



What the place has been, despite what we write about it, what will be written about it by educators, is a place where kids can come and live with freedom, do as they wish, make mistakes, learn what they want, or do nothing at all. Some have built their fantasies. There are no masterminds, philosophies, guiding forces, or directors, it's just a place to be.

PACIFIC HIGH SCHOOL

I'd heard about Pacific off and on for a few years, knew that it was some kind of rebel school, that it was in the Santa Cruz mountains, that a lot of people's trails had passed through the place. Turns out that Pacific is what is called a *free school*, not free to attend, because tuition is high, but free in the sense that there's freedom from institutionalized education, it's an attempt on the part of the founders to make their own school. It started in 1961, went through moves from one place to another, heavy changes, finally was given 40 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The first school buildings were old tin chinchilla barns, Peter Calthorpe and I have written the following stuff, some background of the high school community that sponsored the domes and gave us the freedom to experiment.



Three years ago Pacific high school was probably one of the freest places around. We had forty acres of beautiful land, a lot of close friends, some money, a daily influx of students, and no idea of what education meant or was for. Almost everyone lived in the flatlands and came in busses every day; it was like coming to a little haven of comrades, getting stoned and playing at everything from submarine building to James Joyce. In the winter the rain kept us inside and drove us mad with lack of space and dirt. People started hating each other. It didn't seem worth driving for 45 min. to get to a lot of intense conflicts.

Everyone had plans to make the school better (Pacific's greatest trouble has always been its unlimited potential) and all the plans involved firing someone or changing the government or embarking on some sophisticated program of cognitive development. The students fired all the staff, totally reorganized, restructured, the educational process, and went steaming off for a good three weeks of scheduled classes and work lists.



Things started to pick up when the weather cleared and we ran out of money. The staff (we had all been rehired) that didn't care stopped coming, the rest started camping out and sharing food expenses. There were less people around and less conflicts, nobody cared really.

People had toyed with the idea of making it a live-in school but we were so lame and could barely keep the buses running and everyone out of jail, much less feed and house 60 people. It was the best idea, because everything we were trying to do to give students a sense of independence and autonomy was contradicted by their life at home.

By the end of the spring there were about 15 people living on the property and were very high. There was no doubt that students and staff living in a community was the next step. We had a small kitchen running with a new cook every night. People lived in tents, parachutes, trucks, trailers and one beautiful house. The school was really on the edge of disaster; every time I went to the flatlands someone would ask if it was true that the school had folded. So there was nothing to lose (actually, I think the "school" folded 2 years before that time when all those exciting things started happening in S. F.).

