



CERTIFIED RAW MILK

SELECTED COLLEGE POEMS
1969-1970

BY KENT M. KEITH



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Certified Raw Milk

Certified raw milk

is cream

and whole milk

and skim milk:

the entire trip.

No two glasses

are the same.

The cream plops loudly

into the first glass.

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Author's Preface

During my last year and a half in college, January 1969 to May 1970, I spent most of my evenings reading and writing poetry. I loved every minute! I would go to my room after dinner and read and write until 1:00 am or 2:00 am. Sometimes I would go to the Lamont Library and listen to recordings of poets reading their own poems. I especially remember listening to recordings of e. e. cummings. I also attended poetry readings on campus, including ones by Robert Penn Warren and W. H. Auden, as well as poets from the local community. I was totally engrossed in the work of other poets, and I was always excited by the possibilities each time I put a clean sheet of paper into my Royal Safari manual typewriter.

I was helped along the way by Robert Lowell, the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry, who taught a poetry seminar at Harvard. About 200 students applied for admission to his seminar in January 1969, and I was one of the twelve students he accepted. All twelve of us were feeling pretty good about ourselves until, at the first meeting of the seminar, Lowell explained why he selected us. Many of the applicants, he said, were already good poets and didn't need his help. Others were just starting out and needed more help than he could give. He chose us because we were already on our way, showing promise, but not really good yet. We were the ones he thought he could help the most. He was doing triage on aspiring poets! In any event, his comments on the poems I submitted to him were very encouraging. He was the first person to give me a degree of confidence in my work, and I thank him for that. I also owe thanks to Stan Rubin, who was my tutor in a one-on-one independent study during my senior year that was focused on the English Romantic poets.

I wrote hundreds of poems, including many bad ones (mostly about real or imagined relationships with women). A few of my poems appeared in college publications. For example, "San Francisco Backstreet" appeared in Harvard's *Lion Rampant*, and "Pacific Beach," "Cab to Logan," and "The Baggage Comes In" appeared in the University of Pennsylvania's *Eclectic*.

Each time I finished fifteen or sixteen poems, I declared that they

constituted a "collection" and shared them with friends and family members. I also copyrighted them for posterity. From January 1969 through September 1970, I copyrighted more than 250 poems in sixteen small collections. (Sidebar: In the summer of 1972, when I was in Moscow on my way to Japan, I was seated at a restaurant table with a group of people who included the U.S. Register of Copyrights. She was a nice person who complained that way too many people thought they were literary geniuses and made a lot of work for her department by copyrighting all kinds of nonsense. I sat there feeling very sheepish. I was one of those people she was talking about.)

In December 1970, when I was finishing my first term at Oxford, I created a final collection of poems chosen from those sixteen smaller collections. I called the new collection "Certified Raw Milk." I actually drank certified raw milk at Oxford. It was delivered to the door of our student house in small glass bottles. The milk was not homogenized, so it had cream at the top, then whole milk in the middle, and skim milk at the bottom. I liked that variety within a single bottle. Certified raw milk became symbolic of the variety I enjoyed in life, the variety about which I was writing as a poet.

Early on, I discovered that I was no good at rhyming, so I wrote what could be called "prose poems," "free verse," or "concrete poetry." Sometimes my poems were punctuated visually instead of with traditional punctuation marks. As I read other poets, I came to like what I called the "earthy American poets" like Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, and e.e. cummings. I enjoyed writing about things that I saw and heard as I lived my daily life.

A lot of the poems I wrote related to experiences I had when I flew around the country giving speeches at high schools and student council conventions. Some experiences were due to the "student revolution" on the Harvard campus in the spring of 1969, as well as the protests over the war in Vietnam. Other experiences occurred during the summer of 1970, when I drove from Massachusetts to California and back to see friends and relatives before leaving for England. I traveled with a college friend, Brad Ware, who wanted to go with me because he had never been further west than his hometown of Buffalo, New York.

