"Thing of the Mountain" contest

Introduction to the design process in engineering, stressing the creative approach. Problem definition and concept generation...

Provided with a small electric motor, a few pieces of wood, a venetian blind slat, and assorted other "goodies," the students in 2.70 had to use all the creativity they could muster to solve the problem of getting what they built to the top of a hill of sand. One other problem existed: they would be competing against each others devices. There would be only one winner.

In two days of tense competition about 145 students felt the agony of defeat before the contest neared the final round. "Probably the most exciting finale we've ever had" declared Instructor Woodie C. Flowers after John E. York '80 (upper right) narrowly defeated Lee A. Boy '79 (upper left) for the title of "Thing of the Mountain."

Although the over-capacity crowds in 26-100 had seen vehicles tipping over, digging themselves into the sand or not doing anything at all in earlier rounds, Professor Flowers noted that the final rounds were "very close" with "well designed, well built machines competing against each other."

— Photo essay by David Schaller