

Energy Unlimited

Huttenback's Law says that energy begets energy; it also produces a lot of solid achievement.

Those to whom Robert Huttenback is only a name may wonder how a Caltech faculty member can simultaneously teach, manage a constant flow of research, run the division of humanities and social sciences, and be dean of students. Those who observe the torrential Huttenback energy at work don't wonder at all. It is the hallmark of the man.

Huttenback's Law says that energy begets energy. He starts his mornings with either a couple of sets of tennis or a two-mile jog through the quiet streets of San Marino, where buses of school-bound children watch for and wave to the man in the old blue sweat suit.

His energy also floods out into a passion for games, and his life style is reminiscent of the often unorthodox way he plays and coaches them—an unorthodoxy based on a grand impatience with red tape, and on a good-natured conviction that people don't always use common sense. If, as player and coach, he shows a strong self-confidence, imagination, and an ability to make and execute decisions, it is equally true that he is insistent on seeing that details are attended to and that differences in personalities are recognized and respected. These qualities that have brought him loyalty and respect on the playing field are also descriptive of his handling of the successive jobs as house master, dean, and acting division chairman.

A coaching job brought him to Caltech in the first place. Back in 1950, when he was a UCLA senior and captain of its soccer team, he happened to be in the gym office when a call came from Caltech's athletic director, Harold Musselman, wanting somebody to coach soccer here. Huttenback volunteered.

To toughen up the Techers who unwittingly turned out for soccer under the new coach, he immediately ran them

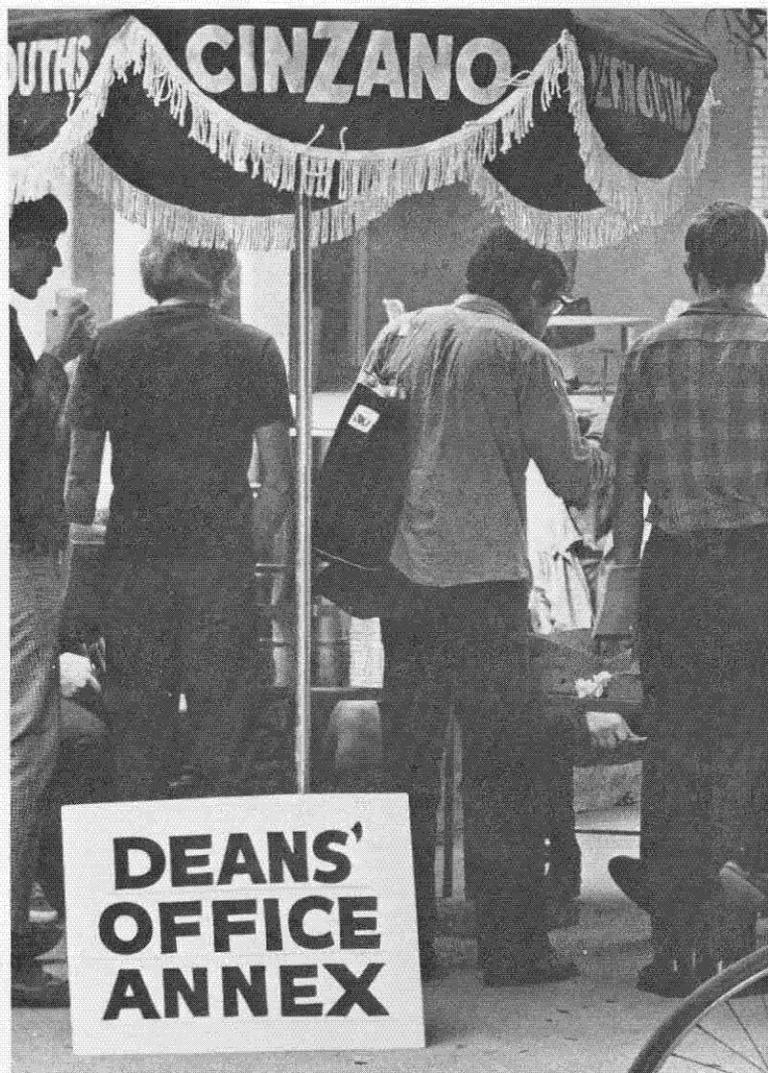
for several miles. This coaching method cost soccer some participants, but it winnowed those who had dedication and stamina. It also seemed to pay off, because the team had a magnificent record of achievement and eventually even beat UCLA.

