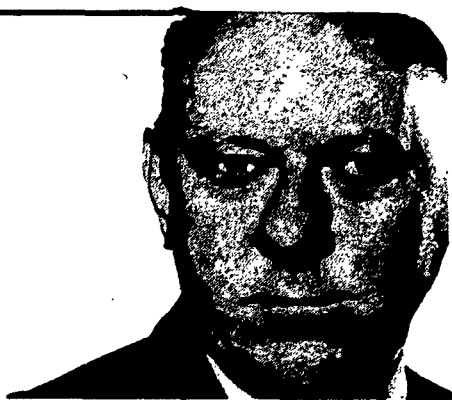


BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Moving is a melancholy business. The kids we bought the roost for have taken wing to the Big Town, to Ohio, to California. So, one of us said, "We really don't need a place this size," and that made sense. We'd sell it lock, stock, barrel (and the print of the Laughing Cavalier) and take with us only the good memories.

But the dear people who wanted the house shuddered perceptively at the way we had lovingly adorned it. Would we please be so kind as to pack everything and leave quietly?

Sure. But what to pack? What to keep? What to give away? What to consign to the damnation of the sanitation department?

Who would want a thermometer with a mercury leak, or a peeling trophy faintly inscribed: "Delaware Water Gap — Mixed Doubles — 1930 — Runner-up. Or a three-wheeled roller skate, Stassen-for-President pin, a piano full of tinklers, a rug the departed dogs obviously found great relief on, "Best Sports Stories of 1952," a rack of thin neckties,

and half a jug of some villainously purple liqueur?

The answer to those questions is "I," as it turned out.

Millie had a good idea: "Some of the kids are coming by. I told them to take anything they want."

But there was still utter chaos the next time I looked. The only thing they seem to have taken was my razor. They, in turn, asked their friends to pluck whatever they wished from what by now was Hesperus (N.J.). The friends did better than our spawn. One took the outboard motor, whose 2½ horsepower engine had thundered bravely across Deal Lake. Another made off with a dehumidifier. But a little girl from down the street balked when asked if she'd like Kelly's bike.

"No," she said, thoughtfully. "It's last year's."

One hopes that the librarians of Ocean Township and the Monmouth Medical Center will be charitable enough to accept

those books. Surely, they wouldn't be unkind enough to return the 14 bound volumes of the life styles of tsetse flies, all those Mignon Eberharts, Joy of Plane Geometry, Contemplations of Casey Stengel.

Hope the Salvation Army finds enough kids to adopt the tattered dolls and revive them with new names, new dresses and new hair-dos. Hope there are fresh batteries for the toys that ran down and were abandoned like derelicts along a highway. Hope somebody finds a ball for the pinball game, a dart for the dart board, a swinger for the swing, a good catcher for the Frisbie.

We're going to miss the good neighbors who somehow survived the electrified jam session period in the boys' life, and who kept an eye on the little boy who liked best to play in the middle of the street instead of the middle of the yard. We're going to miss the forsythia in the spring, the fragile rambling roses, the confagurations of pink dogwood and azaleas, the weep of the willow,

the struggling birch, the plaintively barren holly, the old oak that assumed the frozen grace of the pillars by Bernini that frame the high altar in St. Peter's.

