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You remember the books about "Europe on 36 a Day" which aimed at helping people (especially students) travel around Europe cheaply. Of course those books are still selling and with their help some students are making trips overseas.

However, surviving the cost of a trip to Europe and the expenses of room and board once you're there is one thing. Surviving the expenses of college right here at Cal Poly is another matter. In this issue our cover story by Rhonda deMazarrutte is one step in helping students tighten the belts of their budgets and spend less.

Fortunately we are not stopping there. Future issues of Outpost will carry a column by Rhonda which will give helpful tips on getting through college cheaply. She has fun, challenging ideas to share with the total campus community.

We at Outpost also have many exciting articles to share with our readers this quarter. Stories ranging from vasectomies to exorcism will run in coming issues. Perhaps the biggest thing to hit Outpost since brown ink is color. Yes, I know there isn't any in this issue, but on May 10th we will publish in living color. That is the date of our third issue, and the theme of "naturaleza" will be featured.

Our last theme, "alcohol", received a large response from our readers. We welcome letters and/or queries about stories we have already published or will publish. If you have any of your own ideas, let us know. Write to me in care of Graphic Arts 299.

William Mattox, Editor
THE MAKING OF CHAMPIONS

by Janet Heering and Sue Hubbs
photos by Randi Wald and Eire Lawler
The trip had started out with a holiday spirit. The crowded car had shouted with laughter and the usual traveling songs—"100 bottles of beer on the wall, 99 bottles of beer..."

Now 84 hours later, their bodies ached from the long drive and their stomachs rumbled for food. The singing had long since stopped.

As the destination drew nearer, those who weren't dozing stared anxiety ahead or watched the passing countryside awaken in the still air of dawn.

Life seemed so peaceful outside the car windows; inside there were stiff necks and hungry, knotted stomachs. They hardly felt their discomforts. They were all thinking, wondering or dreaming about the classes they would be judging as soon as the car rolled to a stop in the next town—the destination, at long last.

A giant that number three was the framed, nicest balanced, but I excelled him and placed him second because he lacked the muscling of member two.

Sound like a Mr. America contest? It's the National Western Livestock Show and Cal Poly Livestock Judging Team member is telling a judge why he placed a class of beef cattle as he did.

Livestock judging competition is based on how closely team members place classes of livestock compared to official placements by a judge or panel of judges. Judging livestock and giving oral reasons to judges may sound simple, but it's no easy task. It takes concentration, poise and sportsmanship, as well as knowing what you're talking about. There's no taking in this business.

Preparation for judging contests takes a great deal of time, energy, money, dedication and self-discipline on the part of team members.

Bill Jacobs, the team's coach, said the primary factor in making a good team member is interest. "A student doesn't have to be an animal science major to participate on the judging team; it just takes a willing desire to learn how to evaluate livestock and justify evaluations in extemporaneous speaking before a judge."

Cal Poly's teams certainly have what it takes; they've won every major livestock judging contest in the western United States for the past 30 years. The hard work and motivation of the team members and their coach paid off in full this year. It made them national champions.

The team rounded up top national honors at the National Western Livestock Show in Denver in January. They staked their major Midwestern teams to bring the championship back to the West for the first time in 14 years.

Jacobs said, "This Denver show is the best livestock show in the world today. A Cal Poly team won the team competition once before in 1968. We're the only school in the West Coast that's ever been champion at Denver. We really worked hard to win this year."

Until Cal Poly appeared in the winner's circle at Denver, livestock judging teams from colleges in the West were considered second-rate. Team member Sally Vivrette said, "When we went to Denver people looked down their noses at us if we said we were from California. They laughed at us when we said we were from Cal Poly. When we went to Houston, after winning in Denver, people were a lot nicer. At least they knew who we are now."

However, the future doesn't look all that rosey for the team. The fuel shortage and budget cutbacks may spell doom for the team's participation in future events. Jacobs is worried.

