

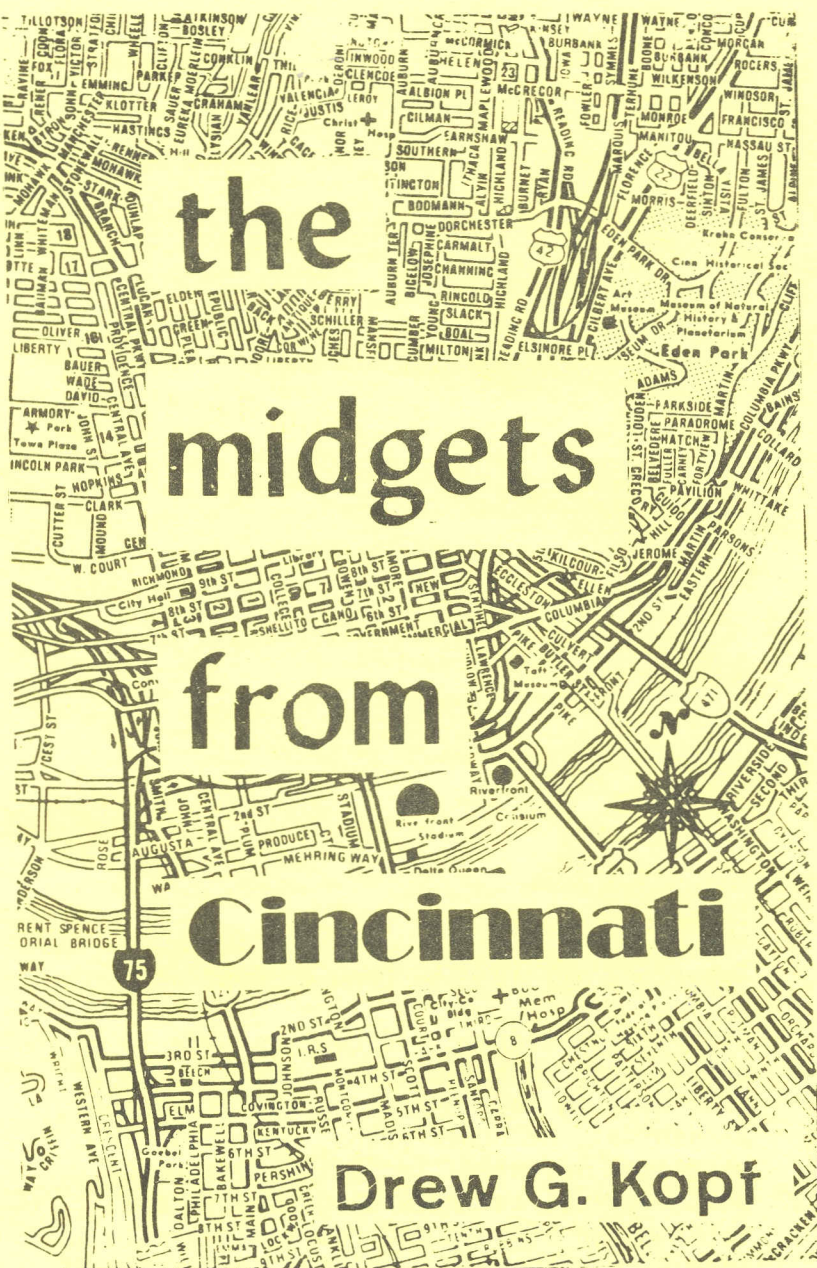


the midgets

from

Cincinnati

Drew G. Kopf



the
midgets

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This dedication is to be read
aloud with thumb and index finger
pinching one's nose (unless you
happen to be a well established
hospital page):

Doctor Shaw, Doctor Shaw

Three two one four

Doctor Shaw

Three two one four, please.

Dr. Rinaldi, Dr. Rinaldi

Two one eight seven

Dr. Rinaldi

Two one eight seven, please.

INTRODUCTION

Book shops and libraries are not places for perfectionists unless they are their own personal ones. Knowing where books are is easy. Deciding where books should be is not.

