The front half of this charging equine was later identified as the rooster king, "Pi" Thompson. And—yes, you guessed it! The rear end? Who else? Cedric Adams!

Thirty-six years later Cedric's *Minneapolis Star* editor assigned him to write a series of columns on the University scene. Among other things, Cedric recalled how "Pi" Thompson, later a physician, and he were the cheer leaders on what he called the "poolhall side", or south side of the stadium. The college section was on the north side. Cedric boasted, however, that "Pi" and he could whip up "much vocal enthusiasm" in their sections of non-collegians.

Whenever we change from one environment to another there is apt to be a great adjustment, a cultural shock. This is certainly true when we enter college which has both its

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new freedoms and stringent academic and social taboos.

Cedric was no exception. When his editor sent him on assignment to the University of Minnesota in 1960 he described his own adjustments and the feeling of "being out of it" when he had entered thirty-nine years before.



Cedric the collegian.

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“I was a gay blade of 19, weighed 130 pounds. I wasn’t exactly retarded. I finished high school at the age of 16 but came out with a pretty flat wallet, so I worked for three years. Back there in 1921 the cake-eater was in flower and, boy, was I one! I had my sideburns cut at a slant. My suit jacket was tucked in slightly at the waist. It had but one button and the coat pockets were put in on a slant. My trousers were cuffless and had just a touch of a flare at the bottom, a kind of modified bell-bottom, if you please. Do you have that picture?

“It didn’t take too long for me to realize that I was slightly out of tune. All I had to do was look around me and I could see my non-conformist touches. First thing I did was straighten out my sideburns. Because of budget restrictions there wasn’t anything I could do about the coat with the slanted pockets or the pants with the bell-bottoms. It had to be worn out before it could be discarded. But by December I had everything under control. I found a wholesale connection through which I bought a black fur coat, dogskin as I remember, at Gordon Ferguson, the St. Paul fur house. It hit my shoe tops and covered my cake-eater suit except when I was in classes. I even remember my hat. It was a crushed-up job in brown with the entire crown battered down to within an inch of the brim. With these exterior appurtenances I was suddenly transformed from a cake-eater to a Joe College. The metamorphosis did something for me psychologically, too. I began to feel a part of the general student body, which at that time numbered 10,000. My mother never liked that hat, though.

“My dancing was another thing that had to undergo an

abrupt change. As a working boy in my late teens I had been a habitu  of what we called 'The Track.' A more polite term for the joint was 'The Arcade,' located on Fifth St. just across from the courthouse. The band was good, the dames were numerous and willing and the admission was nominal indeed. What else could a young guy ask? My first university dance was a 'sunlight' in the old Union. Co-eds dropped me like a hot potato when I started to use some of 'track' technique on the dance floor. Several of them simply walked off in disdain. But by December I had mastered the 'collegiate glide' and I was over one more hurdle."

Cedric's career at the University of Minnesota spanned nine years from the fall of 1921 until 1930; yet he fell short of graduation by three English credits. Niocy says "it wasn't because Cedric was stupid. Not Cedric! Cedric was always dropping subjects which bored him, or he would not register some sessions so he could work to earn tuition for the next."

In an Adams profile years later *Minneapolis Star* reporter, Bob Murphy, remarked about the irony of this three-credit deficiency in English. Murphy pointed out that Cedric's "casual relaxed style of writing and operating generally don't fool those who know him. They realize that Adams is also an expert reporter with intense powers of observation and a quick eye for the unusual." Cedric proved this over and over. No matter in what part of the country or world he was in, or on what assignment, Cedric gave his stories a distinctive touch which often were conversation pieces.

For example, Cedric could bring to mind when describ-

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ing the contemporary scene on the Minnesota campus those former days of the “football specials” when there would be reserved railroad cars—those for the girls and those for the boys. The baggage car, he remembered, was for dancing as the train sped them to one of the Big Ten games, and the Prohibition Amendment “wasn’t strictly observed.” Those Big Ten Specials must have been riotous with Cedric aboard as a catalyst. His inventive mind and pixie character could always dream up the unusual, the way to have fun and live life to the fullest.

Two of Cedric’s fraternity brothers, George Hellickson and Reginald Faragher, Cedric’s cousin, told me that Cedric never took a drink while he was an undergraduate. Hellickson said Cedric never needed a drink because he had so much fun without an extra stimulant, and that he had promised his mother he would not drink intoxicants.

Faragher was instrumental in getting Cedric to pledge the fraternity to which Hellickson and he belonged. It was a local, Chi Delta Xi, which later joined the national fraternity, Chi Phi. “I was naturally quite anxious to have Cedric as a fraternity brother,” Faragher told me. “We had him there for rushing parties. The boys all liked him and voted him into the fraternity. However, he caused quite a commotion at the initiation because he definitely at that point didn’t drink at all. Part of the initiation ceremonies was for the pledges to swig down some gin, which Cedric refused to do. He very obdurately refused and said he wouldn’t join if he was forced to do it.”

Hellickson recalls that “Cedric was very choosy in the classes he enrolled in. If he didn’t like a class he wouldn’t show up for it. If he liked it he’d get an ‘A’ in it. Other-

wise, he'd get a flunk because he'd drop out of a class almost immediately if it didn't interest him."

Cedric lived at the fraternity house off and on for years. Hellickson remembers Cedric's irregular hours resulting from "his stepping out practically every night in the week. Then, of course, he liked to sleep late in the morning. There was a fraternity house rule that the boys had to at least wash their hands and face before they ate breakfast. But they could come in their bathrobes. Cedric had a very old and tattered bathrobe. Before appearing he'd manage to splash a little water on his face. Very little. After eating he'd dash back to bed and if he had an early class he'd sleep right through it."

Among other things, Cedric occasionally beat the drums in a campus dance orchestra he led called "Cedric Adams' Famous Yellowjackets Dance Band." There have been no monuments erected to its success. In later years Cedric would sometimes sit in on drums when he was making personal appearances. And once while Niecy and he were in Paris, after attending the coronation of Elizabeth II in London, he sat in with a dance band at a nightclub called "The Casanova." He recounted the experience on June 6, 1953:

"It was quiet and subdued when we walked in. The orchestra was largely a string group. In an hour we had two fiddles, a clarinet, a cello, and the drums at our table playing bop—believe it or not. In the second hour something happened that rarely does in my life. I reverted to my college days. I once played drums in a dance band. So I tossed out a few francs—quite a few—and found myself playing drums with the Casanova boys.

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“That went on until 6 in the morning. I ran out of francs and what happened? The manager of the joint had to ride back with me to the hotel where I could cash a check. He practically held my wrist all the way. I was all right as a drummer, but my credit wasn’t too good.

“Anyway, how many Minneapolis musicians can say they have played with the Casanova boys in Paris?”

While Cedric was living at his fraternity house in the early '20s there were still a few World War I veterans also there. These veterans were naturally more mature and serious. Fraternity brother, Nat Finney, recalls that “one of them was Austin Grimes who resented Ced’s habit of throwing the cymbal of his drums into the corner of the cloak room when he came in at two a.m. after a dance job. Austin told Ced the next time he did it he would punch his nose. One early morning he met Ced at the head of the stairs, fist cocked and ready to make good his threat. Ced leaned toward him, face stuck out, and said, ‘Kiss me, Audie!’ ”

That was pure Adams. Cedric could crumple anger with a word or action.

As a speech major, with an English minor, at the University of Minnesota, it was only natural that Cedric would gravitate into master-of-ceremonies work while on campus. He had been the leading man in a play at Minneapolis Central High School and he always admitted he was a ham at heart.

Cedric saved in his scrapbook several clippings about his early appearances as an emcee. The clippings give further insight into what was to be his future as speaker-writer, humorist-personality. He was variously billed at his

personal appearances as “campus entertainer of note,” “toastmaster without ceremony,” and “roastmaster.” The Business Administration Boom Dance publicity release noted that “Adams can be relied upon to add spice to any program on which he appears.”

Schoolmate Finney recalled in 1952 that Cedric not only had “a penchant for practical jokes, but in his University days, as in these, Cedric possessed a Claghorn voice and had discovered he could win arguments using it.” He was a natural debater. Wayne Morse, then a speech teacher at Minnesota and former senator from Oregon, was his coach.

After Cedric’s death, Harold E. Stassen, former governor of Minnesota said, “We were at the University of Minnesota at the same time and were good friends through the years. I had a very high regard for him. He was an inimitable individual who loved life and could express his enjoyment of it and his experiences in a unique way.

“I remember,” Stassen continued, “when we were on the University debate team. Most members would sit around and talk about how we could meet this or that argument. Cedric would usually chime in and say, ‘Well, let’s think how we’re going to have the audience enjoy the debate.’ And then he would turn his thoughts to an unusual method of expression, often cryptic. He had a warm sense of human reaction from the very early days.

“Being on the Daily and busy in other activities,” Stassen concluded, “Cedric was more or less a big wheel on campus. And he carried out the part, too. He got a big raccoon skin coat and was ‘Joe College’ in every way but always with his tongue in cheek.”

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Nine years earlier Finney had written, "There were witless ones in Cedric's early days who tried to force him into the Joe College mold. It would have been easier to reorganize the college than to change Cedric! Thank heaven they gave it up."

It was in his University of Minnesota days that Cedric enunciated his "Principle of Sleep." He firmly believed eight hours' sleep are necessary. This is how he worked out the "Principle" mathematically: "Every night I spend four hours abed. I go to school eight hours a day and am half asleep all the time. Half of eight is four and four and four is eight."

It was this ability to sleep anywhere at any time that allowed Cedric to carry on a man-killing schedule for so long. Niecy once said, "I can't worry too much about Cedric. He has three secret weapons. For one thing, he can fall asleep at any time, and in any place—in a bumpy airplane or in the midst of a noisy party—and waken refreshed as a baby. Then he has his boat. Finally, Cedric is doing exactly what he wants to do."

One of the stories about Cedric the former WCCO personality, Bob DeHaven, likes to tell is the time Radio Station KSTP reportedly had made Cedric a fabulous offer to leave WCCO. The late "Rube" Couch, the local manager for Butternut Coffee, and Cedric attended a meeting regarding Butternut's possible sponsorship of the KSTP noon news. Thousands of dollars were involved. When the subject of Cedric's talent fee came up Couch glanced around the room and there was Cedric rumped and slouched on a sofa dozing contentedly.

It is paradoxical that anyone who was so seemingly

relaxed could have accomplished as much both at the University and in his later career. Undoubtedly Cedric's most important activity while on campus was his first published column which appeared in the *Minnesota Daily*. It was called "Paltry Prattle" which brought him the paltry sum of fifteen dollars a month; but they were a welcome fifteen dollars to Cedric whose income then was on a catch-as-catch-can basis. Hellickson told me the column was popular right from the start and that the *Daily* enjoyed more popularity than it ever had because of it.

Minnesota Daily staffer, Nat Finney, whose relationship with Cedric continued many years on both the "old" and the "new" Minneapolis Star, remembered that "in those days—and this isn't going back the full distance—Cedric had a way of being late with his 'Paltry Prattle' column. The crew that got out the *Minnesota Daily* would finish up, and the night editor would take the copy down to Lund Press. And still nothing from 'The Hired Hand,' which was Adams' signature in those days. Cedric would be located somewhere flashing his Manx blue eyes upon some co-ed queen, and a promise would be exacted that he would deliver his copy at the printery. Which he would . . . and then came the morning afterwards.

"Some error of exuberance had crept into Cedric's letter to the mythical 'Dere Inez,' and there was the devil to pay with the deans. Don Whitney, long gone but so warmly remembered, found a formula for such situations. On the following day the Hired Hand's contribution would be solemnly omitted, and the left-hand ear on page one would contritely say: 'The Hired Hand's column is omitted today while its author gets his mouth washed out with soap and

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water.' Somehow that was lanolin for the faculty burns."

Since it is not likely that you will ever go into the newspaper files of the University Library, as I did, to read some of the Hired Hand's columns, I think it is only fair that I share one with you which appeared December 1, 1925. Most of Cedric's early writing style—as you will note here—affected illiteracy reminiscent of Josh Billings, a nineteenth century American humorist.

PALTRY PRATTLE

By the Hired Hand

P. O. 8803

Well Inez:

The outstandin event of the last wk. is that the Faculty a round here has been tryin to work out a pension system for the old an the infirm. Personaly I think they aint embodyin the right features in the plan. Like for inst. if a Prof has never missed any of his classes or if he has been in the habit of flunkin a large percentage of his students or if he thrives on long papers why right there they is a guy that should ought to be put on a pension say at the age of 28. He is a man that is makin the most of his profession an deserves a just reward. And I would wager that most of the students would be willin to see him get it.

Now further an more if they is a Prof that never has writ a textbook or never has flunked anybody or who feels like sleepin 2 or 3 mornings a month why they is a man that aint grasped the true traits of a professor an should ought to be kept a round here. But like everything else it's on the knees of the gods

which is another way of sayin that the student body will get rooked.

Well it's only 2 more wks. till the educate it mass will be returnin to their respective Main Streets an most of them can hardly wait till they get a chance to show off to the home folks this appoplexy at one end an paralysis at the other called the Charleston. It sure must be a great throb for a set of parents to send the young Offspring off to some cultural center an then have them come home for the holidays and be able to get out in the middle of the Odd Fellows hall an hold the locals spellbound for 3 hrs. I guess that is probly what holidays is for.

I an the little coin coaxer was down seein the Phantom of the Opera Saturday an it certainly is a swell place to take a girl if she has got any emotional nature a tall. All threw the picture they is certain spooky parts an she was holdin on to my arm an hangin onto my neck all durin the performance. An I am certainly very found of those little personal touches. Well right after we come out I was feelin sort of charitable on acct. of the thrills I had just had so I says how would you like to light into a Chocolate Sundae? But dont let Pa know how I am wastin money like that. Afterwards we went home an we was standin in her doorway an I had that expectin look on my face an I says Well? But she didnt seem to get it. So I says they aint a Chance is there? An she says I'll yes you to

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death on that. Meanin that the drapin process was out of the question.

Lovingly,

—The Hired Hand.

The pithy Adams prose had another outlet in the *Daily* which added to Ced's slender budget. He wrote ads for Stiffy's Restaurant which helped make it a leading campus hangout.

There are two versions of a practical joke that Cedric was involved in while at the University. George Hellickson says Cedric was the butt of the joke, while Nat Finney gives the version that follows.

"Cedric had spotted a family with two daughters that lived in southeast Minneapolis near the campus. He touted one of his fraternity brothers into going with him to visit the two girls. He had watched the house on this particular evening until Mama, Papa, and the two daughters had gone to a neighborhood movie theater.

"Another fraternity brother, who was in on the prank, lay in wait on the front porch in the dusk until Ced and his victim showed, then rose and angrily roared, 'So you're the bastards who've been messin' around with my daughters!'

"With that he fired a blank pistol Ced had loaned him. Ced collapsed on the lawn, then hurriedly applied catsup on his shirt front. Ced's companion took off like the wind, and wound up at a police call box. When the companion returned to the scene both Ced and the 'irate father' had disappeared. Instead, there was a crowd standing around some cops.

"Shortly, another of the fraternity brothers who was in

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on the prank showed up to suggest that maybe it wasn't that serious, after all, and that the two of them better go back to the fraternity. At about this point the family returned and the cops proceeded with what is called 'an interrogation'. One old harness bull, who had overheard the newly arrived fraternity brother, suggested forcefully that they visit the fraternity house. There, of course, they found Cedric laughing. But it wasn't a laughing matter because the cops hauled them all down to the Eastside Station and made them come clean, plus pay fines."

CHAPTER IV

Cedric Goes To Seed

All his life Cedric Adams had a multitude of interests and occupations beginning with his first job in the Magnolia hardware store. Another of his jobs during his long "residence" at the University of Minnesota was that of seed salesman for Northrup King and Company. Northrup King's headquarters were in Minneapolis. Now the leading seed company in the world, in the '20's it was much smaller and more intimate.

Each summer vacation some of the campus leaders were chosen to go out on the road as salesmen. But let's let Cedric tell the duties: "I got to thinking the other day about one of the best jobs I ever had in my life. I was a summer salesman for Northrup King and Co., the seed firm. Each year they selected some 50 or 60 of us from the University and various colleges around the Upper Midwest to represent them all over the country. Our principal job was to pick up the cases of garden seed that had been sent out earlier to grocery, hardware and feed stores. These boxes had been sent out on commission and it was the salesman's job to go into the store, find the seed box, usually down in the basement, count the remaining packets and find out how much each dealer owed the company.

"We then attempted to rebook the account for the following year, sell the dealer some bulk garden seed and a

few onion sets. We then carried the seed box out to our car and hauled it down to the depot.

"There was a fellow named Mox Lindquist who was assistant sales manager. Mox was a self-styled handwriting expert and hired most of us on the basis of our penmanship. I think the reason I got the job in the first place and the choice territory of portions of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, was because I circled the 'i' in my first name.

"This all happened back in the early '20's. I went out to the so-called 'Inland Empire' every summer for four years, headquartered out of Spokane and Wenatchee in Washington and Lewiston in Idaho. Our salary the first year out was \$85 a month and expenses. Each salesman was given a Ford roadster with what was called a 'Murphy back,' a contrivance that permitted the back of the roadster to fold over, then a drawer was pulled out to catch the back and form a kind of truck body. All of the 'summer salesmen' received two weeks' indoctrination into the seed business and on the operation of our Ford roadster. I'll never forget the manual we were given. Parts of it were authored by the American Automobile Association. You may find a quote or two interesting.

"'Look over your tool box,' it said, 'and see that it contains the necessary wrenches, a spark plug socket, a pair of pliers, a box of extra tire valves, a tire pressure gauge, some extra spark plugs and rim lugs, a roll of tape, a grease gun, an extra fan belt, a sheet of cork for emergency gaskets and a small bottle of shellac.' When I read that during the indoctrination period, I almost quit right there to take up digging ditches for the summer. I visualized myself stuck out on a mountainside in Idaho taking out that sheet of

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cork and cutting a gasket. I thought of the \$85 a month, plus expenses, and decided to carry on. The manual scared me in another department. In addition to these, what I deemed foolish accessories, we were advised to carry two spare tires, 'preferably inflated on the rims,' and three extra tubes. I saw myself once more out on that Idaho mountainside, with the tire and rim off the wheel, the tire off the rim, the innertube out of the tire and me trying to stick a patch on a slow leak.

"The one thing I thought was sensible was the steel rope for towing. Economy-minded Northrup King had another piece of advice: 'Do not drive in ruts—it wears out the side walls of the tire casings. Use talcum powder when inserting tubes in casings.' I could just see the sales manager, after noting on my expense account, 'talcum powder, 35 cents,' sending me an urgent note on red paper, 'The company does not permit cosmetic purchases as an allowable expense.'

"There hasn't been very much dishonesty in my life, but now and then I wake up in the middle of the night wondering if I owe Northrup King a little dough. We were allowed hotel expense of up to \$2.50 a night in the smaller towns and up to \$3.50 in the larger cities, such as Spokane. I rigged up a kind of sleeping bag and tent arrangement which I fastened to the side of my Ford roadster and frequently 'camped out' alongside a mountain stream or in a park. The charge of \$2.50 went into my expense account and therefore resulted in a little spiff at the end of the week. In Spokane, I was permitted to stay at the Davenport Hotel at \$3.50 a night. I got my mail there, but my actual room was at the YMCA across the street at 50 cents a

night. Nightly I snuck over to the writing desk off the lobby in the Davenport to send my daily report on that hotel's stationery. Confession is good for the soul, even though it's 35 years late."

Cedric's good relationship with Northrup King, and particularly with Mox Lindquist, was evident in a letter he wrote from the Chi Delta Xi fraternity house in 1924. Cedric's "business" letters were unique both then and in his later years when he would be negotiating contracts. He often used a light, bantering approach. So Cedric's letter to Lindquist asking to be hired again for the summer is characteristic. His mentioning "a big case of seed" at a Chaska, Minnesota, store was a not-so-subtle touch to let Lindquist infer that his interest in selling seeds went beyond his summer employment. Cedric was also aware that Lindquist enjoyed his contrived lapses into illiterate spellings.

"Dear Mox:

"According to a memorandum on your desk I wish to be considered for sales work during the summer of 1924. And I don't mean probly. Writing in a philosophical vein, for I just came out of a Philosophy class, may I add that from the standpoint of Fatalism, I trust that this will come to pass, looking at the situation from the angle of determinism, may this be your attitude, and then from the liberatarians' viewpoint, I'll be damned glad to 'get liberated.'

"Passing from the epistemological into the meta-physical or from the abstract to the concrete, may I say that the party of the second part wants very much

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to be considered by the party of the first part for said work and no men by these hear presence.

"I had hoped to get over for a visit long before this, but something has always intervened to make it impossible. This business of getting smart takes considerable of my time, and then, too, the drums have to get beat up occasionally. However, I did not take my choice of the three in the matter of their importance. We are governed too much by the pulling of stimuli and too little by our own desires.

"Out in Chaska last nite I noticed a big case of seed. The dealer had discontinued our case, but it had not been shipped, and he's going to keep it. Naturally I told him there was wisdom in that. I kinda ached to get out the black book and let him have it. (No, not the book.) If the City Sales haven't an account with the Carlson Grocery at 1315 E. Franklin, it might be well to try them. They handled Ferry's last year and paid them approximately \$15.00. They want a nickel seller too.

"Say Mox, casting aside all business relationships, I'd be highly pleased if you could arrange to come over to the House for dinner some nite. As a host, well, remember the journalist, but at any rate we do have food. There are matters of great import that I should like to discuss with you, solicit your advice about, and hear your judgment upon. I will dutifully promise not to mention the name of a Seed Company during the course of the evening in order that the occasion be kept strictly social.

"Thanking you for writing me, assuring you that

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I am heartily interested, and trusting that you can
arrange to come out and that soon, I am,

As is,

C. M. Adams

CMA/eh

"

"

(Doesn't mean a thing.)"

Walter Bright, a sales representative for Northrup King from 1920 until his retirement, remembers Cedric very well. He recalls a little white duck hat Cedric wore, and that he always had a way of talking that common people could understand. That he also "had the ability in his contacts with dealers and people to bring out their side of it in such a way that he could express it in writing." Bright called it "the common touch."

Bright said the candidates for the summer seed sales jobs were first screened by the University employment service and then by Lindquist. Many of these men later distinguished themselves in business, politics, and the professions. One, LeRoy E. Matson, became a Minnesota State Supreme Court justice. And another, P. Kenneth Peterson, the mayor of Minneapolis. Bright recalls that the students selected were given a ten-day training course before they were sent out. The training was both realistic and practical. Experienced men worked with them for two or three days as soon as the students were in their assigned territories.

Cedric's correspondence with Lindquist while he was on the road focused attention on his personality. When Cedric's letters would arrive at headquarters everything

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would stop while Mox would read them to his Northrup King co-workers. There were observations, adventures, and doggerel verses in the letters all written in a humorously illiterate style. One of the wildest of these was type-written from Republic, Washington, on Spokane's Davenport Hotel stationery. (What else?)

"Dear Mox:

"Well, I have not writ you no prose for so long that I have got a wad of it stored up under my 1st layer of dandruff that I just gotta get rid of. My last trip I went north and I went so far that if I had of gone any farther I would have had to of taken a course in Eskiquemeaux or else draw pictures of what I was talkin about. I got into a town called Orient and I got orientated to a coal oil lamp which didnt no much about oil but was hep on coal. Their was nothin for me to do accept stay their seein as how them customs officers quits work at 6:00 and wont let you acrosst after that and I had to get into Canada to get into my next town in the States.

"In the A.M. I pryed my self out of the sleeping troff and drived on to ward King Georges big colony. The 1st thing I seen was a little house with a sign on it reading united states customs. And a little ways a way was an other saying Canada customs. I didnt no if I should change my habits or not as I was moving their peramently. But just as I was thinkin a guy comes gallopin out and he says where are you from and I say my home town to him and he says you didnt come from their this morning did you and I say take an other look at what I drived up in and dont ask

such dam foolish questions. And then he repeats where did you come from and then I thot he was tryin to aggravate me so I just looked at him and then he says what was the last town you was in and I says Orient but I aint braggin about it. And then he says what have you got in them grips and before I got a chanct to answer him he takes a holt of one and opens up and pores the contents of same onto the bottom of the car and then takes grip #2 and does the same and then grip #3. I thot he was a goin to start a auction the way he had my personal belongings piled up. Then he sees my typewriter and he says that will be \$7.50. I will half to contraband it. And then I says listen hear what is the idea? And he says that is what the stamps costs. And then I says I dont want no stamps, and after we had of argewed for some time I says you had best get a laps of memory whilst I slip this under the seat and he says all right if you can get buy with it in Canada.

“Then I started to pack up again and after I had got my stuff ready for the departure I drove onto where it says Canada customs and another guy with less intelligents than guy #1 romps out and he says holt on their. And it seems like as if they all got this mania for pittin your stuff out on the ground. Then he says have you got anything under the seat and I just looks and waits whilst he does the same without the waits. Then he sees the typewriter and I was wishing that I had not of made the last paymnt. on the dam thing as it would not have been their then. And he says you have not got no stamps on it that

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will cost you 11.75 and I says good lord what is the idea. And he thot I was calling him a member of the english nobility and he softens up right a way and he says you can put that back it will be o.k. Then he gives me a pass port and says go on.

“Them british possessions is just like a carnival its hard to get in and harder to get out. When I went to cross the line again an other one comes up looking like a Pure Oil cop and he says have you got anything to declare and I says nothing except that I never seen such dam monkey business in my life. Well he was even more lazy than the other too he says empty out the grips. Then he asks me if I have got any liquors or merchandise and I says no then he startes a snoop conducted by himself personally. And I bet if I had of soaked my pajamas in beer he would of rung em out. I was glad I didnt have no seed cases on as he of made me tear open every packet whilst he looked for beer. Then he says come in and sign a paper. Well I went into a house their and there was about nine guys a round their and they all had badges on. At 1st I thot I got into a elks convention. Well then I met up with one outside and I says what is the idea of the badge and he says I am lookin for aleans and I thot right off the bat he might think I had some of them in my grips so I says come over and I will show you I aint got any but I will do my own unpacking as I no where I want the things stacked. And he says no I guess I will take your word for it and he says have you been convoyed yet and I says you dont see no scars do you. Well I didnt no if he was going to make

me a member of the house or commons but I was gettin so damd used to havin these guys monkey with my shavin cream that I says listen on acct of my extreme youth and also a governess which I had whilst I was a kid I am going to plead mitigating circumstances short of legal insanity so you had better not try to take any more advantage of me. Then he says all right but 1st take this ticket over to the u.s. official and let him take care of you. Well he says have you any thing to declare and I says listen hear I quit declarin about four miles back Im just plain cussin from now on, and he says well I guess you can pass. I have made my mine that if I have to go forth and back I will fix me a close line and hang all my stuff out on the running board and say a line of hard-wear thats all I have got ow revoyer.

"Then I asked the natives how far it was to Curlew and they says nineteen miles over the seven devils. So over I started. I think them devils was mixed sexes and they had had some offspring sinct them natives crosst them. I saw seven big ones and about forty little ones. Then into lawyers canyon which must of been named that on acct of it being so crooked and then Cur Plunk into Curlew.

"From their I went to Republic and when I tried the door of my customers store it was locked and I asked a lady what was the idea and she says the town is closed on acct of the 1st day of the fair. Well we had two accts hear so I decide it to stay over."

Adumz.

In Cedric's scrapbook are several other letters to "Mox"

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Lindquist which all point to Cedric's eventual career as a columnist. Two of the letters written while he was on the road for Northrup King in Illinois express Cedric's thrill at selling several contributions to the *Chicago Tribune*. The first letter from Mattoon, Illinois, expressed his reaction:

"Dear Acne,

"I have run on to a string of success that I simply got to tell you about. You know you of all ways said as how I was bent toward the writin business well the Chicago Trib which is a stack of paper they hand out down here for 3 lousy ducats has got a dept. in it which is called Slanguage and same is run by the contribs. They give you a buck for everything they except so I laid the torso down on a seat last wk. and think out about 57 selections that was red hot from the word go an I sends them for their use. Well I picked up the Sunday edition and turned immediately to my section and low and behold they was one of the dam things in. Well to see the old C.M.A. sittin behind the article was a big kick to the dudley. So you can all ready see I am a huge success as a journalist. My writings have now got a net pd. circulation of 1,678,987 accordin to their own figures an not only that but last wk. they was exactly 3,357,974 eyes shot over the article with eager interest an this of coarse is not even mentionin the other members of the family which reads same. An to think that it was due to you that I got start it on this memorable cruise to success. I want that you should hustle the letter from the Trib. to me right off of the bat on acct. that I need

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the dough badly as the 1st payment on the type-writer will be due soon.”

A few days later Cedric wrote from Champaign, Illinois:

“Dear Mox:

“I am in recpt. of that lousy buck from the Chi Trib an they owe me three more which I wisht they would send on acct. that I have on mine several finance problems which I certainly need the money for.

“Yes, I am certainly a good journalist! If it wasnt for keepin the dough out off an from circulation I would frame the ck. as bein the 1st. returns from my pen an later on in life when I am probly writin for such famous publications as THE SEED, HOW TO BE A PLUMBER, or MY TRIP THRU THE STOCKYARDS, why this ck. will be very dear to my memory. But right in the stage of the game I am in now why memory dont mean any more to me than starch in my collar so I guess I will go out an spend same now.

“Now regardin the banquet. If you want an can use a one man skit of about seven minutes in length why I will donate a oral offerin that I aint puttin no warranty expressed or implied concerning degree of purity or germination of same. At any rate I will get it ready an then when I get in you can audit it and if you think it will go over why I will spout forth if not they wont be no hard feelings or skull fractures no matter which way the tide turns.

Love,

Adumz”

Cedric was in Texas at least one winter and a summer.

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One of his letters on Northrup King stationery was from Tyler, Texas, in which he wrote, "The other nite whilst Warner Forsman was warmin a twin bed I wore out a little ribbon in getting out the 'Seed Bag' [The Northrup King house organ]. In fact I was sittin up at 3:35 still pounding the alphabet when some bozo up above raps on the radiator which was the prelude to a good murder scene if I did not quit the Underwood operations so I quits. If they is I thing which I like to come in succession its good health aint you the same way?

"My Xmas will be quiet Merry on acct. that this hotel is fine I an the food is the kind which dont need any Wrigley aftermath. If it dont warm up tho I guess I will drive to Miami for the holiday or may be Galveston an right now I am sorry I write about the B.V.D. raiment as they are not functionin as they should ought to right now."

Just before Christmas Cedric wrote another letter from Texas to the home office in mock self-pity telling of his search for "a rm. with a fireplace in it for Xmas eve but I guess they aint any hear. Ordinarily my sox will stand up in the corner so I guess if I have a sign paint it why old Nick can follow the detour all right. This hotel would make the Nicollet Hotel in Minneapolis look she needed renovatin and I will be sittin pretty for the holiday season accept for me not havein my Mother hear.

"When the roll is called up yonder, when roll is called up yonder, when the roll . . . when . . . I just Cant finish.

' (Teardrops)

Adumz."

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Cedric wrote also a poem commemorating that Christmas:

'Twas the day before Christmas,
When all thru the room,
Not a creature was stirring,
Save the Maid and her broom,

The lobby was empty
The clerks looked half dead.
My socks were so dirty
I hung my shirt up instead.

I looked for old Santa
To come thru the night,
But his reindeer had detoured
For the roads were a sight.

His load was too heavy
To travel by rail.
There was nothing to do but
Take my shirt off the nail.

My spirits were broken,
My hopes were downcast,
I'll stick it out this time,
But, Man, it's the last!

Anon Anon.

My favorite bit of doggerel by Cedric is one he entitled, "98 Fair and Height," which he wrote while in Texas. It appears in his scrapbook in Cedric's penciled handwriting with each verse illustrated with appropriate stick figures:

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Because it's hot
I haven't got
Anything on but me.
And I don't care
How much they stare
Nor what it is they see.

My B. V. D.'s
Impede the breeze
That cools the sturdy limbs.
It may be rude
To sit here nude
But I'm fond of foolish whims.

With pants and vest
And all the rest
A hanging on the chair
I haven't got
An awful lot
That doesn't get the air.

But — — — — —
I would advise
If you are wise
And try my little trick
To gently place
A bit of lace
Where I'm inclined to stick.

CHAPTER V

The Lull Before Success

A New Star At The Old Star

The 1925 Christmas vacation was an important milestone in the life of Adams, the collegian. No one has related why better than Cedric did in 1949: "More to refresh my own memory than anything else, I'm going to go back to 1925. I had been doing a column for the University of Minnesota Daily four days a week for \$15 a month. For some reason or other, it had a pretty fair readership. Nat Finney was city editor of the Star then. One Christmas vacation he got the idea that it might help boost circulation for the Star if, during the Christmas holidays, the paper ran a little university section every day while the Minnesota Daily suspended publication for the Christmas season. He asked me if I would do a daily column for the Star's University section for those two weeks. We haggled a little over money, but it was finally agreed that I was to get \$50 a week for those two weeks. I went to work. I did an alleged humor column in those days.

"I ground out 12 columns in two weeks. (We had no Sunday edition in 1925.) It was the hardest job I ever did in my life. I fooled somebody, though. At the end of two weeks the editor offered me a full-time job on the paper. But only half of my day was spent at column writing. The first half I was on the rewrite desk, one of the

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toughest assignments on a paper. And I had never written a news story in my life. I couldn't write a fire story to this day. We stuck awfully close to standards in those days. The lead story of any item had to have the who, what, why, when, how, and where. You had to give the whole story in the first four or five lines. Then you retold the story about three times after you got the lead written. We ran short-handed then, too. The reporters on their beats all over town would start telephoning in their stories about 11:15, the rewrite man had to take notes and then write the story for an 11:45 deadline. That was a blood, sweat and tears era, if ever there was one.

"My first daily column, 'The Observatory,' ran on the editorial page. I used a Samuel Pepys' diary takeoff as the opener every day, filled in with jokes, little departments, quips and an occasional poem. Had to be at work by 8 every morning, too. Many a time I'd sit for a whole afternoon trying to think up one gag. A lousy one at that, it would be. Thank goodness we had no such thing as readership surveys then. I would have been lower than a liver pill testimonial, I know. Once you get that grind of a column a day into your system, though, it seems you're set for life from the standpoint of the routine never bothering you."

As if the re-write assignment were not enough, Cedric boiled over when he was also required to type the stock market reports, a job usually done by a copy boy. This precipitated his resignation via an explosive letter to the managing editor, Roger Banning. When a reporter recounted the episode years later he said "the letter of

resignation is still being quoted, as the saying goes, by the cognoscenti.”

Cedric occasionally would refer to those days at the “old” *Star*, but never more humorously than he did in the house organ, *The Star and Tribune Makers*, in the September 1952 issue.

“The *Star* in those days,” Cedric wrote, “was owned by a fellow named Frizell. He had made some money on some kind of a deal with fountain pens. About all he did at the *Star* was walk around the office. Next in line was a fellow named Tom Van Lear. He was a former mayor of Minneapolis and about all he did was follow Frizell around. What probably had happened was that Frizell had sold Van Lear one of his pens, the pen had gone on the fritz and Van Lear was waiting until Frizell had made enough on the *Star* to refund Van Lear the amount he had paid for the fountain pen.

“Editor George Adams and John Sherman wrote all the editorials in those days. And we had a very rigorous editorial policy. We campaigned for flower boxes on the Nicollet Avenue lamp posts. We never got them but it was fun waging the campaign. During the election campaign years it was a very simple matter for the *Star* to decide its editorial policy. We always waited until the *Minneapolis Journal* had picked its candidates. We knew that he was going to be a dead pigeon. So, we always picked the other one and invariably emerged the winner.

“We didn’t stress advertising very much in those days. We carried no retail advertising, the emphasis fell on what we call national advertising. One of our national ads was the cure for the itch and the other was a remedy if you

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had something wrong with your gall bladder. Apparently the remedies were all right, too, because you don't see those ads anymore. I suppose everybody was cured.

"Most of us carried our lunch, too. And along about 4:30 in the afternoon the city room smelled like a Nu-Skin factory because of the banana peels in waste baskets.

"On payday, however, we all ate at the cigar and sandwich counter in the lobby. That was run by a fellow named Emil. Emil didn't serve sliced ham sandwiches. He served sliced sliced ham sandwiches. As a matter of fact, he was so deft I think he could have sliced sliced dried beef. He had another little money maker. He developed his own method of reclaiming soda straws that we got with our milk. He could take a used straw back into his little cubby hole, do something to it and make that straw look and work like new. Emil died a few years later on his yacht at Miami Beach."

Whiz Bang

Cedric's varied experience at the University of Minnesota as a columnist, master-of-ceremonies, dance band leader, practical joker, cheer leader, debater, and member of the University Masquers paid off when he joined Fawcett Publications in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, in 1928, as an associate editor. Fawcett's then published a variety of magazines including *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*, which was selling over half a million copies a month at twenty-five cents apiece.

Actually, Cedric had begun turning out jokes for *Whiz Bang* during his first years at the University. He later described it as "a little journal of jokes, cartoons, philoso-

phies and humor—all of which was a little on the blue side in those days. Now, nearly 20 years later, you could read any issue of *Whiz Bang* in the politest of society and it wouldn't arch a brow."

Nat Finney referred to this Adams activity as "fattening his purse by jokesmithing. It has been said—by me at least—that few young men could turn out a 'he and she joke' into a limerick and vice versa faster than could C. Malcolm Adams. His check for same ran \$5 per contribution."

When *Minneapolis Star* columnist, Virginia Safford, reviewed *Poor Cedric's Almanac*, published in 1952, she wrote that she "had known Cedric when he was poor." Then added, "I can recall when we were both working for Fawcett Publications. Though I was running my own magazine, he'd be dropping in to ask for a \$5 or \$10 advance. This I readily turned over anticipating a bit of good copy for the magazine I ran. In fact, we were reminiscing recently how I had paid him the first money he had earned from an article. It was then a big \$15. Subject of the article was Bronko Nagurski, the famous University of Minnesota All America Football player.

"Actually, 'Poor Cedric's Almanac' is Adams' second bound publication. One day Fawcett asked him to get out a book that would be titled 'The Country Plumber.' It was to be a takeoff on Chick Sales' 'The Specialist.' The \$300 he was to be paid must have looked awfully good to him, because he sat down one night at 11 p.m., wrote until 9:00 a.m. and his first book was completed. It sold 40,000 copies."

When Virginia Safford resigned from the *Star* to move

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to Cuernavaca, Mexico, Cedric bantered his good friend and associate of so many years noting that her new home would be different from her place in Bloomington, Minnesota, adding, "I envied you your life in the country—until I saw your shoes. I've wondered how you still get that stuff off them."

Then he typically reminisced: "I'm sure you remember your happy years with the Golfer & Sportsman at Fawcett's in Robbinsdale. I've heard you mention how you gave me my so-called writing start. You've always done what I like to call a 'fringe' job on reporting that. We didn't have what we know now as cash income in those days. Everything was on a 'trade deal' basis. You were up to your navel in such things as Pontiacs, lawn furniture, dry cleaning, due bills at the YMCA in New York and beach shoes from Stendal the Shoeist. When it came to paying me off for the little pieces I turned out for you, there was never any cash so I took my writing fee in what was then known as Kingsbury Pale, a near beer used for spiking purposes. They had advertised and somehow you had 700 or 800 cases of the stuff you weren't able to use, so I agreed to take my fee in near beer. You used to wonder why I could never get my magazine copy in on time. You live on a diet of near beer and there isn't enough time out of the bathroom to devote to free-lance writing.

"Your desk location at Robbinsdale had an effect you may not have heard about. It was located at the back of the top of the stairs. There was nothing but a bannister between your desk and the stair well. And your desk was nothing but a flat table at which you worked. Understand, I'm not criticizing, but you sat there in a kind of relaxed position.

It didn't take long for the engraving salesman and the associate editors and all others to form a habit of looking up at you as they went down the stairs. Then gradually these same persons caught on to the idea that as they walked up, if they turned, they could see you on the way up, and I mean clear up. So we had several callers a day trying to negotiate those stairs and at the same time trying to catch a glimpse of you. That was really the beginning of what we know today as the slipped disc. And you can see how it would happen."

When Fawcett Publications moved to New York Cedric was faced with the problem many Americans had after the stock market crash of 1929 and during the subsequent Depression. He had to find steady work. Among other jobs to tide him over, he was a salesman for Chesterfield Cigarettes while still dabbling in courses at the University.

1930 had one great highlight in Cedric's life. One day at Stiffy's Restaurant at the University a mutual friend introduced him to the daughter of a Virginia, Minnesota, physician. She was Bernice Lenont, who is still better known to her friends as Niecy.

This meeting blossomed into love. On July 13, 1931, Niecy and Cedric eloped to Sisseton, South Dakota, which is just across the Minnesota border. They had a formal wedding ceremony later in Virginia, Minnesota, where Niecy's parents lived.

When Niecy first met Cedric she had been struck by his way of asking questions which made you feel he was interested in you. He had the knack of making people feel important.

It was these qualities which played such a key role in

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Cedric Adams' subsequent career as a columnist and radio-television personality.

One wonders what internal adjustments Cedric was making before 1931. Had he already fully realized his special qualities for reaching and drawing out others? Was he fully aware of how others perceived him as he surely must have been later in his life when success was his?

Cedric's inborn perceptivity and curiosity may have been sharpened by his writing ambitions. His aims were journalistic since his early attempts at columns reveal this. Certain patterns in his life were emerging. First of all, he had lived by his wits in his teens and twenties in the sense that he had served in many capacities: dance band leader, emcee, joke writer, seed salesman, *Minnesota Daily* columnist, ad writer for Stiffy's Restaurant, cigarette salesman, plus his first stint at a re-write man and columnist with the old *Minneapolis Star*.

Writing, speaking, and entertaining were the abilities which were emerging. Finally, these abilities combined to build the Adams image—the "I'm a friend of Cedric's" feeling.

The Turning Point

1931 was the turning point for Cedric Adams. He was married in 1931, which meant increased responsibilities. He was twenty-nine years old and did not have a steady job because Fawcett Publications had moved East.

The 1931 Depression year found job opportunities scarce for the unemployed. Cedric grasped every chance to increase a slender income. His best income source came from writing a column for the handout, the *Minneapolis*

Shopping News. The column did not catch on immediately; but when it did its readers anxiously waited for each weekly release. Readers welcomed the sunlight the *Shopping News* column brought as a relief from the grim Depression news. Cedric had that mysterious sense of divining what interested readers just as he had had when he was writing his Minnesota Daily column. His penetrating perception caught that which was universally appealing.

One example Niecy cites was the impact the *Shopping News* column had when it mentioned a "haunted house." Dozens rushed to see it. Another instance of where Cedric's own curiosity was contagious.

During those struggling years of the early thirties Cedric had to eke out additional dollars to add to the meager pay from the *Shopping News*. He wrote jokes and cartoon gags evenings. Sometimes as many as fifty a night. Of these he might sell ten. Cedric also accepted master-of-ceremony jobs. He was ideally suited for these assignments because he knew the latest jokes and local gossip.

The Adams budget did not allow much for recreation. Like millions of Americans the Adams would play bridge with friends. These sessions paid later dividends for Cedric because he had found that if he brought up a subject at the bridge table that stopped the play and created lively discussion that this would be column fodder. He never forgot this. Both in column-writing and broadcasting he knew that the ideal topic or program was one which stimulated "card-table conversation." Years later he exemplified this in an imaginary epistle to his parakeet:

"Dear Gabby: Inasmuch as you're a comparative newcomer to our house there's something I want to discuss

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with you. It isn't too serious, but I do think you should know about it. You'll notice tonight that your mistress will spend almost the entire evening out in the kitchen. Then tomorrow morning she'll be up long before you usually awaken. You'll know that she's up because she'll start running the vacuum cleaner around 6 a.m. She'll go over the entire house—cleaning, dusting and sprucing it up. Everything will glisten like you've never seen it glisten before. Her evening in the kitchen was spent preparing 'the hot dish.' All this hinges around the fact that she's entertaining her bridge club tomorrow.

"Now let me outline the routine you may expect the rest of the day. 'The girls' (that's the way they refer to each other although there isn't one of them under 48) start arriving around 11 in the morning. Your mistress meets them at the door and each one will say, 'My, you look lovely today.' And your mistress will answer by saying, 'My hair's a mess. I didn't get a chance to have it done yesterday.' Then the girls will go into the bedroom to take off their wraps and each one will look around slyly to see how clean the soap dish is or whether the medicine chest has been straightened. That's a regular ritual. Then they're ready to play.

"Playing is done in the living room. Some of them will play gin, others Bolivia, and the die-hards, four of them, will set up one table for bridge. Then the game begins. They cut for deal and invariably the wrong one opens the bidding. 'One club,' South will say. 'One club?' West will echo. 'Let me see. One club, huh? Say, that reminds me. Have you heard about the Schmaltzes?' That stops not only the bridge game but also the playing of the gin and

the Bolivia table. 'Did they have a knockdown and drag-out the other night! I heard it all from Mary Glump. She lives right next door. Would you ever guess that he'd actually hit her? He did! And they always seem so lovey-dovey in public. Well, she wound up with a regular black eye. Mary said she must have hit him with something. Could have been a lamp because she heard glass shatter all over.'

