

## *Friends*

By the time I had returned from college that next summer, my father had been talked into retiring from Keith's. He had missed work due to various health problems, but it wasn't long before the doctor was able to lower his blood pressure with medication and generally build him up with vitamins. The better he felt, the more he resented how he had been treated by the company he had worked for for so long. He was also very deeply hurt. Just as had Kirby his, I saw my father cry for the first time in my life during an episode of "Gunsmoke" that dealt with the situation of an old man denied work due to age and imagined inability.

Friends and relatives rallied to his need for work and asked Daddy to paint their houses (or agreed to let him). Over the next year or so, he stayed fairly busy with a succession of jobs that he enjoyed and that paid him well. I was able to help him during that summer, and we worked well together, he handling the larger painting surfaces, I doing the windows, eaves, ceilings, and woodwork.

Spending that time together, we grew closer than we had ever been. We talked some, although never about our deepest feelings and concerns. What I remember most is just our enjoying being together. We'd sit eating our Vienna sausages, cheese, and crackers at lunchtime, planning the afternoon's work, calculating the duration of the job. Then I'd get back up on my ladder, turn on my radio, and do detail work with my narrow brush while he remained below, somewhere near me, laying on paint in broad strokes.

Since I had no immediate plans to return to college, I was looking for a job. Finding full-time, permanent work is never easy for young people just returned but not graduated from college: businesses are afraid that their newly trained employees will soon return to school, and they frequently do. By early fall, though, I had gotten a job as an actuarial clerk with an insurance company and Daddy had lost his painting partner.

Working downtown enabled me to visit the several bookstores there on my lunch hour, and I stopped by the Doubleday store one day and ran

into Steve, a fellow I knew from high school. He told me that he and Jerry were renting a house near downtown and added that they were looking for a third person to help with the rent.

He suggested that I drop by.

The house on Bennett Street was an old frame structure that had three bedrooms on the ground floor, a fourth bedroom upstairs in a back corner of the house, and a long living room with a hardwood floor, ideal for Jerry's grand piano. My bedroom would be just behind the kitchen: third-choice, but adequate. I moved in, bringing my cat, Petit Chou, from home.

I hadn't seen Jerry for a while. Being with him made me feel awkward at first, and I was somewhat of an outsider on Bennett because I was either at work or off somewhere with Robert most of the time. Steve had been a member of Jerry's high-school clique, along with Diane, and he, his girlfriend, Elizabeth (who was soon to move in with us), and Peggy all seemed rather wild to me.

There were regular parties, loud and long, that I left and returned to; I preferred going to dinner and the movies with Robert, cruising around in my new red MG Midget, the top down and rock and roll on the radio.

I had moved my Magnavox stereo to Bennett and it sounded great in that spacious living room, bare of furniture other than the piano. Music of some kind was always coming from that room: Edith Piaf (Steve's favorite), Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony (a recent discovery of mine), and Stockhausen's *Gesang der Junglinge* (that Jerry introduced us to).

The Beatles were just becoming known, thanks to Ed Sullivan, and their music came to supplant everything else on the Magnavox. The single "I Want to Hold Your Hand" could be heard around the clock; we were all crazy about it. One night after a party I'd come in on earlier, Jerry and I had sex again, after more than two years, while that song played over and over, thanks to the automatic changer. Our sexual relations had resumed, and they continued for the next three decades, interrupted only when I was away at college.

We were friends again, then, but I still thought of myself as being in love with Robert. I was also

becoming more and more aware that that love was unreciprocated. Our sex was always at my instigation; he was embarrassed at any talk of deep feelings. I preferred being with him in intimate circumstances, just we two; he always wanted to be with crowds of people, to be seen. I figured out that I could keep his attention better by letting him sit facing the entrance at restaurants so he wouldn't have to keep turning around to see who was coming in.

On the day of Kennedy's assassination, Robert and I had planned to have dinner at a steak house downtown and then walk over to a movie. I had gone out at lunchtime to see the presidential motorcade, and it seemed as though Kennedy had met my eyes as I waved to him from the sidewalk. When I got back to work, the office had already heard the news. We were sent home, tearful.

