AND A TIME TO GRADUATE:
Some Considerations of the World in 1933

by Graham Hovey

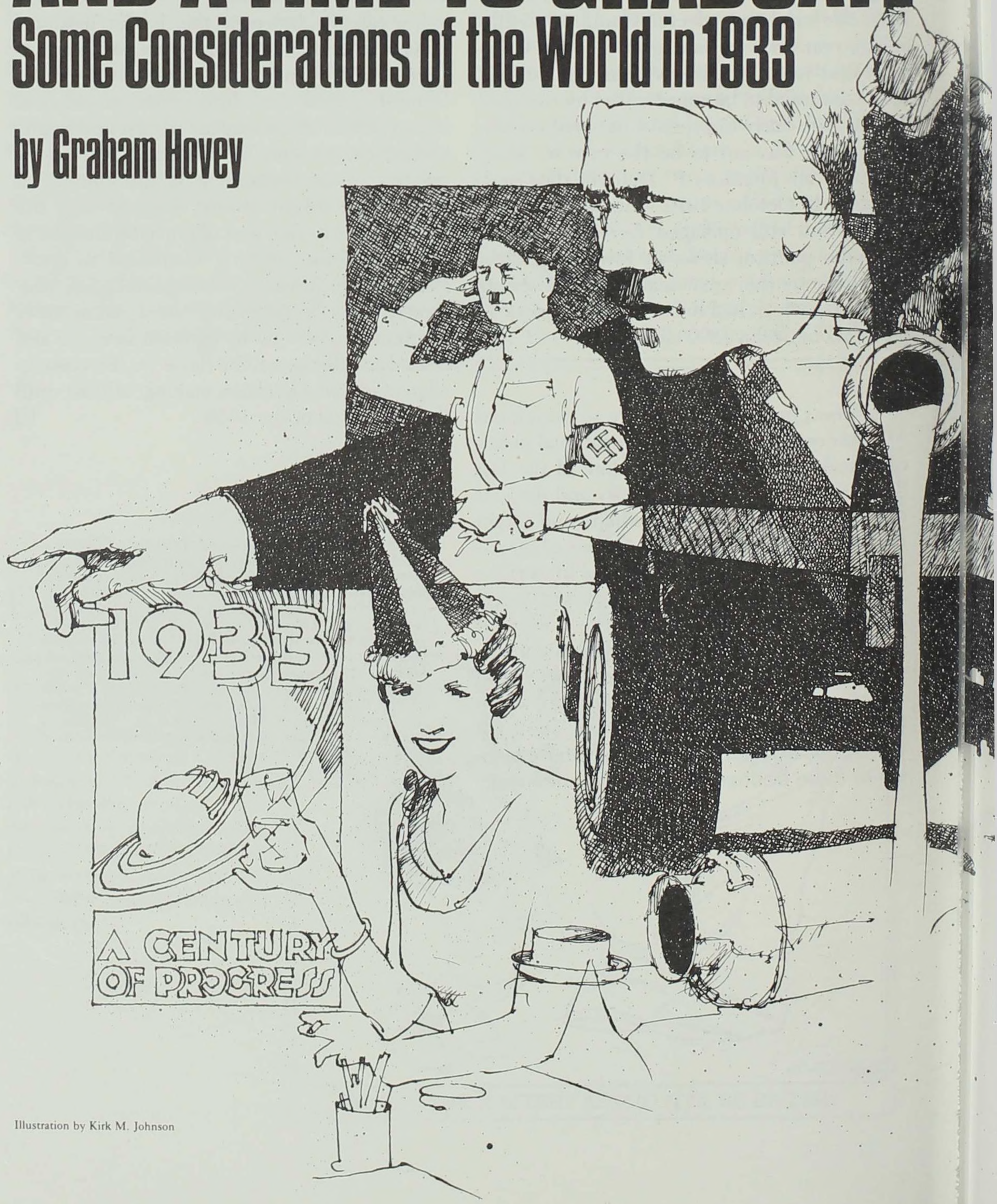
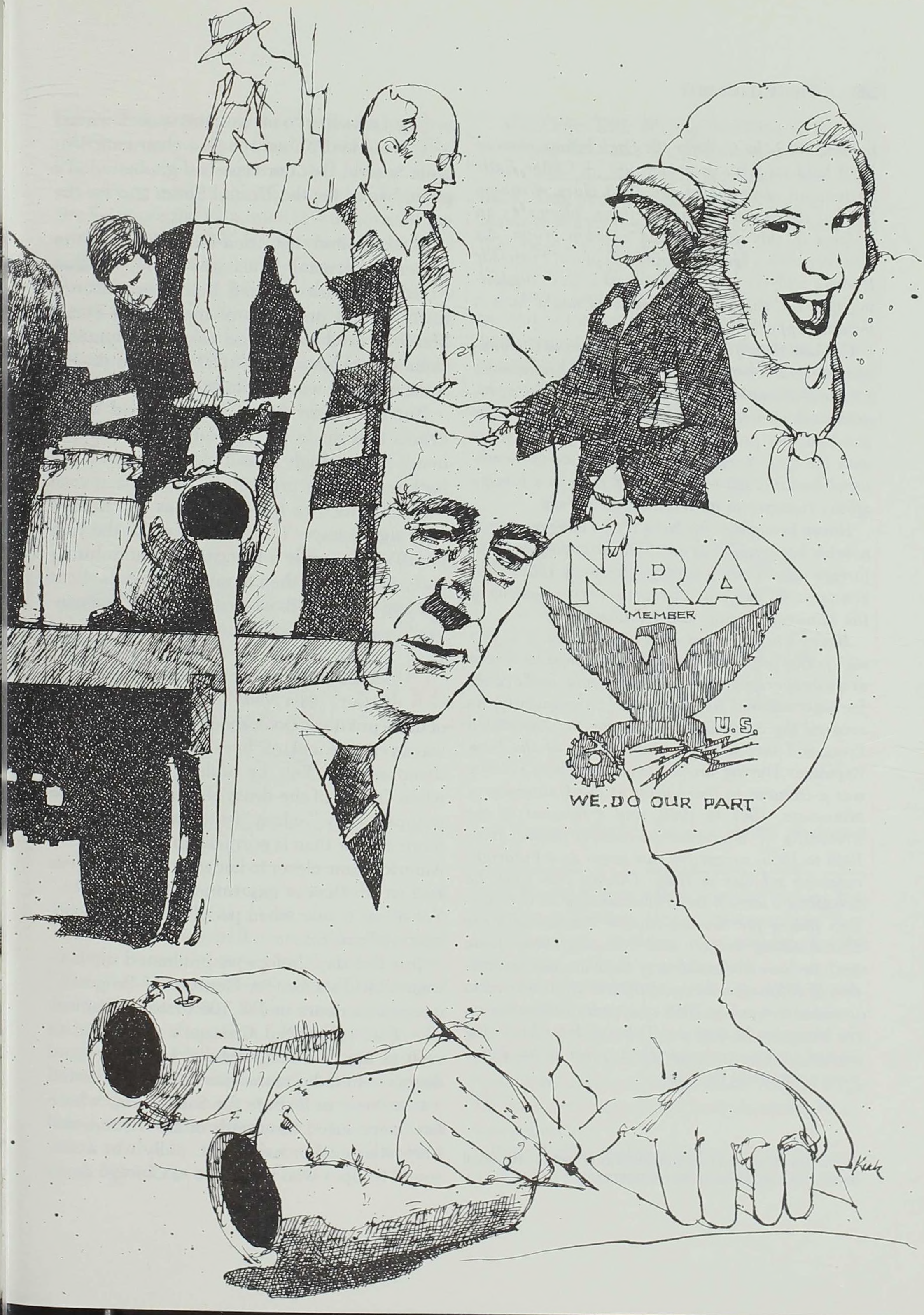


