

Dave's Favorites Are Biology, Tennis and, Mostly, Girls

Fortified with a breakfast of graham crackers and milk, the chunky young man in his light blue jeans and Adidas tennis shoes strides out of his spacious \$70,000 home atop the Cheviot Hills, headed for his classes at Hamilton High School.

The day's fare will include President Wilson's foreign policy, a recitation of Spanish past participles, dispensing gym towels to a parade of wet, nude boys, inspecting fungi under plastic and whipping through two sets of tennis to top it all off.

In between will come the studious pursuit of the thing that makes it all palatable—girl watching.

It will be little different from the other days that blend into the largely unremembered routine of his junior year in high school.

Long Hair, Tan and Car

Sixteen-year-old Dave Auerbach (it's not his real name)—hair modishly styled over his ears and deeply tanned from weekends at his family's retreat in Palm Springs—takes only a few minutes to glide his low-slung 1967 Pontiac GTO down the side streets to school.

At 8:30 a.m., most high school students are already in class.

But Hamilton, like other Los Angeles city high schools, does not offer its students a full range of classes.

"There were few electives in first period," Dave says in explaining his choice of forgoing an 8 a.m. class.

It wasn't Hamilton's decision. The school district had decided there were other higher priorities than offering students a full day in school.

A side gate could have admitted Dave to the campus. But it is locked. Gates usually are at Hamilton, due to the tight security aimed at keeping outsiders out.

The padlock forces a longer walk to another gate near the front of the school that Dave enters with other late arrivals.

He heads for his wall locker. Dave is not supposed to be in the halls. Students who arrive after 8:10 are expected to remain outside the buildings or stay in the library.

It's Easy for Him

The rule is meant to prevent commotion, which annoys teachers in classrooms, and except for a few like Dave, the halls are clear.

Dave hadn't taken any books home. He does so only rarely to study for a test.

Still, he maintains a B-plus average. It's that easy for him. And he does little extra on his own.

"I can't motivate myself," he says.

The locker is nearly full. He shares it with three other friends, despite the fact that each student has been assigned his own.

"One guy has a locker down there," he says, nodding toward a lower row, "but he's forgotten the

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DAVE'S DAY

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Books in hand, Dave descends a flight of stairs to the quad, a large open-air area of concrete, a small patch of grass and a few trees hemmed in by buildings. He takes a spot on his customary bench and is soon joined by his closest friend, Jerry.

They inspect the other students waiting for second period. Finally, their eyes rest on a group of 10th grade girls.

"Some guys transfer to Uni (University High) just because of the girls," one of the boys says dejectedly.

It's a common gripe, Dave observes, about the lack of good-looking girls at Hamilton.

"Last year's seniors were pretty good," he recalls with nostalgia.

Two girls in baggy jeans stroll by, turn slightly, smile and say hello. Dave and Jerry, both athletes and handsome, seem unimpressed.

The bell ending first period sends them off across the quad to their history class.

"Oh, no!" a girl exclaims as she enters the room and sees the teacher. "I thought you weren't going to be here today."

Nothing Personal

It was not meant as a reflection on the teacher, a favorite among students. The girl was just disappointed, expecting a substitute teacher and a period of loafing.

The teacher jokes easily with youngsters about his surprise appearance, and, even after the tardy bell sounds at 9:10 and a few stragglers slink in, the friendly chatter continues.

Dave is in his seat in the front row and Jerry in the middle. Cliquish conversation has led to the teacher's assigning everyone a seat away from his closest friends.

In six months—at this point over halfway through the spring semester—the class has hopped across American history from the first European explorations to the dawning of the 20th century.

From a little lectern, the teacher launches into President Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy, how the United States during his administration began meddling in the internal affairs of other Western nations.

The class seems to grow listless.

He tries to relate it to current events, to the attempt of International Telephone and Telegraph Co. to influence government elections in Chile recently.

"Anyone know what happened?" he asks. No one. So he explains.

"Anyone know who the president of Chile is?" No one. He tells them.

"What makes him different from Western politicians?" No one knows. He informs them he is a Communist elected to office.

Doesn't Give Up

His attempt to involve the class flops. But he doesn't give up. He seizes upon any comment, however inane or facetious, to draw in students.