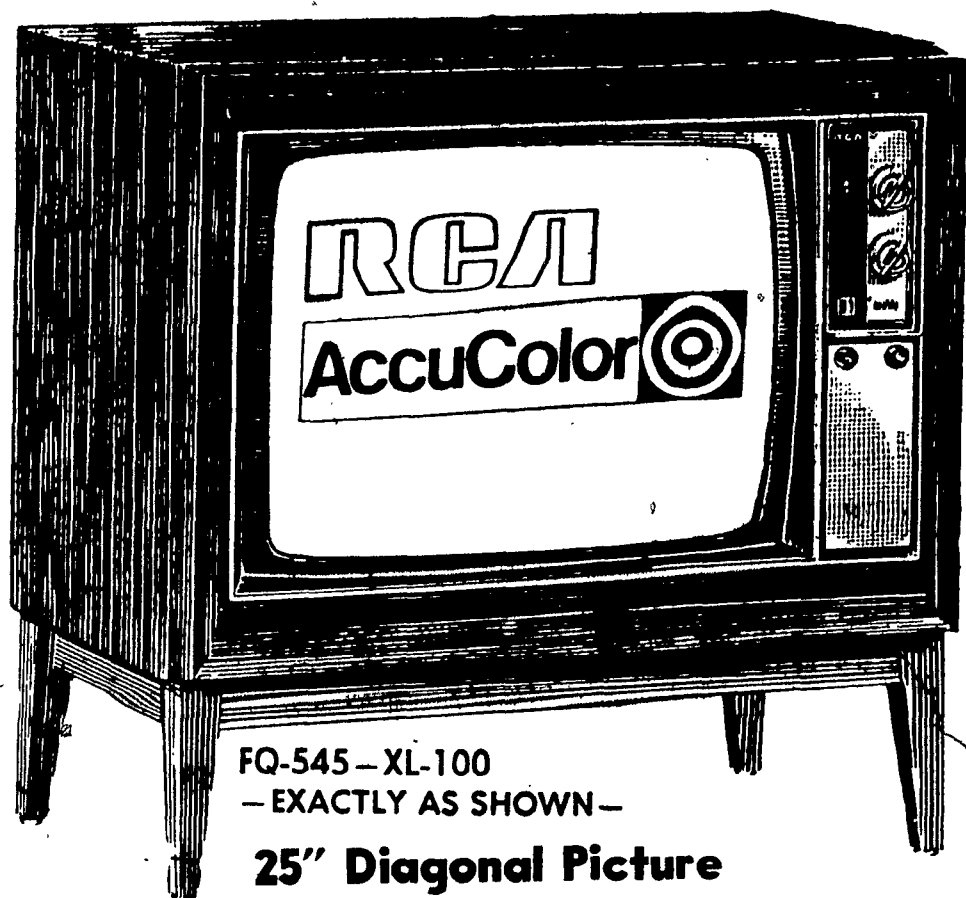
P.S. — As soon as we can fight our way from under tons of precious nothings, we'll ask our friend Helen the real estate to search about for a place nearby, near the lake with its laughing water skiers, the emerald golf courses, the ocean, the horsepark named Monmouth.

"A small place," one of us will say. "Something over a drugstore, or a saloon. The kids and their kids are gone. We don't need much room, really. Just some place to hold the stuff we have in storage. You know, the old piano, the Laughing Cavalier. Bob's trophy, the yellowing clippings from the New York Journal American, and all those wonderful pictures of us when we were young and one-chinned."

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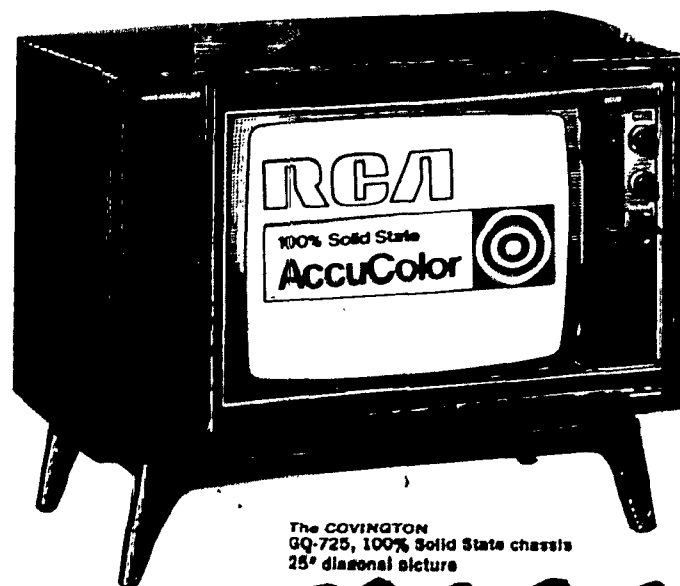
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