



An old idea flowers anew

Photographed by
GREY VILLET

At Santa Cruz, overlooking Monterey Bay, the University of California has made a controversial addition to the chain of nine campuses that comprise its educational colossus. In an era when many universities have grown into massive academic cities choked with specialists, this contrary institution contrives to keep its human proportions even as it expands. Admittedly designed to educate an elite, like the ancient collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge on which it is modeled, Santa Cruz is devoted to the old-fashioned ideal of a broad liberal education. Founded five years ago, it today consists of a collection of five small liberal arts colleges scattered among the redwoods on 2,000 matchless acres which

eventually will accommodate 25 such schools. Each college is limited to 600 students, has its own general faculty, its own style and intellectual bias. Tests and grades are rare; most courses are on a pass/fail basis. Though conventional disciplines and lectures exist, much of the learning at Santa Cruz occurs in unstructured seminars, where the line between student and teacher is often blurred. With students and faculty living as a community of scholars, the campus has so far avoided the kind of turmoil so familiar elsewhere, evolving in the process a form of education well matched to the energies of such intellectual adventurers as Ron Richardson (above) who come to Santa Cruz seeking understanding of life—not careers.



at Santa Cruz

Ron Richardson tends dahlias at dawn in the campus garden where students raise flowers and vegetables organically to give away to faculty, students and staff. The gardeners also grow enough for their own lunches.



Spontaneity is the rule at Santa Cruz and students are encouraged to express themselves in many media. In a courtyard near the sea at Cowell College, drama students stage an impromptu happening before beginning an encounter session at the beach.



'Education must begin with an exposure to joy and variety. Ideas have a way of creating people'

