

# THE BEAVER

## Some Notes on Student Life

**T**HE first weeks of the fall term always had a special and very pleasant flavor for the Beaver. They were warm days, and the joyful feeling of vacation freedom still lingered unshakably in the air. It wasn't like the weeks later in the year, when everyone seemed bowed down by too many problems and too little sleep.

Most of all, each new autumn presented a new group of frosh, first to be fawned over and rushed, then to be initiated. There was the interest in new faces combined with the ego-warming opportunity to display yourself as a knowing upperclassman—as a wise big brother whose broad experience at Tech and life in general would be devoured word for word by eager new freshmen. A very pleasant situation, the Beaver decided expansively.

During frosh rotation period, everyone proselyted. You personally brought the frosh in to dinner, slyly insinuated into the conversation the perfectly obvious advantages of your particular house, got them dates, bought them beer, and in short treated them as favored equals. This was a painful concession for upperclassmen, and particularly for sophomores, who have all gained untold years in maturity since they were frosh.

### Rude-Awakening

■ Past the Beaver's room shuffled a very wet frosh, leaving a soggy trail of water from his squishing shoes to the alley shower. The Beaver put his head out into the corridor to observe several more clothed and squirming frosh headed for the showers. He went out to help.

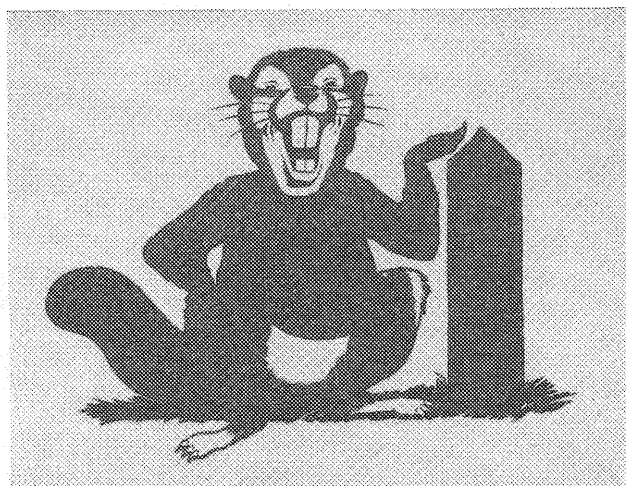
It comes as a stout shock to suddenly become frosh again directly after the settling of house assignments. Initiation commences then with a suddenness that serves to salve the wounded dignity of the sophs after the equality and fraternization of rotation period.

### Turning Worms

■ The Beaver had seen a good many wise and spirited freshmen though, and he was inwardly amused when their Fleming component staged an insurrection. The glorious portrait of Prince Eugene, of whom frosh must humbly beg permission to enter or leave the lounge, disappeared the night before initiation. Rising in noble authority, Pledgemaster Sonny Crump informed the frosh they would eat with only their bare left hands until the defiled icon was returned. But, behold, at dinner that evening the entire dining room was mysteriously devoid of any silverware.

The Beaver was broadly pleased. This sort of spirited revolt was secretly desired and admired by upperclassmen. Why not? he pondered, missing his transom with a carelessly tossed cigarette butt; the frosh are still outnumbered three to one—no real danger.

The Beaver slipped on old clothes and went out into the patio, stepping carefully through the slick of water on the stone walk. A dozen frosh were half-heartedly singing "Cool Clear Water" in the center, at the loud insistence of pledgemasters—and were getting the commodity they sang for in great wastebasket gulps from the surrounding second-story windows. Everywhere on campus the Beaver saw frosh with green hats or enormous red bow ties, with nipple-capped root beer bottles



hung from their necks, carrying books in suitcases, or determining pi to ten decimal places by counting the number of revolutions of a golf ball rolled down a brick sidewalk.

At every meal the Beaver enjoyed entertainment provided by frosh who stood on their chairs and sang, or excited or reported—and were "floated" when they sat down again. Every noon water fights broke out between houses, patios were flooded, stirrup pumps going at grim speed. Initiation was, above all, a magnificent way to get acquainted. The Beaver deeply regretted that the grave and gray-haired powers of law and order had forbidden the uproarious tradition of measuring the length of a block of street in downtown Pasadena in unit mackerel-lengths. Traffic used to pile up like neglected homework when the frosh set up a blockade and studiously flopped their dead mackerel down the PE car tracks to measure the standard length of the city block.

Still, here on campus, enough went on to lighten the academic intensity of physics and math. The final initiation ceremonies left the stains and smells of molasses, flour, and eggs on all four houses, but with these the Beaver also noted a distinct atmosphere of righteous satisfaction.

### Expanding Universe

■ It was a great adjustment for the freshman. He had been an academic wonder in his home-town high school. He had risen to the top of the high school hierarchy as a senior—maybe a wheel. Now he was suddenly inverted, at the bottom looking up again. And now he competed against a whole class who had graduated last June with top honors. He was swamped with work, staggered with initiation, and learning to live in a dorm with a new and somewhat more mature group of men. He lay in bed at night and wondered in the dark how he would stack up in the competition, how he would adjust himself to the nebulous four years that confronted him.

But the Beaver watched them pass their initial crises: Foster Strong's first formidable physics quiz; the first time they were floated in their dining room seats; the first night they were forced to leave a piece of homework unfinished. The Beaver knew these things built character, and that most of the frosh would pull through with little more damage than to high school egos. After all, the Beaver noted with satisfaction—didn't I? To prove which he pushed away the problems he was doing and wandered down the corridor in the direction of a phonograph playing hot jazz. He was thinking, somebody here must have some beer he'd be eager to share.

—Jim Hendrickson '50