Illustration by Kirk M. Johnson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AND A TIME TO GRADUATE:

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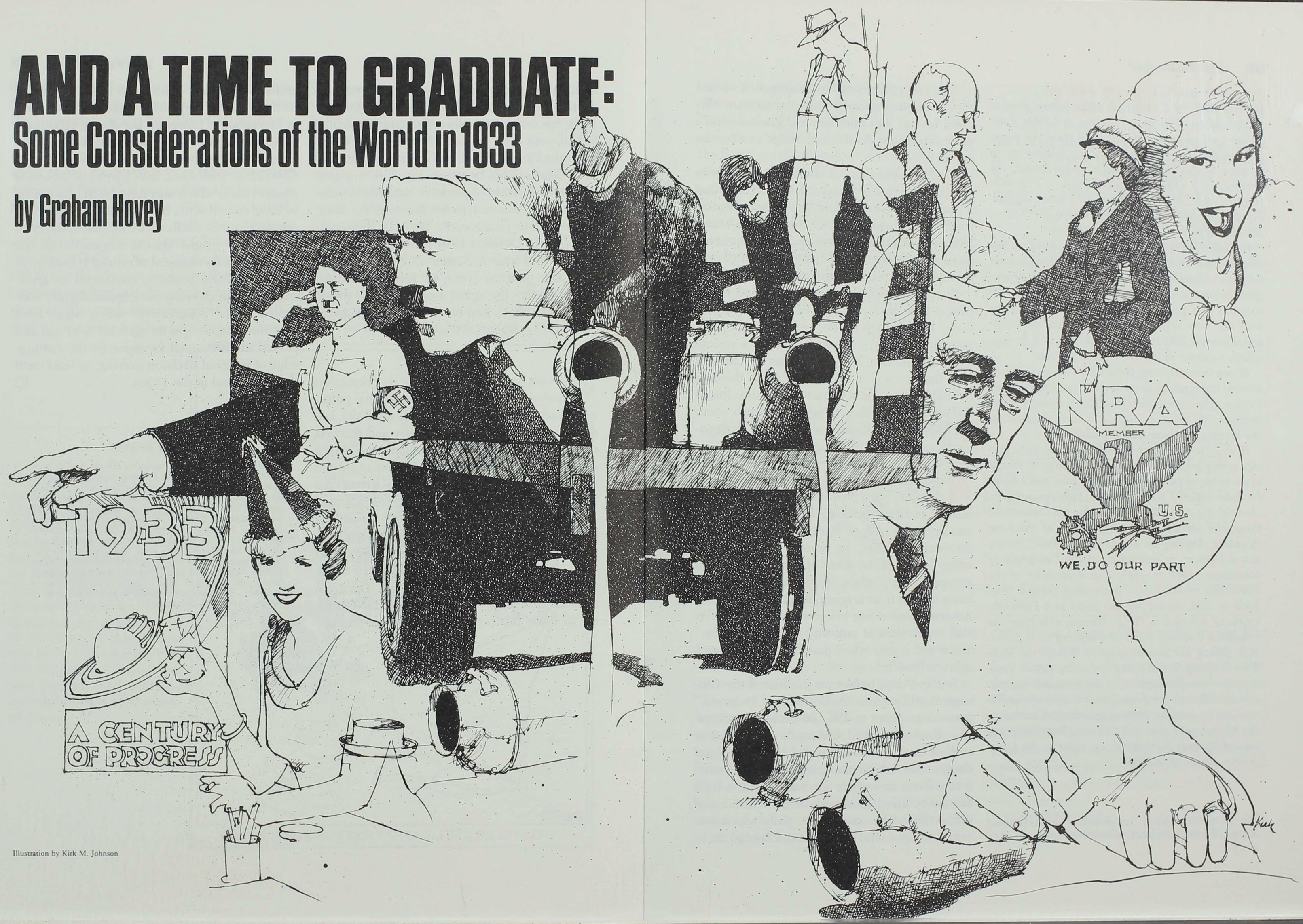


Illustration by Kirk M. Johnson

In June 1983 the Cedar Falls High School class of 1933 held its fifty-year reunion. A Cedar Falls native and alumnus of the 1933 class, Graham Hovey, delivered the article that follows as an address to this distinguished reunion group. An observer with a keen eye routed a copy of Professor Hovey's address to the Palimpsest *editor, suggesting that the subject of the address might have a broader appeal.*

Graham Hovey is currently Professor of Communication and Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships for Journalists program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He assumed this position in 1980 after fifteen years with the New York Times *as a member of its editorial board (1965 to 1977), and then as a foreign affairs reporter in its Washington bureau.*

Hovey brought to his New York Times *position a notable background as an observer and reporter of foreign affairs. He joined the* Times *in 1965, after nearly seven years as European correspondent of the* Minneapolis Star and Tribune.

