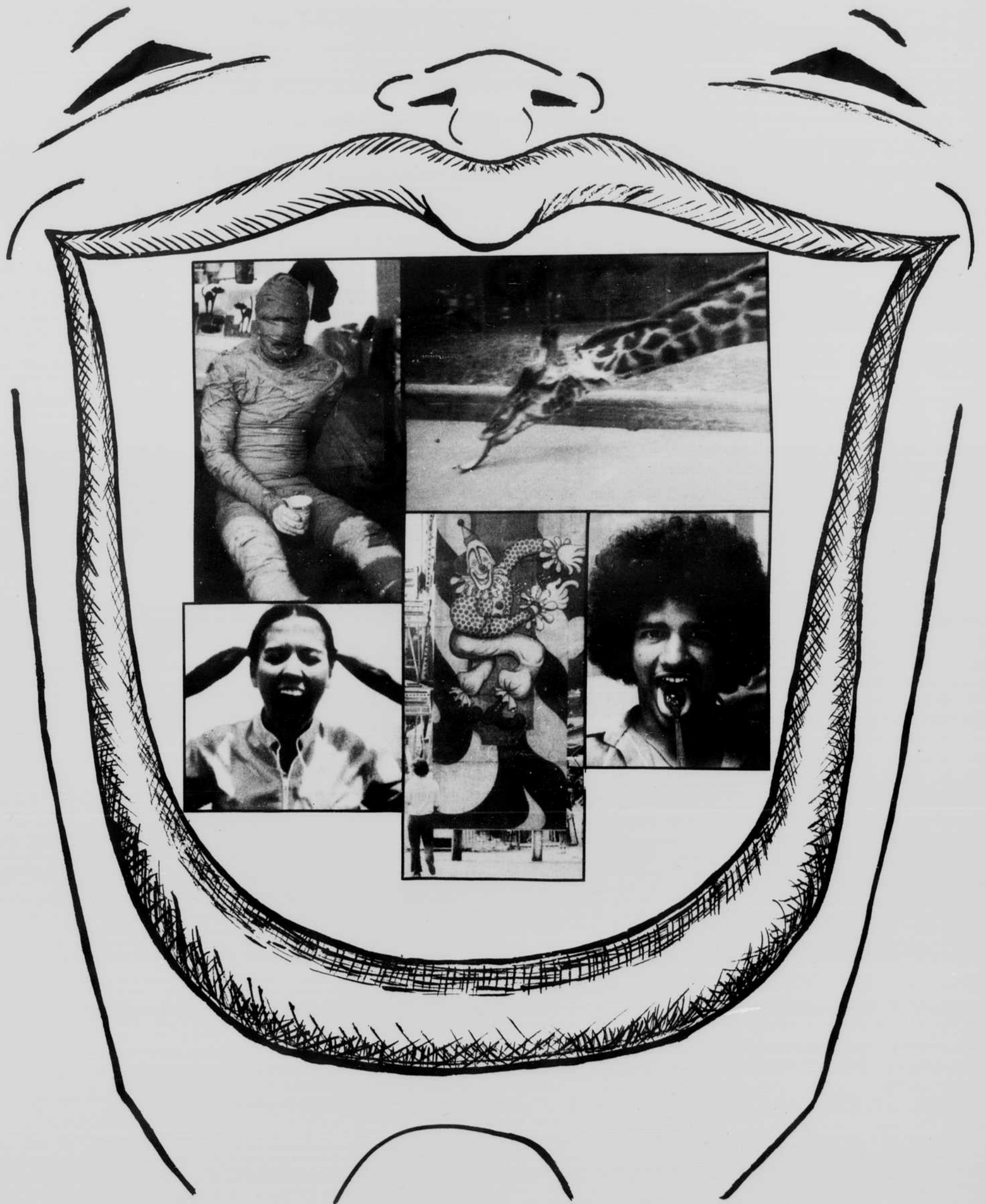


Edition 2

Comedy Tonight!!!



They asked, didn't they?

When people greet me on the street
Saying, "How are you today?"
I murmur, "O, pretty well—
CONSIDERING."

What else is there to say?
However—
For a starter act the martyr,
Don't belittle all your pains and aches.
Tell it like it is, my friend,
Be strong, for goodness sakes.
Make their day a happy one,
Give them an hour of pleasure,
Explain your palpitating heart
And the height of your blood pressure.

Don't draw a breath, don't allow a lull.
They might be embarrassed

By saying something dull—
Like, "My, how well you look!"
Now, really, are they blind
To my facial lines of agony
Or are they struggling to be kind?
This is a situation for my recitations
About my tranquilizers, cortisone and
sundry medications,
And if they do not listen and interest
seems to wane,
Don't be shy, hit them with your cane.

