

An Editor Rambles

Following the recent magazine editors' conference held in Washington at the Octagon (see *NMA*, Jan. 1963, page 11), I spent a couple of days in New York. I always enjoy New York. I enjoy the shows, the lights, the restaurants, the museums, and even the people — for a few days. After that, however, I am most happy to return to New Mexico.

There is a song, "New York, New York, it's a wonderful town." But is it? So infrequently does one hear a "please" or a "thanks." Most questions are surly and most answers are curt. The competition for taxis is animalistic; the push into subway trains is unyielding. Is this a product of *mass*? Does *mass* produce *rush*, and do *rush* and *mass* produce *human indifference*? Friendly to friends, yet uncaring for unknown neighbors.

The hardships of the African jungles may make cannibals out of humans; will the civilization of the mass produce a new form of cannibalism? Is our human race, though possibly quite lovely in isolated groupings, ugly in mass form? Are all our anti-ugliness campaigns (see page 17) only idle longings of romantic dreamers, and are they therefore doomed to failure?

But New York is exciting for the visitor. I sauntered through the Museum of Modern Art and its neighbors the Whitney Museum of American Art and the American Craft Council's exhibition area. I laughed at some of the works, smiled at others, and wanted to own several. Naturally these evaluations vary with the beholder.

New York is exciting architecturally and very lively. I made a special point of visiting the New I. Miller "shoe parlor" — one cannot use the crass term of *store* when referring to all this elegance. Here a non-descript Fifth Avenue retail space has been transformed into an elegant, almost "Gothic" retail establishment by Victor Lundy, A.I.A. Mundane structural piers have been encased in vertical stripes of wood and the result is a soaring nave with a surrounding balcony hanging just below the spring line of the vaults. Where these vaults join the walls, mirrors are placed to heighten the effect of soaring spaciousness. The entire scene is one of subdued grandeur; mulled velvets and silks, aluminum and glass, all combined with the wood-slatted columns and vaults to produce a setting of quiet splendor.

But it is best to enjoy this large space-drama and not to look at the jointing details of the myriad pieces of vertically laid wood. Perhaps good wood joinery is not compatible with New York wage scales. This interior, however, is "stage design" at its best! Elegant shoes are sold to elegant women in an elegant manner.

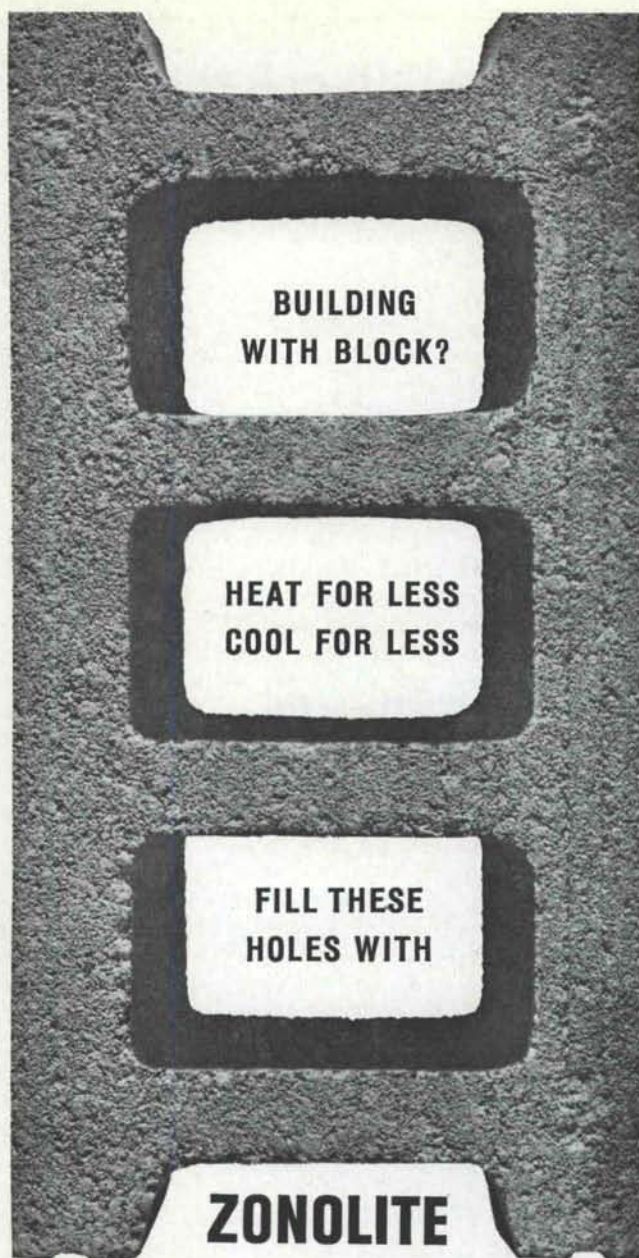
A walk of a few blocks will deposit you at one of New York's newest hotels. This is a "must" for the architectural sight-seer. The exterior is large and not a little flashy. To me it looked like a Florida beach hotel set uncomfortably on a too-small New York lot. Its name, "Americana," is boastfully spelled out along its roof top in letters large enough to be read five miles off shore.