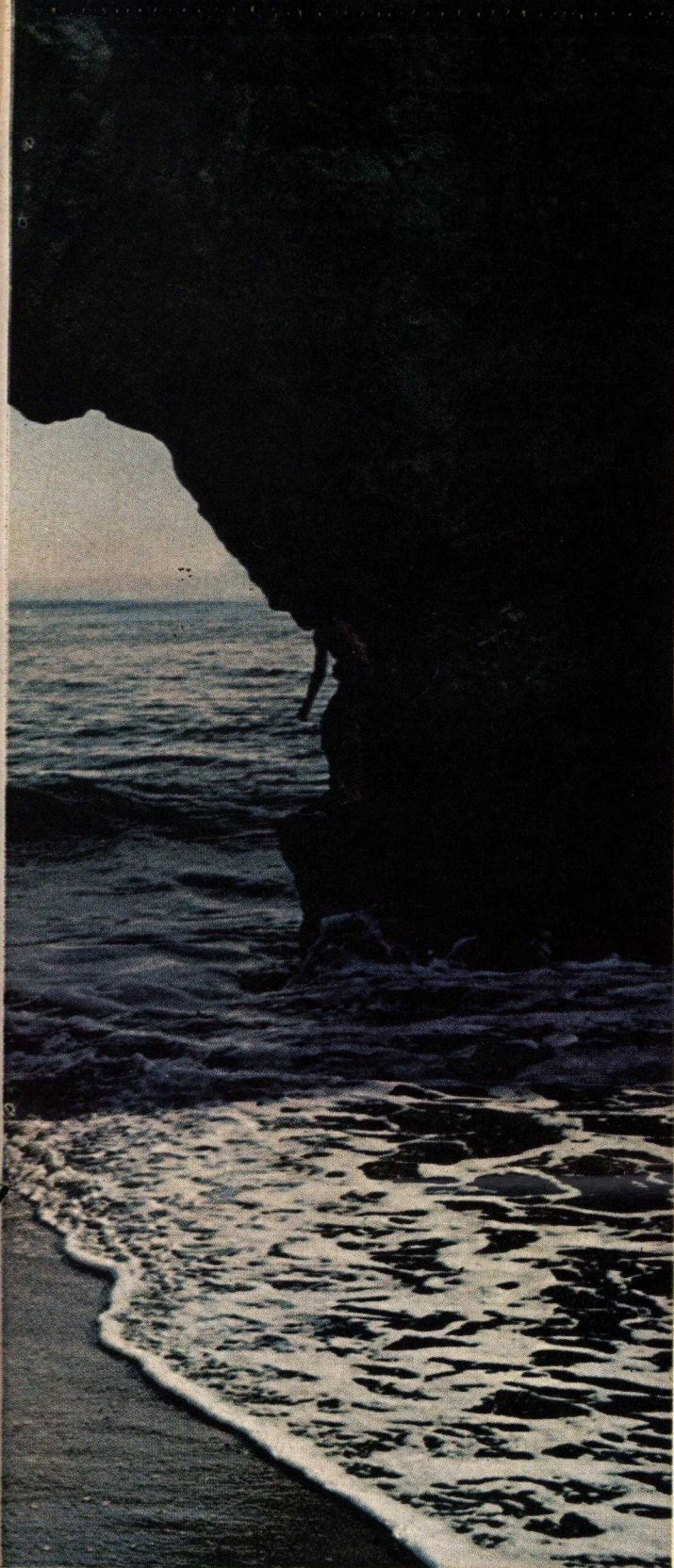
RON RICHARDSON

Opening another new college every year, Santa Cruz is full of transfer students. Ron Richardson, for example, transferred in his sophomore year from UCLA (where he had created some doubt about his existence by forgetting to file his computerized registration form), to find education at Santa Cruz at once more personal and more applicable to his plans to teach. The subdivision of Santa Cruz he entered was Merrill College, whose curriculum emphasizes the comparative study of emerging cultures, and whose students are encouraged to do field work outside the uni-

versity—including overseas. Ron soon discovered that at Santa Cruz the question of what and how he would learn was mainly up to him. To round out a heavily academic program, he counsels local boys on weekends, studies auto mechanics and the language of Mexican-American Chicanos, and does a daily stint in the university garden. "What's come clear here," he says, "is that there's wonder in doing anything—fixing a car, singing, reading, thinking, gardening. To sustain a sense of wonder is what education should be all about. That's what it really is all about here."

At a Santa Cruz park, Ron Richardson romps with the slum boys he counsels each weekend. The program is organized through Merrill College as a community service project.





