

THE BEAVER



The Seniors Go Dissolute

EVERY YEAR ABOUT THE TIME the bock beer goat becomes a familiar face and other familiar faces begin to tan from opening beach seasons, the Beaver watches the Seniors go slowly but pleasantly dissolute. When the spring term opens the Senior faces his books hesitantly, with faraway thoughts on his mind. He suddenly realizes that he has fumbled, fought, and worried his way through eleven long terms at Caltech and in this last—making it a round dozen—he feels that no one will have the heart to flunk him out now.

His plans for next year have probably materialized too; he's abandoned comfortable Levis many times for his pressed blue interview suit and filled out questionnaires until memory aches, but now someone satisfactory has accepted him and it seems unreasonable to have to work hard in the face of that.

Many Seniors, each in his own manner, have devised means of appreciating their last college term to the

utmost. They lift their red, raw noses up from the spinning grindstone, rub them tenderly and peer about, blinking in the spring sun. In the cultivation of leisure, Senior Beavers are seen over coffee in the Spoon, over beer at the Skip, over sand at the beach, or over programs at a concert, but seldom enough over books and slide rules in the heavy early-morning hours.

Still the coveted sheepskin must yet be won, and the brittle bitterness of the beaks is turned upon those adamant professors who fail to account for the proverbial turning of a young Senior's fancy in the warm green season. Too many Seniors look ahead to hard work enough and now, wistfully or desperately, grasp at the fast-disappearing leisure of college—even at Caltech.

Ditch Day

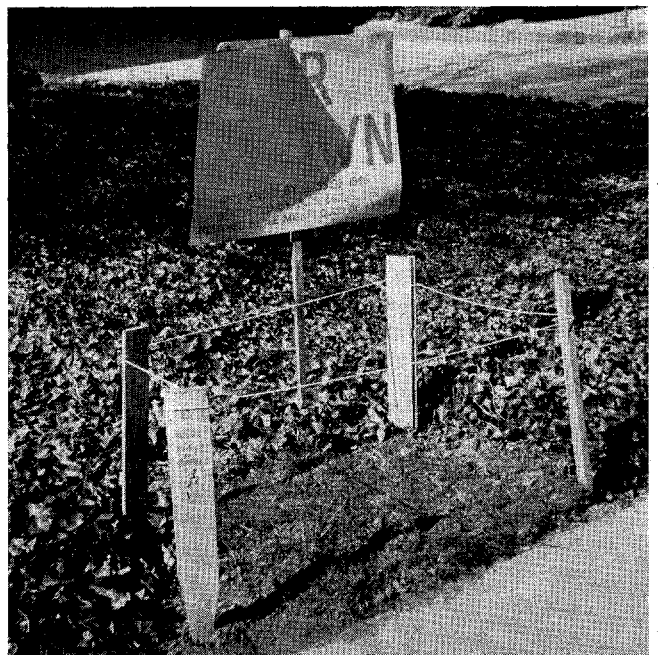
Apropos of the spirit of the Senior's final term is Ditch Day, a cherished ritual in which, at least for a day, the long-suffering graduating class can quasi-legally flaunt its merriment and disappear en masse, leaving somewhat bewildered profs to walk into empty classrooms.

For weeks prowling, prying Juniors try to worm the secret date out of unexpecting Seniors in the traditional hope of trapping some of the escapees on campus after 8 a.m. Last year it had been well-known the day before, and some Seniors awakened on the fateful morning to find their rooms nailed shut or barred up tight. The only remains of one such imprisoned but clever Senior was a tell-tale rope of tied sheets and blankets hanging from his second-story window—with no habeas corpus for the Juniors to seize at eight o'clock. This year fleeing Seniors found their cars incapacitated by lack of wheels, distributors, spark plugs, or electric wiring, but almost all escaped, nevertheless—on hands and knees if necessary.

By noon the troops arrived at the Corona beach to unload Larry Knight's big truck of its five beer kegs, endless quantities of hamburger, potato salad, and eating paraphernalia, then proceeded to tan their collec-



While the Seniors are away the Juniors tie it up



Senior lawn—restored for Ditch Day

tive classroom pallor by playing volleyball, taking brave short swims in the icy ocean, or simply lying in the radiant glow, quaffing tall glasses of foaming brew and gloating quietly over the classes they were missing.