Sometimes I just wanted to observe a scene and describe it with

metaphors. At other times, I wanted to make details as vivid as possible. Then there were times when I wanted to record a situation in which people were interacting, like a scene in a novel or a play. There were many times in which I just wanted to share the way in which the things I was seeing and the things I was hearing were disconnected. I would be seeing one thing while simultaneously hearing about another thing. There was a kind of discord or irony, even a low-level chaos, in the contrasting visual and auditory experiences. That was life!

This current version of *Certified Raw Milk* is a selection of 29 poems from the longer 1970 collection of the same name. The poems in this collection still cause me to smile or nod, more than fifty years after I wrote them. I hope that they may cause you to smile or nod a little as well.

K.M.K.

June 2022

The Baggage Comes In

And the baggage comes in
one load two loads you don't see yours yet
and then you hear it

The room is small and the passengers are all crowded around
and then there is a shriek and a sob and you
look
and there is a woman bending over a small suitcase with five holes
and the suitcase contains a dog
and the dog is dead
Lifeless in the bottom of the suitcase its tongue dried up
and eyes closed The dog is dead and

The woman sobs and sobs and two redcaps look at the dog and the lady
and they want to help
no charge
they want to help

But the dog is dead and the lady presses her face to the wall lockers
and she cries and she
cries and
cries

The crowd looks
The dog is dead some say
They whisper Dog
It's dead

An old lady goes to the woman and puts her hand around her shoulder
And she still cries
Hysterical

The crowd doesn't want to know the dog is dead
The crowd is restless It is hard to face A crying woman is always
hard And the dog is dead and that's all
The man next to you mumbles that the woman shouldn't have
expected the dog to live in that suitcase with five holes in the
baggage room on an airplane She should have known it would suffocate

But she didn't know
And all she had with her was the dog A purse A book and a dog leash
And the dog is dead and the book is superfluous and the
dog leash no good and the purse probably empty
And so

She leaves screaming You killed him You killed him You killed him
And the crowd is still restless The crowd doesn't want this sadness
suddenly thrown at it The crowd has its own dead dogs to attend to
The crowd can't cry every time a dog dies
And so the crowd goes about its business Upset
Taking the sadness thrown at it and returning it with anger
Trying to forget Criticizing the woman who should have known

But she didn't know
They never do
And that makes it the hardest

Snowed

Society came to a halt today
when four billion snowflakes congregated
on or about the city of Boston.

"Each snowflake is an individual,"
the Weatherman General reported,
"and each snowfall appears to begin with
a single snowflake. On the other hand,
they are much more effective in a group."

Cars have not been found to skid on single
snowflakes, according to latest reports.

My Life Is Coming

i.

I ask for tools

I ask for time

and a little help

If you cannot help

I ask you step aside:

For I am coming through

ii.

I want to live

I want to love

and share a little

If you cannot love

I ask you step aside:

For I am coming through

iii.

I will not die

before I'm dead

and burned to ash

If you are dead

I ask you step aside:

My life is coming: Now.

Turmoil

The sand would not be stirred
 And the surf would not come crashing
If the last waves did not
 Always turn against the next ones

Sand Crab

I found a sand crab in my tent.
We were both digging in.

Drip

Sweat drips from my hatband
onto the inside of my sunglasses
sliding down the concave slipping jerkily
until forming a pool at the bottom of each lens
as I ride
the little pools shimmer and
will not be shaken loose

Drunk

Coming from nowhere
nowhere to go
the drunk made his bed
where he fell

Soiled pants and hair-peppered chin
he curls up under the night
his knees halfway to his chest by instinct
 (the dune is not too short; the air is not too cold)
lying on his side an arm for a pillow
 keeps him from inhaling sand

A bump on the empty beach
he can only be robbed of the air
the rain and a little sleep:
he is unafraid

The footsteps that pass him
will all go home
and the drunk with no place to go
will at last have this

In the morning his nightlight the moon
will be unplugged

Gate 8

Their only son is leaving for Vietnam.