Huttenback's introduction to football as a freshman at UCLA delighted him, not only because it was fun, but because he discovered team membership also meant clean socks every day and an occasional free meal. He also played rugby, cricket, and soccer, and ran a flourishing intramural touch football league that flattened all but the Bruin Nisei Club.

His liking for such sports as rugby, cricket, and soccer dated back to early childhood years spent in the games-playing English school system. His mother had been a child piano prodigy from San Francisco who spent several years studying with Europe's top teachers. She cut a concert career short to marry Otto Huttenback, a member of a wealthy old Jewish family in Frankfurt, where Bob Huttenback was born. The Huttenbacks were among the many families who fled Germany during Hitler's rise to power.

Otto and Dorothy Huttenback, with Bob and his older sister Peggy, settled in London; and Bob, who had been registered at birth for the famous old public school of Harrow, spent his prep school years at Highfield School in Hampshire. At the age of eight, he was the youngest boy there, having—in the traditional English manner—been bundled off with a trunk full of newly tailored gray flannels, Eton jackets, blazers, and a boater hat.

At Highfield he endured the standard inconveniences



of canings and early morning cold showers, along with the classic rigors of Latin, Greek, and mathematics. But of course there were always those games to play.

The family was visiting in the United States when World War II enflamed Europe. Since they had no deep ties in England, they settled in Los Angeles with no plans to return, and for Bob Huttenback, Beverly Hills High School became a substitute Harrow.

He had always been allowed a free rein to develop in his own way, which contributed to a certain maturity of attitudes. As a teen-ager he chafed under high school's stringent rules and enforced social activities. He never saw the necessity of following the flock.

His ensuing four years at UCLA were a revelation. The big school was made to order for him—with the freedom and anonymity one could have if one chose. He says this environment influenced him as master of Caltech's student houses and still marks his philosophy as a dean. Every student has what he terms the God-given right to flunk out, and one of the foundation stones of his beliefs about adults, young and old, is that they



The deans' office in Throop and the chairman's office in Baxter are too far out of student orbits to suit the ex-master of the student houses. So, every now and then, Bob Huttenback sets up a branch office in Winnett Plaza.

Halfway through graduate school—in July 1954—he married a fellow UCLA student, Freda Braginsky. He met her when he audited an undergraduate history class and happened to sit next to her.

His Caltech coaching continued through his graduate school days, and in addition to soccer he assumed responsibility for the freshman baseball team. He claims that the team's success came about because his ignorance of the subtleties of the game drove him to some outrageous and exotic coaching methods, which paid off. However, students he coached say that one of the strongest reasons for his success was his ability to take a bunch of oddly assorted people and weld them into a cohesive, smoothly working group.

His popularity with the students became so widespread that he was eventually offered the job of master of student houses. The administration wanted him to take it on as a full-time position, so it came as a bombshell when he pointed out that he was a serious scholar of British imperial history, for whom teaching and research had number one priority. Since he was about to receive his PhD, he didn't want to be master unless he could also be a faculty member.

The compromise he worked out with the Institute allowed him to teach "at the discretion of the division." This delicately turned phrase didn't bother him. Hallett Smith, the humanities division chairman, gave a sympathetic ear to his academic plans, and his active scholarship and demonstrated teaching ability kept him moving up the professorial escalator—until he received his full professorship in 1966.

Huttenback's colleagues describe him as a dedicated and effective scholar whose work has reflected a steady maturing in depth of insight. His latest book, recently published by the Cornell University Press, is *Gandhi in South Africa*. The important *London Times Literary Supplement* spoke of the author's meticulous documentation and close reasoning and doubted that Huttenback's detailed and critical study of this period of Gandhi's career will be superseded.