Books catalogued under law may really be histories. Ninety-nine percent of biographies are authors' conceptions and might better be shelved under science fiction. Encyclopedias take pains to list entries according to generally accepted subject titles. But, subject titles and their general acceptances change.

Fact today could be fiction tomorrow. The opposite is equally true. Re-organizing our literature by authors' names or by titles could be caotic, but it would be less leading — more honest. Fiction and fact would be left to the determination of each reader rather than to the understandings, beliefs, and hopes of professional book people.

As you finish reading this book, consider where you found it - fiction? Non-fiction? Humor? Philosophy? Theology? or, Cincinnati? — consider why it was there and where it ought to be.

FOREWORD

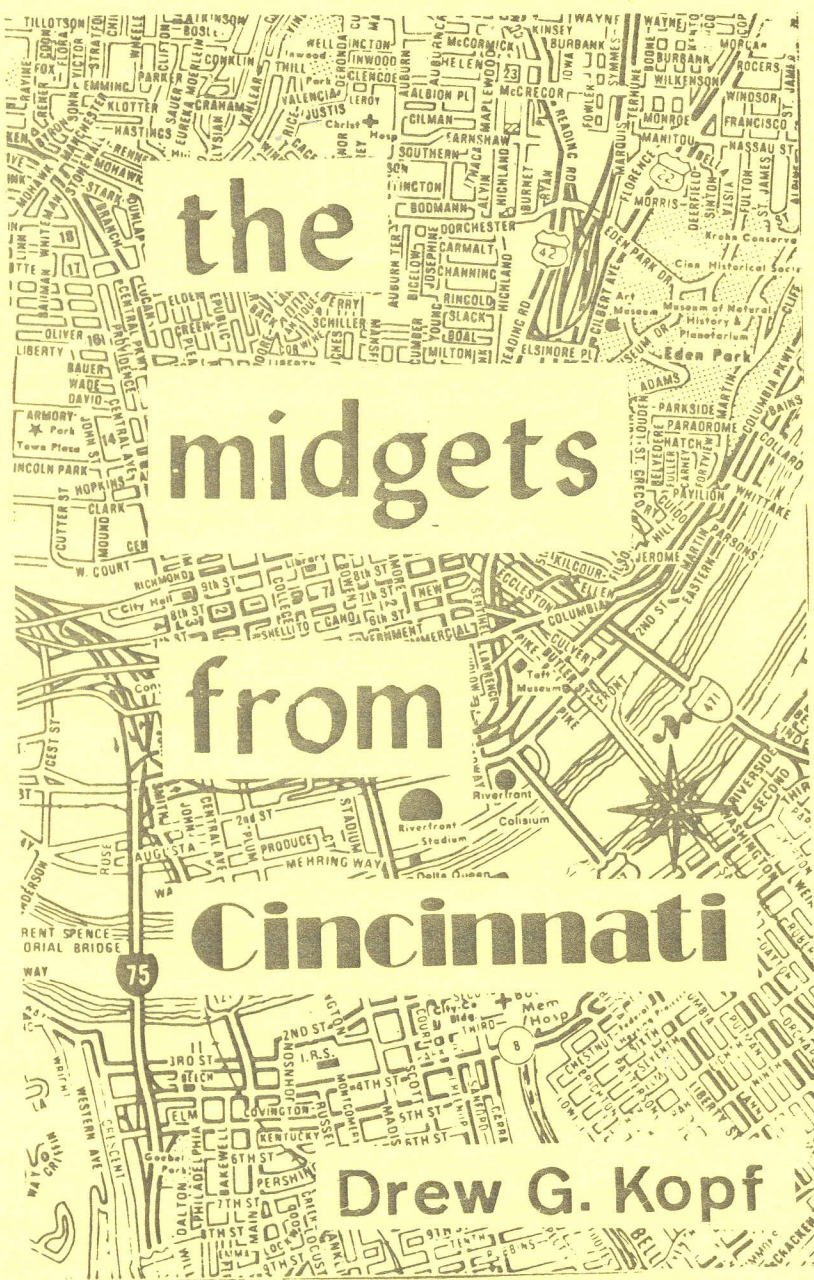
Who are the midgets from Cincinatti? And who sent for them? The midgets from Cincinatti are little people who "sub" in the ballgame of life as kids. But more often than not their greater function is to be waiters at the banquet of life who serve up wit and wisdom in the delightful book that follows.

