



Is That So?

Friend to Plover But Enemy to Man

By EUGENE BURNS

A SKULL SHAKER it is! Identify me by No. 2 and you are in the expert class; by No. 5, you're still fair to middling.

1. Without using my legs, I am a powerful swimmer—none of my kind going far a-sea. A meat-eater, I do not chew my food; to help my digestion along, I swallow hard objects like pebbles. I build a large nest and my young hatch from hard-shelled, goose-sized eggs. Come the springtime, when romance gives me a twinge, my bellows may carry a mile to my smaller mate. At the same time, I emit jets of musk from paired glands under my chin.

2. I may continue to grow half a century or more—in this, I think I am unique. Once I'm adult, man alone is my enemy—and even though armed, he shows considerable respect for me. With my bantam-weight youngsters, it's different: their enemies are legion—Birds, raccoons, soft-shelled turtles, fish, snakes. Even their own father may devour them.

3. Survivor of an ancient race, my fossil remains have been found in Europe and America. They show that I once had 6-inch teeth set in a 6-foot head, and measured over 50 feet. Today my



kind are smaller—from 4 to 25 feet—and encircle the globe's warm regions. However, direct sunshine at 100 degrees F. kills me. Before the white man, my range in America extended from the Rio Grande in Texas to North Carolina.

4. I construct my den in the riverbank above water level, entering it through an underwater passageway. To avoid the heat of day, I bask in water or mud; to avoid droughts, I burrow into the mud and sleep; to overcome cold, I hibernate, perhaps months on end—the farther north, of course, the longer.

5. The female builds the nest. Some make a large mound of

vegetable matter and mud, others scoop out a hollow in the sand. Laid, the 20 to 100 white eggs are covered. The heat from the decaying vegetables and warm sand incubates them. After 8 weeks or so, the mother hears the "grunting" from inside the buried eggs, scratches away the covering, and then the young peck their way out with an egg-tooth which is discarded within a couple of days. At birth, the young are 8 inches long and look surprisingly mature. They grow slowly, about a foot a year until mature, at 10.

6. For a land-lubber, I've made some rather clever adaptations. For easy walking in bogs, my feet are webbed; for floating in water, just under the surface, my nostrils open on the tip-top of my upturned snout so I can breathe, and to keep a sharp lookout, my eyes protrude, stem-like. Should I desire to submerge completely, I close 3 valves: one for my nostrils; another for my ears; a third for my throat—the latter permits me to kill my prey under water.

7. I am mostly a night-time feeder—eating anything which I can overpower such as fish, salamanders, birds, and creatures which come to the river-banks, including cattle. My favorite approach is to proceed slowly, care-

fully—and then make a sudden rush, striking my victims with my large, powerful tail, and then seizing them in between my formidable jaws, and dragging them under the water to drown.

8. My sharp interlocking teeth are embedded in vise-like jaws. Despite my big mouth, I cannot swallow anything large so once I drown my prey, I seize hold of a chunk and twist it off by turning my body lengthwise in the water. Curiously, once my big mouth is clamped shut, a comparatively weak man can hold it shut with his bare hands.

9. Rapacious though I am, I have formed a touching partnership with a plover-like little bird. As I sleep with my mouth agape, this little fellow pops in and out fearlessly, picking my teeth. Occasionally, he also picks things out of my close-set overlapping bony armor-plate that covers my back and neck.

10. Of all reptiles, I am perhaps the most highly specialized. The soft underpart of my tough skin is made into traveling bags, handbags, and shoes; my teeth make fine ivory; my musk glands rare perfume; and some people think my eggs scrumptious. I am best known for my so-called crocodile tears. Nonsense! I care not a hoot for my victims.

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FIRST MUNICIPAL SUMMER THEATER

Philadelphia Goes Into Show Biz

By JAMES F. HAUGHTON
Of The NEA

PHILADELPHIA (NEA)—The citizens of staid Philadelphia are in the theater business—and they love it.

The Playhouse in the Park, America's only municipally-operated summer theater in the round, is now in its third and most successful season. In fact, there is even talk of opening a second tent theater in another part of the city.

the city's huge Fairmount Park. The lowly outdoor setting is in direct contrast to the busy downtown district only minutes away.

The Playhouse, which aims to provide the living theater for the average Philadelphian to enjoy, features top Broadway and Hollywood stars in leading plays at prices ranging from \$1.20 to \$2.40. Wednesday and Saturday matinee tickets sell for \$1.20 and \$1.80.

Not only do playgoers get free parking and excellent protection provided by Fairmount Park Guards, but they also enjoy comfortable seats and an intimate view of the circular stage—some 68½ feet in circumference. The theater has 1,072 seats.

Although a comparative newcomer on the summer circuit, the municipal tent show has rapidly gained favor with show folks. It ranks with Westport, Conn.; Provincetown, Mass.; and Bucks County, Pa., among actor and actresses.

Quaker City residents are given a varied theater fare during the 13-week season which began in June and closes in September. Managing Director Samuel Handelman, a veteran of 30 years in show business, has arranged such shows as "Boy Meets Girl," "Front Page," "Ah, Wilderness" and "Tonight at 8:30."

This season's casts feature such standouts as Joan Blondell, Zachary Scott, Robert Preston, Betty Field and Kim Stanley. Margaret Truman is scheduled for a late August appearance in "Autumn Crocus." Treasurer Harry Silver reports "the biggest advance sale in history" for Miss Truman's appearance.

Credit for the city summer theater belongs to John B. Kelly, famous Olympic oarsman who began as a bricklayer and now a millionaire brick contractor and civic leader.

He's also the father of Hollywood's newest star, Grace Kelly, and of Henley rowing star, Jack, Jr., and a brother of George and Walter, famed author and actor. The success of Philadelphia's

city theater has prompted Actors Equity, the stage union, to campaign among mayors and civic leaders in the United States and Canada, urging cities to get in show business. Several of the 65 cities contacted have expressed interest in sponsoring tent shows.

"Not only has a handsome and unexpected profit been chalked up," Equity reports, "but it has been found that people are most appreciative of what their Park Commission has done."

Police Seek Church Usher In Portland

PORTLAND (AP)—A 25-year-old usher for the First Methodist Church here was sought Thursday in connection with the theft of more than \$500 of Sunday collections.

The suspect was identified as Robert L. Johnson, alias Robert L. Gordanier, who also has passed bad checks worth \$400 to Portland merchants. Spokane police were reported to be looking for a man of his description on a bad check charge.

Johnson was taken into the home of Rev. Laurence E. Nye, church pastor, several months ago. He was to have deposited the missing money at a bank Tuesday.

Rev. O. Maxwell Graham, an assistant minister, called in police after the usher's disappearance was discovered following the suspected theft.

Detective William Brian told church officials that the usher and the man wanted by Spokane police used the same name. He said Spokane police reported their subject was "active in church work" and was possibly staying with a Portland minister.

The man sought by Spokane police had passed \$2,000 in bad checks in that area. Portland police also were checking several check transactions made by the missing Johnson. One concerned a \$1,000 personal check he gave Rev. Nye for purchase of a car.

ILLEGAL PARKING

MILFORD, Conn. (AP)—When Mrs. Phyllis White moved over to let her husband drive their automobile, she accidentally stepped on the accelerator. Police said the car lurched across a street, narrowly missing other machines, and "parked" in a garage which it entered by punching a 10 x 10 foot hole. Her husband was thrown out, hurting his leg, but she escaped without a scratch.



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