I followed the afternoon's events on TV, but my main concern was that nothing would happen to ruin my date with Robert. The entire city was in mourning: everything was closed or closing, the streets were empty, people were sitting stunned in front of their TVs. Robert and I did in fact go back downtown to Cattleman's Restaurant, but before we had finished our meal, the waitress came over to tell us that the restaurant was closing (we were the only diners remaining at that point). We left and learned that the theaters were closed as well. The evening was ruined.

Although I had certainly realized by that time that the differences between Robert and me would eventually come between us, I couldn't accept the fact that he was obviously pulling away. He would have other plans when I'd call, and he called me less and less often. I remember working myself into a deep depression one afternoon, listening over and over to the Adagio of Brahms' D Minor Piano Concerto (a piece I had been introduced to by the film *The L-Shaped Room*).

But a new element had been added (or perhaps it had just surfaced): when I left Bennett to go somewhere to meet Robert, I was showing Jerry that he didn't matter as much. Since our reunion in bed, he later told me, he'd come to realize how important I was to him. I wasn't willing, or able, to see either how he felt or to return the feeling. To lose Robert would not only hurt me but would

compromise me in some way, I must have felt, where Jerry was concerned.

There were always drugs around Bennett, and I found a bottle of tranquilizers one afternoon late, when I had heard one time too many that Robert had made other plans. As soon as I swallowed the pills, I began to think of how much my death would hurt my family, my mother especially. Even if I might not have wanted to live just then, I didn't really want to die, and I was suddenly ashamed of what I'd done. I walked down the street to a medical clinic and showed them the empty prescription bottle, and they sent me in an ambulance to a hospital to have my stomach pumped. The hospital called my parents.

As a result of this deed, everyone began to see that I was in trouble emotionally. The hospital referred me to a mental health clinic where I attended group sessions (and sat speechless at the stories of drug dependency and parental sexual abuse, an outsider more than ever). My parents were alarmed to have to face what they had been afraid of acknowledging, but although my mother must have talked with the psychologists at the clinic, neither she nor my father ever discussed with me what the underlying causes of my emotional turmoil might have been. And Jerry, at this time, began referring to me, with a mocking affection, as the bird my mother had that was born with a broken wing. He became, after this incident, both more tender and more aloof, concerned for me and yet put off by the weakness my desperate act revealed—not to mention the statement it made about the extent of my feelings for Robert.

While I was foundering emotionally, Jerry was experiencing the intellectual and artistic changes that would head him in the direction he was to follow for the rest of his life. He had always been an independent thinker and an independent learner; the only thing he ever really needed to be taught was how to read—which he had to be able to do to begin studying piano (or so the teacher said).

As a child in Waco, Jerry found his way into the adult section of the public library and selected a few books of interest to him, but the librarian refused to let him check them out since he only had a juvenile library card. Mrs. Hunt always enjoyed telling the story of how she "marched

right down" to the library and demanded that Jerry be given whatever kind of card it took to grant him access to any book in the library he might want.

Another story I often heard was about Mrs. Quay's abortive Latin class, an after-school group of fifth graders that was able to meet only a few times before the principal disbanded it, claiming that it showed partiality toward the children involved. Mrs. Quay was one of Jerry's favorite teachers. That she must have appreciated Jerry's special qualities is illustrated, I think, by what happened one day in class when she said to him, "Jerry, you may go now," and he gathered up his books, retrieved his coat from the cloakroom, and walked outside the building—only to discover that there were no waiting cars. He returned to the classroom, hung his coat back up, and sat down again. In a few minutes Mrs. Quay said, "Jerry, you may go to the board now," and so he did.

I often look at a picture of Jerry in his homeroom class, taken when he was in the sixth grade. It's an eloquent portrait, reflecting the white, middle-class schools in the '50s, the uniformity of dress, pose, and expression—except that the self-possession and in-his-element happiness so evident in Jerry's eyes do make him stand out, at least to me. He must have been every teacher's favorite student in those early grades.

Even so, he was by nature an autodidact. One can trace his work with electronic musical instruments back to the electronics correspondence course his grandfather ordered but lost interest in. Jerry, at age 10, finished it. And when he stayed with his Aunt Maudie and Uncle Raby, he used to hang out at a neighborhood radio and TV repair shop (he took me by the place in 1991, when we drove to Waco to have his mother's ashes interred). I imagine him digging through the bins of surplus resistors and capacitors, looking for what he needed to build a circuit—just as I was to watch him do 15 years later when I would go with him to Crabtree's or Texas Electronics Supply, amazed at his patience, impressed by his knowledge, and tickled at the salesman's incredulity when they heard him identify himself as a composer.

