

Woman: Just take a street car -- this car (pointing to trolley tracks). Just take this car to Boylston Street. Transfer there -- go under the subway -- and take a Commonwealth and Boston College car. When you get on the car here, just ask the conductor. Gee, I don't know. (Thinks.) Go straight down here (pointing down Arlington Street). Straight down.

I don't know. It'll have a regular sign. I don't know.  
I don't know.

Man with nearly incomprehensible Brooklyn (or Bronx?) accent: (Uses violent gestures throughout conversation.) Commonwealth Avenue. Yeah. (Whirls, points down Chandler Street.) You gotta go 'way (with emphasis) down there. 'Way down. See the end (pointing to Columbus Avenue)? The end of the street? Go right there. Go right, over to Copley Square. Hey! (Whirls.) Catch the street car right here (pointing to trolley tracks). Change at Boylston Street (grabbing interviewer's arm pointing east down Tremont Street). At Boylston Street, go underground. You'll have to ask the conductor the best way to Commonwealth. It's a long long way. It's too far ... this way is better than the other (pointing over shoulder down Chandler Street). Unless you feel (with emphasis) like walking. You do? Well then (whirling, facing down Chandler Street again) ... The fastest way is to go right down there (pointing down Chandler Street). See the second street light? See there -- the first? Now see the second? Right there, go right. Right over to Copley Square. Go right there. That district's all nigger folks. I mean, they're all nice people and all that, and it's not dark now ... but you'd better turn over there. Right to Copley Square. Ask anyone there where Commonwealth Avenue is. You'll be close enough so anyone will know.

Just ask anyone at Copley Square. They'll tell you. It should be very close there, and when you get that close, someone will know. Don't worry -- ask someone. I can't tell you, from here (with emphasis), the best way from Copley Square.

(Laughs.) Oh, it's a good long way, real long. It's a good long walk (laughing).

Columbus and Warren to Commonwealth Avenue

8-10 p.m.

Young man: Commonwealth Avenue ... (Turns facing north, stops to think.) Ah, ah ... It's 7 blocks over (motioning north). You can't get through there (pointing to West Newton Street). There's railroad tracks in the way. You'll have to go down to Mass Ave (motioning west up Columbus Avenue). Do you know where Mass Ave is? That'll be ... oh ... (thinking) ... one, two, three ... oh ... four blocks. Go four blocks to Mass Ave, and then follow Mass Ave (motioning north) till you get to Commonwealth.

Oh, let me see. Besides the sign ... Well, go five blocks -- it'll be five blocks at least. Leessee. Newbury ... you'll come to Newbury. Well, just go five blocks down Mass Ave and watch out for it. It'll have a sign.

Oh, maybe about twenty minutes.

Fifteen-year-old girl: Commonwealth Avenue. Gee, I don't know. Why don't you ask in that drug store down there (pointing east down Columbus Avenue)? I know it's around here somewhere, but don't know where. Why don't you ask down there?

Old man with cane: Commonwealth. That's a long way from here. Yeah, a long way. You'll have to go up here (pointing cane west up Columbus Avenue) to Massachusetts Avenue. Go right there (pointing cane to north) about 7 or 8 streets.

Oh, it's a big street divided in two. Cars going in each direction, with a green strip down the middle. Just go ... Better yet, I can tell you a short cut. See this here West Newton Street (pointing cane at street sign)? Take that street straight over (pointing cane to north). You'll come to Huntington Avenue. Huntington is a big main thoroughfare. Cross Huntington, and keep on going around, like this (indicating swing in north-westerly direction with cane). It'll take you right into Massachusetts Avenue, about Boylston.

I don't know how fast you walk.

Old toothless Negro man: Commonwealth Avenue. You must go down here (pointing east to Braddock Park Street) to Braddock. There's a foot-bridge (motioning north) ... Wait. No, you can go this way (motioning west to West Newton Street). Come with me. See West Newton Street? (Walks to corner of West Newton Street and Columbus Avenue.) There's

Columbus and Warren to Commonwealth Avenue (continued)

railroad bridge. Take West Newton Street over railroad bridge to Huntington Avenue. Huntington is a big wide avenue. Go across Huntington, and angle over like this (pointing in northwesterly direction). You'll see a street like that. Cross Huntington and take Belvedere Street -- it's called -- to ... uh ... Mass Ave. Straight down Mass Ave is Commonwealth.

