CONSUMER TIME

ICE ON WHEELS

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

5. MUSIC: (BACKGROUND...BUT SPRIGHTLY)

6. NARRATOR: Across the country the refrigerator cars roll... Through high sierras...across the desert...over the great plains of the middle part of our country. These refrigerator cars speed across like live caterpillars on the run, carrying food from the winter gardens of the West and Southwest to Jersey City, New York...Baltimore and Philadelphia...bringing it crisp and fresh and sweet.

7. SOUND: (PAUSE)

8. VOICE: (JOHN'S) Did you ever stop to think how the fruits of summer can be with us the year long? How a melon picked in a far-away sunny field...picked when it was ripe...comes to you just right for eating?

Did you ever stop to think of an apple from an orchard in Washington...riding the reefers...rolling to markets thousands of miles away...arriving in tip-top shape.

9. MUSIC: (UP AND OUT)

10. FREYMAN: I've thought of it alright, Johnny. And with a touch of envy, I may add. You ought to see me after a long trip. But look at these winesaps and Rome Beauties and Delicious...so big, so beautiful, so fully packed. After months in cold storage, mind you...and a long trip thrown in.

11. JOHN: And not only apples, Mrs. Freyman. But lettuce and celery and cauliflower...

12. FREYMAN: And grapes and cherries, and carrots and spinach. But leave us abandon this catalogue, Johnny, and tell how the scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture make possible a continuous supply of fresh foods the year through.

13. JOHN: Okay, Mrs. Freyman. Let's start with those winesaps you were admiring a little while back. Recently, the British Food Commission purchased 12 carloads of apples from growers in the State of Washington.

14. FREYMAN: Quite a jaunt, wouldn't you say...all the way from Washington to the British Isles?

15. JOHN: Besides being a long trip, it was a test trip too. The apples moved out of storage in January..."and bitter cold it was..." But there was the Department of Agriculture...Johnny Appleseed on the spot...with its fatigues on, and a parka over them.

16. FREYMAN: What was the Department testing, Johnny?

17. JOHN: Heaters...different kinds of heaters.

18. FREYMAN: But I thought that apples required refrigeration. Why I don't even let them sit around in the fruit bowl anymore. Right into the refrigerator they go.

19. JOHN: And rightly so. Ordinarily, apples are shipped under refrigeration. But these apples we're talking about were loaded in January...and the problem was to keep them from freezing. Gets mighty cold out there in Montana and the Dakotas and Colorado. So, instead of putting ice in the bunkers, automatic heaters were installed. Electric thermometers were hung in twelve different positions in each car, and readings were made from the roof of the cars, so that the car doors wouldn't have to be opened. The outside temperature sometimes went as low as 16 degrees below zero, but the thermostats of the heaters were set at 32 degrees. This kept the apples from freezing, and gave them the benefit of cold storage temperatures all during transit.

20. FREYMAN: Cold comfort, Johnny...cold comfort is all I can say.

21. JOHN: But warm enough to keep the fruit from freezing, and cold enough to retard further ripening. What they were really aiming at, Mrs. Freyman, was uniform heat throughout the load. But you know what happens to heat. It goes up to the ceiling and lingers there, leaving the bottom with a chill on it.

22. FREYMAN: Seems to me, they'd try to change the direction of the heat. Force it down with a blower or something.

23. JOHN: Exactly what they did, Mrs. Freyman. Fans were installed at the end of each car and the warm air at the top of the load was forced down and mixed with the cold air at the bottom... then forced up and around again.

24. FREYMAN: Did those experiments prove anything, Johnny? I mean, about the effectiveness of different kinds of heaters.

25. JOHN: Then men who took the readings are just now putting their data together. So the results are still a bunch of graphs and figures. The big problem, as they see it, is to take the bugs out of the existing heaters, and come out with a stove that's simple and rugged...and will give real pullman comfort for apples.

26. SOUND: (PAUSE)

27. MUSIC: (UNDER BUT LIVELY)

28. NARRATOR: From Wenatchee to New York...across the Atlantic to London. Fresh fruit for distribution in the British Isles. Winesaps from the apple capital of the world. Apples that had been picked at the moment of maturity, at the peak of their three-score-ten. But life doesn't begin at forty for apples ...assuming that forty is their age of maturity. From the time the apple is picked from the tree...from <u>that</u> moment the apple needs every drop of care we can lavish. For separation from the tree is the beginning of the end...the beginning of old age.