He said, "We certainly appreciate the support the Associated Students, Incorporated has given us. I hope they will continue to support us. We'll certainly keep working hard to bring home top honors."

ASI funds help pay the team's traveling expenses. The team was allotted $30,000 to participate in eight contests during 1973-74. If the team doesn't have the funds to return to Denver again in January 1976, Cal Poly will probably never be considered a serious contender with high-powered Kansas State and Oklahoma State. To the Midwestern schools Cal Poly will look like a poke player who pulls out of a game after winning everyone else's money without giving them a chance to win it back.

The uncertain future hasn't dampened the motivation or caused an energy crisis among the team members. Their dedication far outweighs their discouragement.

Enthusiasm is what keeps the team going—going to practices day in and day out, to contests long distances away and to their pocketbooks to get them there.

One team member estimated he spent $800 of his own pocket money to attend the contests. He put in 1000 hours attending practice sessions and contests.

The mental strain of judging can be as staggering as the empty wallets. Former team member, John Cocca, said, "After traveling 84 hours on the Ex-Lax Express (the school car) you get there just in time for a quick breakfast that you couldn't eat if you tried. Your stomach is tied up in knots of nervousness and you feel as though your body is going to start falling..."
was good at it. Once you get into livestock judging you really like it and you get to travel a little bit and meet people from other schools. I would also like to be a professional judge after I'm through on the judging team."

Another team member, Ray Hagemann, said, "Being on the judging team has taught me more and helped me more than what I've learned in classes so far. It's going to give me the background I need to have when I graduate. I'll be able to choose the right kind of cattle and I'll be able to improve my herd tremendously by being able to select good livestock."

"Another thing which people realize is the poise and self-confidence you acquire judging. You learn to express yourself in a logical, correct manner. It helps you when you have to start communicating with people in the livestock industry."

They do stand out, even in a crowd of aggies—wearing faded jeans and dusty boots. There is a certain assurance, poise and casualness about judging team members wherever they are that makes people take note.

Wearing a western hat and boots, Coach Jacobs could easily be mistaken for an aggie student, himself. Much of the team's inspiration, encouragement and self-confidence, as well as instruction and constructive criticism, comes from Jacobs.

Every team member, past and present, has nothing but the highest respect and praise for Jacobs. He is considered to be a top professional livestock judge. Around Poly his students call him an excellent teacher.

Confident, personable and neat in appearance, even when he's been working with animals all day, Jacobs transfers his competitive spirit and self-assured manner to the team members.

This begins in the livestock evaluations class he teaches. In this class Jacobs shows students exactly what characteristics are desired in sheep, beef, swine and horses and explains why. Students then practice judging livestock during their lab sessions.

Jacobs stood behind the first lamb and felt along her back, ribs and shoulders. He moved to the second, third and fourth lambs, quickly and deftly feeling through the wool to size, muscle and fat on each animal. The students waited anxiously for his opinions and reasons; would their reasons be the same as his?

Style, speed and accuracy are very important in delivering these sets of reasons because these are the criteria used to judge team members in actual contests. Students in the livestock evaluations class who show speaking ability, as well as interest, may try out for the judging team, explained Jacobs.

If they make the team, they must attend workouts every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

On Saturdays the team travels to different areas to judge livestock on ranches and in commercial livestock operations. This gives the members practice and helps the livestock owners by giving them free evaluations.
During the 1973-74 Christmas vacation the team traveled throughout the state judging livestock as many times as possible. One team member described the experience as valuable, but lonely while "everyone else was on quarter break taking it easy."

"It takes a highly motivated student to participate on the team and not break down under the pressure."

But why not get a bull's eye view of this yourself if you have a chance some Tuesday or Thursday afternoon, wander up to the Beef Pavilion and watch the goings on. What you'll see and hear will be Jacobs, the team and students in the livestock evaluations class hard at work.

