

Topping-Out Day

From zenith to horizon, a radiant blue sky formed the backdrop for placing the last silver gray section of the Gateway Arch. The day, crisply bright as fall days in St. Louis so often are, was as brisk as the ceremonial band music and the traditional topping-out flag. Entranced by the shine and sparkle, thoughts wandered, not disrespectfully, from what was being said.

Memories drifted back inevitably to that evening — Feb. 18, 1948, it was — when the drawings of the five finalists, chosen from 172 entries in the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial design competition, were projected on a screen in the Statler's banquet hall. Each had been awarded \$10,000 to detail his work, and the time had come to announce the winner of the \$40,000 grand prize.

For drama's sake, the four "also-rans" were shown first on the big screen. Each, of course, was applauded. But the proposed Saarinen arch, rising out of a forest of trees, touched off such a salvo of delight and enthusiastic approbation that the verdict of those in the hall must have been unanimous, as had been the decision of Dean Wurster and the six other members of the jury.

All the designs were earnest efforts of competent men, but Saarinen's arch was uniquely symbolic of the great westward surge of trappers and missionaries, soldiers and settlers through St. Louis into the Western wilderness. It fully deserved the praise accorded it by Aline B. Loucheim, then the architectural critic of *The New York Times*, as "symbolizing the 'Gateway to the West' — a modern monument, fitting, beautiful and impressive." She went on to say:

"Its symbolism is direct and convincing. Large in scale, the arch does not dwarf the other structures and its form is sympathetic with the courthouse dome which it frames. It has a simplicity which should guarantee timelessness; yet the audacious engineering, the material, and the implications of science in the choice of this curve make it wholly contemporary."

As Mrs. Eero Saarinen, widow of the arch's chief designer, she attended Thursday morn-

ing's ceremonies. With a very special interest, she must have felt that the selection of the design was not really the beginning, nor the topping-out the completion of the magnificent national undertaking on the riverfront. She knew, of course, that its realization began with the allocation of \$9,000,000 in WPA funds by President Roosevelt and the approval of a local bond issue in 1935. That made possible the clearing of the 40-block site, but the demands of war pushed aside all thoughts of further work. And by the war's end, what had seemed assured had become an uncertainty.

Congress, which never had made an appropriation for the monument, was bent on balancing the budget, and slow to recognize the agreement of the late President and the City of St. Louis that the riverfront park should be a joint federal-local enterprise. Opportunists had their eyes on the site for a dozen different projects ranging from housing to a stadium. The reluctance of the railroads to move their tracks became a new obstacle — removed, finally, by an engineer-mayor in City Hall whose name unfortunately was not mentioned at Thursday's ceremonies, Raymond R. Tucker.

There were many such St. Louisans who would not let the vision fade. The strenuous efforts of a few had launched the competition for a design. Once that design was unveiled, they grew in numbers, in enthusiasm and in determination. In a very real sense, its realization and a new flowering of an old city became intertwined. Those who witnessed the placing of the last section of the arch had but to look about them for evidence of this.

Their celebration actually was premature. Much remains to be done to complete the arch and the park. Much also remains to be done to complete a thorough rehabilitation of St. Louis. The building of the arch, however, has engendered a fresh confidence. St. Louisans have learned how much they can really do. They have made the arch not merely the symbol of two hundred years gone, but also of a future, bright as the sky on topping-out day.

GROUP Research have retorted that nobody familiar with the organization's work could honestly make such a charge. If anybody has been smeared, they suggest, it is Wesley McCune.

What lends the attacks enhanced political significance is the fact that the Democratic Na-

THE ATTACKS drew rejoinders from Bailey, McCune, and from Senator Gale W. McGee (Dem.), Wyoming, who said the attempt to dismiss Group Research as a blacklisting operation was an old right-wing tactic.

A spokesman for the National Council of Churches in Washing-

restoring racial designations on their personnel forms to insure compliance with anti-discrimination laws.

