Guest Column/Peter Merkle

Porchers, hot tubs, chablis and brie

Mellow. Images of hot tubs, chablis and brie. Porsche 914's cruising at 140. Bronzed athletic people with designer shades in orthopedically correct footwear. Yea, verily, this is the stuff of which mellow was made.

Mellow enjoyed a brief period of notoriety a few years ago. Spaces were found in which to get one's head together. The entire nation faced toward Southern California and kicked back in unison. Also, the nihilist anarchists triumphed in the end. Millions of Americans east of the Mississippi were agog: the first ripple of the Mellow wavefront was just beginning to propagate across the vacuum of Midwestern culture while the very source of Mellowness itself lay bruised and bleeding beneath the hoisted balls of L.A. punks on the nightly news.

It seemed as if all was lost. Isolated pockets of Mellow remained, which to this day persist unsullied, but no longer could the would-be Disciples of Mellow make their pilgrimage to the West unafraid. The road has darkened, and the way obscured. Left to their own devices, neophyte Mel-lophiles in the East have cultivated the mind-set and refined its space. The siege mentality has given way to infinite variations on the Mellow Theme.

For all of us who might wish to adopt the Mellow Mentality, a bit of relaxed research is in order. Lacking a definitive text, we must speculate and extrapolate from the living examples of our own community. Consider the Male Closet Mel-low. This is the guru who builds a 2.70 project the night before and wins. This is the savon who finds the only copy of your thesis which you left on the outside of the paper, in case of emergencies, like long in-dent to forget thesis deadlines. There will always be those who are able to be caught in the act of Mellowing-out, for they perpetually reside upon the Mellow plane, and descend to impart their Mellow Karma only in dutch situations.

This is the guru who builds your 2.70 project the night before and wins. This is the savon who finds the only copy of your thesis which you left on the subway in downtown Newark at four a.m. and spot you as you are about to be mugged. He leaps from his Alpha Romeo and repels your assailants with Tai Chi, and whisk you off to Fire Island for Tequila Sunrises. If you are blessed with such an acquaintance, give thanks.

The quest for Mellow will never end. There will always be those for whom going with the flow is hyper-motivated, dressed for success and on the fast track. A glance behind the facade will reveal the MIT Mellow precepts: Ocean Pa-per, watchbands, organic hair shampoo, broken calculators, three incompletes from 1981, a high alcohol tolerance, and a tendency to forget thesis deadlines.

At the opposite end of the Mellow spectrum are the True Mellow of MIT, albeit in a mutated East Coast/L.A. manifestation. Almost without exception these lucky souls were members of the Experimental Study Group. They tend to live in Berkeley Hall and Senior House, or behind Central Square, although the most overbearing jock/pep fraa may contain the token representative.

Such gentle folk may be recognized by their total disregard for the cold. It is as if the Mellow rays of the Malibu sun keep their barefoot and shirtless until March, when they don a parachute jacket to be worn until October. Tofu, ultimate fries (baked or fried), and veiled conversational references to secret Mellow rituals will alert the uninitiated to the presence of these Mellow Fellows.

The Mellow Masters, like their Zen counterparts, are so laid-back as to evade detection. They are never be sneaked in the act of Mellowing-out, for they perpetually reside upon the Mellow plane, and descend to impart their Mellow Karma only in dutch situations.

To the Editor:

I am writing concerning a problem I have with an unfortunate side effect of one of your layout practices, namely the continuation of stories from one page to the next. I know this is perfectly ordinary in the newspapers, but there is an aspect of the matter that is unique to a campus paper. Some of your readers would like to read your paper during lectures, but hesitate because turning the pages is an eye-catching, noisy, and generally obtrusive process.

Your Sept. 23 issue is especially bad, with all four front-page articles and both back-page articles continued inside the paper, presenting the potential lecture-hall reader with the choice of flipping pages back and forth repeatedly or carrying six incomplete stories around in his or her head.

While I realize that you cannot create a newspaper that can be read without turning the pages, it would be nice to have at least one story per issue placed entirely on the outside of the paper, in case of emergencies, like long incomprehensible questions concerning the lack of rigor in the lecture's derivations.

Robert G. van der Heide G