

Lecturers: Their Talk Isn't Cheap

Big money (up to \$30,000) on the platform circuit draws politicians, comics, writers

by Karen Feld

No sooner had President Carter accepted the resignation of HEW Secretary Joseph Califano, Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal, Transportation Secretary Brock Adams and Energy Department head James Schlesinger, than all four had signed up with Harry Walker, president of the New York-based lecture bureau that bears his name.

They're in good company. Others in Walker's lecture circuit include former President Gerald R. Ford, Gen. Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, authors Truman Capote and Joseph Heller, Mike Wallace and Barbara Walters.

The platform industry, with an annual gross of hundreds of millions of dollars, has come a long way since Ralph Waldo Emerson received a fee of \$5 plus oats for his horse for giving lectures. Today, there are over 3000 platforms on any given day in Los An-

geles alone; 30,000 in Chicago; and 50,000 in New York. These include Rotary clubs, universities, women's groups, church groups and conventions.

In today's golden age of the lecture business, Henry Kissinger earns \$25,000 a speech while Bob Hope gets \$30,000. Ralph Nader earns \$800,000 a year speaking.

In fact, lecturers represent one of our most inflated commodities, according to Dan Tyler Moore, director general of the International Platform Association (IPA), the professional organization of the speaking circuit. "The people on the front pages are in the most demand," says Moore.

Moore ascribes the boom to television and the airplane. "Seeing somebody like Hugh Downs on TV builds up an appetite over the years to actually meet him, shake his hand, sit down and have dinner with him," says Moore. "With the airplane there are no two places in the U.S. that you can't get to and back in one day. Nobody, no matter how important or busy, can afford not to become a lecturer." Some, he notes, have books or candidacies to promote; others, just ideas.

Economist Howard Ruff was speaking at an investment conference when Harry Walker came plunging through the crowd and said: "Stick with me, kid, and I'll make you a star." Says Ruff: "I'm not on the lecture circuit to make a buck, but I charge top dollar."

continued

The Most Requested Speakers in America



JACK ANDERSON DR. JOYCE BROTHERS JAMES KILPATRICK HENRY KISSINGER

LECTURER

[\$5000 per speech] because I want to ration my appearances by price."

"Speaking keeps me in touch with the people. I love it," says "Dear Abby" Van Buren, the world's most widely syndicated columnist. "People are interested in politics, economic security, and social issues. Should we accept the boat people?" says Abby. "Then there are the never-ending marital problems, and living together problems, love-problems, and teenage problems: 'Mom won't let me shave my legs or pierce my ears.'"

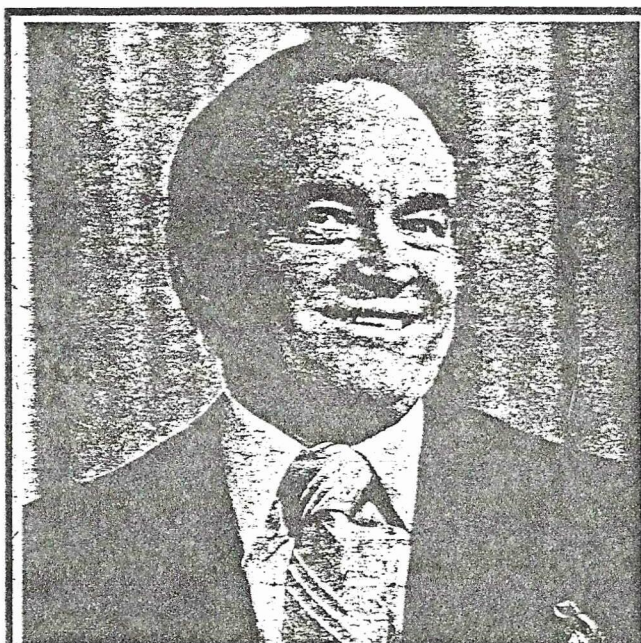
Some lecturers have a message. Dr. Henry J. Heimlich, a thoracic surgeon, discovered the lecture circuit five years ago after developing the Heimlich maneuver to save choking food victims. "The maneuver has given me a platform to promote peace," says Heimlich.

