

Ridge Project and U.C. Berkeley in the 1970s

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This is a draft copy. Higher-numbered revisions are more current. In the end, this is expected to be a book of about 300 pages that serves a specific purpose. I initially planned a book of this type at [Walnut Creek Intermediate](#) in 1971.

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***** About this document *****

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For Creative Commons purposes, the author is Robert Kiraly, also known as Robert Crowley, OldCoder, and BoldCoder.

All people mentioned by name existed as individuals; no composites are used. However, names have been changed in some cases.

This document was prepared using LibreOffice 4.4 and other Linux tools. The operating system used was [LACLIN](#), a Linux distro of my own design.

Note for Linux hackers: The photograph negatives used were damaged. I used [GIMP](#) 2.8.14 to make repairs; most importantly, David Tschumperlé's GREYCstoration plug-in to reduce noise and the Resynthesizer plug-in, by several authors, to remove some of the scratches.

The Phoenix illustration in [Appendix C](#), The New Song for Twisted Time, is licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 3.0. For attribution purposes, the rights-holder is AngelIq.

***** 1 - Introduction *****

[Casa Zimbabwe](#) is a university student's residence located just north of the U.C. Berkeley campus. It's part of a student-run association of co-ops, the Berkeley Student Cooperative (formerly known as the University Students Cooperative Association).

I lived in Casa Zimbabwe, though it had a different name at the time, from July 1976 to May 1981. I spent two summers away, in 1977 and 1978, but this was my home, the first genuine home that I ever had.

In 2015, I was asked to write about life at Casa Zimbabwe in the 1970s. This document is the result. I've included some discussion of Walnut Creek, a city very different from Berkeley, and of my life subsequent to Berkeley.

Casa Zimbabwe was known as Ridge Project in the 1970s, and this is the name that I knew it by. I'll use the name Ridge Project in the story.

Human memory is flexible, not a record of events, but a canvas that paints itself over Time. I apologize for any errors in this part of my canvas.

***** 2 - Dedication *****

This document is dedicated to someone who was involved in events of the 1970s and has offered support: Twisted Time.

Twisted Time is an IEEE member, a developer, a mathematician, and a quadriplegic who's started a disability foundation. [Appendix C](#) has more to say.

I'll mention a moment that he told me of. Actually, two moments. One, where he watched rain falling, and the scene became a frozen moment, all of the drops falling forever at once.

And another, where he perceived the rain, an arc of time in which rain fell, the sequence, as an equally eternal moment.

I asked him if he'd been transformed by the visions. As nearly as I can tell, we've both been transformed. By what, and into what, remains to be seen.

****** 3 - Into the past ******

It was mid-2014.

I hadn't been to Berkeley, the parts that I remembered, in 25 years. But Bedivere, a mid-20s developer that I knew online, was flying to the San Francisco Bay Area for a job interview. We decided to meet in person and we settled on Berkeley as the place.

Bedivere proved to be relaxed, casual, nice.

I'd helped him, two years before, in small ways. But, in mid-2012, legal cases related to my family, a church, Amazon Corporation, and a gag order hit unexpectedly. Bedivere, who was associated with Amazon, ended communications. The last thing that he said was, "I leave you now to your death, Robert".

He returned a year later. We talked, online, about what had happened:

<Bedivere> I did not wish that for you

<OldCoder> No harm is intended

<OldCoder> I need to understand people. I've paid a high enough price.

<Bedivere> There's no price

<OldCoder> Oh?

<Bedivere> Is it greed? Was there exchange?

<Bedivere> The coincidence that I was working at Amazon maybe had you compelled to share with me as you did. But that had not much to do with me.

<OldCoder> I'm not able to follow.

<Bedivere> Are you able to find peace out of it? Here I am, aren't I?

<Bedivere> I don't know that you're exactly seeking fairness in this. And I'll admit that I was conflicted about what to do.

<Bedivere> We'll speak another time.

<OldCoder> Bedivere, to quote an S.F. movie of the 1990s, "Sleep, Now."

<Bedivere> I would give up lavishes to live simply.

<Bedivere> This Internet thing is strange. But I see the strange things it causes in a way that does not yield happiness.

<OldCoder> Your dialect is gold.

<Bedivere> That's not important.

<OldCoder> What is important, then? Friends are. Doing good is.

<Bedivere> I don't care to piss around with you about that.

<OldCoder> The truth is important, Bedivere. There's no piss.

<OldCoder> Speak to me and see me as human. Friendly and honest. I wasn't made for any of this. I sought to do good.

<Bedivere> Vain romantic, OldCoder.

<OldCoder> Vain, no. Romantic, too late.

<Bedivere> It started somewhere.

<OldCoder> I'm the Mechanical Boy. But I'm real at last.

<Bedivere> Pencils in the shirt pocket. There you go.

<OldCoder> Oh, yes.

<Bedivere> Go on, then.

<OldCoder> Hm? Pencils in the shirt pocket. What about them? Braces, too. Retainers. Fall to the ground. Clumsy kid.

We chatted a bit more. And, in 2014, we met in person.

