

Redd Boggs'

SPROOCHES

number 9

Apa L #34

10 june 1965

CUTE STUFF BY CHILDREN

"Listen to this, from Der Høllander #9," Gretchen said, looking up from her reading of Apa L distribution #31. My mind was on Higher Things at the moment, but I laid down my copy of Jerry Todd and the Flying Flapdoodle and listened politely. "'Today was Senior Ditch day at Caltech...'" What's Senior Ditch day?" she asked.

"Ditch day?" I said, turning the full force of my fine mind to the problem. "Let me look it up." I got up and plucked the Dictionary of American Slang from the shelf and thumbed it dubiously. "There's no clue here. But come to think of it, isn't 'Ditch day' a semi-official holiday for high school seniors shortly before graduation, where all the kids go off to Disneyland or the beach or something? We didn't have such a thing when I was a high school senior, but I think I've heard about the custom. It seems to be almost universal these days."

"High school? But isn't Caltech a college of some sort?" Gretchen asked. "It's hard to believe a college would adopt such a juvenile custom. I wonder if Caltech has recess and home-rooms, too?"

"Probably," I said. "Ah, youth! Isn't it charming? But go ahead with your reading. What else does Fred Holland say?"

"'Today was Senior Ditch day at Caltech. And since Lloyd House has one senior we today broke into his room. As far as lockout mechanisms go, his did not go very far and so it only took us 18 minutes to get into his room. The rest of the day was spent in distributing the contents of his room in various inaccessible locations around campus. Is he going to have fun when he gets back! Ask me or Barry about Ditch day if you want to hear more.'"

"Good old Fred Holland!" I marveled. "Isn't he a great kidder? Ah, youth! Isn't it charming?"

"What do you mean?" Gretchen said. "A 'great kidder'? You don't think he's serious? Well, I think he is. Look, this is a perfect example of male behavior in an exclusively male organization. Hazing like that is supposed to be funny. Why, they used to do it in the SS. all the time."

"No, he couldn't be serious," I protested. "They wouldn't act like that in the nut-house, let alone in one of the respected institutions of higher learning in the state of California. No," I said again, but this time more feebly, "he couldn't be serious. No, no, old Fred's just pulling our legs. Ha ha."

"But suppose he's not kidding," Gretchen said. "Would you find youth so charming then?"

"Those bastards!" I snarled. "If they did that to me, I'd kick 'em in the boo-boos. No, I'd cut off their balls with a dull nail-file and feed them to the morons with celery salt and strychnine... But no! Fred Holland is just kidding! He must be."

Gretchen shrugged. "Well, we'll see. Write Holland or 'Barry' and 'ask about Ditch day if you want to hear more.'"

"I'll do better than that, I'll write a squib about this for Spirochete," I said, leaping for the typewriter. "I'll get to the bottom of this. Break into his room and steal his possessions and strew them all over the campus? Those fuggheaded little boys! Why, I'd emasculate them so their bodies would match their brains!" I pulled myself up with an effort. "But Fred Holland's kidding. He must be kidding."

THE UNCHANGING CALIFORNIA SCENE

(from Martin Eden, by Jack London, New York: Macmillan, 1908)

"...Martin contaminated Professor Caldwell with his own earnestness, challenging him to speak his mind. As Ruth paused beside them she heard Martin saying: --

'You surely don't pronounce such heresies in the University of California?'

Professor Caldwell shrugged his shoulders. 'The honest taxpayer and the politician, you know. Sacramento gives us our appropriations and therefore we kowtow to Sacramento, and to the Board of Regents, and to the party press, or to the press of both parties.'

FOG ON A MAY EVENING

I opened the door to the west
and saw the billows of fog race in from the Bay
over the swaying poplar tops,
carrying night in on the cold sea-wind.
I fluttered for a moment like a gull
lost in a world of mist
and the angry foam of powerful waves,
turning blindly in the steady blast
toward the unseen land,
then I closed the door,
smoothed the weather from my dazed hair,
snapped on the kitchen light.
Through the window, where the glass
gave back a ghost reflection of myself,
I watched the palpable darkness
gather over the hidden slopes
of Angel island and the Marin shore:
I could not see the path I meant to go,
but I was where I wished to be.

27 May 1965