Hovey's involvement with coverage of U.S. foreign policy began in World War II, when he served as a war correspondent in Africa, Italy, and France for International News Service. Subsequently, he covered the State Department for the Associated Press and served as assistant editor of the New Republic. *During an academic interlude, Hovey was a lecturer in journalism at the University of Minnesota, 1947 to 1949, and a member of the University of Wisconsin journalism faculty from 1949 to 1956, except for two years as a Fulbright research scholar in Italy. During this time, he broadcast a weekly radio commentary on U.S. foreign policy for the ten-station Wisconsin State Broadcasting Service and a weekly Letter from Italy for member stations of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. He returned to newspaper work in 1956 as an editorial writer on the* Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *later becoming United Nations correspondent, prior to his European assignment in 1958.*

—Ed.

I got myself into making this speech when I remarked to our reunion chairman, Virginia Seeley, that our class had graduated in a pivotal year, for the United States and for the world.

I had in mind that Adolf Hitler had come to power in Germany January 30, 1933, and that Franklin Roosevelt had been inaugurated thirty-second president of the United States March 4, and that these two developments alone would have made 1933 a pivotal year in American and world history.

But of course there were myriad other events that made it a special year. I suppose every fiftieth high school class reunion looks back on its own graduation year as a special time, and its own half-century as one fraught with significance. I am here to make the case for 1933; to profile a fantastic and tumultuous and *pivotal* year, then to say a few words about our half-century, those first fifty years that conventional wisdom calls the hardest.

Nineteen thirty-three was a year of "wintry despair," as a *New York Times* colleague of mine put it in a book about the depression. It was a year, he said, of "lives stunted and people demoralized." Yet, he added, it was a time when "much of the dross of American life was stripped away," when "truths were faced with more candor than is normally in evidence, and America came closer to knowing its aims and its real worth than at any time before or since." Yet it was a year when people somehow managed to have fun.

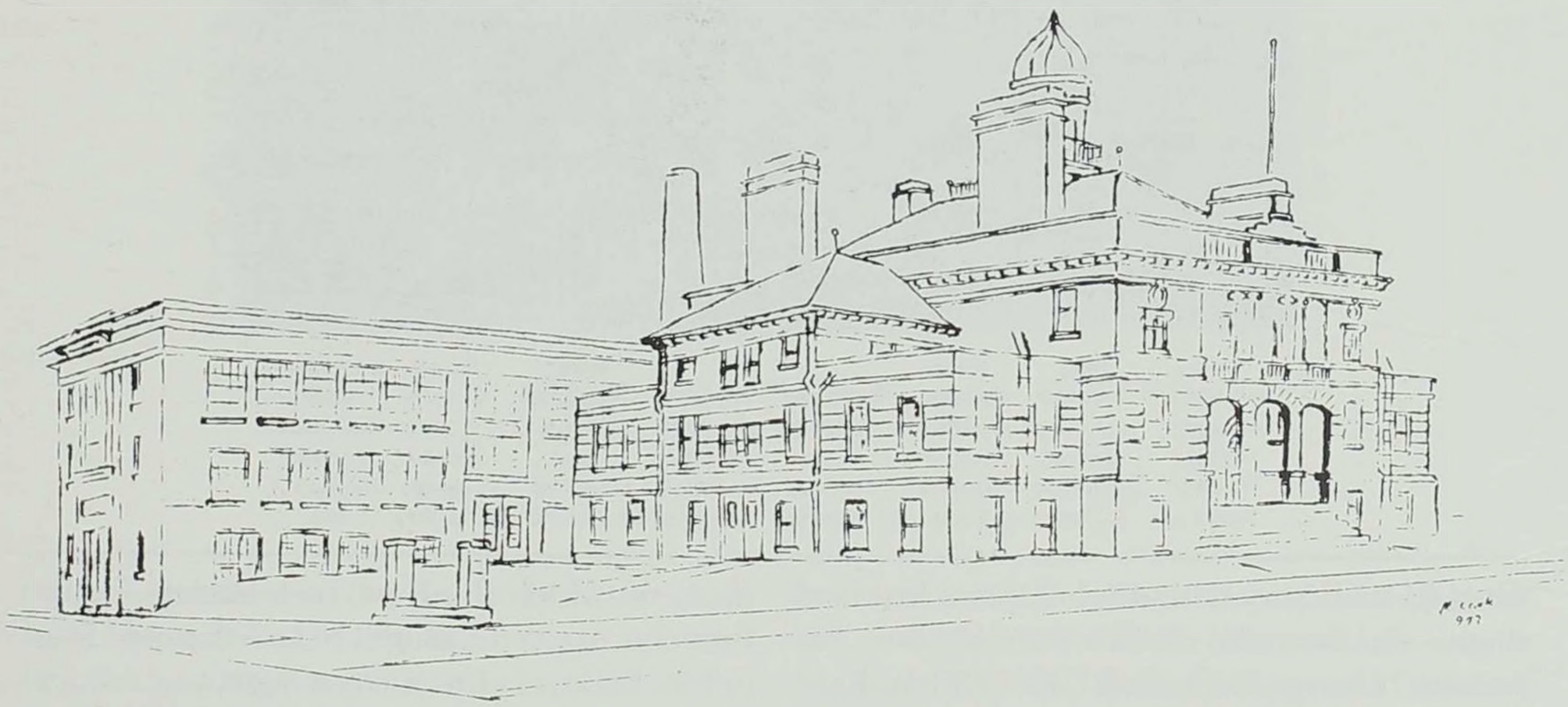
Just five days before we graduated the Chicago World's Fair, "A Century of Progress," opened its doors to 185,106 first-day visitors. The Fair celebrated Chicago's centennial as well as modern arthitectural technique and design. But it did more than that. It celebrated a turnabout in fortune for Sally Rand, whose fan dance lured thousands of fair visitors and immortalized her overnight. Sally was a seasoned trouper who had come to Chicago down

