

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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For my Brother, Prescott Smith: Died Suddenly September 24, 2015

Charles Kay Smith, *University of Massachusetts at Amherst*



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***For my Brother, Prescott Smith:
Died Suddenly September 24, 2015***

We were brothers growing up
In Iowa along the Mississippi
He and I were river rats
Taught ourselves to swim near shore

Then ventured into open water
in the tricky current Mississippi.
We built a kayak that we paddled,
picnicked on sand bars,

sunbathed in the middle of the river.
Steam-driven paddle wheelers
pushed barges past us.
When the Patrick J. Hurley

blew its unmistakable horn
we swam to body-surf the trailing
wave from its rear paddle wheel
sans splash-board, so its waves were high.

We understood Huck Finn
before we read Mark Twain.
Both began to read in the army
and learning became our way of life

We honored our President,
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
and in almost eighty years,
never lost faith in his ideals.

Last week my brother died.
Few now know the finest man
I knew with all his kindness,
his wit and humor, too.

Pres was my younger brother
who lived to eighty-three.
The saddest part of growing old:
those you love die before you.

Some are alive to mourn him,
I'm surprised how few.
But I miss him in my flesh,
Oh! so deep in every bone.