Clumsy kid. And an isolated one. The boy I'd been, and the young man who'd lived at Casa Zimbabwe, wouldn't have risked a meeting of this type.

But I went to meet Bedivere.

I asked him to walk with me up to Northside. I realized half-way up the hill that I'd changed physically. I needed to rest. This was odd.

We found Euclid Avenue. And La Val's Pizza. Still there after 35 years. From La Val's, we walked around the corner to Ridge Project.

It wasn't Ridge Project any longer. It was Casa Zimbabwe instead. But the building was the same except for a locked gate out front.

A college student came out to meet us. He was friendly, but he wasn't clear about the history of the building. When I asked about Ridge Project, he thought that I was referring to Ridge House, the building next door.

I decided not to ask to go in to visit Casa Zimbabwe. It was enough to see the place I'd spent so much time in.

But, half a year later, I found myself in the area again. My webdev student, Ramon, was visiting the Bay Area. We decided to meet in Berkeley.

Ramon knew Casa Zimbabwe. He'd partied there as a young man, 21 at the time, a decade earlier. So we went to see the building. And, this time, we went in.

It was different inside. Centuries had passed. And no time at all.

*** * * 4- Visiting Berkeley * * ***

4a. I grew up in Walnut Creek, California, a city about 16 miles from U.C. Berkeley. After BART, a mass-transit train system, came to Walnut Creek in 1973, I started to take BART trains to visit Berkeley and the U.C. campus.

Berkeley wasn't like my town. There were public-access computers, among the first in the country:



This photo was taken at the [Lawrence Hall of Science](#) circa 1974. The terminal is an ASR Model 33 or similar teletypewriter; as high-tech as it got at the time. The boys are writing games in the BASIC programming language.

You could also play existing BASIC games at the LHS such as Lunar Lander, Star Trek, and Hunt the Wumpus. Input was by keyboard. A mechanical printer typed output on paper that was fed from a roll. Graphics were ordinary ASCII characters.

4b. The university libraries had open stacks where one might find anything. The stacks have been closed now but I used to spend hours in them. There were bookstores too, of course, different from the chain stores such as B. Daltons and Waldenbooks that one found in white-bread cities.

4c. There were interesting people.

At the Lawrence Hall of Science, for example, I talked to the singer Joan Baez's Father, Albert Baez. He was a physicist who answered my questions about lasers.

Dr. Baez told me where to get my own laser diodes. I wasn't able to construct the laser death rays that I'd imagined out of them. However, they were fun, regardless.



4d. There were people in Berkeley who weren't white. For the most part, Walnut Creek didn't have non-whites at the time. I didn't understand why this was. But I knew that Berkeley was different. It was more open, less artificial, than the pretend world I'd lived in.

Forty-odd years ago, I applied to U.C. Berkeley. I was accepted. I moved into Ridge Project on June 24, 1975, shortly after my 18th birthday.

**** * * 5 - Moving into Ridge Project * * ****

Ridge Project was a good choice.

I didn't know what I was going to be, but computers and mathematics were going to be part of it. Ridge Project was located just a short walk from Cory Hall and Evans Hall, where most of the computer rooms and math classes were.

It was a relatively quiet residential area, but there were stores located one block away on Euclid Avenue.

Businesses on Euclid Avenue included Rasputin's Records, Giant Hamburger, a college supplies store, and of course, LaVal's, a pizza place which was still there four decades later.

Things that you couldn't get on Euclid could be found within walking distance on Southside, below the other side of the U.C. campus. Southside had independent bookstores such as Cody's Books and Moe's, bars and restaurants, and everything else.

Ridge Project itself was right for me for reasons besides convenience and the quiet neighborhood.

I was different.

I wouldn't have done well in large or rigid settings. The cooperative structure was appealing, I didn't mind the idea of workshifts, and the diversity that I encountered was interesting; nothing like the limited world of Walnut Creek.

So, I settled in, started computer courses immediately, and became part of Ridge Project for the next five years.

***** 6 - Art *****

If you walked through Ridge Project, you noticed art. Some walls and doors were painted; there were also posters hung up or taped to doors.

One wall painting was still there four decades later: “*Dark Side of the Moon*”. This photo is from circa 1977. In 2015, the painting looked about the same:



There are more examples of Ridge Project art later in this document.

As of 2015, Casa Zimbabwe has more art than Ridge Project did. Enough that some of the pictures will be erased over Time to make room for new works. I'd like to suggest that high-resolution photographs be made of the pictures so as to preserve them.

*** * * 7 - Drugs * * ***

When I moved into Ridge Project, there were small plants growing in stairwell gardens. The plants were decorative. And, I was told, useful. They made appearances, in a different form, occasionally at council meetings.

I protested, when one of them was passed to me, “What if somebody takes a picture and years from now I want to run for public office?”

People laughed, so I put aside the objection. But it didn't do much for me.

By the time that I left Ridge Project in 1981, the stairwell gardens were gone. Looking back, this made sense. The Reagan years had begun, and it was a colder, darker, morning in America.