Welling up inside them their fears
quaver their words and belie the laughs
they must quietly exchange: the Pfc son turns
and re-walks all his years
to the boarding door.

"Good-bye," the mother says.
Forever, the father fears.

We may never see him again,
as he walks to the door.
We may never see him again ever,
As he climbs into the plane.
We... may... never...
"—But he will write," she says.
"If he can," he says.
"He must," she says,
"because we may...
we...
because we...
because he...
because...

because...

because...

Son of Haiku

Walking by the road
I shudder
and cannot tell
if it is my thoughts
or the cold wind

+++

I am handcuffed
by a watchband
two inches wide:
and by the watch.

+++

I thought the little boy
was wearing his woolen winter cap.
Instead, his head
is completely wrapped in bandages.

+++

Today a surfboard was found by the Navy
floating 120 miles south of Waikiki
on its way to Tahiti:
"Strada" was written on its fin.

Cab to Logan

"Today—
cop was cleaning his pistol—
it went off, shot another cop.
Things like that really get me.
Last week, an ambulance, rushing
to the hospital— it rammed another car,
killed the driver, and the patient died.
Yesterday— did you hear about it?—
big jet overshot the runway here at Logan—
missed the whole damn runway and bellyflopped
right smack down in the ocean."

The meter has a fever
and ticks too fast.
Thrusting my hand into my pocket
I cut my finger on the hard slim edge
of a poetry journal;
I bleed red on green dollars
and imagine white corpuscles
bumper-to-bumper in their own traffic arteries
trying to reach my fingertip.

Self-Portrait at Logan

A woolen shawl
knit by a grandmother;
a gray Harvard topcoat from Robert Hall;
a necktie, broad, in stripes,
made by mother;
black shoes from High School ROTC;
Mayakovsky in one pocket,
Poetry in the other;
mustache from God;
plane by United.

I Am's

I am a match.
Force me into friction
and I flare,
burning blue-hot bright.

Self-consuming, I will die
in a smoke wisp.
Thrown against cold water,
I will hiss my fate.

+++

I am a telephone
that rings only once
giving no one time
to answer

+++

I am a harmonica.
People breathe hot air on me
and I play chords
for an answer.

Pacific Beach

Five flat trays of water
pull in and out on the sand
like dresser drawers.

The white sun boils at the morning mist,
raising the heavy gray blanket of wet sea air.
Sea gulls stand stock still
between mounds of kelp,
plastic tubes, bulbheaded,
like piles of extension cords
waiting in a warehouse.

Pebbles punctuate the sand.
Retreating waves fan out
over their heads
and form tiny wakes.
Suddenly the still stones
are distant motorboats
churning for harbor
and a cliff they cannot climb.

Gulls scream and flap
as the orange Rescue Jeep
hums down the beach,
tracking a December surfer.

San Francisco Backstreet

Worn white paint
high on the brick building wall
declares the good news:
"Rooms with or without bath.
Tiled showers."

An unshaven man
in a patched and spattered coat
dips his shabby shoe
in a water puddle on the sidewalk.
Stirred by the circling motion of his foot,
little flakes of hard black soot
rise from the puddlebottom,
drift in the current,
and re-settle gently
when the man limps down the street,
tracking one wet footprint
on the dusty cement.

Tailgating

Somebody stop him They're going to kill him

She screams

They're going to kill him

and there are two cars

stopped in the middle of the street

and one has an old man at the wheel

and someone is hitting him

hitting him in the face

and the old man's wife

rushes to his side of the car

She tries to help

but the old man is trapped in his seatbelt

and a hippie A hippie has him by the collar

shaking him hitting him shaking him shaking him

and the old man can't break loose He only tries to cover his face

while his wife hits the hippie over the head

timidly with her purse

She is afraid to hit him and she is afraid not to hit him

and it is hopeless She breaks down weeping and crying

her husband is dying Somebody help

They're killing him

and the service station attendant
rushes from his fuel pumps
Wrestles the hippie away from the old man
Pins him to the side of the car
and tries to talk him down

