

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From the Selected Works of Charles Kay Smith

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Elegy for Allen, Prose/Poem 9/12/2014

Charles Kay Smith



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Elegy For Allen

Thanks for the fine conversations, my friend.
We discussed the world and its ways over lunch
with humor and a decidedly liberal bias.
Since we were geezers and still progressive,

we sometimes imagined ourselves radical.
You grew up in the South in the 1920s
and I in the Mid-West Depression.
We both remembered horse-carts in the street,

bewildered men without jobs in the park
for a couple of dollars a day to discuss
how to get a job in a vanished economy.
We remembered farm machinery at rust

in every field due to the poor quality of steel
before WWII. We matured close to nature
and then in the military: navy and army.
You became a chemical engineer, inventor and CEO

and I a university professor who shared your interest
in science and technology. We also shared
a love of music, art and laughter.
You didn't like new gadgets very much.

It was the triviality of their invention,
which could have been of more consequence.
New model cars changed only the length of a tail-fin
or added a bit more chrome to the grill or bumper.

Rarely, a slight change in a new model,
such as variable speed windshield wipers,
we both had to admit, was a bit of genius.
If cars had advanced as much as computers,

they say, each would have the power of the QE2,
and astoundingly better mileage. A Rolls Royce
would cost a few dollars, and be the size of a pin-head.
We laughed over who'd want a car that small.

Ginny assured you a long happy life
and you often exclaimed your appreciation.
I miss you, Allen, my friend.
May the earth rest softly upon you.