

IT'S A WONDERFUL TOWN

I am not a New Yorker. I don't live in New York. In fact, I've never even *been* to New York. But that doesn't mean I can't wax nostalgic about the Big Apple, extol its virtues, do the important Thought Piece that everyone's been waiting for.

For me, summer is New York at its friskiest. The lulling hum of the El. The Gambino family gently spraying the Lower East Side with their Uzis. The laughter of out-of-towners as they try to ice skate in Central Park, only to discover the pond liquefied six months earlier. Ah, the wonders of New York, New York--seldom expected, seldom equaled, always just so.

After three hours, one hails a cab and takes a bracing drive down Fifth Avenue. Wait--there's the Algonquin, famed playground of Bob Benchley and Dottie Parker. And next to it, the fabled post office where they mailed their culture-defining "casuals" and *bon mots* that galvanized a generation of wits and *boulevardiers*. And over there to the right--La Guardia airport, the thundering multiprop Constellations lifting off, transporting their human cargo to exotic Bermuda, Boca Raton, Des Moines. And finally, there--the Sears Tower! The mighty monument to '30s excess, the towering tribute to Elijah Sears, Yankee first baseman, *financier, stock market failure, bum*.

Yes, Here is New York! cried E.B. White in his famous piece, and although Andy never visited New York either, he captured the *d'essence* of the place, the jostle and hustle-bustle of its crowded sidewalks, the big dreams and small paychecks, that still make New York the place to be.

Of course, no reminiscence can truly impart the raffish charm of the town. Until you've worked the docks as an oyster hauler, until you've broken an inlay on the hard-as-brick pretzels slathered with week-old mustard at Shea Stadium, until you've opened a fire hydrant on a corner in Bed-Stuy and doused your friends on a hot, shirt-clinging summer day, you can only dream of what New York is--and should be.

I know I have.

The End