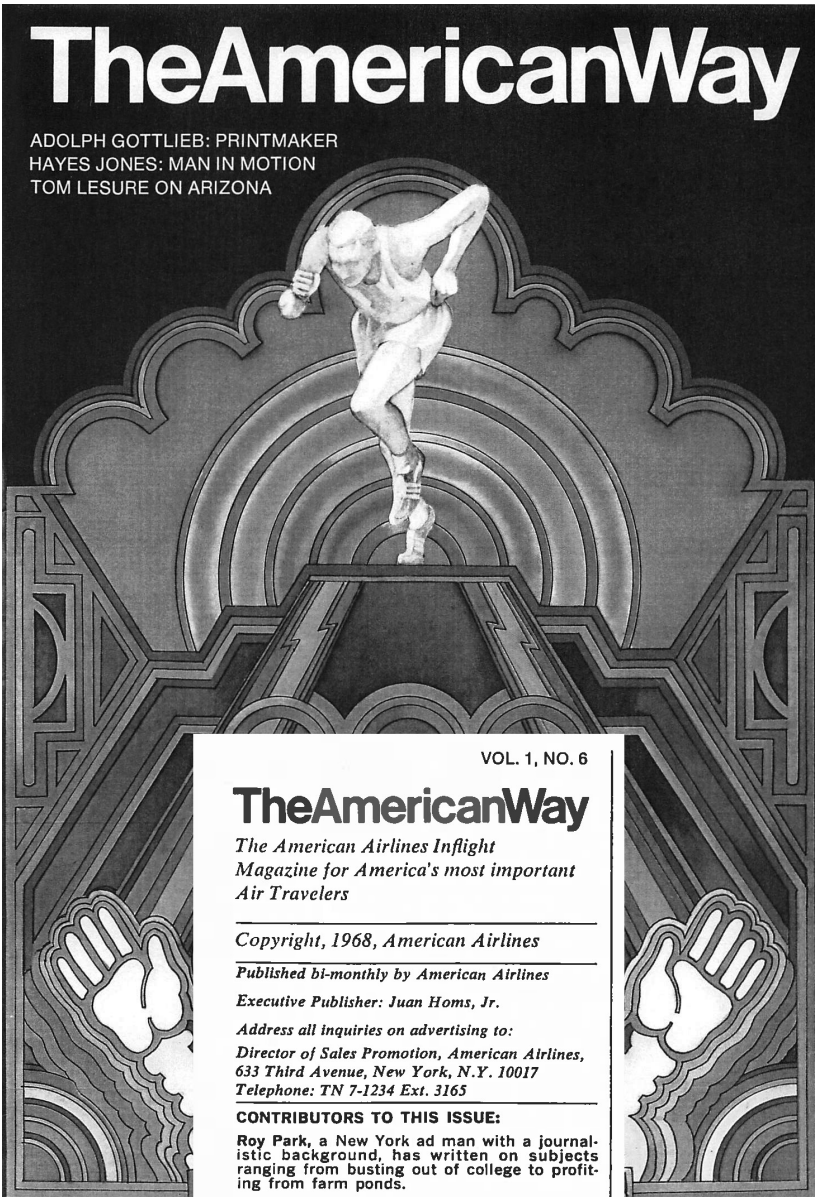
TheAmericanWay

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB: PRINTMAKER
HAYES JONES: MAN IN MOTION
TOM LESURE ON ARIZONA



VOL. 1, NO. 6

TheAmericanWay

The American Airlines Inflight Magazine for America's most important Air Travelers