By the early '60s, he was wiring his own circuits, and he would later modify every synthesizer or

sound-altering device he acquired. In fact, on several occasions he worked as a consultant for electronic instrument manufacturers, a musician with sufficient knowledge of electronics to be able to recommend specific adaptations to enhance the musical appeal and value of the product. (Some of Jerry's early ideas for simulating the role of the piano pedals in electronic keyboards were rejected as being unimportant and too expensive, only to be adopted later by the more successful companies.)

On Bennett Jerry had just begun exploring the relationship between machines and music that was to fascinate him so much in later years. He was still practicing the piano, learning the music of Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, Sylvano Bussotti, and John Cage, whom Jerry had met in 1960, riding a bus to Texas Tech in Lubbock to do so. Jerry always said it was this encounter that redirected his musical career, from classical music to the avant-garde and the chance operations that Cage employed.

I often wonder how our neighbors stood the noise, what with Jerry's impassioned practicing, the Magnavox in around-the-clock use, and the loud parties and frequent brawls. We were a high-spirited bunch, set on living *la dolce vita* as we saw it depicted by Fellini, eager to *epater le bourgeois*. We could also get into petty, vindictive snits that resulted in Elizabeth's breaking my kitty bowls because I'd left them on the sink, my hiding Steve's classification notice from the draft board under the ice tray in the freezer, and Jerry's and my tearing in half one of Steve's long paintings over a disagreement about where to hang it.

Jerry was our unacknowledged leader, influencing our lives in subtle and no-so-subtle ways, overseeing the decoration of the house (which was rented in his name), bringing in exotic foods like baby octopus and squid for us to try, preparing dishes from the Escoffier cookbook and the *Larousse Gastronomique*, and planning parties and inviting guests. One of these was Jerry Howing, an astrologer recently arrived from South America who became such a nuisance that Jerry and I hid in the closet one day so he would think no one was at home. Howing, by the way, cast Jerry's horoscope, telling him that his lungs would be a problem in years to come but that he

would not die of them directly. That turned out to be the case.

Because Jerry was earning his living playing in clubs, he would get home quite late. We all became habitués of the corner coffee shop, Anderson's, that never closed. Jerry would be hungry after work, and he was particularly fond of their pancakes and waffles, which he would eat while smoking his Chesterfields, a "bottomless" cup of coffee at his side. Since we kept late hours, mornings on Bennett were invariably quiet, so at least the neighbors had that.

I thrived in this environment for a while, enjoying being friends with Jerry again, exploring the world at his side, impelled by his enthusiasms and his energy. Something happened, though, that forced me, ultimately, to get serious about doing something with my life.

I was still working as an actuarial clerk, but the job was becoming tedious and boring. The cycles of songs pumped into the office by Muzak had become odiously predictable, and the conversations on break and at lunch were all about TV ("The Fugitive" was popular then), which I rarely cared to watch. Even the money I was making didn't matter so much to me now that I wasn't trying to keep up with Robert's interest in fancy restaurants and expensive clothes.

Although I didn't really make friends at work, there was one young lady in my department I chatted with regularly, often talking, as I remember, about the squabbles she and her husband were having at the time. Since they lived just a few blocks away from our house on Bennett, I invited them to attend one of our Saturday night parties. Jayne came alone, mixed with the crowd, and drank too much.

At one point she had to be brought back from the bushes in a neighbor's front yard where she had passed out. In a little while she was able to go home on her own. I remember this occurrence as being very tangential to the party. None of us really knew her, and, I suppose, we didn't really care what she was thinking.

At work next week I received an anonymous hate letter in the inter-office mail, insulting me for being a person of despicably low morals, for being—in a word—queer. I couldn't imagine

anyone sending such a letter except Jayne, and it occurred to me that she might have thought there was more between us than there was. In any case, I was furious and naively took the note to the personnel department, which I foolishly expected would be interested in helping me find out for sure who had written it. Their concern was rather more with my being homosexual, and when I refused to deny it (that wasn't the issue, I maintained), the head of the department explained that he thought I'd be better off working elsewhere. The company would give me two-weeks' severance pay if I would resign on the spot; I could come back later to pick up whatever personal items I might have left in my desk. There wasn't anything worth going back for.