When I grew old, I fell into a decade of pain. Friends who knew that I had no medical care persuaded me to try marijuana again. The idea was that it might take the edge off.

The drug didn't stop the pain, but I realized as I tried it how ordinary the occasion was. And I was grateful to those who had tried to help.

In the 2010s, I filed for the trademark on a cannabis-based drink product. I figured that a refreshing marijuana beverage might make for a sensible business model. However, the Federal Government declined to award me the trademark.

I don't remember any hard-drug use at Ridge Project.

The only hard-drug user that I recall meeting at the co-op was Todd Sarver, a teenager from a halfway house located nearby. Todd used to walk into the Ridge Project dining area and try to get people to take LSD. He was enthusiastic about the drug.

I don't know what happened to Todd, but it probably wasn't good.

It's hard to say, though. A High School classmate of mine, Jim Angliss, disappeared at age 16, a few years before I came to Berkeley. Jim used drugs and some people figured that he'd died of a drug overdose. But I tracked him down 34 years later and spoke with his mother. She told me that he'd become a respected Elder of the Mormon Church.

Trajectories can take unexpected twists.

*** * * 8 – Alcohol * * ***

Beer wasn't seen as a drug. The beverage was popular enough that Ridge Project had a Beer Manager for a while. I don't remember if this was an official workshift or not. However, there was a separate locked refrigerator for beer and the Beer Manager was responsible for the contents.

It wasn't “[*Animal House*](#)”, to be clear. People drank casually and usually after-hours.

Beer tastes more ordinary these days. It's an illusion related to age. I'd trade a six-pack of Michelob's now for one of the cold ones that I remember from 35 years ago, the way that I remember it. They were pretty good.

I drank beer mostly at the co-op. I was afraid to go into bars by myself; to me, bars seemed dark and mysterious.

But, on my 21st birthday in 1979, I walked into bars on Telegraph Avenue and demanded free drinks to mark the occasion. The bartenders acknowledged that my 21st birthday was a milestone and complied with my demands.

Emmanuel, another Ridge Projectile, says:

“Do you remember going to the Buena Vista Cafe (the home of the Irish Coffee) in S.F. where I introduced you to the Harvey Wallbanger (vodka, galliano and orange juice) ? – you found it refreshing.”

I don't remember the trip or the drink. But I wouldn't have gone by myself and I'm appreciative that somebody took me.

*** * * 9 – Rooms * * ***

9a. My first room at Ridge Project was Room 13, located partly below ground level.

In late 1976, somebody threw lit firecrackers through the window. I was in bed at the time. The firecrackers landed next to my face. Fortunately, I wasn't blinded. I was safe because I'd named the room “Lucky 13”.

9b. Lucky 13 was small. I shared it with a roommate besides. But Ridge Project had a point system for rooms. You could work your way up to larger and more prestigious accommodations.

“Room auctions” were held on a regular basis. These were events where students competed for rooms. I went up against somebody with equal seniority once. We both wanted the same room. We drew lots and I won. As I started to move in, though, I was told that some sort of mistake had been made and was sent to a smaller room.

The fix was in :P 🤪 Eventually, though, I landed Room 42, one of the better rooms in the co-op.

9c. Towards the end of my student career at U.C. Berkeley, I earned the right to leave Ridge Project and move into an apartment-style USCA residence on Southside. I didn't see a strong reason to move, but it seemed to be expected. So, I packed up and left Ridge Project.

My Brother Tom Kiraly helped me to move. He didn't understand that it was stressful for me, so the move didn't go well. And, when I got into the apartment, I didn't like it. The building and the area were too much change, too quickly. So I moved back to my home, Ridge Project. People there were surprised, but they accepted my return.

9d. This is “Lucky 13”. As the picture below shows, I was a believer in order :P 🤪



9e. This is another typical room, this one belonging to Emmanuel and Vern (pictured).:



***** 10 - The Five-Foot Banana *****

I was similar to “Sheldon”, an autistic character in the 2010s TV series “*Big Bang*”. Not as humorous though sometimes I made people laugh.

I was curious about some things, but I accepted other things as they came.

So, I missed opportunities to meet people, or to keep them, or to understand things that they were involved with. This included a large yellow banana, about five feet tall, that resided in the Ridge Project dining room for a while.

My reaction was, “There's a five-foot banana here. All right. It doesn't seem dangerous. So, what's for dinner?”

The banana was apparently a trophy that had been stolen from another school, possibly Stanford University. Or perhaps it had been stolen back and forth by multiple schools. Whatever the truth was, the majestic fruit disappeared one day.

I remember reading, probably in the Daily Cal, that people had taken the banana out to the Bay Bridge and dropped it from there into the San Francisco Bay.

The idea was to preserve peace by putting an end to a cause of discord. It sounds reasonable, but I'd gotten used to the banana. If the story is true, I feel that it deserved better than an unmarked watery grave.



****** 11 - Cockroaches ******

I was asked, in 2015, if the Casa Zimbabwe of the 2010s was more clean or less clean than the Ridge Project of the 1970s had been. As far as I could tell, the two eras were about the same in this respect. Except for one thing.