In the warm yellow sand, in the pungent smoke from the beach fires, in the exuberant yelling of guys and dates the Senior Beaver, if he stopped to think at all, recognized some element which would turn into pleasant reminiscence, which would add flavor to the memory of college years in some future time. It would be refreshing to be able to remember these classmates not only in Levis and slide rules but also in bathing suits and towels. The Senior Beaver, like all Seniors before him when graduation loomed close, occasionally felt old and looked back on his four years to wonder if they had been all they might have been. Ditch Day helped make the answer to that query a favorable one.

Rats at Play

True to the envious and vengeful attitude of underclassmen toward Ditch Day, much went on in the Houses during the day; the rats indeed played in earnest in the cats' absence. The Beaver, browsing around to survey the diabolical handiwork of the underclassmen, came upon a strange sight in Blacker court. Proudly standing in mid-court were the complete, re-assembled rooms of two Seniors—beds, desks, chairs and dresser drawers artistically surrounded by sham walls made of room doors, closet doors, disassembled molding, windows, sinks, radiators and hanging clothes. In the vacated rooms there remained only white walls and bare floor, with breezes lazily wafting through the windowless and doorless apertures in the wall, and through the holes where electrical fixtures had been.

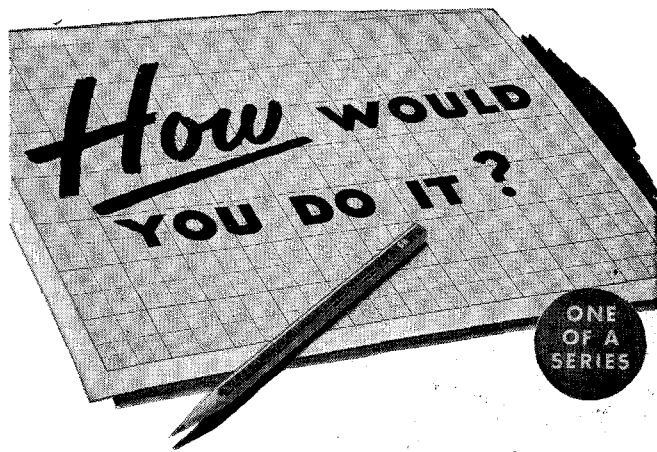
In Dabney court, the Beaver was staggered by a mountain pyramid of Seniors' bed springs towering over his head and swaying sickeningly in a light wind. Ricketts court was festively decorated with the neckties of fifty absent Seniors, draped colorfully on trees and bushes and eaves, on furniture in the lounge, in fact everywhere he turned to look.

The spirit of constructive activity had gone beyond Senior-sabotage in Fleming, where a ten-foot canvas tank had mysteriously sprung up full of water. With lower jaw agape, the Beaver stood and watched a couple of lively Sophomores diving into it from a high ladder, splashing great mushrooms of water onto the bedraggled orange trees and onlookers.

Blame it on Spring

And everywhere the Beaver stuck his inquisitive nose he saw distraught groups of House Presidents, Resident Associates, and sundry wheels gathered in worried talk, shaking their heads in despair. The Beaver stopped to light a cigarette and wondered if the springtime didn't bring on these strange outbursts of activity. He remembered the ill-fated Mount Wilson safari of several years ago when Willie Boutelle broke his head and William Randolph Hearst blew his top; and the spring a couple of years ago when a cement-mixer found its way into Dean Johnson's room. The season was still as unpredictable as ever, the Beaver decided, and ingenious utilization of its inspiration had not passed from the campus.

—Jim Hendrickson '50

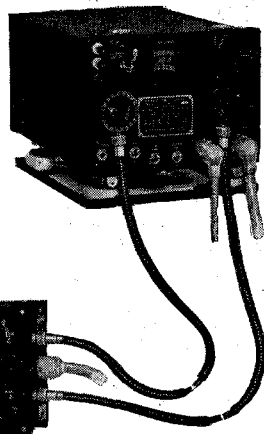


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