



Ushering at the Lucille Ball-Gary Morton wedding.

I'M THE WORLD'S GREATEST GATE CRASHER!

While you dream about meeting John Glenn or dancing with Marilyn Monroe, a jaunty taxi driver is doing just that

By STAN BERMAN
as told to Marya Saunders and Bob Gaines



Night clubbing with Rita Hayworth.



Strolling with ex-President Truman.



Berman after bestowing fake Oscar at the Academy Awards.



Hobnobbing with Ted, Bob Kennedy.



Rubbing elbows with the Kennedy clan at the Inaugural Ball.



Welcoming astronaut Glenn at New York's ticker-tape parade.

THOUSANDS were cheering as astronaut John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth, climbed onto the reception platform at New York's City Hall. I walked over and shook his hand. "How are you, Colonel?" I said. He smiled noncommittally.

I then shook hands with the others on the platform: Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Mayor Robert Wagner of New York, Mrs. Glenn and her children, and the six other astronauts who were taking part in the ticker-tape parade through Manhattan. They all smiled.

As we were being seated, I suddenly reached in front of Mayor Wagner and handed Colonel Glenn a small trophy. It was an imitation-gold statuette I'd bought the previous night in a novelty store. The inscription on the base read: "To Col. John Glenn, World's Greatest Astronaut, From Stan Berman, World's Greatest Gate Crasher."

What happened after that is incidental to the story. Mayor Wagner stared at me in shock and, the next thing I knew, three burly Secret Service men had yanked me off the platform. But I had accomplished what I had set out to do. Despite hundreds of police and Secret Service men, I'd slipped through the barricades and crashed the Glenn parade. Thousands gathered at City Hall and millions watching on tv had seen me there. I'd done the impossible.

Several weeks later I did the same thing at the Academy Awards presentation in the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Bob Hope, master of ceremonies at the event, has often joked about his long wait for an Oscar of his own. So when the awards were being handed out this year, I suddenly appeared on the stage and announced: "I'm here to present Bob Hope with his 1938 award." As the audience of movie stars gasped, I plunked a miniature Oscar on the podium and disappeared. Shelley Winters thought I was a winner as I came on stage—and almost gave me the Oscar for black-and-white photography.

Later in April I was back in New York for the televised presentation of the Tony Awards, the legitimate theater's equivalent of the Oscars. That time I got on stage twice and presented flowers to two award-winning actresses.

In the past 18 years, I've crashed more than 3,000 "uncrashable" parties. I've eaten more than 1,000 free meals, rubbed elbows with statesmen, queens, movie stars, socialites, famous athletes. I've been seen with every President since Herbert Hoover. Last year, during the Inaugural Ball, I sat in the Presidential box next to Joseph Ken-

nedy, the President's father, and only a few seats away from President Kennedy and Jacqueline.

I crash everything—movie premieres, political rallies, championship prize fights, diplomatic receptions, and weddings and funerals of the famous. I've dined and danced with such beauties as Rita Hayworth, Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, and Princess Grace of Monaco.

Some people deny that I crash all these events. But I make it a point of getting documented evidence whenever possible. After Lucille Ball's recent wedding to Gary Morton (which I crashed disguised as her bodyguard), Lucy swore I had not been there. She kept on swearing—until I produced pictures showing me helping her into her limousine at the church.

Some of my friends and relatives think I'm crazy to have spent 18 years crashing parties. My mother is afraid the FBI will get me eventually. "Why, Stanley?" she asks. "Why should a 36-year-old bachelor with a good job as a cab driver and a good home with his parents in Brooklyn want to be a gate crasher?"

I can only tell her it's exciting to prove to myself that a humble cabby can hobnob with the great. It's my hobby, just as some people collect stamps, and I know plenty who envy me.

It All Started with Roosevelt

Our country's Presidents and political leaders always have had a special fascination for me—probably because my career as a gate crasher started in 1944 when I went to a political rally in Brooklyn to get President Roosevelt's autograph. I managed to slip by the guards and get close enough to pass a note up to the President's box. I didn't get the autograph, but it was a thrill seeing him. I decided then I was going to be important and mix with the famous.

Since then, I've been a dedicated Presidential gate crasher. Once, I strolled into the White House grounds to meet President Truman, but the guards nabbed me before I got to him. I caught up with President Eisenhower several times on the golf course, and I've shaken hands with and waved campaign signs for every Presidential candidate since 1948. When Gen. Douglas MacArthur came back from Korea, I hitchhiked to the West Coast so I could be one of the first people to greet him. I dropped a note into his pocket. It read: "MacArthur for President."

But my biggest crash took place when Queen Elizabeth II visited this country in 1957. The Queen was the best-guarded person I've ever encountered. Because this represented a challenge, I decided I would try.

I slipped through a side exit of the Waldorf-

Astoria Hotel in New York the evening an official banquet was being held there in the Queen's honor. Once inside, I worked my way down to the kitchen. There I picked up a tray, draped a napkin over my arm as if I were a waiter, and walked out into the crowded ballroom. A detective even held the door for me.

I marched up to the dais where the Queen was sitting with W. Averell Harriman, then governor of New York. I handed the Queen my autograph book and said, "Your Majesty, may I have your royal signature?"

She said, "Ugh"—her exact word—and gave the book to Governor Harriman. He said, "No," and gave the book back to me.

Scotland Yard Had a Waiter, Too

Not wishing to make a scene, I turned away. Another man dressed like a waiter came up behind me, pressed something in my back, and said, "Keep walking, chum. This is Scotland Yard."

I spent the rest of the evening in the 54th Street police station. The police grilled me for four hours. They wouldn't believe I was just a gate crasher and autograph collector. Finally, they took me to Bellevue Hospital. There, the examining psychiatrist talked to me a few minutes, then turned to the police and said, "Why do you waste my time? There's nothing wrong with being an autograph collector. I'm one myself."

Gate crashing is essentially hard work. I wear out three suits a year, and my pants are usually shiny from all the banquets I attend. Clothes are important, and I spend \$20 a week for the best shoes, shirts, ties, stockings. When I go out to society parties, I act and dress the part.

I always keep a good dark suit and a shaving kit in the back of my cab when I'm cruising in case I bump into a good party. Since most of the hotels have at least one function a night, I'm never short of parties.

To be a successful gate crasher, you must throw out your chest and say, "I'm as good as anybody and I'm better than most." I carry all kinds of press cards to get me past ticket collectors and police barricades, but I rarely depend on them. My real tools are timing, cool nerves, and a faith in myself.

If anybody does stop me, I have dozens of alibis ready. I say I'm a reporter or a relative, a bodyguard, a caterer, a doctor, a fire inspector.

I have become so well known to guards and police that I sometimes use disguises. I have a kit containing a fake mustache, a goatee, a pipe, and pancake make-up to give me a darker complexion.

In the past year, an exciting thing has happened. People have begun welcoming me to par-

(Continued on page 12)