Oh, it's ... (thinking) ... Boylston Street ... It's about 4 blocks down from there -- Boylston. And it's got a big underpass. You can't miss it. It goes right under Mass Ave. There's a mall up the middle, and a street on either side. Cars going both ways. Cars parked both sides, with a big underpass under Mass Ave. You can't miss it. Just go down (pointing north up West Newton Street) to Huntington and go over (indicating northwesterly direction) to Mass Ave. Straight down.

Oh, about fifteen minutes.

Negro woman: That's a long way. You gotta go down to Mass Ave (motioning west up Columbus Avenue). No. You gotta take a bus. You can't walk it. It's down that way (motioning north). You gotta go down to Columbus and Massachusetts. See them stoplights down there (indicating west up Columbus Avenue)? Go down there and go right. You have to get a bus. Go to Mass Station. Commonwealth is down Mass Ave that way (indicating north).

Oh, you go down to Mass Station and ask. You gotta catch the bus. go down there to Mass Ave. When you get to Mass Station, you ask.

Depends how fast you walk. If you walk fast, five minutes.

South Station to Commonwealth Avenue

2-3 p.m.

Distinguished-looking crewcut man, fitting college professor stereotype: Commonwealth Avenue. Ha ha. How do you want to go now, walking? Let's see now (pausing, looking over Boston skyline). Go right down there (pointing up Summer Street). Take any left. Go until you come to Washington. That'll be a big street. Go one more block. That'll be the Common. Cross the Common. Cross the Public Garden. Commonwealth is a big wide street with a mall down the middle that runs into the Public Garden. Commonwealth will stop at the Public Garden. It's a good twenty minute walk.

Yes. It will be wider than any of the rest. All those streets run up to the Public Garden and stop, like this (indicating a right angle with hands). Commonwealth is the widest.

Little old woman: Oh that's a long distance from here. That's over in Back Bay. I couldn't tell you how to get there though. You'd better find someone else to tell you. It's quite a long way. (Looks around.) I'm just trying to find one of those men who directs traffic. He ... Oh, you've got to get on Tremont. Find Tremont, and go from there to Boylston. Then Commonwealth. Take Essex here (motioning south down Atlantic Street). Go down to Boylston and over (motioning all the time). Essex is down a ways, four or five blocks. Essex to Boylston to Commonwealth. Ask someone down there.

Oh, there are signs. It'll have a sign like any other.

Oh, it must be a mile from here. Fifteen or twenty minutes.

Pipe-smoking man: Yeah. Go right up that street (motioning up Summer Street) to Beacon Str... Go right up there to the Common. Go through the Common like that (indicating slight veer to left with hand). Right to Commonwealth.

It'll have the regular sign. Commonwealth is big and wide, ... With one of those green strips down the middle. It'll have a sign.

Oh, about five minutes. It's not far.

Woman: I think you'd better ask somebody else. I think the policeman could help you over there.

Woman: Gee, I'm new here too. Let me see ... (looking over skyline).

Overhearing man: Can I help?

Woman: Here, he can tell you.

Woman moves on.

Man: Commonwealth. Commonwealth and what? Commonwealth is a long street. Commonwealth and Arlington. That's different. It's a good twenty minute walk. Tell you -- take this street (pointing to Summer Street) straight up until you strike the Common. When you strike the Common, look left. You'll see the Carlton. You'll see the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The Carlton is right on the corner of Commonwealth and Arlington. Or ask anybody. Anybody'll know.

Well, the Hotel ... it's a big street. Wide, with trees and stuff down the middle. And long. Goes straight out of town for miles and miles. (Leaving, turns and yells:) It's the biggest street in town.

Old North Church to Commonwealth Avenue

3-5 p.m.

Young Italian man: I don't have any idea. Try asking across the street (pointing to shop).