Drew Kopf's great little book, The Midgets from Cincinatti, provides the answers to such profound universal queries as: Where does Chinese food really come from? Are there really any honest game shows on TV? What do hospitals and car repair shops have in common? And many other irreverant analyses of places, things, and ideas that will cause the reader to pause and consider and laugh (not necessarily in that order).

Drew's book is a quotable gem that has a way of creeping into your thoughts. (And I just can't wait until they start sending Chinese food through those pneumatic tubes.)

In short, this is an original work that does what "good" literature should always do: It delights and enlightens. Read it. You'll enjoy it; you don't have to be from Cincinatti.

Burton L. Fischman



the
midgets
from
Cincinnati

Drew G. Kopf

THE MIDGETS FROM CINCINNATI

We left the fencing match for a brief intermission and lunch. As we drove past a ball field, a girl in the back seat said, "aren't those kids cute?" Little kids, seven and eight year olds, were kicking each other and a ball across the grass. The big people, probably supposed to be moms and dads, were standing in a straight line, their eyes riveted on the kids.

It was then that I understood my question of long standing: "Kids always bring flowers to the President as he gets off his plane. Why don't they use midgets? They're more dependable and just as cute."

Why not midgets? It had been staring me in the face ever since I could remember. I nearly said, "...ever since I was a kid," but I don't remember having been a kid. I remember being told I was a kid, what it was supposed to have been like, how cute I was supposed to have been, and where I was supposed to have grown up, but I do not remember being an actual kid.

Truth is stranger than fiction.

I guess most everyone loves kids. Some people love raising them. Grandparents love visiting them on birthdays, holidays, and sometimes babysitting is OK.

Of course, kids don't generally like kids. Kids don't think kids are cute. Kids don't think kids are darling. And kids who are smaller than other kids would be alright if they were just a little bigger and could throw and catch and other good things.

Who would want to be a kid anyway?
Let's face it: nobody.

Consider some "growing up" milestones:

Closing the bathroom door
when you go;
Staying up late;
Going to the store by yourself;
Sixth grade;
Certain scout pins;
Your first kiss;
A learner's permit;
A driver's license;
A diploma;
A real job;

But, who gets to bring flowers to the
President?

Midgets. Midgets who are made to look
and trained to act like little kids. And
what a fantastic job they do. We really
have to hand it to them. What control.
Amazing discipline. Even if awakened in the
middle of the night they still make sounds
and act like little kids.

The midgets from Cincinnati. Trained
by the best, the people who know. Cincinnati
calls the shots; runs the show. They send
us the midgets all trained and ready to
go... or is it grow.

I turned to my companion in the back-
seat and shared my revelation. "Those
aren't kids." I said, "They're midgets,
from Cincinnati.

CHINESE RESTAURANTS

I used to wonder why the best Chinese restaurant is in Philadelphia. The further away I get--I think it is called "The South China"--the worse the food gets. Other Chinese food isn't really bad, it just doesn't taste as good.

I tried to recall what "The South China" was like. I would get there early to watch the waiters sitting around a few pushed-together tables in the middle of the dining area. They jabbered Chinese while folding wanton for the wanton soup. I used to order the wanton soup first. Then egg rolls, which were served as I savored the wanton and considered ordering another bowl. Once I sampled the egg roll before finishing my soup. Just once. H-O-T. I'm still wary when it comes to eating egg rolls. I really needn't be. The ones served elsewhere are just "so-so" warm and uninspired.