I drove home stunned and surprised Jerry by arriving in the middle of the day. He met me in my room, where I was standing in front of a chest of drawers. I told him what had just happened to me, and, as I cried, my head down now on top of the furniture, he came up behind me and embraced me and cried too.

By the time we learned that the house on Bennett was to be torn down to make room for an apartment building, we had all begun to think of moving. Steve left Dallas and Jerry and I returned to our homes, both of us hoping to save money in order to realize as-yet undetermined goals.

While I was looking for another job, I helped my father housepainting. It had felt funny—wrong, somehow—to go back home, and I was happy to take up an older friend's offer to move in with him. Jay was completing his last years before retirement as an engineer for a large oil company, and he had a comfortable house with a spare back bedroom (that doubled as a darkroom). He loved music, and we spent many happy hours in his den listening to Jerome Kern, Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, Prokofiev, and Gerald Hoffnung's festival music. On July 4th Jay coordinated the annual fireworks display at Fair Park with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's performance of Tchaikovsky's "1812" Overture, and I helped him follow the score in the control booth. Jay and I became friends, getting to know one another surprisingly well, I think, given the difference in our ages.

Jay had never had a longtime companion. He liked to be around young boys, and he entertained (and helped financially) two or three of his friends' children, without, I am certain, taking advantage of them. Jay did have one close friend nearer his own age, a partially deaf fellow by the name of Quinn who often joined us for dinner. It gives me pleasure to recall those evenings, the three of us (our four, when our friend Bill joined us) sitting on Jay's patio, "nursing"—Jay's habitual term—our drinks, Quinn laughing and blushing at the gentle teasing Jay always treated him to, probably giving him more attention than he received elsewhere.

Jay was the first older gay man I had ever known, and I learned a lot from him about getting by in a homophobic world. I also saw (and see even more clearly now) the unhappy side of subterfuge: Jay drank steadily, buying Canadian Club by the case, and he had gotten into the habit of keeping his innermost feelings, even his convictions, entirely to himself.

A few weeks before the presidential election of 1964, I came home and noticed a Goldwater bumper sticker on the back of Jay's car. I was outraged, peeled it off, and strode into the house to tell Jay what some Republican at work had done. When we later watched the election returns, Bill and I became more and more jubilant as the landslide for Johnson became apparent. Jay sat quietly, drank, and retired to his bedroom before Goldwater conceded. It was only then that I realized that Jay had put the sticker on his car himself.

What he thought—to the extent that I could divine it—mattered a great deal to me. He could let drop the merest suggestion, and I would leap on it, eager to please, or impress.

He rarely criticized me, but when he did his words stung for days. I still remember the time we were washing dishes (perhaps after his favorite meal of roast lamb with mint jelly), and I was wittily, I thought, making fun of one of my friends. "Have you always been so sarcastic?" he asked. It was a direct hit, and it still hurts.

Jay was a generous man, opening his wallet and his home to many in need. He gave my father work painting his house, and he found additional jobs for Daddy through his friends. He welcomed a girlfriend of mine who was in hiding until she

could have and then give up her "illegitimate" baby. And he took me with him several times to Rockport on the Texas Gulf Coast, where we ate redfish and sat laughing in the Adirondack chairs under the windswept trees of the Live Oak Lodge, nursing our Dos Equis.

I saw Jerry from time to time, but he was very much involved now in launching his career as a performer of avant-garde music.

He had begun attending new-music concerts both in Texas and elsewhere, and he was meeting other performers and composers, making friends and contacts.

And he was still cooking. When my sister surprised us all by announcing her marriage to a young man she'd met only weeks before, Jerry offered to prepare a tray of delicacies for the reception Jay agreed to have at his house. Judy and I are still trying to figure out what some of the dishes were, but we do remember hors d'oeuvres shaped like sea horses.

For work I had found a job "doing research" and was paid so much per "report"; what I did, of course, was to write term papers for a company that marketed its products nationwide, by topic.

I'd sit at my trusty Remington Rand typing out essays on operations research or wildlife management, consulting Jay's encyclopedias and pillaging his library for information on subjects I rarely knew anything about.

I continued to think about returning to college, and I took a correspondence course from the University of California at Berkeley, a course in the European novel taught by U.C.