The topic now is the United States's role in the Mexican Revolution, and someone remembers Marlon Brando playing Emiliano Zapata in a movie.

"Oh, Brando is one of my favorite actors," says the teacher, veering into a side discussion that arouses the class.

It's the kind of thing that Dave and the other youngsters love, producing a break in the routine and a feeling that students can contribute something, no matter how small.

The blackboard becomes jammed with names, dates and places as the teacher tries to do justice to the course topic within nine months.

After the 13-minute nutrition period, Dave is off to his Spanish class with a sigh, "Oh, the next class is really boring."

It's also third-period homeroom, requiring the reading of the daily bulletin of announcements and information, which seems to attract few listeners.

"Como se dice en español . . .?" the teacher begins.

The lesson is on past participles. The teacher reads the class a sentence

in Spanish, except for one word in English. The students' task is to translate that one word in Spanish and to write it down.

Then the teacher begins calling on students to return answers.

Dave glances at the wall clock. A note is slipped from a friend: "Where are you going after school today?"

Weekend plans and a phone call after school are

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DAVE'S DAY

Continued from 16th Page discussed in three or four subsequent notes — interrupted only by Dave's past participle answer — until the welcome bell rings.

"It's all downhill now," Dave beams as Jerry takes his books to the locker and Dave heads for the boys' gym.

It is his duty to hand out towels for the gym shower room. He scheduled it this way to avoid taking a fourth academic class, which he thought would be too taxing.

Dave settles behind a coach's desk after the physical education classes depart for the field and Jerry appears, ostensibly on an "errand" from another class.

Dave uses the telephone on the desk to call his ninth-grade girlfriend, who is home sick. He chats briefly, then says, "I can't talk long. See you later," and hangs up.

Daily Visit

Dave also makes his daily visit to the bathroom. The gym bathroom is empty now and safe. He's been "pushed around once or twice" in other school restrooms and avoids them as a precaution.

Lunch for Dave consists of his usual half-a-sandwich from Jerry's brown bag and a pudding dessert, then back on the quad bench.

Another friend walks up and informs Jerry, "I've got a girl from Beverly Hills who wants to meet you." Jerry seems skeptical.

Jerry and Dave are like many other students who think about transferring to Beverly Hills, University or Pacific Palisades high schools, except they don't want to leave their friends.

Reflective Moment

In a more reflective moment, Dave has said about Hamilton, "I like it as far as a school. It's better than everyone makes it out to be. A lot of people say how bad it is. It's not."

But now, finding even the short 37-minute lunch period dragging, he says, "This school—it's so dull. I'm glad I'm graduating next year."

A black girl walks by, reaches out and touches Dave's long-sleeved body shirt. "That's a pretty shirt," she says, smiling. Dave is dumbfounded.

Biology follows lunch but Dave and Jerry don't

mind at all. "It's a gas," Jerry says.

The bell hardly affects the talking and guffawing in the classroom. The teacher wades into the raucous assemblage with questions about fungi growing in small plastic containers.

What is happening in there? Where does it come from? How does it grow? he wants to know.

Through their answers—more joking than serious—the class discovers that the fungi came from the drinking fountains and bathrooms; they can cause sickness; they also come from dirt in kitchens, and they could be used in warfare by human beings.

Egg Question

He informs the class that he has some eggs which are going into an incubator and then asks, "You know what I'm going to do?"

"Make ham and eggs," someone pipes up to the roar of laughter. The teacher breaks up, too.

The wisecracking is sparked by a group of white boys, including Dave and Jerry. Another small group of black students are asking most of the serious questions but also enjoying the fun.

"Let's talk about sex," says the teacher. "Okay!" the students applaud. "About external and internal fertilization," he adds. "No, no . . . about sex, sex," the students yell.

'Up on the Table'

"All right, Cathy," someone orders, "up on the table for a live demonstration." More laughter. Cathy blushes.

After the bell, Dave leaves chuckling. It was a fun class. Both he and the teacher insist that learning does occur in what might best be described as "controlled chaos."

After two hours on the courts with the tennis team, Dave's school day ends in the locker room, well past 4. The talk is about winning the next match.

But then someone says, "Man, I'm glad the season is almost over." Spring has just arrived, but thoughts are already on summer.