

When Young America Goes to the Fair



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By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

THURSDAY of every week is Young America's day at the 1934 Century of Progress exposition in Chicago. For that is the day when boys and girls under the age of twelve are admitted to the grounds for a nickel and the concessionaires make a special price to the youngsters. And does Young America take advantage of the opportunity for seeing at this small cost the modern version of "the greatest show on earth"? He (and she) does indeed!

They come by the scores, by the hundreds, by the thousands. They pour through the various entrances and scatter to all parts of the exposition grounds, there to see all the wonders of modern science and industry and invention which is spread before them and to enjoy all the different forms of amusement indulged in when youth takes a holiday. This day the world is very much their oyster, and they know it.

If you happen to visit the fair on a Thursday and, in the midst of these juvenile crowds, find yourself saying, "I didn't know there were this many children in the world—where do they all come from?" ponder for a moment upon this statement: The sight you may be seeing is as nothing, compared to the sight which you would have seen at the fair if you had been there on Thursday, May 31, 1934. Aye, that was a day! The like of it has probably never been seen before and may never be seen again.

It was the first "children's day" of the 1934 fair. The Chicago schools had been closed for the occasion. To the youthful part of Chicago's three and a third millions were added several thousand more from the outlying Cook county towns, from other counties near by and even from points in Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan.

Over 500,000 boys and girls, over half a million pushing, shoving, wriggling, whooping, super-charged-with-energy units of young humanity descended upon the fair. They broke last year's one-day attendance record of 367,004 made on September 4, 1933. They broke all one-day attendance records of any fair anywhere, with the exception of the record of 761,942 on Chicago day at the World's Columbian exposition of 1893. That wasn't the only thing they broke—but that's another story!

Early on the morning of that historic May 31 they began streaming toward the fair grounds. Massed from rail to rail on the painted bridges, they moved forward slowly but unceasingly, toward the turnstiles. Half an hour before the time to open the gates they were packed tight about the seven entrances.

From outlying parts of the city came the news that street cars, "L" trains and busses were jammed beyond capacity with youngsters bound for the fair. Immediately orders were sent out summoning all exposition policemen off duty to report at once. Five hundred exposition employees were sworn in as special officers. Meanwhile every passing moment saw the crowds outside the gates growing denser and denser.

Up from the milling mob rose a strange variety of cries—"We want in! Let's go! Hey, stop your shovin'! Lay off, youse guys! Look out! Ya nearly jammed me in the eye with that lollipop! Hey, that ice cream bar is meltin' and drippin' all down my back! Oh, I've dropped the sack with my lunch in it! Stop pushin'! Quit your crowdin'! Stop it, I tell you!"

Bewildered gatekeepers tried in vain to hold them back. The turnstiles couldn't click fast enough to let them through. A hurry-up call was sent for 200 city policemen—then for 200 more. In the administration building telephones were ringing wildly, incessantly. From box offices came word of exhausted ticket supplies, of turnstiles out of commission and of guards trying vainly to maintain an orderly flow of eager youngsters through the gates. Then came the news that the crowds were becoming absolutely unmanageable. They were forcing their way through the service entrances through which supplies are brought into the grounds. They were beginning to scale the walls. They were dropping down inside by the hundreds and paralyzing the bus traffic which runs just inside the western walls.

Officials of the fair realized that something must be done quickly in order to avoid injury to the youngsters jammed outside the gates. "Let 'em all in free" was the order flashed out. All gates, including the service entrances were thrown wide open. And then—the deluge!

Attempts to coin appropriate similes for the sight which followed failed. One observer said "like a swarm of hungry locusts." Another compared it to the stampede of a vast herd of Texas steers. "The surge came up and across the causeways in a spectacle seldom if ever seen before—certainly never seen before in an American city," declared one eye-witness.

Can you visualize a crowd of 500,000 people? Remember there are only 13 American cities which have more than a population of 500,000 and in the largest of these the density of population is less than 5,000 to the square mile, or 640 acres. Now, the Century of Progress grounds comprise less than 400 acres of available "walking space." Pour 500,000 people into that amount of space, and what do you get? A crowd, of course.