We kept things scrubbed, but we couldn't get rid of the cockroaches that lived in one of the walls.

The dining room wall closest to the kitchen wasn't solid. You can see what I mean in the banana photo above. Cockroaches lived in the wall. They'd watch us calmly from there, antennae waving casually, secure in the knowledge that they'd be able to vanish in a cockroach moment before we could get to them.

If they ventured out into the open, though, it was open season.

****** 12 - People at Ridge Project ******

12a. During my years at Ridge Project, I didn't make a lot of lasting associations. And I didn't think a lot about what people thought of me.

People were usually relaxed and often patient. This was enough.

People of my type are distressed if you force them into unpredictable situations or display anger without cause. This happened to me a few times at Ridge Project.

Once, I asked somebody who was angry at me, I don't know why, to leave me alone. His response was a sardonic “You *are* alone”.

But people at Ridge Project were mostly tolerant of others, accepting of differences, willing to work things out.

Would it have been the same at a fraternity or a dormitory? Not to the same extent. The USCA-BSC system was special.

The USCA was run by the students themselves, and so it encouraged responsibility. More importantly, acceptance of diversity was one of the underlying principles. The USCA system was true to the spirit of the Berkeley of the times and it worked pretty well.

12b. People did get to know me, even if it didn't occur to me that I ought to pay attention to them.

One summer, I traveled around the country on buses. I returned to Ridge Project and found people in the dining room talking about me and my trip.

It was fun to stand there, grinning, as they looked up, surprised, to find me right there, back from thousands of miles of wandering.

And, after my 150th Ridge Project Council Meeting, the house gave me a couple of gifts. They named a gavel after me. There was also a little wooden TV set that somebody had made, its screen a photo of me watching TV.

In the past few years, I've lost most of my possessions, but I still have the little TV set packed away somewhere.

****** 13 - Heidi's Room ******

Was the Legend of Heidi true? I don't know, but the legend was there 40 years ago. As was Heidi's Room, known today, in some circles, as the Heidi-Hole.

Was there actually a House Mother, a kindly older woman, perhaps 20 years younger than I am now, who devoted her time to classes at Ridge Project that taught physical education and fine arts to male students?

Was Heidi enthusiastic, energetic mentally and physically, and committed to her role? She must have been, as she has never been forgotten.

In my day, Heidi was spoken of respectfully, and even with awe. She was gone, but her room remained in her name, and the room was put every day to practical use.

People could sign up for Heidi's Room and use it for such occasions as seemed appropriate. It was attractive to students because it was larger than most rooms, had a bouncy water-bed, and once in the room, you were part of the legend.

I used Heidi's room twice. Others, more often.

I was pleased to see, in 2015, that Heidi's Room lived on, so many years later, a monument to recreation and to mythology.

****** 14 - How I paid for college ******

In High School, I was a good student most of the time. Or part of me was. This was the side of the brain that wrote. The other side of the brain, the one that talked, was damaged.

To the extent that I thought about the future, I assumed that I'd be going to college, and that I'd figure out the details when the time come.

I nearly didn't go to college, though. This part of the story is in Appendix C. Ultimately, I did go.

My father, Jim Kiraly, paid for half of my university expenses. This was related more to evolutionary psychiatry than to sentiment or a sense of obligation. Jim was abusive, but in public he adhered rigidly to social expectations. Convention dictated the arrangement.

I earned a small academic scholarship. This covered about 15% of my expenses. I covered the balance through work.

I took the usual workshifts at Ridge Project, took pride in doing them well, and sought every possible job outside the co-op system as well.

I carried a full course-load for a double major, Mathematics and Computer Science, in addition to workshifts and outside jobs.

In the end, I graduated with high honors in one major and highest honors in the other despite the workload. It's good that it worked out. But I can't claim to have planned things in advance. The truth is, I stumbled through events.

****** 15 - Student Loans ******

I know 20-somethings and 30-somethings these days in different countries. Startupers. The current generation of developers.

Most graduated from college in the last decade. And the ones who accepted student loans are struggling under the load.

I don't like to hear that students are facing debts that can't be paid off. Debts that require one to grab the brass ring. Only a few get to grab the brass ring and often it's just for moments.

****** 16 - Workshifts and jobs ******

16a. I was in the co-op system for about five years. So, eventually, I tried most of the house workshifts that existed.

I cleaned the bathrooms, washed out the garbage cans at Central Kitchen, delivered meals, ran the switchboard, and did anything else that came along. I also attended Board meetings, but I don't recall if this counted as a workshift.

I was interim house manager once. This was just for one of the school breaks, though, and not many people were around; so, there wasn't much to do.

16b. I remember washing cups and dishes for years in a large machine in the Ridge Project kitchen. But actual cups were in short supply. People often drank out of glass jars, such as Tang or peanut butter jars, that had been cleaned.

Was the machine there? Did we drink out of Tang jars? When you are old, how much of what you remember will have been real?

16c. Some students in tech majors these days do webdev or computer security work on the side. One of my college-age startupers earns \$125.00 an hour this way.

