

THERE was another Philadelphian who identified himself by his initials, the man who is credited with the invention of the Philadelphia Joke. Certainly he made it a popular art form and contributed greatly to C. T. Alexander's present challenge, which is to get people to take Philadelphia seriously.

C. T. isn't fazed by the ghost of W. C. Fields, or by the brand of humor that was spawned by Fields' talents. Anyone who attends the University of Pennsylvania for four years will hear his share of Philadelphia jokes, particularly those of the "I-went-to-Philly-for-the-weekend-but-it-was-closed" school, so C. T. has ample exposure to the problem. But it has serious overtones. A Pennsylvania senior says to a corporate recruiter, "We enjoy a unique combination of big city squalor and small town boredom in Philadelphia." A prominent businessman dismisses the

city as "a quiet suburb of Camden." And Philadelphia's image clouds a little more.

Any objective comparison of Philadelphia and other big cities reveals the thoughtlessness, inaccuracy, and unfairness of such statements, which nevertheless continue to proliferate. Many of the worst offenders in running down Philadelphia are Philadelphians, who ought to know better. Why do they persist? With some people, it almost seems to be a Pavlovian response.

The city's prospects for future growth are no laughing matter to business and civic leaders.

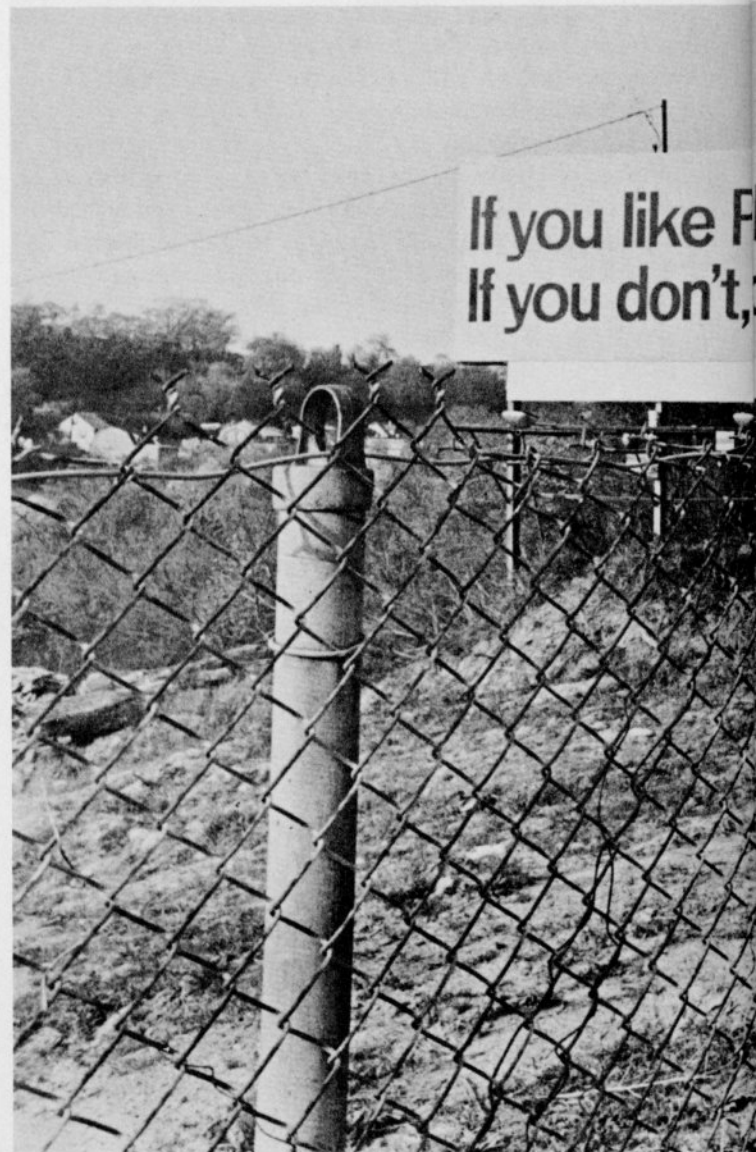
Late last year, a small group of Philadelphia's most concerned and influential men, representing financial, business, manufacturing, utility, and service organizations, formed a nonprofit corporation, Action Philadelphia, Inc., to combat the problem. Organized along the