The pavilion will be still and quiet as students mill around, concentrating on making visual appraisals of the livestock and feeling the animals for muscle and fat. They must remember how and why they compared the animals as they did and present their reasons orally to another student or Jacobs.

When they begin giving their reasons aloud the sound level nears shouting as reasons are rattled off with the speed of an auctioneer.

You'll be watching the making of champions."
I fight a constant battle against the forces that unbalance my checkbook. I can't seem to keep due bills from becoming overdue. I have a hard time cooking inexpensive meals, keeping my apartment and keeping up with the laundry. I deal with professional—administrators and professors—and must defend myself when conflicts of interest occur. No, I am not a bookkeeper, cook, housewife, accountant or a lawyer. I am a student.

And I have found many other students experiencing the same financial hassles.

"My problem is that I went through my summer savings faster this year than last," admits a student in Financial Aid Office.

Her checkbook reads -654, her parents can't send money until the end of the month and the bank won't wait that long. She is taking out a $200 Emergency Loan.

Seated next to her and fumbling with a pile of forms, another student shares his reasons for seeking financial aid:

"I could not come to school unless I took out a loan," he says and continues on, "My parents are divorced and I can't depend on them totally. So, a $1,500 loan is the only answer."

Both of these students are also having trouble making ends meet and it is no wonder.

The national government recently announced that in 1973, the cost of living rose 8.8 per cent. Students, along with the working class, must also face the upward spiraling cost of living and feel the burdens it places on them. Most students are on summer savings and/or inadequate paying part-time jobs. All must pay for registration, books, (paper prices expected to double in three years, printing costs up 50 per cent since 1972), parking fees, gasoline prices and the quest for financial aid begins. What can a student find when he looks for this aid?

Under the Higher Education Act, bank loans are available, providing $2,500 maximum each undergraduate year. Although this sounds reasonable and even rather generous, there are two great drawbacks: 1) No bank will finance more than $1,500, 2) Rent and food will cost an estimated $1,400 for three academic quarters. The remaining difference is easily figured, but not so easily stretched to meet all other costs.

There are $20 and $200 emergency loans; the former to be paid back within two months and the latter due the following Fall Quarter. But you may find yourself ineligible for financial aid—of the 3,000 students who seek help through the Financial Aid Office yearly, some 1,000 are turned down.

Scholarships are few. Here at Cal Poly with a student body of over 12,000 only 225 scholarships are awarded annually.

After the student then has exhausted governmental, university and parental help—can he ever hope to find relief from checkbook mishaps, tasteless inexpensive meals and rising prices that haunt even the most expert bookkeeper? In hoping to provide some of this relief, here are some of my tactics, hints and how-to's that may ease your financial pains.
TOILET PAPER IS NOT A LEFTOVER

Just how much are you willing to pay for items like toilet paper and paper towel? That depends on your sense of perception and ability to be a little cunning. (After all, most are not inclined to use leftovers!) Think about this:

When school janitors wheel their cleaning carts around the halls each night laden with toilet paper, paper towels, and cleaning liquids. Robin Hood was able to justify his actions with, “Steal from the rich and give to the poor”, but you may need more justification after stealing two rolls of toilet paper and package of paper towels. Boost your saving conscience with these:

1. Would you use them in the school bathroom anyway?
2. Have you gotten your money worth out of the student services fee?
3. Stretch the imagination—Rose Mary Woods did. Blame it on the truckers strike. Watergate or the gasoline shortage.

The price of being entertained today is also high and what you may have been looking for is in front of your eyes—the Audio Visual department. Students review a film at the cost of hunting down an instructor to sign a film request card. It may be for “The Last Tango in Paris”, but “The Red Balloon” is a beautiful story and about 85-90 cheaper.

PRODIGAL PENNIES TO CALL HOME WITH

Many times, I find myself with two pennies at the bottom of my purse and although grandfather’s “A penny saved is a penny earned” is little consolation, it does carry a bit of truth.