There was no webdev in the 1970s, it was usually manual labor, and hourly rates were closer to \$3.00 than \$125.00.

16d. I did manual labor, myself, plus tutoring and other types of jobs as well.

One typical manual-labor job involving scrubbing a dirty apartment for a departing tenant so that he'd get his security deposit back. It took four hours and he paid me \$3.50 per hour, which was a good wage at the time.

16e. I remember one manual-labor job that didn't work out. I helped to move a sofa and it ended up stuck in a staircase. Perhaps it's there to this day.

16f. A more unusual job was inventory for the U.S. Gumball Company. I was part of a group that worked through 50 tons of candy in 7 hours. We counted gum base, gumballs, “non-melt ice-cream cones”, and Pterodactyl Eggs (large “jawbreakers”).

The pay wasn't high, but we were allowed to eat gumballs as we worked. My teeth were worn out by the end of the day.

16g. I managed to land one long-term coding job while I was at U.C. Berkeley. I worked part-time on an accounting system for a small office on Telegraph Avenue.

Companies didn't have PCs at the time. Those that were computerized usually had minicomputers instead. These were computers, about as tall as a person, that were placed in a dedicated computer room. Usually, the room needed to be kept cool. Cables ran from there to “dumb terminals” located on people's desks.

“Dumb terminals”, such as ADM3As, were similar to small TV sets with keyboards attached. They had no computing power and could display only text.

In this case, the minicomputer was a Data General Nova 1200; a simple but reliable machine that some aging coders remember fondly. The programming language used was BASIC.

I'd leave Ridge Project in the evening, walk across campus to the office, code for a few hours, and walk back in the middle of the night. Telegraph Avenue was usually deserted on the return trip. It was interesting to walk down a major thoroughfare, night after night, and have it to myself.

I had the feeling that one of the people at the firm, a nice guy, wanted to be a power user. So I added secret shortcuts to the software just for him.

The staff at this, my first “real” job, treated me with respect, the work was interesting, and I learned a lot. I didn't try to build associations, though, or even stay in touch with people. I allowed the job and everything to do with it to fade into the past.

****** 17 - An isolated memory ******

I have an isolated memory that's probably about a job. It's simply there, without context. This will happen to you more often as you age.

A couple took me into a room to meet their 8-year-old son. I assume that the stated reason was tutoring but I don't know.

I wasn't told that he was different. They simply took me there and left.

He wasn't able to speak. He was on the other side of the space that I inhabit. I was located halfway between you and him.

I didn't know what was expected of me; what this was about. But I observed that he was making slight movements. So I sat down and mirrored his movements.

In the end, there was communication of a sort. I met somebody on the other side of the divide. Subsequently, no explanation was offered to me.

Decades later, this is what remains of the memory.

****** 18 - Ridge Project switchboard ******

One type of co-op workshift has disappeared.

Casa Zimbabwe used to have a telephone switchboard.

There was a workshift known as Switchboard Operator. Typically, it was three hours long.

If a resident wanted to make a phone call, the Switchboard Operator on duty would plug in a cable to connect the caller to the outside world and write down the call for billing purposes.

There was also a Switchboard Manager, who was responsible for figuring out phone bills and making sure that callers paid for them. This was different in the past. Everything was done by hand; there were no spreadsheets.

Switchboard Operators didn't work around the clock. Instead, after the end of Switchboard shifts for the day, Night Lines were turned on.

Night Lines were phones in rooms, assigned to a few residents, that worked at night.

If residents needed to make night-time phone calls, they'd find somebody who had a Night Line and ask permission to use it.



I acted as a Switchboard Operator and as a Switchboard Manager, and I had a Night Line. But, with the advent of smart-phones, these things are history.

Regular phones are gone, too.

In the 1970s, regular phones sat quietly on the wall or your desk. They weren't able to send text messages, hold addresses, serve as alarm clocks, or display flocks of irritated birds. It was inevitable that they would disappear. But I didn't see it happen. I looked up and they were gone.

* * *

This was one of the nicer door paintings at Ridge Project:



***** 19 - An unambiguous change *****

Guns were controversial in the 1970s, but less so than in the 2010s.

I assume that students aren't allowed to own them today. But a 1970s ban on guns in the co-op system wasn't confirmed formally until a Board meeting that took place on January 27, 1977.

Some members of the co-op were upset about the ban. One of them owned a Saturday Night Special that had two notches cut in it. He'd bought the gun used and he said that he didn't know what the notches meant.

***** 20 - Entertainment *****

20a. In the 1970s, people didn't have modern computers, tablets, cell phones, or game devices. Or CD or DVD or MP3 players.

Or even VHS players. Primitive video recorders existed, but they were bulky and intended for institutional use.

Almost nobody had access to the Internet. Computer Science students had email and mailing lists such as Chaos, but they were nearly a secret club in this respect.

Students who weren't buried in classwork found ways to relax, regardless.

20b. People played poker, bridge, commercial board games, and sometimes chess. Surprisingly, for a while, bridge was the most popular game.