" 'That man has always given me a pain,' said East. 'I don't know how she's put up with him as long as she has. And she's such a sweet girl. I hope she did hit him with a lamp. He's not only mean but he's stingy on top of it. I'll bet he hasn't taken her out to dinner in a year.' 'Did you bid one club, sweetie?' asked West. 'Well, I think I'll say one diamond.' 'One diamond?' mused North. 'Let me see. This is going to call for some study. One diamond? What shall I do? Oh, I just thought of something. What do you suppose happened to Harold Limp? He got himself engaged. And after all these years, too. Knew the girl two weeks. And do you know where he met her? In a cocktail lounge of all places! Can you imagine how Margie feels. She gave him the best nine years of her life and then he ups and gives a rock to a girl—a pickup, really. Sometimes men make me sick. Let's see, yes, one diamond.'

" 'Is it my turn?' asked North. 'One diamond. My, that's what I was going to bid. Partner, what did you bid? Oh yes, a club. And you bid a diamond. I'll say one heart.' 'Darn,' said East, 'that's what I was going to bid. Now I've got to think of a new one. Let me see, what's been bid? A club, a diamond, a heart. Say, before I forget. Did you hear what happened to Myrtle and Elmer Flotsam? They're

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separated and she's going to get a divorce. Elmer fell in love with his secretary. She was that pretty brunette that Myrtle didn't want him to hire in the first place. Well, Elmer told Myrtle he wanted a divorce but that she could get it. What's more, she's going to do it. She'll get the house and the car, though, so that isn't too bad. But Elmer gets his freedom and his secretary. I think I would have fought it. Let me see, a club, a diamond, one heart. I think I'll pass.'

"Then your mistress will break in and she'll say, 'Let's finish this after we eat.' She's been pretty worried about how her hot dish turned out and she wonders if she forgot to put vinegar in the dressing. Anyway, dear Gabby, you'll hear them all afternoon. I always look forward to bridge club days because there's always some of the hot dish left over and it's always very good. I'm sorry you can't eat that kind of food. Don't you ever get tired of nothing but seeds? I know I would. But what I wanted to warn you about most of all was this: If I were you, I'd stick pretty close to my cage all day tomorrow. I don't want you in the living room learning any new words. It'd be terrible, for instance, if you said, 'Mrs. Glump hit her husband with her lamp,' if she happened to be visiting us some night. Be a good bird, and I'll see you tonight."

Until 1935 when the Cowles' interests bought the "old" *Minneapolis Star*, there reportedly was an unofficial boycott of Cedric by the three Minneapolis newspapers: the old *Star*, the *Journal*, and the *Tribune*. Allegedly this "boycott" stemmed from his fiery letter of resignation from the old *Star* which he had written the managing editor, then had precipitately left. That scorching letter began a

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long feud between the two, so Cedric was reportedly not welcome with some newspaper executives.

During this period there were a few low-paying, freelance assignments in radio, which Cedric gladly accepted, although he was aiming at a newspaper career. Radio was not a prime consideration for him then. But it was as a radio newscaster in a depressed economic period that he scored his first big success.

CHAPTER VI

Ten O'Clock Sandman

Cedric's start in radio was modest; but it was a start. One of his first radio appearances was in a dramatic role on WCCO for which he received \$3.50. The production was entitled, "The Curtains Part," which was written and produced by Marjorie Ellis McCready, a Minneapolis newspaper writer.

Among Cedric's other free-lance radio assignments was a program called the "Happy Home Hour" which was broadcast over WRHM in Minneapolis. (WRHM's call letters were later changed to WTCN; then to the present WWTC.) The program had six participating sponsors during its fifteen minutes.

One day a Minneapolis department store sponsor, the E. E. Atkinson Company, had a sale on bloomers. Cedric read the bloomer commercial on his program. The commercial began to strike Cedric as funny. The announcer also got to laughing. There was nobody else around and the show broke up. Unable to stop laughing, the two left four or five minutes of dead air space echoing resoundingly through the ages. But Atkinson's sold out their bloomers!

Radio was burgeoning as the principal source of information and entertainment in the late '20's and early '30's. By 1929 over twelve million American families owned radio sets which were then very expensive. After the

stock market crash of 1929 radio audiences increased dramatically. For many of the unemployed radio was a prime time-filler. Reading declined with some because it was easier to sit back and be informed and entertained by radio.

Meantime, Americans were becoming more concerned with world events. The United States was no longer an insulated nation. After World War I Americans were more aware of events beyond their borders. The time was ripe for radio news, especially for qualified men who could clarify the news like H. V. Kaltenborn, who had an extensive newspaper background.

The personal touch of radio news and commentary carried more conviction, according to a *Fortune* magazine poll, than did the more impersonal newspapers and news magazines.

There was growing competition between the press and radio. These media fought for the advertising dollar. This fight brought pressure from newspapers on the three American press services: Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service. As a result, these news agencies notified the radio stations and networks in 1933 that they would no longer provide them with news. This included even newspaper-owned radio stations. In 1934, representatives of the newspapers, radio stations, and networks worked out an agreement which created the Press-Radio Bureau. This agency was to supply a limited amount of headline news each day to broadcasting stations. The stations were required to advise their listeners to read local newspapers for complete details. This arrangement shackled the radio industry. The networks began setting up their own news-

gathering organizations; while many stations subscribed to a newly created news service, Trans-Radio Press. Meantime, newspapers were buying radio stations as a hedge.

The so-called "Press-Radio War" ended when United Press and International News Service saw that the ground for selling their services to networks and stations was too fertile to ignore since radio news could not and should not be impeded.

Early in the Depression the circulation of newspapers reportedly fell off twelve per cent. Radio news was a particular boon to the farmer and small town residents. This is substantiated by the research of Dean E. W. Ziebarth of the University of Minnesota who in 1948 reported in his doctoral dissertation that "there can be little doubt that the news program is the most highly valued single program type among rural listeners. This trend was well established before World War II, gained strength during the conflict, and appears to be continuing with relatively little diminution."

And it was to rural and small town audiences that Cedric Adams had no difficulty adapting because of his own rural background when he got the opportunity to broadcast the news over WCCO in September 1934. While the network radio news commentator gained stature in world affairs, Cedric Adams became a good neighbor to the Northwest.

The automobile, the motion picture, and the radio broadcasting industries all had an impact on the United States in the 1920's and 1930's. The improved transportation and forms of communication brought a greater awareness of other regions and societies. Radio, especially, broke down regionalism. Radio voices broke through dialectal diction

modifying the spoken language to a more uniform standard with the exception of the Deep South and regions in the East. Northwest listeners easily identified with Cedric's speech because it was both colloquial and casual. Previously, many announcers and newscasters had used painfully formal language carefully articulated.

In 1934 the general manager of Radio Station WCCO was Earl Gammons. He recalls how Cedric was hired as a newscaster: "Well, I knew Cedric. I used to run into him when I was working for Washburn Crosby Company and running their magazine. He was over at the University and he was doing a little writing on the side and becoming quite famous for the things he was doing. We put him on the air several times and Cedric found it a little difficult to take his work too seriously. He would get to laughing in the middle of a program, if something funny happened, with the result that we finally figured there wasn't much of a future for him so we dropped him."

But Gammons had second thoughts about Cedric when it seemed advisable to beef up the WCCO news coverage in view of the restrictions resulting from the "Press-Radio War". The two five-minute newscasts the networks were allowed to broadcast daily under the Press-Radio agreement were insufficient and did not give local or regional coverage.

Cedric's *Shopping News* column had caught on. He had a deep, authoritative voice, a news background, and an enthusiastic personality. These factors made him the logical newscaster choice for WCCO, the dominant voice of the Northwest.

WCCO had no news-gathering and news-writing staff

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in 1934. It was "paste-up" news at first. The news which was broadcast was "begged, borrowed, or stolen"; but when United Press decided to sell its news service WCCO became a "rip 'n read" operation. This meant that Cedric or one of the staff announcers ripped the news off the United Press teletype, processed it to some extent, and read it on the air.

When Sig Mickelson became WCCO's news director all this changed. Mickelson, now vice president of Time-Life Broadcast, Incorporated, and former CBS vice president of news, raised WCCO's news coverage and editing to the degree he thought a fifty thousand watt, clear channel station should have. Under Mickelson's direction WCCO came to the forefront in radio news.

In a letter to me Mickelson wrote, "There is not much I can add to what you know about Cedric Adams except for the fact that WCCO did operate exclusively on a 'rip 'n read' basis when I entered the scene in the winter of 1943. As a matter of fact, it was a bit of a problem to convert the news broadcasters, including Adams, from their reliance on United Press copy to a willingness to read staff-written broadcasts.

"As to Cedric himself, I think he achieved his impact largely through the force of his personality since he was almost entirely dependent upon staff reporting and writing for the broadcasts which he read."

Mitchell V. Charnley, professor emeritus of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, worked at WCCO-Radio during the summer of 1943 as a news writer when the changeover from a "rip 'n read" operation was still in transition. Charnley reinforces Mick-

elson in these words: "One of my sharpest memories is that Cedric was reluctant to give up his early catch-as-catch-can method of preparing his newscast when WCCO put its full-time news room into operation. Cedric's habit had been to come and rip some copy off the printer, add to it some ad-libs that he got from the evening paper, and put a well-organized and smooth newscast on the air. He didn't think anybody else could do it for him."

Charles F. Sarjeant, a former associate director of WCCO-Radio News, remarks about the compatible "marriage" between Adams and WCCO in *The First Forty*, a book commemorating the fortieth anniversary of WCCO. Sarjeant says that "WCCO and Cedric were made for each other. Cedric brought human qualities to a radio station which had become an institution in the region, and WCCO made an institution of Cedric Adams—a personable, likeable human being. The two together fit perfectly as good neighbors to the Northwest."

After Mickelson set up the news bureau Cedric was not involved in gathering, editing, and re-writing the news. He had the ability to read the news at sight with surprising accuracy and understanding. This sight-reading ability served Cedric well during his broadcasting years. And when he would fluff or mis-read he would chuckle and his listeners would overlook and love him for his humanness!

Niecy told me how Cedric and she had fallen asleep one evening on their cruiser which was moored at the Minnetonka Boat Works' dock at Wayzata, Minnesota. The news teletype and the remote broadcasting equipment were inside the Boat Works. Niecy recalls that about "three minutes before ten—I don't know what wakened me—I sat up and

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said, 'Cedric, you're on the air in three minutes.' Well, I've never seen anyone scramble so fast. He ran up that hill and into that room. He ripped the news off the teletype and sat down and gave the news cold turkey. He had the knack of reading his news without having to rehearse it, if it were necessary."

In later years Cedric's man-killing schedule often did not give him time to read the news ahead of time; but as a former newscaster and news writer I believe Cedric—or anyone who communicates either interpersonally or over a mass communications medium—would have been more effective if he had gone through the intrapersonal process of thinking the news through by editing and writing the news himself. However, Cedric's theory—or rationalization, if you will—was that he wanted the copy to be as much *news* to him as it was to his listeners. The results were sometimes painful for those who edited and wrote the news for him, as I did, because of misplaced inflections which sometimes gave new and strange interpretations to the material. But Cedric was Cedric, and no one but the hard-working and underpaid news writers seemed to mind!

Jim Bormann, the present news director of WCCO-Radio who succeeded Mickelson in 1951, recalled for me his ten-year association with Cedric. Bormann said that "he was the kind of a person that was easy to get along with. There were times when he indicated that he liked and appreciated and even expected the special attention that he received; but he was never 'fat-headed' about it to a point where we found it difficult to get along with him."

The reason for this, Bormann believes, is that "Cedric understood people so well that he carried this over even

among the people he worked with. He was as friendly, affable and even considerate with those who, in a sense, worked for him as well as with those he was trying to impress. He didn't always do things exactly the way we wanted him to do them. We used to have considerable anguish over the fact that he didn't want to review the newscast script before he went on the air. We put our life's sweat and blood into the scripts themselves and usually didn't know until a minute before newscast time whether Cedric would be there to read it. He almost always was bursting into the newsroom with only a split minute to go before broadcast time. Just enough to pick up his script, clear his throat, press the button that turned on the mike.

"Then he'd go on the air with the affable manner that he had. He told us the reason he didn't want to review the script was because he wanted to react to it as his listeners reacted. If there was a bit of humor in the script he wanted to laugh at it as he came across it in the copy rather than having to laugh at it artificially on the second time around."

Bormann added, "We did feel that Cedric was very special and that very often he was able to do things with a script that we really hadn't written into it—that we didn't know was there. He did have a tendency to ad-lib. He was careful not to ad-lib any substantive matter; but he would put in little transitions or phrases occasionally making the news sound more conversational. He would chuckle over the funny things. This was what people remembered most about Cedric—the friendly chuckle on the news."

"He was," Bormann concluded, "extremely effective in communicating ideas. So many announcers who read news

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may be excellent announcers, but they have no understanding of the background in the news. They only mouth the words put in front of them. They really don't assimilate the thought. Cedric did."

The WCCO newscasts were tailored for Cedric's easy reading. When I was writing Cedric's newscasts, I adapted to Cedric's speaking style by using longer sentences than I would for my own newscasts and by incorporating some of Cedric's pet words and phrases in the script.

The international and national news developments were customarily wrapped up in semi-narrative form at the beginning of the newscast before the first commercial unless local or regional developments deserved priority. Ordinarily, brief local and regional items were each written on separate sheets so Cedric could stop at any point. This format was "insurance" for his ending on time since he rarely looked at the copy beforehand and was inconsistent in reading speed. For example, I noted that Cedric reflected his relaxed mood on his Sunday evening newscasts when he would read three to four less items than on his weekly evening newscasts. Nevertheless, I wrote the normal amount of copy just in case.

The average radio listener and television viewer is not aware of the complexity of broadcasting. He either does not know, or completely neglects, the men and women behind the man before the microphone or camera. Cedric Adams was the man before the microphone at WCCO-Radio; but behind him were over two dozen newsmen, engineers, salesmen, advertising representatives, and promotion people. There were even more on the television newscasts.

Hard-nosed newsmen do not accept this situation too happily. They feel a newscaster should be more than a personality and that his popularity should be based on news sense rather than on showmanship. This is not cited to belittle Cedric Adams' abilities as a newsmen. It is meant as a factual observation because Cedric possessed both a news sense and showmanship which, when combined, equalled an appealing, enduring personality.

Because of their fixed times news broadcasts depend upon habit and loyalty for their ratings. No wonder airline pilots flying over the WCCO-coverage area often remarked how the lights in small towns and farmhouses would disappear shortly after Cedric's Nighttime News. And one elderly lady listener was often quoted for her naive remark, "I go to bed every night with Cedric!"

Dr. Dwight W. Culver, academic dean at the College of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul, dubs Cedric "the Ten O'Clock Sandman." Not that Cedric's news made his listeners go to sleep; rather, that his news sign-off signaled the close of the day.

Listeners and readers not only felt they were "a friend of Cedric's"; they believed they also knew Niecy and the three sons because they were often mentioned in his column, "In This Corner." Anything the Adams family did was news. So when Niecy and two of the boys once pinchedhit for Cedric on the Sunday Noon News, it appeared in the *Tribune* as a feature item. Barbara Flanagan, now a columnist for the *Minneapolis Star*, related the event under the headline:

CEDRIC SICK—FAMILY MAKES BROADCAST
"When the flu floored Cedric Adams Sunday, the

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'show went on' anyway. Cedric put the family to work. 'Ma' Adams, Cedric, Jr., (Ric), 15, and Stephen (Stevie), 13, broadcast the regular 12:30 news broadcast over WCCO. It was the first time in Cedric's years of news broadcasting that the family had to step in at the last minute.

"After returning home from dinner at a neighbor's Saturday night, Cedric became ill. He took to his bed where he tossed and turned with his flu virus until early Sunday. 'At 7:00 a.m. when I looked in, he was finally asleep,' said Mrs. Adams. At 11:30 a.m. when Mrs. Adams awakened Cedric, he rolled over and croaked: 'I can't do the show. You'll have to do it.'

"By the time Mrs. Adams informed the two boys, the news already was clicking from the teletype machine in the Adams home. 'The boys were nervous and so was I,' Mrs. Adams said.

"Stevie took the international news because it came off the wires first. Cedric roused himself enough to tune in and listen to the family fumbling going on downstairs. As the show sped to its close Ric had a short scrimmage with 'chrysanthemum.' He came out of it in typical Adams style saying, 'Boy, that's a hard word!'

"Cedric's comment on the family's efforts? 'He thought the boys did very well,' said Mrs. Adams. 'But for my part on the commercials, I think I'd better not quote him.'"

Cedric, of course, went on and on as a newscaster. In fact, his popularity and fame went beyond the WCCO coverage area so that on December 5, 1949, he could

write, "I've had a dream come true this last week. You may have heard—Ramona Gerhard and I have just been sold on a network show that starts January 3, and runs through next May over all the stations of CBS. We'll be on here at 2:55 to 3 p.m., following Art Linkletter's House Party and just ahead of Gary Moore's Show.

"I told them that I was strictly a corny guy and that all I could produce was corny stuff. They didn't squawk. It's going to be fun to see how a couple of midwesterners will click on the national scene."

The program format was indeed simple. It was "a little talk and a little tune." Ramona Gerhard furnished the tune on either the piano or organ; while Cedric gave little features and odd facts.

Not only did the staid *New York Times* mention the new CBS feature; but critic John Crosby of the *New York Herald-Tribune* wrote, "Adams comes to network radio with an awe-inspiring list of endorsements. He had the almost unlimited blessing of Pillsbury Mills, his sponsor; the best wishes of Arthur Godfrey, which is one of the aliases of the Columbia Broadcasting System; and the militant support of apparently all of Minneapolis, where he appears in the *Star*, but also hosts of other cities where it appears as an ad in many magazines."

On the third anniversary of Cedric's network radio feature, a CBS-Radio publicity release paid him a high compliment: "Adams, whose steadily growing network audience parallels his phenomenal regional following, adopted a new CBS Radio schedule in December to include a five-minute Sunday afternoon program and a ten-minute series on Monday and Tuesday nights. On WCCO Adams

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has built up an uncontested record of 16 programs a week, all sponsored."



Cedric, Arthur Godfrey, and Art Linkletter at the Pillsbury bake-off in New York.

In addition to his radio newscasts and feature network program, Cedric was master of ceremonies for local radio

shows including "Stairway to Stardom," which was a search for adult talent. There was also the "Phillips 66 Talent Parade," an amateur hour for children; "I'll Never Forget," a potpourri of nostalgic chitchat and music; and the "Dinner at Adams" program. All were sponsored.

Roy W. Larsen, Chairman of the Board of Twin City Federal Savings and Loan Association, was one of the guests on "Dinner at Adams" which he recalled as "lively conversation after an excellent meal."

Among other well-known persons who were on "Dinner at Adams" were Charles Laughton, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, and Agnes Moorhead.

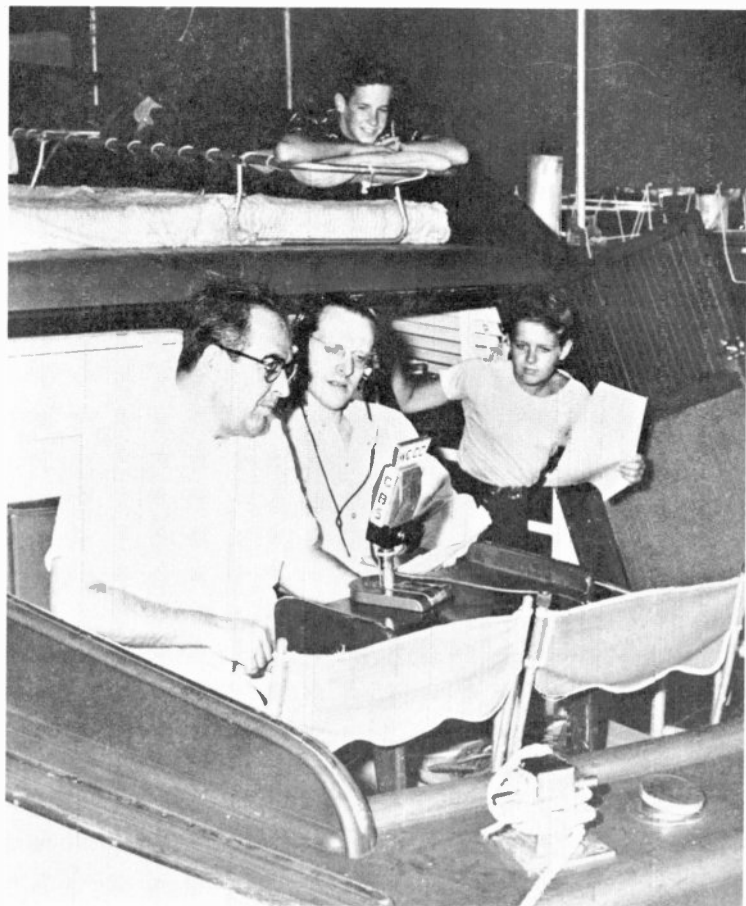
The guests on the weekly program informally discussed problems and questions sent in by listeners. Cedric guided the conversation and summarized at the close.

Those who worked with Cedric knew that he did not ad-lib well on radio or television. *Newsweek* once drew a contrast between Arthur Godfrey, "a proficient ad-libber," and Adams who "never strays from script."

Bill Stewart, president of Radio Station WPBC in the Twin Cities, was once a staff announcer on WCCO, and had been Cedric's announcer on "The Stairway to Stardom" show. Stewart told me that Cedric "was very much out of water on this show. He was supposed to interview the participants. The script was written; but occasionally he would deviate and ask a question. His normal response to any answer was 'well, well, well' in his deep voice." Bill remembered that one time Cedric asked a participant how many children he had. The participant said nine. In response Cedric responded, "Well, well, well! And what else do you do?"

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Niecy says that "Cedric was a good conversationalist, but as far as ad-libbing at a banquet or any place where he was going to emcee a program he much preferred to have



Cedric gets an assist by the waters of Minnetonka from Engineer Lyle Smith and sons, Ric and Steve.

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his part of the program prepared rather than ad-lib. On the air he simply read the late news. He didn't try to interpret the news, except for an ad-lib chuckle once in awhile. Yet his listeners took Cedric so personally that he got telephone calls blaming him when the news was bad."

In later years, Cedric seldom broadcast his evening news from the studio. However, one night when I was editing and writing the ten o'clock newscast for him I heard he would originate the program in the studio. We news writers felt comfortable around Cedric and knew how he enjoyed a good laugh.

When I had a little extra time I wrote a special "feature" for him, then put it in with the rest of his news taking the precaution of putting an "X" in red at the top of the page to identify it. When Cedric came pattering into the newsroom wearing moccasins and sloppy, comfortable sports clothes, he grabbed an early edition of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, propped his feet on the desk, and began reading.

Knowing that he would not read over his newscast ahead of his broadcast I said, "Cedric, I have an interesting feature I'd like you to look over before you go on the air."

"No, no," he mumbled without looking up and kept on reading the paper whose hard news stories were hours behind the items he would soon be reading over the air.

"But there's some tricky wording in it and I think you should look at it," I cautioned.

"No, no," Cedric insisted still not looking up.

With that I started to take the marked "feature" out of the newscast.

"Hey, let me see that," Cedric said.

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I handed it to him and he soon was convulsed in his characteristic belly laugh.

Since I knew Cedric was not an adept ad-libber on the air I had written seven or eight innocuous lead-in lines to the "feature" which I knew would not tip off what was to follow. Gradually, the "story" began to involve Cedric himself in unmentionable, imaginary escapades.

If I had allowed Cedric to read this bit of fiction on the air he could not have extricated himself because its wording began in innocence and descended into disaster for Cedric. And it would have been disaster for me because I would have been fired and possibly could never have worked in broadcasting again!

While reminiscing about radio, WCCO announcer, Jergen Nash, told me how he had taken the chance of helping break Cedric up on a newscast. "Every day," he said, "was a humorous day with Cedric. Merely having him in the room with you and chatting with him and listening to his booming laugh was a joy. He was not too difficult to break up. Like so many of us, he had his key words, phrases, or things that triggered his funnybone and then he was off.

"He was particularly allergic to the word 'goose.' If we knew that a story was coming up with that word in it, we were always alert to see if we couldn't 'help him a little bit.'

"I remember one evening on the ten o'clock news at Christmas-time Cedric had a story which mentioned turkeys and geese as possibilities for holiday fare. Cedric came to the line: 'Many people in this country, despite the fact that turkey is a very popular holiday fare, will prefer their Christmas goose.' Then he paused and looked up. I was

standing right in front of the window in the master control room. As he said the words, 'Christmas goose,' I leaped up into the air and waved my hands. And, of course, one look at me and I knew I had him. He started to laugh. He then said a few words. Then laughed some more. He finally just put his hands on the table and laughed uncontrollably. He couldn't stop. One of the writers came running into the studio, picked up the copy, and finished the newscast."

It was this human quality in Cedric which enabled him to identify with others in his audience. The connotation of "goose" was funny to them, too. In Cedric's place at the microphone they also would have laughed.

Cedric Adams and Arthur Godfrey, in addition to being friends, have often been compared with one another in their abilities to reach audiences. Both talked to people at their level. They did not think of masses. They thought of individuals. The average person.

Cedric could even make the long list of school closings, which are broadcast over WCCO-Radio during severe Minnesota winter storms, both attention-getting and amusing. WCCO announcer, Ray Christensen, while narrating "Voices of the Past," likened the school closings list to "something like reading a telephone directory." Then he added, "But Cedric still imparted to you, the listener, his own brand of humor." What could have been a routine, monotonous recital of place names and schools would turn into an entertaining broadcast because of Cedric's chuckles and laughter over his fluffs and mispronunciations of place names.

A distinctive, easily identifiable voice enabled the hard-

of-hearing to understand him because of its resonance. His enunciation was clean and clear.

I have listened to many of his broadcasts and recently viewed film which he had narrated for the *Star* and *Tribune*. Cedric's phrasing was distinctive. His phrase and sentence endings were held up somewhat artificially. They were not dropped or swallowed as is often the case in conversation. Instead, the sentence endings were elongated and at a slightly lower pitch. For some, these predictable elongations were monotonous.

Examples of his air work also reveal an easy, conversational style; a mastery over descriptive words; and a chatty style on commercials which sold products. His delivery was authoritative, but not overly polished. Not all would agree with me that Cedric's style was not polished. Others would say I am nit-picking and that Cedric's charm and success was because he was *not* polished.

Reginald Faragher, Cedric's cousin, told me that when they were living together Cedric would go into the basement and practice by the hour speaking to a post as his sole audience. This was long before Cedric got into radio. Faragher believes these sessions helped Cedric to learn voice control and to develop an appropriate dramatic pause.

The advent of radio and television brought additional problems for speakers. Immediate feedback is impossible. Dr. Robert L. Jones, Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, recognizes this lack of immediate feedback in mass communication. But believes that "Cedric Adams could adjust to it as a newspaperman who does not expect simultaneous response from his message."

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One of the ways Adams was able to overcome this lack of immediate feedback was the presence of live audiences both at the WCCO Auditorium for his 12:30 p.m. newscasts and at his numerous personal appearances from which he would often deliver the news. And, of course, there were always audiences for his special programs such as talent shows.

All those who had met Cedric even casually went away impressed with him as a conversationalist. Many times they did not realize that Cedric's "conversation" was attentive listening punctuated with a few questions. He probed into others' interests and listened. Anyone who has this ability makes the receiver feel warm and friendly and important.

Colleague Bob Murphy noted this ability when once he wrote, "In conversation, Adams might be described as mercurial and quizzical, laughing one moment and intensely curious the next. He has the faculty for appearing interested in what you're saying even though you may be, for the moment, a thundering bore."

I recollect one evening when Cedric had finished his Nighttime News at 10:15 after another grueling day. Three farmers had come into the newsroom to hear, see, and, if possible, meet Cedric. Cedric smilingly came out of the studio, shook their hands, asked who they were and where they came from, then chatted with them for five or ten minutes.

After the men had left the other news writer on duty with me asked Cedric, "How can you take time to talk to people like that after a hard day?"

Cedric humbly replied, "That's my bread and butter."

Ten O'Clock Sandman

Actually, it was more than "bread and butter" with him. He really fed on people all of whom he genuinely enjoyed. I suspect his reply was a gentle "put-down" for the news writer.

He was especially charming with women of any age. Mrs. Philip Pillsbury, the wife of Cedric's coast-to-coast CBS-Radio sponsor, once told Niecy, "Cedric's power over women is frightening. They do anything he tells them!"

Dr. Ralph G. Nichols of the University of Minnesota and the internationally renowned scholar on listening, analyzes Cedric's impact: "First, he always assumed that his listeners wanted to hear what he had to say, which is the fundamental key to projection to the listener. Second, he used his voice alone to reveal his own emotional reaction to the news. And lastly, he repeatedly revealed his humanness by making errors and gained credibility by admitting them."

The irrepressible Cedric could even have fun and lessen the sting when he was making demands. Thus, Will Jones reported in his column, "After Last Night," on November 20, 1948, "On every newscast since Tuesday, the first words Cedric Adams has been saying were 'Same old microphone, Jones.' Some people thought it was a mistake. Others were just mystified. Now there's an explanation.

"The words were addressed to Merle Jones, manager of WCCO. Seems a lot of big, new microphones have been installed around the station. Every studio except Adams' got one of the new mikes. Adams wanted one. The old, smaller microphone he had been using emphasized the high tones in his voice too much. A new mike would give his voice more body.

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“‘Same old microphone, Jones,’ was his campaign slogan. It worked. Yesterday Jones told engineers to hurry up and get a new microphone in that studio.

“When he showed up for his 10 p.m. newscast last night, Adams found a new microphone. Engineer Russ Person had pasted this verse on it:

‘Adams hadum .little irk.
Callum engineer big jerk.
Pickum bones on Mr. Jones.
Says “Me big chief, want big mike.”
Here I am—I hope you like!’ ”

CHAPTER VII

"In This Corner"

Few communicators have been able to participate in three media as successfully as did Cedric Adams. Lowell Thomas is possibly the closest parallel to Cedric because he is a writer and broadcaster; but Thomas has also been a teacher, film narrator and producer, as well as world traveler and adventurer.

Although Edward R. Murrow wrote much of his material for his broadcasts, especially when he was the CBS correspondent in London during World War II, he was not a newspaperman. Nor did he have the warmth and common touch of Thomas and Adams.

Cedric Adams was unique. He was an amalgam of folksiness, gregariousness, showmanship, and wonder. Cedric's perception made the trivia seem important. By his manner and approach he could bring the consequential down to the level of most readers and listeners. Cedric's juggling of careers—which totaled one large career—was made possible by a willingness to work harder than most men for his goals; by an unique blending of personal qualities which fostered a linkage with others, friends and strangers alike; and by the fortunate timing of his activities when radio news was emerging and newspapers were consolidating and becoming more personal.

Cedric's special qualities fitted these communication

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media, as well as the period. There was a place for a man who was both personable and personal. There was Cedric Adams.

However, it was an uphill battle to success for Cedric, as it was for others caught in the Depression. It was also a grueling battle with constant deadlines on both radio and the newspapers.



Broadcasting the news from the Minnetonka Boat Works with an assist from engineer, Lyle Smith.

In later years a teletype in Cedric's home and another at the Minnetonka Boat Works, where he moored his cruiser during the summer, linked his radio and newspaper work as a constant reminder of his dual role of newscaster and columnist. In a sense, the teletype was a robot task-

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master which prodded him even during his leisure hours that there was work to be done, usually seven days a week.

Cedric's newscasts were often teletyped to his home or boat; while he could reverse the process by sending his columns directly to the *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune*. In remarking about this, Niecy felt that Cedric believed his column and his broadcasts complemented one another. He felt that the column was the greatest thing in his life, although radio ran a close second. Cedric once told Edward R. Murrow, the CBS news analyst, "I make the most money from radio, television is the most fattening, and I like newspapering best."

The nationally syndicated columnist, O. O. McIntyre, influenced Cedric's writing the most. The McIntyre stamp was especially noticeable in Cedric's *Minnesota Daily* columns and in his first columns in the old *Minneapolis Star*.

McIntyre had come from a relatively small town, Gallipolis, Ohio, to the big, big city, New York. McIntyre's obituary, which Cedric pasted in his scrapbook, appeared in the *Minneapolis Journal*, February 14, 1938. It related how "McIntyre's friendships ran through all classes and types of people—Broadway's great, the big city's ordinary people, each alike claimed his attention. . . . His regular column, written in the Samuel Pepys manner sometimes assumed, appeared in the morning. Although McIntyre typified the 'typical New Yorker' to his legions of readers, he never pretended to the veneer of New York sophistication. He took pride, rather, in being a 'small town boy' who was forever fascinated by the scene of the 'big city.' His columns followed a loose-flowing design, mostly idle descriptive chatter about all manner of things and people,

which he variously labeled 'bagatelles,' 'thingumbobs,' 'thoughts while strolling,' 'looks-alikes' or 'purely personal piffle.'

Cedric often slugged column paragraphs, "Thoughts While Shaving" and "Into Each Life a Little Rain Must Fall." And when he was in Texas in the summer of 1924 as a Northrup King seed salesman he sent a contribution to the company's house organ, *The Seedbag*, in which McIntyre's influence was evident. His lead-in was: "Thots while strolling with my dog: Chiming church bells summoning folk to worship. Military dudes home for the weekend. Shine boys in competition for a customer's dime. The city square, the last evidence of the old slave mart. An old Spanish dignitary vending tamales. A shop with a triton as a mark of trade. Motor cars with chauffeurs going up the avenue.

"A little sandwich shop, a rendezvous for traveling men and lunchers, is doing a rushing business. All sandwiches are made on toasted bread, and the daily consumption of large loaves amounts to 14,000 slices.

"The main highway of the town has printed on the pavement at the beginning of each block, KIGY. Some say it means 'Klansmen, I greet you.' I'm going to use it on my car and attach this significance to it, 'Kookie, I'll get you.' I doubt its practicality.

"Yours for more kale and less Rocky Ford,

"Admumz."

Cedric once told Roger Gardner, WCCO-TV's Program Director, that he had patterned his column after O. O. McIntyre, who was his hero. Gardner believes that Cedric

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liked columning best because the column was all his own where he could express himself, project himself.

Gardner was struck by Cedric's formula for column writing which was "to talk it. Write as though it were being spoken." He still marvels at the time he saw Cedric teletype a column to the *Star* from his home in its first and final form.

Cedric rarely took himself too seriously. Or, if he did, he could make it sound as though he did not. So when someone asked him how column writers worked, he answered, tongue-in-cheek:

"Well, columns are born. They're the gleam of sun on a lily pad, the dew on a petunia, the blush on a maiden's cheek. They're sheer gossamer fancy. Columnists don't work. They depend largely on inspiration. Most of us are shy woodland creatures, dwelling under ferns. Come with me today while we journey behind the scenes. Examine with me the procedure."

Then he continued making it all sound so easy: "Columns, unlike price lists, department of agriculture bulletins or music reviews, must have 'sex.' So the alert columnist casts for a good 'sex' item. Babies have a universal appeal. Get a proud mother speaking about hers and you at least appeal to the mother. It's a simple matter to skim through the mail and uncover a mother-baby item; or the fact that it costs 20 cents a night to keep the word 'love' lighted on a movie marquee. See how simple it is?"

Cedric seemingly could find column material anywhere. Would it, for instance, occur to many to write the following paragraph?

"Not all of a columnist's work consists of bringing lovers

together. Sometimes I have to pause to change a typewriter ribbon. Ugh, how I hate that job, even though a new ribbon makes so much difference that it's a shame to cling to the old one. Just for fun this time I measured the length of the ribbon—25 feet of the stuff. The experts claim a typewriter ribbon should be changed in exactly 16 seconds. They also say that only a chump gets ink-stained fingers in the process. Give your steno the test and be sure to look at her paws when she's through. This Rotund Reporter has been changing ribbons for more than 25 years and I still can't make it in less than 15 minutes. And I always have to add another 10 minutes for cleaning up. Well, I just noticed for the first time that there are two units in the type machine keyboard that come in alphabetical sequence—fgh and jkl. I enjoy writing *property* on a typewriter because *erty* are or is in a line. But look what you have to do to write *opq*. The *p* and *q* are miles apart. A guy could sit all day and figure out stuff. Guess I'd better quit, though, and do some work."

Reading this paragraph makes a person exclaim, "Gee, I never thought of that!"

Cedric found that people periodically asked him if he liked to write. His answer, he said, "is always the same. 'No, I hate it.' And I'm honest in that assertion. Writing has always been genuine labor for me."

However, I asked the same question of Niecy. She replied, "I think Cedric loved writing when he could write at his leisure. But so many times he had that deadline that he had to meet. Sometimes in writing an ordinary column, he could write better, I think, and rap it out faster and do it better just before he had to meet the deadline. He was

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a great person for putting things off until he had to push himself into it. But this was not true of his so-called 'think pieces' as it was of his columns he had to get out daily."

One of the greatest influences on Cedric's writing and one of his constant boosters was the late Dr. Anna von Helmholtz Phelan, who taught composition at the University of Minnesota. She always felt that Cedric responded sensitively to things that involved interpersonal relations.

The colleague who took over Adams' column when he died, Bob Murphy, once spoke about Cedric's "unique writing style which enables him to be folksy and urbane at the same time knowing on the one hand and but a transplanted country boy on the other. Adams kids himself and doesn't mind if others kid him. But there is, to his stuff, a genuine literary style. It has been said by those capable to judge that Adams' material differs from that of most writers in that you can lift almost any line or paragraph of it out of context, and still recognize it as Adams'."

On his twentieth anniversary with the *Star* under the Cowles ownership Cedric wrote that the annual anniversary dinner "took me back to the day when a fellow named Stuffie Walters, who was then executive editor of the *Star*, called me to offer me my present job. I was doing a weekly column for the Shopping News and Stuffie wanted me to do a daily piece for the *Star*. That meant six times the work. I was a trifle uncertain whether I could knock out a column a day, six days a week. We didn't have the Sunday paper back there in 1935. Our big paper was the Saturday *Star*. Before I made my final decision, I dropped into Charlie Johnson's office in the sports department. I told him about the offer and asked him for his counsel. 'It'll

mean you have to work,' Charlie told me, 'but this outfit is going places. I think you'd better take it.' So I did."

And glad Cedric was he did. His whole life had pointed to a career in writing with the likelihood it would be as a columnist. His early letters sent to Northrup King, as well as his "Paltry Prattle" column for the *Minnesota Daily*, unfolded his column-writing potential. His ability to perceive the comic and the tragic in everyday events, coupled with his unceasing curiosity, insured success.

Cedric enjoyed the role of columnist even though the daily deadline was a goad which sometimes rankled. Yet column-writing gave him freedom for his many projects as well as for his blithe spirit which could not fit the eight-to-five office routine. He indirectly confessed this once in a column: "Ever wonder what kind of work-a-day lives we columnists live? I'll be perfectly candid—we're sitting pretty. We don't have to maintain regular office hours except that we're supposed to hit fairly close to a 40-hour week. Most of us, though, have to work 365 days a year. If we want to do our holiday stints ahead of the holidays and then take the day off, that's okay as far as the management is concerned. Don't think, however, that all the stuff we write gets in the paper. When you see this little strip of mine come out with one paragraph or maybe two it means that I've either overslept or had a bunch of stuff killed. I used to hate to have stuff taken out. After all, I had labored a long time on it and I disliked very much having my managing editor give it the nix. You mellow about those things. And more than once I've thanked my lucky stars that he had killed an item or two.

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The boss saves his columnist's neck and the paper's quite often.

"How far ahead do you keep?" somebody is always asking. That's a laugh. Many of the syndicated boys have to keep from three to five days ahead. But I'll venture to say 99 per cent of the local lads and lassies shove their stuff across the desk just in time to make that day's deadline. I've tried a hundred methods of getting a day or two ahead—every one of them has failed. I've tried keeping two or three paragraphs in overset, just in case of an emergency. That doesn't work. I've written a column to have on ice for the day I want to sleep. That day is always the next day and there goes the on-ice piece. My Sunday deadline is Thursday night and I have an awful time trying to make that.

"I have no idea how the rest of the so-called byline folk feel about it, but I can't stand to watch somebody read this space. Once in awhile I'll catch somebody turning to This Corner. Invariably I have to look away. I don't want to watch his facial expression nor do I want to see him start reading and then give up. There's always a feeling of inward pride, however, when you hear somebody quote you or somebody mentions something you had in the paper. It's awfully hard to cover up your bum days in this business. You hit those days now and then when it's just impossible to do a day's work. We have to do it, anyway, and hang it up here where everybody can see it."

This account of his column-writing is another example of Cedric's ability to nuzzle up and identify with the "average reader." The "average reader" felt that he, too, could write a column if he had the chance; that he, too,

would have liked to have his writing noticed, even though it would be embarrassing; and that he, too, might procrastinate and just make deadlines. Cedric made column-writing sound glamorous by mentioning the freedom from routine. Whether consciously or not, Cedric was bolstering his image as the boy from Magnolia who made good. His columns avoided global affairs and politics. He dwelt on homey topics, like children, marriage, sickness, food, clothes, housing, animals, and the weather. He wanted items that people could talk about over the figurative back fence or at the dinner table.

The *Minneapolis Star* found a gold mine in Cedric. The impact of the column was soon realized by the sensational response to suggestions or pleas Cedric initiated. One of the first of Cedric's column pleas for help concerned an elderly woman who had lost the money she had saved up to pay her income taxes. Adams asked his readers to send in a penny apiece to help her. The result was 57,000 pennies for the taxes, plus more to go into her savings.

However, Nat Finney added a footnote to this story in a recent letter to me. He said, "There was a lot of imp in Ced and he had to be watched and edited." Nat, as *Star* city editor, began to worry when "the pennies began to pile up in the corridor outside his office. I braced Ced, 'Just who is this woman and where does she live?'"

"Ced fanned the air and replied, 'I've got it on a slip of paper here somewhere.'"

Finney recalls, "He never did find the slip, but a couple of competent reporters found the woman, thank God."

Cedric was not always as careful as he should have been in checking reports or advice he passed along. One of

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Cedric's most "famous" boo-boos was on radio and could have resulted in fatalities. Again Cedric was saved. A *Look* profile of Cedric captioned this episode, "He Was Almost a Lady Killer." Then it told how "one hot summer day he advised housewives to iron while standing barefoot in pails



The Penny Parade: Cedric's first project.

of ice-cold water. A horrified electrician, who was listening, called the studio in time for Cedric to make a frantic retraction and prevent a wholesale electrocution of Minnesota womanhood. Otherwise, Cedric Adams' popularity might not have survived the shock."

The essence of some of Cedric's columns was distilled from curiosity, sentimentality, and a long memory. If he went into the country he would admire the beautiful Minnesota farms and crops. He would delight at the sows and piglets as he talked to farmers. And in one of his rural pieces he declared that "there was nothing cuter than a little Jersey calf. What eyes they have! Some day I'd like to make a survey of farmhouses around suppertime. I'll bet that more than 95 per cent would be serving fried potatoes."

Always there was the emphasis on the Midwest, particularly Minnesota, and appeals to pride. He would tug at memories of those who had or still lived in small towns or farms. "How silent it must be in a small-town church on any day but Sunday . . . What fun it used to be to climb the windmills. Only the big kids ever reached the top . . . I remember the joy of wading in a wheat bin barefooted. The wheat was so cooling."

Cedric's special gift was his ability to snuggle up to a person and in a conversational manner write what would evoke memories and please. Piglets and calves *are* cute. Anything young and small is. Every youngster has tried climbing a high and dangerous place. Everyone who has ever gone barefoot recalls the sensation of walking on certain surfaces. In fact in another column, Cedric said he still enjoyed the cool feeling of grass when he went barefoot.

Cedric's skill in sensing and writing on universal themes was an integral part of his identification. At the risk of an invidious comparison, Shakespeare also endures largely for his probing and illuminating universal, fundamental truths.

Little wonder then that more readers would turn to "In

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This Corner" before reading anything else in the *Minneapolis Star* and *Sunday Tribune*. One survey showed that this was true of a whopping eighty-five per cent of the readers.

In these few examples of his column in this chapter, and in other columns included in this book, I have tried to capture Cedric's capacity to make much out of little. Yes, it was trivia; but every trivial item had interest for some reader.

Those of us who lived our early years in small towns try to recapture memories as Cedric did when he returned to his southern Minnesota town. "This weekend," he wrote, "I visited Magnolia, my old home, for the first time in, I guess, 20 years. Magnolia is a typical small town. It's down in the heart of rich Rock County, its population now is 201. It's probably like your home town if you came from one of the smaller communities. Well, I got the surprise of surprises. And you will, too, if you ever go back to yours. Magnolia has gone, of all things, streamlined. On the way into Rock County, we spotted dozens of threshing rigs. Even that scene has changed. Remember how in August the old steam threshing engine with its billows of black smoke, its nearby water wagon and coal tender used to supply the power for the separator? It was one of the most picturesque of all rural scenes. The old steam engine is no more. Tractors supply the power. More economical, I suppose, but not half so pretty.

"My boys had never seen a threshing crew at work so we drove into a farmyard where they were threshing wheat. There in the yard was the same old wash bench that the field hands use before every meal. The roller towel was

still tacked to a tree. The bucket of water and the wash basin were about the same. Guess what was missing? It was the bar of black tar soap.