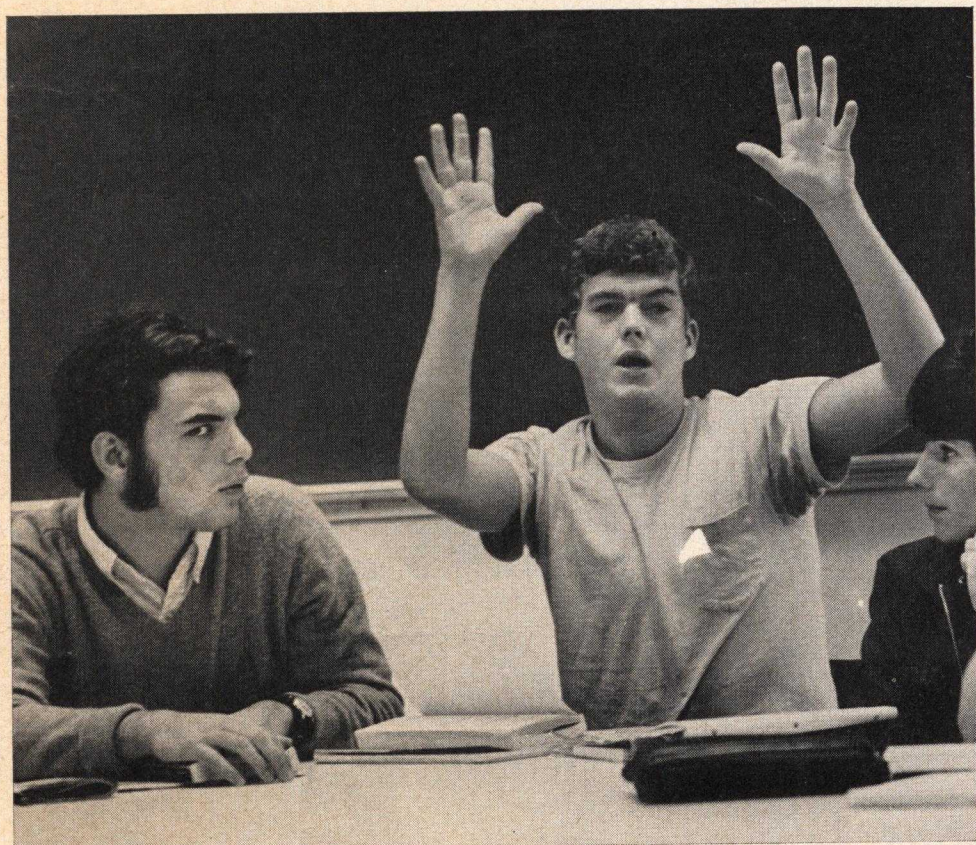
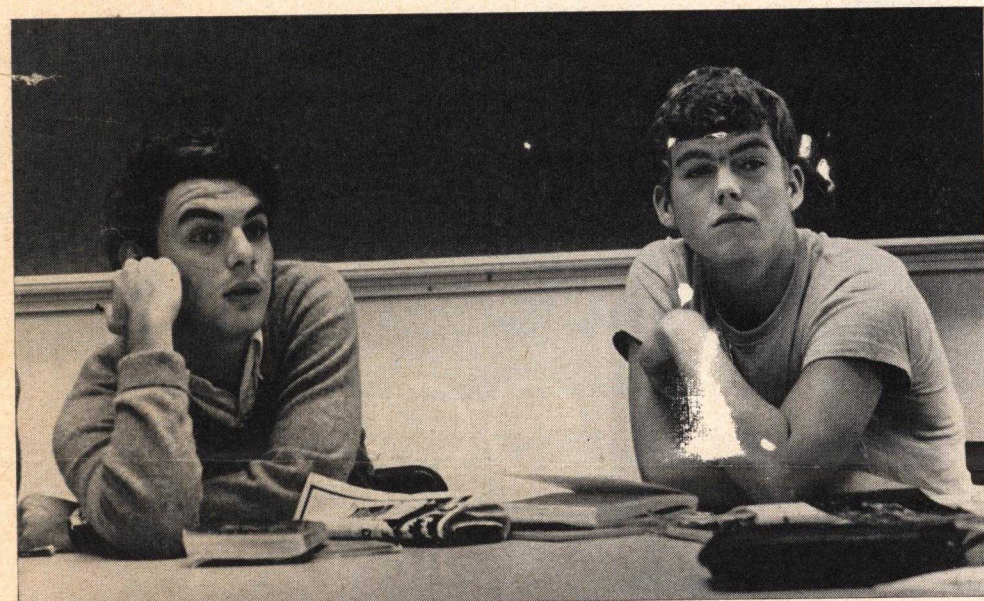
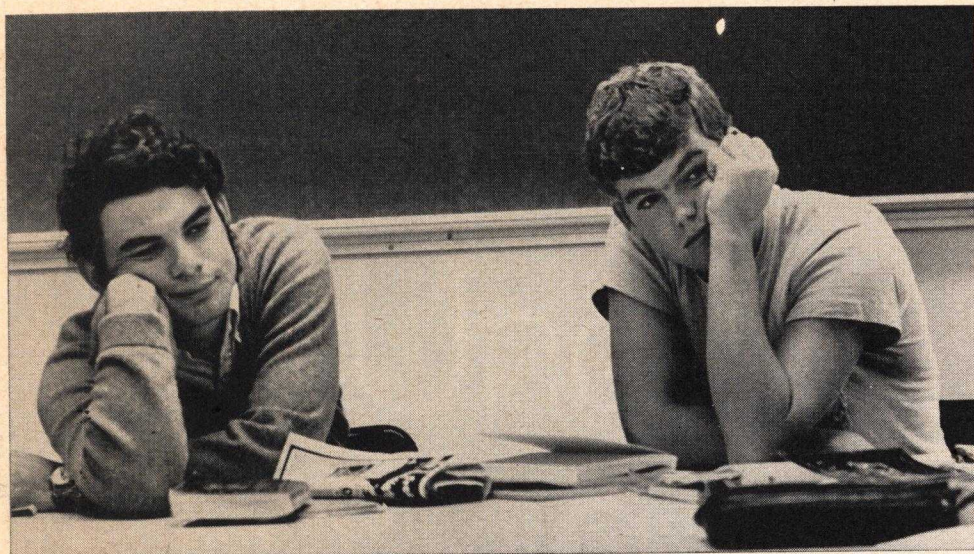
At a garden lunch, Ron listens as Norman O. Brown, prophet of a new romantic mysticism and a teacher at Cowell, discusses man's fall from innocence with students and colleagues.



Bearded Noel King, vice provost of Merrill and professor of religion, is one of Ron's chief mentors. Oxford-trained and a humanist, King here talks about Christ in a seminar.

From the beginning of the fall term until cold weather arrived at the end of October, Ron slept out among the redwoods. He still uses the grove as a retreat for solitary study (below).