20c. One night, the residents of Ridge Project were bored. So, one student ate a newspaper in the dining room while another sang "[*The Sound of Music*](#)" and marched across the room, his arms outstretched, chasing the first student.

20d. I saw Dungeon-style Role-Playing Games, or RPGs, played at the co-op once or twice.

RPGs at Ridge Project were College-style as opposed to High-School style. For example, beer was a standard component. And, when a player was feeling irritated, he might take another player, magically shrunk in the game, and insert the shrunken player into orifices of a third player. In short, RPGs were obstreperous.

20e. There were often group- or house- organized activities at Ridge Project.

Special Dinners were held on a regular basis. Occasionally, Special Brunches as well. These were higher-quality meals. The dining room may have been redone to simulate a restaurant for some of the Special Dinners but, if so, the details are gone from recollection.

Once, people made caramel apples. Old-fashioned, but nothing wrong with that for food.

There were dances, parties, and at least one “disco” night. I didn't understand what “disco” was, so I didn't attend the latter event.

20f. On one occasion, some of us sat around and watched for hours as Emmanuel, discussed at a later point, assembled a blue dodecahedron.

O.K. it wasn't a high-tech life :-)
😊



20g. Some students enjoyed sports, including rock-climbing up in the hills and hang-gliding.

I had a hang-glider fan, Tom Kardos, as a TA. He was notorious for a while because he'd landed his hang-glider in the middle of a Cal-USC football game. Adventurous type. It appears that he was lost at sea in recent years.

I tried taking Karate lessons myself, but I dropped them due to lack of Time.

20h. Students had music, movies, and books.

Music meant cassette players or vinyl records. Stores on Telegraph Avenue carried used vinyl, aisle after aisle. Gone now for 25 years.

Movies meant going out. No widescreen displays in living rooms. You could only see a film once; there was no DVD disk or Blu-Ray disk or rewind button.

Movies are less of a special event these days, but they're more convenient and more fun. You can post clips at YouTube, write comments, produce parodies, and create fan websites or fan fiction. I wouldn't go back.

The U.C. Theatre ran art films and other movie houses showed mainstream movies.

The U.C. Theatre had printed schedules that were poster-size. The schedules showed grids of small pictures from dozens of upcoming films, most of the titles interesting and little-known to mainstream audiences. A typical selection might look like this:

Aguirre, the Wrath of God
The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea
Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000
The Man Who Fell to Earth

I can't comment on many of the U.C. Theatre's offerings because I didn't go there often myself. Instead, I collected the schedule posters.

20i. The U.C. Theatre became well-known later on as the place where, for two decades, you could go to see midnight showings of “*Rocky Horror Picture Show*”:

It's astounding
Time is fleeting
Madness takes its toll
But listen closely
(Not for very much longer)

I've got to keep control
I remember doing the Time Warp
Drinking those moments when
The blackness would hit me
And the void would be calling

Let's do the Time Warp again
Let's do the Time Warp again



I walked down to the U.C. Theatre once to see “*Rocky Horror*”, but I ended up simply watching the line of people waiting to get in. There were hundreds.

20j. Reading meant magazines, paperbacks, hardbacks as opposed to pixels. People read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction.

I read the latest Larry Niven novel, “*Ringworld Engineers*”, once and a girl at Ridge Project asked me if her favorite “Known Space” character, Teela Brown, appeared in it. I didn't have the heart to tell her that the author had killed off the character and millions of others as well.

20k. A few students, myself included, launched model rockets. These peaked in popularity around 1975 to 1978. Here's Robert Loder, a U.C. Berkeley engineering student, with one of his rockets:



20l. If you wanted to see a mainstream movie at the time, typical offerings included:

* *Star Wars* (1977). It will be 40 years soon since the first “*Star Wars*” film was released.

I was more of a “*Star Trek: TOS*” person, but the 1977 “*Star Wars*” film and its 1980 sequel “*The Empire Strikes Back*” were classics that had a lasting impact on U.S. popular culture.

The 1977 “*Star Wars*” was a kids' film, so I took two kids to see it. They'd be old enough to be grandparents now. For that matter, Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker, is older than I am and Harrison Ford (Han Solo) is in his 70s.

Time is flat for me. For some others as well. It's been a few years since I lived at Ridge Project. A few more since “*Star Wars*” was released. But not so long. The years don't add up. There's probably a mistake somewhere.

* *Superman* (1978). Corny but popular. In Berkeley, there were huge lines for this film. “*You will believe that a man can fly.*”

* *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979). This film was a modern soap opera and an exploration of perceptions of gender roles. It managed to be both the top Oscar winner and the highest-grossing film of 1979.

20m. Ridge Project had not one, but two TV rooms, one on the top floor and one at ground level. However, both TV rooms were often empty. Students usually found better things to do with their time than TV. But sometimes people would watch silly series such as “*Fantasy Island*” or “*Little House on the Prairie*”.

I spent many nights in the TV rooms, all night, usually to work on papers for classes. I liked having old movies to keep me company as I worked.

20n. Once I walked into the upstairs TV room and was startled to find a boy and a girl engaged in vigorous exercise.

