



Indexing the Suburbs – The Lighter Side
Index Review by Cheryl Lemmens

Jean Kerr, *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957)

While reading up on the history and culture of suburbia, I was reminiscing with some fondness about the many TV comedies I watched as a youngster – almost all of which were set in the comfortable world of the suburbs. From *Leave it to Beaver* to *My Three Sons*, television comedy seemed to mirror the familiar world of the single-family detached home with garage, nicely paved driveway, and ample lawn.

One of my favourite sitcoms was *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, the TV version of Jean Kerr's bestselling collection of short stories about suburban life. On borrowing a library copy and starting to leaf through it, I was surprised to find that there was, in fact, an index. There was also an introduction, which Kerr felt obliged to provide for her book "because it doesn't have an Index and it ought to have *something*." In the end, however, she also provided a hilarious index which is worth reading on its own. Kerr mimics indexing conventions expertly, and adds a few zingers of her own. Here are just some of the entries:

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| Alaska, baked, 119 | kill, urge to, 66 |
| Bloomindale's, New Rochelle, 29 | Maltose, Dextri-, 111 |
| Bloomindale's, New York, 24 | <i>Morningstar, Marjorie</i> , 56 |
| chicken pie, Birdseye, frozen, 11 | numbers, tell me not in mournful, 179 |
| Cola, Coca, 224 | place, no, like home, 80 |
| diet, Mother's Milk, 49 | sheets, Pepperell, 45 |
| dishwasher, Hotpoint, 30 | spaghetti, Heinz's, 12 |
| good riddance (to bad rubbish), 17 | Tarzan, <i>see</i> Jane |
| <i>How Not to Write a Play</i> , Simon and Schuster, \$3.50 | tooth, eye for eye and tooth for, 113 |
| Jill, Jack and, Nursery School, 40 | vermouth, dry, 89 |
| | vermouth, sweet, 112 |

The cross-reference from "Tarzan" to "Jane," naturally, has no corresponding entry for "Jane." As well, a rather interesting entry with many undifferentiated locators – "beer, Rheingold the dry, 17, 38, 74-5, 164, 195, 211" – is not mentioned in any of the short stories. And, for the kicker, this note at the end of the index:

In all cases, the page numbers refer to the magazines in which these pieces originally appeared

Well, what if they do? An index whose subjects range from T.S. Eliot and Ernest Hemingway to Betty Crocker and Frosty the Snowman has achieved a measure of distinction, indeed.