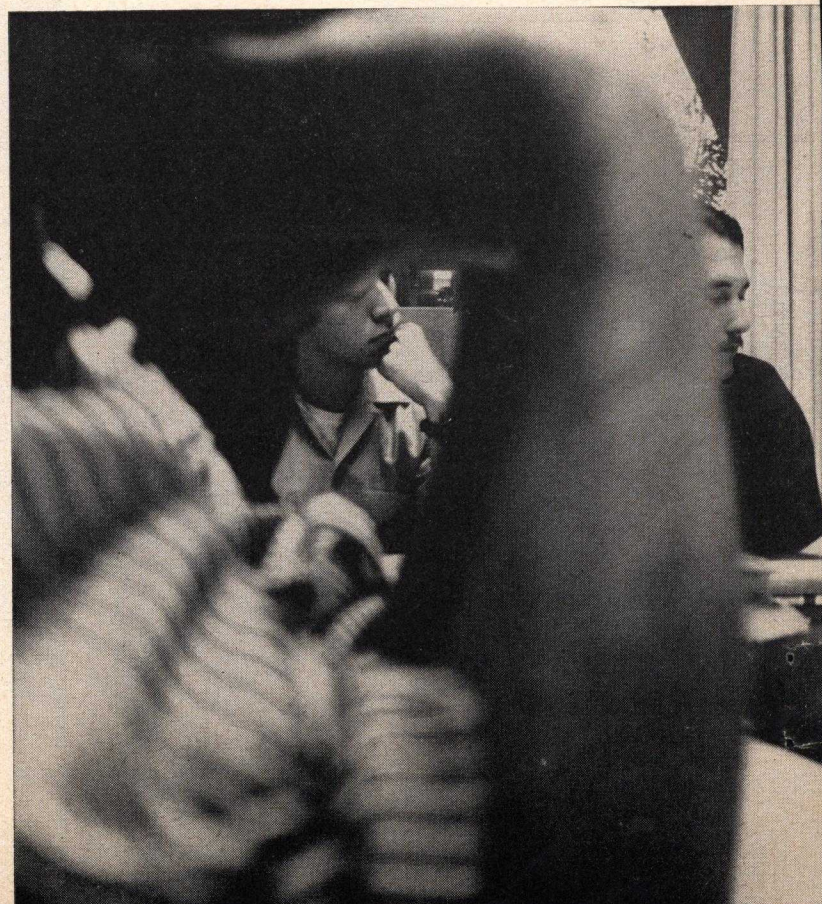
Classroom experiments at Santa Cruz range from courses run by students themselves to special cross-discipline courses taught by a team of professors. Above, first listening and then speaking out, Tod takes part in a stu-

dent-managed politics seminar. At right, he makes a point during a philosophy of science course called "Phenomenon of Man." According to Tod, the open-end dialogue in class helped force him to define his ideas.

'I want my life to be all it can, so I must find my own direction before one is forced on me'

TOD DECKER

Though intellectually rigorous, Santa Cruz deliberately aims to avoid forcing its students to make practical decisions about careers or the future. At the end of his last quarter at UCSC's science-oriented Crown College, Tod Decker found he was still directionless. He arrived two years earlier as a junior transfer from a community college with a vague notion of climbing the academic ladder to graduate school and some useful specialization. In the intense intellectual atmosphere of Crown, this goal and most of his old assumptions were subjected to unrelenting critical examination by peers and professors alike. In the end, Tod was certain only of his uncertainties. Far from regretting it, he is convinced that Santa Cruz has reshaped his life in a positive way. What some might dismiss as drift, he sees as potential. "I got turned on to ideas here and began to realize how important it was to know where I wanted to go before being committed in any one direction." After graduation, Tod took a sleeping bag and a few changes of clothes and moved to Berkeley. There, without enrolling, and keeping his address a secret from friends, he quietly began using the library and going to lectures, hoping to resolve his dilemma.





Before leaving Santa Cruz, Tod Decker relaxed on a hillside with Trisha Miller and talked of their decision to spend a year apart. She had been his

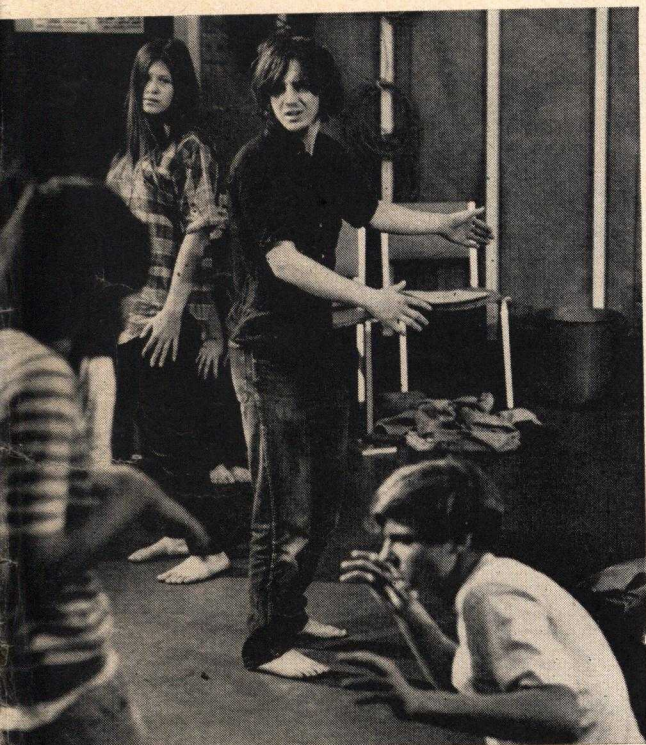
girl friend for two years. After graduation Tod kept his whereabouts a secret, mailing letters to her through his parents. Recently he broke his res-