“The noon train has lost most of its glamor. It used to be one of those short steam engines with a long smoke-stack, shiny brass bell, a baggage car, and two coaches. Bright yellow coaches. It’s a diesel now with homely stripes across the front, a harsh horn, one car. The shiny blue serge of the train crew has been changed to a striped denim outfit now.

“So if you’re planning a return trip to your hometown, get yourself set for some startling surprises. Whatever you do, don’t long for the scenes of your childhood because I don’t think you’ll find them there any more.” And so right he was! You never can go back.

Sentiment, odd facts, travel, humor, projects. These were some of the ingredients which built up the wide readership of “In This Corner.” Cedric always seemed able to come up with something people could talk about as he did, for instance, when he recommended that everyone spend seven days annually in the hospital for a rest. It was not a practical suggestion for most, but his readers could toss the idea around.

However, this was not as preposterous as when he wrote about the goat he had bought to chew his lawn so he would not have to cut it. (About which there is sizeable doubt that he ever did!) That experiment reportedly ended when the goat butted in his neighbor’s picture windows.

Cedric frequently recognized good deeds. However, many hesitate to express their appreciation. Possibly they are afraid that it is self-seeking. But Cedric often gave a

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pat on the back if it was deserved as he did in his *Star* column of September 4, 1957, when he figuratively sighed, "Well, I've done it again. About a dozen years ago I jumped off a boat onto a dock and fractured an ankle. A week ago I was walking around the edge of Frank Griswold's boat, slipped and banged the other one. So, here I am flat on my back and pleased about everything except the line they carried here yesterday that read, 'He's in the hospital for observation.' I can hear the rumor factories grinding after that one. Samples: 'Did you hear about Adams? He's taking the marijuana cure.' 'Isn't it too bad about Cedric? His mother-in-law, in a fit of friendliness, hit him in the head with a meat axe.' Or, 'It's about time they took him in, he's been acting awfully strange lately.' To allay these possible suspicions, may I point out that I have what the medics call a hematoma. I looked that up in a medical dictionary the nurse brought in and it's defined as a 'blood tumor.' That sounds a lot worse than it is. If you get it at the beginning, says the doc, it's not much worse than a bad cold. But let it go and it can develop into phlebitis or an embolism. The doc also pointed out a case he remembered where a tennis player fell and bruised a leg, didn't take care of it and now has a permanent swelling. I've had one of these in the abdomen for years!

"Hospital routine hasn't changed much through the years," Cedric continued. "My room has been like Grand Central Station. You're on pans and needles for the first six hours. Pete, the orderly, was the first to arrive. Systematic, courteous and diligent he was. Then the needle brigade arrived. They wanted blood first and then it was

that 'Over, Rover' routine. Next came the 'fitting' for my hospital gown. I know now why they don't let you out of bed in a hospital. If you ever got a gander at yourself in one of those get-ups, you'd either leap for the street below or call your favorite mortician. Apparently, though, you can bring your own. I snuck a fast peek at a lovely young lady across the hall who was all gussied up in a baby-blue job. Mine'll never get baggy at the knees, though. I still haven't been able to figure out why they tie in the back. Wait a minute, maybe I can find out. I'm sorry, the nurse didn't know either."

Humor, puns, a simple explanation of hematoma, routine, and a request to "wait a minute" while he checks with the nurse makes us feel as though we were in the adjoining hospital bed. But there was more humor to come in this column, as well as a bow to those who devote their lives to getting other people well.

"Had a couple of jolts yesterday," Cedric wrote. "In chatting with one of the student nurses, I discovered that she was being graduated this week. She told me that she has a job at the Rochester State Hospital. 'How did you happen to pick that?' I asked her. 'Oh,' she replied, 'I just love being around the criminally insane.' No. 2 came from an old gent, 74, named Otto. Otto has long since retired and calls me frequently just to chat. Yesterday when he learned that I was having an inning at the infirmary, he called. We visited for a few minutes and then he said, 'I like Northwestern Hospital. My uncle and aunt both died there.' Pleasant fellow, isn't he?"

"Then there are the hospital staffers whose lives have been devoted to the care of others. You think of the skilled

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hand of the surgeon, the trained touch of the physician, the long hours of study behind them and the interns; of the miles of walking, the hours with textbooks, the sunny dispositions of the student nurses; the unpleasant tasks, many of them performed by the orderlies and the nurses aides; the choice of the dieticians and the preparing in serving tasty meals three times a day, meals which have to be kept hot over a distance of maybe, a block or two; the dietician assistants and helpers who peel potatoes, cut carrots, chop lettuce, toast hundreds of slices of bread, and the rest of the huge staff, including the cheery-voiced switchboard operators, the plumbers, the electricians, the office workers, the ladies with their mops. I have no idea what the bill will be, but whatever it is, it's a bargain. We should be eternally grateful for these institutions which contribute so much to our well-being when we need them."

The *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune* sent Cedric on many special assignments: to Russia, to the King George VI and Elizabeth II coronations in London, to the A-bomb testing site at Yucca Flats, Nevada, and others. Clifford Simak, science editor for the *Minneapolis Star*, who worked with Cedric for many years, stressed to me that "Cedric was a devoted and meticulous newsman when it was important. He was aware of the power he wielded, but when he'd settle down to being a newsman his advice was taken."

John Cowles, Chairman of the *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune*, wrote after Cedric's death that "Cedric's column has always been among the best-read features of our newspapers. But he was more than a columnist, he was a superb reporter, especially sensitive to stories with high human interest. All of us at the *Star* and *Tribune* will miss

him personally, and in his favorite role of a reporter at large.”

During the month of September, 1956, thirty-five Northwest businessmen, plus Cedric, visited several European countries including Russia. The first Russian city they visited was Leningrad. When his notes from Leningrad were published Cedric admitted that “appraisal of a country, a city, a people or even a friend is a dangerous thing after 24 hours. Rarely can it be done in 10 days, a month, or even a year. That’s why these reports are going to be largely impressions or reactions. I’ve traveled maybe 4,000 miles and taken many notes, but I want you to understand fully that Adams is setting himself up as no expert, no analyst, no Communist convert. I’m going to tell you about things I’ve seen. The conclusions are strictly up to you.”

Cedric did set these down interestingly. He wrote about Moscow as vividly as he had described his impressions of Leningrad, of Russian life, of Russian people. He emphasized that the Northwest businessmen “actually worked when they were in Russia on the tour. We tramped through factories, construction projects, museums, galleries, attended the ballet and the opera until we were up to the eyeballs in collectivism and culture as we were exposed to it.”

But it was people which interested Cedric most. He noticed “a kind of drabness to both Leningrad and Moscow in spite of the gawdy palaces and towering apartment buildings and the onion-shaped domes that top so many of the buildings. It came, I think from the people—thousands of them walking, walking, walking, looking always straight ahead, nearly everyone carrying something, perhaps a package, a huge square dinner bucket, a bundle.

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Some very shabby, very few in colors, a rare one in nylon stockings. Even in the shadows of almost elegant apartment houses, they seemed forlorn. Ever so frequently I have smiled at one of them. They seem not to understand a smile. But I'm not so sure that it's their lot in life that makes them seem sad. There has been struggle in their past—always.

"I have found, however, that if you keep working the smile routine it eventually pays off. It has worked beautifully with the woman who is the floor clerk on my floor at the hotel. The first Russian word I learned was 'Spaceba,' which means, 'Thank you.' First time I used it on her she did a double-take and then broke into a big grin. The Russian word for 'yes' is 'da-da.' You feel like you're turning out a batch of baby talk when you use it, but I've expanded it into a long series and it kills the old girl. Yesterday morning as I turned in my key she accidentally let out a loud belch. She blushed in embarrassment. I manufactured one in return and let her have it. She seemed so pleased. You can tell what a wonderful time I've been having over there. Height of the day's excitement is exchanging burps with the lady room clerk. Now, however, every time I approach, she giggles, her eyes sparkle, she's a completely friendly character. But a cold-eyed babe she was at the beginning."

One of Cedric's most sensitively written columns concerned two of Russia's heroes. The lead stated: "I saw the dead—Lenin and Stalin. And from now until that first day when they trot me off to Lakewood for my eternal sleep, every time I hear the word Moscow or Lenin or Stalin I know that sight in the tomb will flash across my

mind—eerie, haunting, foreboding—almost sickening.”

(Cedric was at the tomb before Stalin’s body was removed.)

“The Mausoleum,” he wrote, “is in three shades of marble, one shade in each of its three tiers. It’s as though one huge marble box were the foundation, a second smaller one atop that and a still smaller one making the top layer. The only persons ever to touch the glistening marble are the cleaners and they keep it spotless, even dustless. A large wreath of fresh flowers stands at the entrance. Two Russian marines stand at each side of the entrance, stiff and motionless with their bayoneted rifles at their sides. As you approach the entrance you are told to cover your camera—there will be no pictures inside. Outside, yes.

“Into the dimly lit, silent interior you shuffle. No one speaks. The only audible sound is that of tramping feet as they move along the granite floors and down the granite steps. You begin to feel the chill of the air conditioning. Suddenly just ahead you see a strange pinkish glow. You sense somehow that you’re nearing the bodies. You still hear nothing but the monotonous trudging of feet. You’re below the surface at least 30 feet. By this time you feel the dankness of the tomb. Never, in all my life, have I had the complete awe I experienced as I entered to catch my first full view of the two bodies as they lay bathed in the soft, pinkish glow of a hidden spotlight.

“They’re side by side, perhaps three feet apart, completely enclosed in plate glass that extends from the bier to the ceiling. You approach them from their heads on an elevated passageway that extends down one side, then pass their feet, up the other side and out. Your entire glimpse

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of the bodies lasts no longer than three or four minutes. The line keeps moving and you go with it. There is little time to contemplate. As you stand at their feet and look toward them, Lenin is on the left. Both bodies are in perfect preservation and look remarkably lifelike. Lenin is a much younger man than Stalin. But Lenin has been in that state of preservation since 1927.

"Lenin was a thin man with a pointed red goatee, still perfectly trimmed, plus a beard that extends half way back on his jowls. Stalin's full mustache is streaked with gray, his bushy hair in pompadour style. Lenin wears a black suit; Stalin his uniform and war medals and decorations. Their hands lie across their abdomens—Stalin's flat and palms down, Lenin with one fist loosely clenched. The pink spotlight makes them look alive and more asleep than dead.

"But now you hear a new sound—men and women weeping softly but audibly. For some strange reason, you feel a tightening in your own throat. From out of the mists of the past, you are witnessing a strange glorification, a reverence, perhaps a love of a people for two of its leaders."

After ten days behind the Iron Curtain Cedric noted, "Finally, you could sense a sort of restlessness pervading our entire group of businessmen. 'I'm ready for Paris!' was a confession you heard from almost everyone. And most of us made Paris for two or three days.

"There were no pre-arrangements, but each night small cliques of three or four would bump into others of the same numbers in such spots as the Lido, largest and most extravagant theater-restaurant in Paris, or La Nouvelle Eve,

or the Crazy Horse or any other spot that billboarded the Parisian beauts. I hit for La Nouvelle Eve the very first night. I wasn't particularly interested in reviewing the show as a dramatic critic might, so I hit for the stage door where I figured I could get at the 'pulse' of the production. A guard opened the door, I presented my Star and Tribune card and said, 'I'm an American newspaperman and I'd like to interview one of the ladies of the chorus if you happen to have one who speaks and understands English.' He apparently understood me and gave me his full cooperation immediately after I had stuck a small bundle of that vulgar French paper money in his mitt. Funny what that stuff does.

"Moments later I was seated in a dressing room that held the costumes and the make-up tables for at least six members of the chorus. It wasn't quite as glamorous as I had imagined it would be. The room had a very strange odor, in the first place. There was that smell that you might get in the locker room of a high school basketball team between halves mixed with the odor of make-up. Most unpleasant to the nostrils. The man at the stage door had contacted the English-speaking member of the line. She came up to me shortly after I had seated myself and said, 'I'll be with you right after this next production number.' She was a tall one and behind her pancake and mascara probably had quite a pretty face, but my proximity to all of her artificialities prevented me from sensing any natural beauty she might have possessed. I might add that I was in what they called the 'nude' dressing room. They're dancing girls, ballet girls and the 'nudes.' They're the tall ones who appear on stage with nothing on above the waist.

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I'm not sure whether I showed it or not, but I was a bit uncomfortable for awhile. I had never been so close to so many. . . ."

Three years earlier on June 1, 1953, the *Minneapolis Star*, which had sent Cedric on assignment to London, displayed a map of the route from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey of the cortege the day before Queen Elizabeth II was crowned. On the map was a large black cross and the name, CEDRIC. *Star* readers did not have to be told that his last name was Adams. It scarcely needed the large caption: "WHERE CEDRIC WILL SIT TOMORROW TO SEE THE QUEEN."

The following day the headline blared: CEDRIC SEES QUEEN TWICE ON CORONATION RIDE. He described the experience:

"There are only two or three things in life I'd get up at three o'clock in the morning to do. The coronation of Queen Elizabeth is one. I didn't witness the actual coronation, but all day today I have been a part of gay London's greatest hour. For two hours and twelve minutes today, from the palace to the abbey and back Queen Elizabeth traveled six and a half miles in a massive gilt and glass coach.

"For eight hours and twenty-two minutes the Duke and Duchess of Magnolia have been sitting next to the ceiling in the Carlton Hotel bar. Now let me explain that. We had to get up at three this morning, take care of that trip down the hall, dress and then walk what measured three and a half miles but what felt like at least fourteen miles. There was no entry into the royal procession area by car any time

today. We arrived at the Carlton, which is in the Haymarket a few blocks from Trafalgar Square, at six."

Cedric explained the reason for their sitting next to the Carlton bar ceiling. Most of the buildings along the Queen's route that had glass fronts had taken out the glass and had erected stands for spectators. Niocy and Cedric had Row A, Section A, seats one and two on the corner.

After describing the gold coach in which the Queen rode, Cedric remarked what a "breathtaking sight it is to watch the Queen as she passes. You've grown used to the color, the pageantry, the excitement. It's the Queen you wait to see. She sat rather high on the scarlet-embossed velvet seat of the coach. Even from our seat in the ceiling you could see the folds of the robe in her lap. The scepter and orb glittered richly through the glass."

Despite the solemnity of the coronation Cedric had to be Cedric and revert to the light touch. During his stay in London he had had a running feud with his American travel agent who had booked a room without a bath for the Adams in the swank Claridge Hotel. He had jokingly complained, "I'm used to hiking on account of having to go to the bathroom down the hall. It may seem a little silly for a reporter off on an assignment halfway across the world to cover an event like the coronation to even mention such a thing as a bathroom. Here I am exposed to all the panoply, ritual and splendor of the world's greatest pageant, and what am I writing about—bathrooms. But I wish you could see this job. I never dreamed I'd be roughing it in London, especially at a time when Britain is dedicating its sovereigns to the service of its people. Sure, I was brought up on much less than hotel rooms without baths, but when

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you get over the half-century mark and you're on an expense account those little things in life mean so much.

"This down-the-hall masterpiece is something. It's co-educational, so you have to wait your turn. And you know what dawdlers women are in the bath. The tub is at least eight feet long, but it's the rest of the equipment that caught my fancy. The throne idea has been carried out completely. You know the oval arrangement we have for a seat—this is a mahogany bench and high above is the water arrangement and it works by a pull of an ancient chain. But it's the distance that gets me."

The tongue-in-cheek epithet, "old poop," had occasionally appeared "In This Corner" usually referring to Cedric's managing editor; but it was not until Arthur Godfrey aired it over the full CBS Network that it gained national attention.

Wherever in the world Cedric was he had to be sure his columns reached the papers in Minneapolis; so when he was visiting at Godfrey's farm near Leesburg, Virginia, he had no idea he was providing fodder for a Godfrey broadcast when he used Godfrey's teletype which was connected with the CBS offices in New York.

An item relating this experience headlined, "Teletype Trouble," appeared in the October 20, 1948, *Minneapolis Star*. It had the subhead, "Oooh, Cedric, What you Called Her!"

The story reported that "the interchange with the operator was left on the teletype-telephone machine Godfrey discovered it, liked it and read the thing on his Thursday morning broadcast. As he related it over the CBS Network, it went this way:

“ADAMS: Get me Minneapolis, will you? Shall I proceed?

“OPERATOR: Minute while I get the number, please.

“ADAMS: Okay. (Interval of time.)

“ADAMS: Is it okay for me to send to Minneapolis now?

“OPERATOR: Minute, please, while I get them.

“ADAMS: Okay, you let me know. I’m an amateur at this.

“OPERATOR: Okay, I will let you know. (Another interval.)

“ADAMS: Operator, is this Minneapolis? Is this Minneapolis, please?

“OPERATOR: Nope.

“ADAMS: Shall I send yet?

“OPERATOR: Nope. Keep ringing, please.

“ANOTHER OPERATOR: Okay, thanks.

“OPERATOR: They don’t answer.

“ADAMS: Look, can I send you some of this junk and then tomorrow morning you can send it on to Minneapolis, or won’t it work that way?

“OPERATOR: Sorry, can’t work that way. We don’t relay messages.

“ADAMS: Well, can I send it to you and you call Western Union and have them telegraph it up?

“OPERATOR: Nope. Sorry, you will have to handle it yourself. Why don’t you call them long distance?

“ADAMS: This is newspaper copy that I have to have there by morning—about 1,599 words. I can’t get to a phone here because Godfrey is sleeping and I can’t disturb the King Bee. Why can’t you call them and charge it to

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the Star and tell them it's for Cedric Adams? They'll accept it, I'm sure.

"OPERATOR: I'm sorry. I can't take it. It's against the rules for us to accept any messages to relay.

"ADAMS: You are an old poop. What shall I do, sit here and die on the vine?

"OPERATOR: After what you called me, I don't care what you do. What I suggest, though, is for you to hold the message and send it in early in the A.M., say around 7 o'clock.

"ADAMS: That I would, dearie. Do you like that better than poop? But Godfrey broadcasts from here in the morning and I can't make any noise and this d--- thing makes like a tractor as well.

"OPERATOR: Well, I'm sorry. You will just have to get that tractor going. Don't worry, Godfrey is a nice guy. He won't koo u. I know him from way back.

"ADAMS: What do you mean, he won't 'koo u'?

"OPERATOR: That was supposed to be kill you. I don't know what happened to it.

"ADAMS: Well, Godfrey is a great guy, sure, but how could he possibly broadcast when I am making this room sound like a foundry with this thing?

"OPERATOR: That is his headache.

"ADAMS: Now I am right back where we started. You are a poop and a big one and an old one and that is the worst kind.

"OPERATOR: I am not going to print what I think of you. I'll have you know whatever I am, I'm not so old as that, see—phooey!

"ADAMS: You are too. Look, see if you can get Min-

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

neapolis to turn on any machine in town to take this, will you, and send it down in the morning?

“OPERATOR: Do you have a telephone number of that place you are calling?

“ADAMS: Yes, the Star is Atlantic 3111.

“OPERATOR: That is in Minneapolis, isn't it?

“ADAMS: Yes, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

“OPERATOR: Thanks for the state, too. I'll see what I can do for you and call you back. I assume you will be there all night.

“ADAMS: Yes, dearie.

“OPERATOR: I'm not either. I'm an old poop; you said so.”

CHAPTER VIII

Kudos

The most cherished praise is that which you get from your colleagues or your competitors. For example, on March 5, 1958, *Detroit Free Press* columnist, Mark Beltaire, wrote, "For a good many years now I've admired the style and elan of a colleague of mine from way up north. Chap named Cedric Adams who labors column-wise for the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He first endeared himself to me when he admitted he couldn't keep a checkbook straight either. He received reams of advice from helpful bank officials but after it was all digested those slippery balances were just as elusive as ever. Adams is smart in other ways. Like getting his fellow itemizers to do his work for him while he loafs away the month of April. He's asked thirty of us around the country to write a column apiece while he's away."

In return, Cedric promised to send them a copy of each of the columns he received, plus one of his own, so that each columnist could—theoretically, at least—take a month off, too!

Fellow columnists both liked and respected Cedric's ability. Famed feature writer for the Hearst newspapers, Bob Considine, once characterized Cedric as "a transparent fellow. He has no guile, no subterfuge. Any person meeting him feels he knows him. You can see right into

his big heart and his good soul. He is one of the most wonderful and talented men of our time.”

A close associate, “Chuck” Sarjeant, who wrote Cedric’s WCCO radio news for fifteen years, gives the key to Cedric’s ability to achieve much in little time. Sarjeant declares that “Cedric did everything with utter concentration. He worked hard. He played hard. He talked hard. He slept hard.”

This disciplined ability did not come overnight. Cedric once reminisced that “fifteen years is a long time in the column business. That means that more than 5,000 times I have sat down in front of this typewriter with a blank sheet of paper staring me in the face and a job to do. He credited his readers for much of his columns’ content—their letters and telephone calls; plus, he said, “I’m a great hand to visit. Almost any street-corner conversation will produce an item or two if you press your informant.”

When Cedric’s long-time colleague, John K. Sherman, the late literary and music critic of the *Minneapolis Star* reviewed *Poor Cedric’s Almanac* he noted that in this book “we find the same mystery that we have in Cedric’s daily columns in the *Star*—the mystery of the ‘common touch.’ Very few people have that touch; I’ve never had it, only a small minority of writers have it.”

Sherman admitted that “what that touch is, is hard to define or analyze. You can go over a typical Adams column and often find no clue as to why the column is read by umpty-thousand people as regularly as they eat their evening meals. Similar material may be found in other columns which are read by relatively few people.”

Then Sherman believed that “part of the secret seems

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to be that Cedric instinctively is interested in a lot of things most people are interested in. Another part is that he has a deceptively simple and clear method of passing on what interests him. You'll find no affectation or self-conscious flourishes in his prose; he is a first class writer, when he wants to be or has time to be, with a natural gift for the right phrase, the right intonation.

"And when he settles down to do a writing job once in a while, forswearing the knick-knackery that fills the bulk of his space, you'll notice that he does a masterly job of balancing humor and sentiment, that he is following no leads but his own, that what he says has the glints and slants of an original mind."

This is high praise, indeed, from one who knew Cedric well and had worked with him on both the old *Star* and the new *Star* under Cowles' ownership. Sherman had no ulterior reason for his warm words. Almost surely he was striving for objectivity.

Sherman continued: "I don't know of anyone who views the world and all the things in it with more open-eyed wonder than he does. You'd think by this time, with his rise to prominence and considerable fortune, that he would have acquired a shell of skepticism and sophistication that the charming gullibility of youth would now be gone. But Cedric still is struck with astonishment at things he never knew before, at statements which are positively new to him. He never pretends to knowledge he doesn't have, and you'll hear him respond, 'Is that so?' far oftener than 'I don't believe it.'

"This lack of cynicism goes with an entire lack of malice or envy—and I speak of the days of the past, when his

own status gave him much to envy, as much as I do of today. I have never read a sentence of Cedric's that was motivated by spite or revenge or self-pity. Cedric would hoot at this, but he is essentially kind. He is a man of good will.

"How he avoids self-importance I'll never know, inasmuch as he has become in the last 10 years a legend, a regional personality of almost Paul Bunyanesque potency. I have seen sophisticated people staring at Adams-in-person in the same transfixed way that tourists stare at Mt. Rushmore Memorial. No one in Minnesota history has come closer to being 'known by everybody,' yet Adams is still a country boy amazed to be wallowing in fame and money.

Then Sherman summed it all up catching the pixie spirit of Cedric. "Of course the thing I react to most with Cedric is the inner bubbling spirit and the irresponsible humor—things you don't always get in his columns or broadcasting, but which are basic in his personality. You know those people who make you 'feel good' when you are in their presence? Cedric is one of them. His giggle is infectious, and it sets the world aright. His humor is not so much a matter of joke-telling as a wild and fanciful thing, salted with nonsense, employing the quick switch on sober, ponderous things that quickly reduce them to their essential idiocy. A man with such humor is basically a civilized person. A lot of intellectuals ain't got it."

But Cedric Adams had it. As a newspaper columnist he had the intimate approach which intuitively touched basic needs. Cedric could and did apply personal qualities to radio in a spontaneous, blithe style which was far different from most of the formal announcers and newscasters. He

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could be as folksy on the air as a hillbilly emcee while projecting humor, sentiment, and sincerity. Cedric was gifted with a distinctive, resonant voice which had the ability to register with most listeners. The voice was as identifiable as was his jovial appearance and his writing style.

Periodically, the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* advertised in the *New Yorker* magazine. Many of the ads featured columns written by Cedric which were carried by the magazine in 1948, 1949, 1950, and 1954.

The October 20, 1949, "In This Corner" reported that "quite a controversy raged a couple of weeks ago and we lost. There's an interesting little slant to it that I think you may enjoy. The *Star and Tribune* resumed their *New Yorker* magazine series this week for what is hoped to be a 26-time advertisement in which we run excerpts from *This Corner* in column style and then tie in a little pitch about our papers. This will be the third series in which we have been in the magazine. We were scheduled to start a week ago and didn't because the *New Yorker* editorial staff tossed the copy out right smack on its ear. We learned the hard way that you cannot kid the *New Yorker* magazine. Obviously it's perfectly all right for them to lampoon to their little heart's content, but when you start monkeying around with the *New Yorker*, it's a different story and you'd better back up. That was what the controversy was about. Violent objection was taken to the copy in our first ad. And telegrams and telephone conversations couldn't straighten it out. Let me background you a little more on it and show you the copy that was blue-penciled.

"We had taken a summer respite in the ad series so I

was anxious to open with something other than a mine run. Instead of the column culls we usually use, I did a little separate piece and then made a pitch for contributions from New Yorker readers. A curious thing had happened last year when the ads were running every week. I was getting quite a bit of mail from New Yorker readers from all over the country. And the magazine readers were proving to be an excellent source of material. That was the thing I wanted to encourage. Very boldly I went after it. Now for the copy the lads turned down. This was the opening paragraph.

“ ‘I’m back in this slick again and you probably haven’t even missed me during the hiatus. As a matter of fact, you must have wondered *hew* I ever got in there in the first place. I know *how* I got in. It’s a very simple process. We *buy* the space. It’s *why* I get in that bothers me. My boss is a very sharp guy, nevertheless. He figures that by the time you readers have got back here, you’re up to your nostrils in words like *plethora*, *nubile*, *force majeure* and so on, and it’s a change you need. That’s me. Let it be known, however, that I am not without *culture*. I’ve worn Brooks Brothers shirts with the button-down collar since 1922. My wife plays canasta and has a 12 handicap at a country club golf course, the name of which eludes me. We have a *vertical* Venetian blind in our downstairs bathroom and radiant heating in our activities room. How much better are the boys in lower Connecticut doing?

“ ‘I realize I have a golden opportunity in this little department each week. I *could* bang out a helluva piece of copy each week, but what would it *get* me. I *love* those italics. I got that from the boys up in the front part of the

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magazine. I'd still be a misfit and I wouldn't be providing contrast.'

"I went on from there to ask for contributions and then we went into our little chat about our papers and what fine examples of family journals they are and also added a few things about our new plant. Any publication, of course, reserves the right to have its editorial and advertising copy subject to review and rejection. But one of the principal beefs the *New Yorker* boys had was mentioning their use of italics. The substance of their complaint was this: Look, we run our magazine the way we want to run it, and we don't particularly like that type of comment about the methods we employ. And that was that. I know darned well that the type of stuff I do is not in keeping with the spirit of the *New Yorker* magazine."

There are those who believe that some of the kudos, the praise, Cedric got for his column were indirect and were not meant to be complimentary. The *New Yorker* episode was a case in point. When I asked Otto Silha, publisher of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, about the hassle with the *New Yorker* he was pleased to comment.

"I think," Silha told me, "that Cedric was undoubtedly the greatest local newspaper columnist in America. If you go through the years I have observed the journalism scene, probably only Herb Caen in San Francisco would have been his rival. And if you put it all together—Cedric's radio and his briefer television career—then I think he was undoubtedly number one. It all really started with the column in many respects. The column was the thing (smile in Silha's voice) that he was always most proud of.

"When we ran the series of ads in the *New Yorker*, I

think that, more than anything else, demonstrated the power of Cedric Adams. I used to help Cedric put these together. And I picked out some sequences from his regular column which I thought were of national significance. And then he would polish them, or he would come in with his own ideas. These columns were so potent that he began to get a great deal of mail. Then when he was Godfrey's replacement on television in New York, people recognized him by the *New Yorker* column. Cedric really appreciated that.

"The editors of the *New Yorker*, on the other hand, were a little nervous about Cedric's column as an advertisement for the papers. It was the only thing of its kind. It was really a good creative gambit for the *Star* and *Tribune* because it did get this tremendous readership. It was always high in the readership scores. And Cedric occasionally touched on some tender items. We had several columns that were banned by the *New Yorker*. And finally the magazine really discouraged the series.

"Some used to say it was the editor, Harold Ross, who just couldn't stand the fact that this columnist from the Midwest—I suppose that Ross regarded it as the sticks—was in there competing with his selections and in some cases drawing more mail. I think what used to happen was that the editors would get some of the letters about Cedric's column. And sometimes they might have gotten a greater response than they received. And this, I think, kind of drove them wild. So they discouraged it."

Cedric's appeal for the supposedly sophisticated reader of the *New Yorker* may have been that of nostalgia. Many of these readers had formerly lived in smaller towns where

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life was simpler, slower. Cedric's forte was communicating this. His columns brought the urban reader back to a simpler plane and a longing for a less hectic pace.

The following column which appeared as a *Star* and *Tribune* advertisement in the *New Yorker* is the key to the high readership these ads had. Here Cedric has captured the typical symptoms of puppy-love in a teen-aged boy:

"I got to thinking of an old girl of mine the other day and the first honest-to-goodness date I ever had in Minneapolis. My 14-year-old reminded me of it when I thought of the things he's going to have to go through pretty soon. A strange mixture of pain and delight, with pain probably a little more pronounced.

"Dagne Hansen was her name. She was a Dane. A blond Dane with red cheeks and eyebrows that were darker than her hair. Her house was two doors from mine. Dagne was about eight months older than I was and had lived in Minneapolis all her life. That gave her two advantages over me. I had done such mild things with her as swing her in a hammock. On many occasions I had swooshed up to her house on my bike, made a very spectacular stop by swinging one leg over the bike and riding up to the door with just one foot on the pedal. The time had come, though, in our lives when I figured it would take more than hammock-swinging and bicycle acrobatics to hold her attention.

"I'll give Dagne credit for one thing. She made me fingernail conscious. After I had made up my mind that we should have a date, I began preparation for it by keeping my nails clean for at least a week ahead. I argued with myself for several days about whether it would be

easier to ask her face to face or over the telephone. I rehearsed the telephone routine by the hour. Every time I found myself alone, I'd pick up an imaginary phone and start, 'Hello, is Dagne there?' I even filled in the waits. 'This is Cedric Adams. Could I speak to her, please?' The voice on the other end would say, 'Just a minute and I'll call her.' Then my imagination took me to the point where she said, 'Hello,' and I said, 'Dagne' and then another wait. 'This is Cedric.' I remember I made one telephone call and she answered the telephone and I was so startled because I didn't get a chance to use the wait I had rehearsed that I hung up before I could get another word out.

"I finally cinched it, though. We got through a streetcar ride and a movie. It was exciting having her next to me. We wound up at the old So Chu Inn, a Chinese place on Fifth Street, where they had dancing. She ordered chicken chow mein. I wasn't that hungry. I was a little worried about the check, too. I ordered a banana split. I'll bet that waiter thought he had a couple of live ones. Dagne suggested we dance, which we did. When I suggested another dance she said she thought it was too crowded. I knew then that I wasn't quite cutting the mustard with her. She seemed to dawdle over her chow mein. We were in there about two hours, the longest 120 minutes I ever put in in my life.

"I recall having sort of planned on maybe a little good-night smack. I had even rehearsed that. It didn't happen. For weeks I looked upon myself as a social failure. I wonder whatever happened to Dagne. She had such pretty eyebrows."

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Cedric was deeply touched when he returned from a vacation in Jamaica on March 15, 1950. He was met at the airport by a band and was escorted in style to the Nicollet Hotel in Minneapolis where his family and he were honored with a huge testimonial dinner attended by over eight hundred. There were floor show acts and speeches before Cedric was presented with the keys to a new Cadillac convertible. Naturally, Cedric was pleased and he expressed his appreciation in his inimitable manner.



Cedric watches Niecy, Dave, Steve and Ric open their gifts at the Adams testimonial dinner.

Cedric's words appeared in the *Star* on the following day: "I thought I was nervous the night of the Godfrey show," Cedric had said. "This tops that by all odds. You are now looking at the greatest pile of maladjusted hor-

mones ever assembled under human skin. As you might well surmise, this whole affair has been nothing short of overwhelming. It is very difficult to know how to react. I could be coy and say, 'Shucks, you shouldn't have done it.' Or I could be very practical and say that 'I'm glad it came now rather than after the morticians had worked on me.' You've been listening to a lot of malarkey here tonight. These speakers were given the option of paying for a ticket or saying a few words. And you can see what choice they made. I want you to know that I am the first to realize fully that there is nothing in my background to deserve any part of all this to-do. I'm just a guy who back about 1910 sat in a little house back of the school in Magnolia and wrote his initials on the wall to start a writing career which hasn't gone much beyond that since.

"All the things that have been mentioned here tonight," Cedric continued, "have stemmed from one of several things. In my newspaper work I've had all the benefits of our great metropolitan newspapers behind me. In my broadcasting, I've had the most powerful, far-reaching medium of its kind in our Upper Midwest. I've enjoyed the full co-operation of the excellent staffs of these great enterprises. I've been fortunate enough to work for readers and listeners who have been responsive. I've had the help of an understanding and tolerant mate and the inspiration of the three hungry mouths of my sons that you see up here now. Who couldn't survive and flourish under those ideal conditions?"

Cedric admitted, "I'm really in trouble over this Cadillac. And I'm going to go into the situation with complete candor. I deeply appreciate the spirit of generosity behind the gift.

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And I say that in great earnestness. But there is something that I want to do to justify my acceptance. I cannot accept the gift without in some way sharing. The good Lord has taken care of me in a very bountiful way. His generousities and blessings have been multiple. His goodness to me and mine have been manifold. I haven't any idea how much one of these shiny things cost, but I was just about at the point of popping for a new car—under the General Motors Acceptance Plan. So, if it isn't too disturbing to you very thoughtful donors here tonight, I'd like to accept the Cadillac, but give the cash equivalent to four charities—a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Jewish group, but then I'd like to designate the fourth. About once a month, two very fine ladies walk quietly into my office wearing the long black robes and the stiffly starched white headpieces of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Those ladies do something for me, something that, according to my own convictions, has helped me very much. They remember me in their prayers. And in the midst of all this good fortune here tonight I'd like to remember them by making them the fourth recipient. I hope all of you friends understand the sincerity of my wish and my gesture. Friends, on behalf of every member of the Adams family, may I say that we are indeed grateful.”

Cedric was sincerely overwhelmed; but that did not stop him from self-depreciation. He subtly balanced his words with his intention of giving the cash equivalent to charities. No one was taken in by his pretending he would have to buy an automobile on a time payment plan; but he probably guessed that many in the audience bought their cars on installment payments. Members of the audience

probably wished they could accept something and then magnanimously return the kindness by giving to others needier than themselves. Cedric filled this desire for them vicariously.

Cedric received much recognition in his lifetime. In addition to an entry on him in *Who's Who in America*, he was voted one of Minnesota's one hundred great. He was presented the Headliner Silver Medallion Award at Atlantic City on May 3, 1952. And was selected as the Twin Cities' best newscaster in 1956 and 1957 by the local chapter of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA).

It is not surprising that some parents named their offspring, "Cedric"; but, as Adams admitted "In This Corner," "A jolt comes our way once in awhile. A reader forwarded a copy of the program of the fourteenth annual Men's Garden Clubs of America to be held in Minneapolis in August. The back page carried the following: 'Cedric Adams, a hardy, magnificent sub-zero hybrid tea rose with large, ovoid, very double scarlet to carmine red blooms. It is the aristocrat of rosedom and was named after a newspaper columnist!'"

Cedric's comment after the item, "How do you like that? Adams in red blooms?"

In the December 5, 1955, column Cedric, in his inimitable vein, told about the banquet given for those who had served twenty years or more at the *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune*. Cedric, who was one of those being honored for twenty years of service, commented, "We had five new members of the Twenty Year Club from the editorial department at our table. There was Russ Bull,

Kudos

Ralph Mueller, Bower Hawthorne, Bob Murphy and myself. We couldn't figure out how the management had been so smart as to hire all of us in the same year. It's easy to see how they might get one outstanding man in a single year, but to land five of our caliber in a single 12 months indicates true genius. That was the thought all the way around the table. Whether it spread around the room we didn't know. Nor care, I guess you could add."

John Cowles, the Chairman of the Board of the *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune* did, and does, care. In analyzing Cedric he told me that his "greatest gift was that he had the human touch to a unique degree. He was himself interested in precisely the same things that the rank and file of the public was most interested in. What Cedric produced was instinctive and not contrived.

"He liked almost everyone and was warm and simple and friendly. I don't believe there was a trace of anything malicious in his character, and his own personality showed through in everything he wrote or broadcast. Of course his deep, warm, friendly voice and first rate articulation was a major asset to him as a broadcaster, but it was his good humor and friendliness and understanding of what interested people that gave his columns in the *Minneapolis Star* such tremendous appeal."

Not everyone, of course, was an admirer of Cedric as a person, as a columnist, or as a broadcaster. One would have to be a colorless person for no one to react to you pro or con.

One of the severest critics of the column is a leading Twin Cities newsman who does not rate Cedric's writing highly compared with the present columnists on the *Star*.

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He recalls that when he first came to the Twin Cities he would hear people say, "Cedric wrote . . ." or "Cedric said . . ." In order to get their goat this newsman would "innocently" ask, "Cedric who?"

Of course "In This Corner" was not a daily masterpiece. The column appeared 365 days a year. Cedric undoubtedly figuratively bled a little every day of his column writing career because there was always the next day's column to think about.

But column writing was Cedric's greatest fulfillment. His temperament, his curiosity, his skill with words made this vocation inevitable. He had to express his interest in people, in small events as well as large. His ability to observe, question, and delve gave him a rich backlog for his columns.

CHAPTER IX

On Camera

American television made its debut at the New York World's Fair in 1939. There were not many receivers in the coverage area; hence, not many viewers. In 1940 the Federal Communications Commission put a brake on the expansion of television broadcasting until the best standards for TV transmission were determined. In 1941 television got the go-ahead to broadcast; but World War II soon intervened in the same year. There were only six commercial television stations operating in the United States at this time.

In 1947, after the War and after the FCC had authorized black-and-white transmission, television began to make headway as a home information and entertainment center.

On April 23, 1948, KSTP-TV began operating in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In September of 1948 there were thirty-six stations on the air in nineteen cities. These cities had approximately one-third the population of the United States. The Federal Communications Commission froze all new television assignments on September 29, 1948. However, the freeze applied to new applications only.

Now that television was here, Cedric Adams felt he had a decision to make about the new communication medium. At stake was his popularity as a radio personality in the Northwest and, to a lesser extent, over the nation because

of his five-minute CBS Network radio feature. He wondered that if he risked going into television whether his stature might be lessened. He also had to consider the popularity of his column which had unsurpassed readership in the two dominant newspapers of the Northwest.

The decision about television was partially made for Cedric when Arthur Godfrey asked him to substitute on "Talent Scouts." His initial television appearance on February 6, 1950, then, was on network, not local television. His column the day after his CBS television debut described how the assignment came about and what it was that troubled him about TV. It was not like dashing into a radio newsroom the last minute, grabbing a script, and broadcasting. There were many, many restrictions connected with television that frustrated him.

As he frequently did, he began "In This Corner" on a note of humility: "I paid off a debt last night. As you may know, Art Godfrey has been exceedingly kind to me. He wanted a night off, but he didn't want to take any chances. He wants to keep that show. He could have got Danny Kaye for \$15,000. Hildegard would have worked it for \$500. The Ritz Brothers would have tossed in their sister for \$350. But Godfrey wanted the show loused up, so he got me. And I wish you could see the fee. After I pay my laundry bill, and there is one, I'll just about break even.

"And what a hectic day you put in for 30 minutes on the air. I started at 9:00 a.m. with a conference. The first one was with the producer-director of the show. So you sit in his office all morning while he answers telephone calls. He has what they call a working script. It has the name of the show, the time and the name of the network on it.

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Then about noon, this guy says he has a luncheon meeting, but he'll see you at 2:45 and we'll get together with the writers.

"At 2:45 I report to an upstairs dressing room where there are two typewriters and a bunch of yellow sheets of paper and an ash tray on a table in the center. There was one thing that didn't help the show much. The workroom was en route to the ladies' rest room. So about every eight minutes all afternoon, some dame would stick her head in the door and say, 'Could you tell me where the restroom is?'"

"Finally, one of the two writers says maybe we should start on the introduction. The other writer says to all of us that the show should start on a self-smash gag. That was new terminology to me, but I discovered that means you say something against yourself to evoke audience sympathy. It sets you up as a self-effacing guy.

"So my opening line was set up like this: 'There'll be a brief pause while the audience says, "Darn!"' We hashed and rehashed that for about an hour. Periodically we'd vote on the line. It was decided that the darn was too weak an opening. So we changed it to 'while the audience says—' and that was to be followed by a big bird, raspberry or Bronx cheer. Somebody remembered that Mr. Paley, Chairman of the Board of CBS, objected to the bird as not being entertainment, so that killed that."

It's easy to see how by this time Cedric would be seething. He was an established writer himself. Yet he was being treated like an extra wheel. He was the yokel from the "sticks." And yet he was embarrassed at the stupidity, the big-city concept of humor, which in the "sticks" would be considered worse than corny. But there

was still more frustration to come for Cedric as the telecast deadline got closer. Imagine how he felt knowing that it was not only his first time on television, but that it was to be on a network!

“About that time some guy from the advertising agency came in with the commercials,” Cedric’s account continued. “The top line had a penciled notation from Godfrey that said, ‘Brew a pot of tea and ad-lib a commercial.’ So I says to the agency man, ‘What is this, a television show or a cooking school? Haven’t you got just a straight commercial?’ He said he’d see if he could dig one up.

“Then a girl with long hair and ballet slippers came in with the names of the talent scouts. It was beginning to look as though I was getting a lot of help in lousing up the show—a job which I had planned to do by myself. I now had the name of the show, the time, the network over which it was to be broadcast, the names of the talent scouts and a guy who had been sent out for some new commercials. Oh, yes, and we had half the opening line. It was then about quarter of six. We still had a couple of hours. One of the writers said he had to get something to eat. The other one said he had to pick up a suit at the cleaners. They said they would get the makeup man in to get my face ready and they’d be back after awhile.

“The makeup man came in with some foam rubber and some pancake makeup which he smeared over my beard. I told him I had a razor and another suit back at the hotel and that I was going to go back and get ready. He said he didn’t think I’d have time now because we were going to do a dress rehearsal any minute. I told him I didn’t think we had the script ‘ready.’ And he said sure, the working

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script was done last Thursday. So I said how about the opening? He said that was ad-lib. And the close was, too. Finally the writers came back and we wrote some things down and rehearsed and the producer said we were a little short but that the applause would fill it out. It was then three minutes until air time. The producer came up and he says now just relax. We have a lot of time tonight. Take it easy. Just be sure you have your working script . . . Gives you some idea of what you have to go through for a friend.”

When I asked Niecy if Cedric had been nervous about subbing for Godfrey she replied, “Very nervous. I can remember his telling about the time at the old Minnesota Theater when they had University events—talent things—he said that on a couple of occasions he’d be gagging in the wings before he had to go out on the stage. The Godfrey appearance was even more nerve-wracking.”

Cedric wrote a semi-apology in a column four days later for relating his experiences in New York television. His words express the doubt, then a degree of reassurance, such as any of us would utter after we have tried something new.

His column admitted, “I have a difficult problem today. In a way, it’s a very pleasant task, but it’s the approach to the problem that has me stymied. It’s about when I was in New York. That’s why I like to travel occasionally. You can always come back home and punctuate your conversation with that kind of talk. You grow a little weary of having to say, ‘Now when I was driving down France Avenue in Minneapolis the other day.’ It’s always a little more impressive to be able to say, now and then, ‘I’ll never

forget the day I was crossing the Alps,' and 'Oh, you've been in Tibet, too.' And there you emphasize the 'too.'

"Since my return last Tuesday—and this is where I don't want you to think me immodest—I've had a whole sackful of mail. It's that thoughtfulness, that warmth that has been so gratifying. I made a quick analysis of the mail geographically and there were only four states in the Union from which I had not received letters or cards. There was one theme which ran through the majority of the letters. This one line occurred so many times, 'We sat there with our fingers crossed.' That meant they were hoping and pulling."

As a result of his television appearance as Godfrey's substitute, Cedric was asked to emcee the 1950 summer replacement show for Godfrey's "Talent Scouts." The format for the show, called "Prize Performance," was similar to "Talent Scouts" except that it used talented children instead of adults.

