

5 AUGUST 2007

TO: THE MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 1957

FROM: DR. KEITH W. PRICHARD

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Ron Lovely spoke to me the other night and remembered one of his fellow classmates who sometimes came to my history class, and sometimes he came not at all. I once heard a learned person say that a teacher is not worth a damn until he or she has taught at least ten years, and he or she is not worth a damn after they have taught twenty years. I am pretty much in agreement. A young teacher, and I was one, just twenty-four and out of the military, may demonstrate eagerness, enthusiasm, and energy; but a bit more aging and maturity would help mightily. It would certainly have helped me. If the members of the class of 1957 learned anything in my classes, it was more by accident than from good solid planning on my part. I do recall, and have thought of it a thousand times, an incident in which I left the classroom to see Mr. Gandy or he may have sent for me and as a result, four or five young ladies in the class decided to pay a social call on the adjoining classroom. I rather think Miss Stultz was in charge of that classroom. I refused to admit the girls back in the class until their mothers appeared. And they did. Today, I would be sued for such behavior as a teacher for having violated the students' rights.

I also remember a very funny incident in which I was not involved but one Mr. Gandy regarded as hilarious. He laughed every time he told the story. Miss Stultz taught a geography class. And every bad or unruly or rowdy boy in the entire school was enrolled in the class. It was viewed as something of a dumping ground for potential discipline problems. It would have taken a teacher with enormous interest in geography and the patience of Job to handle the situation. Miss Stultz had neither quality and was near to a nervous breakdown due to the behavior of the boys. She would be in the midst of attempting-a discussion or lecture on some remote area of the world, and the boys, with no possible interest in the subject or in Miss Stultz commentary, would in unison throw their books on the floor. An unnerved Miss Stultz would rush downstairs' to Mr. Gandy's office and demand he come up and settle the boys down. On the occasion in mind he dutifully did as Miss Stultz had ordered. When they opened the door to the classroom, to the astonishment of both of them, the room was deadly quiet. The boys, to a person, were studying their textbooks with great intensity. Then Mr. Gandy and Miss Stultz glanced at her desk, and she burst into tears. The boys were deserving of an Academy Award. On her desk was a lighted cigarette and a half bottle of beer.

How did I come to Columbia City? I needed a teaching job, and I interviewed with Mr. Gandy while I was on military leave. He was attending a field and track event at the time. And upon inquiry as to where I could find him, his secretary pointed me in the right direction and I found the place after some exploration.

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I sat with him in the bleachers. He appeared far more interested in the athletic events than in the interview. I tried to make a good impression. I was a second lieutenant and due to be shortly discharged from the service. And as a consequence had very limited opportunities to seek out or interview for teaching positions. I informed my advisor at Indiana University that I did not feel the interview had gone well at all. However, Thank God, Mr. Gandy called some few weeks later and while I was in the field and informed me that I had the job. I must say he proved to be one of the finest and most understanding administrators under whom I have ever served. Oh, yes, I was offered the grand sum of thirty-three hundred dollars per year. I gladly accepted it. I received an increase of three hundred dollars for the second and final year of my stay in Columbia City High School.

The Columbia City High School of that period was almost exactly the same size as the one I, myself, had graduated from in central Indiana. And despite my innocence, or one might say ignorance, I found my experience at Columbia City to be among the happiest of my long teaching career.

I have received fine letters and phone calls from any number of students from the classes of 1956 and 1957. I have intended to write each and thank them. However, this will have to do the job.

I am dumbstruck by the many achievements and successes of the students from the class of 1957. For a graduating class of that size and the rather regional nature of Columbia City, many have accomplished very great things. I certainly did not foresee it, and I am afraid I was overly concerned with my own educational career.

I spent four years at Harvard, and since I have never married nor had children, I have left almost all of my estate to Harvard. I could never have afforded the cost of that institution; however, they scholarshipped me from the beginning. It will shortly be payback time.