Save those straying pennies and when you don’t have an extra dollar to break for change, go to the bank and ask for a bundle of penny rolls. Each paper penny roll will hold 80 cents and with that you can do your laundry or purchase a magazine. If you use it to make a collect call from a phone booth, there will be 40 cents left to buy stamps, a bill pen or just to hear jingle in your pocket.

Give an effort to save Blue Chip stamps, even though you may not have time now to put them into books. When you do find time, in between mother’s stew recipe, rice puddings, cream soups and calculus finals, it may prove to be worth the undertaking. A “free” towel, kitchen appliance or pencil sharpener are useful items.

Old newspaper may be recyclable within your group of friends and family. When a birthday comes around, don’t rush out to buy wrapping, (taking into consideration you have a present to be wrapped) decorate a sheet of newspaper with potato prints and use in place of store bought wrapping paper. This will be your first step to saving money.

MINIMAL SOUP, MOTHER STEWING AND MEAT FOR A DOLLAR

You may throw away food only because it is difficult to find an appealing use for the leftover boiled potato half or the celery stalks lying in the bottom of the refrigerator. This may help:

Leftover vegetables make a delicious soup with only minimal effort. Carrots, beets, potatoes, broccoli, leftover from meals, can be dumped into a heavy pot, boiled for two hours and then pureed through a blender. Added to chicken broth and used as a base for hot soups, it not only brings a personal touch to meals, but has saved 20 cents on a can of soup.

If you also find yourself wondering what to do with a handful of rice remaining after dinner, turn it into a dessert. Leftover rice can be stored in the refrigerator and after three meals with rice, you most likely will have a sizable. Put this into a sauce pan along with two cups of milk and the mixture thickens. Sweeten with cinnamon and sugar and the result—rice pudding.

For preparation of the stew meat mentioned previously, ask mother for her stew recipe and prepare the stew using half a package. Leftovers should be enough for two more dinners and before you feel stew coming out of your ears and scholarly eyes, the end should be in eight and step two will commence.

Take the remainder of meat from the refrigerator and sauté it with a can of mushroom soup and diced celery. Almost a week’s worth of dinners can be created from a package of stew meat, three potatoes, four carrots, one celery stalk and a can of mushroom soup. This can be supplemented by rice, save the leftovers, and a green vegetable, save here also.

These money saving devices and more that are found in magazines can also be added to by personal tactics. Try your ability at conjuring invitations (“We ought to do this more often, how about your place next time?”), but pull from your hat the next trick. Suggest a group dinner in which each guest coming brings one dish and contributes to the meat as a meat item. Not only will you save on preparing a whole meal, you may find most people prefer not to take leftovers home with them. (“Keep it, there is only a little left.”) A possible counterbalance to a sinkful of dirty dishes, especially if the leftover is rice or a vegetable.
RECIPEs

JOINT RECIPES FROM A ONE POUND PACKAGE OF STEW MEAT

Musher's Stew
one half lb of stew meat
3 potatoes
4 carrots
1 (bap. flour
salt
pepper
garlic salt

Season stew meat with garlic salt and pepper and brown in a skillet. Put into a heavy pot of slow boiling, salted water, turn down flame and simmer for 48 min. Meanwhile, peel carrots and potatoes, slice and add to meat, continue simmering. To thicken mixture, pour off one half cup and stir this into flour. Slowly pour back into stew, stirring thoroughly. Continue cooking until vegetables are soft but not overcooking. Optional ingredients - 1 small onion, 2 celery stalks, 1 bell pepper.

MEAT IN MUSHROOM SAUCE

remainder of package of stew meat
1 can mushroom soup
one half cup water
celery (1 cup diced)
salt
pepper

Cut meat into strips approx. 1-inch thick. Season with salt and pepper and place into an oiled skillet. When meat is lightly browned, pour off excess oil, add mushroom soup and water. Stir well, add celery. Simmer for one half hour and serve immediately over hot cooked rice.