The cops will settle this if you want He says
You got no right to beat an old man He says
I don't care what he did to you

Tailgating The hippie says
He was tailgating and it gets on my nerves
These old bastards Why don't they die
and get it over with
Look at my car He nearly climbed right over it
Look at his car It's smashing into my fender

and a small crowd gathers
and it doesn't like the hippie
and he cools down Outnumbered he controls his hate
and the old lady surrounded by the protecting crowd
is brave and says If you touch him again I'll really hit you

and the hippie breaks away Sullen
and the old lady gets back into the car Righteous
and the old man straightens his tie
and the street traffic honks
and the two cars drive off

Return to Boston

Unwept by wind,
snow falls in careful columns,
steady flakes of dead skin
direct from Winter's hand.

Flight 96 strikes the runway
at six on Sunday morning.
Airplanes stand
in the still blue twilight
of early morning haze
and night-long spotlights.

Unwept passengers gaze
at the foggy windows;
slowly rise; and button their coats.
In town, park benches sit alone
with the snow.

Good Morning from the Herald

Good Morning in pink letters
from the Morning Herald I didn't ask for
and my pajamas droop from one hip
as I bumble from my bed for the news.
"Post Offices are closing"
as I shave my face thumbing the pages.
"Can everyone wear the same size pantyhose?"

Lunch at the Harvard Union

The main hall is dark; the walls hang heavy
with tall paintings of red-robed academic heroes
and stags killed by Teddy Roosevelt, the conservationist.
A side room is bright with windows;
from there you can watch
secretaries chatter down the street
slurping cartons of Dannon Strawberry Yogurt,
and Dy-Dee Diaper trucks cruising the Square
with plastic babies stuck to their windshields.
"We're the elite,"
says a fuzzy-headed freshman,
looking around to see if anyone is listening.

Pennsylvania Goes to the Moon

The radio is fuzzed by the telephone wires.

“Take away the trees,
and the birds would have to sit upon the ground.
Take away their wings,
and the birds would have to walk to get around.
Tennessee Birdwalk.”

My car rattles its way over a hill into a tree grove
that hides another Pennsylvania town.

“The final moments here now at Cape Kennedy.”
Interstate 80, East, detour continues, right,
“Six... Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Lift-off!”
a tractor, car brakes gripping, slowing, stopping,
watching the tractor’s front wheels wobble.

“Now at 15,000 miles per hour going to the moon.”
An old lady backs her Studebaker out of the garage
as all of Interstate 80 waits for her.
Somewhere, up there in the sky,
are three men who’ve already had the measles.
Down here, when the highway disappears into pot-holes,
they put up a sign that says: ROUGH ROAD.

Cambridge Riot

"I'm only going to a lecture,"
I keep saying to myself,
"Lectures are legal and this is a college
and I'm only going to a lecture."
But tonight on Mass. Avenue, the riot police stand
in V-formations of bulgey blue uniforms,
billy clubs, and plastic face-shields.
There is a fire somewhere; I am jostled
by a sudden surge of the crowd; young men
are rushing about with red flags;
I cross the street to the sanctuary of the Yard.
At the fire station, more riot troops roll in
on chartered buses with sideboards reading:
"THE TIME IS NOW—Combined Jewish Philanthropies."

As I turn past the fire station,
fifty policemen in shiny helmets and sticks
move out in formation and follow me.
I cannot look back.
"I'm only going to a lecture, dammit,"
I keep saying, but people are running and shouting
back over their shoulders:
"Here they come! The pigs! Look out! RUNNNN!"
I cannot run.
I keep walking, listening to their boot heels behind me,

I know my rights, I am going to a lecture,
their boot heels, gaining on me,
I have done nothing, leave me alone,
their boot heels, closer, closer,
I'm just a *student*, dammit,
their boot heels, their boot heels,
turning at last to the lecture hall,
turning and knowing they aren't following,
but still,
hearing their boot heels, hearing their boot heels,
hearing their boot heels crunching behind me.