on her luck, a victim of the depression, same as almost everyone else. She later said, ruefully: "Mine was always a class act, but I never made any money until I took off my pants!" But from the first time she shimmied down those velvet-covered stairs, clad in her waving fans (and apparently nothing else) — from that moment, the only wolves at the door that Sally had to worry about had nothing to do with hard times. I suppose Sally, in her singular way, did contribute to the Fair's theme: modern architectural technique and design.

She Done Him Wrong was one of the two most popular 1933 motion pictures; the other was *Little Women*, starring Katharine Hepburn. Talk about contrasts in movie fan tastes in our graduation year! Miss Hepburn also won the "best actress" Academy Award in 1933 for her performance in *Morning Glory*.

Charles Laughton won the Academy Award as best actor for his portrayal of King Henry VIII. *Cavalcade* was judged the best picture and Walt Disney won his second straight Oscar in the short cartoon category for *Three Little Pigs*. It was a year when popular movies featured Jean Harlow, Norma Shearer, and Barbara Stanwyck. Perhaps as an antidote for the depression comedy was big, with such stars as W.C. Fields, Will Rogers, and the Marx Brothers. Radio City Music Hall opened its doors in Rockefeller Center only a few days before our graduation. The movie was Bebe Daniels and Randolph Scott in *Cocktail Hour*, and on stage the Rockettes kicked and danced to John Philip Sousa marches.

Rudy Vallee had just brought his Connecticut Yankees back to the roof of Hotel Pennsyl-



A view of Cedar Falls High School from the northwest, as it appeared when the class of 1933 graduated. (Illustration by Marie Cook)

Another veteran trouper who finally made it big in '33 was Mae West, who became a national personage in the movie *She Done Him Wrong*. It was in this picture that Mae hissed, "Come up and *sssee* me sometime," but one of her better lines was, "When women go wrong, men go right after them." Her popularity was so great that Hollywood rushed out another Mae West film that year called *I'm No Angel*. One expert said many American females imitated Mae's mannerisms, but I don't recall much of this by the girls in the Cedar Falls High School class of 33.

(*Cedar Falls High School's* Red and Black, *1932*)

Auld	Bagg	Bailey			Barger	Barnes	Bergstrom
Breckenfelder	Boslough	Bossman	Buhmeyer	Cawelti	Christensen	Church	Ebersold
Eickelberg	Ellis	Erickson	Feldpouch	Fleming	Flynn	Freet	Galloway
Gashel	George	Getchell	Grant	Gump	Haire	Horn	Hovey
Hughes	Huston	Iversen	Jellinger	E. Jensen	H. Jensen	L. Jensen	Johnson
Keifer	Lamme	Lang	Larsen	Llewellyn	Vera Madsen	V. Madsen	Masterson

vania in New York with Alice Faye as featured singer. On the radio we heard Fred Allen, "in person," George Burns and Gracie Allen, Kate Smith, bringing that old moon up over the mountain, Amos and Andy, and Eddie Cantor on Sunday nights, reminding us that "Potatoes are Cheaper, Tomatoes are Cheaper, Now's the Time to Fall in Love."

Roberta, with music by Jerome Kern, began a long run on Broadway, popularizing such songs as "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "The Touch of Your Hand." And opening in New York was a play adapted from Erskine Caldwell's 1932 novel, *Tobacco Road.* At first it appeared to be a flop, but attendance picked up and it became the longest-running play on Broadway.

Erskine Caldwell figured in a court case that year involving another of his novels, *God's Little Acre,* which the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice sought to have banned from public libraries. But a city magistrate exonerated the book of obscenity, so the book-burners lost a round. They lost another when U.S. District Judge John M. Woolsey lifted a ban on James Joyce's *Ulysses,* which had been confiscated by the U.S. Post Office. Judge Woolsey called *Ulysses* "a sincere and honest book."

But critics generally agreed that it was not a distinguished year for novels or the theater. Publishers detected a national taste for escape literature by bringing out such works as *Anthony Adverse,* by Hervey Allen and Kenneth Roberts' *Rabble in Arms.* The Pulitzer Prize for a novel went to *The Store,* by T.S. Stribling (I have no recollection either of book or author). And the Pulitzer for drama went to Maxwell Anderson for *Both Your Houses.*

(*Cedar Falls High School's* Red and Black, *1932*)

MacStay	Mayo	Merrill			Miller	Mills	Miner
Mommer	Moore	Morgensen	Nasby	Nelson	Nykvist	Oleson	Olsson
Ostergard	Ostergaard	L. Petersen	M. Petersen	Poduska	Randall	Rasmussen	Rogers
Rowe	Rowley	Shedd	Sheerer	Sherk	Sherman	Shortess	Smith
Springer	Stokes	Strand	Streeter	Swope	Thierman	Thompson	Unger
Webster	West	Willson	Wilson	Wiltse	Woolverton	Workman	Wright

Some critics thought the best play of the year was Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* A best-selling whodunit was Erle Stanley Gardner's *Case of the Sulky Girl*, and the nonfiction best seller of 1933 was Walter B. Pitkin's *Life Begins at Forty*, which, as one critic put it, "offered solace to men and women whose early ambitions had been wrecked by the depression."

I suppose about all any of us knew of Gertrude Stein at that time was "A rose is a rose is a rose . . ." But in 1933 her book, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, attracted what a critic called "a surprisingly large reading public for an author who was usually read only by a few devoted followers."