Copyright, 1968, American Airlines

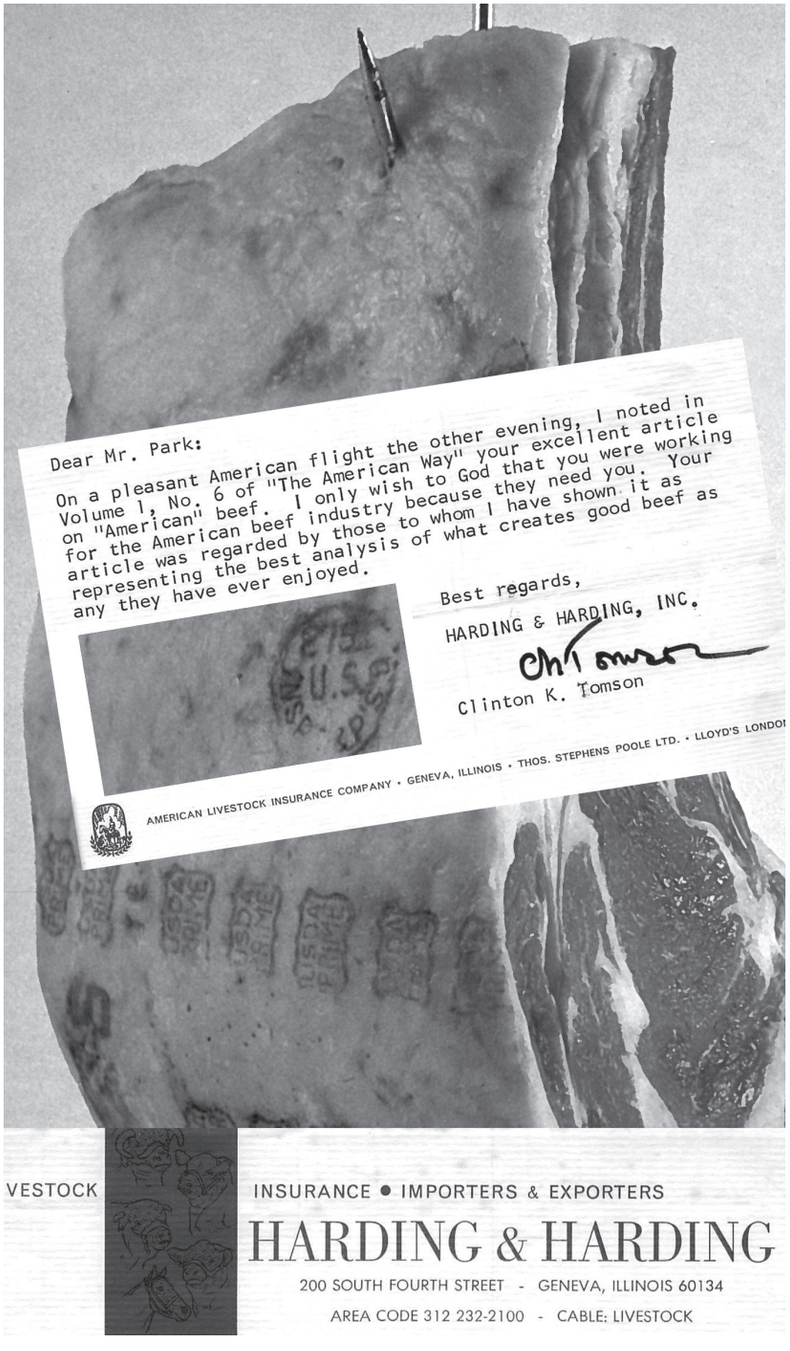
Published bi-monthly by American Airlines

Executive Publisher: Juan Homs, Jr.

Address all inquiries on advertising to:
Director of Sales Promotion, American Airlines, 633 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017
Telephone: TN 7-1234 Ext. 3165

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Roy Park, a New York ad man with a journalistic background, has written on subjects ranging from busting out of college to profiting from farm ponds.



Where Does All The Best Meat Go? by Roy H. Park, Jr.

One evening, recently, in a fit of al fresco hospitality, I sought to entertain company with what I thought were some darned fine pieces of specially cut two-inch thick supermarket sirloins. I had kept them cold but unfrozen, rubbed them (when they reached room temperature) with freshly-ground black pepper, and after coating the grid with suet to prevent sticking, seared them quickly on both sides to seal in the natural juices. I had taken care not to punch them full of holes with the turning fork, lest the flames scorch the surface or cook them more than 12 minutes on each side to keep them medium rare. They were served sizzling hot, with an appropriate coating of butter and mushrooms.

We had jointly engulfed several pounds when the voice said, "Ever taste one of those steaks at..." and one of those great New York restaurants was named.

Even as I made a mental note not to invite the speaker to dinner again, I knew in my heart what he meant. My homecooked steaks never seemed to match some of those I had been served in the city, and it started me thinking.