Fifteen-year-old Italian boy: Oh gee, I don't know. (Turns two full circles, looking over rooftops.) (Calls to approaching friend:) Hey -- ya know where Commonwealth Avenue is? He'll have to take the railroad, won't he? Catch the railroad at Haymarket?

Italian friend of same age: Commonwealth. Ooh. Are you (pointing to illegally parked Cadillac) driving that? Walking. Oooh. You've got a long one. You can't take the train? I wouldn't walk.

Passing Italian man: Where do you want to go? (Two boys set off after passing girls.) How are you goin'? Then listen to me. Go straight down (pointing west down Salem Street) Salem, under the bridge, and up the hill to Scollay Square. The bridge is the highway -- you'll see it. Scollay Square is on top of a hill. Go left (with emphasis) at Scollay. That'll lead you to Tremont and the Common. You'd be best to cross the Common and Public Garden. Commonwealth runs into the Public Garden. Take Tremont to the Common. That's a big open space park thing. Cross a street and you'll come to a smaller park with lots of flowers (Note: the date is February 14.) and things. That's the Public Garden. They're adjacent. Go across the Public Garden and you'll run right into it.

It's different from this street -- wider, less noise, less busy. And the houses are probably spaced different.

Oh, about 25, or twenty, minutes. You've got long legs (laughing) -- for you, twenty minutes.

Old Italian woman: No. No spika.

Ten-year-old boy: No.

Teenage Italian girl: Ayeee. Oooh. I do not know how to get there. You must go down (pointing west down Salem Street) further and ask someone. Wait. See that clock (pointing to clock at corner of Salem and Bennet Streets). Go up there and ask there (indicating the next street over). That's the main street, and somebody will know. It's over that way (point-

Old North Church to Commonwealth (continued)

ing Southeast) anyway, I think. Where to on Commonwealth? Oh well, just go up that street with the clock.

I do not know. I do not know. I have never seen it.  
Oh, about five or ten minutes. It's not far.

Woman: Oooh, that's far. You must go to Haymarket and take the subway. Go straight down this street (nods west down Salem Street) to Haymarket Square. Walking? You can't walk. It's too far. You CAN'T WALK. It would take you one hour, one and one-half hours. It's a big street. It's long, real long. You would have a terrible time walking. Commonwealth is the biggest street in Boston. You must take the subway.

It's big and wide. You can ask someone at the subway. It's too far to walk. (Walks away shaking head.)

Old Italian man with heavy accent: You too far, from here. You too far. You must go Haymark'. You know Haymark'? You walk! Too far to walk. Too far. You must go to Haymark' and take train. Walk. Go straight down (pointing west down Salem Street) to Scollay Square. Ask there for Tremont. Then go Beacon. Beacon. Beacon. It's very far. Commonwealth. It very close to Beacon.

Younger man stops: Where to? Oooh, that is (with emphasis) far. Where do you want to go on Commonwealth? How are you goin? Ooh, walk-in'.

Older man: One hour.

Younger man: At least. Listen, you go down here (pointing west down Salem Street) through the tunnel and up the hill. At Scollay Square, go left. That'll be Tremont. Go straight on Tremont, and you can't miss it.

Same as any other street. It's wider than this, and longer. Cut across the Public Garden and you'll run right into it.

Older man: Beacon.

Younger man: Yeah, it's right near Beacon. There are many ways. It's at least four miles. Anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half. It's too far to walk. What made you decide to walk there? Oh.

Mass General Hospital to Commonwealth Avenue

10-11 a.m.

Woman: Oh, gosh. I don't know. I'm new around here. Commonwealth Avenue. Why don't you ask ... (indicating passing man) ... ?

Passing man: Commonwealth Avenue. Yes.

Woman: Yes. Excuse me. (Moves on.)

Man: Are you drivin'? Well, go down here (pointing to Cambridge Street) to the light -- the red light -- and take a right. Go down here to Charles Street, the traffic circle. That's right, go right at the light. Go left at Charles Street. On your right will be what we call the Public Garden -- a big park. Trees and things. You'll see a gate. Go through, to the other side. There'll be another gate there. That'll lead you right to Commonwealth Avenue. You can't miss it. You got that now. (Pointing to Cambridge Street) Right, on down to the circle, then left. When you come to a big park on the right, go on through. It's easy -- one gate to the other. You'll pass a pond and benches and trees and things. Right on through to Commonwealth -- it stops there at the park -- the Public Garden.