Yes, the fair was "crowded" on May 31. It would have been crowded even if the horde of youngsters had been evenly distributed about the grounds, which they weren't. They streamed down the Avenue of Flags in an endless procession of closely packed humanity to which only the milling crowds at Forty-second and Broadway in New York and State and Madison in Chicago are comparable. From the terraces of



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the Hall of Science as far as the eye could see these thousands of boys and girls were moving north and south so close together that the streets themselves seemed to be moving. So steady was the stream of young visitors across the bridges over the lagoon that solid lines of policemen were stretched across the approaches to prevent the weight of too many from endangering the structures.

Over on the Enchanted Island, the part of the fair most popular with Young America, the congestion became so great that it was necessary to establish and enforce a one-way traffic rule. The eager youngsters massed ten deep around some of the amusement centers and from 25 to 50 deep around others. Some of them spent most of their day standing in line, waiting for a chance to ride on the ferris wheel, or roller-coaster or slide down a synthetic mountain.

But if many of them were intent upon such pleasures, there were thousands of others who jammed the exhibit buildings until every aisle was packed solidly with a slow-moving throng. It was in some of these buildings that other things besides records were broken. In justice to Young America, however, it must be stated that officials in charge of the Hall of Science, one of the principal points of attraction, say that the crowd there was mainly an orderly one and more easily handled than an adult crowd of the same size.

But sightseeing wasn't their only activity. There was the matter of eating and drinking to be taken care of. Early in the day it was announced that 125,000 bottles of milk would be distributed free. It was, and it vanished like a light summer shower on the face of the Sahara desert. In the struggles around the booths where it was distributed some of the bottles were broken and this caused the only serious injuries of the day—a few minor cuts from the shattered bottles.

So the milk disappeared (as did hundreds of thousands of hot dog and hamburger sandwiches, thousands of gallons of ice cream and of soft drinks, and hurry-up calls for fresh supplies were sent out throughout the day) and there was left behind all over the grounds a trail of discarded milk bottles and pop bottles. A force of 200 extra workmen, called into service to gather up the abandoned glassware, the papers, the boxes and other trash, which was ankle deep in places, soon gave up hope of picking up all these things one at a time. So they brought shovels and scooped the debris into wheelbarrows. And they were scooping far, far into the night.

By the middle of the afternoon the surging crowds through the entrances had died down to a thin trickle. All over the grounds tired youngsters, heedless of "Keep Off the Grass" signs, were stretched out in every available spot of shade. The hot sun had wilted most of them and overcome some. These were rushed to the hospital maintained by the fair, given a bath and made to rest for awhile. Lifeguards in canoes and motor boats were kept busy patrolling the lagoon to see to it that no venturesome youngster tumbled in, but they couldn't stop many of them from duffing shoes and stockings and splashing hot, tired feet in the cool water any

Above are pictures taken on May 31, which was the first "Children's day" at the 1934 Century of Progress exposition in Chicago, and which broke all attendance records for the fair.

1. "What's your name, little girl, and where do you live?" A Travelers' Aid Society worker talking to one of the 1,400 children who were "lost" in the crowds.

2. This is how the Avenue of Flags looked during most of the day when 500,000 children invaded the fair grounds.

3. Guards and other employees of the Fair formed human chains in an effort to restrain the children awaiting their turn to get in.

more than guards on shore could stop others from jumping into pools and fountains in various stages of dress and undress.

Refreshed by such interludes they were off again to join the mob still milling everywhere through the grounds as individuals, in couples, in groups chaperoned by harassed teachers trying in vain to keep track of their charges. One teacher solved the problem by using lengths of string to tie the 16 of them together, wrist to wrist. As she led the way through the grounds, they trailed along behind her like the tail of a kite—that is, until they attempted to spread out in the midst of the crowd. Then "tangle" is a mild word to describe the resulting situation.

She didn't lose any of her little flock, however, but there were plenty of "lost children" that day—1,400 of them to be exact, fourteen hundred who became separated from parents or teachers or companions. But thanks to a "clearing house" maintained by the Travelers' Aid Society all of the lost were found eventually. Urged by the public address system to seek their stray charges at the society's headquarters, anxious parents and teachers stood in line for hours until policemen or Fair attendants pushed their way through the crowd with their weeping charges. Older children who knew where they lived were given carfare and sent home. Younger ones were comforted by the young women in charge of the "clearing house" and an harassed staff of over-worked volunteer assistants.

