



SCRIPPS HOWARD

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35 Cents



David Wecker

School is proud "it's on the rocks"

*Rooty-toot-toot, rooty-toot-toot,
We are the boys from the institute.
We don't smoke and we don't chew,
And we don't go with girls that do.*

Here at the Professional Bartending Institute in Cumminsville, they don't fool around.

The Institute doesn't dally in extra curricular activities. They don't have a football program or a debating team or a Latin club. They do only one thing here at the bartending school, and they do it right; they turn ordinary people into "mixologists" equipped to go into the world and prepare esoteric mixed drinks to exacting specifications.

Don't let the name fool you. They put "Bartending" behind "Professional" and in front of "Institute" for the benefit of the rank layman. But the emphasis is clearly on mixology — the thinking being that any schmoe can pull a beer, but it takes a mixologist to properly prepare a '57 T-Bird with Florida Plates (*a half ounce each of Grand Marnier, Amaretto and vodka in a Tom Collins glass of OJ, shaken or on ice, garnished with a slice of orange*).

"Here at the Professional Bartending School, we teach professional mixology" says Roger Oldham.

"A mixologist is a highly skilled bartender. A mixologist is to a bartender as a chef is to a cook. If you consider the food service or hotel industry, it's the job that pays the best and has the most status. Except maybe at one of your classier restaurants where they have a head chef making \$100,000 a year."

Roger Oldham is the 36-year old director and owner of the Cincinnati campus of the Professional Bartending School. He is a lean, tall, smooth-talking, well-groomed individual. If he were a mixed drink, he'd be a Long island iced Tea. He has prepared a list of interview questions and answers because he knew I was coming and he wishes to be helpful. Among the points he wishes me to understand:

■ **The local** campus is part of a national chain with 37 schools across the country. Since its establishment in 1978 the school has certified over 2500

■ **"Ninety-one**-point-six percent of our graduates get bartending jobs," Oldham says. They end up at trendy places, which tend to be haunted by Cincinnati's Beautiful People — places like the Waterfront, Japp's, Rhino's, most of the hotel bars downtown.

If each of the school's graduates prepare, say, 20 drinks per diem, they'd collectively prepare 16,717,000 drinks per annum. And if each drink at these froo-froo joints costs a minimum of three bucks, you figure a total of \$50,151,000 in mixed-drink revenues gets shaken, stirred or blended into the local economy each year. That's not counting tips, which sometimes don't get counted anyhow. At least not for the IRS.

■ **Oldham** says General Electric, General Motors, Ford Motors, AT&T and the Drackett Co. have arrangements whereby the companies will pick up tuition fees for laid-off employees interested in becoming mixologists.

"I had a man in my office the other day who was laid off at GE," he says.

"He broke down and cried, literally cried, when I told him GE would pay to retrain him as a professional mixologist.

Here, at last, says Oldham, the man had found a recession-proof career.

"Because when times are good, people go out to celebrate. And when times are bad, people go out to commiserate."

■ **You can** become a professional mixologist in a jiffy! The course can be completed in a week if you're in a hurry, although most people do spread the 40

One requirement for graduation is that you prepare 12 drinks in eight minutes.

Classes are offered in Tall Drinks, Fruit Cutting, Bar orientation and Martinis & Manhattans, among other subjects. Oldham doesn't wish to discuss the tuition figure, but he says most graduates earn it back in tips in their first two weeks.

At the bar in the school's classroom, an instructor named Liz Applemann is using Blue Curacao, creme de cacao and grenadine to further the educations of Patty Vincent, a special ed teacher who's looking for a change in careers, and Adam Kenter, who wants more out of life than a gig as a part-time landscaper.

Hope. That's what the Professional Bartending School offers, Oldham says.

"We get students who are down on their luck," he says.

"A shabby-looking guy comes in here and, in two weeks, he's got a good haircut, a little money in his pocket, a spring in his step. . ."

Post columnist David Wecker writes Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.