

## Despite 'Snow Capital' dubbing

## Chicago—toddlin' at sunup or sundown

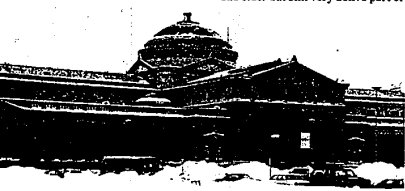
By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

CHICAGO—A winter weekend in Chicago will teach you something about winter. It's not snow that drives you winter-crazy, it's the digging out and driving in it.

Television shows snow piled half way up the parking meters, and cars buried on both sides of the street a few miles north of the Loop, but the downtown city is clear and throbbing with action. It's not that the snow piles are any warmer in somebody else's city, but a compact downtown, a good public transportation system and lots of action recommends this city to tourists.

Mini holiday packages stimulated by the tourist bureau open the best hotels to tourists half-price for weekend visits, and you can eat and play on a reasonable budget.

**GETTING THERE.** I-94 and area expressways were cleared of January blizzards, so driving there and back is easy if there is not another disaster-level storm. Park the car at your hotel or in the Grant Park underground lot near the Art Institute on S. Michigan Avenue in the Loop. Leave it there and make use of the city's public transportation.



The Field Museum of Natural History preserves much of yesterday for today.

downtown Chicago is the Loop, marked by the rectangular loop of the elevated railroad there to the south, bordered by the western and northern arm of the Chicago River. The Sears Tower rises in glass-sided glory from the center of it.

Three major museums weight the point of land that prods the lake a few blocks south: the huge Field Museum of Natural History which hosted the King Tut exhibit last year; the Shedd Aquarium, said to be the largest in the world; and the Adler Planetarium, which offers a first-class view of the Chicago skyline.

The pocket north of the Chicago River is the newer, more expensive part of downtown Chicago. It is landmarked by the Water Tower, now a tourist bureau, and the Hancock Building. These two buildings bracket an elegant high-rise shopping center called Water Tower Place. Chicagoans who once scoffed at it, now give directions by it.

Within these two downtown pockets north and south of the Chicago River is everything you need for an active winter weekend except perhaps for two things: the Lincoln Park area, a few blocks by taxi to the north and the Museum of Science and Industry, a short bus ride to the south.

Michigan Avenue is a major artery through it all, north to south. Shopping is on State Street in the Loop, which is being converted to a mall, and on North Michigan Avenue towards Water Tower Place.

**WEEKEND ENTERTAINMENT** is found in several distinct areas of town. The old jazz quarter on Rush Street is within a few blocks of the Water Tower. Lincoln Street is a short cab ride north, as are Old Town and New Town. Rush Street has the old Chicago look—polished wood and glass and green plants, all upgraded along with the prices. There are dinner places like

Sweetwaters, where small tables sit on a platform above a huge oval mahogany bar. There are drinking places like Harry's Cafe across the street where nightimers stand in mobs and drink between paneled walls. There are hidden places like the Back Door, half a block south, where the musicians are.

The Back Door is down an aisle-wide alley that you can miss if you blink and walk at the same time. There is a mild electronic noise level in the bar-and-basement atmosphere, with the kind of stools and high tables usually associated with coffee houses.

One of the highlights of Old Town, north of Rush Street, is Second City, which is similar to the Comedy Store in Los Angeles. Young performers learn improvisational comedy there. Some of the graduates include Alan Arkin, Mike Nichols and Elaine May.

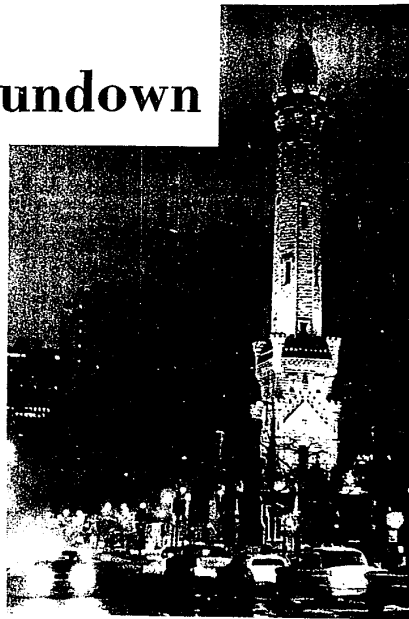
On Broadway, nearby, is New Town, which hosts the singles bars, discos and craft shops populated by the 25-and-younger set.

