



## A NEW IMAGE

Every so often, some magazine decides to do a story on the 150+IQ pranksters at Caltech, dredging out and redescribing old and forgotten practical jokes of years past, and spewing generalities about how bright all we Techmen are. January must have been a favorable month for this sort of story this year, because two of them appeared.

One of the magazines joining the Let's-Push-Caltech crusade was *Los Angeles*, a local-consumption monthly combining nightclub floorshow listings with Southern California Boosterism. The other was one of those magazines for MEN, specializing in the "Ted Maldoror fought his way through the sharks, and swam toward the golden twilight of the sea's surface.

'Does Cecily still love me?' he thought as he carried upward the thousand-year-old gold of the Aztecs he saved from the deadly Indian Ocean" type of story, in addition to articles on such titillating topics as the sex life of poor old President Harding. What virtuous, unadventurous Techmen were doing in a magazine like *this* is unclear. But we were predictably described.

In fact, despite the disparate characters of the magazines containing them, both Caltech articles were remarkably the same. About the most notable difference was that one article glorified Techmen's lock-picking talents, and the other talked about card-stunt stunting. Big Difference. Essentially, both of them conveyed the trite old idea that Techmen are smart, overworked, and incredibly ingenious when it comes to stunts. Big Deal. People and magazines more highly thought of than either of these have been saying this sort of thing for years. Caltech's image seems set in the eyes of the world, disregarding most everything that's true. Pity.

Pity, because a lot of the old image *is* untrue, and also because it creates confusing consequences in the big old outside world. Let's talk about consequences now, and image changes later:

Consequence One: Magazine articles like these lead Techmen to meet the Wrong Kind of Girls. Since my name is mentioned in one of the articles, I am in receipt of the following letter from a Miss D. who claims to attend Texas Christian University:

My Lance:

My name is Linda D., freshman at T.C.U. at Fort Worth, Texas. I have just finished reading an article on you all about Cal Tech. Had to rite and find out what is really goin on over there . . . Finially found a school with a little sense of "humour". . . Mabe one of you could *push a bed* to T.C.U. for some public relations sometime.

Love,  
Linda D.

The letter was accompanied by a picture of a rather moosey brunette playing a ukelele. This is the kind of girl for a 150+ IQ intellectual?

Consequence Two: Magazine articles like these make Techmen shy and bashful in the company of virile males from other colleges. If ever I see another article quoting Bert LaBrucherie, philosophizing as only a disappointed-football-coach-turned-philosopher can, about how Caltech football is good, clean, honest sport, and we only finish last because we work too hard studying—I am going to go out and croak. Even if we *are* such mediocre athletes (which is actually untrue; the swimming team, for instance, has whipped the conference three years in a row), why publicize it? It's embarrassing to show up at such football powerhouses as Azusa Bible College and Western Ozark Valley Teachers College, and be asked, "But

ain't you the football team that lost 25 games in a row?" We is, buddy, but why rub it in?

Consequence Three: Techmen are always branded as pranksters. If the Harvard fellows think it's bad being Commsymp, they ought to be in *our* shoes. Walking into a typical bar, for example, is always a predictable adventure for a Techman.

You order a beer. Then you talk to the guy next to you, who turns out to peddle nuts and bolts for the Irving Kurtz Steel and Pig Iron Corporation. After discussing the bolt market at length, he asks you what you do, and you (with trepidation) reply that you go to Caltech.

"Ho, ho, ho," he says, rubbing his belly through his \$47.95 double-breasted conservative green suit, "You fellows really pulled a clever stunt up there at the Rose Bowl, didn't you? But you know when I was back at North Dakota State, we did something even better. It went like this. . ."

And then you're in for it. An hour later and five beers poorer, you know all about how the fellows let the air out of old Dean Blowbottom's tires, and fed a chicken up with Rice-Krispies and put him in the back seat and waited for consequences. As I said before, Big Deal. The Kurtzian bolt-peddler might live in his memories of the Good Old Days, but that's no sign I have to.

Thus, the time has obviously come for a new Caltech image. Maybe a start comes from all those scientist-fellows that are always posing for cigarette ads. You know the picture—tall, slightly graying, Scotch-and-soda, middle-aged-hotrodder types who are always firing off rockets at the moon. Perhaps a suitable modification of one of these chaps could apply to Caltech.

Picture a serious young six-foot-two science student just strolling from his lab to be met by a dedicated young scientist's girl friend who looks like Piper Laurie. The Techman would have a square jaw, a deep suntan, and be smoking a briar pipe. His lab jacket would be Brooks, button-down. He would walk with an air of noble dignity.

Poses later in the day would show this brave young scientist giving Pancho Gonzales a good run in an impromptu tennis match, or driving his true love toward the city and the Cocomat Grove in his XK-E, or seriously studying for ten minutes as the clock strikes two, before retiring with a glass of port and a good book in his tastefully but seductively furnished suite.

Now, this is the sort of image Caltech wants—cultivated urbanity instead of escapist collegiate pranks and whimsy. But can we get this kind of image? You bet your life we can't. *We* are the overworked, high-IQ, terribly dedicated pranksters, etc., of Caltech. Oh, for a trip to Princeton.

But, until the day of the great change—anybody wanna hear how we changed the cards at the Rose Bowl? Hee, hee, hee.

—Lance Taylor '62