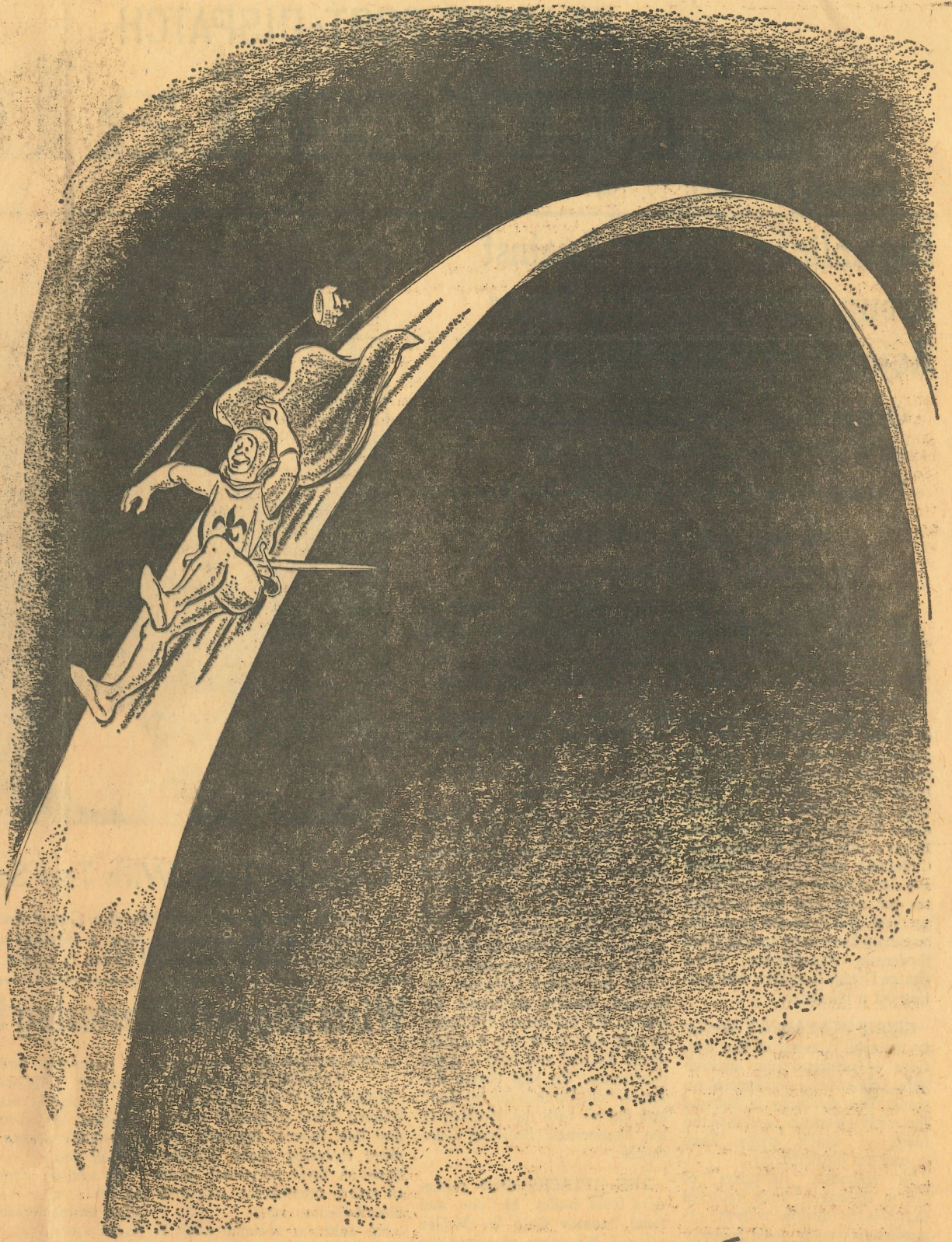
He said he thought such a move would help his department determine whether it was living up to nondiscrimination laws. He said that the question was a matter of "very grave concern" in other federal agencies, 1962

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ENGELHARDT

'WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!'

Arch Crowd

FROM PAGE ONE

explained that ironworkers on top were handling a spray nozzle throughout the delicate action in placing the final section in the 8½-foot opening. The hose was raised aloft by the south elevator.

Spectators with the best vantage points were helmeted workmen on the upper sections of the Mansion House, and other riverfront construction, and employes of buildings facing the river, who lined windows and balconies.

The Scott Air Force Base band was among late arrivals. The bandsmen got caught in a traffic jam caused by the flow of automobiles into downtown St. Louis.

An officer of the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Co., which erected the arch, said that the company would have a full staff here for five or six months before its job was completed.

The workers will bring down the creeper cranes and other equipment from the top of the arch and will remove rail tracks and rungs riveted into the structure. Field offices and other temporary buildings in the area will be dismantled.

"We'll weld patches on the holes made for the tracks and rungs," the spokesman said. "After we get the stainless steel shined up you'll never know the holes were there."

The first stainless steel section of the monument was placed on the concrete foundation of the south leg Feb. 13, 1963. The foundation consists of 13,000 cubic yards of concrete. The arch contains 4000 tons of steel. In addition to the stainless outer skin there is an inner shell filled with concrete to the 300-foot level.

Today's event was akin to driving the gold spike in the cross-continental railroad years ago. Parents were overheard telling their children, "Some day you will tell your grandchildren about this day."