Charles Eliot Norton Lecture #6

The sirens rise and fall;
the lecturer speaks of the authentic unconscious;
I shift in my seat; Freud, Marcuse, Brown;
my feet want to be out of my shoes; the sirens;
the ego, the super-ego, the id,
the room is hot;
the authentic unconscious; the sirens;
we clap loudly;
the city is barricaded and we cannot go home.

Independence Pass

In low gear, we snail our way through the night,
around hair-pin turns and up the mountain ramps.
The road is simply an open cut in the hard rock;
a narrow shelf that holds cars two abreast.
The gas meter is low, and the oil light
blinks like the warning signal in an intersection.
At the Continental Divide, we talk in low tones
as we add water, oil, STP, and gas to the car.
"Sure am glad we brought all this stuff along."
"Boy, so am I. Not too many service stations
open up here this time of night."

Midnight at 12,000 feet brings coats from the trunk.
Following the signs, we walk the TRAIL OVER THE LAND OF NO TREES.
Lakes reflect moonlight and look like white snow;
the flashlight blinds us, until turning it off,
a panorama of snow-spotted mountains
emerges from the darkness, subtle and strong.
Stars, like spattered white paint, cover the sky unevenly.
"God. Stars *do* twinkle. They really *do*."
Galaxies send few of their secrets,
leaving us to struggle with the problem of a universe
which, if it has an end, must be encased in something
which is endless.
"Sure is a long way from Buffalo."

At Aspen, the mountains keep the valleys in shadows
until late morning.

Shampoo

This morning, I shampooed my hair
with Protein 21, which is already
“working to make my hair look shinier, feel softer,
and altogether more manageable than I ever thought possible.”
("IT ACTUALLY HELPS YOU BEAT THE FRIZZIES!")

Once, last winter, I shampooed with handsoap,
and stepped out into 10-degree weather.
My wet hair grew stiff and cold in the wind;
at the bank, I shook ice crystals
out onto the customer writing table.

Utah

Okay, man, this is my thing.

Cruising down the highway, rocker arms tapping,
STP in the radiator, STP in the crankcase,
crystal glass at the bottom of a new fuel pump,
air filter, in-line gas filter, a whole new car
hiding under that hood.

"ON YOUR NEXT TRIP, DON'T FORGET SWISHER OIL COMPANY."

Okay, man, I won't forget.

This is my thing.

These dry mountains, this scrub and clay,
and pioneers stalled by the roadside with overheated horses.

"George, I can't find the pressure release on our horse."

"It's somewhere behind his ear, I think, dear."

The towns grew out of the rocks with names like Silt, Rifle, Bountiful;
and the creeks are Horsethief, Roaring Fork, and Brown's Wash.

("Wash" is the name of a creek that happens only once a year,
but they hold a place for it just the same.)

"TUNE IN TOMORROW FOR THE EVANGELIST HOUR."

Okay, man, I'll tune in.

This is me, my car, and my country,

all doing our thing.

The muffler rattles complacently,

and the sun is the only red light on the freeway.

"Brad, we're a couple of impudent snobs."

"In a '61 Ford?"

"Yeah... you got a point, there."

Root Beer at the A&W is too syrupy,

and the radiator drinks three gallons of water per day.

At Cherry Hill, roughing it

means moving your television outdoors,

or going to the student lounge

where college kids agree you can't knock Freud,

but how do they know who's a Mormon, to let into the Temple?

Don't worry, man. They can *tell*.

UCLA: July 1970

Like everything else in Southern California,
here is a drive-in university.

"That certainly is a massive building."

"Yes, isn't it? Health Sciences. Second in size
only to the Pentagon."

"Really."

Pot-holes, detours, construction, police booths
to regulate incoming cars.

Then the older campus, brown stone and brick tile,
eucalyptus trees, shade, courtyards.

In the student union bookstore, Joe College Athlete
says to his girl:

"Do you have a copy of Byron?"

"Nah..."

