

## Job Wanted

I submitted an advertisement to the woman in charge of the classified personals that appear in the final pages of this magazine. She rejected it.

Told me it was too personal for their personals, too heartbreaking, sounded to her like a phony, and ran too long. Said the classic classified personal runs to an average of forty to fifty words, and she implied, inferred, and came right out and said: At the rate of \$1.75 a word for a classified ad, it was obvious to her that, in my basket-case condition, I could not afford a 500-word personal.

She ended with giving me the name of a psychiatrist. I suppose, hers.

Isn't that something? A classic cry for help constrained to forty or fifty words. I can understand "Police!" "Fire!" or "SOS!" But setting down in forty or fifty words a lifetime of accumulated qualifications is what I call writing in shallow.

Excuse it, please. It just occurred to me you don't know what I'm talking about. Here is the ad:

**LECTURER.** Wants someone to lecture to. Three years' experience with a booking agency, during which time, according to all the written comments (solicited by the booker after each talk), I was judged a smashing success. Critiques sent by women's clubs, business organizations, town halls, library associations, conventions, community centers.

Subject of lecture: "Off the Top of My Head," an umbrella that permits pleasurable meandering through topics like the mores of our times, doctors, writing comedy for glamorous TV personalities, book publishers, nightclubs, the pigeon population explosion, politics, drug-store menus, my wife, etc. Nothing of any great import, but I do it as if I know what I'm talking about. Informative entertainment.

I am now without a booker because, although I began what seemed to be a flourishing and small, profitable sideline, in three short years my former bookers had me pegged on their list of Ten Least-Wanted Speakers in America Today.

Until now I have taken that denigration lying down. My favorite posture these days. But now I am aroused. I miss the glorious sound of uncanned laughter

from the audiences. And in my behalf I tell you that the bookers have never heard me speak, never once monitored my lectures. A point I made to the head man when I asked if he was interested in knowing what I talk about.

"What *do* you talk about?" he asked.

"About an hour," I replied.

"Good," he said. "That's what they want."

A couple of months ago I thought of sending him recordings taped by some of the groups to which I had spoken. But at that time turning over tapes was not the "in" thing to do.

During this past year, I received a flattering letter from a woman on the West Coast who heads a lecture bureau. She indicated she could think of no one she would rather handle than me. She had received a letter from Dean Dennis Watkins, Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth, who commended me highly. I wrote, giving her my business. Several months later she gave me the business.

Said on long distance that all budgets for speakers at colleges, chambers of commerce, literary clubs, senior-citizen groups, high schools, kindergarten classes, and church groups are being meted out to U.S. senators, Watergate witnesses, breakers-in, burglars, and other culprits in the dirty-tricks department of our government.

Although she didn't imply or infer or come right out and say it, I detected in her voice a wistful, wishful suggestion that I would be a cinch for bookings if I could see my way clear to doing you know what.

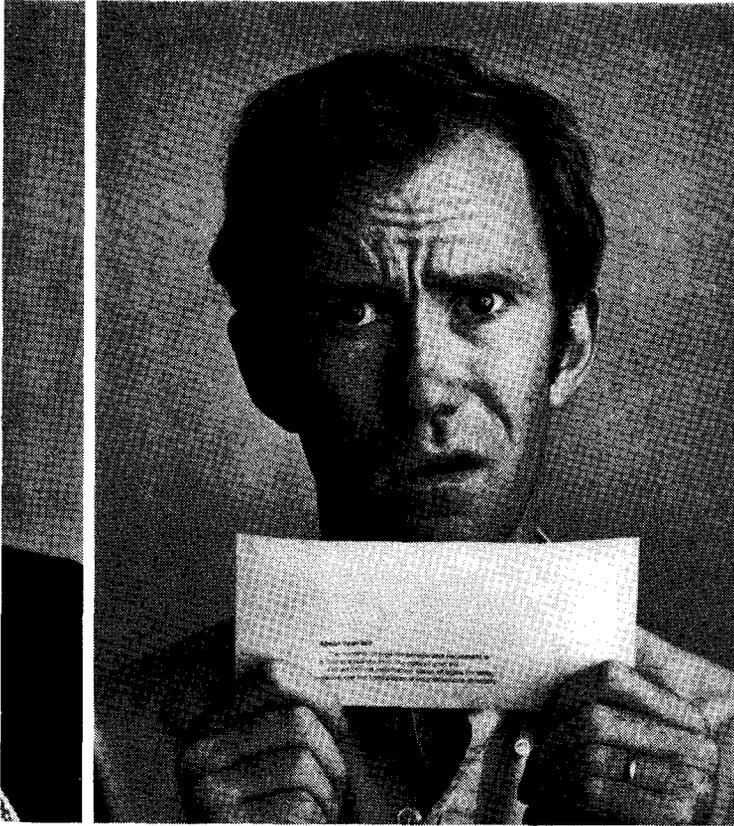
If you don't know "you know what," I tell you I am now ready to burglarize any hotel in your city or to break into the offices of any psychiatrist of your choice. Anything to rid myself of this pitiful, traumatic feeling of rejection.