Despite the depression, horse racing and betting on the horses boomed in 1933. I suppose poor souls were hoping to hit on a long shot, and some did when Hurryoff, a 15-to-1 shot, won the Sixty-fifth Belmont Stakes, earning nearly $50,000. Broker's Tip — and what a name for a depression-era horse — won the Fifty-ninth Kentucky Derby and Head Play won the Fifty-seventh Preakness.

Nineteen thirty-three saw the first baseball All-Star Game, dreamed up by Arch Ward, the *Chicago Tribune* sports editor, as an added attraction for the World's Fair. 49,200 fans paid $56,378.50 and jammed Comiskey Park July 6 to see the American League All-Stars beat the Nationals, 4 to 2. Babe Ruth, nearing the end of his great career, clouted a home run in the third inning. Connie Mack managed the American League winners, John J. McGraw the Nationals. In the fall of 1933 the New York Giants beat the Washington Senators in the Thirtieth World Series, four games to one. The

Chicago Bears won the first National Professional Football League Championship December 17, beating the New York Giants, 23 to 21. Michigan's Wolverines were the national college football champions for the second straight year. Southern California beat Pitt in the Rose Bowl, 35 to 0.

At Forest Hills the national singles tennis champions were Fred Perry of England and Helen Jacobs of the United States. Johnny Goodman won the National Open Golf Championship at North Shore Country Club near Chicago. On the day we graduated the *New York Times* said in a news item that Max Schmeling planned only four more workouts at Lake Swannanoa, New Jersey, before his fight with Max Baer in Yankee Stadium June 8. Those workouts failed to save Schmeling. Baer knocked him out in the tenth round. Thirteen days later Primo Carnera won the World's Heavyweight title by knocking out Jack Sharkey in six rounds. This set up the 1934 bout in which Baer won the heavyweight crown by knocking out Carnera in the eleventh.

There were stirrings of Women's Lib in 1933, quite apart from the accomplishments of Katharine Hepburn, Mae West, and Sally Rand. Frances Perkins became the first woman cabinet member when sworn in March 5 as Roosevelt's secretary of labor. A year earlier Hattie Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman to be elected to the United States Senate, and Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly the Atlantic.

In another unusual development we adopted two amendments to the U.S. Constitution in 1933. The Twentieth Amendment abolished lame-duck sessions of Congress and moved up the inauguration of the president from March 4 to January 20. And precisely at 3:32 P.M. and five seconds on December 5, national prohibition passed into history. At that moment, Utah, the thirty-sixth state to do so, ratified the Twenty-first Amendment, repealing the Eighteenth Amendment almost exactly fourteen years after it had gone into effect.

Actually, Americans had been legally drinking light wines and 3.2 beer since an act of Congress had gone into effect April 17. Now the ban on the hard stuff was gone as well. In the first full year after repeal Americans consumed an estimated thirty-five million barrels of beer and forty-two million gallons of hard liquor. One commentator, Frederick Lewis Allen, said wryly that drinking "pretty surely increased during the first year or two, but decreased in *stridency*."

On the scientific front, television planners put a nine-inch cathode ray screen on the market and hailed a new communication medium — a bit prematurely as it turned out. The Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology went to Thomas Hunt Morgan, of the California Institute of Technology, for discoveries concerning the chromosome in transmission of heredity. Sulfa drugs had been discovered in 1932. And the average life expectancy for Americans was fifty-nine years, up ten from 1900.

The Great Lakes were linked with the Gulf of Mexico when the Illinois Waterway was opened. The first U.S. aircraft carrier specifically designed as such was christened at Newport News, Virginia, February 5 by Mrs. Herbert Hoover. It was called *The Ranger*, after a ship commanded by John Paul Jones. *Newsweek* and *Esquire* magazines were published for the first time in 1933.

On the day we graduated, the *New York Times* advertised boys' plus-four knickers (remember them?) at Sak's Fifth Avenue for $2 a pair. Knicker suits were $4.95; men's suits at Sak's were $37.50. "Genuine white buckskin" shoes were advertised for $5, and you could get your shoes both half-soled and heeled for forty-

1933 Prices in Waterloo, Iowa

Automobiles

DeSoto Six	$665.00
Plymouth Six	445.00
Pontiac Roadster	585.00
Dodge "6"	595.00
Willys 77	395.00
International Harvester half-ton truck	360.00

Clothing

WOMEN'S	
Fur-trimmed coat	$24.00
Wool skirt	1.58
Silk stockings	.69
Suede shoes (2-button step pump)	3.45
Felt hat	1.49
MEN'S	
Suit	14.75
Overcoat	16.50
White shirt	1.39
Wool dress pants	2.29
Felt spats (pair)	.89
Shoes	3.85
Stetson hat	5.00

Household Items

Double-bed sheets	$1.00
Bath towel	.25
Silver plate flatware, 26-piece	3.49
Dinnerware, 53-piece	6.98

Appliances

Electric iron	$2.29
Electric washing machine	45.95
Refrigerator (6 cu. ft.)	159.00
Electric vacuum	19.95
Electric waffle iron	2.69
Electric food mixer	9.95
Electric toaster	1.39
Electric corn popper	1.19

Miscellaneous

Eyeglasses	$6.50
Bifocals	9.95
Aspirin (100)	.29
Tooth brush	.27
Dental filling (silver)	1.00
Prince Albert tobacco (2 cans)	.21
Chanel No. 5 perfume (dram)	1.19
Hair cut (women's)	.25
Lifebuoy soap (cake)	.06
Electric razor	7.50
Razor blades (5)	.05
Mickey Mouse watch (pocket with fob)	1.50
Cabinet radio	39.75
Typewriter, portable	45.00
Motor oil (gal.)	.39
Automobile tire	6.80
Automobile battery	5.40
Coal (per ton)	7.50

Toys

Singing top	$ .25
Electric train	2.95
Leather football	1.79
Leather basketball	1.79
Sled	.98
Roller skates	.89
Ice skates (hockey)	3.49
Baby Doll (26-inch)	2.49
Coaster wagon (Lindy Flyer)	2.98
Tricycle (20-inch)	4.95
Boxing gloves (4)	1.95