Oh, it's a big wide street, with a green park down the middle. Cars going both ways. You know. And trees down the middle. About twenty minutes.

Mass General Hospital to Commonwealth Avenue

5-6 p.m.

Two women, one talking: Commonwealth Avenue. How are you ... ? You'd better go right (pointing to Cambridge Street), to the subway. There's a traffic circle there. Go left -- that's Charles. Go along there to Beacon Street. That'll be the Common. Cross the Common and you can't miss it. It's the next one down from Beacon. It's quite far.

Young woman: Oh, that's awfully far. Are you walking? Go to the traffic circle. See that red light (pointing to traffic light at the Cambridge Street corner)? Go right like this (making south-to-north motion). Do you know Boston at all? You're going my way. Come on. (Walks to Cambridge Street corner.) Go left there (pointing to traffic circle) on Charles. It'll take you to Beacon Street. The Common will be on the left, the Public Garden on the right. Charles goes between. Cut across the Public Garden. Commonwealth runs into the Public Garden. It's above Beacon. You can't miss it. They go alphabetically: Arlington, Beacon, like that. Commonwealth is next to Beacon. They go Beacon, Commonwealth, Huntington, I think.

It's got signs. It's easy. Next to Beacon.

It's a long way. Maybe twenty minutes. Don't go through town. You'll never get there that way. No, it's impossible. Go around by the right and cross the Public Garden. You can't miss it.

1-2 p.m.

Distinguished-looking man: Where do you want to go on Commonwealth? Well, you'll have to go by subway. Go down here to this stoplight (pointing to Cambridge Street) and go right. Go to Charles Street and catch the subway there, at the traffic circle. Walking? Oh, you've got a ways. Well, go right here (pointing to Cambridge Street) at the stoplight to Charles Street. Go left. Parallel the river until you come to Beacon Street. Beacon parallels the river like this (illustrating with hands). First it's Beacon, then Marlborough, then Commonwealth (illustrating with fingers).

Oh, it's a big street. (Pause.) With a big mall down the middle.

Depends. If you want this end, no more'n five minutes. Down near Mass Ave, at least fifteen or twenty minutes.



Mass General Hospital to Commonwealth Avenue (continued)

Woman with German accent: Commonwealth Avenue ... Commonwealth Avenue. You turn right (motioning toward north) and then left. You'd better ask from then on.

Two women:

One: We're not from here.

Other: We're not from here. We're from out of town.

Young man: Commonwealth. Are you driving, or ... ? ... (Stops to think for minute or two.) ... I'm just trying to think ... Commonwealth ... the best way ... Listen, I'm going that way. Come on. I can't tell you how to get there, but I can drive you there. Oh. Well ... (Thinks some more.) Tell you. I think you'd better go right over there (pointing straight over Beacon Hill). Straight down and straight over. I think that's best. Just go straight in that direction (pointing south) and you'll run right into Commonwealth. I don't know if you can make it over that street (pointing straight ahead to Grove Street on Beacon Hill) but zigzag and you'll make it. (Pauses.) Yes, right to Commonwealth. No wait, it might be Beacon. I'm trying to think. Which comes first? Either Commonwealth or Beacon come first, the other second, but I'm not sure which one. You get over there and ask. I think it's Commonwealth. No, it's Beacon, I'm sure. You'll go right. (Understanding is obvious in facial expression.) See, Beacon Street runs along the Common and river. Commonwealth is one or two streets over -- two, I think -- and parallels Beacon. (Uses finger on hand to sketch imaginary map.) Commonwealth stops at the Common, and Beacon goes on, like this. You'll come to Beacon. Go right, and then over two. Commonwealth's a big street. You can't miss it.

It's got a center strip, with cars going in each direction. It's big.

Oh, just about 7 minutes, I'd say.

Missing from others

Mass General Hospital to Commonwealth Avenue

6-7 p.m.