They were probably High-School students who'd broken away from a tour of Ridge Project. They'd found the room and decided that it was abandoned. Obviously, the thing to do when one finds an abandoned room is to put it to good use.

I'm not sure of the story. They were quite busy, so I didn't interrupt to inquire.

20o. This wasn't a usual occurrence. Most of the time, nothing much went on in the room except for reruns of “[*Benny Hill*](#)”.

Good old Benny Hill. He wasn't the classiest act, and you couldn't describe him as sensitive. In the end, his failure to adapt to changes in society proved to be his undoing. But I didn't think about any of this at the time. He was simply a familiar presence.

Now if you're feeling miserable, if you're feeling blue
Here's a little ditty that'll help to pull you through
All the clouds will disappear, the grey skies turn to blue
Just stick your finger in your ear and go ting-a-ling-a-loo



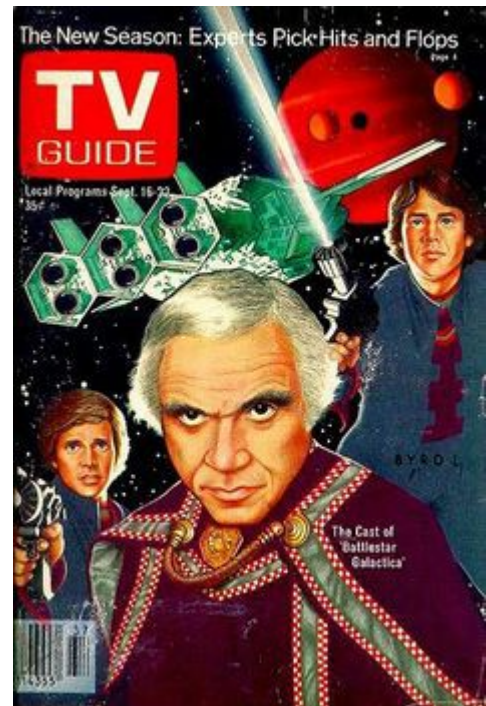
20p. One TV show was a special event. Members of Ridge Project and Ridge House met at Ridge House in September 1978 to watch the premiere of “*Battlestar Galactica*”.

This was the TV series with robots that said “*By your command*” as opposed to the 2000s existential angst version.

The robots were originally supposed to be lizard-men, but this was changed to reduce risks that “*Battlestar Galactica*” might be accused of being too violent. If the heroes destroyed robots, this could be positioned as less violent than killing lizard-men.

TV has changed in 35 years :-)

Expectations were high. “*Battlestar Galactica*” was thought to be TV's answer to the first “*Star Wars*” movie, which had come out a year earlier. The premiere was flashy, but the series was shallow and petered out quickly.



***** 21 - Women of the 1970s *****

21a. My parents were conservative white suburbanites in a city that was largely whites-only until growth started in the 1970s. Their views were common for the time and the place, though far from universal.

In short, my parents and others like them had a patronizing view of minorities, a dislike or even hatred of gays, and a disdain of modern women.

Women had started to work outside of the home in increasing numbers. Conservative suburbanites considered women who did this to be strident, humorless, “women's libbers”. This view made no sense but many espoused it.

My parents were Fundamentalists, though not people of genuine faith, and so their view of women was especially complicated.

Women, from their perspective, were supposed to be submissive and to worship their husbands. Worship as in a literal perception of the Hand of God at work. If a husband was violent, it was to be perceived as God's Will.

My mother, Grace Kiraly, was a victim of long-term spousal abuse of different types, but she saw no incongruity in any of this.

These views were more common at the time in Walnut Creek and other lily-white cities than in diverse cities such as Berkeley and San Francisco.

21b. My parents had sent me, at age 15, to a religious reeducation program that mirrored their views.

The program wasn't about religion as in philosophy, metaphysics, or ethics. The point was to drive home the notion that the husbands in a household, even the violent ones, had the backing of God.

The teachers mailed me Bible Bookmarks for years afterward. I liked the Bible Bookmarks, but I shed the rest of it as easily as a duck sheds water.

“God is fond of abusers.” “Quack.”

A friend who's interested in the mind, Metacognician, tells me that I can't be affected by indoctrination. It rolls right off of the folds in my brain.

So, when I arrived at Ridge Project, I didn't need to learn new ways of thinking. It was more as though I'd left a strange place and found my way to the real world.



21c. What I remember most about the women of Ridge Project is the self-confidence. They'd have laughed at the views of the past.

If there were issues at Ridge Project related to gender, I don't remember them.

The women were individuals, of course, but a typical young woman of the house, and of the times, could be described as assertive, free-spirited, and self-aware.



Ridge Project circa 1980

*** * * 22 – Gays * * ***

22a. In Walnut Creek, it was considered very bad to be gay.

I don't think that the word “gay” was widely used until the mid-1970s. Boys who were passive, regardless of actual sexual orientation, were called “Queer”, “Fag”, or “Fem”. And if a girl seemed awkward, she was called “Lezzy”.