Before he began the eleven week summer replacement stint Cedric wrote, "I happened to be thumbing through some old copies of This Corner the other day. It was back in the period of 1939 and I ran across this paragraph: 'I hope I've made my little pile by the time television actually arrives. A group of us last night volunteered for the Philco demonstration at WCCO. The lights are brighter than any movie set I've ever seen. Because my beard line is a little heavy, they daubed my face with grease paint. Women have to wear black lipstick. You have facial expression, camera range and voice technique to keep in mind all at once. All in all, it's a pretty tedious procedure. Make mine just plain broadcasting, Charlie.'

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“That was written 11 years ago, mind you. Unfortunately, my little pile hasn’t been made which is why on July 3 I begin the summer replacement on the TV show in New York once a week all summer. Incidentally, I just learned that the show will be kinescoped and broadcast in some sections of the country later, so there’s a strong possibility that it may be shown locally. If and when it is, don’t be too critical. Remember, I’m just a beginner at the darned stuff even though I made a debut 11 years ago.”

Cedric had cause for fear. Television was new and relatively crude. Performers had to contend with the hot lights required for the less sensitive camera tubes used at that time. There were the producer, the directors, cameramen, lighting engineers, floor men, and a host of others required for each program who themselves were learning about the medium.

Niecy remembers that “Cedric was not very fond of television. There were too many outside things that bothered him so that he couldn’t concentrate on what he was doing because there were so many telling him which way to look and what to do. He felt that it was a very trying medium for him anyway. It was his least favorite.”

Jim Bormann, News and Public Affairs Director of WCCO-Radio, feels that “Cedric didn’t enjoy the same degree of success in television as he did in radio and this bothered him. This was the only medium in which he had not been extremely successful in the communication arts. He really was baffled by it. He was somewhat frightened and frustrated by TV.”

Bormann continues, “Radio was so easy for him. He could sit down and be himself and act naturally in front of

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the microphone. But when he sat down in front of the cameras the confusion around him, directions being given and all of the bustle he was off stride. He felt that he couldn't act naturally and that he wasn't coming through, that he wasn't communicating in television as he knew he was able to do successfully on radio. Consequently, in time he dropped his TV programs feeling apparently—though he never told me this—that it was better to maintain his successful image in radio rather than risk it in television. People obviously had a different image of him as a radio broadcaster than that which they saw on the television tube.”



Cedric with Peter Donald, Arleen Francis and a contestant on the CBS-TV "Prize Performance".

Almost two months before the first "Prize Performance" telecast Cedric had to go through the harrowing experience of two trial runs of the show to satisfy the network and

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potential sponsors. Cedric described the experience, including, of course, a Minnesota angle.

“Come back stage with me for a television show. Last Tuesday night I did my second ‘closed circuit’ TV show in the CBS Playhouse. The first one had too many rough spots in it. The second one, we hope, will be okay. Ed Wynn had to do three before he got one that was presentable. Those of us in the minor leagues, however, will probably get the boot if the number two attempt isn’t approved. A one-shot TV show costs in the neighborhood of \$40,000 to put on film, so it’s obvious they aren’t going to monkey around too much. We had a 14 piece orchestra, a technical crew of 17 camera, sound, light, and stage personnel. Long before a TV show gets to the shooting stage, program directors, script writers, producers and casters have put hours and hours of labor into it.

“Here’s the working schedule I followed on the second trip to New York. I left here at 7 in the morning on a stratocruiser, arrived downtown in Manhattan 10 minutes ahead of my radio newscast piped to the Twin Cities, did that and then began the script writing job. It was 2:15 a.m. Tuesday when I finished the last of 18 pages of type-written material. The theater call was set for 11 a.m. for the working cast. When I arrived at the theater the musicians were in the pit, a camera and sound crew of at least a dozen men were working on stage, prop men were checking positions, control booth operators were matching levels. A thousand details, most of them too technical for me to comprehend, have to be taken care of before a rehearsal can even start.

“Radio has made me very definitely a script guy,” Cedric

confessed. "On the first show I had a terrible time trying to duck the script and keeping the pages in order. This time the director very thoughtfully had the carpenter shop design and build me a special table with a sunken compartment for my script. The table came out, though, with an edge just in front of my belly over which I had to drape my hands to turn the pages. Removal of that lip would have made the table ideal. Three unions were involved. The work could not be done on the stage. The desk could not be removed to the sidewalk. Time did not permit returning it to the shop. So I draped my hands over the edge into the sunken compartment.

"One of the amazing things about this show was that sixteen present and former Minnesotans who were in the audience came up on the stage after the show to say hello. I wish they had come up before the show. You have no idea how 'all alone' you feel in the strange surroundings of a cold New York audience, among musicians and cameramen and directors you've never seen before and who have never heard of you, working with personalities, stars in their own right, who are all familiar with each other. I saw a breakdown of time and talent costs on the completed package over 52 television stations. The astronomical figure makes me feel very confident that the next time I go to New York it will be a sightseeing trip only!"

Here Cedric gives us other keys as to why he did not feel comfortable in television. He shared with us the insecurity we all feel in new and critical situations.

Cedric pleased the network brass so his return to New York was for the series and not "a sightseeing trip only." The summer replacement programs were unsponsored and

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were planned partially as a “showcase” to demonstrate Adams’ talents to potential sponsors. All the youngsters on the program were professionals, mostly from the Professional Children’s School in New York.

1950 was a strenuous summer for Cedric. He continued his seven newspaper columns a week, plus his many radio broadcasts. Always one to share his thoughts with his readers, he took his small-town-boy image to New York and related the experience.

“For the first time in my life I have what New York refers loosely as a ‘writer.’ I’m to say what he has written and memorize my portions in a 28-page script sometime between 3 and 7:30 p.m. Let me give you an example of what the writer had in last week’s opening for me. I’m supposed to say, ‘My, it’s warm in New York. Somebody told me today they saw a dog chasing a cat and it was so hot they were both walking.’ That was what the writer gave me. Now let me tell you something about that gag. Way back in 1928 I was editor of a pocket-size humor magazine called Captain Billy’s Whiz Bang, the very first Fawcett publication. Back in 1928, we had that identical gag. Here it is on television in 1950. That gag has lived longer than my writer should. Anyway, I killed the gag.”

Cedric endured the supercilious treatment and completed the series. However, Niecy says that “the New York appearances were a terrible drain on him because he was flying in those days when it wasn’t like going by jet today. It was time-consuming. An ordeal, actually, although he was happy to have the chance to be on national television.”

After the series concluded, Dr. Frank Stanton, President of the Columbia Broadcasting System, showed his apprecia-

tion in a telegram: "Dear Cedric: Congratulations on terrific job you have turned in this summer on CBS-TV and best wishes for another great season as one of the mainstays of our radio daytime schedule. You are truly our only triple threat broadcaster and we are proud to have you in the Columbia family."

In the spring of 1951 Cedric received another invitation to appear on CBS Network television. Because the "Talent Scouts" series was continuing through the summer, Adams' assignment was to substitute for Arthur Godfrey for eight weeks. Cedric pondered the offer and, in effect, had his readers help make the decision vicariously. They, too, had had to struggle over decisions and understood.

"I remember so well those wonderful Tuesdays of last summer," Cedric confided. "What a joy it was to move out of the New York heat and tempo into the much more enjoyable atmosphere of Minnesota and the folks you call your friends. I'd start living again on Tuesday and then along about Wednesday afternoon I'd begin to think about Monday morning so virtually my whole week was ruined. There's an excitement about it, I'll admit. But just how good is that excitement for the human system? Should you permit yourself to be constantly stirred up? Is there any compensation worth what you have to go through?"

Despite his hesitancy he did fill in for Godfrey during the summer of 1951.

On August 17, 1952, WCCO-TV came into being. Midwest Radio-TV, Incorporated, had been formed. The Columbia Broadcasting System sold its interest in WCCO-Radio to Midwest Radio-TV. In turn, Midwest bought Channel 4 in Minneapolis which had been telecasting

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since July 1, 1949. Channel 4's call letters were then changed to WCCO-TV.

As expected, WCCO-Radio's leading personality, C. Adams, got the call again. While Cedric still had mental reservations about television, he could treat it jocularly this time, although his same fear of failure lurked. Again he went to his typewriter and on January 4, 1953, admitted, "The jitters are upon me. My second major stab at television starts tomorrow night at 6 over WCCO-TV, and I don't mind confessing that a curious tingle ambles up and down my spine every time I think of it. Goodness knows I'm no Clark Gable or Cary Grant in front of a camera, and viewers are not too gentle in their criticisms. I'm in for a 13-week stretch anyway, so I hope you set owners



A television message for Northern Pacific Railroad.

will join us for the first week at least and make any helpful suggestions which occur to you. I may be smiling on the outside, but the old boy will be revved up on the inside, believe me.”

It would take a lot to “rev up” Cedric, or so it would appear. Often persons who seem outwardly calm, actually are churning within. Most everyone felt that nothing would perturb Cedric because he would josh about things, turn on his smile, or just indicate by seeming insouciance that whatever came along, he could handle it. This, of course, was an image which was not accurate. Cedric *did* care. He cared very deeply. He had pride in his craftsmanship, particularly in his writing. The fact that he carried an excessive work load often obscured this because it was physically and mentally impossible for him to be at his peak on all assignments.

Cedric seemed very serious when he once paradoxically explained to me, “Actually, Beno, I never try to do my very best. I always save something more in case my sponsors or bosses become critical!”

Before he appeared on WCCO-TV, Cedric wrote that “for the last two months I’ve been traipsing over to WCCO-TV every week for dry-run practice sessions. One hour of that takes as much out of you as a whole day of normal routine work. There’s a hectic quality about television that you don’t find in the city room of the newspaper or the busiest studio in a radio station.

“My troubles began with my rate of speed,” Cedric felt. “In radio I bang along at about 175 words a minute. Sherm Headley, the TV director, pointed out that with that rate I lost the intimacy so necessary in TV reception. The minute

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I started slowing down, I felt as though my feet were dragging. He told me to look at the camera and imagine that I was sitting there talking to my wife. It's hard to gaze at a big black ugly thing and set up in your imagination the fact that there is a member of your immediate family. You have a couple of dozen of other things to think about, too. Naturally, you can't memorize a news broadcast, so you have a script to think about. You try to give the impression that you're not reading and that necessitates looking into the camera periodically. You have such minor things as whether your necktie is on straight, what you're doing with your hands, is your frown showing, which way your mouth is curling, is your coat buckling over the shoulders, and how about those bags under your eyes?

WCCO-TV's evening newscaster, Dave Moore, who was a staff announcer when Cedric began these dry-runs, says that Cedric would rest periodically while the television executives would huddle at the far side of the studio. Presumably they were discussing his performances. During one rest period he signified a jabbering movement with his hand and said to Dave, "Look at 'em yakkin'! Tohellwith'm, I'm going to do it my own way anyway!"

Colle-McVoy Advertising Agency's creative director, Fred Booth, remembers those first days of Cedric's TV newscasting. He calls Cedric a pro who was always easy to work with, but that rehearsals bothered him. Cedric was stiff in front of the camera. He did not photograph well at that time possibly because lighting and other techniques were still in their formative stages. And Cedric just could not or would not walk in front of the camera.

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In later telecasts Cedric used a teleprompter which is a device attached to the camera which allows the performer to look at the lens while the news or commercial copy, which is written in large type, rolls out the words at the speaker's rate of speed.

Cedric's affability always invited joke-playing. When he was not clowning with his colleagues, they were trying "to get something on Cedric." Joe Bartelme, news director of WCCO-TV, remembers one evening before Cedric had arrived for his six o'clock television newscast the staff closed down the newsroom. They turned off the news teletypes and shut off the lights, then hid. In mock terror, Cedric screamed when he arrived and found dark stillness instead of the frenetic hustle of a newsroom.

Incidentally, Bartelme believes that Cedric was always nervous on television although he was with WCCO-TV over six years from January 5, 1953 to April 1, 1959. He adds that Cedric's radio following never carried over to television, and that his local TV ratings were poor.

Anyone who has ever performed before the public knows that it is unwise, if not fatal, to ask for criticism. Cedric made this mistake after his first week on WCCO-TV. The reactions were numerous, varied, humorous, abrasive, and contradictory. Cedric confessed, "There's little danger of any television performer getting a big head. Exposure is so complete that the smallest flaws pop out like Mount Everest. You can imagine then what happens to the major deficiencies. I asked for help and got it. Let me dip at random into the basket of mail to show you what I mean:

'Try moving your head up and down only, instead of to the side. It gives a neater and cleaner cut line.'

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'Why don't you wear a visor so you don't squint so much?'

'Cut off the top of the chair you're sitting on. The chair looks like your shoulder, and makes you look like your head is way down in your coat. You pushed your glasses up eight times. Are they loose, or is that only a habit?'

'Why do you call it dinner news? It was supper you ate in Magnolia, so why go highbrow on us?'

'I think you've been over-sold on the folksy, intimate type of approach. Stick to your rapid-fire delivery.'

'You went so fast and were too bombastic. Can't you just talk the news to us?''

Not all the criticism of his WCCO-TV newscasts was as contradictory or unflattering. *Variety* magazine reported, "Some attributes which have carried columnist Cedric Adams to the top of the local radio ladder stand him in good stead in TV. Adams' flawless diction and restrained, quiet delivery suit well here. Moreover, he's photogenic and projects the same warm, arresting personality."

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of Midwest Radio-TV, F. Van Konyenburg, emphasizes that those first WCCO-TV newscasts of Cedric's were "in the early stages of television. We were experimenting and so was Cedric. He, of course, had a long background of radio. He was a phenomenon in communications. We spent a lot of time with Cedric trying to work him into television, but he never felt comfortable in it, although we felt he was doing an excellent job. It was the result more of his own feelings that perhaps he should let television mature a little bit before he made a major effort in the medium."

Cedric's own observations explain why he later voluntarily left television: "Twenty years of radio have provided a certain skill in reading copy 'cold.' Most experienced newscasters can take a piece of copy and read it for broadcast without ever having gone over the material. So far, in television that has been impossible.

"For the 6:00 p.m. news I have to arrive at WCCO-TV at 4:00 o'clock. It takes two hours ahead of each telecast for makeup, rehearsal, arrangement of the news, timing of the voice back of film, and finally the dress rehearsal of the show itself. Maybe if we gave that much time to radio newscasts the results would be improved. But let's not go into that.

"One of the blessings of radio," he went on, "has been that you work alone. You take your news copy in your hot, dry hand and go into the cubicle about the size of a back hall closet. There you sit with nothing but a microphone, a clock, and a red light to distract you. What a change when you move into television! I'll never forget—22 guys leering at you out of the darkness behind the cameras.

"In a radio broadcast you have nothing more than the copy in front of you to think about, plus your voice inflections. When I read the 678 letters which came in after my first television show, I realized that I had such things as eyebrows, hands, mouth, nostrils, necktie, shoulders, facial expressions, coat creases, shadows, and a blood pressure of 265 to concern me."

He concluded the account with the question everyone was asking him, "How do I like television? How does television like me? That's a much more apt query. I don't

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want to say anything in television's favor that might offend my sweetheart—radio. What a gal she's been! Faithful, loyal, and pretty good to the Bureau of Internal Revenue. I will say, however, that television is challenging and stimulating. I'm sure it's here to stay and I hope I can piddle along well enough to remain in it."

Roger Gardner, WCCO-TV's program director, also insightfully notes that since no one person can edit and write an entire TV newscast, this was another hurdle for Cedric. He reminds us that "Cedric in radio and TV was always reading someone else's words. There was also the problem of having to narrate a news film clip for a timed program, which tied him even tighter to mechanics. He didn't have a chance to put in a sly aside or his inimitable chuckle."

Cedric "broke up" easily on the air if something tickled him, but never worse than on the episode Gardner relates when Cedric's TV show, "Take Five," at 12:15 p.m. was being telecast.

"One day," Gardner continues, "they had a special gadget on the show in which there was a live chicken in a cage. It was a coin-operated machine. If you put a dime into the coin slot, it lowered a red ball, a bat would hit the ball releasing a pellet which the chicken got as a reward. On this particular day Cedric could see out of the corner of his eye his assistants trying to get the machine to work; but dime after dime would not trigger the mechanism. When it came time for Cedric to demonstrate the machine on camera all the dimes previously put into it began spewing out on the floor. Cedric went into paroxysms of laughter.

“Immediately after the show Cedric sped in a taxi to WCCO-Radio five blocks away. He got into the radio booth for his ‘Noontime News’ with seconds to spare, the mike opened for his newscast, and he was off again. He went into a fit of laughter from which he never recovered.”

Only Cedric could get away with something like this and actually increase his listenership. “Did you hear Cedric laughing the other day on the news?” they would ask. His contagious laughter made him human and one of them. At these times he was not just another oracular voice reciting the events of the day like a robot. So people would laugh *with* Cedric, not *at* him.

Gardner tells how embarrassed Cedric was in February of 1959 when he invited the managers and key staff members from WCCO-TV and WCCO-Radio to a luncheon at the Minneapolis Club. Gardner says one reason for this meeting was that in later years of his career Cedric found his heavy schedule a “crushing load. He wanted to enjoy life more. He was awkward and uneasy when he announced he was pulling out of TV.”

Four years earlier CBS had offered Cedric the permanent host position on its five-day-a-week television “Morning Show” out of New York. His duties would include reading news and features and introducing acts. As additional bait CBS claimed the network exposure could lead to additional TV assignments.

In his column Cedric confessed that major decisions were difficult at fifty-three. “First of all,” he pondered, “you think about uprooting yourself after at least two-thirds of a lifetime in one spot. Then you think of the switch from the minor leagues into the majors. What if

you failed? But, what if you clicked? Is it better to accept the standing you have, remain in your own little neat niche, or go on to try to establish yourself in the Big Time?"

He balanced the pleasant memories he had of New York: the hobnobbing with celebrities in glamorous clubs and show business talk against his affection for his Northwest neighbors, as well as the faces and places he knew so well. Then he asked, "Can a smalltown boy adequately adjust himself to the Big City? How much more genuine satisfaction would there be in enlarging one's operations: Where does happiness really lie? These and a thousand more unanswered queries have been whirling through my noggin. Sometimes I wish to heck he hadn't called!"

Throughout this chapter on Adams in TV we are aware from his own words and the testimony of others that he and television were not completely compatible. There are a number of reasons for this.

In the first place, Cedric was firmly established as a radio personality and columnist. He had grown financially independent from these two media, as well as from his other sources of income including personal appearances, endorsements, and investments. There were not the same incentives in television that he had had in the other media.

When Cedric first substituted on TV for Arthur Godfrey, he was forty-eight years old. Then, television was still an infant in a largely experimental stage with cumbersome, groping techniques. Because Cedric had a man-killing schedule with his radio programs, columns, and personal appearances he found the long rehearsals fatiguing, as well as frustrating and time-consuming. There was confusion in production, even at the network level.

Cedric was a loyal worker; but there is no evidence that WCCO-TV put pressure on him to appear on the station in 1952 when it went into operation. However, when he was invited to do a television newscast he may have felt it his duty to lend his talent and prestige to help meet the competition of the older and, at that time, better-established KSTP-TV. Besides, the Cowles newspapers, for which he wrote his column, had a forty-seven per cent interest in Midwest Radio-TV, Inc., which was the new corporate owner of WCCO-TV and WCCO-Radio. In addition, six potential sponsors were vying for Cedric if he appeared on WCCO-TV.

In the early 1950's broadcasters, including Cedric, were worried about the future of radio. More frequent and shorter newscasts were being programmed. Some radio stations cut down, or eliminated, the fifteen minute newscast. Radio news had also become more flexible in that items of interest, often of less than urgent bulletin importance, were aired by announcers during their record programs.

Radio listening prior to the fifties was concentrated in the living room. But by 1948 when television mushroomed Americans were more mobile because of better roads, more automobiles, and improved air service. There were more car radios. The small transistor radios allowed listeners to take them everywhere to furnish background sound. Fore-ground news was not as important for many of these portable-toting listeners, many of whom were teenagers and even younger. Companionship. That was the role that radio had assumed for many. Radio was only a part-time medium to which people could listen while doing some-

thing else. However, after the first flush of television, radio's vital role was recognized.

The radio networks in the fifties began changing their programming drastically with five minute newscasts every hour. The soap serials, which filled many daytime network hours, were off radio by 1960. They became network television fare. Also, big-name entertainers and high-budget radio programs were leaving the radio networks for television.

These changes disturbed Cedric, according to Clayton Kaufman, national sales manager at WCCO-Radio and a former news writer for Cedric. Kaufman cites "Cedric's uncanny ability to know what was right and wrong in programming. He was always concerned about what programs preceded and followed his radio newscasts so he could maintain listeners while adding more. When the 'Ma Perkins' serial was moved to a different time slot away from his 'Noontime News' Cedric was afraid his listeners might blame him for the move to afternoon time."

WCCO-Radio had initiated a drastic program change in 1954 with less reliance on network services and more on records and local personalities. Cedric, however, still voiced the 12:30 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 10:00 p.m. fifteen minute newscasts as well as the 6:15 a.m. "Morning Almanac," which was a ten-minute feature program broadcast via tape recording. His accepting local television assignments may have been a hedge in case radio collapsed as some at first feared.

Those who were in television exclusively had only the one medium to consider. Cedric's commitments were unbelievably varied and numerous. And although he did

not admit it to anyone, or perhaps even to himself, he was getting tired.

CBS President, Dr. Frank Stanton, explained in a letter to me why Cedric succeeded spectacularly in radio, but not in television: "Adjectives do not really capture Cedric Adams. He was all of the things people remember him for: warm, folksy, influential, popular, neighborly, homespun, lovable. But none of them singly, nor all of them together, can explain the phenomenal rapport between the man and his audience. We who would find the answer to that uniqueness must look for it not in the man alone, but in the man joined with the medium.

"Cedric Adams and radio worked; neither was as much without the other. He was, of course, a successful newspaperman—but not a spectacular one. He and television tried each other—but the graft did not take. The answer, I believe, is that he was a consummate *person*, that radio was then and remains now the greatest of *personal* media, and that the two knew each other at once. He was not Cedric Adams broadcasting to the world at large, he was Cedric Adams talking to *you*; he managed a one-to-one ratio with millions at a time."

CHAPTER X

The Profitable Word — Sponsors

Sponsors are the broadcaster's "business." By this yardstick Cedric had a thriving business. From the beginning Cedric had a sponsor for the Nighttime News on WCCO-Radio. The first newscast was on September 1, 1934, at 10:30 p.m. The time was later changed to 10:00 p.m.

His first sponsor was Maurice L. Rothschild which had clothing stores in both Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Rothschild's sponsorship of Nighttime News extended through August 12, 1938. Then for six months the next sponsor was the George A. Hormel Meat Packing Company.

The Purity Baking Company followed as a sponsor on Nighttime News in 1939. The results were phenomenal for Purity's leading product, Taystee Bread, as well as for its other baking products. Joseph M. Tombers, now vice president of the American Bakeries Company after a merger with Purity, had been a regular listener to Cedric's newscasts from the beginning. He realized that Cedric had a special quality and dreamed that Purity could some day sponsor him. However, at first Tombers didn't think the Company could afford to sponsor Cedric; nevertheless he secured an option on Nighttime News with Ralph Campbell of the Campbell-Mithun Advertising Agency in Minneapolis in case Hormel ceased sponsorship. When Hormel's contract terminated, Purity signed Cedric.

The Purity Baking Company sponsorship of Cedric's Nighttime News extended over nineteen years with tremendous results. Any broadcaster will tell you that getting sponsors is usually easier than keeping them. Cedric's longevity as a newscaster and with sponsors was enviable.

Tombers still reminds his salesmen that they owe a lot to Cedric because he contributed so much to the growth of the Company. He maintains Cedric created product loyalty. He often relates the time he was visiting friends at Lake Independence, Minnesota. While there he met an elderly lady who lived in a nearby small town. She complained to Tombers because Taystee Bread wasn't delivered to her hometown. She told Tombers emphatically that "Taystee Bread IS the BEST bread because Cedric says so, and Cedric DON'T lie!"

Cedric not only broadcast Nighttime News for Purity; but he did a good public relations job for them. He met the Company's customers and regularly originated his Nighttime News from the grocery conventions. At these—and Tombers winces when he recalls it—Cedric would always tell the same joke to the convention audience before his newscast. The joke never failed to get a big laugh.

It was the often-told joke about the lady who went into a drug store to get some powder. When she told the clerk what she wanted he politely asked her, "Please walk this way."

The lady replied in a huff, "If I could walk that way I wouldn't need the powder!"

After the newscasts the grocers would line up to shake hands with Cedric. Tombers particularly remembers one big, hard-boiled grocer who was always tough to get along

with, but who was in the line at one of these conventions. Afterwards he remarked incredulously, "I never thought I'd see the day when I could shake hands with Cedric Adams!"

It didn't seem to matter what Purity product Cedric would advertise. Sales for each would climb. When Purity commercials plugged raisin bread on only the Tuesday night newscasts, sales increased from 34,000 to 74,000 loaves a week during a sixteen week campaign. The sales increase in the Twin Cities alone was 145%.

Tomers chuckled when he recalled when Purity introduced a Swedish rye bread called "Svenska Limpa." Cedric had difficulty—or made it appear that he did—pronouncing "Svenska Limpa" on the commercials. But after just one announcement on his news the supply of "Svenska Limpa" was exhausted. Purity couldn't keep up with the orders and ran out of baking pans. The complete advertising campaign had to be changed because it was *too successful!* Customers were unhappy with Purity because they couldn't buy and try "Svenska Limpa"!

One evening when Cedric was interviewing Governor Luther Youngdahl, a Scandinavian, he asked the Governor to coach him on the pronunciation of "Svenska Limpa." Youngdahl kidded Cedric about his difficulty in getting it right and then gave the pronunciation with the correct Swedish lilt. This pleased the large Scandinavian audience and proved once again Cedric's mastery at identifying with people. They not only were amused because it was Scandinavian, but they could sympathize with Cedric because they, too, had words that were difficult for them to pronounce.

Four years after Purity began sponsoring Cedric,

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Tombers received the following letter from the Campbell-Mithun Advertising Agency of Minneapolis:

September 9, 1943.

“Mr. J. M. Tombers
Purity Baking Company
W-1376 First Natl. Bank Bldg.
Saint Paul, Minnesota

“Dear Joe:

“Here is a copy of the letter I read to you on the phone.

“Today I have seen Adams on this subject. He starts getting \$175.00 per week from Butternut for WCCO—this next week. *Also*, for the same broadcast, he will get special fees for Duluth and Grand Forks, bringing his salary on this news program to about \$225.00.

“We now pay him \$100.00 per week.

“I suggested to him—that \$150.00 per week would be fair to Taystee. He objected, but agreed finally to this figure.

“In view of the fact that Adams’ program has the highest Hooper listening rating of any show in America—I consider this a reasonable price for Adams. Also, in view of the fact that we pay \$150.00 per week to Ty Tyson in Detroit—I consider this a fair price.

Sincerely,
Ray Mithun.”

In sharp contrast to this business-like letter from Mithun to Tombers, Cedric had written Mithun a letter eight

days earlier on September 1, 1943, regarding renegotiations:

“Mr. R. O. Mithun
Campbell-Mithun, Inc.
Northwestern Bank Bldg.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

“Dear Ray:

“Money matters, I know, pall on you. The damned stuff has irked me through the years. But somehow I enjoy being thoroughly irked.

“I hardly know how to launch this little problem, but we might as well head into the breeze and let the sails swell where they may.

“That means, rather bluntly, I’m afraid, that I’d like to bring the evening salary up to somewhere near the figure I am to receive for the WCCO noon show. Through all of the Bitternut and General Mills contract I’ve been getting \$125.00 a week which, as you know, is higher than the current Purity figure.

“No money-mad guy am I, but I do have to keep an eye on the main chance. The day may be fast approaching when the sun will not shine so gloriously on my hay patch, to mix the metaphor slightly.

“The squeeze is tighter, too, when I consider two additional factors. One is an offer for a one-night-a-week shot for \$175.00. Another is a once-a-week show for \$200. Still another proposition has been offered by one of the nation’s largest advertisers which would more than double my current

night salary for the news program you now book. That, of course, is out as long as Purity maintains its present spot.

“I mention these possibilities to you merely to give you an idea of what I am up against.

“You may have gathered by now that I am asking for a raise. Certainly there is no harm in asking. Once I get your reaction or the position of your client, then perhaps we can get together for further discussion.

“There may be a thousand and one reasons why you or Purity won't look with kindly light on this request. On the other hand, you may have been wondering why the hell I hadn't asked for more money long ago.

“What goes on in the minds of advertising agency executives or in the noggins of sponsors has always been a mystery. This is one way of finding out.

“May I hear from you?

Very cordially,
Cedric Adams.”

A possible explanation for Cedric's “unorthodox” business letter was his friendship with Tombers. There was a bond between the two men which grew over the years. Theirs was a social as well as business relationship.

Some persons cannot plead their own causes. Does the tone of this letter suggest this was the case with Cedric? Or was it a letter written with calculated casualness? You decide.

Cedric got the raise from Purity and many more as the business association continued. As a matter of fact,

Cedric's opportunities increased with the years so that in the fifties his income was variously estimated at between \$125,000 and \$250,000 a year.

During the Purity Baking Company sponsorship of Nighttime News it customarily purchased an extra fifteen minutes of air-time each year to mark the anniversary of its association with the program. Tombers was usually at the studios on these occasions. Cedric would invite him into the radio news booth during the regular program. Then when it was time for the Taystee Bread commercial he would hand it to Tombers without warning to read sight unseen.

Tombers remembers one of these evenings vividly because of what Cedric had to say during the extra fifteen-minute period. No one was expecting of all things a confession. However, a confession it was with Cedric admitting he had nipped a bit too much occasionally which he said was not fair to the sponsor, to the station, or to the audience. He vowed at the time that he would go on the wagon.

It was like molasses in January to walk down the street with Cedric. Everyone would stop to chat. Always Cedric appeared as though he had all the time in the world. He was gracious, Tombers adds, even with the pests.

Former WCCO-Radio personality, Bob DeHaven, underscores this. "I suppose it would be hundreds of occasions," states Bob, "when I have seen people on remote broadcasts and people visiting our studios, hoping to see and shake hands with Cedric. I NEVER observed him as anything but enthusiastic, polite, and ingratiating in a completely genuine manner. Never a fluff-off, never a remark or an aside that would hurt his image with the

people or with other pros nearby. This attitude, I'm sure, sprung from his true gentleness and kindness."

However, it was inevitable that some of the Purity Baking Company competitors would resent Cedric's broadcasting success for Taystee Bread. Tombers recalls that some rivals made snide remarks. One baking company owner, for example, always referred to Cedric as "Citric Acid!"

Cedric had enjoyed his Saturday evenings off until 1943 when money—lots of it—intervened. Purity sponsored Cedric Sunday through Friday nights. But Coca Cola had other ideas for Cedric's night off. When it offered to sponsor Cedric's Nighttime News on Saturdays, understandably, Niecy balked. Cedric, in order not to alienate a possible sponsor for other time periods, thought if he suggested an exorbitant fee, then doubled it, Coca Cola would refuse. Cedric had also reasoned that Niecy must have an equal amount because that was their night out.

To Cedric's mixed emotions of dismay and elation, Coca Cola accepted the terms and told him to start at once. Coca Cola, then, must have been "the one of the nation's leading advertisers" Cedric mentioned in the Mithun letter almost two months earlier.

Colleague Bob Murphy, wondered just what it had been worth for Cedric to give up his Saturday night off. Murphy wrote in 1950, "The Adams income isn't exactly assailable, but was quoted in a recent issue of *Quick* magazine as in the neighborhood of \$125,000 a year. The same mention quotes him as saying, 'I'd like a five-day week. But then I've got a \$700 Saturday and what else can you do on Saturday that's worth \$700?'"

The response from Cedric Adams' radio commercials was sometimes unbelievable. He was a skilled, convincing air salesman. The magazine, *Sponsor*, carried an article in 1957 which illustrates the faith some listeners had in Cedric:

“Earlier this year a Minnesota farmer went into a downtown Minneapolis savings bank and withdrew \$8,000 he had deposited a few hours before. He explained he had ‘made a mistake’ and wanted to open an account at the ‘place Cedric talks about on WCCO.’”

The “place” was Twin City Federal Savings and Loan which over the years has carried heavy advertising and promotional campaigns over WCCO-Radio. Twin City Federal also was one of Cedric's first sponsors on WCCO-TV.

When I interviewed Roy W. Larsen, Chairman of the Board of Twin City Federal Savings and Loan Association, he graciously received me. He smiled broadly with each recollection he had of Cedric. Although Larsen said his relationship with Cedric was essentially a business relationship—not a personal one—his warm tone revealed his appreciation and affection for Cedric.

Larsen believes that probably the most important advertising connection Twin City Federal has had over the years was the one with Cedric. In fact, after Cedric had been on the air for Twin City Federal for only about six months he told Cedric, “You're already more important to the company than I am!” Yet Larsen himself had founded the company over twenty years before.

Larsen said that it was sometimes reported to him that “some of our financial friends were jumping up and down

over the connection we had made for promotion purposes with Cedric. Whenever these reports came to me, I used to tell them that I guess the only thing for them to do is to go and shoot Cedric because as long as Cedric will stay with us I'm sure we'll stay with Cedric because of his importance to us. And it turned out just that way. He remained with us until the time of his death."

People, largely country folks, would come into Twin City Federal to start accounts, according to Larsen, but first they always wanted to be sure that Twin City was "Cedric Adams' Bank."

Listeners had so much confidence in Cedric that they'd mail in checks and cash directly to him to open their accounts. One listener sent him \$10,000 for deposit. The late Vance Pidgeon, president of the Vance Pidgeon Advertising Agency, which had the TCF account, commented in 1957, "We know of no more powerful figure in advertising acceptance in this area than Cedric Adams. Twin City Federal's daily mail is seldom without a letter which has been written because 'Cedric recommended . . .'"

Roy Larsen defines the mystique of Cedric this way: "Once in a lifetime you meet a person who fits into the scheme of things. I never saw Cedric when he wasn't smiling and happy. He made you feel good. This feeling was reflected in his voice, which carried over into radio."

The creative director of the Colle-McVoy Advertising Agency in Minneapolis, Fred Booth, who has written much of the commercial copy for Twin City Federal, says that "when Cedric would say such things on a commercial like 'save money,' it sounded like, by God, he wanted you to save money. He thought it was important. He could

get people to respond to things.” Booth adds that Cedric would say, “I like this account because I think this is something important to talk to people about.”

Ray Foley, executive vice president of the Colle-McVoy Agency, describes the set-up Cedric had when he would broadcast his Noontime News from Twin City Federal when there would be a drawing for a prize. “Cedric would come over to Twin City Federal for these promotions, which were held in the lobby,” Foley says. “Since we weren’t set up for audience participation we’d have him climb up on a chair, or get on top of a counter to sit on a chair at a table to broadcast his famous 12:30 news. During one of the commercials he’d pause for the drawing and would announce the name of the winner. Cedric was always a willing person and showed loyalty to his sponsors. He’d always come to an event sponsored by TCF which would have anything to do with WCCO. Just to show up as one of the gang, or to trade quips with Roy Larsen. We always had at least ten times the number of save-by-mail letters after a Cedric announcement than from any other personality we had on the air.”

There were other instances of Cedric’s warm relationship with his sponsors. For example, on January 20, 1961, a month before Cedric died, Jim Paul, a WCCO-Radio salesman, wrote a letter to Ray Foley regarding the Twin City Account:

“Cedric Adams is very appreciative of Roy’s and your friendliness, understanding, and co-operation during his recent hospitalization.

“As a small return gesture of appreciation, he has offered to record one-minute copy for you to

be run free of charge by WCCO-Radio for between 15 and 20 spots."

A few weeks earlier on December 30, 1960, Cedric had written a characteristic note to Joseph Tombers.

"Dear Joe:

" 'Twas the day after Christmas when all through the house, your thoughtful remembrance really stirred this old louse . . . souse . . . grouse . . . (check your choice).

"My 800 calorie diet obviously necessitates a little snitching and I can't think of a better way to do it than with an occasional nibble on a piece of fruit-cake.

"You're a sweet guy, Joe, and I want to tell you again how much I appreciated your visit to the hospital.

"Ever-grateful and with

Warm regards,
Cedric."

The July, 1951, edition of the house organ for a health insurance company, the *Blue Cross Key-Notes*, boasted that "the magic voice of Cedric Adams, which reportedly reaches 212,000 radio homes each night, went to work for Blue Cross-Blue Shield on April 1st. Mr. Adams easily became 'star salesman of the month' when his nightly 20-second spot announcements caused over 3,000 persons from Minnesota and neighboring states to write in for information enrolling in Blue Cross-Blue Shield during the Plan's third non-group campaign . . . The responses to the magic Adams voice came not only from 500 indi-

vidual towns in Minnesota, but from 180 other towns in seven neighboring states as well."

A month later on August 8, 1951, *Variety* headlined: "CEDRIC ADAMS' BLUE-CHIPS DEAL." The story read,

"Cedric Adams, the Northwest's top radio personality, has signed an agreement extending his contract with the Twin Cities' CBS station, WCCO, through 1955. Sum involved is undisclosed, but is believed to be the largest ever paid to any radio personality outside of New York and Hollywood. Deal gives WCCO and CBS continued exclusive rights to Adams' services for the next four years.

"In the 17 years since his first broadcast, his popularity in the five-state area covered by WCCO has increased apace and still continues to grow, and he also has attained national eminence. Despite new TV competition from two other stations during the past two years, Adams' news programs popularity ratings have risen to new peaks. Latest surveys indicate his share of audience for the 10 p.m. radio news is greater than the audience of all other Twin Cities stations combined and is three times greater than the second-rated station. Audience share in the outside area is even greater. Radio advertisers' demand for his services, in fact, have been so great that WCCO has been unable to meet them."

A complete list of Cedric's sponsors would read like a *Who's Who* of advertisers. However, a partial list would include Twin City Federal, Purity Baking Company, Coca

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Cola, Pillsbury, Peters Meats, Phillips '66, Griggs-Cooper Company, General Mills, Ewald Dairies, The Milk Foundation, Nutrena, DeKalb, Wilson and Company Meat Packing, The Hormel Company, Land-O-Nod, Vigorena Feeds, The Minneapolis Gas Company, and Northern States Power Company.

Robert E. Woodbury, Commercial Manager of WCCO, summed up Cedric's sponsor-relationships. Woodbury does not recall who it was, but once a sponsor blustered, "I don't give a damn if he sells anything! I sponsor him just so I can go out to lunch with him!"



Advertising Executive Vance Pidgeon, Cedric and Roy W. Larsen, Chairman of Twin City Federal, meet in the TCF office.

CHAPTER XI

Anything But Lazy

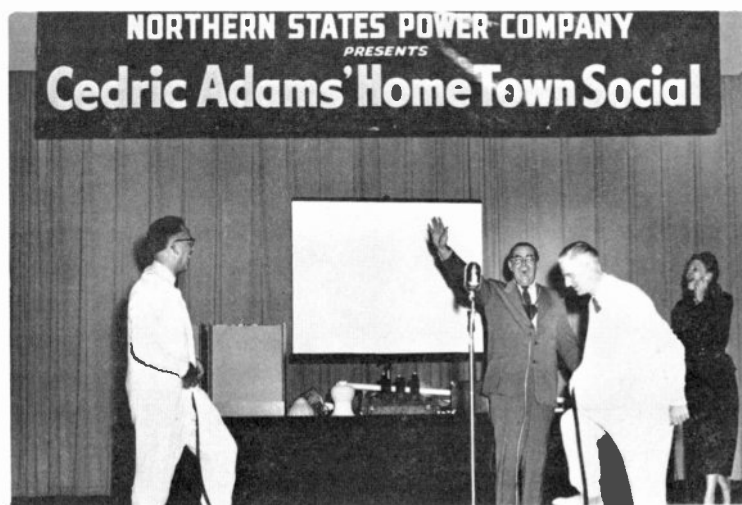
Cedric Adams' personal appearances were the most demanding part of his heavy schedule. In 1949 alone he made one hundred fifty-six appearances. He would visit small and large towns in the five-state area of Minnesota, South and North Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin where he would preside at a banquet, then deliver his Nighttime News. Or he would present "Cedric Adams' Open House," which was a two-hour vaudeville package sponsored by the Northern States Power Company. Much of the talent for the shows came from his "Stairway to Stardom" radio show. Cedric's appearances with or without his troupe were big events for his devoted listeners and readers.

For instance, the February 2, 1952, issue of *The Blue Earth County Enterprise*, published in Mapleton, Minnesota, reported: "Cedric Adams was at his very best. At ten o'clock, Cedric Adams gave his regular news broadcast, this alone proving very interesting to the large company which closed the broadcast with a cheer which could be heard all over town."

The WCCO news writers dreaded Cedric's out-of-town appearances because it meant that the news deadline was earlier in order to dictate the news to the remote broadcasting point. Portions of the news would be dictated over the telephone by one of the newsmen while the other

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would continue writing other sections of the newscast. One of Cedric's six attractive secretaries, who traveled with the troupe, would copy the news items—sometimes inaccurately and disastrously! Consequently, the occasionally garbled items that Cedric delivered came as a surprise even to the newsmen who had written them! The foul-ups in transmission and copying of the news were bad enough; but they were compounded by Cedric's reading them at sight over the air without checking them.



Cedric on the road stages a stunt.

Cedric realized the public relations value of these appearances. Once when Niecy expressed her concern for his traveling two to three hundred miles over icy roads on stormy, wintry nights he admitted, "The trips are a grind for both of us, but they're awfully important to me.

After the show, I get out at the door like a preacher with his congregation, shaking hands. People tell me what they think. If I ever stop knowing people and what they think, I'm through."

One Rock County, Minnesota, resident did let Cedric know what he thought. Cedric devoted an entire column on why his troupe and he were willing to make the sacrifices they did for personal appearances.

"Four hundred and nineteen miles of driving in swirling snow with visibility at times extending about as far as the radiator ornament. That was what our little traveling unit had Tuesday when we went down to Luverne, Minnesota, to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Rock County Cooperative Oil Company. We missed the noon broadcast by 15 minutes and weren't able to get back for the 10 p.m. but out of something like 19 hours of travel I learned several things. After we had put on our show and were standing around trying to decide whether to head back or stay over, a Rock County resident button-holed me and got me off in a corner. He was a sincere guy. He wasn't trying to butt into someone else's business. His conversation went something like this: 'What do you do this for? Why do you take all these chances? Are you money hungry? Or are you shy a few marbles?' Unfortunately I didn't have time to give him a full explanation. But his query did start me thinking along these lines as we bucked our way home.

"That money hungry expression sort of got me. I don't know why so many persons translate work into that single term. I'm sure if they examined their own lives they'd find that dough isn't their only compensation. Then why do

they charge others with that motivation? If you were going to put a money value on some of the things you do, if I were going to say to myself, how much is it going to be worth to fight a storm for nearly 24 hours or to take chances at night travel or even walk from the parking lot to the office, I'm confident that no employer would be willing to pay what it would be worth in the dollars of today. That trip for all of us yesterday is one of these things that cannot and should not be reduced to monetary terms. Walking out on that stage at Luverne to be met by the warm applause of a thousand farmers and friends right from my old home county is something you can't hang a dollar sign on . . .

"There was a spirit in others which I observed that was a very compensating thing. We got as far as Mankato, Minnesota, and the going had been extremely rough and I might say on the hazardous side. Our two drivers, Louis Smith and Jerry Proell, had been doing a magnificent job and amazed me over the entire route. But I felt that maybe we should have a little conference among the troupe. If they were nervous I didn't want to subject them to real or imagined dangers. This was the sentiment they expressed: 'Don't forget, those people down there are expecting us. They all did some driving to get there. We can't disappoint them. Let's keep going.' That we did and there again is that curious kind of compensation. The troupe wasn't thinking of money. They had a job to do and they wanted to do it."

Characteristically, Cedric did not forget others who helped the troupe to make the trip successfully when he added, "There was another experience we had that brought

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home very forcibly something I have mentioned on many occasions. We can thank the good Lord for our truck drivers, the over-the-road-boys who make it through in all kinds of weather and provide for the rest of us motorists a great caravan of courteous, helpful, thoughtful guys who add to our safety 24 hours of the day.”

About three months earlier the traveling troupe had had an accident when their bus ran off the road and overturned at Annandale west of Minneapolis. Cedric broke both ankles in the accident; but he kept up his newscasting schedule from bed. This, of course, was grist for the column on December 2, 1951. His first paragraph recounted their previous good luck: “An accident is like an operation: no use having one if you can’t talk about it. I’d like to tell you about ours partly to point up the necessity for increased highway precaution, but primarily to pay tribute, not only to the members of our traveling troupe, but also to the citizenry of both Annandale and Maple Lake, Minnesota. On the way to Annandale on that afternoon, the seven cast members had been talking about how lucky we all had been during our seven years of traveling. Our trips average about 300 miles apiece. Many of our jaunts are 200 miles out and 200 miles back and we make them in a 12 to 18 hour span. And we do it 49 weeks out of the year. That type of traveling heads us into all kinds of road and weather conditions. We had just headed out of Annandale for our after-the-show meal. The Annandale audience had been a stimulating one and we had the customary lift that you get after a satisfactory performance. We had all started singing Christmas carols when the skidding started.