Lights! Camera! Action Philadelphia! C. T. Is Ready When You Are

John C. T. Alexander, '56 W,
president of Action Philadelphia
(at right, in front of expressway billboard),
believes that the secret to Philadelphia's
success is in the same marketing
techniques that sell any other product

By ROBERT W. ANKERSON

Photographs by JOAN RUGGLES



lines of the highly successful Forward Atlanta group, its purpose is to be a catalyst for change where it is needed, and to improve Philadelphia's image. First and foremost, it was decided that the city needed a top-notch cheerleader.

John C. T. Alexander, who counts having been Penn's head cheerleader among his many accomplishments, is the man who was persuaded to quit banking to run Action Philadelphia. It is nothing short of war C. T. is waging—a war of words, ideas, and actions calculated to overcome Philadelphia's worldwide reputation for apathy.

Fortunately, he has plenty of ammunition at his disposal. Philadelphia possesses distinct qualities that hold strong appeal for businessmen who might consider the relocation, expansion, or establishment of an enterprise in the area. Its superior seaport and rail and

road facilities and the location of its airport make it easily accessible to foreign markets and eastern seaboard population centers. As America's fourth largest city, Philadelphia itself is the hub of a lucrative marketing area.

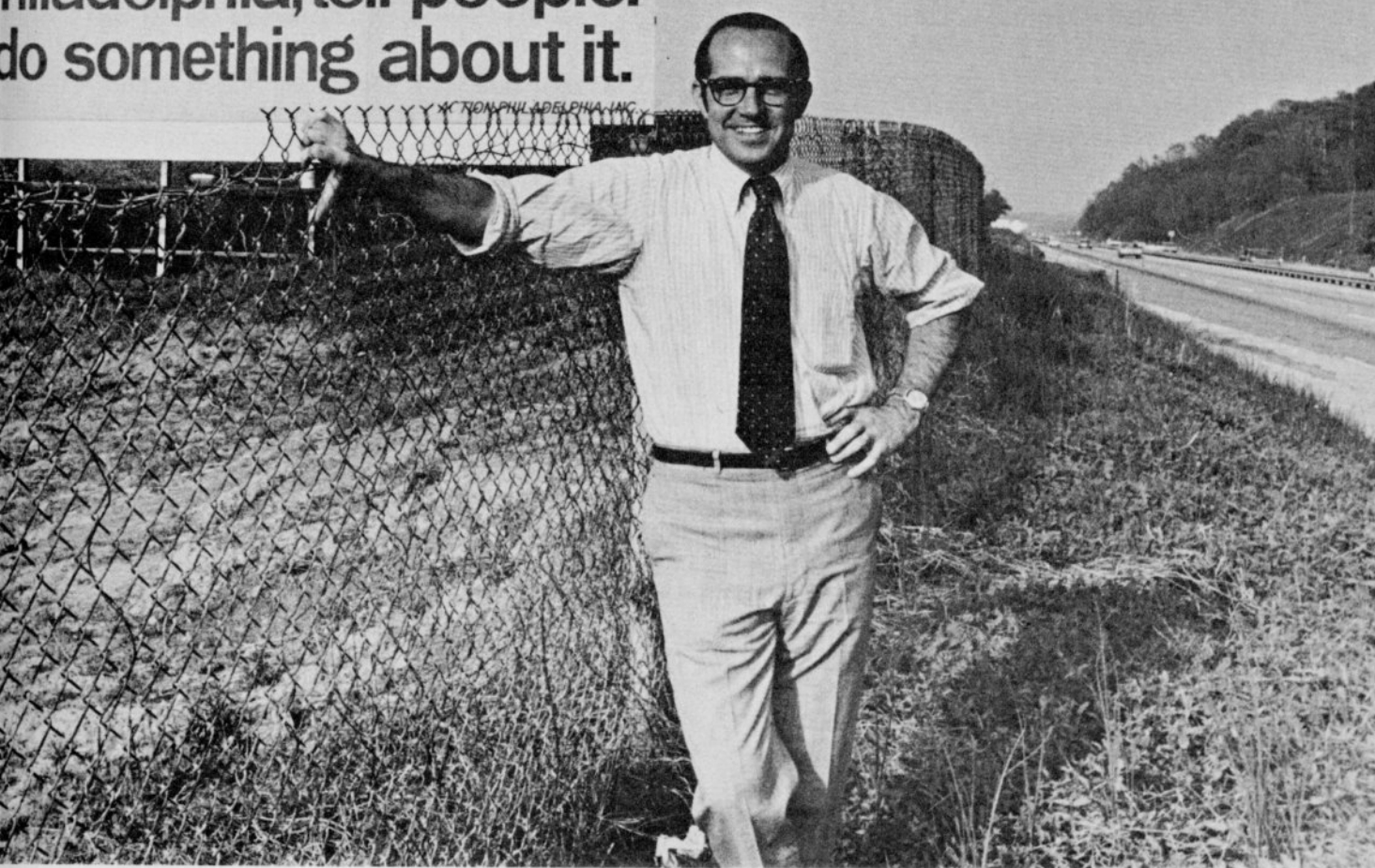
Philadelphia's Orchestra and Art Museum are incomparable, and other cultural attractions, such as its Pennsylvania Ballet and theaters, are eminently worthy of attention.