29. VOICE: (JOHN'S) First, it's a matter of storage. Thirty-two degrees will slow down the aging process... Between the storage vault and your apple bin is a caravan of refrigerator cars. Is it a wonder that the Department of Agriculture rides the rails? Climbing on top of ice-coated cars to take readings...jumping off slippery roofs into snow banks to get to the caboose with these records...carrying fuel through bitter wind and cutting sleet. It's mostly the oldxr men, too, who are doing this work. Men with experience and know-how...and a feel for the work they're doing. To the railroad people and the men in the produce world, it's a job that effects their every-day lives. To the consumer, it's a service too often taken for granted.

30. MUSIC: (FADE)

31. FREYMAN: Not after today, Johnny. I'm going to appreciate every apple I meet up with from now on. Now that I know what it goes through.

32. JOHN: And every cantaloup, too, Mrs. Freyman. Did you know that cantaloups are picked in California when they're ripe...and roll into New York nine days later in perfect shape?

33. FREYMAN: But I thought that cantaloups were picked when they were green...that the long trip was too much for a ripe melon.

34; JOHN: That was in the days of old, Mrs. Freyman. Now, they gently pinch the ripe fruit from the vine, escort them into a refrigerated car and blow 10,000 pounds of finely ground "snow ice" on top of the loaded crates.

35. FREYMAN: And that does the trick?

36; JOHN: Like magic. The Department tried it last year on one of its summer runs...and you've never tasted such melons!

37. FREYMAN: Why Johnny, you're actually blowing little epicurean kisses. Did you taste one yourself...toi-même?

38. JOHN: (LAUGHING) No, but Harold Johnson who chaperoned them across the country for the Department did. Says they tasted like they just came off the vine. Says they sold at the top of the market.

39. SOUND: (PAUSE)

40. MUSIC: (UNDER)

41. NARRATOR: Like they just came off the vine...that's the miracle of the refrigerator car. What was it Dr. Pennington said...Mary Pennington, the lady engineer who used to ride the rails with the other agricultural engineers...

42. WOMAN'S VOICE: FREYMAN: "The people of the U. S. are as dependent upon refrigerator cars for their food supply as are the people of England on their ships."

43. NARRATOR: The miracle of the refrigerator car...ice on wheels. All kinds of ice...bunker ice and body ice...chunk ice, coarse ice, crushed ice. It all depends on the load you're carrying. If it takes to water, then body ice is what the ice man brings. Sometimes they stack blocks of it around the crates. Sometimes the ice is crushed and shoveled in right between the layers. Like they do with spinach and celery and lettuce. Sometimes a three-hundred pound cake is fed into a crushing machine and the "snow" is blown into the car...like the cantaloup deal...

Bunker ice is placed at the ends of the car. Or it can hang from the ceiling. Just so it doesn't touch the crates. Oranges and apples, pears and spuds travel in the bunker department...For cargo that needs a real chill, there's ice with salt added. That' for frozen foods..(NARRATOR CONT)

NARRATOR (CONTINUED) All kinds of ice. Name it. The iceman has it, and the shippers know how to use it.

44. MUSIC: (FADE)

45. JOHN: Ice to the left of them.

Ice to the right of them.

Ice on the ceiling.

Ice in the bunks

Crushed and in hunks...

Straight through the Great Plains rode the caboose...

46. FREYMAN: Brrrrr. My teeth are chattering. Can't we discuss something warm like the pink sand in Bermuda, or Fearless Dick in the Tropics?

47. JOHN: Let's see...we could talk about respiration. Did you know that an apple doesn't stop breathing until you eat it? Did you know that, Mrs. Freyman?

48. FREYMAN: You mean just like a raw oyster?

49: JOHN: I mean just like you and me.

50: FREYMAN: NO!

51. JOHN: Yes! Fruits and vegetables are very human in some respects. They take in oxygen and give off carbon dioxide... They react to cold and heat... True, they don't say "ouch" when you pinch them, but they would if they could. Now take a tomato, Mrs. Freyman;

52. FREYMAN: You take a tomato, Johnny. I bet you're going to tell me that a tomato breathes, and plays mah jong, and does the samba...