“First panic of an accident is a horrifying experience. There was a long deadly silence. The car’s motor had been stopped and the only noise in the car was the drone of the heater fan. From the floor of the back seat, I shouted to the boys in front. Not a sound came from any of them. I tried to move and found that my own legs were immobile. I’ll never forget the terrifying thought that everybody around me was dead. I kept shouting for a response from somebody. The two girls who had been in the back seat came to first. That wait seemed without end. Fortunately, the second car of our troupe of seven had been following us not much more than a block to the rear. The six members in that car rushed down to where we were, opened the jammed doors to survey the appalling situation.”

The car in which Cedric was riding had skidded into a five-foot ditch at an icy curve from the slippery black-top. The entire front of the car was telescoped. The windshield had cut the heads of the men riding in the front seat.

However, the broken ankle bones Cedric suffered were not the first fractures he had had. Several years earlier he had broken a leg; but, as usual, Cedric saw the funny side. “One of the funniest cracks I ever had made against me occurred as the result of a broken bone. John Cowles, President of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune, had invited me to play tennis at his summer home at Lake Minnetonka. I went over by boat from Wayzata to John’s house, docked down in front, and then walked up to the tennis courts. I played the first set in slacks and decided they were too warm so I hiked back to the boat to put

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on a pair of shorts. After I had the change, I jumped from the back of the boat down onto John's deck.



A broken ankle and an audience of four: Dave, Steve Ric and Niecy Adams.

“As I landed, I heard something crack, thought at first it was John's deck, discovered in a matter of seconds

that it was my left ankle. I shouted for help and my host called for an ambulance. During the interval, I lay on the deck with my injured hoof in the cool, caressing waters of Lake Minnetonka. The ambulance arrived minutes later and a crowd gathered on the highway above. Two ambulance attendants came down and loaded me on a stretcher. And here comes the punch line. A woman in the crowd gazed down at me as I lay on the stretcher, turned to her husband and said, 'Oh, look, there's been another drowning. And see how bloated he is.'"

One of the WCCO engineers smiled broadly when he recalled an incident when the traveling troupe was staging an evening performance at a small town ball park. He remembered that "Cedric was at the pitcher's mound with a microphone in hand. And at the beginning of the program everything stopped for a flag ceremony. They turned off all the lights and put a spotlight on the flag which was in centerfield. I don't recall whether they played the *Star Spangled Banner* or not. Cedric, during that interval, apparently took advantage of the darkness. When the lights came on again there was a small puddle just behind him as he faced the grandstand. Now we never accused him of causing it, but it seems rather obvious what happened!"

Cedric's personal appearances and the sacrifices he often made in traveling have been pointed out to show that he toiled hard to increase and keep his following, to bolster his image. Since people were his business, he constantly worked to impress people favorably.

Cedric's pattern of hard work was forming as a boy in Magnolia when he would take the few odd jobs a small

town afforded. Earning money became doubly important to him when his father died when he was twelve. A March, 1954, *Cosmopolitan* magazine article stated that "he is now in the top one-half per cent of all U.S. taxpayers. This month he will file a return on a 1953 income of around \$200,000. The Government won't let him keep too much of this healthy sum, but Cedric takes pride in the amount, anyway, because he's done it all himself."

Niecy does not believe Cedric's father ever made much more than twenty-five dollars a week as a bank cashier at Magnolia, so when Cedric had the chance to "exchange" jobs for a day with Al Haakenson, president of the Austin, Minnesota, State Bank, he wrote in his January 19, 1951, column: "I wish my father had lived to see his only son as president of the Austin State Bank the other day. My mother and father ran the State Bank of Magnolia when they were alive. Father wasn't the president, though. He was the cashier and my mother was the assistant cashier. My day as president brought back a lot of memories nevertheless. I was a sweeper-outer of the Magnolia bank, hauled the coal for the stove, washed the inkwells, ran the letter press which we used instead of carbon paper for making copies of letters, even polished the handles on the safe and the vault. The Austin State Bank and the Magnolia State Bank smell the same. I guess the odor never changes no matter what the deposits are. Nor do the contents of a banker's desk drawers. I went through all the drawers in Al Haakenson's desk during the morning. A good example was the center drawer. Here's what I found: nine rusty penpoints, a heart-shaped eraser, three pencil stubs, eight rubber bands, five common pins, and

the telephone numbers of Phyllis and Helen. They're probably relatives."

Just to kid Haakenson a bit more Cedric devilishly added, "You know where these bankers get their kicks—from calendar salesmen. One called on me and it was the highlight of the day. He hangs his calendar numbers up on the wall and you sit there and look at them. It's kind of like going through the underwear section of the old Sears Roebuck catalogue. Haakenson will be surprised when his 1952 calendars arrive. I ordered 3,500 of a number called, 'I am your sunshine.' She was, too!"

Part of a columnist's routine is making the rounds of nightclubs for material. Over the years Cedric had picked up news tidbits at the clubs and had given his approval or disapproval of their performers and food. An okay from Cedric was an almost sure signal for success.

So it was that Niecy and Cedric went bowling one Saturday with *Star* and *Tribune* advertising manager, the late John W. Moffet, and his wife, Janet. Moffet told me that "Cedric was not much of an athlete and hurt his arm. So we quit bowling and went to Murray's for dinner. Then Cedric wanted to go to the Key Club, which was a black and white night spot. I was very impressed with how many of the black people came up and shook hands with Cedric and were pleased to know him. What a great feeling they all had for him.

"It so happened that same night there was a shooting there, which—to put it mildly—marred the evening. Cedric wrote a column on it, so why don't you have him relate the incident?"

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"In This Corner" on February 26, 1957, reported both the shooting and two earlier ones in Minneapolis:

"Shootings and I seem to have an affinity. In 20-odd years of reporting I've been in on three, the last one just last Saturday night. That experience brought to mind the two earlier ones. And curiously, a saloon has been involved in all of them. Intimate friends may rightfully inquire, 'How come you frequent saloons?' Frankly, I don't spend all of my time on this kind of beat. I have in the past gone to concerts, visited the Walker Art Gallery, chatted with the girls in the public library, gone to teas and have appeared at institutions for the aged, the mentally retarded and law violators. I'm not defending the saloon, instead I'm saying there are occasions when the patrons therein provide an item or a paragraph now and then.

"I remember so well sitting in a booth one night with a former police surgeon. He had overheard a conversation a half hour earlier in the same spot where one guy was telling another that a well-known labor leader was about to be bumped off. The whole thing sounded good enough to me for the lead item for the following day. I went back to the office and quoted the conversation in the paper. Thought nothing much of it until the following morning at 2:30 when two cops came out to my house, routed me out of bed and hustled me off to headquarters. A labor leader had been murdered that night.

"'What did I know about it?' asked the officers. 'Who was the source of your information?' they went on. I telephoned my executive editor, he came down and they were going to throw us both in the jug unless we told all. That was Murder No. 1.

“It was closing time for the Hennepin Avenue night spots nearly a decade ago when I strolled into a place on Hennepin and Fourth. About three minutes before somebody had called police and squad cars were belching out their drivers and helpers. We all went in together. There on the floor in a pool of blood lay Al Schneider, another labor leader, shot. Rubin Shetsky, a bartender, was subsequently tried for that one and you remember the involved history of that trial. It gives you an eerie feeling to see a victim lying dead on the floor with policemen and detectives swarming about taking statements, looking for fingerprints, checking bullet wounds, angles of fire and that sort of thing. There’s something impelling about being at the scene of a murder. You don’t want to leave immediately.

“Last Saturday night Mrs. A. and I, with two friends, set out after dinner for the Key Club. So off we go, landing at a table in the center of the club to watch the show. In the show was what some have called ‘the female Sammy Davis, Jr.’—Emily Foster. She’s a bombshell of talent and showmanship and had the capacity crowd hoarse from shouting for more. Henry Sabes, the club owner, brought her over to our table after the show. We chatted about her background, her routines, her appearances at Las Vegas, her gowns and what not. It was nearing closing time and Sabes excused himself to go to check the cash registers.

“We were still at the table when suddenly a noise like cap pistols going off wafted through the door of the Key Club from the South of the Border Bar. There were screams, the shuffling of feet and at least five more shots.

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We had no definite idea of where the shots were coming from nor how many more there might be. I felt like ducking under a table, at least. We were told to get out as fast as we could. By the time we had emerged into the street, two squad cars, the Black Maria and an ambulance had arrived. The shooting had subsided and I walked back into the South of the Border Bar. There on the floor lay the victim and at the far end of the room was another man with a bullet hole in his leg. Those two had argued, one had whipped out a gun and had fired two shots. Proprietor Sabes always gets a gun from the drawer when he checks the cash registers. The moment he walked into the shooting fray he shouted to the man with the gun to put it down. Instead, he opened fire at Sabes.

"The two were some 20 feet apart at that time. The victim, as he came toward Sabes, fired five shots which went wild. At that point, Sabes whipped out his .38 automatic and fired three times. The last one, apparently fired at some five feet away, hit the victim in the mouth, killing him instantly. There were no other bullet holes in the body, according to police. Sabes was ashen and who could blame him after having been shot at five times.

"And there was Killing No. 3. I'm going to the Walker Art Gallery on Saturday nights from hereon in."

Cedric loved what he was doing because he loved people and delighted in success, personal and financial. Early in his career Niecy had said that having money was not nearly as fulfilling for Cedric as earning it. Money was a form of applause like handshakes at country fairs. And it was these handshake-forms-of-applause that kept

bringing in greater earnings until Cedric's income was in the six-figure-a-year category. Yet he maintained the same approachability, the same enthusiasms that he had had when he had come to "the Cities" from Magnolia when he was twelve.

Cedric was eager to try new ideas on radio, television, or in his column. He had a sense of gauging the public, of knowing what it wanted and would accept.

In addition to his column, he wrote articles which appeared in *Coronet*, *Holiday*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Esquire*. Several of his columns also were reprinted in national magazines as well as were quips gleaned from his columns.

With the editing help of Angelo Cohn, a colleague on the Minneapolis papers, *Poor Cedric's Almanac* was published in 1952. This was a collection of selected columns on the subjects of food, weather, animals, health, children, and s-e-x. With disarming candor Cedric admitted in the first chapter, "My pay check and I are both fatter nowadays, but otherwise I really haven't changed too much."

In the *Almanac* introduction Arthur Godfrey wrote, "Here's a bird who wouldn't admit that the horse has passed out of American life, and he's been cleaning up ever since. What I mean is that my good friend out in Minneapolis, Cedric Adams, is making hay on the horse-and-buggy days. He never forgets anything. He 'remembers' stuff that happened a hundred years ago. And I know he can't be that old and look at his secretary the way he does."

When *Cedric Adams Year Book*, a paperback, reached the newsstands in 1940, Cedric wrote a tongue-in-cheek introduction explaining how this collection of columns

was born; however, do not try to make out the address at the end of his "guarantee." It was *not* a typographical error!

"Hundreds of my friends," then he qualified, "(I say hundreds—if you'd simmer it down to an actual count it'd probably be my mother-in-law and a fellow named Stumph from Kerkhoven, Minnesota) have been at me for years to publish some kind of compilation of material that has been used in previous Star Journal columns.

"I've never had the dough that it takes to finance such an undertaking. Three months ago I found a printer who wasn't paying too close attention to the business end of his plant and he hinted around that he'd take a gamble. So today you're holding this tome on your lap, the printer's holding the bag for his bill and I'm holding my pants up with a belt and suspenders just to be on the safe side.

"Just to be fair about this whole thing, if after you've skimmed through these 64 pages and you think you've been gyped, ship the book back to shrdlu etaoin."

Besides the magazine articles Cedric wrote there were profiles about him and his family in *Holiday*, *Collier's*, *McCall's*, *Look*, *Quick*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Radio Mirror*, and *Coronet*; and he was frequently quoted by other columnists and broadcasters.

Cedric's schedule was an inevitable drain. When vacation times came he would be so wound up that Niecy says it would take him at least a week before he could enjoy himself. When you work as hard as Cedric did over a lifetime there is a "guilt" complex which hovers over you. It gnaws at you constantly. You vaguely feel that there is a vacuum if you are not meeting deadlines. This

hidden feeling results in irritability. You lash out over little things.

Larry Haeg, president of Midwest Radio-TV, Incorporated, and former manager of WCCO-Radio, further illuminated Cedric's hard-work pattern. Haeg told me that "in all my twenty years' association with Cedric I found him a very pleasant, agreeable person. He was always willing and enthusiastic about his work.

"Only once did I experience a definite and sharp retort. On this occasion Cedric had a particularly busy schedule. It was State Fair week and he had daily broadcasts from the fair grounds plus his regular schedule of programs. The weather was hot and sticky. We had arranged, through one of his sponsors, for his personal appearance at a banquet at one of the hotels. Cedric had just returned from the fair grounds, hot, tired and perspiring. I had requested him to come to my office. I told him that the sponsor would like very much for him to attend the banquet. He sank into a chair and said, 'God, Larry, I wanted this evening off to spend some time on Lake Minnetonka on my boat.'

"To prod him on I casually said, 'Hell, Cedric, you're getting lazy.'

"With this, he jumped out of the chair, came over to me, pushed his finger in my chest and said, 'Listen, Haeg, you can accuse me of anything, but don't ever call me lazy.' There was fire in his eyes when he said it.

"I apologized. The incident passed. He called the sponsor and explained that he had planned an evening on his boat."

The *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune* publisher, Otto

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Good Neighbors of the Northwest.

Silha, marvels at Cedric's endurance. Not only would Cedric appear at the papers' booth at intervals during the ten-day State Fair; but if there was a *Star and Tribune* Open House Cedric would be somewhere in the line of guests propped up on a desk chatting and kidding with everyone.

Silha declares that Cedric's magnetism was an unbelievable thing. He adds, "I think the most impressive thing about Cedric was his interest in people, which was reflected back so much. Somebody would remember where they had met Cedric before and they would talk about the event. He was better than any politician. He had real skill! Fantastic skill!"

CHAPTER XII

From The Heart

Anyone who edits news is faced with a similar problem. Everyone thinks the item he has contributed or a cause he is backing is newsworthy. In radio and television sheer lack of time eliminates perhaps a hundred or more items a day that a large newspaper can carry; yet there are also limits of space and costs on what a newspaper can carry. Then, of course, there is always the consideration of how broad a base a news item has. Is it significant, timely, and applicable to a particular or a large audience.

Cedric tried to explain this problem in relation to his columns: "In this business of mine people come to me day in and day out with all kinds of propositions. They have movements they're interested in, there may be a meeting they want publicized, perhaps it's a rummage sale they want help with, now and then it's a lost dog or a purse or a valuable pin. I have to sift these requests, search for an unusual twist, look for an angle that might make the item a newsworthy one. If you turn the asker down, you've lost a friend. If you accept all of them you're in a notch about 65 per cent of the time."

In *Cedric Adams Album*, a pictorial review of his first twenty-five years in radio and newspapering, was a picture of Cedric surrounded by doll buggies. His caption reported, "One of the first indications I ever had of the

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responsiveness in readers came from a one line appeal in the *Star*. An unfortunate youngster had her baby buggy stolen. The mention brought baby buggies from as far away as Montana. The surplus was given to orphanages. It was the baby buggy appeal that set off the series of projects. I knew that I had a warm, generous group of persons who were willing to help any time they could."

Personalities who depend upon exposure for success develop a shrewd sense of what appeals, captivates, or motivates. Cedric was no exception. He was convinced of the importance of promotions and of the stunts in which he was involved. Not only did these promotions enhance his own career and popularity; but they increased circulation and listenership in the newspaper and broadcasting media for which he worked.

Cedric participated in almost any stunt that would attract attention, would be talked about, and could be photographed. He never hesitated to poke fun at himself, so at various times in his career he appeared in a ballet costume, in a Pilgrim's outfit at Thanksgiving, and in a vintage car dressed in a duster and wearing goggles.

The expression, "laughing on the outside, crying on the inside," must have applied when he would mention his weight problem. He referred to himself as "your rotund reporter" even though he was truly sensitive and embarrassed because he *was* rotund. He never forgot that he had been a trim 139 pounds when he was at the University and at his wedding. His top weight, reached in 1957, was 244 pounds. He always referred to them as "ugly pounds." This was admittedly far too much for his five-foot, ten and three-quarters inch frame.

When he mentioned his own bulk in his October 24, 1947, *Star* column he was both sensitively moved and gently "sermonizing." "Ran across a good line in connection with obesity yesterday," he began. "It said, 'Imprisoned in every fat man is a thin one wildly signaling to be let out.' The reason, say medical authorities, why fat people loudly bemoan their size without ever doing anything about it is that the fat person started out as a timid soul who came to depend on his bulkiness for a feeling of strength, safety, and power. Food for us Fat Ones stands for love, security and satisfaction. Sometimes the very unattractiveness of obesity serves a definite emotional purpose. It offers a seemingly obvious reason for avoiding situations which might provoke fear and anxiety."

Firm resolutions to diet Cedric made. New and varied diets he tried. He would lose for awhile, but the pounds would wash back on his frame. He just could not resist good food, especially rich desserts. He admitted he could eat a quart of ice cream at one sitting anytime, any place.

Because Cedric hated being fat and because he also saw the promotional merit of dieting campaigns in his columns it is no surprise that he had many recruits. So again in still another area Cedric demonstrated he could sense needs of others and fulfill them. And the fact that he, too, was fat and that he, too, shared the diets made these drives more effective and caught the imaginations of "the 'thin ones' wildly signaling to be let out" of their layers of fat.

Cedric launched his most talked-about and participated-in mass dieting crusade in his *Minneapolis Star* column, October 22, 1947. The ostensible reason for this campaign

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was to help President Truman's committee during the post-war food shortage in Europe to conserve on food. Cedric's tenuous premise was that by dieting, thousands



Cedric defying gravity!

in the Northwest would not only save food, but they would be improving their health. He published a "tested diet" and "the complete details in connection with it."

His fourteen day campaign, he warned, would be a real challenge, but a rewarding one.

"I happen to be the only fat member in my family," he confessed. "It's no cinch to sit at the table with a small portion of grub in front of you which you invariably finish about the time the rest of the family are just getting a good start. I've found that it's a pretty good idea to make arrangements with your family to be excused early from the table. There's no particular advantage in hanging around just to drool when the dessert course comes in."

The impact of this mass dieting drive was tremendous in the Northwest. Cedric received hundreds of letters, telephone calls, and greetings on the street from dieters. The story was picked up by United Press. "Not in a dozen years of columnning," Cedric reported, "have I had anything that's been more fun than our little 'mass dieting' episode. I can't recall anything ever launched here with so much popular appeal. The majority of us, obviously, are conscious of food, our shapes and our weight."

Then he shared his own food dreams when he mentioned how he had "gazed longingly at a coconut cream pie, at a box of chocolate creams, at a juicy steak." He admitted, "I bumped into some discouragement, too. The first four pounds rolled off like petals of a rose. Then came the stymie."

In January 1958, Cedric got two projects under way which involved shedding flesh and lonely hearts respectively. He announced in his column on January 5th, "This is for fat slobs only, of whom I am one. So all you skinflints will have to look elsewhere for your money's worth today. We're sending out a call for 10 dedicated disciples

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of dieting—10 men and women willing to set aside the next 12 weeks to fight the battle of the bulge. This isn't a diet spree, a short-lived expedition, but rather a prolonged and determined attempt to get rid of unsightly flabbiness, rolls, blubber or whatever we have hanging on our frames in the way of unnecessary flesh. This Corner in the past has devoted considerable attention to various kinds of diets, methods of reducing, two-day, ten-day attempts, but we're on a brand new approach now—collective, scientific and, we hope, successful."

So much for the background for the fatsos. On January 20, Cedric told how a lonely heart always impressed him: "I think lonesomeness is one of the hardest emotions to overcome. That's why I felt sorry for the three airline stewardesses who wrote me wondering where our eligible bachelors were. I remember the only Christmas Eve I ever spent away from home. I was peddling garden seeds for Northrup King and Company and wound up in, of all places, Tyler, Texas, for the holidays. Didn't know a soul in the whole town and spent Christmas Eve in the hotel lobby. You get to feeling pretty sorry for yourself. And I'm sure the plight of these three girls is similar. Night after night watching television in their own apartment or going to a movie or reading can become dull. After the paragraph appeared here, the calls and mail continued and it became obvious that the same lonely hearts situation exists for men. And for a lot more girls than the three airline stewardesses."

Cedric was right. There seemed to be almost as many men seeking companionship. As a result, a group formed which Cedric dubbed, the Mixmasters.

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

The diet campaign was an instant success. Instead of just ten volunteers, for which Cedric originally asked, eight hundred men and women showed up ready for pound-shedding. In one of his periodic reports on both groups he boasted, "Our Fatsos and our Mixmasters have been going great guns during the last month, we're happy to hear. The Mixmasters now have 620 women and 450 men registered for their various calendars of activities. They have elected permanent officers and have been filling their events long before the date of the activity. Some 1,470 single men and women have participated in the social activities since the kickoff dance in March. Big problem is that the women sign up early for the activity while the men hold off until the last minute. Makes for very difficult planning, boys, so try to indicate your willingness to participate in the events of your choice a little more promptly. You guys said you were looking for single girls. Well, here they are."

The projects Cedric spearheaded were important contributions to the Northwest. He admitted that the results could not have been accomplished by one individual and he wrote in *Cedric Adams Album*, "When a great newspaper and a great radio station provide their facilities to an individual, and that individual develops a loyal and responsive audience, there's a tremendous force available 'to do good.' Inside almost every man and woman is an urge to help. Harnessing that urge has been one of the most stimulating experiences I've had during the last 25 years."

On the same *Album* page was a picture of a man's mutilated hand which Cedric captioned, "This is the hand

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of Harold Beldo, whose ring finger was ripped off by a firecracker. Harold's injured hand was one of the exhibits before the Minnesota State Legislature in a successful campaign to abolish the sale and use of firecrackers in the state. There were more than 50,000 backers of the anti-fireworks campaign."

Cedric realized the danger in fireworks and strongly backed the anti-fireworks bill that was passed in 1941 and was signed by Governor Harold E. Stassen, Cedric's University of Minnesota friend and fellow debater.

I asked Niecy why Cedric felt so deeply about the indiscriminate sale of fireworks. She said that Cedric "couldn't figure out what there was about fireworks that was so great that they could give them to children who didn't know how to handle them and that would endanger their lives and their eyesight."

She added that Cedric's stand on fireworks "was kind of tough on our kids because the rest of the children were pretty cross about what their father had done."

Cedric had also taken a stand about the use of BB guns because one of his neighbor's daughters had lost an eye from a BB shot. However, there was never any legislative action on BB guns.

Another cause which gave Cedric deep satisfaction was the "Heart Home". Cedric was happy to give credit to his readers for its realization. "There's a monument to the generosity of folks in our Northwest," he wrote, "and it isn't a towering mass of granite nor a man on a horse nor an obelisk sitting in a park. Instead, it's a home with a mother and children and atmosphere and love and an abiding faith.

“A sightless mother and her four children had been abandoned. One of the children was a victim of polio. They were almost without funds. The story of their need was a simple one to tell and the telling of it was all that was needed to open up the hearts of thousands and thousands of willing givers. The ‘monument’ is located at 4050 Forty-Second Avenue South in Minneapolis. The house went up in record time, the furnishings were moved in, and a family of five suddenly found new horizons. A devout woman’s prayers had been answered.”

And what a change it was for this family. The whole project cost \$28,000 or 2,800,000 pennies which poured in in response to Cedric’s story. A \$4,320 trust fund was set up for the children. The new house was completely furnished including an oil burner, electric refrigerator, vacuum cleaner, and three radios.

Perhaps Cedric’s most enduring and important project was an annual solicitation for gifts for the “forgotten persons” in Minnesota institutions for the mentally retarded. From 1950 to 1954 alone his readers sent more than 65,000 Christmas gifts to these people and contributed money to buy sixty-five TV sets for various wards.

In the December 8, 1969, *Minneapolis Star*, W. G. Kubicek, a professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Minnesota, wrote, “Cedric Adams of The Star supported many civic activities during his colorful career. One of his most touching human endeavors was to assist in programs to aid the mentally retarded. A memorial to him has been established at the Faribault State Hospital. A group of volunteers work long hours to make Christmas as bright

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as possible for these people. There could not be a more fitting memorial to Cedric Adams than a contribution to this great cause.”

During a visit to one of the state mental institutions Cedric was involved in an amusing incident. And the laugh was on him. He seldom missed a chance to poke fun at himself and to appear gullible. It was one of his most successful devices to identify with readers, viewers, and listeners.

It seems that on this particular visit he heard that Niecy was trying to reach him from California. He went to a telephone and said, “This is Cedric Adams. Will you please connect me with Operator 28 in Los Angeles?”

The operator was all charm, but nothing happened. So Cedric asked again. More charm, but no attempt to get Operator 28. As the time grew closer to his personal appearance on the institution’s stage he tried once more and just as he was about to complain to the operator about the service he heard her voice say, “There’s some poor old soul at the mental institute who thinks he’s Cedric Adams and wants to call California. I’m just humoring him along until he gets tired.”

In the *MAC Gopher*, the publication of the Minneapolis Athletic Club, John Lamb wrote after Cedric’s death, “What a terrific guy was Cedric Adams. Joe Ferris, vice president of Doughboy Industries tells about the time right after World War II when he and Cedric were chatting about the return of the servicemen from overseas and what a real joy it was going to be to see them back with their families. Out of that conversation came the idea for a heart-warming contest—a letter-writing effort for boys

still in the service. The contest was planned exclusively for those servicemen who had never had a honeymoon, with the winner getting a dandy prize. Know what it was? Well, it included a trip to New York, a suite at the Hotel Pierre, a visit to the Stork Club and other night clubs, a private car with a driver, spending money for the couple—the works.

“The winning letter in the contest came from an Air Force man who had been shot down over Germany after 26 missions, and had been held prisoner of war for many months in an enemy prison camp. Cedric, his wife, Niecy, Joe and Mildred Ferris joined the couple at Charlie’s Cafe Exceptionale to break the news that they had won. Joe then sez, ‘Cedric was always a softie when it came to the men and women in the service, and he was deeply impressed when he met this young flier and listened to his account of bombing missions, his months in a prison camp, the joy of being released, and the happiness which came with the trip back home.’

“When the dinner party was over that evening and it was time to part, Chuck Saunders stopped by the table and shook hands with the couple. As he did so he pressed several bills of large denomination into their hands and said, ‘This is a little spending money for your delayed honeymoon.’ Tears glistened in Cedric’s eyes as he said good night to the couple.”

There were those, however, that questioned Cedric’s sincerity in the causes he supported. Some felt Cedric was egocentrically motivated. When I asked Niecy she replied, “I think he was *very* concerned. He felt very deeply. And Cedric had a great sympathetic feeling for

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people. When he had this feeling he couldn't do enough for people. He felt this way about the Little Sisters of the Poor. And many things which he promoted he said could not have been done without the help of his profession. He did feel very sincerely, I'm sure."

One of Cedric's staunch defenders was Mrs. Sarah Bloom of Minneapolis who wrote to the *Tribune* editor on March 26, 1950, after the testimonial dinner for the Adams at the Nicollet Hotel: "I am amazed that anyone should think that Cedric Adams did not deserve the honors awarded him by grateful citizens. His actions speak so much louder than any words of mine, but his many good deeds prompted this letter.

"In the days when so many of us were on public relief, I remember how we had to line up in the streets outside the relief department office, rain, snow, or shine, until Cedric prevailed upon the officials to open the outside doors before the offices opened. I have observed, many times, scores of harried persons, waiting outside Cedric's office. Whether he can help them or not, they always knew they would be heard, and would be treated with respect by both Cedric and his courteous secretaries."

CHAPTER XIII

"Into Each Life . . ."

Cedric did not hesitate to poke fun at himself whenever the occasion arose. It was part of his balance as a human being that allowed him to see the comical side even at painful moments. One of these occasions appeared "In This Corner" on August 10, 1958, which began with his frequent lead-in:

"INTO EACH LIFE A LITTLE RAIN MUST FALL: Last Saturday morning I was ready to bounce out of bed in my usual fashion but did so with an amazing reaction. The very instant my left foot touched the floor it felt as though a family of wasps had somehow gained entry to the inside of my foot just below the toes or I had stepped on a land mine. The pain brought me to my knees immediately. It was absolutely impossible to put any weight, of which I have considerable, on that left foot. As I moved away from the bed on all fours, the dog came in, noted my crouched position and assumed, as well she might, that I was in the mood for play. I very definitely was not. When my more serious attitude became apparent to her and when my method of moving about failed to change, she became somewhat irritated. She figured, I know, that I was usurping not only her area but also her position for locomotion. Her friendly bark of play became suddenly a snarl, a sort of dog warning that she had had

enough of this foolishness and that I had darned well better get off the floor and start behaving myself.

"I crawled to the nearest chair and managed to pull myself on to it for a sitting position and a closer examination of my pained hoof. The foot itself looked perfectly normal. There wasn't a bruise, there wasn't an abrasion, but a small area across the ball of the foot, not much larger than a silver dollar, would not even tolerate the slightest touch. I thought of a lot of things that might have happened to the member. Perhaps my mate kicked me during the night. Maybe a bee had visited my bed. Maybe there was a brand new kind of disease making the rounds that struck during the night and in the bottom of the victim's foot. But these guesses had no basis in fact or symptom. There was no swelling, no redness in the area, nothing but an excruciating pain that only hurt when the region was touched.

"It began to look like a case for our family physician. To remain mobile either by crawling around on all fours or hobbling from one place to another on one leg was going to be pretty inconvenient especially in the downtown area. I called the doc, gave him the picture. He couldn't diagnose it over the telephone, he told me, but he'd be glad to come out. One hour later he had my foot in his lap, applying ever so gently a bit of pressure here and there, gazing at the area of distress intently, asking a few questions about my recent activity, diet and what not. Then came a very curt and very direct statement. 'You, my friend,' he began, 'have the gout.' 'The gout?' I shouted. 'I thought that was an old man's disease!' 'You have the gout,' he repeated quietly. 'What's to do with this gout

business?' I inquired anxiously. 'First of all,' he replied, 'it's a matter of very strict diet. No lentils, no meat, no fats of any kind, no alcoholic beverages, very little proteins, and no tripe.' 'Look, doc,' I said, 'don't tell me I have to give up tripe! That's too low a blow.' 'No tripe,' he admonished again. 'I'll have the drug store send you some pills.' Then he gave me a list of what I could eat—eggs, bread and very little butter, jelly, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet corn but with very little butter.

"The pills came and the instructions on the label killed me. It read: 'Take one pill every hour until the pain stops or diarrhea begins.' It began to look as though I was trapped either way. I began the treatment nevertheless. The mate and I had been invited to a garden party on Saturday night. 'You'll have to go without me,' I told her. 'I can't be hobbling around on one leg or crawling on all fours at a garden party. And besides, everybody will want to know what's troubling me and I'll be darned if I'll tell them I have the gout. And on top of that, remember that label.'

"She was adamant. 'You won't be any more uncomfortable at a garden party than you will be home moping. The neighbors have a pair of crutches you can borrow.'

"Anybody making an entrance to a garden party on a pair of crutches is bound to be a conversation piece, so it wasn't very long until most of the guests knew I had an attack of the gout. The hostess very thoughtfully placed me on the chaise lounge almost in the center of the party. She brought pillows, lemonade, moved an ashtray in, did everything she could think of to make me comfortable. What she didn't realize, though, was the fact that she had

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made me a captive audience for every guest there. She probably didn't know this herself, but a very high percentage of her male guests had had, at one time or another, an attack of gout. And there was scarcely a female guest present who hadn't had an uncle or very old aunt or a brother-in-law who hadn't been bothered. I learned in each case how long they had suffered, how frequent the attacks were, where else they occur besides the feet and I also was given a total of 14 cures, one of which was to soak my foot in kerosene. The thing that intrigued me most, however, was the fact that each guest as he or she got up off the edge of my chaise lounge would reach down and pat my elevated foot right smack on the gout area and then say reassuringly with each pat, 'Don't let it worry you, there are a lot more serious things than gout.' "

Readers of "In This Corner" did and could expect anything. It was no surprise then when about a year later the Adams column announced, "Just as I was beginning to enjoy the official arrival of summer and the pleasures of our new double bungalow, our front doorbell rang the other night. I answered it to find a man in his early 50's standing on our front stoop. He was a serious-looking man. He wore pince nez glasses and a stiff straw skimmer with a high crown, a black band and a narrow brim. 'I'm with the so-and-so cemetery association,' he said politely, 'may I have a moment of your time?' I figured at first that perhaps his group was having a square dance he wanted publicized or maybe they were entering a canoe in the Aquatennial Canoe Derby, so I said, 'Indeed, come right in.' I motioned him to a chair. He removed his stiff straw hat, made for the chair and sat down, his back

erect, his hands folded across what would have been his abdomen had he been fatter. 'Have you thought about your burial plot?' he began. His abruptness started me to wondering immediately. Could it be my complexion or had there been a survey made which indicated that I was about ready for the last song.

"'No,' I confessed, 'I haven't given it much thought. As a matter of fact, I haven't given it any.' He turned his head toward me slightly and said, 'Tsk, ts, ts. In the first place, that's the trouble with most people today. They fail to realize how rapidly our cemeteries are filling up. In a matter of years there'll be no room left. And what have the suburbs done about it? Nothing, absolutely nothing. They think about streets and schools and sewers and swimming pools, but not one tiny bit of consideration is given to cemeteries.' He seemed so disconsolate about the whole thing that I said, 'Would you like a drink?' 'Never touch the stuff,' he said, looking very self-pleased. 'May I go on?' he asked. 'Please do,' I told him. 'Your wife is several years younger than you, is she not?' I said he was right. 'Surely, your demise will come before hers and you don't want to leave her with the ignoble task of selecting a cemetery lot.' I hadn't given that much thought either, so I didn't bother thinking up an answer. I didn't have to because he pulled a huge plat from his briefcase.

"'As you can see,' he said, placing the plat on the floor between us, 'there are not too many desirable locations left. Here is a choice one here. This one is high upon a hill with a beautiful view of the surrounding graves, great oaks to the right, great oaks to the left. And the drainage is excellent.' I interrupted him with, 'But how about the

children using it for a toboggan slide in the winter?' 'We do not grant playground privileges in our cemetery,' he countered with the emphasis on 'our'. 'It was just one of those disturbing thoughts that came to mind,' I explained, and then went on, 'I like the view, but how important is that?' 'Surely you wouldn't want the feeling of being hemmed in as you would in one of the lower locations.' I'm sure he was convinced of the truth of my statement that I hadn't given much thought to my burial plot. It was evident that he felt he was dealing with a numbskull. But he seemed very fair in his next utterance. 'I don't want you to make up your mind tonight. Give it your careful consideration. It's later than you think.'"

Cedric would be the last to deny that he would take a nip or two, and in some cases, a nip or two too many. But he had never taken a drink until after his University days.

His radio listeners would sometimes notice a slurred word or so, or a thickened tongue; but he was not an alcoholic. Remember, he had even confessed over WCCO after a Taste Bread newscast that there had been times when alcohol had clashed with his enunciation. So when he launched his first mass dieting drive in 1947 he warned, "Drinking is going to be quite a problem, so we might as well face it. Rarely do diets include any alcoholic beverages. The one we're going to publish advises against any drinking during the diet; but there is a little provision that says if we must take a nip, take it with the meal, not between. I, myself, have been on the wagon for nearly ten months."

Cedric had a right to crow about this because he had had a bet with his good friend, Chuck Saunders, which he

reported in the October 2, 1950, *Star*: “Two years on the wagon, that’s what I’m celebrating today, so don’t mind if I jump up and down a couple of times, clap my hands, and let out a mild huzzah. Two years ago tonight I stopped by the Cafe Exceptionale and Chuck Saunders and I got into one of our usual talks. The talk veered to the habit of drinking. We talked generalities at first and then got down to individual cases—his and mine.

“‘You couldn’t stop drinking,’ said Saunders, looking me squarely in both eyes.

“‘Ha!’ I said, ‘I’ll bet you I could.’

“Well, it wasn’t long till we had a pretty fair wager all signed, sealed and pocketed. The odds he gave me were long to begin with. He was betting five to one. But there was a very stiff penalty attached to every nip I took during the two-year period in addition to the loss of the bet. Saunders wasn’t out to win the bet. I knew that he wanted me to win. He wanted me to win so badly that he tossed in double the amount of the original wager if I hold out till nine tonight—that’s twelve more hours from the time this is being written. I’m in pay dirt. And it looks like a cinch.

“In two years of sobriety, thirst isn’t the only thing you experience. You learn, for instance, that the cocktail hour can be the longest hour of the year. I’ve seen it last from 5 until 11:15 p.m. By that time, you’re up to your armpits in canapes and you begin to marvel at the stamina of your hostess, who has just said to you for the 39th time, ‘Isn’t there something I can get for you?’

“I have found, however, that the cocktail hour can be a period for complete relaxation for the non-imbiber. The period of rest begins during the middle of the very first

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round. From then on all you have to do is listen or give certain outward signs that you're listening. The imbibers take the conversational ball and keep it throughout the entire evening. While they're talking you can do a lot of other things. You can plan tomorrow's work, think out a sales campaign, decide what was wrong with your golf yesterday, map your next vacation. Just be sure you nod your head once in awhile.

"A substitute for a drink is a major problem. You begin with soft drinks. I don't know why, but soft drinks fill you up ten times faster than hard ones. Then you switch to coffee. That has an exhilarating effect, but an evening on coffee can leave you with next-day jitters that are almost as bad as the alcoholic shakes. Charged water and lemon juice is next. Acidity results and you're down to plain charged water, which gives you the burps. Socially you're already a stick-in-the-mud, so you don't want to add burping to that reputation. Finally you decide that wanting to drink something is only a form of nervousness. You switch to a glass of plain water and let it go at that. At the end of six months you have arrived at the point where you don't need something in your mitt to feel at ease.

"In these last two years I've had a lot of questions tossed at me. Among them: 'Don't you miss it?' Sure, I miss it. There's a lot of relaxation in a drink or two before dinner. But it's also nice to wake up in the morning knowing that your car is in the garage, that you didn't pinch Mrs. Hemmingway surreptitiously the night before.

"'Are you a member of Alcoholics Anonymous?' No, I never have been, but they've done a magnificent job for many persons.

“Saunders, I want to say a word to you. As long as I live, I’ll be grateful to you. And when He starts making those final tallies, He’ll put this one down for you, I’m sure.”

Ric Adams thinks that his father could have developed a severe drinking problem when the bet was made; but that Saunders realized this and that the bet was made for Cedric’s protection.

Dave Adams explained the rules and the stakes of the bet saying, “It was a thousand versus five thousand. A five thousand dollar mink coat against a thousand bucks and Dad won. The one exception to the bet was that he could drink all the Rhine wine he wanted and he had cases of Rhine wine in the basement.”

Dave remembered that on the next to last day of Cedric’s life he asked his father, “What was THE most embarrassing thing you remember doing in front of an audience?”

Cedric confessed, “I think it was when I got up and did the same show three times when I was stiff. I went through the whole performance. I got down off the stage and there was all that good applause, so I went up and went through it again. And, my God, if I didn’t do it the third time! I didn’t remember it until the morning. Oh, did I die then!”

This was the sort of thing Saunders had in mind. He not only wanted to protect a friend, but a friend’s career.

CHAPTER XIV

Niecy and Cedric

Christmas is a time of heightened emotions for most Americans. Cedric was no exception. He wrote sensitively about this season from the time he was a Northrup King seed salesman when he had spent a lonely Christmas in Tyler, Texas.

Niecy told me about his last Christmas. "I think," she said, "that Cedric was a very tired man after his heart attack in November, 1960. I can remember when he came home from the hospital the day before Christmas how happy and thrilled he was because I had sort of gone overboard with the decorations and that sort of thing. When we were sitting having our cocktail before dinner he looked out the window at the little lake and at the scenery around the house and said, 'I hope God gives us ten more years.'"

Despite Cedric's evident presentiment of death he could still make jokes. Niecy knew he was having trouble sleeping. He would get up early and then kid her, "Well, what are you staying in bed for when it's so beautiful out?"

Ten years earlier Niecy had given a glimpse of their home life in the *Minneapolis Star* in one of a series of interviews of wives of Minneapolis personalities. Niecy had said, "Cedric is seldom at home. Sometimes during the night he is. It's a very congenial arrangement, however. We never have time to quarrel. On Sunday afternoons when

he's home Pa Adams sleeps a great deal of the time. He reads and that puts him to sleep.

"When it comes to habits that need reforming, I could mention several. The worst one he has is putting his soiled clothing in the most difficult place to retrieve that he can possibly think of. Under the bed or under the chest of drawers or under the vanity, or any place where I have to get down on all fours to get it out."³

Niecy did not mention one habit about which everyone could have complained. It was a Cedric "trademark". He smoked Turkish cigarettes, Rameses II, which he bought from the exclusive Minneapolis tobacconists, Billy and Marty's, who still stock them. During his "Rameses II Period" wherever Cedric went he left a trail of sweetish, cloying smoke.

Cedric was anything but the domestic type and household handyman. Niecy says he did not like to do little things around the house or to cook; but that he was an expert at raiding the refrigerator where any food would do. His favorite was ice cream of which he never tired.

After Cedric began his newscasts on WCCO Niecy once admitted that "wonderful as it was to have some real cash it messed up our social life. I never accept a dinner invitation without warning our hostess Cedric would have to leave early."

Although he sometimes asked his readers for material for the column Niecy remembers that Cedric was not very prone to talk about his business and problems at home. When he came home at night he liked to shed himself of that. One of the exceptions was the night he came in bursting with a new idea and a question.

Niecy and Cedric

“Niecy,” he excitedly asked, “what do you think of interviewing the wives of well-known men?”

“Good idea,” she replied, “women are always curious how other women live.”

“Okay,” said Cedric, “how soon can you leave to set up interviews?”

The very next day Niecy was on a train to Washington. After overcoming some obstacles she arranged for interviews there as well as in New York and Hollywood. The interviews, which Cedric conducted by telephone, resulted in still another Adams radio program.

As it was for most young married couples those first few years together were lean for Niecy and Cedric. But their fortunes were greatly changed in the next twenty-one years, thanks to radio and the column, so that in 1952 Niecy modestly told an interviewer, “I am married to a man in the public domain. As you can readily imagine, it is a very curious thing. And not the least confusing aspect is the fact that neither of us ever expected to see him there.”

Therefore those who had only known Cedric in those years after he had “made it” needed prompting. Cedric did this in a column written on February 20, 1949, when he described his new home in Edina, Minnesota, which is one of the most fashionable suburbs in the United States. With his usual light touch he recalled the places where Niecy and he had lived since their marriage in 1931 during the Depression. Actually, most newlyweds have had similar experiences while living in cramped and economical quar-

ters and could relive those early days of the Adams' marriage.

Cedric's lead for the column was, "THIS IS QUITE A THRILL." Then continued: "I'm writing my first column in my new home. We've moved in, the last slip-cover is back from the cleaner, the last washrag has been hung, there's nothing to do now but sit around and wait for the plaster to crack. As I sit here I can't help skipping back over the nearly 18 years we've been married. Our case was similar to thousands of other young married couples: our first home was a one-room apartment with one of those in-a-door beds that moved from the closet out into the living room when it came time to retire. What a production it was to get up in the middle of the night. You sort of squirmed out of bed, stumbled into an armchair, hit an end table, bumped into a floor lamp and walked over two pairs of shoes en route. Only reason you didn't hit anything else was because that was all that was in the room.

"Weary of the daily tussle with the in-a-door, we finally took an apartment with a bedroom. After the one-room job we felt as though we were in a palace. It was a thrill to know that you had a closet. Then one morning she whispered, 'We're going to have a _____.' I knew I couldn't be lugging a baby buggy up and down the stairs in an apartment, and besides, where would we hang all the _____? So almost the next day we began our house-hunting. It was easier in those days. No rent controls, no ceilings, no 'No Vacancies' signs. And wouldn't it be wonderful to have an extra bedroom for the baby and a yard and a furnace and an attic in which to

Niecy and Cedric

store things, and a kitchen where we could cook cabbage without having the people next door grumble. So we moved into our first house—a bungalow.

“Baby sitters hadn’t been heard of then. You got hold of a schoolgirl who came in afternoons, helped with the cooking, did the dishes, went home nights. She worked for \$2 a week. And by the end of the week I had borrowed half of the \$2 back from her. I’ll never be able to understand, but always, just as life settles itself down to a comfortable routine, there comes that impelling urge to move. I think the reason we left the bungalow was because we needed more attic space. Stuff was collecting too fast up there. The guy who invented the attic should have died in his youth. Anyway, our next hop was into a three-bedroom house. As I recall, the secondary reason for that move was the fact that the baby could be upstairs by himself undisturbed by the noises from the main floor. And the spare room was always handy when relatives dropped in. And they did. Just on my wife’s side, though. Another one of those mornings came along when she whispered again, ‘We’re going to have a _____.’”

“‘Don’t you think we’ve been renting long enough?’ she cooed one day. ‘Why don’t we buy a house, then at the end of the year we’ll have something other than landlord’s receipts to show where our money went.’ Does that sound a familiar note to you? I fell for it. I don’t remember where we got the down payment, but it was a little one, I know. That was the year we joined the venetian blind set. We’d never had a house with them before. She whispered once more that year, too. That meant four bedrooms and all full. The moving urge returned two years later. She had

found a house that had just been built. It had never been lived in. 'Wouldn't it be a thrill to move into a brand new house?'