I remember licking my fingers of egg roll mixed with duck sauce as the waiter would bring the main course: Chow Mein, Shrimp in Lobster Sauce, Moo Goo Gai Pan, Rice, sometimes Fried Rice, always Chinese Vegetables, like Snow Pea Pods, and all of it nice and hot. Not spicy hot; really hot.

Desert had to have been more than desert. Nothing fancy; but the food was so filling that the rainbow sherbet or pineapple chunks must have been sprinkled with a stimulant to get people up and out so those waiting could be seated.

Fortune cookies are perfect after Chinese food. (No one ever says "Chinese Meal"). But lately I've seen fortune cookies "by-the-box." It's almost sacrilegious. Can you imagine coming home from school and having milk and "fortune" cookies? How can the company that manufactures fortune cookies support such outrageousness?

In a Chinese restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, an occidental waitress told me they had no "chop sticks" and asked me if I wanted my wanton soup with or without wanton.

"WHY IS THE BEST CHINESE

RESTAURANT IN PHILADELPHIA?"

I bolstered my morale with the confidence that comes from eating through many similar oriental-ish dinners. "Well, at least the fortune cookies will be good." As I said it, the answer came to me.

What else could it be? "The South China" Restaurant makes all the Chinese food. Fortune cookies, everything. Other Chinese restaurants are branches of "The South China."

Your order is called in to "The South China." While it is prepared and shipped you wait with drinks, noodles, mustard, duck sauce, all the tea you can drink, wanton soup (with or without wanton), egg rolls (which we all know are frozen), sometimes a waiter to botch up your order: all a stall for time to get your main course in from Philly.

At the South China, fortune cookies used to be soft, fortune cakes. The further away from the South China the harder they got.

People liked the hard fortune cookies so now they are uniformly baked that way.

When a rapid food transport system (RFTS) is developed - pneumatic tubes are a possibility - all Chinese food will be as good as at the South China. Imagine, before you taste your Moo Goo Gai Pan, it is sucked across country in a pneumatic tube.

DAMN CREVER CINCINNATI

THAT WILL BE TEN MINUTES

Things cost more than money.

If you want an ice cream bar because, well, you're just in the mood for an ice cream bar, no problem. Ten cents O.K., even forty-five cents, if you choose something super; with cake and strawberry filling, but you can get an ice cream bar.

However, should you NEED an ice cream bar, that is, should you really have a craving that can only be satisfied by a cold creamy chocolate covered, cake or no cake, ice cream bar, it will cost you more than money. When you finally find one, it will be the last one they had, and you'll probably have to buy it from some little kid (see chapter one) who just bought it, and the kid will even take a bite out of it before you.

Things cost more than money.

Here is proof, to which anyone who has ever had a prescription filled can attest. Walk past lipsticks, newspapers, greeting cards and other ice-cream-type items all the way to the prescription counter. It's always at the back of the store. Wayback. The Druggist looks up from his newspaper, asks, "May I help you?" Hand him your prescription. He glances at it and says, "That will be ten minutes."

At sixty miles an hour you can go ten miles in ten minutes. Some people live ten minutes from work. Is ten minutes a short or long time? Yes it is.

When you are standing in a non-waiting area, waiting for medicine you really need, trying to look like you've got something to do when you've got nothing to do, "That will be ten minutes" is costing you more than money.

Why are pharmacists' areas always elevated? Why do pharmacists always wear white? And glasses? And all those bottles back there... and then, ten minutes are up. Exactly ten minutes. Ten minutes!

He puts a prepackaged pill holder in a box, (prepackaged!), writes your name, and says, "Thank you for waiting", as he adjusts his glasses and newspaper.

There is nothing like Cincinnati efficiency.

THE NIGHTLY NEWS AND WEATHER REPORT

They used to say, "The policeman is your friend" and "You can remember how to spell principal because it ends with p-a-l and the principal is your pal." Because they had to tell me, I questioned both ideas..

No one ever says, "The weatherman is your friend." Yet, he is always friendly, fair weather or foul.

We all tune in for the weather. It's the one thing we can count on.

We may skip the news completely,
or dare to tune in late,
But, we always watch the weather:
at six, eleven or eight.