Knoepfmacher (my good luck). I threw myself into reading Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, putting my one semester of French at the University of Houston to work into making a rough translation of the Walpurgisnacht section of that novel. During the last year of Jerry's life, I was to think often of that book, with its discussion of rales and rhonchi (rattling sounds in the lungs) and its graphic descriptions of the fatigue the tuberculosis sanatorium's patients struggled with.

Finally I found a full-time job at another insurance company (there were, it turned out, no problems with references), and I could begin saving money in earnest. Since I had given up my

MG,

I borrowed my parents' Chevrolet each week, leaving them with Daddy's truck to use for transportation Mondays through Fridays. I took their sacrifice for granted, then.

Of all the jobs I had working for insurance companies (and there were five), this is the one I enjoyed the most. I worked for a company that sold health insurance primarily, but it still, had quite a few life insurance policies on the books, acquired mostly through mergers and buyouts. I was the "Life Department" (and so my stamp felicitously read), and I spent many agreeable hours reviewing old policy contracts, figuring cash and loan values from rate tables, and corresponding with policyholders. I had an efficient IBM electric typewriter fitted with a font consisting entirely of capital letters, and I worked largely unsupervised, spinning out long, chatty letters to hard-up or bereaved customers. As had been the case at the other companies, though, I found the office environment stifling—but I was careful, now, to keep pretty much to myself.

While I was in Houston, I had read an article in *The Saturday Review* about St. John's College, the "Great Books School," with a uniform curriculum and no grades. I was intrigued by the concept and by the Santa Fe, New Mexico, campus. I was eventually accepted for the fall semester of 1965, and with a combination of scholarship money, a National Defense Student Loan, and the promise of an on-campus job, I was ready to go.

But not until I'd bleached my hair and dyed it blond. Did I want a new identity? I startled everyone—I startle myself, now, as I think of it, as I picture myself sitting at the seminar table, smoking my pipe (inhaling too: no one told me not to), my roots steadily darkening.

In those days most Texans thought of northern New Mexico as we would a far-off country. None of my family or friends had ever been there. Santa Fe in particular we closely identified in our imaginations with its motto, "The City Different"; we pictured it snowbound most of the winter. As a farewell gift, Jerry bought me a magnificent black parka with a fringed hood and a thunderbird stitched in the white nylon lining. (Although it didn't concern us then, we were pleased to recall later that the "fur" was man-

made.) I had bought a new blue suit, and I started out on what I hoped would be a real adventure, something that would change my life.

My parents hoped that for me too, although I know it was hard for them to see me go away so far, especially since Judy had left to join her Army husband in France (and, later, Germany). I remembered how upset they had been, particularly Daddy, when we said goodbye to Judy at Love Field. (Daddy's health was by then so poor that we had to have an airport wheelchair for him.) Here they were at the airport again (commercial flights could land in Santa Fe then), seeing off their other child.

I'll never forget the altitude shock I experienced the day I arrived. Carrying my luggage (and Thunderbird coat) up the steps to the dorm on the hillside above the campus just about disabled me. I wasn't even able to speak to the fellows who had come out to welcome me. They assured me I'd get used to it—we were at over 7,000 feet elevation—and I did, but it took several weeks.

Just the other day I was looking at photographs of the college president, Richard Weigle, and land donor John Gaw Meem surveying the site of the yet-to-be-built campus. There was nothing for miles around, except for the Santa Fe Preparatory School at the very bottom of the hills. Those who know only the Santa Fe of today would have a hard time imagining the remoteness, the splendid isolation, of the place in the mid-'60s. The three main college buildings and the cluster of smaller dorms were built on the side of Monte Sol, in the Sangre de Cristo range. The view in every direction was of pinon trees and rocky hillsides, all under the magnificent New Mexico sky.

Santa Fe itself was a distant village. A few of us made regular treks there on Saturdays, meandering through the residential neighborhoods downward to the plaza, where we would get haircuts, do a little shopping for provisions beyond the scope of what the college store carried, and generally take in the exotic look and feel of the place with its adobe buildings and Native American vendors. I always stopped at the Candy Kitchen for some of the piñon brittle that they made on the premises.