olution not to see her, but he still insists he must be free to find himself. Though Trisha has qualms about all this, she accepts it as necessary to Tod.



'To find out who I was I used
to listen to others. At Santa Cruz
I learned it was up to me'

BRUCE WANDMAYER



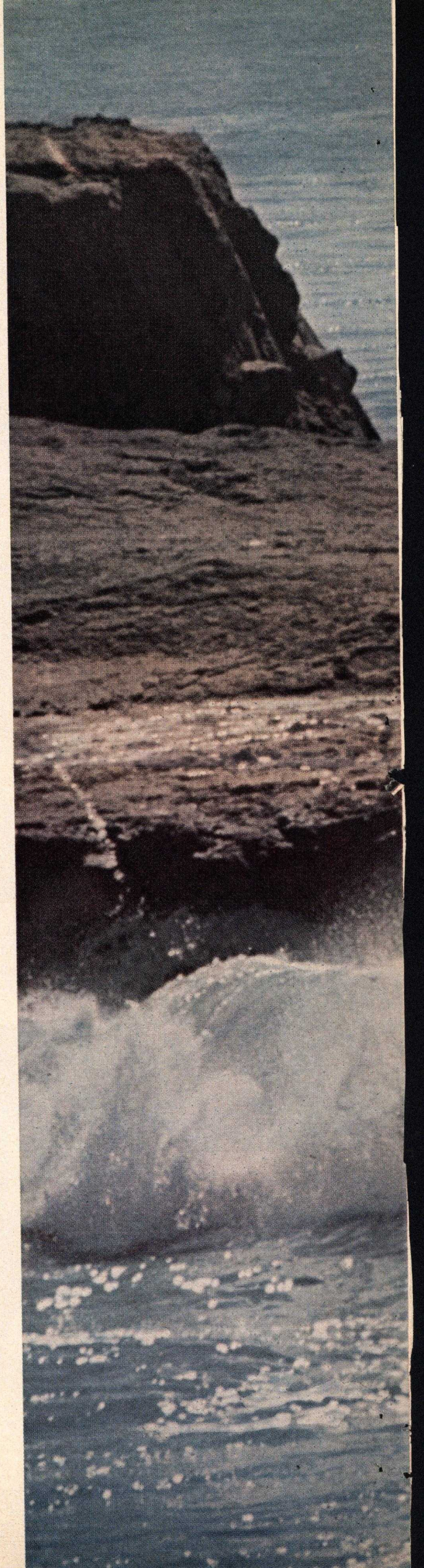
In a drama class that used encounter techniques and group therapy, Bruce (center) began exploring his own fears of being lost while at Santa Cruz.