CREAM SOUP FROM LEFTOVER VEGETABLES

Put into a heavy pot with a tight cover all your vegetable leftovers. Add water to cover and boil, covered on a high flame for 3 hours. Blend all ingredients through your blender or by hand. Store in refrigerator in jar and use as a base for hot soups (adding diced celery, carrots, rice and bean bits. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese). Any or all of these variations can be used or you may think of your own variations. (Remember "Hobo Stew?") Mix this with chicken broth or bouillon and season to taste.

RICE PUDDING

1 cup leftover rice (or cooked especially for this recipe)
2 cups milk
cinnamon
sugar

Place rice and milk into saucepan and bring to a slow boil. Sweeten mixture to taste with sugar and cinnamon. Continue boiling until mixture thickens. Serve hot. Optional ingredients - one half cup of raisins or the yellow of an egg for added protein.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR POTATO-PRINT WRAP

1 medium large baking potato
tempered powdered paint in desired colors
shallow bowl for mixing paint
paring knife
newspapers (enough for protection and for the wrapping paper)

Scrub the potato; leave the peel on. Cut the potato in half across its width. Each half will make a printing stamp. From the flat surface of one potato half, whittle away the edges to form a protruding shape, such as a square, diamond, circle, heart, etc. If you wish, you may draw the design on the potato. Work on a surface covered with newspapers for easy clean-up and protection of the work surface. Mix a portion of tempera paint with water to a cream-thick consistency. Dip the potato stamp into the paint, submerging only the protruding shape. Beginning at the top-left corner of a single sheet of newspaper, press the paint-covered stamp to transfer the shape onto the paper. Try your own patterns, circular, horizontal, letter or words, phrases or follow the singular pattern of printing images evenly across the page. As each successive shape is transferred, the paint color will have its own accents of deep and pale shades. Once the entire newspaper sheet has been stamped, lay it out in the protective newspaper to dry. Continue on to another sheet of paper. Potato stamps may be washed and reused with new colors or you can alter an existing shape by making a few additions.

If this procedure reminds you of kindergarten, you should have no problem reacquainting yourself.
If you can't Streak...Vulture

by Connie Giansanti

The main problem with swooping is other swoopers. I mean, it can be pretty frightening for a pedestrian (or a swooper) in a small car, walking along alone, happy with life because the school day is done...when suddenly he realizes he’s being stalked by a swooper. Then, horrors, he sees another swooper in the next row, sneaking eerily from car to car, easily with one eye on that poor walking target. I’ve seen terror stricken students walk right on by their car, out of the lot and into the produce store, then after a short wait for the disappointed swoopers to disperse, come sneaking back, often crawling on their hands and knees to avoid attracting another swooper swarm!

Tod Benson, a junior at Poly, and a fellow vulture, though unfortunately a swooper, told me the other day, he gets a parking space in the lot in front of the produce store about 80 per cent of the time. The other 20 per cent, it was a little longer. Asked if he ever had trouble over a parking place with another driver, Tod laughed, and related he has twice bluffed a cowboy, but, he assured me, he has never had words with anyone. I just get in it (the parking place) first, get out and walk away.

Hardly a day passes that I don’t hear someone complain about the parking situation. Oh, I seldom run into anyone who couldn’t find any place at all. It’s the location of the spot that causes complaints.

I’ve always listened to the bitchers with hidden amusement, because I have a secret. Every single day that I drove my car to school during winter quarter, I parked in the best lot for students on campus. Perhaps I should qualify that statement. On the first day of classes, last January, like most other drivers wishing to become pedestrians, I drove aimlessly up and down rows of parked cars, seeking a place for my beast, any place, I wasn’t particular. Naturally, I wound up in a lot somewhere up on a hillsides, just short of the big white “P.” The ten minute walk from my car to class wasn’t bad...it was the twenty minute sprint back, from cover to cover, puddle to puddle in the rain that had blown in during my hours in class that inspired me to look for a new approach to parking. That evening weather forecast made me sure I didn’t give up my search.