Food

Rib roast (per lb.)	$ .16
Bacon (per lb.)	.14
Ham (per lb.)	.14
Chicken (per lb.)	.18
Leg of lamb (per lb.)	.15
Pork chops (per lb.)	.13
Bread (16 oz. sliced)	.06
Eggs (dozen)	.12
Sugar (per lb.)	.05
Butter (per lb.)	.24
Cheese (per lb.)	.17
Coffee (per lb.)	.29
Soda crackers (2 lb.)	.21
Flour (per lb.)	.04
Navy beans (per lb.)	.05
Cantaloupe (each)	.05
Peanut butter (per lb.)	.10
Bananas (per lb.)	.10
Potatoes (per lb.)	.02
Ice cream (pint)	.13

Entertainment

Admission to dance (Electric Park Ballroom) men	.40
ladies	.10
Rides at Electric Park (Kid's Day)	.02
Admission to ballgame (Cedar River Park)	.10
Admission to see Fan Dance (Electric Park Ballroom)	
men	.40
ladies	.25
Admission to movie	.25
Admission to boxing card	.10

Travel

BUS (from Waterloo)	
Des Moines	$2.50
Omaha	4.50
Ft. Dodge	3.30
Cedar Rapids	1.15
New York	22.40
Miami	32.90
Washington, D.C.	20.90
Chicago (roundtrip)	10.95
RAIL	
Chicago (one-day all-expense educational tour of Chicago World's Fair)	8.40
New York (30-day trip with stopover at Chicago World's Fair)	62.25

Source: *Waterloo Daily Courier*, 1933.

four cents.

Longchamps Restaurant advertised a lunch of fricassee of second joint of capon, fresh mushrooms, fresh new lima beans, and pilaff of rice for sixty cents. Dinner was creamed chicken, fresh mushrooms, and asparagus tips for ninety cents. Budweiser beer was ten cents a glass at the plush Hotel Taft bar. Lux soap sold for five cents a bar. An ad admonished *Times'* readers to prevent "Pink Tooth Brush" by using Ipana. Another carried this message: "Who cares if your gown is beautiful? How's your *breath* today? Don't guess, use LISTERINE and be sure!"

Then there were the Burma Shave roadside jingles — remember them? One current in 1933 went like this:

His tenor voice
She thought divine
Till whiskers scratched
Sweet Adeline
Burma Shave

My favorite was the longest one I ever saw:

Doctors, lawyers, sheikhs and bakers,
Mountaineers and undertakers,
Make their bristly beards behave
By using brushless Burma Shave

A news item reported recently that an Indiana firm still ships Burma Shave to wholesalers on request, though it made its last batch some years ago. What happened? Burma Shave took too long to get into aerosol technology and lost out to brands in aerosol cans.

New games of the early 1930s had included contract bridge and monopoly. Miniature golf had begun to spread across the country in 1932 and the first golf driving range was set up in 1933. Not a new sport but a thriving depression sport was softball, and residents of Cedar Falls will remember the games under the lights at Washington Park.

An observer noted that movies and autos, invented about the same time, came together at the drive-in theater. The first one opened just five days after our graduation in Camden, New Jersey. The movie was *Wife, Beware.*

Annual Earnings, 1932 to 1934

Accountant*	$1320.00
Architect (state)*	3600.00
Bituminous Coal Miner	710.00
Bookkeeper*	1200.00
Carpenter*	1800.00
Chemist*	2400.00
Clerk*	1320.00
College Teacher	3111.00
Construction Worker	1150.00
Dentist	2479.00
Electrician*	2400.00
Engineer	2520.00
File Clerk*	1200.00
Governor*	7500.00
Hired Farm Hand	206.00
Iron & Steel Worker	835.00
Janitor*	1320.00
Laundry Worker	675.00
Lawyer	4156.00
Librarian*	1700.00
Municipal Court Judge (city of 30,000 to 50,000)*	3400.00
Physician	3178.00
Printer	1250.00
Schoolteacher	1417.00
Secretary*	1200.00
Statistician*	1800.00
Stenographer*	1200.00
Telephone Operator*	1050.00
Textile Worker	615.00
Watchman*	1500.00

**Iowa state employee*

So much for the lighter side of America in our graduation year. I hardly need add that there was another side, and it was my thought that we should not ignore it even on this joyful occasion. For I believe profoundly that the strains on the social fabric of America, the cement that holds us together as a nation, were never as great in any previous period of our history (save for the Civil War years) as they were in the Great Depression. Just a few

"bench marks":

A wave of lynching swept over the South in 1933, and forty-two blacks were lynched — something to keep in mind when we recall the surging demand for "black power" in the 1960s.

In September of the year we graduated, 2,000 American rural schools failed to open, more than 1,500 colleges and commercial schools suspended, 200,000 certified teachers were unemployed, and 2.3 million school-age children were not in school.

Half the workers in Detroit were jobless and this was bad news for an economy in which the jobs of five million Americans depended on the automotive and related industries.

But the greatest strain on the social fabric, the most dramatic portent of genuine revolution, came not in the great industrial cities, but right here in Iowa, with some of the action occurring six miles from where we sit.

No group in America except for black workers was hit harder by the depression than the farmers. Their realized net income in 1932 was less than a third of what it had been in 1929. Farmers were getting two cents a quart for milk and corn sold for eight cents a bushel. Pure White Chester hogs brought two cents a pound. Iowa farmers burned corn in their stoves to keep their families warm in winter and a western Iowa county adopted the policy of burning corn to heat its courthouse because it couldn't afford coal.

Those were the days of the dollar and the ten-cent farm sales. When a farm was foreclosed the neighbors would rally 'round at the auction sale and bid a few cents on the equipment — perhaps twenty-five cents for a horse, ten cents for a plow. They would bid a ridiculously low price on the land, too, then give it all back to the farmer. Any outsider who came to the sale bent on acquiring the farm was rudely and effectively dissuaded, as a rule, by the neighbors.