Tra la!

When major news stories pre-empt everything else, we still get weather reports. They may be done "tongue-in-cheek", with maps or charts or graphs, with complicated overlays, rear screen projections, split-screen dissolves, or simply, with a short list of numbers and the direction of the wind. Every hour of every day and more frequently during morning and evening commuter "drive-times" the weather message gets through.

Of course. Why not? Weather does it to us every day. We live it. It gives us a constant variety we can depend on. It is something to talk about to anyone, everywhere, all the time.

Next to weather's dependability we like the predictable surprises of professional sports. Memorize and analyze to speculate. It shows we did our homework. And, win, lose, or draw, we'll be able to memorize and analyze to speculate again.

There are men's sports and women's sports, and men's and women's sports, and men in women's sports, and women in men's sports, and kids in all sports (see chapter one) with no time-outs, till we get to the weather. We save the best for last.

We've got the sun in the morning and the moon at night. And with the sun in the morning and the moon in the evening, we're alright as long as Cincinnati tells us what to wear.

"... YEA, BUT..."

New things are always opposed like Christopher Columbus' round-world notions, penicillin, soccer, T.V., jazz, and the Bible. Resistance to change is proof "There is nothing new under the sun."

Words have a way of becoming popular. Learn a word and for the next several days you'll hear it, over and over, in different places, by different people in different contexts. Until then, that word did not exist. It's new. Words are invented and periodically released to keep us entertained. There are fad words, hip words, flop words, and even special "golden oldies".

"...Yea, but it's in the dictionary?"

Did you check to see if it was there before? What is it to mock-up a few dictionaries to keep us happy?

"...Yea, but there are people who seem to have known that word before I did?"

Do you think anyone wants to admit they don't know a word? Skip it and then try to make sense from the remaining words. Who would want to say they weren't one of the first on their block to learn the new word?

The "... Yea, but..." syndrome is evidenced by how strongly people defend their beliefs in T.V. game shows. How far do these "shows" go in the name of entertainment?

For \$64,000.00 we expect honesty, integrity, and fairplay. We believe in the isolation of the "isolation booth", and in the secrecy of "sealed answers" to the really "randomly selected questions". We want it to be so, that contestants can really "name that tune", "pass that word", and "make that deal". We don't wish to wonder how the shows fit so perfectly in thirty minute time slots, with breaks for commercials, news briefs and station identifications.

Game-show scripts are "tighter" than those of the best Broadway plays. If a stage show goes under- or over-time, we get to our late night snack that much earlier or later. We hardly consider it. If a T.V. show is off time, we start doubting our time pieces.

Game-shows are as real as any other show. Every line is written, rehearsed and directed to help us identify with the actor/competitors as they try to win a zillion dollars and drive off to Hawaii or Buenos Aires in a huge new car with a mink coat wrapped around their super intelligent, thrilled to the gills, bodies. The whole thing is acted out for our pleasure and diversion.

"...Yea, but my cousin, in California, was on this or that game-show?"

It's interesting that game shows are produced where so many unemployed or would be actors wait for "good" parts. Any actor would do a game show for a few bucks. It's a chance to be on T.V. Maybe your cousin is an actor trying to "make it" in T.V. or the movies. Do you think you'd be the first to find out?

"...Yea, but game-shows look so real?"

For the money they get, they had better look real. But, it's all put on so we'll believe and cheer them on.

"...Yea, but what about those guys they caught cheating?"

Part of the plan. Sacrifice one show, so the audience believes the others. And where are the fellows who were caught? What happened to them? They were no more punished than the "bad guys" in a Superman episode. We'll buy it 'till they offer something more entertaining and just as believable.

It's nice to get away, to dream the impossible dream, somewhere over the rainbow. It's nice to believe that something fantastic is really real.

Good show, Cincinnati.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

QUESTION: People, people, everywhere; but where are they now?

You get to look at yourself in the mirror every morning. The next time you do, look hard and ask yourself, "Where are they now?"