**FOOD WITH WALKING** strings is another typical Chicago entertainment. If you feel rich and romantic enough for the Consort at the top of the Continental Hotel, near the Water Tower, Franz Bentler's Royal Strings weave among candlelit tables and flaming desserts, with a three-piece band for backup. Franz plays a rare Stradivarius violin, circa 1701.

The Consort is expensive European elegance with a long-stemmed rose and unpriced menus for the ladies and spectacular ambiance. It's sold out months in advance for Valentine's Day. Franz and his strolling violins do both table-side schmaltz and floor show.

Most of the bars are open until 4 a.m. (See the Travelog column on this page for other restaurant recommendations.)

Friday and Saturday night everyone



Brightly illuminated Water Tower stands out along a busy Michigan Avenue. (Photos by Micky Jones)

plays. Sunday morning you plan on dieting and jog, preferably in Lincoln Park. The Park is fun, whether you join the joggers and skaters and cross-country skiers playing beneath the nearby high-rise skyline or whether you amble lazily through the Conservatory or the Lincoln Park Zoo.

Lincoln Park is a very restful way to

end a great winter weekend in Chicago. You can Sunday brunch at R.J. Grunts or Mel Markins, pick up your car and drive out of town via the museums to the south of town, or catch a train home.

For information, contact your travel agent or the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60604.

## When doing the town

## Travel

It's the little things that count when you travel, like where to go for dinner and how much does it cost to park. Here are some of those details collected to help you plan a winter weekend in Chicago and help you keep the cost down.

Amtrak leaves Detroit at 7:25 and 11:10 a.m. and 5:50 p.m., stops about 15 minutes later to pick up passengers in Dearborn and arrives at Union Station in Chicago about five hours later. You gain an hour going there, so it's four hours on the clock. Trains leave Chicago at 7:55 a.m. and 1:50 and 5:20 p.m. for your return.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** are available at half price on weekends of the best hotels under a Mini-Holiday plan good on weekends. Prices are for one person for two nights. Ask your travel agent or the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, or ask for the rate by the name at the hotel. The information will not be volunteered.

Personal recommendations from people who have been there:

## North of the Chicago River:

• The Ritz Carlton, Water Tower Place, an elegant hotel with a 12th-floor lobby, solarium seating for cocktails, open cafe and a dining room. The elevator opens directly into the shopping mall with its stores, restaurants, movies and Drury Lane Theater. Mini-holiday rates: \$49.

• Chicago Marriott, North Michigan Avenue a block from the river. An atrium lobby in a brand new hotel, pleasant decor, various eating places, handy location. Mini-holiday rates: \$50.

## Near the Loop:

• Ascot House, South Michigan Avenue near the Loop. It's old, and not at all fancy, but it's acceptable, has a swimming pool, access from Grant Park and the waterfront and accessible to the Loop. Mini-Holiday rate: \$24.55.

**RESTAURANTS** recommended by people who have been there: Steak houses—the Steak Joint in Old Town, Kinzie's Steak House, near north, where you pick your steak before they cook it. Larry's Prime Rib in the old Cyrus McCormick Mansion on Ontario Street, has only one entree: prime rib in a choice of three thicknesses. Lettuce Entertainment Enterprises has restaurants with modern and amusing decor, menu and names—Great Gitz's Flying Food Show, R.J. Grunt's, Jonathan Seafood, Lawrence of Oregon. The Bakery, a tiny place on Lincoln Street with a good, notorious chef, a fixed \$15 meal and lots of hometown atmosphere. Also mentioned: Arnie's, Don Roth Blackhawk, the Ritz Carlton and Truffles at the Hyatt Regency, the Berghoff and the Consort.

**INFORMATION**—Visitor Event hotline, 922-7000. Transportation hotline, 836-7000. Rock and roll concert schedules, 686-6667. Chicago Magazine and The Reader newspaper are gold mines of tourist information. The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau in the Water Tower or at 332 S. Michigan Avenue.

**BUYING BOOZE**—There is a five percent Cook County tax on liquor, but it's still about \$1 a fifth cheaper in either Indiana or Chicago than in Michigan.



Eat, drink and be merry Friday and Saturday. On Sunday, it's time to work off the weekend.

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