I had been gripped in a net of homework requirements and other things that had to be done. Then Thursday morning, when the Beaver dropped his bluebook on the desk and walked out of his last exam, the tension suddenly broke. He looked up at the warm sky and suddenly realized that summer was here, and, more incomprehensible, that he had no work to do that involved an adjustment.

The times, thought the Beaver, that that summer work their corridors hollow, haunted shells. He felt adrift when they had no assignments. The Beaver decided it must be a cruel world for his friends, financially more fortunate, were leaving. The Houses were turning quiet and empty, and lonely, and he smiled a little, thinking how he would at any rate inevitably hear all about their varied summers in September, over coffee in the Student Body offices that went uncontested in the last election; and the members of the drama club, who had assembled several pages of data had been assembled, statistical picture of the Techman's comparison with the State University men. The state university, which preferred anonymity, was a meager place where apparently one did nothing but study—and then, for all its pains, found Caltech a brilliant thought, combining all the close ties courses. How many of these "active" Techmen ever really got out of their muddy technical rut?

The Beaver decided to build a great lurking number of these people with "activities" were EE's who belonged to the AIEE, ME's who belonged to ASME, physicists who belonged to the Radio Club. He burrowed through his packed trunk and came up triumphantly with the 1949 Big T, eager to check his hypothesis. Then, after considerable checking and pencil-chewing, he sat back and surveyed the results: Very close to 60 per cent of those who had "activities" merely belonged to the professional societies of their respective trades. On a note of bitterness he leaned back in this chair, feeling he'd suspected it for some time—and wishing it weren't true.

The value of technical knowledge

Of course, the Beaver admitted, good sound technical knowledge had often been put to useful purposes. It had certainly led to some excellent tricks of diabolical hilarity. Not too many years ago a small Model A had been laboriously dismantled, cored piecemeal, and reassembled in the room of a House brother who had unwittingly left for the weekend without locking his room. The hapless one returned on Sunday night, tired and lugging suitcase, to hear the ominous chugging of an enthusiastic Ford motor issuing from his normally quiet speakpit. How many days Hapless lived with the monster the Beaver didn't know, but he grinned to himself thinking of the poor guy sitting on its fender before the sink to shave, or setting his alarm clock on its running board by his bed before sacking out. Perhaps he even sat in it and ran the motor in the evenings to obtain inspiration from its musical purr.

During the past year, though, no wild, ingenious putz had arisen to divert the troops. It's true they had filled a mammoth meteorological balloon with water and left it, sprawled like a gargantuan jellyfish, on the floor of someone's room in Fleming. It had broken, of course, when he tried to budge it, and flooded the alley—but this was not the kind of spectacularly executed putz that rapidly becomes part of the legend of the Houses. There had really been nothing like the revolving, oil-filling cement mixer that went into a House proxy's room a couple of years ago, or the ill-fated Mount Wilson safari that aroused such a storm of newspaper bungling in the spring of 1947. Even the Ricketts brake-drum seemed to be getting rusty this last year. The Beaver had worried for some time over this evidenced lack of joie de vivre. Now, suddenly, a fiendish idea came to him, and he began to work out the details for a fine, epic-making putz that he could bring about next year. Things looked rosy again.

—Jim Hendrickson '50