The city already has established an enviable record of urban renewal and redevelopment, while its tradition is rooted in the beginnings of American history.

Its suburbs are both remarkably pleasant and quickly reached via a public transportation system that is better than most. Perhaps most appealing of all, business

continued

Philadelphia, tell people.
do something about it.



and the editor-in-chief of *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, John W. Alexander. And, therein lies the reason for John Charles Thompson Alexander's subsequent use of the initials, "C. T." With two prominent John Alexanders in the Class of 1956, something had to give, and that something was C. T.'s first name.

Ask C. T. to recall his greatest single achievement at Penn and he will tell you it was making the dean's list in his senior year. He's probably right, considering all of his other activities and the fact that, a couple of months before graduation, he and Carol Tripner, a student at Drexel and his childhood sweetheart from Ridley Park, were married.

But he wasn't through yet at Penn. At Hey Day exercises, C. T. was awarded the Spade, and he later was elected alumni president of the Class of 1956.

Following graduation, he served for two years as a lieutenant in a Marine assault helicopter squadron. He eventually achieved the rank of captain in the reserve and developed a strong taste for being flown about in helicopters. He still indulges himself in it when he can find good reason to hire one (such as showing two foreign businessmen the fourth largest U. S. city from the air recently).

When he was released from active duty, C. T. returned to Penn after a short-lived exposure to the pension-consulting field at Towers Perrin Forster & Crosby, Inc. Ray Saalbach ('49 G, '52 Gr) was moving from the admissions office to become graduate admissions officer at Wharton and Bob Pitt ('49 W), then dean of admissions, hired C. T. to replace him. After a year of covering secondary schools for Penn, C. T. went to work for John Hetherston ('46 C), as assistant corporate secretary of the University, for approximately another year. He then resigned to accept a sales job at Scott Paper Company.

In 1962, Richard Havens ('42 W, '48 GB), president of Industrial Valley Bank, asked C. T. to join IVB as an assistant secretary. By 1966, C. T., at age 32, had worked his way up to senior vice president and secretary of the bank, in charge of the corporate services division. He acquired a reputation as an astute marketing man and was largely responsible for building an image for the bank as an aggressive, contemporary "business that happened to be in banking," as he referred to it.

C. T. says that marketing is basically the same, whether your product happens to be paper napkins, a bank's services, or a city. The job is knowing your product for what it is, and exploiting its existing opportunities; then you research what the market desires and initiate product improvements and diversification. Finally, you repeat the cycle. It sounds complicated, but, in the classic sense, C. T. is saying that he can't sell Philadelphia as being something

different from what it really is.

So, moving beyond Action Philadelphia's initial advertising and promotional phase, C. T. has assigned a number of projects to outside agencies and consultants.

In an effort to determine his product's potential, he commissioned a survey of people's attitudes about Philadelphia.

A transportation monograph is being prepared.