With the incentive provided me by the weather during the first week in January, it was easy to discover my parking method—which I call vulturing. The name draws an obvious comparison between a rather odious bird, patiently waiting for the dying to finish, and a driver patiently (and sometimes not so patiently) waiting for a parking space to open up. That’s the basic idea of vulturing—waiting.

But vultures, like normal people, vary in their view of life’s little problems, especially parking. Thus, like the rest of humanity, vultures can be divided into sub-groups, sub-sub-groups and probably, if I tried hard enough, sub-sub-sub-groups. I shall, however restrain myself, and stick to two main vulture species, and one sub-species.

The species are the swooping vultures, and the perching vultures. Swooping is a proud and noble calling, but for strength, cunning and sheer nerve, you can’t beat a percher...which, by the way, just happens to be my favorite method.

Swooping vultures are a more high strung, nervous bunch than us perchers. They arrive about ten minutes early, usually right on the hour (I’m speaking of MWP vulturing). They vultures are a harder breed, who deserve separate treatment, then begin a continuous search and swoop section, hence the name.
Then there's the parked individual who considers it a point of honor to be out of the way before any of the vultures know he's there. It's a real treat to watch one of these artists at work. A sneaky-ped will walk casually across the street, sometimes with a friend, stop, look around, and go into his act: He’ll size up his foe, shade his eyes, and squinting painfully, survey the nearest parking lot, the one up presumably for his car. After a few seconds of this, he’ll show teeth on his heels, possibly in a sneaky manner, and then when everyone else has been diverted by some motionless driver going straight at the pace, sneaky-ped will surge forward in a running crouch, and streak (pardon the expression) to his car, which is always in a prime spot in the prime lot, because good sneaky ped’s are first class vultures first class vultures too.

Once you've caught on to their methods, sneaky-ped are great fun! They are the main reason I became a percher rather than a swooper.

Parking is very easy on the nerves and the gas tank. One simply swoops the lot one time, then parks at one end of a row, blocking the exit of four cars on one side, and keeping access to the four cars on the other side to a minimum. This leaves you in an excellent position to grab the place vacated if the next four cars on either side leave. Thus, by choosing your parking place carefully you can have at least sixteen parking spaces. If you arrive first, other perchers take a perch in another row, rather than encroach on your territory. Don't hesitate, however, to scoot at the far end of another percher row, if there is a percher in every row.

One thing I can't emphasize enough is that initial swoop. It's humiliating to be sitting quietly, watching, then watch another vulture swoop through, and find an obvious vacant place.

It's even more embarrassing if the other driver is a member of that vulture sub-species much despised by all true vultures, swooper and percher. Through the lot one time then come vulture. Vultures feel the same way about this low life as Geronimo must have felt about "tame Indians." You might say vultures are drawing to an inside straight when they wait in that lot. If no spaces show up, they're in trouble. So you can imagine how they feel about the driver who wants a good parking spot, but who won't risk all for it.

I also approached a vulture perched behind three cars in the lot across the street from the English building, to ask her a few questions, but when I walked up to the car, she took one look at me, shook her head in disgust, snarled, "Oh, oh, I'll move!" And before I could explain, she did just that. It got me to wondering about the legal status of vultures. So I went to see Chief Cookriel, head of the Cal Poly security force.

The chief is a forceful, cigar chewing veteran of seventeen years at Poly. In the first ten minutes I was there, we discussed all your main problems, now facing the nation: Legalization of marijuana, prostitution and gambling, before I finally had a chance to bring up parking.

Had anyone talked to him about parking? "Why, young lady, I'm the one who talks to, and ask any man in this university!"

And he was off, telling me about the problems his office has concerning parking. I had the distinct impression the largest problem was people who received tickets, didn't want to pay them and brought them in to argue. But, at the end the chief said, "people get to have something to complain about..."