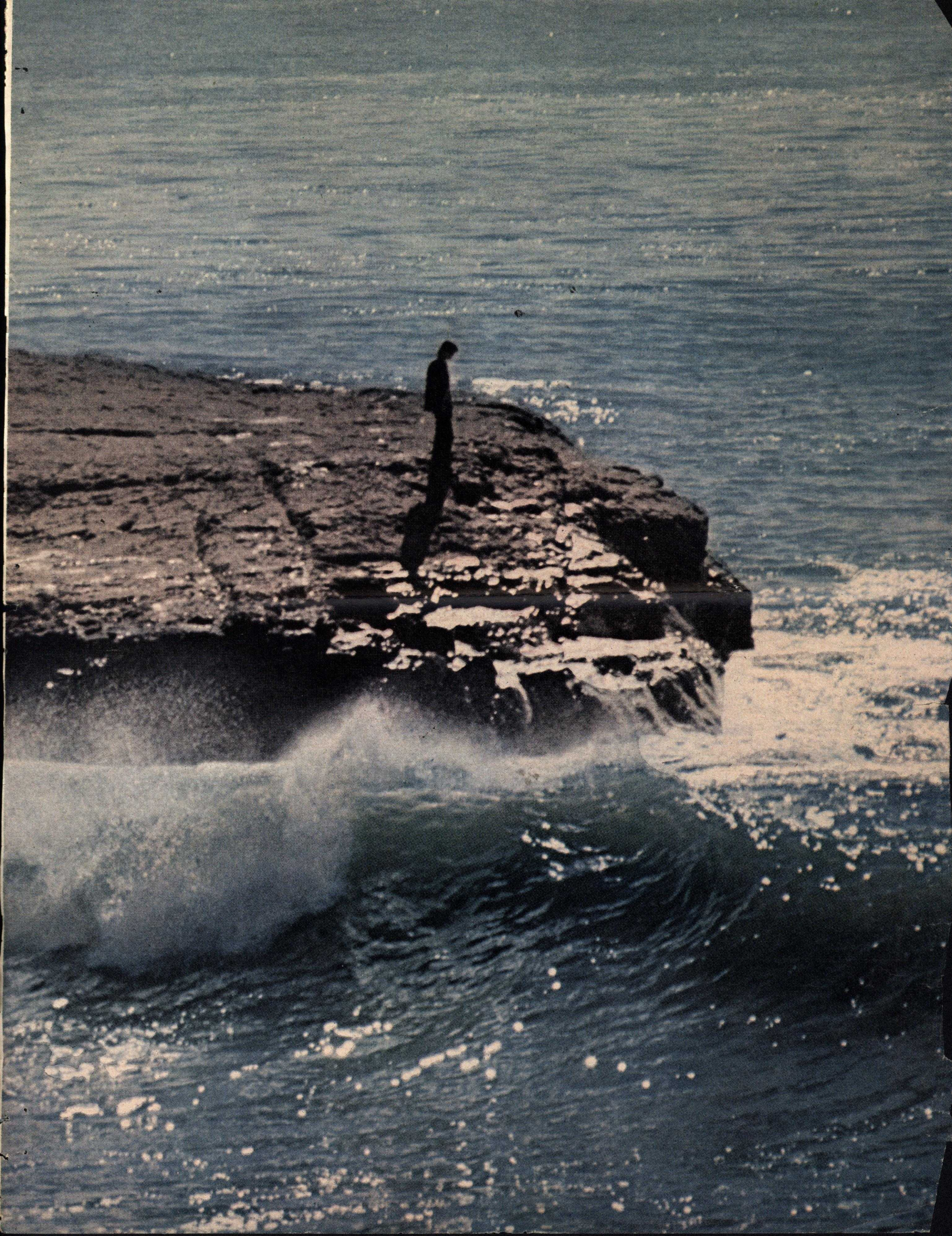
Though Bruce Wandmayer claims he "started freaking out" in high school because he felt "too structured and penned in," as a freshman at Santa Cruz's newest College V he found the lack of clear academic requirements unnerving. The benign nature of the collegiate authority combined with the serenity of the campus to make UCSC seem unreal to Bruce, as it does to many students. "The world is out there and here we are—dependent middle-class kids," Bruce said. "I thought of dropping out altogether to hitch around, but then I met a guy doing that barefoot, looking for God. I didn't want to be in his bare feet." Bruce went to Santa Cruz, "hoping to find a way out of my lostness," but once there he realized that "nobody would give me directions." Finally, Bruce decided to leave school to find a job, hoping to become self-reliant and to discover what he wanted out of an education. Bruce may resume his studies in a year and Santa Cruz is usually sympathetic to readmitting students. "I've found I'm irresponsible and have to learn how not to be," he says. "But some great 40-year-old freakouts disguised as professors here seem to know a lot I need to know."



Playing the Universal Soldier, Bruce is attacked by his professor, Michel Landa, and students in a class that turned into impromptu psychodrama.

While the drama group works out on a nearby beach, Bruce broods on a rocky headland only ten minutes away from the university campus.





'Nobody hassles us, everybody listens'

by BARBARA VILLET

Perhaps we shouldn't have to baby-sit the identity crisis of our students," says Frank Andrews, head of the educational policy committee at Santa Cruz and a preceptor at Crown College, "but they come to us scarred by education, in a state of suppressed rage, so crammed with facts and pushed to compete for grades that they've no idea who they are or why they should think." Many of them are like Bruce Wandmayer, anxious as well as angry about their "lostness," reaching for help at the same time as they declare loudly that they "can't hack the system." When Bruce decided to revolt in high school he used orthodox methods: he grew long hair, a straggle of beard, sought freedom on a motorcycle and went unrecognized in his own home town. "People would look right through me," he recalls. "I remember hitchhiking near home and being passed and passed until I shouted: 'BUT I'M ONE OF YOUR CHILDREN!'"