Following Harvard, I attended Oxford University in England. Then I journeyed to Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina as a member of the faculty. Great place and great students. If I had had any sense, and I did not, I would have remained there. Superb students and well trained faculty. But it did not have the research facilities so vital for career advancement in colleges and universities. At the University of Virginia and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln I did publish and did not perish. Did ten or twelve books and a hundred or so published articles. Did get then General Colin Powell to write the introduction to one of them, while United States Secretary of Education, Dr. Louis Sullivan, wrote the preface for the work. With considerable political skill I managed to be named Professor of the Year at the three different universities at which I taught. Colleges and universities are very political.

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Just now, I am on the last book I will write. While, as I say, the rest were of the textbook type, this one is a novel. I hope to finish it before I am finished. I started it some fifteen years ago, and then would put it aside to work on something my publisher wanted me to do.

Now, I will background you on the thing. Thomas Jefferson owned a parrot named Shadwell (true). He was a genuine talker. Everyone was enthralled with his verbal abilities. In the novel, Shadwell tells his own story in first person and obviously in his own words. He relates a series of swashbuckling adventures that occur both before and after he comes into Jefferson's possession and concludes the whole thing when he is, as he says, he is one hundred and four years of age & near to being blind. Incidentally, and it is true, Jefferson took him to Philadelphia when he wrote the Declaration of Independence and later to Paris where Jefferson served as ambassador for the United States. Here, Shadwell did, indeed, meet the Marquis de Lafayette and any number of royals at the French Court. After three or so years in Paris and with the bloody French Revolution about to break out, Jefferson decided to do the grand tour of Europe. He did not take his two daughters or Shadwell with him but placed them in a Catholic Convent school in Paris, the nearest thing to day care at the time. Upon his return to the city, Jefferson seeing what was now about to happen in the streets where blood was beginning to flow, quickly chartered a ship to sail for America where he was to become Secretary of State. Unfortunately, (true) in his haste, he forgot Shadwell and left him in the very strict Catholic convent. Shadwell tells of his further adventures during the bloody revolution and so on.

I have about a three foot stack of research notes on the historical and factual parts of the novel.

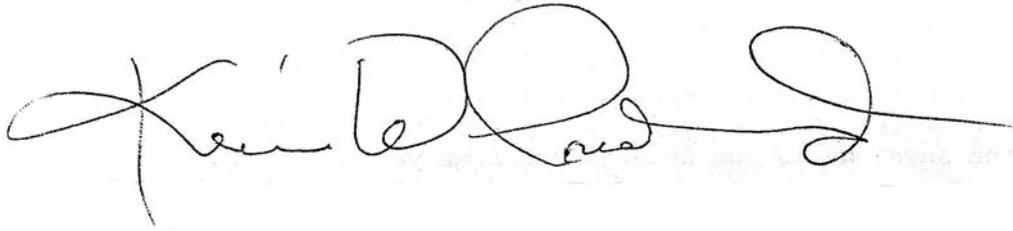
I hope to be through this thing shortly; it is now about five hundred pages long and probably should be cut down considerably. And cutting out adventures and fictional or real people is rather like being forced to kill one's own children. Most publishers demand that a novel be no more than two hundred and sixty-five pages. That is pretty much the standard. So I must commit something akin to literary murder. What's worse, much worse, I am not computer literate, and this thing is being hammered out on an IBM Selectric. As a working professor, I always had a secretary and at least a dozen undergraduate or graduate students eager as all hell to join in a publishing effort. Not so now.

Now, let me confess my real reason for not wishing to attend the 50th. I want to remember you just as you were. All handsome and beautiful and bright and eager. Rosalie Farber graciously sent me a copy of the very fine 1997 manuscript denoting the careers of the class members. Rosalie also noted the sad passing of several of your classmates. However, the testimonies, to my great shock, indicated you are all senior citizens. Hard to believe.

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You will always be sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen years of age and have eternal youth, at least in my mind. I hope you understand.

My sincere love to all of you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ken DeLoe". The signature is written in black ink on a white background. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "DeLoe".