



Graphic by Steve Sandstrom

Studying is awfully good occupation

"There's one in every bunch," I sighed to myself, slumping down into my desk.

I was sitting in my psychology class, "Psychoanalysis of Inanimate Objects," doodling in my notebook and trying to ignore an exchange between the professor and a know-it-all student sitting next to me. I was bored because a verbal slugfest over something as ridiculous as acrophobia in clouds seemed like a waste of time, and I was mad because listening to the student's views wouldn't help me find out the professor's opinions and biases — which, after all, were what mattered when it came to passing the final.

But I had to admit that the student seemed to know what he was talking about, especially when he boxed the professor into a corner with something called the Paranoid Dew theory — a theory that the professor had apparently never encountered. Interested, I introduced myself to the student at the end of class and asked where he had picked it up.

"Oh, that," he said offhandedly. "I ran across it when I was researching my thesis on cumulus cognition. Gee," he murmured, his eyes growing misty behind Coke-bottle bottom glasses, "that was my first thesis."

"Your first? How many have you written?"

"Oh, dozens," he said. "Maybe I should

his thinning hair. "Are they still teaching undergrads that nonsense? If the only activities that qualified as jobs were the productive ones, what would that make the millions of soldiers in a peacetime army? Unemployed?"

"Well, no, but..."

"And as for providing income," he reached into his briefcase and pulled out a thick sheaf of papers "these are BEOG grants, social security checks, G.I. bill payments, food stamps and a couple of federal equal opportunity scholarships because of my Lithuanian extraction. During my first year here I worked part time at a sawmill until I discovered that taking 12 hours of practicum and two of P.E. worked out to 20 cents more per hour. Ever since then I've been going to school steadily."

"How long has that been?"

"Well, let's see...January, February, March...it'll be 14 years in June."

"Fourteen years! But how did...where was...didn't you..."

"I got out of high school in...well, when Howdy Doodly was a household word, and I went into the Navy as the Mediterranean fleet's epidermic maintenance coordinator..."

"What?"

"Requisitioning suntan lotion," he said. "It

meaningless sham that keeps the student from recognizing the realities of life. I voiced these concerns to T.P.S.

"Have you been sniffing library paste?" he snorted. "Siddown, you're in for an education."

"As to the notion that college is hard work — pure sweatsocks. Nothing is so irrelevant to complaining as the object at which it is directed, and college is no exception. Com-

to be here." Suddenly he glanced around furtively, and then he whispered, "I even talked to a woman who said she was going to vote for Gerald Ford."

"It's true. And she told me her husband was thinking of voting for Reagan."

"Come on, now," I chuckled, trying to control an icy fist of fear that was tightening around my stomach, "next you'll be telling me that there are people out there who vote

"...when was the last time you were out of Eugene..?"

plaining is one of the few instincts that civilization has not bred out of humankind, and at the end of a lifetime of complaining I don't doubt for a moment that people's disembodied spirits go right on griping about how drafty the pearly gates are. No sirree Bob, you might find me complaining right along with the best of them, but when it boils down to a choice between burying a hoedad blade in the Oakridge permafrost and burying my nose in a book, it's no contest.

"Regarding your second point, college is stimulating, it's exciting, it's fun, so all in all, I must agree with you — it's nothing like the "real world." He coked his head and squinted at me. "When was the last time you were off campus?"

"Huh? Why, I was off campus this morn-, hell, I live off campus, over on 20th and..."

"No, no, no, no. I'm not talking about the literal borders of the campus, I'm talking about the ideological boundaries of the cool, liberated, slumless, academic, tuned-in, token-integrated, artsy-craftsy, goose-down-stuffed, my-dad's-a-doctor campus. When was the last time you were out of Eugene altogether — in Alabama, or South Carolina, or," he shuddered, "Grants Pass?"

"To tell the truth, I've never."

"That's where you'll find out what the Real world' is like. I go to places like that once each year, to just remind myself of how lucky I am

against mass transit and don't recycle their cans."

"You may believe what you wish," T.P.S. said, "but don't be surprised if you step off of a bus someday and find that the people you meet aren't mellow."

I tried to grasp the enormity of T.P.S.'s statement and failed. People who weren't mellow? Why that was ridiculous, everyone I knew was mellow — even the cats of everyone I knew were mellow. I shoved it into the back of my mind to be pondered later.

"...so I've decided to stay right here," T.P.S. was saying. "I'm working on r... P.D.M.F.-S.A.L.M.S.V. — Post Doctoral Masterful Fellow of Sciences, Arts, Letters, Motor Skills and Volcanology..."

"When will you get that?"

"Well, let's see... September, October, November...yes, December 1994. But my options won't be closed then — don't forget the non-matriculant program. Yessir, I plan to stick around, I've found my niche. You can graduate and be washed upon the jobless shores with the rest of the teeming hoardes, but just remember — a dime and a diploma will get you two-thirds of a cup of coffee." With that he turned and strolled away, whistling "Pomp and Circumstance" at an uptempo beat.

"...don't be surprised to find that the people aren't mellow..."

introduce myself. I'm The Professional Student."

"What?"

"I go to school as an occupation," T.P.S. explained. "It's my job."

"But going to school isn't a job." I tried to recall the definition from my sociology class. "To qualify as a job, an activity must provide income and make a productive contribution to society."

T.P.S. chuckled and ran a hand through

was a snap, but I started to get bored so when a friend recommended the college racket it sounded too good to pass up."

I was beginning to understand T.P.S.'s rationale but he seemed to be overlooking two vital points: first, as evidenced by all the griping students, going to college is hard work — undoubtedly harder than most jobs in the "real world."

Which leads to the second point — that college is not the real world. It is a false,