

Inside Indianapolis

Hoosier Profile

IT'S BEEN A blustery spring. Winter dumped record snows through Indiana. And the March lion turned out to be an old soot, snorting at least two cyclones over the state. This upset a lot of us, but it was a real worry to Walter Mendell.

That man you saw chasing hat across a downtown street was Walter's trouble. That man and the one who sat on his hat when he got into his car. He was trouble, too. For Walter has so many hats he hardly knows which way to turn.

You see he cleans hats and blocks 'em. He's been doing it for more than 30 years. And he's a youngish 60 now. He's a specialist, like a skin doctor or a business management consultant. He's got head contours on file of every man who ever amounted to anything in the heart of Indiana for the past 30 years, and quite a few who probably didn't amount to much, judging from the way they treated their hats.

He works at a bench in a window, steaming, ironing and brushing. All day he looks at the silent characters moving across the cosmopolitan stage through the window before, like a setting from "Street Scene." There's nothing elaborate or showy about his place. He gets by on know-how. You can tell that by the class of people who press the latch and move into the little one-chair waiting room, most of them with the high dignity and respect due a man who has spent his life the best for an income which will never let him retire.

While he was talking with a boyish frankness and a still eager outlook on life, a priest came in with a cheery "Good morning." His hat brim was turning up in the wrong place. Walter had his head measure. He slipped it on the form, turned on the steam. The priest had been sent in from the L. Strauss & Co. store. "It's one of those better jobs," the priest explained, "and it cost 20 bucks." When he left the Little Hatter of Kentucky Ave. said "No charge. It's good advertising" as if he meant it.

Customers Will Wait

WHAT WORRIES Walter Mendell (accent on the first syllable) is that he can't turn out a soft felt renovating job before Sept. 20. But the worry is offset by the fact that he knows his customers will wait. They've been with him for years—governors, football coaches, archbishops and bishops, business tycoons, bigwig politicians like Dr. Paul V. McNutt, top-drawer educators like Dr. H. B. Wells, president of Indiana University, race drivers, yes, and some newspapermen who don't take very good care of their headgear.

He's been making battered and sweat-stained hats look like new from his inauspicious little shop at 26 Kentucky Ave., since 1929. The great, the near-great, the prominent and the obscure, the industrious and the ne'er-do-wells have all beaten a path to his door. And they approach the master of his humble trade with hat-in-hand humility.

He was doing nicely until the war started, then he did better, much better. The stores sent him business. The hotels sent him business. His old customers referred new customers to him until, of all things, he had to put in a set of books.

That's where his attractive wife, Ada, came in. And she came in to stay. She runs the money



SIZE DOESN'T COUNT—Neither does shape, says Walter Mendell, who has on file thousands of head patterns. The business outlook is good, he says. He has enough hats on hand to keep him busy until Sept. 20.

They Make 'Em Look Good

"**FUNNY THING** about men," he says, "they'll pay \$20 or even \$30 for a hat with trim, smart lines, then they want it to look like an old one right away. They tilt it and bend the brim. Some of them actually work to get it out of shape." He added that they didn't want other people to know they were wearing a new hat so they try to make it look old, all of which doesn't add up.

"What do you know about a man from the shape of his head?" he was asked.

"Phrenology? That's out," he says firmly. "It doesn't make any difference what shape a man's head is, what size it is or what's in it. It's how he uses what he has that counts."

He learned the hat trade in Louisville and at the Wabash Hat Works. "I'll still avoid the short-cuts. Nobody gets a quickie job here."

Nervous, tense men pinch the crease of their hats. Others pull them out of shape. But, he assured, a hat can be made to fit right, cling to the head, stay on and feel comfortable.

And that's why Walter Mendell's customers (maybe they should be called clients) have piled up six months work in his little unpretentious shop where skill alone outtraces fine fixtures and the sincerity in the man's face and voice tell you pretty accurately what happens to that old battered felt when you drop it on his counter. (By Harold Hartley.)

Jordan Director To Be Honored

Dri Lloyd Sunderman, director of Jordan Conservatory, has been elected to honorary membership in Phi Sigma Mu, national honorary music-education fraternity.

Dr. Sunderman will be installed in ceremonies following the initiation rituals of Eta Chapter of the fraternity to be held at 7:30 a. m. tomorrow on the Jordan campus.

Ten new pledges to become members in the initiation ceremony are: Charles Bayfield, John Cooper, Homer Gober, Jules Goudy, John Netterville, Carl Nicholas, Morgan O'Dell, Richard Powers, Leonard Skinner and Charles Smith.

A breakfast will be served in the Riley Hotel following the initiation.

GROUP TO HOLD PARTY

A party for April 11 will be planned at a meeting of American Gold Star Mothers at 1:30 p. m. Monday in the World War Memorial West Room. The party will be held in the YMCA.

AMBASSADOR ALAMO—"Franklin 2581" for Marilyn's Bonded Furrier To Pick Up Your Furs

Marilyn Fur Co. 29 E. OHIO ST. INDIANAPOLIS' LARGEST EXCLUSIVE FURRIERS

PHONE **FRANKLIN** **2581** **MARILYN'S SCIENTIFIC** **FUR** **STORAGE** **\$100** **TO \$50** **INSURED**

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