Most of the material for his studies has been gathered during research trips to India, Africa, London, and other places where there are major archival collections relating to the old British Empire and the modern Commonwealth. As one would expect of so busy a man, he has to do the Pasadena part of his research and writing in small

should be able to choose not to be saved from their own errors and shortcomings.

At UCLA he was not a big-man-on-campus. Fraternity life didn't interest him, and he considered campus politics an exercise in futility, since students had no real power. He is much more inclined to favor campus politics today, now that students have acquired more control over their academic environments.

Huttenback's academic preferences at UCLA were history, political science, and economics. As might be expected, his minor was physical education, and he thought he might like to be a professional coach—an ambition that waned when he joined the army after graduation in 1951, and found himself running an athletic program in the vast khaki world of Ft. Bliss, Texas.

After his army year he returned to UCLA and graduate school, where he soon realized that he thoroughly enjoyed the academic environment and the challenge of graduate school subject matter—particularly British imperial history, with emphasis on the history of India.

patches during the academic year—"ten minutes here, ten minutes there" is the way he describes it. The results of his notes, writings, and a voluminous correspondence come together during the summer.

During the academic year he tosses up all his activities in the same blanket, being division chairman one minute, a researcher the next, and a dean the next. Except for a brief look-in every morning, he is hardly ever in the deans' office on the first floor of Throop Hall, but the door to his Baxter office is seldom closed, because Bob Huttenback is the most accessible of men.

If he isn't in there, he is probably making the rounds of his faculty's offices—which he sometimes manages to do twice a day. Students wanting to see him about leaves of absence, dropping courses, or occasionally some complicated infraction of the honor system that needs a word from a present-day Solomon drop in frequently. His approach to students with worrisome personal problems is rational and nonjudgmental, which results in a minimum of embarrassment for everyone concerned.

Huttenback likes being dean better than being master of the houses—at least partly because he has fewer occasions for imposing discipline. As master of student houses he found it taxing "to have to hit somebody between the eyes and be Big Daddy simultaneously."

He sees the role of the dean of students as being sympathetic and supportive but he also believes in "inflicting new ideas on students now and then." He feels this is particularly necessary at Caltech because he's never seen much evidence that the student body is very innovative. Those few who are, he thinks, are atypical. "I looked on Joe Rhodes from the outset as an aberration." (Rhodes, Caltech's first sophomore ASCIT president, became nationally known even before his graduation, and later became the youngest member of President Nixon's panel on student unrest last year.)

As a teacher, his students find him tough, and for the old reason that is a bugaboo to many Teachers—lack of obvious structure in the course. Instead of telling them one-two-three the reasons for the rise or fall of the British Empire, he throws them into a mass of material and expects them to strike out for themselves.

One student complained that Huttenback further clutters up his material by tossing out myriads of anecdotes about the people involved in the events being studied. What he has missed is Huttenback's basic belief that history is made up of the irrationality of individuals, and not tidy trends.

Racial problems within the British Empire absorb him as current and planned research. His next book, *Kashmir as an Imperial Factor*, is at the Cornell University Press now, and he will finish *The Quest for a White Australia* this summer. His ideas for future research and writing stretch to the horizon.

Such energy and output make it easy to understand the delight in his voice when he called his office during a research trip to Canada last summer, and announced with great glee: "There's a museum here that's open 24 hours a day!"

When one has worn for so long and with such flare the garb of the genial abbot of the student houses, it is not easily discarded, no matter what other roles he may assume. Occasionally a few people have even mistaken for superficiality the Huttenback *joie de vivre*, versatility, and graceful handling of many sticky wickets.

As one faculty friend recently said, "His solid achievements and his administrative skills can't be denied, so maybe it's time to recognize the real Bob."

The suggestion would undoubtedly be seconded by hundreds of Caltech alumni who, through him, saw the first indication that there's a lot of life going on out there beyond the lab.