53. JOHN: (LAUGHING) I won't go that far, Mrs. Freyman. But I'm on the level about the breathing. You've been buying those prepackaged tomatoes, haven't you?

54. FREYMAN: I've been buying them...but they haven't always been the answer to a maiden's prayer.

55. JOHN: You mean they're pale and piqued looking?

56. FREYMAN: And sometimes a little bit off-flavor.

57. JOHN: Do you know why?

58. FREYMAN: Why I hadn't thought about it, Johnny.

59. JOHN: Well, it's because those tomatoes are all sealed up in cellophane...all caged in without fresh air. What happens is that they build up lots of carbon dioxide, lose weight, get a pinched look and take on a bad flavor.

60. FREYMAN: What's being done about it, Johnny?

61. JOHN: Little holes are being punched in the cellophane wrapper... just big enough to get some fresh air in...and let the waste gas out.

62. FREYMAN: Which is really the same principle as ventilating certain foods in transit...

63. JOHN: Potatoes and oranges and apples, for instance...depending, of course, on the outside temperature...

64. FREYMAN: And the reason why they wrap pears and apples in oiled paper...

65. JOHN: To absorb the waste gases.

66. FREYMAN: On the otherhand, Johnny, if you really want to slow up the life process of plums and cherries, for example, you use carbon dioxide. That's what they do with those big Bing cherries...treat them with carbon dioxide, in addition to ordinary transit refrigeration. It holds back the coloring and ripening, and cuts down decay.

67. JOHN: The shippers usually use dry ice as a source of carbon dioxide ...about a thousand pounds of it per car, Mrs. Freyman.

68. FREYMAN: What about grapes, Johnny? What kind of treatment do they get?

69: JOHN: Grapes are gassed with sulphor dioxide, Mrs. Freyman...a very effective method of fumigation. Grapes are a pushover for mold because they're clustered up so tight. But light applications of sulphor dioxide helps keep mold under control. (PAUSE) To sum up, Mrs. Freyman, this business of being a live thing until it's eaten is really the reason for cold storage and the refrigerator car.

70. FREYMAN: I get it Johnny. Ice slows down respiration...suspends fruits and vegetables in a kind of limbo...stops them from living off the food that's stored up in their body tissues.

71. JOHN: Right you are! And when they emerge from the moist cold air of the refrigerator car, they snap out of their stupor, and start growing old in a hurry.

72. SOUND: (PAUSE)

73. MUSIC: (UNDER) (AMERICAN FOLK SONGY)

74. NARRATOR: The face of America changes. The billboards are still there, the gas stations, the hamburger joints. But in the past seventy years or so, something new has been added. Refrigerator cars, with icing stations along the right-of-way, twenty-four hours running-time apart...heater territory... fuel stations.

Before..."a man could look west and see forever."

Now...he looks west and sees Oregon and Washington and California. He see Yakima and Wenatchee in the Northwest... Salinas in California...Weslaco and Crystal City in Texas.

NARRATOR CONT'D Prosperous progressive American towns that would still be range country...or sagebrush waste if it weren't for the railroad refrigerator car.

Across the face of the country the iced cars roll...bringing to the eastern markets the perishables of the far, fruitful west...keeping them crisp and sweet and fresh...

75. FREYMAN: And Johnny, the people in the Department of Agriculture deserve a lot of credit for their part in the improvement of refrigerator cars.

76. JOHN: Men like D. F. Fisher, horticulturist, and Harold Johnson, shipping expert ...and women like Dr. Mary Pennington who worked in the Department in the early days.

77. FREYMAN: To these people and others like them, the consumer owes a debt for the winter gardens that are brought to her doorstep.

78. SOUND: (PAUSE)

79. JOHN: And now, Mrs. Freyman, how does next week's CONSUMER TIME shape up?

80. FREYMAN: For next week, Johnny, we promise to present an electrical fantasy. Besides fantasy, it will offer some practical suggestions for lighting and safe wiring.

81. JOHN: So friends, be sure to be with us next Saturday at the same time for another edition of:

82. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

83. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME

84. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

85. ANNCR: TODAY'S CONSUMER TIME script, written by Sophia Podolsky and directed by Frederick Schweikher, is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C.

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