Architects Murphy Levy Wurman ('56 FA, '55 FA, and '59 FA respectively) have been engaged to study and propose a highway graphics plan from the airport to center city.

Students at Harvard Business School are studying alternative ways to operate Action Philadelphia, so that they can develop a long-range marketing plan for the city. When completed, it will be the first such urban environment marketing plan in existence.

At Wharton, Francis E. Brown, professor of marketing and statistics, is coordinating a study on Philadelphia's potential market for night life, being researched by second-year marketing students.

Franklin S. Roberts ('48 C), a Philadelphia advertising and public relations man who also specializes in theatrical investments, is studying ways to reverse the trend of a declining legitimate theater. He says that his report to C. T. will include specific recommendations for "a positive effort to achieve results."

FINALLY, C. T. sees Action Philadelphia in the role of ombudsman: at any given moment, there are private and government agencies which, with a little behind-the-scenes prodding, can be persuaded to do a more effective job for the city. As a small, freewheeling operation, Action Philadelphia can learn what is—or what is supposed to be—going on. Then it can apply the influence of its directors to get things done.

An example is the International Arrivals and Departures Center planned for the airport after a quick but comprehensive conversion of two empty hangars. This was noted publicly by C. T. at a business conference last January. In an apparently un-Philadelphian manner, what was said to be a two-year project is now scheduled for an August opening.

Central to the problem of getting things done, according to C. T., is the traditional reserve of Philadelphians. They are notoriously indifferent to new ideas and new people, he says. He blames a kind of mass xenophobia for much of Philadelphia's seeming apathy.

C. T. therefore finds himself using his communications skills to get his fellow citizens involved in their own future. Considering his own personal involvement, he is eminently qualified for the job.

He is a member of Philadelphia's Committee of Seventy, the financial task force of the Philadelphia

Bicentennial Corporation, and the economics and taxation council of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. He also served as chairman of the Philadelphia Action in Depth Project, a summer living program for college students in North Philadelphia.

In and around Valley Forge Mountain, where he lives with his wife, Carol, and his three children (Susan, 11; Linda, 10; John, 5), he has served as chairman of the Schuylkill Township planning commission, a director of the Phoenixville area school district, president of the Phoenixville YMCA, and director of the Phoenixville Red Cross. He founded the community swim club and tennis club and spearheaded the development of a community park for the Mountain. He is currently helping to organize a black community center and day care center in Phoenixville.

He designed and built a contemporary room on his colonial house and plays touch football for relaxation on fall weekends. For nine years, C. T.'s has been the "voice of Franklin Field" at Penn football games. He apologizes for not having squeezed in enough rounds of golf last year to maintain a handicap. When he plays, it is usually at Waynesborough Country Club, of which he is a founding member.

Last year, C. T. was president of the \$150,000 IVB-Philadelphia Golf Classic at Whitemarsh, one of the richest tournaments on the professional circuit. He is serving as president again this year.

Philadelphia's Junior Chamber of Commerce named John C. T. Alexander "Outstanding Young Man of the Year" in 1969. He earned that honor the hard way, having been out of town for a good part of the year. From August to December, C. T. was studying at Harvard Business School in the highly competitive and concentrated Program for Management Development that is designed for top corporate executives from around the world. Upon graduation, C. T.'s class of 145 men elected him "King."

In a tongue-and-cheek proclamation, King C. T. invited all of his subjects to celebrate his coronation at a "... fun packed, all expenses paid, most fantastic weekend" in Philadelphia, but, then recalled that "... unfortunately, Philadelphia is closed on weekends." Which merely proves that the Philadelphia joke as an institution is so ubiquitous that even C. T. Alexander resorted to one, once. Of course, no one in the Harvard group possibly could have misunderstood him. For four months, they had been a captive audience to C. T.'s enthusiastic endorsements of Philadelphia.

C. T. is confident that Action Philadelphia will win out over derision and apathy. The necessary momentum is already building, and it's just a matter of time.

John C. T. Alexander expects to work himself out of his job within two or three years. By then, Philadelphia will have entered into its Renaissance.



At a local architectural firm, C. T. and communications director Dick Cleveland (center) study plans for traffic movement from the airport to center city.