



A Little Thinking Weather

Fall is a strange thing at Caltech. It may be summer-hot but still the leaves turn brown and drop off the trees. Then sometimes it gets cold and the papers are full of oranges dying and it feels good like back East. You can see the hills clearly silhouetted against the crisp blue sky and everybody remarks on the way to class in the morning how you can see the hills.

It's easier to think when the weather is like that; you know, when you don't have to worry about your eyes running and you don't have a headache and you can breathe without coughing. You can think about a lot of things because there's so much to decide and there's so much to do and it's good to think about things besides math and physics and EE and chemistry once in a while. You can think about the girls of the summer-happy-time or the gang back home if there is any left or about what you're going to do Thanksgiving and Christmas or maybe just about how you'd like to sleep for one week and start all over again. You may think about school, too. I don't mean about the courses you're taking and adding up post-midterm grade points and figuring everything. You have to think about how maybe there are other things you want around the old school besides just studying and trying to get a point one GPA higher than your roommate or the guy across the hall. This is a time to make a lot of decisions because everything starts in the fall and you have to make a policy and try to stick to it for three terms. You have to decide if you want to get in all those activities and how much you'll really enjoy them and how much they'll hurt your studying. You have to decide how many times a week you want to go out and if it's worth it and all. You have to decide whether school is worth it all in the first place and how to adjust to it.

No involvements

They started telling you in that first fall just how it was: Don't get involved with too many activities and concentrate on your studies because that's what you came here for. So you figured all your time in study

hours wasted and you felt bad most of the time because you weren't doing anything. You fooled around and you got into bull-sessions and you beefed about too much work and you didn't get into any activities because they took too much time. Besides, you didn't even know what you wanted and you were mixed up. You didn't think too positively that fall. You hated school because it demanded too much from your will power but your parents would disown you if you ever just thought about quitting so you didn't think about that. You stumbled through three terms of confusion which you don't even remember any more.

The pleasant present

And now you're a sophomore. You're a lot older and a lot wiser. You don't think so much of the past or the future summer-happy-time, but instead you concentrate on the present. You read somewhere that the European university produces scholars and the American one creates citizens. Well, you realize that you better become a little of a citizen before you get thrown into the world. You better know something about other things besides engineering and science. So you start really trying at exchanges and calling up the girls after and going out at least once a weekend. You work on the news staff of the *California Tech*. When there is someone on campus that you're interested in you go to hear him. You work hard on Interhouse even if it is during midterm week and even though you're not very convinced of the idea at all because you don't want someone else to do your share. You get active in your house and you start to realize how the campus is run. Most of all a lot of the confusion has worn off. You may study a few hours less a week but when you do study you can concentrate much better. You really are getting a feeling for what you want out of Caltech and you are willing to sacrifice some of your studying time to reap it. You feel pretty lucky every time you see a confused classmate flunk out that you did a little thinking while the air was crisp and cold and the crazy leaves were falling.

— Martin Carnoy '60