"In we went, and for seven or eight years, believe it or not, we lived within our income. Well, that got to be pretty dull. So we decided to build a house. That took care of that. May I suggest to you young men and women who are about to get married that you study this pattern of ours very carefully. It's a cinch that you'll follow it to the letter through the years ahead. It's as stock or as standard as your hat size. The whole setup is ironical, of course. About the time you get around to build a house large enough to accommodate your family the kids are almost ready for college or they're off to work or on their own. So in just a matter of years after your house is finished you find yourself rattling around in a house you thought was going to be for the family. With the kids gone, you find the walks too hard to shovel, the lawn too much to take care of. It's just a matter of time until she'll be saying, 'Don't you think it would be nice if we could get ourselves a nice little one-room apartment somewhere and you wouldn't have all this work?' So you've completed the cycle and you're back with the in-a-door.

"I'd like to add just a word about our new home. It's twelve miles from the office. There are 13 homes in the addition. From the front of the house we have one floor, from the back two. On the main floor are my workroom, the living room, four bedrooms. Downstairs are the activities room (that was a new one on me), the dining room, kitchen, utility room, boys' workshop, and a room for the hired girl. If you ever build, take the number of floor

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plugs you think you'll need, multiply by 14, add 39 and you'll still be five short.

"My workroom I'm sort of proud of. It's a combination library, den, studio and lounge. I've been working seven nights a week for 10 years, now I have it fixed so I can stay home two or three nights a week. I have my own broadcasting equipment, special telephone lines, even my own microphone. And I also have the teletype. So I can sit here at home, write a column and teletype it to the Star or Tribune, or I can have my news sent out here by teletype. First thing I know I'll be turning into a home body—planting onions, putting up a shelf in the laundry room, repairing the electric iron, might even whip up a batch of fudge. Anyway, I hope I enjoy it while I can, because I know back to the in-a-door isn't too far away."

While the Adams family was waiting for their new house to be completed, they were temporarily homeless. However, their good friend, Chuck Saunders, offered them a refuge on his three hundred acre farm in Bloomington Township just south of the city.

Living on a farm was a new and exciting experience for the three Adams boys, as well as for Niecy. Perhaps not as exciting for Niecy as it was new because rural life entailed more responsibilities. As for Cedric, he had worked on a farm around Magnolia as a boy; he sensed several sides to rural life: the beauty, the disadvantages, as well as—of course—the humorous side.

"The autumnal scene on a farm should be a very impressive thing. The fresh, black loam has been turned up by the gang plow, in shocks the harvest lies atop the ground, Nature has labored through the months of summer

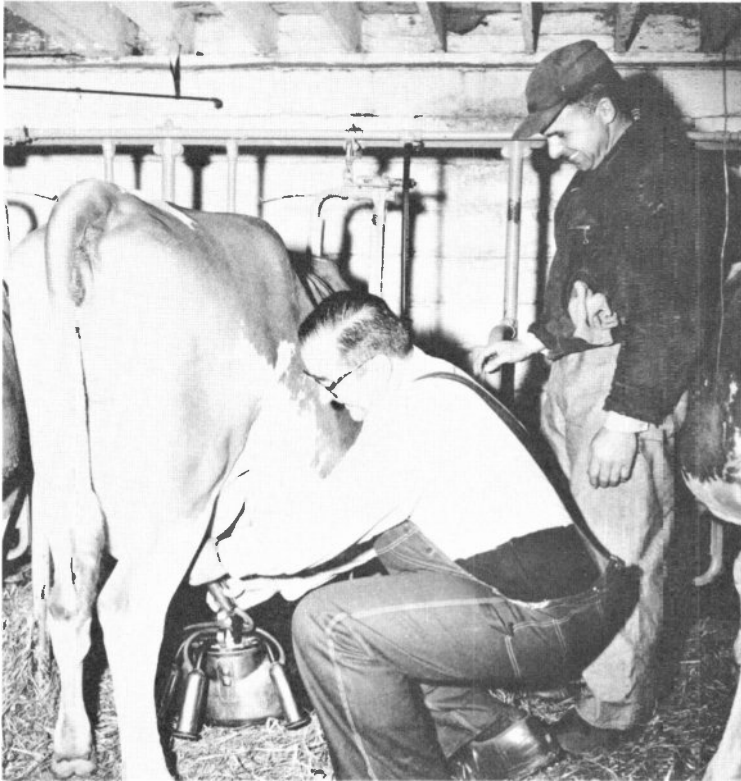
and now prepares for her winter's rest, November's dazzling morning frosts set the countryside a-sparkle, the stillness of a fall morning sends the smoke of the early kitchen fire shaft-like into the sky. Beauty abounds. Here at last, I reasoned, could be the peace for which I had searched so long.

"The awakening hasn't been rude, but has been poignant. Almost every day I have two major adjustments to make. In the afternoon or in the early evening it would be a job to wander in and out of the barns, to visit the stock, to fraternize with the farm workers, I reasoned, so I tried it. You can get into a lot of trouble in a barn. And I mean into it. There must have been something about me the stock didn't like because, to this day, I haven't been able to create a single friendship among the livestock. And I know the farm workers look upon me as a city feller with no knowledge whatsoever agrarian. After the attempt to become a part of the farm, I would go into the city. People backed away from me. They'd arch their brows, twist their noses around and wonder, I know, where in the world I had picked up my strange aura. Saunders had made a fine gesture of friendship, but I don't believe he has any idea what he has done to me. I am neither rural nor urban.

"Farmers' habits have changed a lot since I was a lad. Yesterdays on a farm meant plenty of milk and cream and butter and buttermilk and home-smoked sausages and headcheese and homegrown things. They all come from the grocery store now. Where the grocer gets them I have no idea. Misfit that I am right now, I believe that I'm in a pretty good position to observe that the city feller turned farmer is really not a farmer. Maybe Progress has tampered

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with my early conception of farm life. Saunders with his thermostatically controlled oil burner, his carpeted bedroom, his hand-blocked linen draperies, his koroseal-



Down on the Everett Thies farm.

covered berette, his shower in green tile, his cedar-lined closet, yes, even his shoe trees, is too far a cry from what I knew as a farmer. And I suppose all farmers boast of

such things these days. Makes the farmer I knew seem like a myth. Gone are the porcelain bowl and pitcher, the corncob box alongside the kitchen range, the calendar that held the brush and comb up over the kitchen sink, the brown cistern water, the cold floors of the upstairs bedrooms, the stovepipe drum that heated the upstairs, the pans of milk in the basement, the oily floor around the cream separator, the bare spot out the back door where the dish water was always tossed, the striking mantel clock. I could go on all day. My, what a difference! Would I swap what I have for those things? Well, I should say—not!”

How Cedric was able to remember the details of years past was at the same time amazing as well as a God-given talent which endeared him to his readers. If you had lived in those by-gone days each detail he recalled brought back a deep-delved memory. That “bare spot out the back door where the dish water was always tossed” brings to mind so many homes, both rural and urban. Or “the oily floor around the cream separator” which was not only slippery but redolent of a sour, buttery smell. Niecy, fortunately, did not have to contend with those inconveniences.

A couple of weeks before writing about life on the Saunders farm Cedric had recounted some of the highlights of his visit at Arthur Godfrey’s farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Godfrey’s house was constructed of red brick in an English design. It was fifty years old then and had been completely renovated.

Once again Cedric revealed his sensitivity as he sketched his first morning there, a morning of “autumn’s richest russets, hues of gold that were actually dazzling, a lazy

morning haze that hugged the meadows. Down a slope just outside my bedroom window was the swimming pool. Beyond that a frisky colt romped awkwardly in the paddock. There was that soft morning twitter of birds that would soon be off southward.”

Over the years the Adams household had several maids. Nothing Cedric ever did backfired any more than a column he wrote in which he “advertised” for a maid during World War II when help was hard to get. And that was just what it was—an ad. A gigantic want-ad. Managing Editor Dave Silverman rejected it as a column and told Cedric to put it in the regular want-ad section of the paper if he wanted it printed. Cedric abruptly steamed to the want-ad counter downstairs and bought the space at the regular rates, minus his employe discount, for one of the longest want-ads ever to appear in any paper. Then he fumed as he toiled out another column for that date.

Soon everyone in the Northwest had heard about the episode, even if they had not read the want-ad. The Adams were deluged with applicants for the job.

Several years later Silverman relented and the following “want-ad” appeared “In This Corner” when Cedric was on vacation:

AN OPEN LETTER
to Unemployed Girls
FROM CEDRIC ADAMS

DEAR GIRLS: Ma came to me the other day with her chin below her lavalier (which is a trifle lower than she usually wears it) and she says guess what? Luella is leaving us to join the WACS. So I says so

what? And she says do you think I can take care of three kids and those (some words here the paper won't let me print) turkeys and darn your socks and dust the living room twice a month and count ration points and iron sheets and mow the lawn and wipe off your razor and answer 27 telephone calls a night and cut the kids' hair and run over to Smith's for butter and vacuum the upstairs hall and rinse out my rayons all by myself. I was going to offer to wipe off my razor but instead I says well other women have done it long before your time. You ain't the first mother of three this world has known, I says. But I could see I wasn't getting what you might call any place so I took a new line of approach. I says look if you want me to get you a girl to work for us I'll do it. All it takes is a little patience and the right kind of appeal.

I SAYS the trouble with you is you sit down and write out a little dinky want ad that goes something like this: Wtd. gl. gen. hsewk. No wsg. N irng. Sl. gd. Nr. bs. line. 3 chldn. N ckg. Wnt. 2626. You know why you don't get any answers, I says. Largely because they don't know what the h--- you are talking about. Even a Vassar graduate couldn't make head or tail out of a lingo like that. You have to sit down and write the girls a little letter and sort of go into our history and tell them something about the kind of place we got and what work they have to do and how they're going to live. So then I says you hold still now while I fix you up a good want ad and will see if we

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get any response or not. Which is exactly what I'm doing right now.

NOW I KNOW that I am up against guys out at New Brighton and out to Northern Pump. And they've got a lot to offer. But wait till I get through telling you about the opportunity right here in our little household. First of all, when you get up in the morning you don't have to go running for a street car to get to work. You just walk down one flight and there's your work staring you in the face. That is, it used to be that way. With wartime conditions and girls harder to get and still harder to keep, I'll fix it so your work will all be done by the time you get downstairs. Now do war plants do that for their girls? You're darn right they don't. They brag about music while you work. Don't think I ain't thought of that. After you've had breakfast you go in and pick out a Beethoven or a Brahms or a Schubert album and set right there in front of the Victrola till you're so sick of music that you'll feel maybe like running the carpet sweeper just for a little change.

THE WAR PLANTS brag about their recreation rooms, too. Say every room in our house is a rumpus room. You'll have so much rumpus that by the end of the day you'll want to peel some potatoes just to get off by yourself to get a little quiet. Well, that's the way it is in our house. Pretty soon you'll find yourself doing little odd jobs around the house just to break the monotony. Now about the dough. I always say

money isn't everything. You take a look at some of those checks that war plants put out. Deductions for this, deductions for that, deductions for something else. By the time the girls get them they have to bum carfare home. It don't work that way at our house. We give you a flat sum. It ain't big, but it's flat. I mean it comes to you net. No deductions for anything.

SHALL WE GO into hours now? You can get up anytime. But it's advisable to make it before 7 a.m. And you never have to worry about getting home late at night because you're always there. That's about all I can say about hours. Talk sinks ships, you know that. Now about the treatment. We don't like to make the girl who works for us feel like one of the family. We did that with three girls and they all quit within a week. And I didn't blame them. Maybe you have a hobby. If it's Victory gardening or mending or cleaning out closets or ironing shirts, then this is just the place for you. We're ideally situated—close to all of them. Quite a few families I know brag about being close to the street car. Not us. We didn't want our girl to be disturbed by a noisy old trolley keeping her awake half the night so we got quite a ways away from the streetcar so you won't have any trouble on that score. Pretty near every girl likes entertainment. We haven't overlooked that. Occasionally I sing around the house. The boys put on pillow fights almost every night. And our youngest has a trick on his trike that he stages in the living room that I think you'll enjoy.

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HE SORT OF puts all the end tables in a zig-zag line around the room and then rides around the tables. He'll have you in stitches with this one. Once in awhile he has himself in stitches, but he's young and heals easily. As I say, you won't have to worry about entertainment if you like the homespun variety. We also have an arrangement with the movie theaters. I go down ahead of time each week and buy a couple of tickets and give them to the girl but tell her they're passes. They always seem to like passes better. There's another comparison I want to make between our plant and a war plant. War plants always have some big shot like Eleanor or FDR dropping in on them. You have to be tidying up for those guests. We never do any entertaining. We ain't had anybody in but the man to read the electric meter since I can remember.

ALL WINTER WE kept it so chilly nobody wanted to come over. Then this spring we got the turkeys and you can guess the rest. Well, that about winds up our qualifications. Now a word about yours. If you're still breathing when you get here, the job is practically yours. If you're engaged in war work or in an essential occupation, this job ain't for you because I don't want trouble with the OPA. But if you're debating between going to an old ladies' home or on a Caribbean cruise and can't make up your mind, come out here for a couple of years till you reach your decision. But don't call up and say was Mr. Adams kidding. I'm dead earnest. So, if working

in our little household appeals to you and you want to get into steady work where you won't have to worry if they pass that \$25,000 salary limit or not, call Ma anytime today at WALnut 2626 and she'll hop on her bike and meet you on your own terms.

I HOPE YOU don't let me down on account of my telling her I could get at least one applicant if I handled it right. Incidentally, the turkeys are just about ready to be put outside. Our oldest boy is teasing for a BB gun, but if you come out to work for us I'll tell him he mustn't point it at you even if you've got your back to him. Better yet, I won't get him one. I hate them anyway, don't you? So long for now. Hope to hear from you today. Tell me what time you're coming and I'll have some canapes ready. If you can't call, write me. But your decision must be final. We're desperate and hope that you are the same.

Love—Cedric.

I asked Niecy if she was ever embarrassed by the things Cedric wrote about their household and her. She chuckled, "He did so many things with tongue-in-cheek in his columns. Yes, I used to get a little cross with him. But then I knew he put things in to get a reaction from his readers."

There was never a more understanding wife than Niecy when a CBS television crew literally tore up her house and disrupted the Adams routine for over two weeks. When CBS news analyst, Edward R. Murrow, was in Minneapolis on January 26, 1956, he had asked Cedric,

Niecy and Cedric



Niecy and Cedric on vacation.

"When do you put your boat in the water next spring on Lake Minnetonka?" Cedric said about May first.

Murrow's next question was, "Suppose we plan to do a 'Person to Person' show from your boat out in the middle of Wayzata Bay?" Cedric thought it was a good idea; but the CBS engineers considered it impractical to maneuver four television cameras on it, so the Adams house was the next choice for the program.

Even this choice presented innumerable engineering considerations, perhaps more than even Cedric himself realized. Fifteen days before the June 8 telecast a technical supervisor arrived from New York to make a survey. He and Cedric went to the top of Foshay Tower, where the WCCO-TV antenna was located, in order to see if there were any obstructions between the Tower and the Adams home which would interfere with microwave transmission. Then they drove to the Adams house to inspect the grounds and the house, particularly the electrical wiring.

The upshot of it was that over a ton of equipment was delivered to the Adams home to be installed, including a microwave tower. The carpeting was taken up and replaced after wires were extended beneath. Then the four camera locations were chosen.

In relating the telecast preparations Cedric wrote that the supervisor "told me that next week the telephone and electric crews would be moving in and that we'd have to be exposed to their working all over the house for eight hours a day for maybe a week. I told him I didn't mind at all, that I liked to have the workmen around. He hasn't met my wife yet. The whole thing could be junked."

Cedric confessed to the jitters before the telecast because

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“you parade your furniture, your wife, your kids, the fit of your coat, the homestead and, most dismaying of all, yourself.” After the show he wrote, “As you can see on your own television screen, Murrow is the embodiment of relaxation throughout his show, and somehow instills that same mental and physical calm into all those with whom he works. We took our places at 7:45 sharp and Ed’s voice came over the loudspeaker. At no time did we ever get a glimpse of Ed. We talked to the loudspeaker from which his voice came. But immediately, there was that Murrow warmth. We talked informally back and forth over the line for a few minutes and then we did the walk-through again. I thought sure Ed was going to ask me questions and let me answer them in the rehearsal, but all we did was to go through the movements from the dining room into the library and out and then into the living room.”

“Ed does a very nice thing immediately after the show,” Cedric continued. “The lines are kept open and he chats for 15 minutes very informally. He tells you how he liked your part of the show. He told us he was pleased and I said, ‘Ed, you tell that to all the girls,’ He replied, ‘Oh, no I don’t. Very often there’s a discreet silence at this point.’”

Characteristically, Cedric expressed his appreciation “that it took something over a week to make all the installations of transformers, cables, lights, cameras, sound equipment and so on, but our WCCO-TV boys had everything down and out in a little over an hour after we went off the air. And bless their hearts, they put back all the furniture, pictures, carpets, everything without so much as a scratch.”

Whenever anyone has tried to do his best to make a good impression he often thinks back and winces, as Cedric did after "Person to Person." He exclaimed, "There are times when I'd like to kick myself from here to Magnolia for the stupid things I do. Just prior to the Murrow thing, I received five letters from helpful persons all of whom warned, 'Please avoid saying, "As a matter of fact."' Three others mentioned the pitfall of using, 'Would you like to see the living room?' I heeded both bits of advice by saying over and over to myself, 'Lay off those two things.' I figured I had them both licked. Yesterday some thoughtful stenographer sent me a complete typewritten transcription of the entire show. Blushingly I read it and there in my second utterance was that blankety-blank 'as a matter of fact.' But worse than that, I discovered I had prefaced 13 of my answers with 'well.' Those weaknesses are a kind of conversational crutch upon which we lean, but aren't they the most useless and unnecessary things in the world? Another thing I do is intersperse a lot of 'a-a-a-s' in my speech. If anybody has a method of whipping those shortcomings I wish he'd speak up and advise a guy who knows better but still persists in the boo-boos."

As Cedric had predicted, the Adams family would go full cycle in homes. Homes from modest beginnings, from the raising of three sons and ever larger homes, and then back to a smaller home when the boys had finished college and had married.

Cedric had chronicled these moves in the column—often with a disguised pride, sometimes with slight embarrassment at his good fortune. However, he always managed to wring laughs out of these moves as he stirred in

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imagination with facts. If the facts did not fit, he would manufacture them as he did in the *Tribune* on May 3, 1959. Only the most naive would believe that Niecy was as he described her here. Not the petite Niecy who was an accomplished golfer and active in clubs and charitable organizations.

"I'm a-writin' this piece with a small teardrop a-runnin' down each cheek," he began. "Ma and I sold the ol' homestead. It came about like this. One morning last week I had showered, shaved, put on my clean linen and then bumped into Ma who was down on her knees a-scrubbin' the kitchen floor. Her hair hung down in small strings over her tired face, the red skin was drawn taut over her knuckles, her housedress fluffed gently around her knees, the cuban heels of her shoes pointed upwards at a 45-degree angle. She paused momentarily as she tossed the scrub rag in the pail beside her and murmured, 'Pa, I cain't take no more. I'm plumb tired out.' I could see her reasoning. Here I was off to my air-conditioned office, my walnut desk, the soft April sun shimmering through the draperies at the windows. The comparison got me, too. For 28 years, we had struggled together, me making the living, she caring for our abode—cooking and cleaning and mending and washing and ironing. There had also been the children to dress and feed and look after and discipline.

"Tenderness has always been one of my better qualities. I'd much prefer seeing her slave over a hot game of Bolivia or trying to break 85 on the golf course than think of her grubbing the grime out of a kitchen corner."

CHAPTER XV

Father and Sons

Whenever we follow the life span of a person we become more aware of the recurring patterns in all men. Oh, yes, we like to think we are unique, that we will be the exception to these phases we notice in others. So let's forget Shakespeare's seven stages of man about which Jaques spoke so eloquently in *As You Like It*:

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being the seven ages.

Like the rest of us, Cedric could not sidestep any of these stages. So it was that when he was in the "fifth stage" there was the inevitable news from his second son, Ric, that his first grandchild was on the way.

Probably with tongue-in-cheek, Cedric affected a blase and detached attitude toward the expected event. He wrote on June 11, 1958, "I'm very much opposed to the theory that grandparents should ever be baby-sitters. I've already warned my own kids that I'm not going to be a doting, maybe not even a tolerant or understanding grandparent. I'm not looking forward at all to that period when my own kids will bring their kids to our house and I have to spend two or three hours going through that 'no, no,'

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'ah-ah, mustn't touch,' 'naughty boy' routine. [Why is it the father and grandfather are always sure it will be a boy?] I've told them they can bring their kids over maybe once a week for half an hour. Monday from 12:30 to 1 p.m. would seem like a good time.

"Grandparents by the hundreds have said, 'Aw, wait until your first comes along, you'll change that tune. And I've said, 'Oh, yeah.' And there the argument has stopped."

Any news that affected Cedric was of course big news for the Northwest, so it was inevitable that Managing Editor Dave Silverman and the promotion department decided to send Cedric out on a baby-sitting assignment in anticipation of the first grandchild. Cedric agreed to the assignment and asked for letters from mothers who wanted to get away from their children for a few hours. The response, as a harried mother would expect, was great.

One of the most amusing letters he received was from a mother who wrote, "I took care of your two youngest at Camp Aquilla in 1948. They were good boys, but Ric had trouble with his 'r's' and I remember Steve always eating with a sandwich in each hand. I recall a letter Ric wrote to you his first day in camp which read, 'I will be out of the reformery tomorrow.' I was camp nurse there then. Now I'm married and have two little boys of my own. They would love to have a man baby-sit with them for a change."

A photographer and Cedric went on the baby-sitting assignment which resulted in a picture spread showing the grandpa-to-be doing all the things a baby-sitter had to do.

When Cedric III was born Cedric I announced it in

as bored a manner as he could muster: "Ho hum, another boy. That, I remember so well, was my printed comment when our third boy arrived some twenty years ago. And once again it can appear with the arrival last night of grandchild No. 1 or Cedric Adams III. The lad got here just a shade before 10 and created quite a lot of excitement around our house. I mean grandma was excited. I managed to remain pretty cool through it all. Somebody had to keep his head about him. Grandma was all for rushing right down to the hospital. Not Grandpa, though."

We have all had to eat our "famous last words" as Cedric did when he wrote on December 21, 1958, "A terrible thing has happened to me since last August 7. It was early in the morning of that date that I drove over to the hospital, took the elevator up to the maternity section, met my middle son and the two of us were ushered into the crib department. And there I saw for the first time my very first grandson. He was a sturdy, healthy, normal tot and for that, of course, I was thankful. He had big blue eyes and quite an amazing crop of fairly black hair.

"Yes, I know, he isn't the first grandchild in the world. Nevertheless, here was an experience of my life which, I felt, was going to call for a lot of adjustment. During the nine-month period prior to his arrival, I had a lot of conversation with intimate friends in which I was perhaps a bit outspoken. I confess that I was going into grandparenthood without too much relish. I vowed that his visits to my house were going to be brief, that my nerves could no longer tolerate, for any length of time, the hardships of having a small child around. I vowed, too, that I was

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not cut out to be a baby sitter. This kind of positive stand on being a grandfather brought forth virtually no support from any of my friends.

"He was about a month old when he came over to our house for the first time. His mother unwrapped him, stretched him out on the davenport. His eyes wandered around the room. His little hands and his little feet had movement. I didn't want to ignore him completely in front of his mother and father, so I stuck my index finger into his hand. He gave it a gentle squeeze. That was the beginning. A year ago I would have bet my bottom buck that I never would become a 'gootchy, gootchy' grandfather. Last night, on a Saturday night of all nights, I did my second job of baby-sitting, and what did I find myself doing but giving him a gentle jab in the belly or squeezing his mouth into the shape of a figure eight and saying, 'gootchy, gootchy.' There isn't a softer thing to touch in the world than the back of his neck. And there isn't anything more fun than to watch him kick his feet and make his hands squirm from a tickle in the belly.

"Yes, something terrible has happened to me. I'm in love with the little rascal. I'm not ready for complete capitulation. He still may turn out to be a little hellion. How a little kid like that can worm his way into your heart! Next thing I know I'll be carrying around a picture of him in my wallet. That'll be the day—grandfather 100 per cent!"

The so-called "Father and Son Soliloquys" were an Adams hallmark when his three sons were very young. However, one of the early soliloquys which appeared had a different head, "Ma on Father's Day Soliloquy." This

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

column ostensibly was written by Niecy; but the third impish sentence is very much like Cedric.

The lead was a variation of the regular soliloquys, "Well, David, let's see how you like climbing up here on Mommy's lap for a change. Today is Father's Day, so



Cedric III and Cedric I.

we'll give Pa a vacation. That will be one present and then when we get through, if you'll go up in his blue serge pants you'll find 95 cents and we'll go over to the drug store and get him something else.

"Father's Day is quite a bit like Mother's Day except that we don't get quite as sentimental over fathers. A lot of people will tell you that the attachment between a father and a daughter is stronger than it is between a

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father and a son. You're probably a little too young to understand, but your father and nearly every other father is a sentimentalist at heart. That means that fathers really feel things but oftentimes they're afraid to show their feelings.

"Lots of times I've heard Pa come home from work at two or three in the morning and I've heard him go into your room and your brothers' room to see that you're tucked in all right. And I've even watched him give you boys in your sleep a little forehead kiss that had all the sentiment in the world in it. I do think that sometimes we mothers fail to understand that fatherly affection. And I know you kids don't understand it."

It is indeed difficult for children to understand the grownups. David Adams, the eldest son, was the one to whom Cedric addressed most of the soliloquys. When I asked Dave if the soliloquys were a source of embarrassment to him he replied, "Perhaps they were. I can remember when I was at Camp Lincoln some of those 'thought pieces' were posted on the bulletin board. I felt a bit embarrassed, but nothing serious. Of course Father never did take me on his knee and discuss them in depth with me. I probably could have learned a lot from them."

Niecy recalls, however, that after Cedric had cautioned in print his youngest son, Stephen, about throwing rocks at girls, the boys rebelled. Cedric saw the point. Then she added, "The only other soliloquy column I can remember his writing after that was when the boys were older and David was going to college. David didn't mind as long as he was getting out of town!"

Cedric had explained in his *Year Book* published in

1940 that the soliloquys are “nothing more than simple little chats between a father and his son. I’ve tried not to base them on me as a father nor David as a son. They represent you and your youngsters just as much as they represent me and mine. In other words, don’t look upon them as a parading of my family.”

The soliloquys were not maudlin. They expressed Cedric’s genuine feelings. They were the universal reactions that the more sensitive among us genuinely feel despite the jibes of some at “mother, flag, and country.” Thus Cedric could write on Mother’s Day, “Well, David, get up here on Pa’s lap a minute. Today is Sunday, but it’s a sort of special Sunday. When you go to Sunday School this morning, you’ll see some folks with white carnations on and some with red ones. The white ones are for those mothers who have gone. And the red ones are for those mothers who are still living.

“Today, though, all mothers are alive, but some just in memory. You know, there’s something nice about just the word mother. It’s a soft word. You say it in sort of a tender way. A person couldn’t say anything mean along with the word mother.

“I remember hearing my mother say to me, ‘Now remember, mother knows best.’ Well, I used to get kind of tired of that. I figured that she didn’t know best all the time. But, by golly, she did.”

Those who knew Cedric when his mother was still alive have expressed how fond of her he was. Since he had lost his father when he was twelve, she did her utmost to help Cedric get an education and provide a home for him. Niecy adds that she was a remarkable woman.

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Climb Upon My Knee, David. (Father and son soliloquy)

Perhaps in a way even Cedric did not realize, his thoughts kept going back to his Magnolia days when he had both his parents. Thus, there are reverberations of his own boyhood in what I feel is his best "Father and Son Soliloquy." It is entitled, "On Going into the First Grade."

"Well, David, day after tomorrow you start school again. And this year you'll be in the first grade. That's a pretty big step for a boy to take. Kindergarten has been sort of play for you. I mean you've been going just half days and you've been pasting and making little doo-dads. But now you're going to learn to read and to write and add things up. So next Tuesday is a pretty big day for you. It's just the beginning of a long string of 'firsts' that you'll have.

"Pa remembers a lot of his firsts. I remember the first time I ever smoked. It was a piece of horse whip. And then I graduated to corn silk. You're a normal boy, so I suppose you'll go through the same things, only a piece of horse whip is going to be hard to find these days. But if I were you I'd wait a long time till I tried that first smoke.

"I remember the first girl I ever had. Unfortunately, it wasn't your mother. She wasn't around then. But judging from some of her girlhood pictures that I've seen, I guess it wouldn't have made much difference if she had been—I still wouldn't have picked her out of the field then. But I'll tell you something about that first girl you get. Some day she's going to jilt you. And the minute she does you'll think that the whole world is crumbling, that life just isn't worth it any more. But you remember, if you can,

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that Pa said a long time ago that recovery from that first jilt is rapid.

“After a while you’re going to have another first that you’ll think is mighty important. Some day you’ll look in the mirror and you’ll see that fuzz on your face and you’ll think that maybe it should come off. And you’ll probably sneak into the bathroom and use Pa’s razor. Well, let me tell you right now that the longer you can tolerate that fuzz the better off you’ll be. Shaving every day is quite a chore. Your mother will probably tell you that it isn’t half as much work as putting on cold cream every night. But your mother doesn’t know everything like she’d have us think she does.

“The first dollar you ever earn will be an important thing, too. Of course, you’ve already earned some dimes and quarters for errands and things. But some day, maybe, you’ll have a paper route or work in a grocery store and you’ll come home with the first money that you can call your salary. And from then on that’ll be the thing that you’ll always spend a little more of than you get. A little later on there’ll be your first salary raise. Those salary raises are funny things. Nine times out of ten you and the boss will always disagree as to their frequency and amounts. And you’ll be nervous when you go in to ask for them. Pa wishes he could give you the technique for asking for a pay increase, but I guess 37 years isn’t long enough to learn just how to do it. If I were sure that hard work might get me one I might give that a try. But you can’t always depend on that.

“Then there’ll be your first long pants, where you’ll feel all legs, and your first dance and the first time you flunk

in something, and, oh, there'll be all kinds of firsts after next Tuesday. So when you slide into your little first grade seat with your face shining and your neck and ears clean (I hope) and your hair combed and your eyes bright, Pa won't be there in person to help start you off, but he'll certainly be there beside you in spirit. And when that first bell rings you can sort of plan on a little supplication from Pa—a little hope and a little prayer that everything comes out all right from then on."

Of course, Dave was not aware at this time of what Pa was writing, but he surely was when his parent's twenty-third wedding anniversary column appeared on July 18, 1954. Dave probably still remembers some kidding and name-calling when this account was printed: "I was never around when any of our kids were born. Somehow, Ma always managed to head for the hospital about a half hour before the broadcast and I always had to leave before the population increased. She always had everything taken care of by the time I got back. I remember our first born, David. Ma was sure it was going to be a girl, so his name was Susan until he arrived. Five or six years later, anytime we wanted to get him miffed at us we would call him Susan!"

When the three Adams boys and I were tape recording their reminiscences of their parents I asked them at about what age they were when they realized their father was different from other fathers—that he was a celebrity. Steve thought, "You realize that—at least I did—when you're in school. People used to ask, 'Who's your dad?' When I'd say 'Cedric Adams' at that moment you were a little different because everybody knew of him; whereas no one

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else knew what anyone else's father was doing. I'd say we realized this in the first or second grade."

Dave, however, mused, "I guess with me it had been a lot longer. Because I was almost into high school before the impact of him really struck me. I always knew he was something different, but I didn't realize who he really was in that sense."

I asked the boys if there was ever any resentment or repercussions from their schoolmates for their having a famous father. Dave said, "They always gave my brothers and me a hard time. I can remember Ric and I had a fight over it. We defended each other."

Steve added, "I think the other thing is that with a father who's famous there's a tendency for everybody to identify you with him as the son of Cedric, rather than as Dave, Ric, and Steve. And to this day it's still unbelievable. People don't think of us as individuals, but rather as sons of Cedric."

Ric thought "the advantages and disadvantages offset one another. Sometimes it's an advantage, sometimes a disadvantage." In Ric's case, the identification is even stronger since he is Cedric Adams II. His wife, Carol, explained to me that every time she opens a charge account or writes a check a conversation begins about Ric's father.

All three sons commented on their father's generosity. He had bought Dave a new yellow Oldsmobile convertible when Dave was seventeen, and a horse for the younger Ric. Dave still speaks about the races Ric and he would have down the middle of the block—the horse against the Olds!

It was stunts like those, however, that would get Cedric's hackles up. Generally, the boys remember their father as

gentle because, as Steve emphasized, "He had too much good humor in his blood and too much fun to really get tough. But when he did get tough he'd take you into the den and you would get the message!"

Steve told about the time a Blake schoolmate and he saw an echo chamber on a car. Although they could afford one themselves, they decided they wanted that one.

"So," Steve confessed, "we popped it into our car and scooted. The next day I got a call while at school from Dad. He ordered me to return home right away. The idea of one of us stealing anything was intolerable to him. He hit the roof. He started out softly; but before he had finished he was shouting and hammering the table. You never forgot one of those tongue-lashings."

Ric related two other incidents. One involved Dave and the other himself. "Dad," Ric said, "would do anything for us. He was generous and understanding. But when he did lay down a rule he firmly meant it. If we broke it, we were dealt with accordingly. One time after Dad had successfully campaigned against the use of fireworks in Minnesota and Dave was caught with some, he really bawled him out.

"And I can remember one Halloween night when I had been throwing squashes against a neighbor's garage. I was also smoking a cigarette. The neighbor had telephoned Dad before I returned home real late. Dad was lying in bed and he heard me.

"'Come in here a minute, son,' Dad said.

"I went in and he asked, 'Did you have a good time?'

"'Yeh, I had a real good time.'

"He pretended he was puzzled as he explained, 'Gee, I

got a funny call from some lady that apparently had been drinking.’

“‘Oh, really?’

“‘Yes. She claimed you were throwing things against their garage and that you were smoking a cigarette.’

“‘Oh?’

“‘You weren’t doing that, were you, son?’

“‘I admitted, ‘Yes, I was.’

“‘I’d never seen Dad—his whole two hundred forty pounds—spring out of bed so fast before. He gave me a lecture I’ll never forget. And believe me, he could do more with a lecture than most people can do with a good strapping!’”

Dave added, “‘I can vividly remember a brown hair-brush that he used to crack over all our behinds periodically. So he didn’t spare the rod, either!’”

I reminded the sons that their grandfather, too, had had “conferences” with Cedric in the woodshed back of their house in Magnolia. And in those days it was literally a woodshed.

I asked Niecy what had been their ambitions for their three sons. She said Cedric “hoped that none of his children would go into his same—he called it ‘racket’—that he was in because it was a very tough racket. The hours were long and laborious; but he added that none of them would ever have the opportunity to take advantage of the three mediums that he had because the era that he went into radio, it was in its infancy. He had already established himself as a columnist. And then eventually he went on television. The three of them were complementary. As a result he had a break that most people

wouldn't have starting as a broadcaster or a columnist or a television personality today."

But Steve did try working in radio a couple of summers. He had been on the Yale radio station staff where he delivered newscasts and had a recorded program. KSTP in Saint Paul hired him after an audition as a summer vacation replacement in 1957. When Cedric heard about Steve's summer job he muttered, "Heck-of-a-business-to-get-into!"

But when Cedric got a chance to put in a paragraph "In This Corner" on Steve's broadcasting assignment, he chortled, "My youngest son, Steve, did a summer stint on KSTP Radio and TV. On his last 'Treasure Chest' appearance, Jim Hutton, the MC, paused at the end of the program and began a little farewell speech for the boy which began, 'We've enjoyed having you with us this summer. On behalf of the cast, I'd like to present you with a parting gift as a token of our appreciation.' Steve swelled with pride and moved forward as Hutton went on, 'We've all chipped in to purchase this brand new Remington Rand portable—eraser.' The kid did one of television's greatest double-takes."

Cedric could kid, scold, and reward his sons. Years before the KSTP episode, Steve, who still admits that writing does not appeal to him, had a problem a few days before the Blake School football banquet. He was captain of the team and was expected to give a speech.

So he asked, "Hey, Dad, I've really got a hang-up here. Would you mind helping me out?"

"No, son."

Steve remembered that his father "kind of dictated this

speech. And it was the best cotton-pickin' speech anybody had ever made at ANY football banquet. I got a write-up in the Blake newspaper and magazine about this great speech, and here it wasn't mine at all! I guess I've never admitted it to anybody before!"

Steve's account triggered Ric's memory and he asked, "Do you want to hear a funny story along that same vein? Except the completely opposite. My wife was taking an English course at the University of Minnesota. The assignment was to tell what was wrong with the *Minneapolis Star*. So she went to Dad.

"'Dad,' she wondered, 'could you give me a little help on this theme? I'm supposed to tear the *Star* apart and tell its good and bad points.'

"He sat right down and dictated a five-page theme criticizing the *Star*. Both she and I thought it was a beautiful job. She turned it in and got a D-minus on it. She was strongly tempted to go up to the instructor and tell him who had really written the theme!"

Incidentally, I asked Ric if it were true, as once reported, that when his dad met the well-to-do father of the girl Ric was currently dating Cedric had greeted the father, "I do hope our children will be married! It would mean the union of one great fortune!"

Ric chuckled and tossed it off saying, "Oh, Dad said that to the father of every girl any of us ever went with."

The sons all wished they had been able to be with their father more. Ric explained, "I think we all appreciated the time we could spend with him because of his schedule. I remember what a thrill it was when we were staying out at Chuck Saunder's farm when our house was being built.

We saw more of Dad then. I vividly remember one day after a big snow storm how he drove me to school. I always enjoyed these chances to talk to him because they were the times I got to know him. I guess I best can express it that I cherish the time that I could spend with him.”

“If I were to say what would make the ideal father,” Steve said, “I don’t think Dad was an ideal father in the sense that he just had very little time. Maybe because he liked his work so much that the only time he had left for him was for Mother.”

“That was what I was trying to explain before,” added Ric. “The little time we did get to spend with him I always cherished it. Another thing about that was that unfortunately—a thing I always regretted—was that Dad was never a sportsman. We’d go to football games with him occasionally. In fact, someone just asked me the other day, ‘Your Dad was a great hunter, wasn’t he?’ I replied, ‘Gee, no, that’s the last thing I’d ever expect of him.’ ‘Then he was a fisherman, wasn’t he?’ ‘No, he never fished.’

“So he never did take us out hunting. On my mother’s side my grandfather and uncles were all great hunters and fishermen. So we used to get some of it that way. We never really did spend a weekend or a day just out by ourselves with Dad. At least, I never did. So it was always a great thrill for me to go to a ballgame with him. But we spent many an enjoyable afternoon with Dad on the boat when all of us gathered together as a family.”

Dave felt that this was a conscious decision of their father. “I can remember him arguing quite violently with this principle of the amount of time you ought to spend

with your family,” Dave said. “That you ought to spend time physically with your boys—hunting or fishing with them or whatnot. And he compared us with another family we knew well. He pointed out that in this family the father spent a good deal of time with his children. Dad insisted, ‘I’ll take my boys in terms of what I’m trying to make them up against this so-called ideal father any time. I think in time we’d be ahead.’”

“He did love his work,” Dave concluded. “He felt that he always provided us with plenty of material goods and he was most generous.”

Then I commented, “Of course the demands on your father were just crushing.”

Steve countered, “That was his choice, you see. It wasn’t that the demands were there, but he made them.”

“He made them demanding,” Dave added.

Throughout these pages Cedric’s sentimentality is apparent. He seemed especially moved at weddings, and when that wedding was Steve’s, his youngest son, he admitted, “I’m still an old softie. My youngest son came up to me just before his marriage Friday night and said, ‘Father, I’m depending on you for moral support, so don’t sit there and cry, will you?’ I assured him I wouldn’t. Fortunately, Mrs. A. and I were seated in the front row, so the rest of the congregation couldn’t witness the scene. But the minute the organ started ‘Here Comes the Bride,’ out gushed the tears. I wonder what makes that. I was a very happy man that night, but all of a sudden that emotion swells up within you and nothing that I know of can hold it back and there you sit, a big cry baby.

“There is something extremely touching in a wedding

ceremony. Voices nearly always falter a bit with the 'I do,' and then there's always that pause where the minister asks if there might be anyone who objects to the union. What a shock it would be if someone from the back of the church shouted out, 'Yes, I do.' I wonder if that has ever happened? Holly Ridgway, the twelve-year-old maid of honor, got her terminology mixed after the ceremony and chortled, 'I hope they list me among the survivors.'"

"Like father, like son" is an adage gray with age; but it applied when Ric married while his parents were vacationing in Jamaica. Cedric had cautioned his sons not to marry before they had completed their educations because of the added problems and responsibilities.

Ric had dated a number of girls before he met THE girl while he was at the University of Minnesota. They decided to elope. One of Ric's friends agreed to go with them to Sisseton, South Dakota, just across the Minnesota line. After some complications getting their license the couple was married; but it was decided not to tell the parents for the time being.

When the Adams returned from Jamaica Ric did not know how to break the news. He was very agitated when he said to his father, "Dad, I've got something to tell you."

"I'll never forget," Ric said. "He put his arm over my shoulders and asked, 'What is it, Son?'"

"That just sort of melted me and I felt, 'Oh, why did I ever do this thing? I know it's going to make my folks unhappy.' So I said, 'I'd better show you.'"

"I went into my bedroom and got the license. He thought at first it was a ticket for drunk driving, which in his eyes would have been even more serious.

Father and Sons

"Dad looked at the license, and Mother, who had overheard us, came in and asked, 'What is it?'

"'Oh, my God, he's married!'

Mother started to cry, then asked, 'Where did you get married?'

"Dad looked at the license again and half-laughed, 'Sisseton! Well, I guess we can't say anything about that!'

"I didn't know until that moment," Ric concluded, "that they had eloped to the same town about twenty-five years before!"

The Adams boys are now all businessmen. Dave, the eldest, is president of Blaking Company, Incorporated, in Minneapolis. The firm manufactures components for the hydraulic industry. Dave was graduated from Yale in American Studies and the Harvard Business School. He has three daughters.

Ric owns and operates the Hopkins Car Wash and a public sauna called the Bamboo Hut. These businesses are located in the suburbs. He attended Colorado College two years and then the University of Minnesota where he was a speech and theater arts major. He has two children, a son and a daughter.

The youngest son, Steve, has divergent business interests. When I asked what they were he said, "I don't know how to explain my business, Ben, except that it's a conglomerate. I'm president of Consolidated Financial Corporation which operates a savings and loan company in Wichita, Kansas, the Arrow Insurance Company in Minneapolis, an investment banking and brokerage firm called Adams and Associates, as well as a mortgage bank."

Like Dave, Steve is a graduate of Yale in American

Studies. He has a business degree from Stanford University. He has four children from his first marriage, and his second wife has three children, so he joked, "You see, I'm a conglomerate in everything!"

All three sons were in sports at Blake, a preparatory school. A paragraph from one of Cedric's columns sums up his pride when Ric and Steve were playing football at Blake. He admitted, "I know I shouldn't talk about my kids, but I have to bring them in to get at what I want to mention today. I've been getting the kick of a lifetime these Friday afternoons lately. My two youngest are members of the Blake football team. One plays offense, the other defense, so I have at least one in all the time. And what a strain it is on the old man. I leave the field completely worn out. And there are a couple of other things that I have to discuss with parents of players to see what in the world's the matter with me. Every time one of my lads makes a good block or a tackle or carries the ball, I choke up and my darn eyes fill up with tears."

"In This Corner" occasionally mentioned the summer work the sons were doing. They always had some project. Steve insisted that their father would put Ric and him into the toughest jobs because if they worked like slaves it would convince them how hard it was to bring home a buck. Among other jobs, they worked on two farms. Steve claims, "The idea on the farms was to lift bales, but the bales were always heavier than we were."

In September 1959, Cedric Adams and a group of Minneapolis businessmen purchased the Biltmore Inn Restaurant in Edina and re-christened it "Cedric's." Ric Adams was manager and host for the new restaurant

Father and Sons

for the first few months. The *St. Louis Park Dispatch* headlined on November 19: "FOOD TERRIFIC AT CEDRIC'S PRESS PARTY." (The author vouches for this since he attended the gala opening of "Cedric's.")

"I almost dropped dead the other day," Cedric wrote. "The Old Gent called me into his office, a situation I always dread because you never know what he has in mind. He said to me, 'What's this I hear about you going into the restaurant business?' I thought maybe he'd been out to the joint to eat and was about to sue me. I said, 'Well, yes, in a sort of minor way.' And then he went on, 'Well, for 25 years you've been mentioning nightclubs and cafes and restaurants, why don't you tell your readers something about your own, how you got in it, why, and that sort of thing.'

"In the newspaper business it's pretty difficult to leave your kids anything but a broken-down typewriter, some copy paper and the stubs of a few pencils you may have lugged home by mistake. I mean it isn't as though you had a business or a factory for them to take over. Almost any newspaper career is a kind of nebulous thing, you have your personal following, your readers, your fan and fang mail, but those things can rarely be passed on from one generation to the next. My three sons and I were sitting around one evening about a year ago yakking up that general theme.