Why was this true? Where does all the best meat go?

What Makes Good Beef?

Over the next couple of weeks, I ploughed into some relatively heavy research on the subject of meat and where the best of it goes. With a passionate desire to avoid membership in the Overnight Expert Club, I want to pass along to you some of the things I learned about meat.

Let's talk quality, for a start. The finest cuts, which are tender, juicy and flavorful, come from mature (but not old) muscles that are least exercised. To the eye the meat is plump, bright cherry red, fine-textured and streaked throughout with fat, or marbling. Most of the surface has a thick, smooth covering of pure fat, which incidentally, does not, as many believe, have to be white.

Another sign of fine beef is in the bone. Bone from young animals is red and porous, which means the bloodstream was still depositing calcium when the steer was killed. Bones from older animals are, because of long-deposited calcium, dense, white and hard.

Why You Rarely Get The Best.

But prime beef is rarely available on the retail market to you. *Choice,* the retail market standard, is what you usually get. It's the affluent buyer's fare in supermarkets, chain stores and butcher shops. "About one-tenth of one percent of all the U.S. graded prime is handled in local butcher shops," says Matthew Bernatsky, Professor of Restaurant Management at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration. Those that do handle it, he estimates, "number only one in a thousand across the U.S." And these are clustered around the big cities like New York, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In small cities it's even difficult to get prime in restaurants. As one first class New York restaurant owner points out, "It's surprising how few of even the big city restaurants give you a good prime steak."

U. S. Government inspected meat is officially labeled for quality through a series of seven stamps. *Prime* meats, the top grade, represent a very limited percentage of the total. After prime comes *Choice,* then *Good* and *Commercial,* which are both as nutritious, but not as tender. *Utility, Cutter* and *Canner* are almost devoid of fat within the tissues and are primarily used for canned and processed meats.

Those Juicy American Airlines Steaks.

Ask any butcher to name the tenderest cut of prime or choice beef and he'll probably tell you a delmonico, or filet mignon from the tenderloin, both of which are heavily marbled and equally tender. The five-ounce steaks served aboard American Airlines are tenderloin cuts. Taken from 8,500 head of cattle per month, as a matter of fact.

American buys 110,000 pounds of primal tenderloin a month, of which half is trimmed away, providing 55,000 pounds for the enjoyment of American passengers. "By the time the steak is served," says Jerry Kobel, American's Purchasing Agent, "it costs between $3.25 and $4.00 per pound."

But regardless of its price, red meat is the most popular of all foods in the U. S., its consumption rising steadily since 1920.

And today's consumer controls the food business. His veto power dictates what lines the shelves, freezers and refrigerated units. The mass distributors found by 1960 that meats, particularly beef, were so important to their competitive success that they built their meat departments around beef, and their whole stores around meat departments.

If a food store can bring you in for its meat, you'll go on to purchase most of your other foods and household items there. Meat counters, usually in the rear of the store, are critical to the one-stop shopping that has become so widespread.

Obviously, meat is just as critical to the restaurant menu, and the great restaurants of New York and other large cities understandably put a high premium on prime. They buy the best they can get, with little thought to the cost or loss in fat, as long as the customer is satisfied and comes back for more.

Customer Insurance.

But it came as a surprise to me, after all this talk of cost, to learn that in the restaurant business, food is not the major cost factor.

"Labor is," says Siro, "and we look at a good piece of meat as insurance." By this he means insurance against the possibility of a customer returning the meat to the chef, because this automatically raises the cost of the labor required to turn out the meal.

"What's the cost of a $1.50 prime steak," he hypothesizes, "versus the labor cost involved in a $10.50 dinner and the possible loss of a $150.00 or more a year customer?"

And so my fellow Americans, prime ribs and steaks, which rarely elude the grasps of expensive restaurants and clubs to reach you in your kitchen or backyard, are strictly luxury items.

On this note it saddens me to conclude. But for my friend I now have some answers. The next time I invite him to dinner, I may even turn the other cheek and serve him prime.

Those of you who live near the big cities could do the same. If you think it's worth it. One thought to keep in mind, an old Arab proverb:

If you buy meat cheap,
you'll smell what you saved
when it hits the fire.

Bon appetit! Bon voyage!