Gen. Alexander Haig has a full speaking schedule that includes addresses to business leaders, trade organizations and other groups. "I have a feeling that I have an obligation to express myself since I departed my government service with such profound concern," says Haig, who last summer returned from Europe, where he was NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, to find a backlog of 500 speaking requests.

There are two types of people in the lecture business. One is the person like Henry Kissinger, General Haig or science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov, who gives 200 speeches a year in spite of his fear of airplanes. These people have accomplished something in their field and are therefore in great demand as lecturers. Lecturing supplements their income.

The second, smaller group consists of those who have built their reputation on the platform. One is Lowell Thomas, 87, president of the IPA, who still speaks four times a year for a total of \$40,000.

Some people are always popular on the lecture circuit. "Presidents come and go, but Jack Anderson is al-



Bob Hope \$30,000

Approximate Lecture Fees per Speech:

Henry Kissinger	\$25,000	Harry Reasoner	\$5,000
Gerald R. Ford	\$17,000	Arthur Laffer	\$4,000
Gen. Alexander Haig	\$15,000	Bob Woodward	\$4,000
Isaac Asimov	\$10,000	Art Buchwald	\$3,500
Ralph Nader	\$10,000	Jack Anderson	\$3,000
Lowell Thomas	\$10,000	Howard Jarvis	\$3,000

ways with us with his 50 million readers," says Moore. "Abby Van Buren and Art Buchwald are in the same category. Through his travels while lecturing, Buchwald finds fresh material for his column: 'A person whose time is unlimited on the lecture circuit is the man who continues to create. He's got something new,'" says Dr. Heimlich, who feels he is in this category, always facing new challenges.

"We try to touch the pulse of the people today, whether it is with a celebrity name or the subject," says June Karger, formerly a speaker on memory and now general manager of American Program Bureau, a large Boston lecture agency that represents Ralph

Nader, John Dean, David Frost, Dick Gregory and Julian Bond. Currently, economics and energy experts are in the biggest demand, according to Karger. Economist Arthur Laffer, who does not use an agent, receives an average of 40 speaking requests a week from business groups, corporations and unions.

Many of the top platform speakers get their bookings through lecture bureaus, while others, such as Abby Van Buren, schedule their own. Agents' fees range from 10 to 50 percent, most often in the area of 33 percent.

Potomac Speakers, predominantly a women's bureau in Washington, D.C., was founded by Edith Bralove

two years ago. "Women are no longer interested only in speaking at ladies' luncheons or being relegated to spouses' fashion shows," says Bralove. Her commission is 25 percent of her speakers' fees, which range from \$500 to \$5000.

"Everybody wants a blockbuster," says Bralove, whose lecturers cover a range of social, political and economic subjects. June Bingham, author and wife of a New York Congressman, speaks on "Political Spousehood: Joys and Jealousies." New York Times Congressional correspondent Warren Weaver Jr. and his wife, syndicated columnist Marianne Means, give a joint lecture: "The Washington Follies of 1980: Two Views of the Battle for the White House."

"We try to fit our speakers to the group's needs. It's a big thrill when you can match client and speaker," says Bralove. Clients are clubs, colleges, corporations and trade associations.

Many would-be speakers trying to launch a career on the lecture circuit audition in the "Hal Holbrook Showcase," a daily tradition at the IPA convention. "I always say 2000 speeches make a good speaker," says Eileen Hall, IPA vice president, who has been booking speakers for three decades. The normal fee for these non-celebrity speakers is \$225 to \$500. "The lower the fee, the more apt a speaker is to have more engagements," says Hall.

If a budding speaker is well received at the IPA convention, the results can be dramatic, because the audience includes people who book speakers around the country. When Carl Stokes was nearing the end of his term as mayor of Cleveland, he spoke before the IPA. Within three weeks he was booked for \$150,000 worth of speeches. As he was about to embark upon his speaking tour, NBC made him a TV offer.

The outlook for the lecture business is prosperous. In today's society, people are looking to the experts for advice. For the experts, there are millions still to be made.

The Most Requested Speakers in America continued



ABBY VAN BUREN



JESSICA SAVITCH



CARL ROWAN



RALPH NADER



GERALD FORD



PAUL HARVEY



ISAAC ASIMOV



MIKE WALLACE