Material is original and has been rated G. Sometimes I get slightly PG. But not overly. Have tux, will travel. Also three darling sports jackets with color-contrasting, double-knit slacks. These are also of very fine material.

I am a small eater. Love chicken patty. As an added inducement, and as a saving for your group, you may omit my tomato-soup course, also the ice-cream dessert. And no coffee. It tends to keep me awake through the whole lecture. □



## Wrong number?



**Error on your  
phone bill?**

**We'll take  
care of it.**

If you reach a wrong number when you're dialing a toll call, let the operator know about it as soon as it happens. We'll help you get the charge removed.

If the call does turn up on your bill, or if you are charged for a call you didn't make, just call your local Bell business office.

We know mistakes can happen. A service representative will be happy to correct any that turn up on your bill.

At AT&T and your local Bell Company, we agree: you shouldn't have to pay for calls you didn't make.

**We hear you.**



# Volkswagen's Next Turn

by Roland Gelatt

*Wolfsburg, West Germany*

The first glimpse of a Volkswagen parked discordantly along an American curb in the early 1950s was a sight at once incongruous and indelible. I remember coming upon a vintage specimen on New York's upper East Side, circa 1952. The car seemed grotesque—claustrophobically squat, out of scale with its surroundings, stark and colorless beside the two-toned chromic models from Detroit. It was not only ugly; it had an unsavory parentage. This people's car was originally meant for Hitler's people—those stalwart peons of Robert Ley's German Labor Front who had chipped in by the hundreds of thousands to finance its development. A vehicular reminder of the Nazi nightmare so soon after V-E Day was not exactly wonderful to behold. Indeed, most people assessing the car's chances on the American market twenty-odd years ago would have shared the opinion of Ford's chairman of the board, Ernest Breech, who had been offered the Volkswagen plant in 1948 as spoils of war. He turned it down as "not worth a damn."

Appearances, it turned out, were deceiving. That homely exterior camouflaged a marvel of engineering. The car was a kind of transistorized Rolls-Royce, an astonishing amalgam of quality and economy, and before long customers the

world over were lining up to buy it. The fortunes of Volkswagen became synonymous with the German economic miracle. Production climbed at a staggering velocity. In 1955 the millionth Beetle came off the assembly line. The five million mark was reached in 1961, the ten million in 1967. On February 17, 1972, Beetle No. 15,007,034 rolled out of the Wolfsburg plant to break the production record held by Henry Ford's Model T.

But by then clouds had gathered over Wolfsburg. When Volkswagen issued its annual report for 1971 a few months later, the financial community was stunned to discover that the company had been operating at virtually no profit for well over a year. Volkswagen's balance sheet continues to make somber reading. Successive revaluations of the German mark and the escalating cost of German labor have combined to price the VW Beetle almost out of the subcompact market. To stay at all competitive with Italian, Japanese, and Detroit minicars, Volkswagen has had to cut its profit margin on the Beetle drastically. Besides, the bloom is at last rubbing off this particular peach. Though the Beetle remains a force in an automobile market now dominated by low-gas-consumption models, it is no longer the wonder car of yesterday. Before the decade is over, it may be phased out altogether—at least as a Made in Germany product. Clearly, the time has come for Volkswagen to take a new turn.

