Pittsburgh! Why Pittsburgh? That was the question on everybody's lips when Rand McNally's Places Rated Almanac hit the bookstores with the news that, of 329 U.S. metropolitan areas, Pittsburgh was the number one place to live.

Pittsburgh's lofty status, along with the rest of the rankings, constituted quite a media event. Numerous articles appeared instantly, all trying to explain various of Rand McNally's counterintuitive conclusions. Why was Pittsburgh number one? How did Louisville (number 8), Buffalo (13) and Knoxville (14) manage to edge out sun-drenched San Diego (27) and mountain-fresh Denver (29)? Why the low rankings of world-class metropolitan hubs like New York (25), Chicago (26) and Los Angeles (38)?

The answers to these questions lie in the method by which Richard Boyer and David Savageau, the authors of Places Rated Almanac, arrived at their rankings. Boyer and Savageau considered nine categories—climate and terrain; housing; health; crime rate; transportation; education; arts and culture; recreation; and economic status—that most people would agree are important determinants of life quality. They devoted one chapter to each of the nine categories and, in the process, ranked each of the 329 cities in terms of that category. So by the end of the book, each city had received a rank in each category that ranged from 1 (best) to 329 (worst).

In a final chapter called "Putting It All Together," Boyer and Savageau obtained a single, "overall goodness" score for each metropolitan area in the simplest possible way—by adding the city's nine category ranks. Of all 329 cities, Pittsburgh received the lowest total (735), or an average rank of 735/9 = 81.67, and thus captured the much-touted distinction of being the best place to live.

It is in this process that, from a psychological perspective, things go awry. Consider two hypothetical cities, City A and City B, along with two categories, say arts and climate. Suppose City A has rank 1 and 25 respectively on arts, but 276 and 246 respectively on climate. With these ranks, it is clear that City A is better in arts, but City B is better in cli-
The New Top 20

Original Places Rated Almanac ranks are in parentheses.

1. San Francisco (4)
2. New York (25)
4. Boston (2)
5. Chicago (28)
6. Philadelphia (5)
7. Los Angeles (66)
8. Seattle (10)
9. Nassau-Suffolk, N.Y. (6)
10. Baltimore (16)
11. Atlanta (11)
12. Pittsburgh (1)
13. San Diego (27)
14. St. Louis (7)
15. Dallas (12)
16. Raleigh-Durham (8)
17. Cleveland (80)
18. Denver (29)
20. Oakland (68)

Due to errors in calculation, some of the numbers in parentheses may differ from those in the Places Rated Almanac. Discrepancies will be changed in the next printing of the Almanac.

Beat the Lie Detector!

The old game of Truth Or Consequences may be played a lot more often as advocates push for the use of polygraph or lie-detector tests by the federal government and in employment applications. But the game will be given a new twist when people learn that it is indeed possible to "beat the machine."

The key to the way a polygraph test works is that it begins with a question designed to worry you or make you unsure, such as "Have you ever stolen anything?" The machine records the way your body responds to this control question so it can be compared with your response to the real question, such as "Did you steal this book?" If you are innocent, you should be less discomfited by the second question.

Expert polygraphers have been very confident about this method of telling lies from truths. Several laboratory and field studies have reported accuracy rates as high as 98 percent. But a recent study by psychologists Charles Honts, Robert Hodes and David Rankin shows that guilty people using specific techniques can escape detection even by experienced polygraphers.

The successful countermeasures were biting the tongue to produce