

# THE BEAVER

## Some Notes on Student Life

### Ditch Day

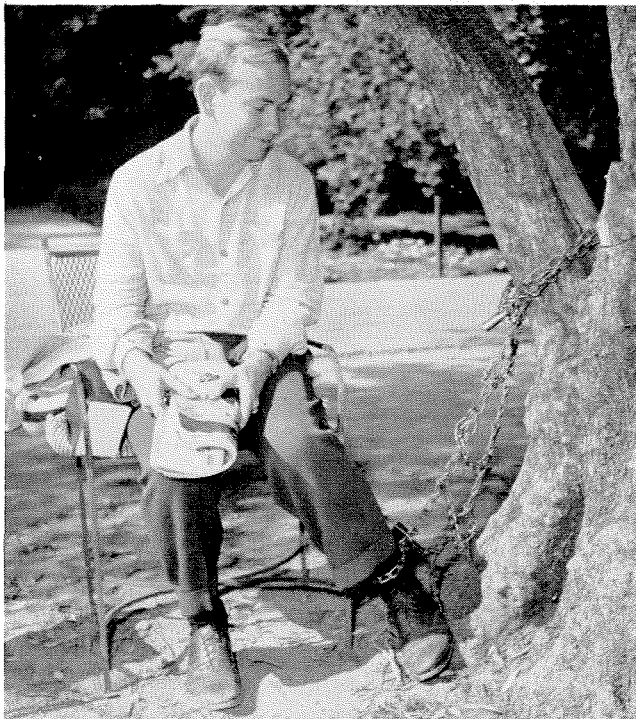
SENIOR DITCH DAY proved to be far more enjoyable to the seniors this year than it did to those last year. The class of '51 contrived some ingenious schemes in order to insure their rooms from being trundled to various parts of the campus, but new locks, timing devices and steel bolts were equally futile. The underclassmen gained entrance to the most closely sealed rooms.

In one room the usurpers installed a horde of rabbits, while in another they removed the means of entrance that the occupant had left himself and thus necessitated a rather dramatic window removal. The seniors were more pleased with these tactics than with the really destructive tricks of last year.

It is not surprising to learn that all non-ditching seniors did not escape the ubiquitous eye of the underclassmen. One senior, in fact, stalked innocently into Fleming lounge at lunch time, seeking the nourishing noon meal. He was immediately seized and chained to the nearest olive tree, so that the multitudes might see the manner in which such flagrant violation of the tradition of d-day was treated.

### Summing Up

With finals over and Commencement only a few days off, the seniors found themselves with nothing to do.



*This hapless senior forgot to ditch on ditch day*

They sat in the sun and talked about future jobs and past classwork. An occasional jibe was thrown at an underclassman as he passed by, loaded with books and notes, in recognition of the fact that underclassmen had not begun their exams yet. For the seniors the end had come. They could now look forward to a different life and could even become sentimental about their recent past worries. But the ratio of sentimentality to criticism was low and they were more inclined to discuss the failings of themselves or of the courses that they had taken for the past four years.

### Competitive Spirit

To some, the intense competition at Tech has proved to be not only exhausting but unprofitable. These men point out that we compete in the classroom, in the laboratory, on the athletic field, we even compete for honor keys.

They complain that the trophies which have been set up for all sports have not created a friendly atmosphere. As there are a vast number of different types of students, it would be most remarkable if all men wanted to enter house sports. Some are not even capable, but the argument is that they should support these things and if they do not do so they are without house spirit. The trophies have become a symbol of house spirit.

Some students would rather listen to music than go to the athletic field, but they don't require that the other members of the house join them and cheer each new cadenza. Since there is no trophy for music-listening, car-building or fishing, these things cannot come under the heading of house spirit.

### The Modified Curve

The classrooms provide more competition—and the system of grading is wholly responsible for this. While grading on the "modified curve" is probably the only method that can be properly used, it has resulted in some inequitable gradings. One senior described it as an unstable system; that is, those in the upper half tend to work harder and gain better grades, while those in the lower half lose enthusiasm and sink even lower.

But the seniors have seen some noteworthy improvements in their four years' attendance at Caltech. Any students who have been to other schools appreciate many of the liberal policies here. It surprises many of the students to know that a great number of colleges do not allow undergraduates to have cars. Other schools will not permit an undergraduate to marry and remain in school. The student at Tech discovers that there is a *singular lack of red-tape in comparison with other schools*. He feels that he will not become caught up in the impersonal cogs of a great machine, but, instead, that the faculty has a sincere interest in his ability. There exists a confidence that the student body has more than the usual control over the policies of the school.

—Bob Madden '51