"I said, 'You know what I think might be a good enterprise? Start a fun center with a bowling alley, a drive-in food place, a car wash, a launderette, a nursery for tots, that sort of thing.' Two of the three boys were left cold by my suggestion. The more I thought of it, the colder

I got, too. But the middle son, Ric, sort of sparked to the idea, especially to the drive-in deal. He began research on the idea immediately. About that time we heard that the Biltmore Inn was for sale. Ric got hold of a group of investors and in we plugged.

“In three brief months I have learned that the food business is the most humbling business in the world. When patrons eat out they expect, they demand, service and quality and taste and quantity and you can certainly not blame them at today’s prices. But I never realized the demands could be so varied. The rolls are too hard. The rolls are too soft. The plates are too cold. The plates are too hot. I had a funny one the other night. A guy called me at home about 10:30 and said, ‘Say, why don’t you put some more meat in your sandwiches over at that joint of yours.’ I told him I’d see what I could do about it. So I called Ric and asked him if we could put a little more meat in the sandwiches. And he said, ‘You’ll have to take that up at the board of directors meeting.’

“We have those meetings every two weeks and they’re kind of fun. I’ve never been on a board of directors before. Ours aren’t quite like the ones they have down town where some member gets up and says, ‘Let’s buy that block of property at Eighth and Hennepin.’ They take a vote and they buy it. I got up at ours the other day and said, ‘I move we put a little more meat in our sandwiches.’ We took a vote, it was passed and now we’re putting more meat in our sandwiches. It’s just that simple.

“Fluctuating volume, cost, recipes, help, service, advertising, take-backs. Those are just a few of the things that had never entered my mind when I sat down to eat in a

Father and Sons

restaurant. It's been surprising to me how quickly I've come to appreciate more fully the hundreds of truly fine eating places we have. Anyway, unoriginal as the title may sound, 'Cedric's Fine Food' will have its grand opening week starting Tuesday. We have an opening week menu that reads, 'Orchids for the ladies. Cigars for the men. Surprises for the kiddies.' I'll explain that last one—no high chairs."

"Cedric's" was not a success because the restaurant could not get a liquor license. However, over the years Cedric had other business interests. Among them was part-ownership of the Hastings Hotel in Minneapolis and the Half Moon Hotel in Jamaica. He also had an interest in a device used in restaurants which signaled for service using a light at each table. The device was incorporated as "Service Centers."

Cedric Adams, Inc., was formed in 1955 to license the name, "Cedric Adams," as a brand name on food and household products. Among them was a special blend of a thin-sliced dark bread. Cedric's picture appeared several places on the cellophane wrapper with his distinctive signature as a trademark.

When I asked his sons if their father had been a good businessman they chorused that he had not. Dave thought "he was a great salesman, but he would buy absolutely anything—and he would lend anybody money at any time. I think he needed the strong, solid accountant he had more than he needed anything else."

Steve agreed adding, "He was sold easily. He was a soft touch."

Dave captured the spirit of his father when he empha-

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sized, "He was never bored. He was curious and very enthusiastic about almost anything. He could be sound asleep one minute and the next minute he could be alive and terribly interested and observant. A phenomenon!"

CHAPTER XVI

Leisure + Money = Hobby

Cedric Adams worked hard and he played hard. His work was an unbelievable schedule in radio and later television, the daily column, and personal appearances.

His play was centered around his hobby. As his popularity and income increased and the demands on his time also increased he combined his hobby and as much of his work as was practicable.

Niecy told me that "his greatest relaxation was his boat and that it was his only hobby. He didn't have time for golf which we had played together in our early years of marriage. He had to give the game up when he had to meet three or four deadlines a day. So he did much of his work on the boat. He had his office out there. This way he could get sunshine and relaxation and still accomplish what he had to do."

Cedric's boating hobby was one which he had in common with many of the people who live in the lake country of the Northwest. Cedric sensed this and wrote about his boats. Over the years he allowed pictures taken of his succeeding boats for promotional purposes. The pictures invariably showed how they were equipped for radio broadcasting and column writing. His listeners and readers could thus vicariously share his experiences on Lake Minnetonka, which is about twenty miles west of Minneapolis,

where he spent as much time in the spring, summer, and fall as the weather would allow.

The May 6, 1956, *Picture Magazine* supplement in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* carried an illustrated feature article which he wrote entitled, "Why I Like Boating."

"Asking me that question is like asking a five-year-old why he likes Santa Claus or asking a stenographer why she likes her coffee break. How my first yen for the waves originated is still a mystery. Rock County, from where I came, is as land-locked as Kansas.

"My desire for a water craft blossomed in my late twenties. My boating started with the purchase of a used 18-foot launch. And when I say 'used,' I mean exactly that. It was an inboard job built about the time McKinley was shot. In spite of the constant motor failures, the backbreaking bailing, the nine-mile-an-hour top speed of the launch, this queen of the ripples was the boat that launched my cruising career.

"There was a brief interval between the launch and my first comfortable boat. The boating yen never faded, but there was the small matter of gathering together that all-important coin of the realm for a down payment. I finally did enough financial scratching to lay on the line a cash deposit with one of those delightful three-years-to-pay contracts and found myself the proud owner of a 26-foot cabin cruiser.

"It was the old-old story of starting out with a bicycle, moving to a motorcycle, then a used model T and then finally getting into something with less than 85,000 miles on it. We moved from the 26-foot to a 31, to a 34 to a 46 and finally the craft we have now.

Leisure + Money = Hobby

“We’re nearing the point of our essay, believe it or not. Boating is generally accepted as a hobby. Hobbies require two things: leisure and money.

“I didn’t have too much of either. I found that if I were going to maintain a boat and get any use of it I’d have to make enough money to take care of the hobby. Then came the paradox: if I worked hard enough to make sufficient money to afford my hobby, I had no leisure. So, I moved the mountain to Mohammed. I set up an office on the boat and for the last 20 years or so I have been conducting at least a portion of my business enterprises on the waters of Minnetonka.

“Through the years, there have been certain refinements. I installed a power line down to the dock and into the boat; I moved broadcasting lines into the boat; I put tape recording facilities aboard; I have a teletype which connects me with my home, the radio station and the newspaper. With almost a flick of a switch, I can send a complete column from the boat to the newspaper office. I can receive an entire broadcast in a matter of two hours. I have telephone connections from the dock to the boat and, by mobile telephone, can call or receive calls from any place on Minnetonka. That’s my first reason for liking this business of boating.

“Most hobbies, then, are for the individual. Boating, however, immediately becomes a family enterprise. Youngsters from 5 on up thrill to taking the wheel of a boat. A wife immediately recognizes the convenience of a small galley. She sees in the confines of a boat something that is easy to take care of. The Old Man nominates the youngsters as first, second or third mates. He makes the

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wife a commodore. From then on his hobby becomes the interest of the entire family.



At the helm of the "Adams-X".

"Some of you, I know, have gone in for cabins or homes at the lake as a hobby outlet. About the time you are

about to settle down in the hammock for a Sunday afternoon nap you hear a noise in the driveway. Four carloads of drop-ins move in on you. Did they bring bathing suits or towels or potato salad or a jar of pickles or a sandwich? No. They expect your larder to be filled. No matter what your meal time schedule is, they'll stay until after you've fed them. Who does the dishes? If ma does them alone, she'll grumble all the way home. If Pa helps her, he'll be nasty through Wednesday at least.

"The boat owner has an escape. He's tied up at a dock, yes, but sooner or later he can anticipate the arrival of his non-invited guests. He unties a couple of lines, starts his motor and in three minutes is completely out of reach. It's a selfish way to look at it, I realize that, but the boat owner has complete control.

"Why do I like boating? Because I don't collect stamps or work in the basement or play golf or own a cabin in the pines."

There are plenty of housewives who would take issue with Cedric's claim that "the upkeep is a breeze" and that housekeeping in a cabin cruiser is as easy as he made it sound. I am quite sure he did not check with Niecy on that statement.

Niecy recalls, "Ever since I had known him Cedric had had some kind of boat, always called the 'Adam-X'. But when he bought his first cruiser, I thought he had lost his mind. I was down in Florida with my father and mother and flew back in a panic because I knew we couldn't afford it. But it was wonderful for Cedric. And it was wonderful for me, too."

Cedric knew that most everyone is interested in where

others take their vacations and what they do on them, so he decided to write about his own decision one summer to have a "sitting vacation" on the boat at Lake Minnetonka. His description of the first day aptly captures the sudden let-down which busy men and women have when they begin their vacations.

"A very discouraged boy I was the first day," Cedric wrote. "I had looked forward to that first Monday when I could wake up whenever I wanted to and face the whole



Niecy surveys the Lake Minnetonka scene from the Adams-X.

day without a thing to do. What a feeling that was going to be.

"What made it so I do not know, but I awoke even ahead of my regular rising time. 'Go back to sleep,' I said to myself, 'you're on vacation, now make the most of it.' But sleep I couldn't. I had longed to be idle. Now idleness was proving to be most unattractive.

"Perhaps I had better set up a new chain of responsibility, lay out a purpose of daily chores. No, that would defeat the purpose. I was going to do nothing but—sit."

One year the Adams lived on the boat the whole summer, but because the boat was too confining the boys stayed at the Lafayette Club, which was also at Lake Minnetonka.

Dr. and Mrs. Paul Larson, who were the Adams' closest friends and long-time neighbors, also owned a boat and docked it in the next slip at the Minnetonka Boat Works. The Larsons and Adams had fun together when their children were young. At night the children would sleep under mosquito netting in the stern of the boats which was a lark for them as it is for all small children.

"It was always a round of laughs whether we were together on a boat, a train, a plane, or in Jamaica," Dr. Larson remembers. "And we men enjoyed it doubly when we could be together because of our busy schedules—Cedric with the papers and the broadcasts and I with my obstetrical practice."

Many Friday nights during the year the Larsons, Adams, and other friends would get together for barbecues. They called these evenings, "gripe nights". These "gripe nights" served as safety valves for getting their tensions and frustrations out of their systems by talking about them.

Cedric expressed his love for Lake Minnetonka and his impatience for the arrival of spring in a clever, sensitive column on April 28, 1957. He used the family poodle, Souffle, as the frame. Cedric's maturity as a columnist is evident here and illustrates how he had progressed since his early columns written for the old *Minneapolis Star* thirty-two years before.

"The poodle and I," Cedric mused, "took our first journey of spring yesterday. Spring to me is the pleasantest

of seasons. I piled her in the car on the seat alongside me and then surreptitiously put on a beret which I had bought in Rome. I thought that if we were going to enjoy spring, we might as well go all out. We headed for Lake Minnetonka. The dog had never seen a body of water any larger than Spit Lake. All the way out she held her nose out the window to let the warm wind blow her ears well back. I had a sense of well-being, too. The car's engine was running smoothly, convertibles passed us with the tops down, here and there we saw a robin on a post with the full crimson of its breast signifying the season. The sun was high and warm as we drove into the west. Though the flowers were lacking, there was a new greenness to the countryside and somehow, all the bonds of toil and care were left behind.

"Saturday's shoppers filled the main street of Wayzata, Minnesota. The drive from the east end of town toward the boat works has always captivated me. On the one side are the quiet waters of the bay, then the railroad tracks, then the broad main street and finally, the long row of shops and stores and business places, none more than two stories high, and each with its own kind of architecture, motley perhaps, but most of them showing the long result of time. Even the sounds of the village moved me. They lacked the annoyance of the sounds of the city. Horns seemed muffled, the tempo slower, the townsfolk cheery. Several of them shouted their greetings as we passed.

"We drove to the far end of the main street, crossed the railroad tracks to the boat works and parked in the shade of a building in a place I have occupied for 25 years. I took off the beret, knowing that the men in the boat

works wouldn't understand it, and then let the dog out. The surroundings were strange to her. I heard the rumble of an approaching freight train in the distance. If Souffle (that's her name) was going to put up with trains all summer, I reasoned, she had better accustom herself to them now. I took her within 20 feet of the crossing and waited. As the noise of the freight increased, so did her tension. She stood stiff-legged as the nose of the engine appeared down the track. The first blast of the whistle produced a startled yip. Her bobbed tail stood out parallel with the ground. As the engine passed us, she shuddered and with each passing box car, there came a bark. As the ground trembled beneath us from the weight of the cars, she occasionally broke her stance to look down for the source of the strange commotion. She seemed relieved with the passing of the caboose and the first ringing of the crossing bell.

"We walked to the boat works and there in the door that leads into the shop were the bright smiles of Walfried and August Swenson, two brothers who have been at the boat works as long ago as I can remember. 'Back again,' Walfried said cheerily, 'won't be long now. The docks are going in pretty fast.' August, the second brother, who has always called me 'Mr. Odoms,' said, 'What is that?' as he pointed to Souffle. 'Something my wife saddled me with,' I replied. 'But treat her nice, or she'll tear you limb from limb.' August reached down and patted the poodle and they seemed to become fast friends immediately. 'She'll be after your lunch leavings this summer,' I told him, 'but don't give her any of those Swedish cookies. And don't give me any, either.'

“‘Did you have a nice winter?’ asked Walfried. He has started his spring conversation with me for 25 years with those same words and every year I come back with, ‘Can’t complain.’ I dread looking forward to the spring when, for some reason or other, Walfried and I won’t be able to exchange these greetings at the boat works door. They have been as much of a harbinger of spring as the first meadowlark.

“The first trip to the water’s edge in spring always gladdens my heart. The cheerlessness of winter’s ice is gone, there is music as the tiny waves wash against the shore rocks, one’s imagination is entertained with all the promises of summer. You look across the water to the nearest shore and you picture the profusion of foliage that you know is on its way, you begin to fill in the unfinished sketches of the shoreline. Oaks and maples and cottonwoods will soon bud and leaf in green array. There’ll be laughter of bathers, the whirl of motor boats, the bright hues of summer garments on patios and lawns.

“We walked among the canvas-covered boats on shore, still stored on their cradles. I watched as the dog sniffed. Now and then she’d stop to stare upward at the towering hull of a cruiser. Here and there she’d pick the scent of a rodent—maybe a squirrel, a muskrat or a skunk. We met and talked with boating neighbors whose anxiety was as great as mine. ‘Think we’ll be in in a week?’ we asked each other, as we enviously watched runabouts skimming around the bay. Souffle nimbly waded knee-high into the water. She arched her neck, completely baffled as she watched minnows darting just beneath the surface. She,

too, seemed to sense that winter's snows and chills were over and that, bud by bud, spring was beginning."

This column, as much as any, reveals Cedric's ability to express his vivid observations lightly, yet effectively, so that we are at his side as he sees and smells an early day in spring. Cedric's ability to fashion trivia into a moving experience came about early in his column career from a suggestion from his city editor, "Why don't you get personal in the column occasionally?" So from that day Cedric wrote about—in his words—"things I have and haven't done." The foregoing column on Souffle and spring demonstrates how facile he had become.

The Adams entertained often on their cruiser. This was especially true at the Minneapolis festival, the Aquatennial, an annual event in July. Among the guests were Arthur Godfrey, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dr. Frank Stanton, Jimmy Stewart, as well as notables of the Northwest and his colleagues on the papers and broadcasting stations.

In mock anger Cedric once struck out against one of the guests with his usual tongue-in-cheek lead:

"Into each life a little rain must fall: And it came down by the bucket on me last night. From now on I'm going to hate Jayne Mansfield. From now on I'm going to hate Will Jones [the *Minneapolis Tribune* columnist]. In all probability I can get over that last one, but the other two—never. In fact, I'm so bitter about the whole thing that I'm starting a one-man campaign of juggling those Mansfield figures—41-20-35. Anybody asks me what they mean I'm going to tell them the 41 is for her age, the 20 for her chest and the 35 for the number of pounds she's overweight.

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

“Let me give you the background of the whole thing and I’m sure you’ll say that I’m completely justified. Each year when the Star and Tribune coronation show rolls around



All in a day's work!

a certain number of so-called celebrities or stars are invited to appear. We've had such names as Mamie Van Doren,

Natalie Wood, Shirley North, and a host of others. The old gent comes to me and he says, 'Adams, do you suppose we can use your boat for a little ride and entertainment on the night before the show?' And I always say, 'Sure, that's fine with me.' I say that because I know you'll pick up the check. And that's history-making enough.

"Last night everything was set. We had the guest list all figured out and the box lunches had been ordered. It was a cool evening and Minnetonka had just enough of a ripple on her to make boating a pleasure. Quite a crowd had gathered at the dock to catch a glimpse of our visiting star. Right on time she arrived. On her one arm was a press agent, on the other her companion, Mickey Hargitay, and on her back a \$15,000 white mink coat. Beneath that gorgeous white evening gown which revealed—well, a beautiful California tan. First thing she did was grab our dog and give it a big kiss. Personally I thought her choice was dumb, but I could have overlooked that.

"About the time we were ready to shove off I spotted Will Jones. I knew Will would want to chat with her probably for copy for a Sunday column. So I said to him, I said, 'Will, why don't you and Miss Mansfield and maybe her Mr. Universe go up on the sun deck? That'll take you away from the rest of the crowd and you can ask her questions quietly and without interruption.' Jones said, 'That'll be fine.' Well, that was the understatement of the evening. Immediately he grabbed her and Hargitay and up they went. Not for just a moment, not for just an hour, but for the whole darned evening. And there I was stuck on the driver's seat watching buoys, hoping the generator would stay on and talking about how many miles to the

gallon I got on the boat with Ted Mann of the Academy Theater. And what about Miss Mansfield and Mr. W. Jones? By this time they were lolling on the sun deck.

“It must have been interesting, too, because Jones was taking notes, something he rarely does. If I had been Mrs. Jones I would have been most perturbed. Had I been Jones himself I would have been worried because that Mr. Universe looks like a possessive guy and with muscles yet. But there they stayed—the three of them, chatting and laughing and carrying on like teen-agers. You’d think that Jones would be generous enough to say after an hour or two of their silly giggling, ‘Thank you very much, Miss Mansfield, I’ve enjoyed meeting you, why don’t you go down and chat a little with Adams? He does a column also and I’m sure he’ll have some questions to ask.’

“I wound up with Miss Mansfield’s hair dresser. And the way I feel right now, I might add—she really needs one. I was so hurt and so angry that I didn’t even get a pencil and a piece of paper to take notes. The hair dresser’s been doing the Mansfield tresses for a year. Mansfield’s hair is bleached which isn’t exactly what you’d call red-hot news.

“I got even with Mansfield, nevertheless. We had a cameraman aboard and he was taking both movies and stills of the blonde. And every time he pointed his camera at Mansfield she’d call for her hair dresser and I’d shout back at her, ‘I’m sorry, but she’s busy right now.’ Then he’d shoot the picture and Mansfield’s hair would be hanging down like strings all over her face. I hope she looks like the witch of Rosehall in the pictures. And don’t ever mention those 41-20-35 figures to me again.”

In the spring of 1954 the usually mild Cedric was steamed up by what he thought was a niggardly and short-sighted economy. He was pleading for natural resources before many had realized how they were being despoiled. He fumed, "Today I'm going to soapbox, plead a cause."

It seems that the county commissioners wanted to dismantle the pipes that kept up the water level of Lake Minnetonka to save seven hundred dollars a year on what Cedric estimated was a three hundred thousand dollar investment a few years before. Cedric did not pull any punches against this proposal and pointed out what it would do to his beloved lake.

Opportunities continued to blossom for Cedric so that even his boating hobby began to pay hard cash dividends on his 'Boating with Cedric' program over WCCO-Radio. He was a natural choice for skipper of the new boat show.

Running a close second to boats was Cedric's love for cars. He had owned many makes and models over the years until he had graduated into the Cadillac and Lincoln class; but he always yearned for a Rolls Royce. He hesitated getting one for many years because he was afraid people would think he was a snob. Finally he broke down and bought a 1939 Rolls, which he had shipped over from England, and he owned a 1958 model when he died.

Dave Moore, the WCCO-TV, Minneapolis, newscaster, remembers one time when Cedric offered another newsman and him a ride in his Rolls Royce. Dave recalls that "Cedric had just come from a poker game and was mildly disconsolate. When asked who the big winner was he said, 'Chuck Saunders. He must have won \$3.50!' Cedric himself had lost about \$1.50. And this from a man whose

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

earnings were in six figures and who drove a Rolls Royce!”

Cedric used reverse psychology when he wrote a column about his first Rolls Royce. In fact, he never did mention the name of the second-hand car he had bought. So he made it sound in his November 11, 1956, column as though he now had a car which defied fashion and age because he was still clinging to the small-town boy image.



Cedric gives Mr. and Mrs. Everett Thies a ride in his Rolls Royce.

Cedric burlesqued the transaction to bolster his rationalization.

“Car dealers and Detroit will probably hate me,” he tentatively probed, “but I’d like to give you the story of my new car. I say new, it’s new to me, but actually it’s a 1939 model and the whole scheme is in the experimental

stage. Twelve months hence I may be the sorriest automobile owner in this grand country of ours, but at least I will have given it a whirl. Every year about this time I've gone around like everybody else, starry-eyed, wondering which new model to buy. I asked the same question you may be asking yourself this very week-end. Shall I hang on to the old clunk for another year? Latching on to a new car every year is good for the nation's economy and it's particularly good for the state of Michigan and the holders of automobile stock, but just how good is it for Old Man Adams? I've gone through all the arguments offered by the car salesmen and a persuasive lot they are, as well you know. I've been faced with the problem of whether it's better to trade in your car every year, every second year, every third year or whether it's better to hang on to the crate until the junk dealer can claim it for purposes of his own.

"A victim I've been of the new razzle-dazzle refinements—sloping windshield, power choke, casket upholstery, disappearing running boards, six headlights, 987 horsepower, jet injection, gliding spark plugs, a built-in barbecue pit, a mother-in-law chamber—anything you might mention. You drive your 1956 model in and the salesman greets you at the door sneering at your pile of junk. Eight months ago this same guy was telling you what a glorious vehicle you had just bought. Now it's a bucket of bolts. He walks around it kicking each tire as he makes the journey. Small pieces of accumulated mud drop from the fender. You cringe. He says, 'Must have given this heap a lot of rough usage.' 'Never been west of Willmar, Minnesota, in it.' you tell him hoping he'll be impressed.

“He finds nicks on the doors you never saw before. ‘Parking lots are mighty hard on cars these days,’ he continues. ‘Whole car’ll have to be gone over. Start her up.’ You turn the starter button. Old Faithful sputters three or four times and finally starts. ‘Need a new ring job. Points are bad. Ever run her low on oil?’ You begin to think that it may be even a junk dealer wouldn’t take it.

“Then comes the haggling. ‘These last-year models are hard to peddle,’ the salesman tells you, ‘We’ve got 15 of ’em, all brand new, out in the back room right now. We want to be good to you, but we got to make a living, too, you know, and this old stuff is hard to get rid of. But come on in and let me show some of the improvements they’ve made this year.’ That’s your downfall. You might just as well get out your ballpoint and sign right then and there. You see those new lines, you sniff that unmistakable odor there is in a new car, he tells you about the added horsepower, you get in and grab that steering wheel and you see yourself zooming past a guy in a 1956 at a stop light, the call of the open road hums in your ears. You’re a gone goose!

“It was last May when I got hold of myself, ‘Adams, it’s about time you had a little chat with yourself about this car-buying business. Your car depreciation has been running pretty high lately. Isn’t there some way you can cut down?’

“I carried on this conversation with myself a bit further. I said, ‘Adams, you’re made of sterner stuff. Be more logical. You don’t have to give in to the whims of these Detroit lads year after year. Get hold of an old car, have it redone inside and out and then drive it until either you

or it fall apart. A small fraction of that depreciation money you put in your car now will permit you to keep it in complete repair year after year and you won't be bothered with that annual hassle you go through in the automobile marts.'

"That's exactly what I've done. I picked up a 1939 model with 83,000 miles on it, a coupe, plenty of chrome, self-starter, windshield wipers, horn, four-wheel brakes, choke, a jack. What else do you need?

"I took my little gem over to Joe Schneider's garage in St. Paul and I says, 'Joe, fix her up.' Joe looked at me a little skeptically and he says, 'Do you mean it?' And I says, 'Yes, make her like new. She's got a lot of good stuff in her, Joe. They don't make cars like that these days. I want her to last me a lifetime.' Joe sighed a little and said he would. That was three months ago. Joe's still working on it. Those 1939 parts are hard to get, it seems. But any day now I'm going to wheel her out and drive with pride for the rest of my days."

Niecy and Cedric discovered their ideal vacation spot in Jamaica. Eventually they joined a group which financed and built the Half Moon Hotel on Montego Bay. This gave them a complete change from the Northwest with its bitter winter cold.

The people, too, were different. Most of them were rich, some titled, and many distinguished. Among them were the then Senator John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, Senator and Mrs. Charles Percy, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Firestone, Joan Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Astor, Lady Montagu, and others.

Jamaica was complete relaxation for the Adams. They

could read, sunbathe, play cards, dance, and swim. Cedric—being Cedric—was irrepressible as always. He “fed” on the people at the resort hotels where they stayed, just as he did at home.

The March 19, 1950, column reveals how he hoped to justify his luxurious vacations in the eyes of his readers back home. After all, he wanted them to think that he was the boy from Magnolia who had made good. He was that—and more—and he had a right to be proud of it. But there always seemed to be a little gnawing doubt in his mind that all this could have happened to him.

This column is far-fetched, but it touched a chord which many dreamed of sounding: that of hob-nobbing with the rich and famous.

“I am not the kind of guy,” he wrote, “who gets his name in the society columns, so unless I told you you’d probably never know that the Vincent Astors and I vacation together. As a matter of fact, the Astors don’t know it, but I figure what they don’t know won’t hurt them.

“Mrs. Astor is a willowy blonde, sharp-featured but pretty, just into her 40’s, I’d guess. Vincent is tall, muscular, bushy-haired. Speaks in guttural grunts. With them was a young girl in her late 20’s. A bus boy told me she was Lady Montagu. Neither the bus boy nor your correspondent went beyond that in any investigation.

“Many a morning I spent with them on the beach. It was a public beach, so they had no alternative. Well, that isn’t exactly so. They could have stayed home. I picked up some rather fascinating beach conversation from them one morning. Mr. and Mrs. Astor arrived on the sand

about 10. Lady Montagu got there 13 minutes later. You can see how accurately I was following their movements. Mrs. Astor spoke first. Her voice is well-modulated. She has an eastern accent that borders on the English. 'Good morning, my brave beauty,' she said to Lady Montagu. Vincent nodded. If he said anything it was too guttural for me to catch. 'I feel positively virtuous this morning,' responded Lady Montagu, 'I just washed out a lot of my things.' Gives you an idea how the other half lives, doesn't it? A half hour later Vincent asked, 'What's a nine-letter word meaning goat?' He was working a crossword puzzle. 'A capricorn,' responded Mrs. Astor. I was sorry he hadn't struck her. It would have given me a perfect chance to get into their conversation.

"This was not the end of our communion, however. The place where we were staying had dances three nights a week following the evening meal. The Astors and Lady Montagu attended the dances. I sat there and watched Mr. Astor whirl his wife about the dance floor. Suddenly a strange idea hit me. I compared the Astors to myself. There were aspects of that comparison that were none too pleasant. Then I thought of my own background, how I was raised in Magnolia, educated in a two-room schoolhouse, had worn pants as a boy that had been made over from trousers that once belonged to an uncle of mine. My own deficiencies began crowding into my mind. I realized that I excelled in nothing, that I was a bad golfer, that I couldn't ride horseback, that I was awkward on the dance floor, that I couldn't discuss world politics, that my reading had been neglected. But here, all of a sudden, came a real opportunity to distinguish myself—for the rest of my life:

I could bump into Mrs. Astor on the ballroom floor. How many others could make that claim?

"A plan of attack formulated quickly in my mind. I would wait until they got out on to the crowded floor. I would say to my wife, 'Shall we dance?' As soon as she recovered from the shock, I would glide out into position and then begin my maneuvers. The whole thing must be subtle, I told myself. Anything obvious would ruin my purpose. This was to be no ordinary bumping. Here was opportunity at its best. Nothing must occur to spoil it. There has been bumping in my life before, but most of it has been without meaning.

"First of all, after I got out onto the dance floor I had to locate my quest. And it was difficult. Heads were bobbing. Bodies were swaying with calypso music. Finally at the edge of the floor I spotted them. Now to get over into position. Just as I was within three feet of them the music stopped. The pause was brief and my maneuvering was resumed. Three times, as I was ready for the kill, Vincent took a sudden turn and he and I wound up with a billiard-type bump. My constant jockeying for position was beginning to annoy the other dancers. I could hear mutterings as I did reverse turns and backward steps against the usual flow of the dancers. Women glared at me as my heel dug into their insteps. What I wouldn't have given for a rear-view mirror. My wife sensed a new awkwardness. She knew nothing of my purpose.

"Then came one of the queerest quirks of my life. Just as I was about to take a quick look backwards to judge my distance from the goal, I received the firmest, the most resounding jolt of my career—a bump to end all bumps. I

looked around. Mrs. Vincent Astor had delivered it. Now every time I sit down I experience a new joy. I am probably the only person in these parts—the only one from Magnolia, at least—who can apologize to a bumper with this remark, ‘Oh, that’s all right. You have just bumped the rump that was bumped by Mrs. Astor!’ ”

As if the Astor “episode” was not fanciful enough, he dreamed up another column nine years later which for anyone who knew Cedric was just as farcical. Here was a man whose mechanical skill was limited to putting a cigarette into a holder and changing a typewriter ribbon admitting, “Your rotund reporter has just returned from his annual vacation—rotunder than ever. But don’t back away now on the assumption that I’m going to ‘tell you all about my vacation.’ I’m not. I know there’s nothing duller than that kind of recitation. There is one phase of it, however, that I want to record. It could save you from the fate I suffered. About six years ago Mrs. A. and I invested in a seaside cottage in connection with Half Moon Hotel down on Montego Bay in Jamaica hoping that maybe during the twilight of our lives we might spend three or four months of Minnesota’s worst and Jamaica’s best there. Each year we’ve been taking down some of the things we need, all of which has been restricted by the luggage weight limitation of overseas travel. This year we flew from here to Corpus Christi, Texas, and then crossed the Gulf and thence into the Caribbean to Jamaica on a freighter.

“Why wouldn’t it be a good idea, I reasoned, to purchase some of the items we needed for the cottage in Corpus Christi, load them on to the freighter and take them right

along with us? Our principal needs were porch or patio furniture in chrome and plastic. Materials weren't readily available in Jamaica. I spent the first Saturday afternoon of my vacation in a furniture store in Corpus Christi buying with almost complete abandon such things as a glider, chaise lounge, sun chairs, a coffee table, end tables, special lamps for outdoor or porch use. I was doing this purchasing from floor samples and assumed it would be but a simple matter to have these samples hauled directly to the ship and deposited upon arrival at the wharf from where they could be trucked to the cottage. Brother, how that plan backfired.

"The furniture arrived all right, but not in the form of the floor samples I had selected. Instead, every item had been taken from the store's warehouse stock and was shipped in the original carton in which it had been packed at the factory. Have you ever seen a glider in a carton? Nuts, screws, and bolts till h... won't have it. I never could have believed there were so many working parts in a chaise lounge. I don't know the type of person our furniture department stores hire to open these cartons, but I'm sure they must be burglars. You can't get into those cartons without dynamite. Each one was tied in Christmas package style with a steel band surrounding it, the steel band taking the place of string. You may well imagine my frustration when trying to get at my newly acquired items when the only available tool was an ice pick. The truck had deposited these horrors on my front lawn and there I was surrounded by what seemed a mountain of cartons—me and my lone ice pick.

"With each item came a full set of instructions on how

to fit and bolt each piece into its proper place. I felt like a kid with his first Erector set on Christmas morning. And the glider, when I got it together, resembled very closely the first creation I achieved with my Erector set. Nobody recognized it as a glider. I had to tell guests that it was perfectly all right to sit on it, otherwise they arched a brow and backed away in complete awe. I never did get it to glide, but that didn't seem too much of a loss. The coffee table turned out to be a unique piece. Even that was broken down into parts to be assembled. You think that's a simple operation? Oh, no. The legs had to be screwed in and I couldn't get them into their proper places. As a result, the table has a permanent list. But that has an advantage—nothing stays on top of the table with the gratifying result that it never has that messy look that most coffee tables have.

“The first six days of my vacation ran something like this: Up at seven, breakfast, and then out onto the lawn with my ice pick, pliers and screw driver exercising a genius I never knew existed. Neighbors walked by on their way to the beach and they'd shout, ‘Join us in a dip?’ ‘No,’ I'd respond, ‘I have a little project I have to finish.’ Another would call with, ‘Can you join us for cocktails tonight?’ ‘I'm sorry,’ was the regular routine, ‘but I have the seat of a beach chair that I have to assemble.’ Invariably they'd mumble, ‘My, he's had his already.’ There were other undercurrents, too. Example: ‘What do you suppose has happened to Adams this year? He sits out there on his front lawn with his head under a piece of furniture and his rump up in the air and does nothing but talk to himself. He never used to be like that.’

All I can say is that we may not have the most comfortable patio in the world, but it's one of the most interesting."

Dave Adams and his wife, Marilyn, visited his parents at the Half Moon Hotel at Christmas in 1960. Before Dave left Minneapolis his father had asked him to bring down some Zippo cigarette lighters to give to the help. When Dave asked how many, Cedric matter-of-factly said, "Oh, around two hundred and fifty."

Dave incredulously repeated, "Two hundred and fifty!"

"Yeh. Hide them all over your suitcase because I don't know whether you can get them through customs."

"So I had two hundred and fifty Zippo lighters," Dave related. "I got into customs and the guy asked if I had anything to declare. I said 'no.' I had these things tucked all around in the luggage. The customs inspector would reach in and take out a lighter and put it back. Then reach in again and come out with another lighter and still another lighter! He asked me what I was going to do with these things and how many I had. I replied, 'Oh, not very many.' So he let me through and we delivered them to Dad.

"On Christmas Eve," Dave continued, "we were seated at our regular table in the dining room. Dad had his pockets bulging with lighters. Absolutely heavy with them. As each of our regular waiters would come up, Dad would say, 'Here's a little present for you. Merry Christmas!'

"Ours was the most popular table in the room from then on. Every twenty seconds another waiter and then another would come to the table and say, 'I'm your waiter, Mr. Adams.' So he'd give them lighters. And whenever we'd

look out the dining room windows we'd see lighters going on like fireflies among the bushes outside.

"The next night Dad got out a cigarette and waited expectantly for someone to light it. Nobody came. Not one. So he finally blurted, 'What the hell? I can't even get a light around here! What did you guys do with all your cigarette lighters?'"

"'Oh, we gave them to our girl friends, Mr. Adams.'" And there wasn't a lighter among them."

Steve had another anecdote about how he had surprised his parents when they were in Jamaica. "I had saved up some money while at Yale and during spring vacation flew to Jamaica unbeknownst to them," he chuckled. "I came into their cottage and Dad was sleeping. It was two or three in the afternoon.

"I said, 'Hey, Dad, wake up!'"

"He rolled over and opened one eye, looked up and mumbled, 'Oh, go 'way.' He rolled back over and went to sleep again.

"The next time I raised my voice, 'Hey, wake up!'"

"He rolled over again and exclaimed, 'Well, I'm dreaming!'"

"And he really, honestly thought he *was* dreaming. And he shouted, 'Mother, come here! Come here!'"

"Out of the blue I had shown up and they couldn't get over it."

Among the dozens of people interviewed in my research for this book, I had the good fortune to meet Tubal Wilson, a native Jamaican, who is in charge of the valet service at the Minneapolis Athletic Club. His wife and he worked for the Adams in Minnesota.

Wilson met Cedric in March of 1950 at a cocktail lounge in the hotel in Jamaica where the Adams were staying. Cedric had ordered a coke, but he did not have change to tip Wilson who had served him. He apologized.

"I told him not to worry about tipping me," Wilson said. "He had come for a vacation and I would like him to enjoy it; but if he felt at the end of his vacation I had given him good service he could leave a tip for me when he left.

"Mr. Adams laughed and said, 'This is the first place I've ever been where one of the staff has ever mentioned anything like this to me.'"

"About a week later," Wilson continued, "he asked me if I would like to come to the United States to work for him. I told him I would talk it over with my lawyer. I did and had him draw up a contract so that if I did not like the job I would be paid for my time there, as well as my return trip to Jamaica. Mr. Adams agreed to the terms.

"Working for the Adams was a great pleasure. They had the qualities that are very hard to find in human beings today. May their sons follow in their paths!"

I asked Tubal Wilson, "If you were to say one thing about Cedric Adams—one quality—what would it be?"

Without a moment's hesitation he replied in a tone of affection, "People. His love of people. He was always interested in people and I told him that personally. I saw him two weeks before he died. After I had left the Adams family employ my wife and I would often go to visit them. This time I saw that he was failing. He had always been an alert man. I told him that if he ever needed any help or assistance I would take off from work right away. Mr.

Leisure + Money = Hobby

Adams meant much to me. Not for what he had, but for the kind of person he was.”

As a postscript Wilson gave me his personal philosophy which had relevance to Cedric, as it does to us all: “The more you give the more people demand of you. At the same time, it hurts the individual because his life is not his own.”

CHAPTER XVII

Every Deck Has A Joker

Cedric's love of life and interest in people came out in many forms. When I asked his cousin, Reginald Faragher, when Cedric's personality began to emerge, he said, "At the age of three!"

All during his grade, high school, and University days, and up until his death Cedric would mine humor and come up with nuggets of laughter everywhere. A practical joke was something to delight in whether it was on someone else or on himself.

Practical jokes were another demonstration of his love of life and people. His exuberance cropped out in kidding others. For a time he carried a set of false buck teeth which he liked to pop into his mouth. Then he would push his face into fellow passengers' faces when riding in an elevator just to get a chuckle out of their reactions.

Cedric was not playing a clown's role. Rather, his antics were forms of identification with others. These pranks communicated his interest in others, that he wanted to share with them the exuberance in life he himself felt.

Once he wrote, "If all my inhibitions were removed when I first met a person, I'd ask him about himself in this order: What do you make a month? How old are you? What is your religion?"

However, Niecy certainly was not prepared for Cedric's

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candor one day when they both were in the New York office of Dr. Frank Stanton, the president of CBS. Cedric was in the process of negotiating terms with Stanton for a network show. Niecy remarked afterwards, "I nearly fell off my chair when my husband turned to Dr. Stanton and asked easily, 'By the way, how much do you make?'"

In later years Cedric did not get into the *Star* and *Tribune's* city room often because of his many other activities; but when he did, George Rice, the former WCCO-TV commentator, says, "it was like a reunion. Everyone would crowd around him because they knew Cedric was always good for a laugh or two."

Sometimes Cedric would bring into the city room gag presents which his readers and listeners would send or bring him. One time, so the story goes, he brought in a white rubber bathmat rolled under his arm. When he had the attention of everyone in the newsroom he "unfurled" the bathmat. On its surface were large, simulated mammary glands. Cedric rumbled, "Hey, guys, how'd you like to walk over an acre of these?"

In other colleague reminiscences, Otto Silha, now publisher of the *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune*, laughed when he told about the first time he had ever seen Cedric. Silha was editor of the St. Paul Central High School paper at the time. At a journalism banquet where Cedric was the speaker, "as a part of the speech he announced that his wife was pregnant. He gave the expectant birth date which was at least seven or eight months away. Only Cedric would do that before a group of high school kids!"

Clifford Simak, one of Cedric's long-time colleagues on the papers, related the farewell party which was given for

columnist Virginia Safford. Cedric, who had worked with Virginia at both the *Star* and Fawcett's, dressed up as a preacher. Then with long-drawn face and sepulchral voice he intoned "an obituary" of Virginia. Virginia could take this in stride since she had been the butt of jokes in the newsroom for years.

In fact, since Virginia was a rather large woman the wording of the last sentence makes a good transition into the time in the newsroom when Cedric managed to attach an ostrich plume to her *derrière*; then instructed someone to call her to come into the editor's office. To get there, she had to parade past everyone in the newsroom with the plume waving behind.

George Hellickson, who was on the staff at the time, witnessed this Adams shenanigan. He recalls that "Virginia walked around quite awhile before she caught on. Meanwhile, everyone was laughing and having a good time except Virginia, who was taking herself quite seriously as usual."

Virginia Safford (McNally) recalled for me the time Cedric and she were demonstrating the rhumba as a promotional stunt. Cedric's back was to the audience and he was so intent on his elephantine gyrations that he did not notice that the spectators were taking them seriously. So Virginia whispered to him to ham it up more; then she began ripping off his shirt. As expected, the results were hilarious. The pair all but killed the rhumba—in the Northwest, at least.

Certainly no one surpassed the late *Star* music and drama critic, John Sherman, when he caught and summed up the blithe spirit of Cedric: "The thing I want to remem-

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Virginia Safford and Cedric annihilate The Rhumba.

ber longest about Cedric Adams is his giggle, an expression of glee rather than a horse laugh, far more than a titter. 'Giggle' isn't quite the right word—it implies a silly or empty-headed approach—but I can't find a better one.

"Cedric's giggle was something fundamental, something that shook me to my shoes whenever I heard it, made me prickly-happy all over even when I didn't know what the joke was. Often enough it wasn't a joke at all, but Cedric's instinctive response to the absurd and ridiculous he invariably found in life's passing show.

"Cedric's priceless gift of humor was a gauge of his intelligence and humanity. His laughter was a spontaneous outlet for his zest for life, his inborn feeling for people. It reflected his sheer delight in what he saw, heard, felt. It was never guarded, cynical or malicious. It had a disarming innocence about it, and it was never—as with many of us—an expression of superiority over others.

"As I think about it, Cedric's incomparable giggle was a complete commentary of life on which you could build a philosophy, if you wished. For it was both affirmative and uninhibited. It unlocked the feelings most of us keep confined. It reminded us of mirth and truth and the fact that the two often go together."

That was both a high and deserved estimate from a man with whom Cedric had worked at both the "old" and the "new" *Star*.

One of the characteristics of a well-balanced person is the ability to laugh at one's self. Cedric could and often did poke fun at himself, especially at his poundage even though he hated it. In his *Star* column of July 20, 1954,

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he used several of his friends, as well as himself, as targets for some good-natured jesting:

“My colleagues, Mr. G. Grim and Mr. W. Jones have both dipped into the ‘walking shorts’ fad. Mr. Grim went



Columnists Adams and Grim ham it up.

so far as to include a ‘How about it, Cedric,’ line in his piece. With this kind of pressure, it begins to look as though I must either comment or fall in line or maybe do

both. I saw Mr. Jones in his last Saturday for the first time. I had just ridden directly behind a Belgian horse in the Aquatennial Parade and that, in a way, softened the blow. Jones has been on that food kick of his long enough so that shorts painted an accurate picture of his chief interest. It's just unfortunate if this thing is going to spread—and what a word choice that is—among columnists like V. Safford who is now writing from Mexico. You know how travel broadens one, and you also know how Safford has been getting around in recent years. There must be a better thought than that in connection with this walking shorts business.

“To be perfectly honest about the whole thing, walking shorts on the Adams frame, as was the case with Mr. Grim, are not new. It was during World War II that I was on the shakedown cruise of the U.S.S. Saint Paul. We dropped in at Trinidad and as was the usual custom, we hit immediately for the British counterpart of the PX and it was there that I found white British shorts. The price was what intrigued me most. They were so inexpensive that I overlooked completely the appearance of the attire. I had them packaged in wrapping paper—eight pairs of them and in my size they make quite a bundle.

“I don't mind admitting that I am rather attractive in them. White has always done something for my figure. At the top there are two fasteners, you know the kind you just push together. I've developed some kind of abdominal pressure that keeps unsnapping the snaps, but that has given me something to do. Anytime I get a little nervous or fidgety, I don't rub my hands together, I don't doodle with a pencil, I don't tap my fingers in a subconscious

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rhythm, I just snap the snapper. It provides a kind of outlet for any tension that develops.

“When they dubbed these walking shorts they said just about all there is to say. You can walk in them and that’s all. Mine are absolutely no good for such things as sitting. When I’m in them and get my hulk down on a chair something happens—everything happens. The snap unsnaps, they fold down around the waist and the legs of the shorts disappear someplace. So there I sit with my legs hanging out from the waist down. There have been occasions when I looked down and thought I forgot to put the darned things on. Well, if my colleagues are going to pressure me into this sort of thing, here I come.”

One of the ways of showing affection for others is through jokes. Seldom does one go to the trouble of a practical joke for a boor.

The three sons, who were fond of their father, knew that he always enjoyed anything funny even at his own expense. One evening when the Adams were living at Chuck Saunders farm while waiting for their new home to be completed, Cedric had fallen asleep in a chair. This was his sons’ chance to burn a cork and use it to smudge a mustache and long sideburns on their dad. Then, without waking him, they gingerly put a derby on his head.

About this time Niecy, who was in on the prank, said, “Cedric, we’ve got to get going.”

Cedric drowsily mumbled, “Oh, okay,” and slowly got to his feet. By now Niecy and the boys were in hysterics. Cedric had no idea what they were laughing at; but their mirth was so contagious he joined in with his rumbling

belly laugh. It was not until Cedric passed a mirror on his way out of the house that he realized he had been tricked.

About that time Niecy and Cedric were members of what could loosely be called "a furniture moving group". When any of their friends were out of town or out for the evening the "moving group" would contrive to get into their house and move all the furniture around: bedroom furniture into the living room, kitchen furniture and utensils into the bedroom, and so forth. The appeal of the devilry in the stunt gave each enough strength for doing the very things that they probably had been putting off doing in their own homes!