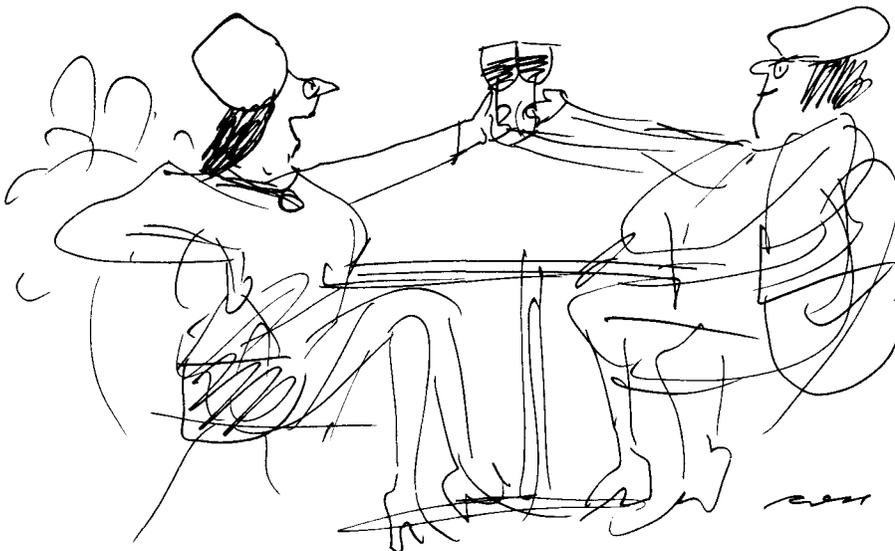
In which direction will it go? To look for an answer, I went to Wolfsburg, site of the company's headquarters and main plant, in the flatlands of Lower Saxony,

not far from the East German frontier. Today it is a city of 130,000, perhaps the most modern urban environment in Germany, where eight people out of ten owe their livelihood directly to Volkswagen. But to put this extraordinary community in perspective, it is necessary to view it first from a historical vantage point.

The seed from which it sprang took root in the imagination of Ferdinand Porsche some fifty years ago. Porsche was an Austrian car designer who had been active in the European automobile industry from its earliest days. Though his reputation was based on fast racing cars and elegant limousines, he became obsessed in the early 1920s with the idea of producing a car for the man in the street. But money was short and progress slow. Porsche was still floundering around with a few problem-ridden test models when he received a summons to meet the new chancellor of Germany.

Adolf Hitler was an automobile aficionado possessed of the politically attractive notion that every German laborer ought to have a car of his own. If private industry could not or would not manufacture a good and inexpensive automobile, the National Socialist State would take on the task. In 1934 Hitler sent for Porsche, fell in with his plans for the Volkswagen, and provided him with government financing to develop the car for mass production. Even then progress was slow. Prototype Volkswagens were hand built, subjected to rigorous tests, and then sent back to the drawing boards for further refinements. By 1938, however, most of the bugs had been ironed out, and the car was adjudged ready for production. A model from that year, assembled by hand, of course, is on display in Wolfsburg today. It still works.

Amid much rodomontade, the German Labor Front began taking orders for the car through its Strength Through Joy (*Kraft Durch Freude*) organization. The sales contract was purposely vague about delivery. In fact, the cornerstone for the Volkswagen factory was only dedicated on May 26, 1938. The plant—which Hitler declared would be the world's largest—was going up in what had been desolate swampland alongside the Mittelland Canal, about forty miles east of Hanover. Plans called not only for the erection of a giant factory on this virgin site but also for the creation of a whole new town on the other side of the canal. It was to be called *Stadt des KdF-Wagens*—City of the Strength Through Joy. (Continued on page 71.)



"To hell with rising prices, I say. Let's live!"