Distinguished-looking man, probably doctor: Are you hoofin'? It's at least a mile. Go down to the corner (pointing to Cambridge Street) and go right, to the traffic circle. Go left down Charles Street -- follow me? -- to the Public Garden. Go right there at Beacon Street -- no, better yet, cut across the Public Garden like this (making diagonal motion with hand). You'll run directly into Commonwealth. It runs right to the Public Garden.

The Ritz Hotel will be one block away from the corner. You can't miss the Ritz. Commonwealth is one of those double-barreled roads that go both ways. You know, it's got one of those green parks down the middle with trees and things. It's one block up from Beacon Street, but cutting across the Public Garden would be faster.

It's a good mile from here. Maybe 20 minutes. (Walking away:) Where you going on Commonwealth? Come with me. I'll give you a lift.

Monday, 28 January 57 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Arlington Square to Commonwealth Avenue

Man: Oh gosh, I dunno. It's over there someplace (motioning between Arlington Street and John Hancock Building). You'd best go down Arlington (pointing) and ask somebody. Anybody can tell you down there. It's over that way (motioning to same place). That's the Statler (pointing to John Hancock Building). It's behind the Statler. Over that way. Just take Arlington and ask anybody. They'll know. They'll show you.

Oh, it's a big park thoroughfare - wide and all that. Plenty of trees, lots of trees and green. Big apartment houses. You know. It's a residential district.

You walkin'? Oh, about 15 minutes. It depends. Ten to 20 minutes. Depends where you want to go. Just gettin' there would be about 15 minutes. Go to Arlington and ask. Over the bridge and straight ahead. About 15 minutes.

Young man: Oh God, I dunno. It's over there (pointing over John Hancock Building). Gee, I don't know how many blocks. Tell you what. Take Arlington - that one (pointing) - down there. It'll run right into it. It'll take a little bend down there. Then you'll come to a big space, a big green - the Public Garden. It'll be on your right. Go a few more blocks. Commonwealth will be on the left. It will run into the park. Go straight down that street (pointing to Arlington Street). Arlington will take you right to it.

Oh, I don't know. It's the widest street in that district. Real wide. And it's got a - I guess you'd call it a mall - down the middle of it. It'll be 2 blocks as soon as you reach the park. I think that will be Commonwealth.

Oh, if you're steppin' right along, 7 minutes. Five, 6, 7, you know. (Walking away.) Right over that bridge (pointing down Arlington Street).

Young man: Oh, gosh, you got me. I think it's over that way (pointing west between Tremont Street and Berkeley Hotel). Boy, you got me. Lessee (pointing to the same place), Massachusetts, Columbus ... (Hand sweeping in arc around to Arlington) 'Course it could be over there. I dunno. Columbus, Massachusetts ... I'm all mixed up. Better ask somebody else.

I dunno. Let's ask ... (He asks man coming out of bar.)

Man emerging from bar: Gee, I'm all twisted. Wait. It's that way (pointing toward John Hancock Building). It's about 5 minutes - no more than that. Go straight down there (pointing down Arlington Street). How are you goin'? O.K., go down there, and inquire again. Bear left to Copley Square (pointing toward John Hancock Building). The Kenmore Hotel is on Commonwealth. The Kenmore Hotel. So's that Red Cross outfit. Dartmouth Street. On Dartmouth Street. Commonwealth goes that way (gesturing in east-west direction). Go down to Columbus and bear left. Better inquire down there. Stuart, Columbus. Inquire to be sure. But keep bearing left. When you get to Copley, bear right. You'll run smack into Commonwealth. Better inquire again at the bottom of the hill (pointing down Arlington Street). At Copley Square, go right. I'm sure the Kenmore Hotel is there. You're sure if you're near the Kenmore. Go right and you're there. Dartmouth is good, as good as any.

Commonwealth is a double (with emphasis) thoroughfare. Cars go (motioning) that way to Boston on one side, that way to Cambridge on the other. See? It runs into the Common. Runs into Arlington, I think.

It's a short way, less'n 5 minutes. Over there (pointing toward John Hancock Building). Better inquire first. Inquire again so you won't get started in the wrong direction. Keep bearing left, but inquire first. Inquire again so you won't get lost.