My freshman class was only the second on the Santa Fe campus. There was a general sense among us, both students and teachers, that we

were creating the place as we went along. Although a few faculty came out from the Annapolis campus, many of the tutors I had were as new to St. John's as I and my classmates were. The feeling that we were pioneers was reinforced by the remoteness of the place and the demands that sometimes placed on our resourcefulness. A heavy snow cut off the college's electricity one weekend; we gathered around the huge fireplace in one of the common rooms for light to study by. An older couple lived in a small apartment just back of the dorms. I assume they were monitors of some kind, but they were rarely seen (except when they came out to put more seed in their bird feeders). They missed a lot. There was steady traffic through the utility tunnels that connect the men's and women's dorms, and I knew that many students smoked marijuana. The men's dorms were noisy on weekends, the music a mixture of rock and folk; a general unwinding began immediately after the obligatory Friday night lecture.

Stress seemed to build as the weeks went by, and the closeness of a small student body studying two set curricula (one for us freshmen, one for the sophomores) intensified the pressure. Most of us cared passionately about our work. And there was no "system" to manipulate: we were always sitting right across the table from our tutors and seminar leaders, and next to the people who lived with us. If you couldn't keep up, you couldn't stay. A few freshmen 'disappeared' during the fall semester, chastening us all.

I learned to study at St. John's, perhaps even to think.

Where glibness had served me, rational argument was now required. My prejudices, pretensions, and intellectual laziness were exposed in the seminars and quarterly "don rags" (where individual students are examined by all their tutors, their progress evaluated and then described in detailed letters mailed to parents and that take the place of grades). I struggled with Greek paradigms, sweated my turn at the board to reproduce Euclidean proofs from memory, and cursed the lab manual that defied me to treat experiments like recipes. But I was not alone, standing shaving at the row of sinks in the dorm restroom, reviewing the irregular verbs that a classmate had crayoned on the mirror.

For a few weeks I was homesick, and I remember wondering if perhaps my going so far away, literally and figuratively, had been a big mistake. I missed Jerry, but I was also delighted to be able to write him all about the esoteric reading and studying I was doing. He could talk about Henri Pousseur, I about Herodotus. My job in the college library took several hours a week away from study time, so I was kept too busy to pine about home for long.

And I made friends: Don, with a bushy moustache and a huge capacity for silliness; Hugo, whose parents lived in Santa Fe and whose father wrote the Matt Helm detective series; and Bob Davis, who shortly became my steady companion. I lived in a dorm suite with Don, Hugo, and Henry. With only two classes on campus, there weren't very many of us and we all knew one another, at least well enough to speak to. People got used to seeing Bob and me together; we'd be asked, when alone, where the other was.

Bob was from San Francisco and talked about being an architect some day. He was reading Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, in the little time he had for recreational reading, and he took thorough notes in class with his trusty Rapidograph—the notes any of us who had to be absent always asked for. He had one of the few private rooms in the dorm (Had he asked for it?), and I would stop by every morning on my way to breakfast and classes downhill to pick him up. I was fascinated by the orderliness of his desk and bookshelves.

We'd go to breakfast early, as soon as they began serving, and when the weather permitted, we'd sit outside on the balcony overlooking the valley below, eating boiled eggs out of the shell and peeling oranges with our thumbs. Bob was a relatively large-framed young man, lean and muscular, who often couldn't get enough to eat: he'd have a second stack of pancakes while I smoked my pipe.

Then we'd jimmy open the locked door to the music room and listen to Bach or Poulenc for half an hour before our first tutorial. In fact, we did quite a lot that was slightly irregular; we were always going on about the "stupid" rules the college had (Why keep the music room locked so much of the time?). Bob was a waiter in the

dining hall at evening meals, which were rather formal. I always sat at one of his tables, and he often saved special food for me or brought me second helpings when they weren't permitted. In turn, as a library worker, I'd save new records for him. Early on we talked the girls who prepared food in the coffee shop into letting us come behind the counter and fix our own sandwiches the way we liked them.

We got into trouble one night, and the college president himself caught us. It was late one Sunday, and we had met to play ping-pong in the dorm common room. We decided to go down to the coffee shop. We'd been studying Ptolemy and had just learned about epicycles. We undertook to demonstrate the principle as we walked through the center of the campus. Bob, being more athletically inclined, ran in a tight circle along my larger circumference. It was hilarious...and it may have been observed. President Weigle had been working late and was just leaving his office in the science building, but by the time he could lock up and get into the courtyard, Bob and I had helpfully begun watering the newly planted trees. "Let's let the grounds crew take care of that, fellows," Dr. Weigle said. Had he seen us dance, too?