Who installed that bathroom mirror? And who etched those squiggly little lines in the corners of that mirror? For that matter, who invented mirrors? And where are they now?

Who delivered my mirror all sparkling and new? Who hung my bathroom mirror just slightly askew? (This could almost be read responsively. Please turn in your hymnals to page four.)

"If you have it, a truck brought it." If a truck brought it, a salesman sold it. Even those tiny little screws that hold our light switches in place were trucked and sold by people: Where are they now?

If there really is a No. 7, a No. 4 and No. 2, who left their "calling cards" respectively in my camera carrying case, a box of scented candles and my C.B. radio antenna kit, where are they now?

There are always dozens of old doors set up in front of buildings about to be torn down. Who sets them up? And, where are they now?

Men who stop traffic to let those big yellow digging machines move piles of

earth from one side of the road to the other almost always return a smile and wave, no matter how hot and bothered or wet and frozen they look. I wonder if they have to buy their own warning flags, and why the policeman, drinking coffee with some of the other construction workers, doesn't direct traffic. And I wonder, where are they now?

Whoever said, "You can never go back" was right. And, if they can not go back to from wherever it is they came, where are they now?

ANSWER (choose one)

- (a) Cincinnati
- (b) Cincinnati
- (c) Cincinnati
- (d) All of the above

Correct Answer:

(c) Cincinnati

TURN THE OCEAN OFF!

*"Even a little
shiver seemed just
right as I sat a few
yards from the bigger
waves. I made circles
in the firm sandy mud
with my big toes, while
I felt the warmth of
the bone dry sand on
my bottom, dazzling
sun, a cloudless sky,
and the ocean, stretched
so far that it looked
like it would keep
coming forever*

I traveled to that island to capture images like those; because I felt my writing needed depth of feeling from personal experiences. The images, feelings and even the ocean were perfect--but somehow it was all too perfect.

Tiny little sea shells were sprinkled all over the beach; some perfectly whole, some perfectly broken. No matter where I looked, sunlight reflected perfectly all over the ocean. Only the little boats and an occasional sea gull moved in opposition to the rhythm of the waves. Think of the energy in all that perfect waviness.

Now, that I'm back, leaving the ocean on seems such a waste. The machine that makes the ocean waves, and moves the boats, and flies the birds must have cost thousands. One day I'd like to see how it works.

*"That simple set
of sand and sky and shells
was made complete by
clean dry salty smells."*

My earliest remembrances of miracles are a woven together something of Bible stories, Greek myths, Popeye the sailor man, and something about "...but only God can make a tree." The key ingredient of a miracle concoction is that miracles are not so super natural, but rather, very natural, only with super-duper timing.

Apparently, fording the Red Sea is not so unusual. Being able to do so, "just in the nick of time" made it a miracle.

If the destinies of people, nations, and the world depend on Goliath-sized miracles, like the Red Sea, and ones no bigger than a broken sea shell, I'm glad Cincinnati remembers to turn the ocean off.

HOSPITALS AND CAR REPAIR SHOPS

Hospitals and car repair shops deal with bodies, integrated systems, rehabilitations, insurance coverages, statements, bills, emergencies, and forms in triplicate. And, whether your problem is a posteria ventriculation of the superior vina cava or a calibrated pre-gapped spark plug out-of-sinc with secondary timing chain linkage, the frustrating feeling of futility is unmistakable, unbelievable but, nonetheless, unavoidable. Watching and listening to glib experts "explain" grim details of dangerous situations is darn difficult. However, an impending blow to emotional and/or financial security can be cushioned, even neutralized, by employing the recommended and reliable "Hospitals and Car Repair Shops Procedures" which follow:

Keep nodding your head. Every once in a while chuckle one of those "sure,-I-know-exactly-what-you-mean" kind of chuckles. Check the shine on your shoes. Start to look at your watch. Stop. Straighten your tie or loosen it; whichever suits you. The tie move is optional. In lieu of it, open and close your purse. (Snap-type with loud click sound is preferable.) Keep nodding your head. Light a cigarette. Extinguish it immediately. Take a fairly deep breath. Let it out with a sigh. Smile broadly. Shake your head once. Give a knowing look (even though you know nothing) and chuckle again.