In LeMars, Iowa, angry farmers dragged a judge named Bradley off his bench, hauled him to the fairgrounds, and put a noose around his neck. He had ordered the sale of farms under the sheriff's hammer, as the law required. One observer recalled: "They were gonna string him up in the old horse thief fashion, but somebody had sense enough to stop the thing before it went too far."

These were also the days of Milo Reno's "Farmers' Holiday" movement. Farmers armed with pitchforks, sticks, and sometimes guns would blockade the roads to prevent trucks from carrying produce to market. A milk strike began around Sioux City, where patrols of farmers blocked all ten highways into town, ripping open milk cans and pouring the fresh milk into the ditches. The strike spread as far east as the Benson Cooperative Creamery in Cedar Falls. James Hearst, the Cedar Falls poet and farmer, one of the great human beings I have known, described the Benson Creamery incident graphically in the *Palimpsest* in 1978.

Jim had driven north from his family's farm on a July morning and was stopped by a truck blocking the road, half a mile from the creamery. He was shocked when two of his neighbors, Einer Clausson and Jake Miller, got out with rifles. Jim wrote:

"Old Einer looked me right in the eye. 'You ain't going any farther, Jim. No one but us members can go down to the creamery. What are you doing over here anyway, you boys don't milk?'

" 'I just came over to see if what we heard is true,' Jim said.

" 'If you heard we was dumping milk and cream, you heard right. . . . Just look down that road and see that big new truck upside down in the ditch? You think the fairies did it?'

"The truck lay on its side," Jim wrote, "and you could smell the milky suds that filled the ditch. I looked down the road past the creamery and there was another group of men with guns. I said, 'Do you really think this kind of

monkey business will raise prices?'

"Einer replied: 'We can sure raise hell and maybe some of the big bugs will get it through their thick heads that we're hurting out here.' "

You can understand why the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, Edward A. O'Neill of Alabama, hardly a flaming radical, warned a Senate committee in January 1933: "Unless something is done for the American farmer, we will have a revolution in the countryside within less than twelve months." Something was done, of course, with the enactment in May of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) and the other legislation rushed through Congress in the hectic first "Hundred Days" of the New Deal.

The Hundred Days, stretching from March 9, when the emergency session of the Seventy-third Congress convened, through June 16, when it adjourned, was the most intensive legislative period in United States history. President Roosevelt summoned Congress to deal with the banking crisis, then decided to keep it in session to deal with unemployment and farm relief as well.

When the Hundred Days were over, a comprehensive body of laws affecting banking, industry, agriculture, labor, and unemployment relief had been enacted. We could have our differences about the effectiveness of some of that legislation, though much of it has stood the test of time. The AAA and the National Industrial Recovery Act, which spawned the NRA, with its blue eagle, were both declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

But the president's bank holiday proclamation and the Emergency Banking Relief Act worked promptly and effectively. During the first three days after the four-day banking holiday, 4,507 national banks and 567 state banks reopened — about seventy-five percent of all the member banks of the Federal Reserve system.

Of interest to several members of our graduating class was the Civilian Conservation Corps

The National Guard was called in to quiet the protesting crowd at Denison, Iowa, when a 1933 farm foreclosure sale got out of hand. (ISHD, Des Moines)

Reforestation Relief Act, passed March 31 to provide work for 250,000 jobless male citizens between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. An article in the *Des Moines Register* two years ago summed up the CCC's activities in Iowa: "By 1936, $22 million had been spent in Iowa, where 30,000 young men had treated nearly 300,000 acres for soil erosion, protected 14 million square yards of stream and lake banks, built more than 60,000 check dams and constructed 65 miles of terracing. Another 1.8 million acres were protected against tree and plant diseases."

Whatever the merits of the legislation, there can be little doubt that the Hundred Days lifted what my *Times* colleague called "that wintry despair" and restored hope. Mr. Roosevelt did not preside over full economic recovery until the war came, but he did rally a nation. I doubt if any who heard it ever forgot that voice coming out of the radio March 4, saying: "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed effort to convert retreat into advance." As James Hearst wrote, that may have been a clever political ploy, but after it there was hope.

Among those who were to underestimate the thirty-second president to their ultimate regret were Adolf Hitler and the Japanese military. And that gets me back to our graduation day. It is my conviction that the die had been cast for major war in both Europe and Asia by the time we were accepting our diplomas from Harry Merrill, the president of the Cedar Falls School Board, on June 1. I believe that by then there was little chance to check the tide of events that were to have their impact, directly or indirectly, on every member of the class of 1933, and were to involve us in global conflict some eight years and six months after our graduation.

It could be argued that the German general staff would have overthrown Hitler had France and Britain resisted Germany's reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936. It could be argued that moderates in Japan might have prevailed over the military had the other major powers united to resist Japanese encroachment in Manchuria and North China. We shall never know: there was no unified, effective resistance. At every crisis point for six and eight years, respectively, Hitler and the Japanese military were allowed to advance unchecked.

On the day we graduated Hitler had been chancellor of Germany only 121 days, but in its June 1 edition the *New York Times* carried no fewer than eight separate news stories about Nazi Germany.

It reported that the Nazis were continuing to destroy, with "guerrilla warfare," the Nationalists who had helped them to power. They were dissolving nationalist organizations or suppressing them, removing all Nationalists from key positions. They had used the Reichstag fire in February to suspend all guarantees of liberty and institute imprisonment without trial in concentration camps. And Hitler had begun the persecution of German Jews that would lead eventually to Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Dachau and Belsen, and the extermination of six million human beings.

I found it fascinating that the word "holocaust" appeared in the *Times* on our graduation day to describe this process. Else Lasker Schuler, one of several prominent German Jewish intellectuals who had vanished without trace in Germany, showed up destitute but safe in Zurich. She said: "I have run away from the holocaust in Germany."

