

GRANDPA SYCAMORE



The only actor in the whole world, we say, who can play Grandpa Sycamore in *You Can't Take It With You* is Henry Travers. Certainly, there's no other American actor approaching his three-score-and-ten who can infuse so perfectly into his playing that quiet, comic, deliriously cockeyed twist that is the epitome of the whole Sycamore clan. Grandpa presides over the Sycamores, governs them with a philosophy that is a compound of Hedonism, Eclecticism, Epicureanism, and some good frothy Americanism—and Henry Travers, long in Hollywood but now back to the fold, can deliver Grandpa's precepts with no strain on your credulity and some strain on your heartstrings.

Below is a compound of Grandpa Sycamore's philosophy and his way of life, lifted bodily from the hysterical play that George Kaufman and Moss Hart have written about Grandpa and his Sycamores. As a practical doctrine it may have its faults. As a message delivered nightly to the world at large by Mr. Travers, it becomes hard to disbelieve. The opening and closing speeches happen to be Grandpa's grace before meals:

"Quiet, everybody, quiet! Well, Sir, we've been getting along pretty good for quite a while now, and we're certainly much obliged. Remember, all we ask is to just go along and be happy in our own sort of way. Of course we want to keep our health but as far as anything else is concerned, we'll leave it to You. Thank You. . . . Oh, the world's not so crazy. . . . It's the people in it . . . if they'd just relax there wouldn't be times like these. . . . Life is kind of beautiful if you let it come to you. But the trouble is, people forget that. I know I did. I was right in the thick of it . . . fighting and scratching and clawing. Regular jungle. One day it just kind of struck me. I wasn't having any fun. . . . (So I) just relaxed. Thirty-five years ago that was. And I've been a happy man ever since. . . . What do you think you get your indigestion from? Happiness? No, sir. You get it because most of your time is spent doing things you don't want to do. . . . Why do you keep on doing it? . . . You've got all the money you need. You can't take it with you. . . . I have a lot of fun. Time enough for everything . . . read, talk, visit the zoo now and then, practice my darts, even have time to notice when spring comes around . . . and I haven't taken bicarbonate of soda in thirty-five years. . . . I used to get down to that office nine o'clock sharp no matter how I felt. Lay awake nights for fear I wouldn't get that contract. Used to worry about the world, too. Got all worked up about whether Cleveland or Blaine was going to be elected President—seemed awful important at the time, but who cares now? What I'm trying to say . . . is that I've had thirty-five years that nobody can take away from me, no matter what they do to the world. See? . . . How many of us would be willing to settle when we're young for what we eventually get? All these plans we make . . . what happens to them? It's only a handful of the lucky ones that can look back and say that they even came close. . . . Quiet, everybody, quiet! Well, Sir, here we are again. We want to say thanks once more for everything You've done for us. . . . We've all got our health and as far as anything else is concerned, we'll leave it to You. Thank You."