"Hospitals and Car Repair Shops Procedures" are most effective while repeating in rapid rhythmic alternation:

"Where did I lose control?"

"Does this guy know what he's doing?"

"Why didn't I become a doctor (or car repair man) when I had the chance?"

"Is this really happening?"

"Medical Doctor" and "Auto Repairman" have thirteen letters each. The parallels become even more evident with ever closer scrutiny. Each profession has a language of its own. For each example of "medical terminology" there is an equally secretive and exclusionary instance of "car lingo."

Comparative Glossary
(partial list)

Clinic.....	Garage
Hospital.....	Station or Car Repair Shop
Operating table.....	Lift
Oxygen tank.....	Air pump
Ambulance.....	Wrecker
Instrument.....	Tool
Procedure.....	Job
Patient.....	Automobile
Sponge.....	Rag
Clamp.....	Clamp
Surgical fees.....	Labor charges
Special diet.....	High test
Transfusion.....	Oil and lube job
Organ transplant.....	Install-a-rebuilt
Corpse.....	Junker
Cancer.....	Rust
Hypothermia.....	"Won't turn over"
Blood type.....	Viscosity
Consultation.....	Estimate
O.R. (Operating Room)...	Bay
Take blood pressure.....	"Start'er up"

When we put ourselves, our loved ones, or our cars in the hands of professionals, their years of training and experience, tempered with a keen responsible awareness of the latest developments in their field, help us rationalize our actions. But, when the "lights go out", or the O.R. door closes, or the car hood goes up, the waiting room magazines, furniture and words of encouragement provide very little comfort.

Is it as simple as explained? Am I going through all this and will I get a huge bill for services rendered just because it's my turn. Is anything done in hospitals and car repair shops?

ONLY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL
BEYOND THIS POINT

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS
PAYABLE TO CINCINNATI

NOTHING CAN GO WRONG, CAN GO WRONG, CAN GO WRONG, CAN GO WRONG...

Railroad crossing signs warn us to "Stop, Look, and Listen." Magicians advise us to "Watch closely: the hand is quicker than the eye." We laugh at mimics who are just like what's-his-name. At soda fountains, we are reminded, "it's the real thing." (Of course, if "it" is the "real thing," what are those other drinks we think we're drinking?)

Solutions to life's great perplexities may be deduced by focusing on its small surprises.

Give the waitress your order. Start discussing the restaurant's decor. Relax. Smile at your dinner partner. Then, through sounds of salt shakers, teaspoons, napkins, credit cards, and vaguely identifiable music, comes a shrill reminder of what you left to enjoy an evening out: (pronounce the next sound with a strong nasal quality and you will know the exact feeling) "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

"Why did they bring that kid?", you ask yourselves, as you discreetly scan the dining area for Mr. and Mrs. Creep who are usually out of sight.

"I wonder how the kids are?"

"Maybe we should call?"

"Your soup is getting cold."

"We should see that another time."

Even if you don't have kids, the "WAAAAA AAAAAAAAAA!" will well up feelings of concern for responsibilities and undone tasks you said you would do. "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!": the universal whine of frustration we are trained to heed and to let bother us. It comes when least

expected. "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" As if it was known that we would be there: "Lights! Cameras! Action! O.K., cue the "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

Pediatric nurses, doctors and mothers of more than three children appear to be immune to the wail of the "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" They are not. They do their job on the job, but off the job the "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" gets them too.

Just when everything is right, someone says, "Cut! Take it from the top!"

"Daddy are you sleeping?"

"Not now darling."

Or, as the tenor effortlessly sings "A" above "high-G" his top lip starts to quiver. Or, cheer for the most fantastic football catch you have ever seen and watch the play get nullified for a rule infraction. Or, when "threesies" in Potsie is finally yours, some kid reminds you of "foursies".

Too much laughter leads to tears.