That same day, the *Times* reported an attack by the Archbishop of Canterbury on Hitler's persecution of the Jews. The Most Rev. Cosmo Gordon Lang expressed "the earnest hope that the German people will not stain their great national movement by continuing this unfair and oppressive racial discrimination."

Also that day, the *Times* reported from Budapest that the International Congress of

Journalists had broken openly with the German Press Association for its exclusion of Jews and Marxists from membership.

Another news story reported that the Council of the League of Nations scheduled a meeting to hear a committee of jurists' report on German objections to a petition charging anti-Semitism in Upper Silesia. In London an Academic Assistance Council was formed to help an estimated 400 scientists and professors who had been dismissed from German universities. The American Association of University Professors protested to the League of Nations about "intolerant treatment" of professors in Germany. Quite a news budget for a single day about Germany's accelerating slide toward tyranny and aggression.

That same day, the *Times* reported that a truce terminating hostilities between Japan and China in North China carried harsh terms imposed by the Japanese victors. It said "no attempts were made to placate the sensibilities of Chinese delegates."

But the major *Times* story on Japan concerned a New York luncheon address by Viscount Kikujiro Ishii, Japan's chief delegate to the impending World Economic Conference in London. In fact, the *Times* deemed Viscount Ishii's remarks so important that it ran the full text of his speech, along with the news story. And the gist of what he said was to become drearily familiar in the years leading up to Pearl Harbor.

Although the Japanese armed forces had penetrated China itself and driven Chinese forces from Shanghai in 1932, the Viscount portrayed China as the real aggressor because it had attempted an economic boycott against Japanese-occupied Manchuria. Japan announced its withdrawal from the League of Nations in May after a League commission criticized Japanese aggression. Viscount Ishii said that for Japan to return to the League, its covenant would have to be amended to include provisions against treaty-breaking and what he called "economic aggression." And evidently he said all this with a straight face and without being challenged by his audience.

Following Japan's example, Nazi Germany quit the League of Nations October 14. And for a touch of irony, on our graduation day, the United States delegate to yet another futile disarmament conference in Geneva welcomed proposals submitted by France for strengthening the supervision of disarmament.

This is enough, I am sure, to make my point that our graduation year was a pivotal one and that momentous, portentous events were occurring on the very day we received our diplomas — events of whose portent and impact I am afraid most of us and most of the American people were blissfully unaware.

The half-century since that hot night of June 1, 1933, has witnessed some of man's greatest achievements: the advance in aviation from the World War I Jenny biplane, in which Johnny Livingston took up passengers for $5 a head at the Cedar Valley District Fair, to the supersonic airliner, the Concorde, which crosses the Atlantic in two-and-one-half hours; man's penetration of outer space and his landing on the moon; advances in medical science from the sulfa drugs, discovered the year before our graduation, to the whole array of wonder drugs and miracle surgery that includes heart and kidney transplants. And a great many others.

But it has also been a half-century which has seen man sink to depths equal to any recorded by history, in crimes against humanity, symbolized by the names of Buchenwald and Auschwitz, by Josef Stalin's liquidation of millions of kulaks and cossacks and communist dissenters in the Soviet Union, and by an obscure place on the map of Vietnam called My Lai.

But we *have* survived, and the nation has survived. Forty-two of the seventy-seven of us who graduated from Cedar Falls High School

in 1933 have come back for this reunion, eloquent witnesses to the capacity of human beings for survival. And the United States, still relatively young among the major nations of the world, is one of the oldest of the democracies, even when Great Britain is included. Perhaps we have done something right after all.

In any event, I wish to leave you with just one prediction about the next half-century. I hope some of you will remember this fearless forecast when we assemble for our centennial reunion in the year 2033.

As a public affiars journalist I usually shun prognostication. I leave that to Jack Anderson or Evans and Novak, to George Will or others whose arrogance is too often exceeded only by their ignorance. But here is my prediction, which begs the validity of the old saw about the first fifty years being the hardest. It concerns the half-century that lies ahead and it consists of only four words: It won't be dull. □

Note on Sources

The basic sources for this address included Robert Bendiner, *Just Around the Corner: A Highly Selective History of the Thirties* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), Gorton Carruth, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1979), Irving S. Kull, *A Short Chronology of American History, 1492-1950* (Rutgers University Press, 1952), Richard B. Morris, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), National Geographic Society, *We Americans* (Washington, D.C., 1975), and *Webster's Guide to American History* (New York: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1965). Many 1933 issues of the *New York Times* proved valuable, as did the 17 March 1981 issue of the *Des Moines Register*. Also important was James Hearst's article, "We All Worked Together: A Memory of Drought and Depression," which appeared in the May/June 1978 issue of the *Palimpsest*.

Forty-two members of the Cedar Falls High School Class of 1933 attended the class' fifty-year reunion in June. The participants included, from left to right: (front row) Robert Grant, David Bailey, George Miner, Ray Ebersold, Add Webster, Charlie Shedd, Harrison Willson, Rod Merrill; (second row) Genevieve Ostergaard Jones, Paula Streeter Meikle, Vera Madsen Wright, Gladys Wilson Ley, Margaret Gump Meyer, Grace Olsson Skiles, Mary Llewellyn Trowbridge, Martha Petersen Shedd, Marvel Bossman Hamilton, Allene Strand Landhuis, Gwen West Pico; (third row) Bernice Bagg Potter, Violette Nasby Eppard, Margaret Erickson Ross, Lucille Eickelberg Sheldon, Bernice Flynn Morgensen, Louise Jensen Eckerman, Ruth Nelson Streeter, Lucile Lang Miller, Elizabeth Lamme Kennison, Charles Poduska, George Sherk; (back row) Sheldon Smith, Harold Thompson, Hubert Iversen, Carmen Shortess Fox, Dorothy Galloway Hanisch, Rachel Hughes Surber, Virginia Auld Seeley, Ardyce Masterson Claerbout, Graham Hovey, Les Cawelti, Leonard Petersen. Not pictured is Bernita Barger Trost. (photograph courtesy of Virginia Seeley)