At the time I didn't know that Bob was gay, and it interests me now to think that I didn't wonder too much about it then. I was, of course, aware that I found him sexually attractive: he wore T-shirts, corduroy jeans, and zoris (which were expressly forbidden by college policy), and his fair good looks and swimmer's build gave me pleasure to contemplate. On warm spring days we'd sunbathe on one of the dorm's rooftops, reading Thucydides, and the first time I saw his bare, well-defined chest I had to catch my breath. One spring day a tutor took Bob and me and a couple of other students with her to her home near a wooded area. Bob and I wandered off by ourselves, discovering a stream and a hillside of dead trees, still-standing reminders of an old fire. We had been arguing, about what petty things I no longer remember, but I still clearly recall the sexual tension between us that day. With some considerable effort, Bob pushed one of the huge trees over. I did the same to a nearby tree. And with increasing frenzy we worked, sometimes together on the largest trunks, until

we had flattened the whole stand. But there was no element of fun in it, and things were never quite the same between us afterwards.

I realize much more clearly now how unhappy Bob was at that time. He talked every weekend with his mother—there was never any mention of his father—and these conversations always seemed to agitate or depress him. And he missed the bay and the ocean, the sailing and swimming he loved. By the middle of the spring semester, he decided to transfer to the Annapolis campus the following year, at just about the same time I decided not to return to St. John's at all the next fall.

Bob and I corresponded intermittently for a year or two. I knew from the St. John's alumni directory that he had been graduated from Annapolis and had returned to San Francisco. Then, in an alumni newsletter in June of 1987, I learned that Bob had died a few months earlier, at the age of 40, of a "brain infection," a common circumlocution for AIDS. He had spent two years in the Peace Corps in Nepal, received architectural training, and become a designer for the De Young Museum. He had also participated in several trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific sailing races. The photograph in the newsletter revealed that his hair had darkened considerably.

When people would ask Jerry and me in the years to come how long we had been together, I always counted back to 1965. We had met in the eighth grade, but I didn't really think of us as a couple, committed to one another, until about the middle of my year at St. John's. Perhaps that much distance was required for me to see how I really felt.

When I came home for Christmas that year, I think I realized how important Jerry had become to me. Since he was living at home again, we could only obtain the privacy we wanted by renting motel

rooms, and when we were alone together, we made love now when we'd had sex before, our relationship strengthened by my having gone off, I suppose, to prove something, and by his having missed me.

Jerry drove to Santa Fe in his Renault to pick me up at the end of the spring semester. He'd had quite a bit of trouble with that car ever since he'd bought it (his mother eventually wrote the factory

in France, to no avail), and the alternator/generator panel light had come on somewhere in the Panhandle—which annoyance he removed by sticking Green Stamps over it. He called me at school from a pay phone in Santa Fe, the car audibly running nearby, and he explained that he knew that once he killed the engine, he'd never get it started again. He proposed to meet me in the college parking lot, and we would then find a garage where the car could be repaired.

As it eventually was, but not without a terrible scene. I no longer remember the issue, the provocation, but at one point Jerry had squatted down and was trying to pull the little car out of the mechanic's bay. (Twenty years later there was a very similar scene at Sam's Warehouse Club in Tyler where Jerry, a Canadian artist friend, and I had gone for new tires. What angered Jerry there was that he'd seen a customer who had arrived after us be waited on first, and we had already waited for quite some time. While Jerry was trying to pull his Volkswagen out of the garage,

I went into the store, found the manager, and he saw to it that Jerry was waited on immediately.)

A phone call to Jerry's parents satisfied the Santa Fe garage that the repair bill would be paid, and we were on our way home in a couple of days.

Jerry had time to meet Bob, whom he didn't much like (he found him "arrogant" and "affected"). Moreover, given all the trouble he'd had with the garage and his car, Jerry didn't much like Santa Fe. (He was to change his opinion in the years to come, when he and his mother and I visited there, and, later, when we went up for a concert he gave at the Contemporary Arts Museum.)

We were both glad to be returning to Texas. My last don rag had been a success, and I left with a sense of accomplishment. My intention to finish college was firm, but I would go to school in Texas, nearer my family, and nearer Jerry. The long drive home passed quickly, with all our talking, laughing, and love-making (suspended for the passing truckers)—the little Renault humming along, no warning lights visible.