"Hello. I'm sorry I am out. At the sound of the beep please leave..."

"Due to heavy holiday calling, circuits are..."

"This is your captain speaking. Welcome aboard flight..."

"Eighth floor: domestics, men's furnishings, furs, and gifts. Please watch your...."

"Breaker 1-9 for a 10-36. Come on."

"Portions of this program have been pre-recorded."

Which portions we will never know, 'till we get to Cincinnati.

THEY FOOLED YOU TOO

One moment you are driving up a moderately rolling, semi-steep, treelined, multi-lane highway, with gray-blue sky before you, brighter blue sky just a half turn to your left, and crystal clear road signs that loom, large as life, long enough to be read and then, like the credits after a movie, they are gone. The next moment, as you crest the hill you can see out as if for miles. Such experiences are striking, unusual, refreshing, wonderful, even awesome.

It does not take much to give us a thrill. How many people remember "watching" the radio as an eerie, shrill sound of an unexpected opening of a creek old door signaled ominous and foreboding perils for our unsuspecting hero, and triggered progressively increasing pulse rates in our ever empathetic veins.

Mix carefully chosen ingredients, bake at the proper temperature, and "presto-chango!" -- a succulent delicacy.

Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring: each has sights and sounds to make even the doubtingest doubter marvel and believe. (See Chapter 4 "The Nightly News and Weather Report").

You may continue to see, hear, taste, smell and touch all the effects prepared for us. Or, the next time you are choosing a pineapple, and the customer next to you exclaims "Wow!: The ones over there are as big as footballs!" you may smile a wry

little smile and quietly reply, "They fooled you too. They are footballs, they're painted to look like pineapples."

SPECIAL EFFECTS

BY

CINCINNATI

LIVING IN CINCINNATI

Think about death. Concentrate on it.
How many of us actually get to see it?
People don't like death. They don't like to
be next to it. Maybe they're afraid it's
catching.

Certain deaths hardly count. Fly-
swatters, bug sprays that "kills 'em dead",
roach traps and rat poisons make convenient
death... convenient to us that is.

Death helps make a hot dog with every-
thing, a B-L-T, leather shoes and fine per-
fume fragrances.

Death is said to be the ultimate escape.
Though, I've been told, "Death is just
nature's way of telling us to slow down."
Nobody believes it is going to happen to
them. Not really. Supposedly, when it does
happen, one never knows it. There's no
proof of that; no one has ever come back.

"The end is near."

"Nights are long since you went
away."

"Tis a far, far better thing I do
than I have ever done...."

"Never, never, never, never,
never."

"The rest is silence."

"Damn the torpedoes; full speed
ahead."

"Don't fire till you see the whites
of their eyes."

Everytime I hear someone say, "...longer
than I care to remember", I think of my father,
and how I am becoming like him. He's forty-
seven and I'm catching up fast.

The good things; the bad things; his
razor sharp smile. Once in a while my son,
and, less frequently, my daughter will smile
just his way.

"I remember" won't bring my dad back.
He helps train the midgets in Cincinnati.

CINCINNATI, YOU REALLY KNOW
YOUR BUSINESS.

DREW G. KOPF's bachelors diploma from Yeshiva University mentions nothing about his studying to become a Rabbi. Why? Because he, in his own words, "decided to go into another branch of theatre." Skits, comedies, dramas, musicals and "nearly" begging got him a Master of Fine Arts degree in Directing from Temple University. "Degree granting guys can be pretty tough before they let someone in their 'club.' You want to know depressed? I'll tell you depressed. I once became so depressed this book almost didn't get written. I was so depressed I threw myself in front of a bus... of course it was parked at the time."

Brushing so close to death helped Mr. Kopf focus on living life each minute. An example: he trained for three rigorous months for the Empire State Games, during which time he skipped eight deserts. Results of Mr. Kopf's efforts in the Sabre competition will be provided upon request. Additional gift copies of The Midgets from Cincinnati are available at the cover price plus one dollar each for shipping and handling. N.Y.
12602

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\$3.00