By the time evening came and the thousands of twinkling lights which adorn the buildings of the fair were being reflected in the waters of the lagoon, an army of weary youngsters was trudging its way to the exit. By 9 o'clock the shrill clamor which had echoed throughout the buildings all day was dying down to a murmur. There were still thousands of children in the grounds but after the spectacle of the day those grounds seemed strangely deserted. By midnight all of them had gone—except for 65 unfortunate youngsters who were still "unclaimed" at the "clearing house." But by 1:30 in the morning the very last of these had been returned safely home. And policemen, Fair attendants, concessionaires, street car conductors, exposition officials (yes, and teachers and parents, too) heaved the biggest sigh of relief in their lives. The record-breaking first "children's day" at the 1934 fair was over.

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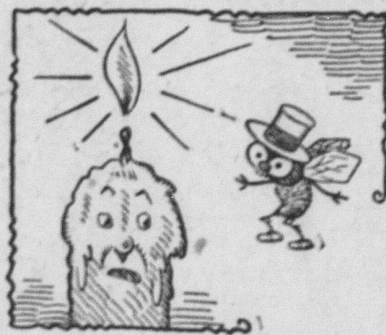
CAP AND BELLS



UGHT TO KNOW

Little Maryellen lives near a college campus and she spends much time watching the college students. "Mother, what are those girls doing?" she asked one day when she noticed a class of nature study students catching butterflies. The mother was busy and instead of answering in a way that would satisfy the child's curiosity, she replied: "I don't know." "Well," said the four-year-old severely, "you should know; you went to college."—Indianapolis News.

GONE TO HIS HEAD



"You look so queer, Mr. Candle." "Well I do feel awfully light headed!"

He Needs a Bleaching

An Irish Guards officer called up a sergeant and spoke of the unsoldierly appearance of a recruit. "He looks very slovenly, sergeant." "Yes, sor." "Are you sure he washes?" "Yes, sor." "Absolutely certain he washes?" "Yes, sor, but he dries a bad color, sor."—Tit-Bits Magazine.

Speculation

"Can the stock exchange be regulated?" "Of course," answered Mr. Dustin Star. "You can make speculation more difficult. But that won't make any difference to people who really want to gamble. Some of 'em are even now gambling on whether new rules can be made to work."

Hardest Part

Brown entered the artist's studio and gazed at the draped canvas on the easel. "Have you finished with your picture yet?" he asked. "No; I still have the hardest part of it to do," replied the artist. "Really! What is that?" asked Brown. "Sell it," came the doleful reply.

A Horrible Example

The Customer—Isn't it rather unusual to see a barber with long hair and whiskers like yours? The Barber—Yes; but it's good business. Every man that sees how awful they look on me will fall for a haircut and shave.

Economy First

Poet—You haven't returned any of my poems for some time. Editor—Well, I want to make one rejection slip do for at least 40. Paper's way up.

LEAVE IT TO 'EM



"Did you tell your wife everything you did while she was away?" "No, the neighbors attended to that."

His Pal

A private, walking down a street with his sweetheart, met a sergeant belonging to his regiment. "My sister, Sergeant," said the bashful young man. "That's all right," said the sergeant, smiling, "she used to be mine."

Can't Fire the Cook

Woman—Does your husband kick about the meals? Other Bridge Player (smiling)—No; what he kicks about is having to get them.

A Smart Postman

The man is angry with the postman for not delivering a letter correctly. Man—Now, suppose I addressed a letter to "The Biggest Idiot in Christendom," where would you deliver it? Postman—Send it back marked "Returned to Sender."

His Friends Won't Tell Him

"I have here an anonymous letter in which the writer calls me a rogue, swindler, liar—" "It must be from a business connection."

Australia Wages War Against Rabbit "Pets"

It is estimated that 1,000,000,000 rabbits infest the state of New South Wales alone. Millions of dollars have been spent in the war against these animals, which were first introduced as pets by early settlers. Fences have been constructed, water holes have been poisoned and professional rabbit catchers have been employed. One fence extends from Condon, on the northwest coast, 1,000 miles south of Hopetoun on the south coast, protecting the entire western portion of the state of western Australia.

Rabbits are particularly destructive in sheep-grazing sections, as they destroy not only grass, but shrubbery as well. Seven rabbits are said to eat as much grass as one sheep. The destructiveness is offset somewhat, however, by their commercial value in fur and food. Exports of rabbit products, chiefly skins, averaged \$15,000,000 per year during the years immediately preceding 1923, but since that time have declined.

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