"Well, I do if you need one. Byronic hero,
you know, all that stuff.

"Yeah, I know."

It must all have something to do
with the snub-nosed brunette walking to her Porsche
with her hand raised in the perpetual cocktail glass position;
or perhaps with the low tuition. The sidewalk reads:

"ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR... AND THIS IS BOTH."

In the parking lot, a pick-up truck loaded with bales of hay
sits next to a Volkswagen window which reads:

"UCLA. Automatic Stick Shift."

Highway 5

An old brown Comet driven by three Chicano farm workers
stalls out with no water, oil, or transmission fluid.

I stop, but they speak little English,
and none of us understand cars.

"San Clemente," the driver says, "San Clemente."

In silence we drive to San Clemente.

"How much?" he asks, getting out.

I shake my head no, and receive a solemn gracias.

I watch him scurry down the hill to a small valley of irrigated fields,
wondering if he'll find any money there to repair an old car.

"Donde esta su casa," and "Somos hermanos"

drift into my head from Spanish 1, an hour after I needed it.

A high school football player hitches a ride
bemoaning the fact that he'll have to get his hair cut
when the football season begins next Monday.

"The girls like it long," he says.

"They must," I say, "because they wear it that way themselves."

The land becomes drier, and the heat more intense.

Only an occasional mirage varies the yellow-brown hills.

A Mexican family stands beside its car,
waiting patiently for the engine to cool.

Water poured into the radiator evaporates immediately
into a six-foot column of steam; but there is also some dripping.

The radiator hose is split, and the radiator completely dry.
The hood and engine are splattered in dappled greens, whites, and browns
where the broken hose sprayed empty perhaps 100 miles earlier.
"You probably hurt your engine, driving without water,"
I say, the profound mechanic.
The mother rips off the strings of her apron and binds the hose.
"I'll give you a ride to the nearest station," I say,
but before reaching town, we discover a Highway Patrolman
parked in the shade under an overpass.

An elderly matron drives her Eldorado Cadillac on automatic chauffeur;
an overloaded Volkswagen flashes me the peace sign;
and a big green Buick sports an "I USE F-310" sticker,
placed carefully above the rear exhaust pipe,
where it has gone black due to the exhaust.

(Once, in the hills north of L.A.,
I saw a man filling his radiator with a coke bottle.
When I gave him a gallon jug, he was embarrassed and said:
"I come all the way from Fresno, you know."
"That far?" I said.)
On a blue Dodge, bright orange letters proclaim:
JESUS DICE: YO SOY EL CAMINO.

Dr. Templeton on Ferry Captains

"Ferry Captains are kind of hard to strike up a conversation with. There were only a couple of us on a ferry, once, and just to be friendly, I said to the Captain:

'My grandfather used to be a Ferry Captain.'

'I feel sorry for him,' he said.

"Another time, I was on one of those ferries that runs hooked up to a pulley and a cable, and I told the guy:

'Hey, this thing works really well, don't it.'

'As long as there's enough water,' he said.

"One place I visited, they were building a bridge to replace the ferry service.

I felt sort of sorry for the old boy who was running the boat, so I pointed over toward the bridge and said:

'Say, it looks like they're trying

to put you out of business, there.'

He looked straight ahead and without blinking he said:

'Don't care if they finish it

before we get to the other side.'"

Accident

A woman in a bathing suit

has destroyed our evening ice cream:

"An accident, down the road from here,

a head-on, we were right behind it,

it just happened— need help, need an ambulance,

please can we use the phone."

Uncle Wendell on the phone, trying to get the operator;

Uncle Ted and I driving out onto the main road

until we see the red flash of a Sheriff's car.

A Valiant sedan, smashed, and resting aslant in the right lane;

a Ford van, spun off the road and burning.

The young couple has given up trying to remove their luggage

from the flames and shadows of the van; the young man turns to the Sheriff

who happened to be cruising by with a dead fire extinguisher:

"Couldn't you carry a fire extinguisher that works?