Ric Adams, who is also a practical jokester, chuckled as he told me about a gag Cedric pulled on the employees of the *Star* and *Tribune*. There was a large attendance at this affair including the top man, John Cowles, and his wife. The feature of the evening was the showing of slides Cedric and George Grim had taken in Europe.

Cedric had asked Ric if he would run the projector; then he gave Ric a slide of Peni Cillin, a burlesque stripper, clothed in a scant G-string, pasties, and a spectator's imagination.

Cedric, who was to show his pictures first, instructed Ric, "Put this picture of Peni Cillin on last. Don't leave it on the screen long. Just kind of flash it on." Ric followed instructions and just as the final slide came on the screen Cedric blurted, "Oh, oh! I can see that we're into George Grim's pictures now so I'll turn it over to him!"

Minnesota is renowned for its large Scandinavian population, so anyone in the area who can affect a credible Scandinavian dialect when he is telling a joke has some-

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thing special going for him. Cedric could and did. He used to demonstrate it as an emcee while still at the University. He also wrote Scandinavian jokes for Northrup King's "Seed Bag" and for the Fawcett Publications.

Cedric used his Scandinavian dialect effectively to probe and parry in elaborate practical jokes he played on some of his friends, most of whom were prominent Minneapoli-tans. He would telephone them and record the conversations. The victims, of course, never realized they were being recorded, nor did they tumble that the "Albert Swanberg" who was calling was Cedric Adams.

I have listened to many of these recordings and it is incredible to me that Cedric's targets did not recognize his distinctive voice and inflections despite the assumed accent. It is to his credit that he kept the butts of these practical jokes so annoyed and on the defensive that they did not catch on.

Dave Adams remembers that when he was about ten years old his parents would scream with laughter after Cedric had pulled a successful practical joke. In fact, Niecy laughed when she told me about one of the earliest of the "Albert Swanberg" telephone calls.

Cedric, as "Albert Swanberg", telephoned the Myndall Cain Beauty Salon one afternoon and demanded to speak to the late Miss Cain personally. When Miss Cain came to the telephone "Albert Swanberg" was in an almost inarticulate rage. He screamed at Miss Cain how his wife had had a permanent wave at the Myndall Cain beauty shop and that as a result all her hair had fallen out. He asked what she would do about it.

Miss Cain was incredulous and could not believe this

had happened. Finally, after fifteen minutes of badgering from "Swanberg" she suggested he bring his wife down to the shop.

In a heavy Scandinavian accent "Swanberg" exploded, "But how can she? She ain't got no hair! And we ain't got no car!"

"Take a taxi," suggested Miss Cain as calmly as she could, "and I'll pay for it."

"But she ain't got no hair," "Swanberg" insisted. "How can she go out of the house when she ain't got no hair?"

"Well, have her wear a babushka."

"A what?" "Swanberg" asked.

"A babushka," Miss Cain answered. By this time she was completely unnerved and near tears from the hysterical, illogical series of questions and loud swearing from a seemingly distraught husband.

Finally, after going 'round and 'round about what a babushka was, "Albert Swanberg" asked, "Say, how do you spell 'babushka'?"

Dave Adams was right when he said that "it's pretty hard to put those telephone calls in writing because of the Scandinavian accent. Father always thought he had a pretty distinctive voice, but he would call up Dr. Paul Larson, his next-door neighbor and closest friend, who would seldom catch on. It was amazing how he disguised his voice."

Even Niocy was often fooled. One time when they were looking for a house Cedric nearly drove her out of her mind repeatedly calling her pretending he was a real estate agent.

Another victim was the late John W. Moffett, Vice

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President and Director of Advertising of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*. He related to me how "Alfred Swanberg" telephoned him at his office representing himself as on the board of directors of one of the paper's best advertisers, The New England Furniture Company. "Swanberg" cussed, ranted, and complained that his firm was not getting as good a position in the papers in their advertising as the Dayton Department Store did.

Moffett laughed as he remembered, "Well, I tried to be nice and friendly about it. I tried to explain our position as patiently as I could and he kept butting in and asked increasingly irritating questions. Finally, I frankly told him to go to hell!"

Out of the blue one morning, "Albert Swanberg" telephoned Mrs. B. C. Gamble, wife of the chairman of the board of Gamble-Skogmo. "Swanberg" said he was from Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where he had known "Bert" Gamble years before and that "Bert" had given him the job of head gardner at their place on Lake Minnetonka. He matter-of-factly told Mrs. Gamble that he was moving into their home within an hour.

Naturally, Mrs. Gamble protested that she knew nothing about the arrangement and that she was surprised that her husband would hire another gardener without telling her since they already had two gardeners, neither of whom lived at the house.

"Swanberg", oblivious of these protestations, wanted to know what the Gambles raised in the garden, and what they used the produce for. He expressed shock that they ate it and "did not sell it."

Taken aback, Mrs. Gamble spluttered to the cocky "Swanberg", "I just don't understand this at all."

The insensitive "Swanberg's" rejoinder was an impertinent question, "What's your first name, Mrs. Gamble?"

"Gladys."

"Well, you can call me Albert then!"

All during this wild conversation the tormented Mrs. Gamble insisted that she would have to talk to Mr. Gamble about this and kept expressing surprise that he had not told her anything about the arrangement.

Obliviously, "Albert" insisted, "I want to find out about my room."

"We haven't got any room except in the house here."

"Well, I don't care," Albert magnanimously replied. "How many bedrooms have you got in the house?"

"I've got two bedrooms."

"Well, one is enough for me."

Mrs. Gamble, by this time almost in tears, protested, "But I don't want any other men around the house!"

"I'm an old man. You don't have to worry about me, Gladys! I'd like to get this settled because I want to move out this afternoon."

"Oh, no, you're not! I just won't have it!"

Then "Swanberg" in a righteous tone asked, "Why don't you and your husband get together on these things? You're causing me quite a bit of inconvenience."

Mrs. Gamble ended the conversation. "I'm not going to be bothered any more. I'm going to call Mr. Gamble."

"Swanberg" sweetly promised, "I'll call you back!"

"Albert Swanberg" was never embarrassed. He always stayed in character as the bumbling, brassy stereotype.

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The surprising thing about these illogical, irritating telephone calls was that Cedric could quickly convince others that it was indeed "Albert Swanberg" calling. Once the telephone calls started "Albert" would thrust and parry so the persons never had a chance to identify the voice or to analyze the illogical conversations because he always kept them on the defensive. Despite their pique, they were convinced that "Albert" was a sincere, slow-witted, insensitive man oblivious to logic.

One day the Manion Pritchard residence received a phone call from "Albert Swanberg" of the Minneapolis Sewer Department who asked, "I wonder if you would give me a little co-operation?" Mr. Pritchard not only gave the "sewer inspector" his co-operation, but nearly lost his mind in the process from the verbal assaults of this persistent, nagging person.

"Swanberg" wanted to know if the Pritchard's had had bathroom odors and if their toilets were functioning properly because, he claimed, the inspectors had been finding that "material had been thrown into the toilet bowls in the block—two powder puffs, an electric light bulb, and something about the size of a baseball." Pritchard was so busy answering questions about the ages of his children and the number of bathrooms in his house, while protesting that he was having no bathroom trouble, that he never tumbled that it was jokester Adams. Pritchard did have his moments of doubt about "Swanberg," but he scarcely had a chance to express them. Naturally, he was particularly distressed when "Swanberg" said that they would have to shut off the toilets in that block on that side of the street for three or four days. However, "Swanberg"

assured Pritchard, "you can have the water on and you can use the sink and that stuff. But we can't have anything going into the sewer except water."

Finally, after much tortuous conversation and "misunderstandings" by "Swanberg," Pritchard — more to humor the "inspector" than anything—consented to flush and watch one of his toilets in the process while "Swanberg" waited. When Pritchard returned to the phone "Swanberg" wanted to know if Pritchard had just flushed or if he had put anything in the toilet. Then he asked, "You didn't sit down? You just flushed it?"

Satisfied that Pritchard had carried out his assignment, "Swanberg" asked which direction the water had turned when the toilet was flushed because "when the stuff backs up it turns the other way. And that shows that—that shows we've got clogging in there."

"Well, now it's up to you to decide how you want to arrange this shut-off," "Swanberg" magnanimously offered. Do you suppose you and the neighbors could get together and go over across the street and work out some arrangement with them?"

"No, I don't think so," was Pritchard's resigned reply. "I think we'd have to go down town. The people across the street from us are not very neighborly."

After recording over a dozen of these zany conversations, the Adams invited the "victims" and their spouses for a buffet supper on their cruiser. After the supper Cedric suggested they listen to some new recordings he had just received. You can imagine the mixture of embarrassment and mirth that accompanied each recording of their conversations with "Albert Swanberg." It was a riotous eve-

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ning capped off with gifts for each couple for their good sportsmanship.

One of Cedric's most successful practical jokes while still at the University was at the expense of a man whom Nat Finney characterizes as a "somewhat pompous University of Minnesota German instructor named Victor Reim, a helluva nice guy; but like Sergeant Schultz in the television comedy, *Hogan's Heroes*, he was a natural target for fun. Reim officed in a cubbyhole in Folwell Hall."

One Sunday Cedric pored over the lost dog ads, then telephoned all the owners. To each he would say, "I think I may have found your dog. If you'll come to Room 268A Folwell Hall tomorrow noon I'll be glad to return your dog." Most of the owners appeared on schedule and Reim had quite a problem!

On September 29, 1954, Cedric wrote about his assignment to cover a movie premiere in Hollywood as a guest of the producers. As usual, he universalized his experience. Anyone who had had the occasion of "free-loading" in unfamiliar surroundings and among complete strangers could sympathize with Cedric at the first event which was a cocktail party to meet members of the Los Angeles press. Since he had had plenty of experience at these affairs, even before he arrived he could "bet that those guys will be 'excited' to stand around and shake hands with a bunch of visiting Elks from Minneapolis and Kankakee and Elmira. I can just hear some of the conversation. 'Well, how's tricks?' Then those of us with bifocals will tilt our heads back, gaze down scrutinizingly at the badge the other fellow is wearing and respond with, 'Fine. Where'd you say you were from?'"

In the next day's column Cedric told about the practical joke another newsman and he pulled. "After the cocktail buffet," he reported, "we were taken to the premiere of Judy Garland's 'A Star is Born.' And we got the same treatment Gregory Peck or Doris Day got on the way in. Our cars drove right up to the front entrance of the theater. Great searchlights played up into the smog-laden skies, throngs lined the streets, bleachers were filled on either side of the theater. There were screaming women and kids. But there was no screaming for the four of us in our car. But we did walk up between the roped-off line where the Hollywood great tread. I got into my seat too early so I walked out in the lobby and met a guy named Thompson from Evansville, Indiana. The two of us stood at the entrance to the main aisle and made like we were ushers and for 45 minutes we had the time of our lives.

"We pulled up to our full heights and asked all incomers for the tickets and then ushered them down the aisle with a sweep of our hand. At times, we were doing an Olsen and Johnson gag. People would come up with a ticket marked left center 5 and we'd send them up into the balcony. We'd never hear from them after that. The loge ticket holders we sent to the basement and they're probably down there yet."

Cedric was an iconoclast. A puncturer of balloons and bubbles. No mortal thing was too sacred for him to prick with the scalpel of his wit. Thus, he could poke fun at one of the most dignified of professions—the medical doctor.

He once wrote, "Ah, health! What would we columnists do without it? To be perfectly frank, the same things that

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we do with it. We make daily copy out of health and all its phases, good or bad.

“Now I can report definitely that over the years I’ve written more about health, in fun or seriousness, than about any other equally broad general topic. You’re all interested in your own health or that of your friends, but my interest is even wider because I’ve got to satisfy an editor every day with some newspaper copy. Since the Old Gent is the nervous ulcer type, he probably thinks every health item I turn in is written expressly for him, so he’s more likely to pass it without the usual heavy touch of his big blue pencil.

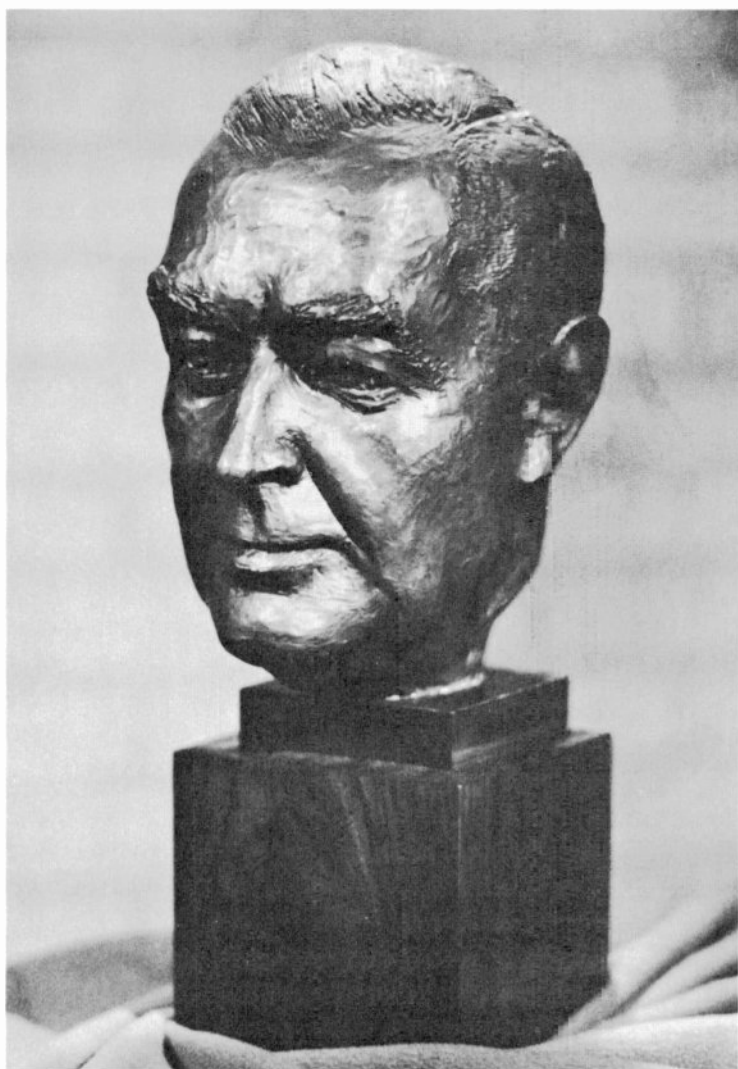
“I enjoy an advantage over the doctors, too. They have to deliver results with their diagnosis and treatment, but Ol’ Doc Adams can prescribe all sorts of medical trivia and just let it go with a warning to readers that it is only somebody’s gossip. Also, I can make hay with medical jokes, while your physician has to keep up a pretty dignified front for his patients. Which reminds me of the advice a medical dean used to give students at the University of Minnesota.

“‘Every medical graduate,’ he’d say, ‘should do two things: raise a mustache and develop piles. The moustache to make you look mature and the piles to make you look concerned.’”

“An old wheez,” you exclaim. Sure, but if Cedric got a laugh out of something he had to pass it on. People loved him for it. So if this book has no other purpose, it may serve to bring back some of the laughter Cedric gave us.

In the *Sunday Tribune* on January 11, 1959, Cedric reported how he had had “his head done.” The late Billi

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC



Cedric had his head done!

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Haeberle, then a secretary at WCCO-TV, was the one who "did it." She was attending a sculpturing class and needed a model. When Cedric arrived at the studio he was told to sit down, remove his glasses, and face the wall. "This sitting business," he wrote, "went on for five evenings spread out over a month or more. Finally, when the last chin was set, the eyebrows in place, the chin chiseled, the wrinkles in their proper places, Billi said, 'You're finished now, but don't peek. We have to let it harden. Bronze it and then put it on a base. Then you can see it.' One of the engineers at television, Weldon Hoge, was taking wood carving and he agreed to do the base.

"Two weeks later they both appeared at my office beaming. Hoge had the head in his arms. I looked at it and felt as though I had been decapitated. It's extremely difficult to tell whether a portrait or a piece of sculpture of yourself bears what you deem is a proper resemblance. There were portions of it that I hoped resembled me and others that I hoped were missing me a mile. The girls in the office seemed pleased, so I willingly accepted their judgment. I could hardly wait to get it home for my wife to see.

"I have a piece of advice for you. If you ever have your head done, don't take it bare from the office to the parking lot. I trudged out with mine in my arms, through the hall, down the elevator, through the lobby and out into the street—all about the time the printers were leaving for home. 'Well, look at Salome.' 'Why don't you sing "I Ain't Got No Body!"' 'Hhhmmm, a two-headed columnist.' 'That one in his arms is where he keeps his brains.' Those are just a few samples of the jibes I received. I finally made

it to my car and placed the treasure on the back seat. I still felt a little decapitated, but made it home, went up the back stairs and placed the head on the floor in the hall. The dog met me, took one fast gander at my noggin on the floor, pulled back three feet and began to bark in tones I had never heard before. She looked at it sternly, cocked her head at it, raised an eyebrow and then looked up at me as if to say, 'Hey, pal, what's with this? Nothing permanent I hope.'

"If you think the dog's reception was obdurate, wait 'til I tell you about the little woman when I called her out to see it. 'Oooohhhh, no,' she moaned. 'If you think you're going to have that out in the open you have another think coming.' 'Now wait a minute,' I pleaded, 'some people think it looks just like me.' 'That's the whole trouble, it does,' she exhorted, 'and I'm not going to look at your armless, legless, chestless, abdomenless head every time I dust. Put it back in the closet and put a sack over it. I'm not going to live with that thing staring me in the face.' 'You just don't understand art,' I told her. 'Art your foot,' she retorted, 'I'm not going to have your head around this house while you're still living.' 'No different than having a picture,' I remonstrated. Well, it's been in the closet until last night. I'll tell you what happened.

"Just before Christmas I was thumbing through the New Yorker magazine and spotted a Brentano ad in which were offered heads of Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer, replicas of works of two famed sculptors and reasonably priced. I sent for the pair. They came yesterday. I surreptitiously unwrapped them alongside mine in the closet. Their heads are a little smaller than mine, which I hope

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won't make me appear immodest, but they're exceptionally well done. Very early this morning I crept out of bed, made my way to the closet and extracted all three heads, carried them lovingly to our front hall where we have a sort of divider with shelves. On the middle shelf I placed Einstein, Adams, and Schweitzer in that order. How can she turn down a conversation piece like that? I may be living in a motel starting tomorrow—me and my four heads.”

CHAPTER XVIII

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Cedric rarely missed writing a column on a special day or observance. These columns were some of his best because he often expressed in them concerns common to us all—the hopes, doubts, fears, and joys. His birthday columns were some of his most insightful. As we grow older age is hard to realize, and sometimes harder to accept, especially when the accent is on youth in the United States.

“I’m 43 today. And the heck of it is, I look it,” Cedric admitted on May 27, 1945. “I used to think that women were the only ones who showed age in their necks. Recently I’ve been paying quite a bit of attention to the necks of men, including my own. Right down below the Adams apple there’s a little stretch in there that resembles the neck of a turkey. That means the years are adding their indelible touch. Years are strange things, aren’t they? Twelve months. Fifty-two weeks. Three hundred and sixty-five days. Let’s see how many days have I lived up to today. A grand total of 15,695 days. Imagine getting up every morning for 15,695 days! I don’t know how I’ve done it.

“Hands show age, don’t they? The back side of them almost as much as the front. The lines through the palms seem a little deeper. I do think, however, that men, on the average, say at 40 and beyond, have better looking hands

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than women of the same age. I can hear the biddies shout, 'Well, why shouldn't they? No scrubbing, no dishwashing, no laundry, no cleaning.' But women's hands are usually a little bonier than men's and that makes them show the years more obviously.

"These heart attacks that have been taking men as young as 35 have concerned me not a little but a lot. I scurried up to the doc for a cardiograph the other day. He's a great guy, that doc. After he got the thing developed, he studied it carefully and then said that as far as he was able to observe, everything was in pretty fair shape. The arteries hadn't started to corrode, or whatever they do, the valves were seating properly and there wasn't too much carbon. So I says to him, I says, 'Doc, after a man reaches 40, shouldn't he take it a little easier?' He agreed. That's why I like him."

Cedric could not have used a more apt comparison than that of an engine in automobile-conscious America.

"I hope at 43 it's a little premature," he concluded, "but I do believe that the older we get the more conscious we become of the shadow of death. That's an awful thought to have on your birthday. There are times, though, when you wonder why you haven't dropped before this. Well, Adams, old fellow, a happy birthday to you. I hope freshly you run on for another 43 till like a clock worn out with beating time the wheels of weary life at last stand still."

When Cedric reached fifty on May 27, 1952, he was still concerned with advancing age, but in this column he used a lighter touch, a more convincing tone of acceptance.

"Ah, me, this is it," he began. "Over the hill today to

hit that mid-century mark. But for some curious reason I can accept 50 far more graciously than I did 40. I began at 40 to make plans to retire when I reached 50. I started a small annuity plan that I felt sure would be ample for my wants when I arrived at the half century mark. Something happened to the buck, as you must have discovered.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't quite work now. Even had the buck stayed, oh say around 85 cents, I'd be a lost guy if I didn't have to go to the office and turn out some copy every day and think about newscasts and get a troupe together to travel once a week. Of course, a lot of people came up to me with this, 'You'd better slow down. You're working too hard. You're going to have a coronary.'"

Niecy knew "Cedric could not retire. He thought about it. He made a survey to find out how much other people thought it would take to live fairly well. At least, to live in more or less the style he was accustomed to. The guesses varied from ten thousand to forty thousand dollars. That sort of defeated him."

Niecy recalled that in their early married life Cedric had told her, "If I had the chance of settling for life for \$6,000 a year that would be for me." There were many others who felt this way during the Depression.

Once when former WCCO announcer, Bob DeHaven, and Cedric were talking shop, Bob asked him when he was going to retire.

"Hell, I dunno," Cedric answered. "How do you know when you have enough money to retire?"

"But, Ced, why do you work so hard?" Bob asked.

Characteristically, Cedric replied, "I always think there's someone standing outside who can do it better than I can."

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Still Cedric continued speculating about early retirement. He loved his winter vacations in Jamaica. There were so many things he wanted to do; but he realized that not only were there financial considerations, but he knew how he would be missed by his readers and listeners. And that he would miss them.

By the early 1950s he had reached the pinnacle of popularity. His WCCO listening surveys surpassed both local and network programs, and he was second only to the comic strip, Dick Tracy, in readership surveys.

Cedric's fifty-fourth birthday column was largely reminiscence—a footnote to social history.

“Ho, hum. This is my birthday. I'm 54 today,” he wrote. “I look it, and at times feel it. Some of you must be more than 54 today and some of you are way under. That's what makes it so difficult to write a birthday piece with any kind of universal appeal. But, will you bear with me while I trace what I can of this two score and fourteen span? Just think, I was born in the horse and buggy days. We had one car in town when I arrived and that a high-wheeled job with a one cylinder motor and a steering lever instead of a wheel. I wonder how many kids today would know what you were talking about if you mentioned the word magneto or spark lever or acetylene lamps or dashboard. For that matter, I wonder if you showed a high schooler a buttonhook today how he'd react. I don't remember mother as she was 54 years ago today, but I do recall her four or five years later. She wore such strange things as a camisole, a shirt waist, puffs in her hair, or maybe a switch or a rat. I'm sure there were no

silk stockings in her wardrobe. As I remember, they were lisle. She had a corset or two, a muff and a plush coat.

“She had an icebox with a drip pan underneath, a kerosene stove for summer, a wood range for winter. It’s a wonder she didn’t break a leg going down the cellar steps—steep and treacherous they were. If she went down there at night she had to carry a kerosene lamp with her. It wasn’t very light down there in the daytime either.

“Let’s think of Mother’s kitchen of 54 years ago. What a drab joint that was. The kitchen stove, a cupboard, a table with four chairs around it and an oilcloth cover on top of the table, a woodbox and a sink with a cistern pump over it. Ah, but she had a pantry. I wonder whatever happened to the pantry. That was a room all by itself. And an interesting one, too. Shelves on either side full of dishes and staples and bowls and pots and pans and cookie jars and a flour sifter. I remember so well how the kitchen table with its oilcloth covering was set immediately after every meal. The sugar bowl, the salt and pepper shakers, the mustard, the catsup in the middle, all the plates around the table placed bottom side up, the silverware at each place, the cups upside down on their saucers, the family napkins rolled in their individual rings. It was always breakfast, dinner and supper at our house. I wonder if the breakfast-lunch-dinner routine has ever been accepted in rural or small town homes today.

“Let’s go into the bedroom of half a century or more ago. My mother and father had never heard the term ‘master bedroom.’ They had a brass bed with a chiffonier and a dressing table which was pretty fancy for those days. Then there was a commode. All matching, mind you. The

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commode held the wash bowl, the pitcher and a soap dish. Matching again, if you please. At either end of the commode, the towels and the wash rag hung down. In the bottom part of the commode was a large square place for the—I know you'll hate the term—slop jar. I wonder who ever named that thing. Father had a shaving stand with a mirror on top, a place to keep his shaving bowl and brush and a little drawer for his straight-edge razor and hone. Mother brought in the bowl of hot water every morning for his shave. My, how he would have thrilled to an electric razor shave.

“Here I sit on my 54th birthday skimming back over the years, knowing darn well I won't be here for another 54, but wondering what in the world they'll bring.”

Cedric's mood shifted abruptly—saddened in the concluding paragraph as he asked, “Do you hate to get old? I do. I despise every birthday. Each year brings us closer to the inevitable. Very soon, if I last, close friends are going to depart and I'll be called upon to act as pall-bearer. There'll be sadness at their parting and I'll stand at the yawning grave and skim back over their years as I have done over mine today. And each time that happens I'll know that my own demise is growing nearer and nearer. That is the inevitability of life. I know there are those of you who will say, forget it, live hard while there is still breath.”

With each succeeding birthday Cedric became more thoughtful about age—its implications. He had looked back to his boyhood in his fifty-fourth birthday column. Now he went back to the more recent past.

“Could it be,” he wondered, “that our philosophy of

living changes as birthday anniversaries slip by? I'm 56 today and somehow, it's nowhere near as hard to take as my 40th or 50th or even my 55th. There are times when I walk through our newsroom here when I feel happy over the fact that I'm an older man. I wouldn't relish particularly starting out as a cub reporter and banging my brains out against all the obstacles of the profession. As the so-called retirement years approach, there is compensation in the fact that the hard distance of the race has been nearly run. The deadlines through the years have been exciting, but exacting. Nevertheless, I owe this business of mine so much. This little pillar is heading into the quarter-century mark and those years have supplied a thousand thrills."

Naturally he could not forget that "the little guys have been fully as stimulating. There's Anna Burnick, just outside of St. Cloud, Minnesota, a Polish woman who hasn't forgotten a birthday remembrance in 16 years. She has made doilies and afghans and anti-macassars. I send Annie coal and kindling at Christmas. She's a very devout woman and prays for me constantly. There are men off the farm who come up to me at the State Fair or on the street and say, 'I just want to shake your hand.' There are truck drivers and policemen and waitresses who smile and wave.

"These friends have become one of the rewarding experiences which stem from the way I make a living. There's an enrichment which becomes deeper with the years in simple things such as Christmas cards or fan mail or small thank-you notes from folks I've never met.

"Tonight there'll be a birthday cake and maybe a sports

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shirt or a hand-rolled handkerchief or a ball-point pen. And as I blow the candles out, there'll be the annual wish. I think it will be the ancient line, 'I had rather be an old man a somewhat shorter time than an old man before my time.' ”

Cedric Adams when he died at fifty-eight, of course, was not an old man, nor could he ever have been an old man had he lived. At least we would like to think that he would not have been. His blithe spirit while he lived, and his joking and gentleness in his last hours—when he must have realized he was dying—transcended age. Mind and spirit defy physical limitations. His did.

Niecy and Cedric spent five months at their cottage at Half Moon Hotel on Montego Bay in Jamaica from December through May in 1960. Niecy explains that since Cedric had talked about retirement so much they were “testing to see if they could stand retirement.” It was a relaxed five months and their longest vacation ever. During this time Cedric only wrote his *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* column and material for his “Morning Almanac” program on WCCO-Radio which he would air mail to Minneapolis. Otherwise, it was reading and relaxing, joking and joshing.

When the Adams returned home they were refreshed. They were back in their beloved Minnesota. Cedric returned to his columning and radio broadcasting. He had dropped his television work in 1959. There was now a little more time for his family and himself.

Cedric had had Minnesota Gopher season football tickets for many years and attended as many games as he could. On November 5, 1960, Niecy and he climbed to

their seats in the fifty-ninth row of Memorial Stadium. The exertion was apparently too much for Cedric's heart. He had a coronary the next day at his home and was hospitalized until December 24. However, it was not until the post mortem following his second, fatal attack that it was discovered that he had had a congenital heart condition that never could have been corrected.

On February 17, 1961, Dave Adams and his wife, Marilyn, drove to Austin, Minnesota, with Niecy and Cedric to attend the grand opening of the Red Cedar Inn. "It was a pleasant trip down," Dave said. "Father had been out of the hospital for several weeks and was still under the doctor's care; however, he was apparently feeling well. We spent the evening at the Inn and had quite a huge dinner after a couple of cocktails.

"I guess Mother hadn't been terribly enthusiastic about Father's going to Austin. However, on the way down he was jovial and seemed like his usual self. He was joking and reminiscing about some of the things he had done in his life that he most regretted.

"We went to bed fairly early, but Father had a pretty bad night. Chest pains and sleeplessness. Alarmed, we called his physician in Minneapolis next morning, the eighteenth. He advised us to take Father to the Austin hospital.

"When we told Father he exploded, 'Oh, for Christ's sake, I'm as healthy as a horse! I feel wonderful!'

"Nevertheless, we drove him to the hospital, although he had first suggested we return home in a bus despite the heavy snowstorm. But Mother insisted on the hospital.

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When we got to the hospital door a nurse met him with a wheelchair.

“‘Say, what is this? Do you think I’m sick?’ he grumbled.

“But he got in and they wheeled him to his room. He went right to bed and we returned to the Inn. About three or four that afternoon a nurse phoned saying Father had been sick to his stomach and advised us to come to the hospital.

“It was then that we fully realized that he had suffered a severe heart attack and that his condition was grave. We were all shaken and very worried. The snow was deep outside as we returned to the hospital.

“We weren’t allowed to go into the room for awhile, as I recall,” Dave continued. “When we finally were admitted into his room he had a tube up his nose and he was jaundiced looking.

“Father had always said that you can tell how healthy a guy is by how his ears look. And if a person’s ears get discolored, he probably will die in two or three days.

“So I can remember his asking Mother, ‘How are my ears, Ma?’

“She looked and said as brightly as she could, ‘Oh, they just look pink and rosy and beautiful.’

“Then Father commented, ‘This would’ve been a helluva thing to have happen on the bus going back to Minneapolis!’

“And it would have been if we had let him take the bus home. He would have had his attack then in a bus which was battling a blizzard. He would never have made it.

“We were only with him a few minutes. Then we left

the room, consulted with the doctors, and waited. It became more and more apparent that he'd had a very bad attack and that he was going down hill. The doctors were trying special injections and everything else that seemed appropriate.

"I don't remember when it was," Dave concluded. "It must have been nine-thirty or ten o'clock. I was waiting outside Father's room and Mother was down the hall. The doctor came out and said that it was all over. I went down to Mother and told her. She, of course, broke down. Then we came back and saw him in the room again."

While Dave was relating his father's last hours his two brothers were listening as intently as I. Dave, however, broke the tension when he said, "I think I recall that the papers said that he was joking with the nurses right up to the end. And he really was. When he asked about his ears and remarked on what a helluva thing it would have been to have had an attack on the bus, he said it lightly and in a joking way."

I asked Ric and Steve where they had been when their father died.

"I had gone off to a dancing party with my wife," Ric answered. "Dave called me there. I remember it was the worst blizzard that we'd had that year. And I wanted to drive down to Austin because Dave had said Paul and Thelma Larson and I should come down because Dad wasn't very well. I drove over to the Larson's from the dance and I was with them when they phoned that Dad had died.

"Paul said, 'We've called the police department and have done everything to get an escort down there, but

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there's no way you can get through. The snow plows aren't even getting through.'”

Steve was at the Stanford Business School in Palo Alto, California, and he flew back to Minneapolis when notified.

That evening the voice of Roger Kent, then a WCCO announcer, carried the news: “Death came tonight to the man who was probably known and loved by more people in the Northwest than any other man. Cedric Adams, who was known by millions of WCCO listeners, passed away in Austin, Minnesota, following a heart attack. Cedric—as he was affectionately known by everyone who heard his broadcasts and read his newspaper column—was fifty-eight years old. (Kent’s voice broke here.) His death will leave an empty feeling in the hearts of those who worked with him at WCCO during the past thirty years.”

News of his death brought messages by the hundreds. There were expressions of sympathy from every corner of the country and from hundreds who were not known to the family or had been helped by appeals in Adams’ columns or had simply come to regard him as a friend through his familiar voice and writings.

On February 21 the Reverend Howard J. Conn conducted the memorial service at the Plymouth Congregational Church. The following is a portion of his eulogy: “Cedric Adams brought inspiration and cheer. He recognized the common heritage of faith. He made no distinctions among Roman Catholics, Jews, and Protestants.

“Surely he had spent his years specializing in living. The secret of his popularity is that he was you and I etched in a larger, finer scale. He was human, as we are human. With our problems and annoyances, with our hopes, and

with our aspirations, without putting on airs. Without being conceited over success he moved amongst us knowing how we feel and struggle and think. I do not know any person who as completely as he spent his life being himself in the finest sense.

“He began his career in the dark days of the Depression when the outlook was gloomy and people had lost confidence in themselves. His friendly manner, his cheery voice, his enjoyment of everyday life helped thousands of people to recover a sense of fun of living and the worthwhileness of life. He often said, ‘Laugh a little every day. It’s the straight path to the best there is in life.’

“We can be grateful that to the very end of his career he never lost his sense of enjoyment. Even in the few moments before he passed away he was joking with his wife and son. And he said to the nurse, ‘It’s so thoughtful of you to be doing all this for me.’”

CHAPTER XIX

I Was A Friend Of Cedric's

The telephone would ring in the WCCO-Radio newsroom and the voice at the other end would identify itself, "I'm a friend of Cedric's." Everyone, it seemed, "was a friend of Cedric's" Why did we feel we were?

Cedric himself summed it up best when interviewed on the "Twin City Story" program, July 10, 1957: "I've always believed in a little pet theory of mine called projection. I become quite curious in the first place about other people. I ask a lot of questions and there isn't anything I want to hold back when I meet people. This personal projection, I think, has resulted in making people feel friendly toward me. I'm strictly a provincial and enjoy every minute of it and want to remain that way."

Cedric loved people. He fed off them. He loved the Northwest. He loved his work. And it was this which his youngest son, Steve, thinks enabled his father "to wring every ounce of enjoyment, happiness, and fulfillment out of life."

Cedric could put people at ease. Harry Peterson, the WCCO engineer with whom he worked many years, believes that one of Cedric's greatest qualities was "the ability to make you feel that you were at his level."

When Cedric wrote about his hobnobbing with Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, and Arthur Godfrey, his readers

shared his experiences. They knew nothing would change Cedric. Cedric was one of them.

Jim Bormann recalls an incident which illustrates this. He relates that due to a mix-up, Cedric had had to make a late morning appearance in downtown Minneapolis. As a result, Cedric had to be whisked after this appearance in a sheriff's patrol car to the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in order to deliver his 12:30 p.m. newscast.

When Adams and Bormann got into the patrol car the driver, a deputy sheriff, turned on the siren as the car sped away. Almost immediately Cedric leaned over and turned off the siren to the consternation of the deputy who exclaimed, "I'm sorry, but we'll have to have the siren going when exceeding the speed limit. If there were an accident we'd be in trouble if the siren hadn't been sounding as a warning."

Quietly Cedric assured him, "Well, let me take that responsibility. I just hate to have people seeing Cedric Adams going down the street with a siren sounding. People get the idea that celebrities who do this are pompous and presuming on people. They might get the idea I'm that way, too!"

Bormann said that "Cedric had been particularly struck by this display during the preceding Aquatennial celebration when Bob Hope and Arthur Godfrey had been in Minneapolis. He was repelled by the recollection of squad cars rushing them all over town with sirens screaming while the people were standing at the curb watching. Instead of the onlookers appreciating the fact that these people must be important to rate such attention, Cedric felt the reaction was quite the opposite."

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Whether completely or only partially contrived, Cedric wanted his grass-roots image to prevail. He wanted others to feel that he was as awed by these luminaries as they were. Instinctively—or premeditatively—he realized that building one's image was an active, persuasive process. One had to work at creating a following, as he was willing to do. Toward this end Cedric noticed people; he inquired about people; he remembered people. People were his business because his business depended upon the impressions he made. This is not to say that Cedric's interest in people was not genuine. He just worked a little harder at it than many others who perhaps were not as willing as he.

Ric Adams believes that “basically Dad was a very shy person. I think a lot of the things he did he forced himself to do. He did them well, but he really had to force himself to do these things.”

Ric's older brother, Dave, remembered his father's advice: “‘When you want something you have to project. You have to try to be gregarious and outgoing and talkative. You have to project yourself. The secret of getting along with anyone is always to ask questions. Just ask some questions and they'll think you're a great guy if you ask enough questions about them.’”

All three sons agreed that their father was basically very curious about everything. And in order to satisfy his curiosity he learned to listen and perceive everything around him. It was this curiosity that made him probe a little deeper into the elements of a story that he knew would concern everyone. He humanized and infused life

into material so that it had universal interest and appeal both in his columns and in his conversation.

Cedric had to a high degree the ability to sense needs and to back popular causes. He communicated his interest by sharing with his readers and listeners his own needs and desires, as well as his own frailties. Cedric seldom failed to catch the imaginations of his audience or to get an enthusiastic response.

Solicitude for others was one of Cedric's strongest traits. Clifford D. Simak, Science Editor for the *Star and Tribune*, spoke softly when he said "there was so much kindness in Cedric. He would always help others. I've had several science-fiction books published. One of my stories was adapted as a play. The play was horrible. It closed in New York after two performances. When Cedric heard about this he telephoned me at my home and talked for half an hour suggesting ways the play could be saved."

Listening to others attentively is one of the greatest forms of flattery. Listening is an art which takes active concentration and appropriate feedback. Of course attentive listening and observing are essential in any communication process because unless these two elements are operating there is no communication. So Cedric's superb listening ability, plus his insatiable curiosity, pleased and reinforced those whom he met. His manner indicated an interest in each person.

For a number of years Dr. E. W. Ziebarth, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota, followed Cedric's Nighttime News with an international news analysis. Dr. Ziebarth remembers when he appeared with Cedric one evening in a small North Dakota town.

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After their broadcasts a lady came up to him, shook his hand, and thanked him for "opening the window to the outside world." Then she looked over at Cedric and added, "When Cedric Adams comes on the air I loosen my girdle, take off my shoes, and simply relax!"

Cedric himself had probably shaken as many hands in Minnesota and surrounding states as most politicians. It is understandable that he could not remember everyone's name. Niecy told me that "one of things that used to irritate Cedric was that people would come up to him and say, 'You don't remember me, do you?' Naturally, meeting so many people he couldn't remember everybody, so he finally hit upon the idea of saying, 'Do you want to bet me five bucks I don't?' That would stop them. They couldn't take the chance."

Niecy said that Cedric was not only inquisitive about people and things, "but he was in a strange way phlegmatic. He would sit and let people come to him at a cocktail party. The first thing he looked for was a chair. And he was never without an audience."

Except for a short time, the Adams phone was listed in the directory. If Cedric was closest to the phone when it rang he would answer it. And if someone would ask, "Have you got a second?", he would reply, "Sure, all the time in the world."

My wife, Murel, pinpoints this quality of receptivity. Metaphorically, she remembers Cedric as a transformer through whom the energy of the Northwest flowed. He transmitted this energy—these stimuli—in human terms in a unique, human manner. His qualities and abilities, she

believes, seemed disarmingly simple; yet they were actually complex.

A celebrity can vicariously fulfill the needs and enrich the lives of others through his communication abilities. Cedric could and did. His contagious laugh alone was enough; but when it was combined with his conversational writing style or his cozy chatter on radio, those in his audience became in essence, if not in fact, "a friend of Cedric's."

People in the Northwest supported Cedric for what they imagined he stood for and by how he fulfilled their expectations. As an intelligent, sensitive person, Cedric analyzed changing conditions and aimed for flexibility in adapting to new requirements in basic wants common to us all. He was fully aware that we all strive for acceptance whether we are the source or the receiver in the communication process. He could grasp the elements in persons and places that would evoke poignant reactions. These sentimental touches some labeled corny; but they were moving. I believe they were sincere.

Cedric sometimes could bare his own soul as he did after visiting the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. He reflected on "my moment of silent prayer within the sacred walls of Notre Dame. Never had the feeling of closeness to my Maker been any greater."

Sharply juxtaposed to this was another side which Dr. William S. Howell, Professor of Speech at the University of Minnesota, wrote in a letter to me: "Cedric's impact was heightened by the belief that he was a bit of a rascal. People loved to circulate rumors about his drinking and his girl-oriented escapades. He became a legend of the

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Upper Midwest, the person who could violate conventions unscathed and work harder and play harder than any other human. Probably he served as a vicarious outlet for all sorts of repressed impulses. People projected upon him their inhibited antics and their thwarted ambitions. In this sense, his role was that of therapist to the masses.”

Harry Reasoner, the CBS newscaster, speaks of Cedric as “a phenomenon who had the ability to reach people. Everybody liked him. There was absolutely no one like Cedric.”

When I asked Reasoner what he felt was behind Cedric's impact he replied, “I suppose nobody ever really did figure out *why* he was as great as he was. The people who worked with him and for him, as I did, came to respect him, as well as to recognize his power. He was surprisingly easy to work for. He knew the news and had a very sound feeling for it.

“Here was a man who had really never basically been a reporter. He had no entertainment talents in a broadcasting sense. He was a newsy writer in his column, but he didn't have any great style. It was the total impact of his personality. And I suppose it was believability that came across, not only in his column, but over the air. He was always completely at home with the people he was talking to. And I suppose,” Reasoner concluded, “that's what made him a success.”

There is experimental evidence that there is a correlation between vocational success and large physical size, a healthy appearance, a strong, vibrant voice, and a relaxed attitude. Cedric had a striking, relaxed attitude. By general American standards, he was more handsome than not,

even though his peak weight shot up to 244 pounds. He did not appear clumsy or inept, even though he pretended he was. He even posed once for a picture in a ballet costume when The Ballet Theater performed in Minneapolis. Of course he looked ridiculous; but what middle-aged man wouldn't in a white leotard and a cape?

On October 22, 1952, *Minneapolis Star* columnist, Virginia Safford, commented that "Cedric looked pretty snappy today as he sat down with me and we talked about him. His dress is quite conservative now—a neat blue suit, pin-striped shirt and striped tie. (But have you ever taken a look at him in those dreadful, always mussed summer seersuckers? They're awful!) He looked at his polished shoes, then at his socks. 'I got the socks on wrong side out this morning,' he confided, 'You see it's my pet superstition. When the socks come up from the laundry—right or wrong—I never change them.'"

Niecy confided to me that he didn't feel that with the weight that he carried he could dress very stylishly, so he sort of went the opposite way. It took a long time to get him back to the point where he was really caring.

Here was a man—Cedric Adams—who communicated so many things in so many ways: by his voice, his writing, his relaxed manner, his gregariousness, his interest in others, his appearance, and his practical jokes.

His career coincided with the rise of radio and television, and the increased popularity of newspaper columns. More than that, Cedric was fortunate to work on and for the Northwest's dominant mass vehicles in all three media, as well as for the Columbia Broadcasting System. So the force of his personality came from many directions. Since mass

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communication media often have the effect of strengthening personal opinion and raising it to the level of public opinion, Cedric became a stronger, more credible source as the result of his mass communication outlets.

This credibility was also due in a large measure, of course, to his own abilities and personality, as Gordon Mikkelson, Director of Program Promotion and Public Relations of WCCO-Radio points out. "Cedric's radio career began at the right time," Mikkelson observes, "when the flow of news centered on the Depression, war, drouth, strikes, labor warfare, and kidnappings. He caused his listeners to emphasize bringing news down to their level because he had the perspective of the ordinary person. No matter how the news was written or by whom, he put his stamp on it."

And so we have Cedric Adams who had a "pet theory" of projection and who never lost sight of his small town origins. He had the desire for achievement and succeeded. He wanted people in the Northwest to love him, and they did. He wanted the independence and freedom which wealth would give him, and he realized this goal. He sought recognition and prestige, and he gained it locally, regionally, and to some extent, nationally.

Cedric longed for status, recognition, attention, and appreciation—as we all do. He garnered his share.

Cedric did not seek what a psychologist might call "dominance"; yet he was dominant in an entirely different sense. He was dominant in readership and listenership as revealed by surveys and by the testimony of many.

Cedric reached other character goals through hard work,

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM CEDRIC

fairness, forthrightness, lack of ostentation, high intelligence, patience, optimism, humor, and above all, the common touch.

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