It is to deal with such young people, who simultaneously demand total freedom and a recognition that they deserve a place in society, that they are, in fact, "one of your children," that Santa Cruz was founded. In 1969 *FORTUNE* surveyed a cross section of the nation's eight million college students and found that roughly two fifths of them fell into a category identifiable by their lack of concern about making money, their dissatisfaction with the competitive qualities of American life and the subculture of the suburbs where most of them grew up, their determination to build a life-style different from that of their parents. On the assumption that their numbers would grow, *FORTUNE* labeled these students "fore-runners." The pressures—and laxities—of affluence practically assure that many of them will run squarely into trouble in conventional educational institutions. Santa Cruz thus functions as a sort of academic "catcher in the rye." "I came here as a last stand," says Bruce Wandmayer, "hoping to find me without freaking out all the way."

Attracting dissidents like Bruce, Santa Cruz aims at turning them into seekers like Ron and Tod. Students often arrive in a fairly critical state: in-turned, pervasively suspicious of Western rational traditions, deeply anti-intellectual. Many have had considerable drug experience, most have experimented with pot, almost all are less interested in practical benefits from their education

than in developing "a philosophy of life."

Accepting their concerns as legitimate, Santa Cruz asks mainly that they in turn assume intellectual responsibility for what and how they learn. Though conventional departments exist at the university, each college offers its own special core of studies that combines several fields of study into a related whole. At Cowell College, history, philosophy, art and literature are blended in a two-year program on civilization. College V emphasizes the popular arts, while at Merrill economics, philosophy, literature, sociology and psychology contribute to the study of "third world" problems of race and poverty. Students have a say in designing their own programs, and few restrictions are placed on imagination: course credits have been given for such outside projects as a voyage down the Mississippi on a home-made raft a la Huck Finn, studying yoga in India, time spent as a migrant worker among Californian Chicanos and work on the poverty-stricken isle of Dauskie off South Carolina. Some of these "studies" may seem frivolous, but each is carefully screened by faculty before it is approved, and students prepare themselves beforehand for field programs with thorough academic work. The latter-day Huck Finn was a "third world" student at Merrill College; on his voyage he kept a careful diary comparing the racial realities of today's Mississippi towns with those observed by Twain a century ago.

The administration maintains the same open-minded attitude toward the nonacademic side of life at Santa Cruz. A coeducational commune was formed within one of the dormitories as an experiment in living recently and lasted for several weeks with full faculty knowledge. The students—among them a seminarian on leave from his order and a young woman engaged to a rabbi—asked simply to be trusted to run their own lives, and they were. Most upper-classmen live off-campus without restrictions. "This place is so good to us," one student allowed, "there are times we suspect it's a subtly disguised insane asylum for freaks. Nobody hassles you—everybody listens. Man, that's therapy, not education."

It is, of course, both, and purposely so. The "collegiate" principle is based on the assumption that true education will not take place in an antipathetic environment such as now exists on too many giant, anonymous campuses, and that hope lies in making the units smaller and more humane. Many of the country's best educators, teachers and administrators, concerned with the low state of conventional undergraduate education and alarmed by the increasing alienation of more sensitive students, are convinced that the Santa Cruz model is promising and sound. But a number of similar experiments in other large state universities have met with difficulties. "The only problem with exporting it," says Dean Gordon Rohman of Michigan State's Justin Morrill College, one of three small interdisciplinary colleges set up within that immense multiversity, "is that in an established institution you're faced with all the problems of entrenched interests. It's like trying to reform the Civil Service. Santa Cruz just left the problems of metropolitan Berke-

ley behind and started fresh with a few million and a beautiful setting. But the art of the future will be to remake the old."

The "old" Rohman is talking about is the long-established United States university system, imported from Germany in the 19th Century, in which the kingdom of knowledge is divided into fiefdoms, each the jealously guarded preserve of specialized scholars. In the last decade in America, while these disciplines and departments have proven extraordinarily effective in promoting professional scholarship and new knowledge, the job of teaching freshmen and sophomores has fallen more and more to needy graduate students. At Kansas University, 60% of all freshman and sophomore class hours are taken by graduate assistants. At Berkeley, nearly half of all classes with an enrollment under 30 are taught by graduate students. If senior faculty members teach undergraduates at all, they usually do so in a huge lecture hall where dialogue is nearly impossible. Education, considered as a process that shapes the mind and touches the heart, is rare not only in the lecture hall but in most large universities.