Its interior is opulent and cluttered. It seems that every light source is bedecked with glass prism; they even hang from the semi-flush ceiling fixtures in the large assembly rooms. Gilded "things," ranging in height from one to six feet, stand about at various focal points. I suspect that these "creations" were conceived as supports for something like candles, lamps or plants, though their function may only have been to create the impression of luxury and elegance, an elegance of past, regal ages, long gone but redeemed by designers unable to cope with the problems of creative contemporary interior design. I have seen such "things" gathering dust on Third Avenue antique shops for years, and I used to wonder who would ever buy such nonsense. I have also mused on what a wonderful irrelevant wedding present such an *objet* would make for the young couple just moving into a cramped apartment!

But to return to the interior decor of the "Americana." No wall space or door or column is left unattended. Antique mirrors cover walls and columns. Moldings "relieve" the "harshness" of the flush door. Marble is used; wallpaper is used; in fact all the materials in the book are represented. It is thoroughly "decorated" if, unfortunately, not "designed." It is sheer visual cacophony. I recommend that you time your visit to the "Americana" so that you can go quickly around the block to sit in that "essence" of good interior design, La Fonda del Sol, and there have a strong Pisco Sour.

A trip to New Haven to visit the new Yale dormitories by Eero Saarinen was most rewarding. The day was cold and gloomy; the dormitories, warm and inviting. There is new visual excitement as each view or visita unfolds when one walks into and through the courts. The exterior wall texture is a warm sand-colored concrete and stone. The pleasing sculptures of blocky, monolithic and abstract concrete shapes are appropriately placed. The surrounding landscaping, while still in its infancy, is obviously an integral part of the over-all design; it is not the too often seen "foundation planting."

Inside, the dining halls are handsome and comfortable; the libraries are intimate and conducive to quiet study or relaxed reading. Saarinen has translated the essence of the "Collegiate Gothic" architecture of



ZONOLITE MASONRY FILL INSULATION

Because Zonolite Masonry Fill Insulation cuts thermal transmission (heat and cold) through your walls up to 50% or more, it pays for itself in three to four years in decreased fuel bills. From then on, just add the savings to your profits. Besides saving you money, Zonolite Masonry Fill Insulation also keeps your customers cooler in summer, warmer in winter. It reduces the loudness of sound transmitted through your walls by 20% to 31%, too! And, as an extra added attraction, its installed cost is low—as low as 10¢ per sq. ft. For complete information, send for booklet MF-53.

Southwest Vermiculite Co.

1822 First Street, Northwest, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Phone CHapel 7-2244

Apache Lumber Company

100 Mescalero, N.W. Albuquerque, N. M.

*Are Distributors For The State
Of New Mexico For The
Entire Line Of The*

Glen-Mar Door Manufacturing Company

Climate Built

*FOR
THE
ARID
SOUTH-
WEST*

No shrinkage,
no moisture to
lose before
stabilizing.
Every Glen-Mar door
is built with the
natural moisture
content of this
area (6%).

Glen-Mar
DOORS OF QUALITY

THE LOCATION of the Glen-Mar plant in dry Phoenix, achieves "Balanced Moisture Control" through maintenance of low moisture levels in all component parts, from raw material to finished door. For convincing proof of its superiority, just open and close a Glen-Mar door. They are Quality Built!

Manufacturers of:

- Hollow Core
- Solid Core
- Hollow Core Institutional
- Architectural Type
- Lead Lined X-Ray
- Wardrobe Units
- Special Sizes

Glen-Mar Door Manufacturing Co.
310 S. 43rd Ave. Phoenix, Ariz.

Yale's older colleges into modern dress and techniques without resorting to archaeological clichés. The detailing is simple and direct, and the buildings look as though they would withstand the vigor and vitality of many generations of college students.

Two reviews of these dormitories appear in the December issue of *Architectural Forum*. One is favorable and was written by Walter McQuade of the *Forum* staff. The other, by a British architectural critic, Reynier Banham, is a whopping damnation. When Mr. Banham observes that "Yale is a very sick place," I can only wish that my clients were so "sick!" I personally find no basis for any of Mr. Banham's judgments, and, on the contrary, I might suggest that it is he who needs the doctoring.

It is invigorating to see the architectural vitality displayed by a leading university like Yale. In New Haven new buildings are rising to mingle with the old. There is no attempt to mimic nor even to mock the Gothic or Georgian neighbors. The directions set by the university administration call for the architects to recognize site, place and purpose, and to produce work which is truly reflective of the best of contemporary thought.

The flight back to New Mexico originated from the TWA terminal also designed by Eero Saarinen. The space is sculptural drama. A review of this structure written by a layman, can be found on page 19 of this issue.

—J. P. C.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Southern and the Albuquerque Sections, New Mexico Chapter of A.I.A. report the elections of the following officers for 1963. A notice of the Santa Fe Section's officials was carried in the last issue of *NMA*.

SOUTHERN SECTION

Chairman E. C. French
Vice-Chairman Jerome Hartger
Secretary George Buffington
Director W. T. Harris

ALBUQUERQUE SECTION

Chairman Garland B. Bryan
Secretary Bill Wilson
Director Joe Boehning

FOR OVER A QUARTER
OF A CENTURY



HANLEY'S

Fine

PAINT

Products

AMBASSADOR
SUNFOE

*Climate Designed
for the Southwest*

HANLEY PAINT MFG. CO., INC.

EL PASO, TEXAS
Ph. KE 2-6921
SK 5-9821

ALBUQUERQUE
NEW MEXICO
Ph. 265-1524