Couldn't you? Couldn't you? My car's burning

and your goddam fire extinguisher won't even work!"

There is blood dripping on his sleeve and his left foot is lame.

The gas tank explodes softly and the whole van

begins to rage in bonfire flame.

"You're lucky to have your life," Uncle Ted tells him.

"Just quiet down, boy, and thank God you're still alive."

Flares are passed out, and we citizens begin to patrol the roads,

waving our flashlights, slowing the cars, re-routing traffic.

"The van was traveling without headlights on.
God knows why— it's pitch dark— maybe the headlights didn't work.
Anyway, the Valiant pulled out to pass this car pulling a boat,
and suddenly, he looks up, and sees the van coming at him.
He braked and swerved at the last minute, so it wasn't a complete head-on crash."
The young couple stands alone in each other's arms not watching.
"We'll have to call the folks," the girl says.

An oncoming car ignores our flashlights and nearly runs us down; Uncle Ted
rolls up his trousers so they can see the whites of his legs in their headlights.
A crowd gathers; then the fire truck screams in over the hill
and whips through the people and parked cars;
volunteer firemen in their own cars screech to a halt
bailing out and throwing on their fireproof coats.
The van is burned out: the firemen find only a shoe,
part of a notebook, a burned bottle of Brut for Men,
scissors, and a melted valve cover, curled at each end from the heat.
"How bad was it?"
"The cars were totaled."
"I mean, was anyone hurt?"
"Well, from the looks of them, barely a scratch. The driver's side
of each car is so demolished, it's hard to believe they made it out alive."

The driver of the Valiant writes down the name and address of his witness,
while the road flares burn to white ash and disappear.

Oriel: Freshman Dinner

The hall is filled with sherry-headed freshmen in their commoner's gowns and pale white faces. Sir Walter Raleigh, Cecil Rhodes, King Edward II, and Provost Turpin look down from the High Table and impose 600 years of tradition on the new charges. "King Edward II is something of an unfortunate figure in the history of England," the Provost admits. "Nevertheless, he is our official founder, and this is the oldest college in Oxford founded by royalty."

We sit in three long tables spotted with lamps wired through the century-old slated floors. Chicken is forced from its bones and joined with peas; Beaujolais is poured into glasses; and an elderly Don, complete with mustache and monocle, points out that the fare is a bit better than usual.

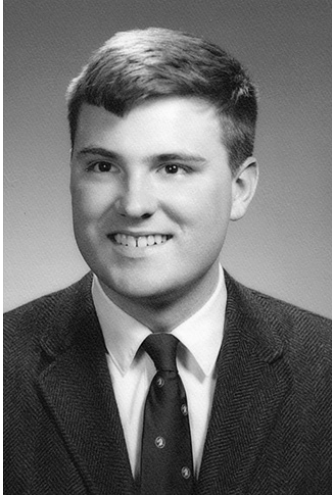
"When I came up in 1937," the Provost announces, "I was advised by my Provost to work six hours per day, and get plenty of exercise. Also, I was told to be kind to the servants, since Dons and students are easy to replace but good servants are nearly impossible to come by."

The pie is politely savored and a toast is proposed.

"To the Queen, our Visitor."
and then, "To Oriel."

The American Rhodes Scholar has finished his wine with his meal and makes both toasts on an empty glass.

About the Author



Kent M. Keith was raised in New York, Nebraska, California, Virginia, Rhode Island, and Hawaii. He graduated from Roosevelt High School in Honolulu in 1966 and attended Harvard College from 1966 to 1970.

During his years at Harvard, he sang in the Harvard University Choir and served as Manager of the Harvard Student Agencies Publishing Division. Committed to peaceful change during the “student revolution,” he traveled the country giving more than a hundred speeches at high schools and student council conventions in eight different states. He also published booklets for student leaders, one of which included the Paradoxical Commandments.

He spent his last year and a half at Harvard mostly reading and writing poetry. He graduated with a B.A. in American Government, and then attended Oriel College at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.

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