In its place, students are offered a dazzling scholastic smorgasbord. As campuses bulged in the '60s faculties grew, until today an English department of 165—like that at Kansas—is smallish. The University of Chicago's faculty phone book is almost as thick as that of a rural county. Since professors are all specialists, course offerings run to the thousands and few university catalogues weigh in under two pounds. California lists 9,000 courses in its multiversity though it spends only 34% of its annual budget on teaching. Sheer variety is expected to substitute for the lost high-quality undergraduate educational experience. The naive student, offered such abundance, can in the end only select what sounds good to him and hope blindly his university's distribution requirements will assure him a "liberal education."

Good guidance is as rare as personalized teaching. "Most advisers," remarked a concerned faculty member at Kansas, "already know the system too well—know that what's really offered is an immediate contact with regimentation and demand. So they follow one rule: the kids want the degree and whether they get educated or not doesn't really matter. The good students reject this approach, but the less good go along, and the majority won't ever even find out what's in a university."

In the same period as the quality of undergraduate programs has been declining (except for certain pre-professional courses), a new generation of students groomed competitively for college since kindergarten has arrived on campus. The result is frustration on a very large scale among young people finding little relation between class work and private concerns. Robert Blackburn of the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher Education surveyed students in a pilot program designed to ameliorate some of the problems of anonymity by placing dormitory mates in the same undergraduate classes. Blackburn's search for "positive influence" by the university in the students' lives proved "rudely disappointing." "Their courses for the most part touch them

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Why undergraduate education resists reform

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only incidentally and apparently not by design," he wrote. "Students record no meaningful contacts with the faculty. One student had spoken to one faculty member outside class—on the telephone to clarify an assignment. . . . None had entered a faculty office . . . or walked across the campus with a teacher during the week of study. Furthermore, this complete separateness is what students feel is expected."

Lacking even minimal intellectual support in a quest for values that sometimes approaches the religious, many of the best students seek "connections" in the worlds of pop culture, amateur existentialism, drugs and sensation—or drop out completely into the communes of the counter-culture. This not only discomfits their parents, it threatens to place the future by default in the hands of the merely ambitious, because the dissident students are often the most gifted. Their rejection of education and intellectual leadership could conceivably assure victory for the very elements they abhor in American society, those whom scholar and sociologist Max Weber has described as "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart."

Nevertheless, so far, a number of attempts to reform undergraduate education by forming sub-colleges within large universities similar to those at Santa Cruz have met with only limited success. Standing in the way are those ranks of discipline-oriented scholars. At Kansas, when administrators subdivided the immense College of Liberal Arts and Science into five "Colleges-within-the-College," one hundred faculty members were assigned to each unit and invited to teach small seminars, introductory and interdisciplinary courses. Only 10% have volunteered to teach in the colleges because they would not get paid for their extra work. At Berkeley, a much-praised experiment based on an open-ended dialogue between faculty and students living together was suspended after four years, and there is some question if it will be reinstated. At the University of Michigan, where a small Residential College on the Santa Cruz plan was formed three years ago, data showed that a cross section of average students who passed through it compared favorably to honors students in their motivation to learn. Even so, it passed through difficult times and was nearly closed; only now does it seem to be winning its right to continue as a four-year institution. Fordham's "live and learn experiment" called Bensalem has finally won its right to continue for three more years, after a very shaky beginning. Only at Michigan State, where a wise president created the three interdisciplinary units by fiat, giving each an independent faculty and a budget beyond the control of departmental interests, has a collegiate experiment enjoyed a success similar to Santa Cruz's. And Santa Cruz itself came into existence at almost the only possible time. One year after it began operation, Governor Ronald Reagan's conservative government came into office. Next year Santa Cruz's budget for teaching will be tighter because of increased student enrollment.

Yet despite the faltering nature of these experiments in sane and humane undergraduate education, wherever they have been allowed to thrive even briefly they have made their mark. Students in each have testified to the constructive efforts of living in a "community of scholars" and many faculty members have been fired with a rededication to teaching. Each experiment served to revive the relationship, taken for granted yesterday and so rare today, between teacher and student as mutually learning human beings. It is the system, not the theory, that is resistant to change. "Each experiment fails because it shakes authority, questions system," says Noel King of Santa Cruz. "We may fail even here. We stand between yesterday and tomorrow."