As for the vultures... I don't think the chief quite believed in them. He seemed to think I was making the whole thing up, I can't imagine why.
Sentimental Journey

by Michael Ruskevich

Maybe I'm too sentimental. I went to a basketball game at the end of last quarter, but that's not really what I did. Instead of a game, the whole thing turned out to be a sentimental journey.

The two teams playing were not college teams, but high school teams. And it had been four years since I'd been to a high school basketball game.

I probably would not have gone to this particular game had it not been for a few twists of fate. It happened to be on my way home from a class just about the time the game started. The two teams were Alastader and Paso Robles, the former being my home town.

Anyway, the thought struck me that it had been four years since I'd gone to anything other than a college game (and only a limited number of those), so I paid my dollar and a half, skeptically, and went in. It was the best investment I've made in a long time.

A senior in college doesn't think much about high school basketball games. Too many events and thoughts flow between a senior in high school and a senior in college. But when I walked into that gym, time fell away; it all came back to me. They were too young. They looked up there on the bleachers and thought, 'Man, this is a place that doubled as a gym and meeting spot for us.'

There were the cheerleaders, the ones that I thought were women in high school. Now they looked like younger sisters.

There were the cheerleaders, the ones who considered themselves too mature to be cheerleaders, but not too mature to go to a game with a guy. (Or was that the intellectual type and those out his sendrumas, screaming.)

And then there were the guys. Their hair was just beginning to lengthen. Most of their faces (and even their pimples) looked obviously in early dating stages. There, nervously, trying to play the game. Others were 'tall,' still turning their arms around their shoulders to see if anybody noticed.

Still others were alone. Those were the days when you could live with being alone. You'd arrive late, watch the game and stumble up the bleachers acting like you were drunk and say to your mind when really, the flagship that you had to brave was a Dr. Pepper. And when you were lucky enough to get a bottle, you let everybody know it.
and it didn’t last long. Besides, even if you were taking it the fans got a kick out of it and you could always fall into the lap of a good-looking girl. It was hard to know those guys were all in high school and probably always would be.

Then there were the aunts. Groups of girls, each having something in common (usually glee club or Girl Scout) met and yelled with each other. Some of them had tried out for cheerleaders themselves but didn’t make it. These were intensely jealous of those who did. Others were just too shy.

A group of athletes, donned in ist- men’s jackets (even though it was better than the hub of hell in there) near the colors of their respective schools, shouted with deeper voices and waved their fists at the referees. Another section of the crowd was a mass of cowboy hats and still another sea of long hair.

Somewhere in-between, a third group set as a compromise: long hair under yellow baseball caps. Each group had a representative out there on the court; one of their own they could cheer for the victory.

Fathers watched and shouted and mothers set proudly as their sons took the show or warmed the bench. It didn’t matter, it meant just as much to collect splinters as it did points. When the stories were told and retold at work, the splinters had a way of turning into points, anyway.

It was two small-town teams in a CIF basketball game. But it was really Alameda and Pico Robles battling it out for the superiority of the county. The whole world was riding on that game.

In the final seconds, time caught up with the ball. The game ended in favor of Alameda and I felt good about it. I laughed and smiled with the rest of the crowd as it to say, “boy did we show them!” But WE hadn’t shown them at all. I had just been an observer, not quite old enough to be one of the fathers and not quite young enough to be one of the sons.

All I saw the weight of my books I knew the world hadn’t been changed by the outcome of the game. I had only slipped away as we do at times, and it made me feel melancholy. I’d just gotten caught up in the spirit of a joy I hadn’t known for four long years. I, perhaps, would never know it again.

I watched them all as they went home in the mailer’s buses and the hot cars they worked for all summer and still had to use dad’s money to buy the meal. Some of them would get their futures. And some of them would fall in love...and out again. All because of a basketball game.

But maybe I’m too sentimental.
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