



# Confessions of a Moving Man

*Every year 30 million Americans change addresses; some do it with tears, others with laughs—but few without some surprise for the men who tote their stuff back and forth*

By JEROME C. CIRKER

**T**HE JOB LOOKED simple enough. This couple was making the move from an apartment to a house. But as soon as my crew started bringing in the furniture, the fireworks started. "Put the love seat in front of the fireplace," said the wife.

"Nuts!" replied the husband, "I want my lounge chair there."

And so it went. Whatever idea she had, he was against—and vice versa. We weren't enjoying this moving job one bit—unlike the trio on today's **FAMILY WEEKLY** cover. In fact, we figured that any minute they would head for the divorce court.

Then one of my moving men got the couple together and said, "Look, folks, is this the way you want to get started in your new home?" Immediately, they stopped bickering, relaxed, and invited us all to have a drink with them. By the time the job was done, they were standing in the middle of their new living room, his arm around her and her head on his shoulder, both of them lost in admiration of their new domain.

Strange cases like this come to be almost routine in this mad moving business my family's been in for so many years. When we opened the door of a house in New York years ago to remove its contents at public order, we were greeted by a really incredible sight: piles of newspapers and junk—battered furniture, tin cans, even hunks of automobiles—were stacked from floor to ceiling. We went about the job of removing what seemed to be the accumulated debris of a lifetime, when suddenly one of my men came upon the body of an elderly man buried under the papers.

It took us five days to remove the 50 tons of trash from this house. And for months, newspapers and magazines printed stories about its occupants—the famous Collyer brothers. For years, this pair of aged recluses—scions of a once-wealthy and prominent family—had refused to have anything to do with the outside world and had buried themselves within their cluttered mansion.



We handle the moving for a lot of well-known personalities. When we moved Steve Allen, his family, and 22 members of his company from New York to California last summer, it turned out to be an experience almost as unpredictable as Steve's show. We were all set to go when a rush call came from California to pick up some shirts that Steve had left at a laundry. In spite of this and similar problems, we enjoyed the job and found Steve to be funnier off-screen than he is on.

I understand that each year over 30 million Americans move to new addresses and that the average person moves almost a dozen times in his life. Believe me, every time it's an occasion for highly seasoned emotions. People always have

mixed reactions to changes and they often reveal their deepest feelings in moving to a new home.

Not long ago, we were hired for what looked like a routine move to a small house in Pennsylvania. The woman was all packed when we arrived, but as we went to work the tears started to flow.

It turned out she was leaving her husband after 15 years of marriage, but now that she saw her home being stripped bare of all she loved, her husband's transgressions seemed small compared to a future without him. Well, it happened that one of the crewmen had a daughter who had gone through a similar experience and had decided to forgive her husband; now she was a happy housewife again, with three darling children. After he had talked with the woman awhile, she told us to bring everything back in!

That was one moving job we didn't mind losing.

**A**NOTHER JOB I won't soon forget involved an elderly couple who, after living in the same house for 47 years, were moving to a home for the aged. All their belongings, the cherished possessions of a lifetime, were being given to charity. And as we loaded the van, we saw them walking down the path away from their home, hand in hand, with never a backward glance.

A few years ago, a woman moving from New Jersey to Iowa wanted to take along 150 house plants, all neatly arranged in an open crate. She handed the moving man a watering can and gave him detailed instructions on how to care for them.

When he protested that he wasn't allowed to transport plants, she called him a brute, a monster, and an enemy of God's green growing things. In fact, she didn't calm down until he promised to take all the plants home with him and give them the loving care they were accustomed to.

Funny thing is that this guy, who'd never grown anything but whiskers, now has become a talented and enthusiastic gardener!

## COVER:

Fred Irvin shows us a pause in the day's occupation as a jolly threesome indulges in a bit of moving harmony. It's all part of a fascinating job, as you'll see in "Confessions of a Moving Man," above.

**Family Weekly**

May 1, 1950

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WALTER C. GREYNS Vice President  
PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

Send all advertising communications to  
Family Weekly, 150 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to  
Family Weekly, 60 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

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Sub. (Dist.) 1500 15th Ave., John Hoderman, Jerry Klein,  
Harold Landa, Jack Ryan; Post Office, Hollywood.

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