Now about my operation—
The Dr. said it was the worst.
Another iota of a second
And something would have burst.
And, if operations cease

A good conversation piece
Is that *pièce de résistance* of the pack—
My everlasting aching back, plus
sacroiliac.

My partial plate seems not to fit
Nor do my orthopedic shoes.
And now my new bifocals
Give my nose a nasty bruise.
I'm luckier than most, you see,
With total recall I am blessed
About my hemorrhoids, my gallstones,
And the knot that's in my chest.

From my ingrown toenails
To a head of pure migraine
I give them all the gory details.

Milk each precious pang of pain.
My Dr. does not understand,
Says I'm as fit as he.
What does he know of suffering?
He has no sympathy (for me.)

Now if they start to panic
And you sense that they might leave
Just move in forcefully
And clutch them by the sleeve
So—
When greeted by, "How are you
today?"

Force a patient wistful smile.
They asked—they want to know
So give it to them blow by blow
And make it worth their while.

—Jessie Fairchild

My Introduction to Geography

by Nancy Overfield

Most of us have experienced, at one time or another, a certain exhilarating feeling that comes with the solution to a much pondered problem. As a child, I found myself faced with many seemingly impossible dilemmas, and only after much serious thinking would I arrive at the often quite obvious answers. These revelations were always accompanied by a delightful sense of well-being. I would feel akin to Aristotle and Socrates. Though often short lived, my flirtations with abstract thought made learning an enjoyable experience for me.

The first of many difficult problems I encountered had to do with distance. I had begun my third year of school and was introduced to the subject of geography. The world intrigued me and I longed to be friends with the foreign children pictured in my geography book. I realized that countries like Spain and Japan were very far from my home town, but just how far I had yet to learn. The scaled-down world maps we were shown fitted easily on one page and were useful in showing the shapes of the countries and their major cities, but they presented a distorted picture of distance to a seven-year-old. The farthest I had traveled at that time was about twenty miles, and that, to me, was a long way from home. I reasoned that Japan must be quite a bit farther than twenty miles.

The summer after my introduction to geography, my family and I traveled to a vacation cottage approximately sixty miles away. My parents prepared us for our long journey. We took food, toys, and pillows to fight the boredom of an hour on the road. While driving through unfamiliar country, I spotted a sign for Peru, a small town in New York State. We had been

driving a long way, so naturally I assumed we had reached South America. Excited with my discovery and mostly to show off my knowledge, I questioned my parents; I was quite certain we were really in Peru and probably not too far from Lima. My parents, however, insisted that we were still in New York and told me that quite a few cities and towns shared the name "Peru." I couldn't, or wouldn't, accept their reasoning. After giving the matter much thought, I finally decided that they had been out of school for so long that they had probably forgotten where South America was. I don't remember ever doubting my parents' word before this time; I assume that the euphoria that accompanied my discovery raised my self-image to a point higher in my mind than that occupied by the image of my parents. The pieces of the map were finally beginning to fit together; no one could have changed my mind at that point.

Later that same summer we traveled to a beach on Lake Ontario, approximately thirty miles away. We had often driven to another, closer spot on the same lake for the afternoon, but for this full day of swimming and picnicking, my parents had chosen a new beach as a special treat. The day was a pleasant one, and toward afternoon I decided to venture off on my own and do some exploring. As the oldest child, I had often exerted my independence that summer, when the childish games of my younger brother and sister interfered with serious thinking. I walked quite a distance, to a spot where the beach had shrunk and the only way to the water was down treacherous, rocky cliffs. I sat on a large, smooth rock, gazing at the water and wondering what was on the other side. As I sat there thinking, I spotted a

large, jagged piece of land jutting out into the lake. Something clicked in my mind; I knew for certain that I had stumbled on Florida. Again I experienced a terrific sense of well-being, but this time, now a little older and wiser, I decided to tell no one of my discovery. Remembering my parents' response to my last revelation, I wanted no one to put a damper on my happiness.

My seventh summer ended, and I returned to school to resume my studies. I don't remember giving much thought to my two geographical discoveries after school started. Neither do I remember when I finally realized that I had been wrong about Peru and Florida. I'm sure my misconceptions served only to satisfy my puzzled mind until it was capable of comprehending an intangible concept like distance.

As I look back on my childhood, I can recall similar examples of problems resolved in rather unorthodox ways. It seems that a developing mind faced with age-old questions it is unable to comprehend must resort to fantasy to remain healthy. Solutions to these problems may come with maturity, or they may never come; but if the mind is satisfied, the problem is solved.

In my late teens I again visited the beach with the jagged piece of land, and I thought back to the summer of Florida and Peru. I was old enough then to laugh at myself as a child, secure in the knowledge that I had long ago solved what now seemed to be a trivial problem. But even now, when I sit on a large, smooth rock and look out over Lake Ontario, I think of the intricacies of a child's mind and smile softly to myself.

About the authors . . .

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Edition

Three

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