22b. The issue of being passive or not was confusing to me, a logical child. Fighting wasn't allowed at school. But, if you didn't fight back when attacked, you were a “Fem”.

I only fought back against attackers twice. It should have been more often.

22c. I think that the “Lezzy” insult was chanted at a dear friend from the period, Peggy Hildebrand.

Peggy was a nice young lady who was similar, on the female side, to what I was on the male side.

Autistic, or a parallel condition, with unusual neurological traits. Honest, naive, and most likely vulnerable.

I was drawn to Science Fiction, as autistic engineer types often are, but found a couple of normals who shared the interest.

Peggy, for her part, was a fan of the composer Aram Khachaturian. I'd guess she didn't know many people that she could discuss her beloved composer with.

I wish that I'd been there more for Khachaturian purposes.



At one point during my Ridge Project years, Peggy wrote to me about the past. She wanted to talk about things that had happened.

This was snail-mail as opposed to email or text. At the time, snail-mail was the primary means of written communication. Email was something that only C.S. students had. Text messages didn't exist in their current form for another 15 years.

I was busy and wrote back to express disinterest. Peggy didn't respond and, in a lifetime, I never saw her or heard from her again.

22d. I don't recall if anybody that I knew at Ridge Product was gay or lesbian. If I was aware of this at the time, I don't think that it mattered to me.

There was a surprise, though. One day, I was walking through Sproul Plaza at U.C. Berkeley and I found Roger Ceragioli, a former High School classmate, at a table. I talked briefly to Roger and then looked down.

It was one of the gay rights tables. Roger was an early gay activist. It was unexpected, and “unexpected” wasn't something that I did well. I didn't know what to say, so I left without saying anything.

I should have offered Roger support. But I didn't. And you don't get many chances to “take it back” in life.

I told my mother, Grace Kiraly, a few years later, that one of my High School classmates had turned out to be gay. She was appalled.

I didn't identify the gay classmate. Instead, I told Grace only that his mother was one of her circle.

It pleased me to leave the woman disconcerted, wondering, who in her circle was connected to “un-Christian choices” ?



It's difficult to say if people like my mother can be considered “good”. Do you assess those who hate the different in the context of their upbringing and their culture and overlook what they say about others or do to them?

I'm inclined to say, “No”.

In 2009, Twisted Time, a member of the same High School group that Akhil, Roger, and I had belonged to, was in declining health. He wanted to talk to Roger, who had been a close friend for a while. So I went and found Roger.

Roger had become an astronomer. Then, in middle age, he'd experienced a mid-life crisis or gotten into some sort of trouble.

Whatever the reason, he'd run away from his life abruptly and left the country. And he'd hidden himself well. But I located him by writing to a couple that had met him and mentioned it in a blog. He responded to an email, but he didn't want to talk to Twisted Time or to me.

Roger's unwillingness to speak with Twisted Time, under the circumstances, seemed harsh, but sometimes one must let others make their own choices.

22e. In recent years, I've learned that Bob Westrup, a boy I used to play chess with, was gay and others were as well.

It doesn't seem important. I don't expect to speak with my parents again, or my brother Scott Kiraly. Scott, especially, was of the “It was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” school of thought. But if they were to talk to me about gays burning in Hell, I'd say this:

God doesn't revile gays, up your ass goes your song
He'd revile you; He doesn't, though, because He can't perceive you
You are the failed crop, the seed that came up wrong
You hate the different, you are not to be treasured or even measured
You are the chaff, the part that does not belong

***** 23 – Racial minorities *****

23a. I don't remember many racial issues in the Walnut Creek of the past. One reason is simple. In much of Walnut Creek, until the city started a period of rapid growth, you simply didn't see people of color. It was largely a “whites only” place.

My entire grade in Grade School had one Filipino boy and that was it for non-white. I don't remember meeting a Black person my age until I was 10 years old. And he didn't live in the area; this was on a Church trip.

Segregation of this magnitude didn't mean that people in my community were racist. In fact, most individuals were not “[Archie Bunker](#)” types. But there was certainly something odd about Walnut Creek as a whole.

And, as an autistic child, I noticed details though I often didn't process them. This included little things related to my family and race.

My mother, Grace Kiraly, told her children “There are good black people as well as bad black people”. Why, I wondered, didn't she say “There are good white people as well as bad white people” ?

Why did Grace say this only about Blacks?

The Kiraly household was full, too, of books and magazines that said strange things about Blacks. They argued that slaves in the U.S. had healthier lives than their masters, suggested that people of color were lazy and did not wish to work, and insisted that God had willed slavery. Slavery was said to be part of the Divine Plan.

Grace herself believed that slavery was all right because some Black nations had sold prisoners of war to slavers.

These views were common among Conservatives and Fundamentalists at the time, though less so among people of genuine faith.

23b. Walnut Creek was so “white” that employers miles away listed jobs at Las Lomas High School so that they wouldn't run the risk of having a Black teenager apply. Especially not one who was lower-class.

Employers weren't allowed to say “No Blacks” in job listings, but they knew that if they hired from my High School, they'd get a white teenager, or at least one who was middle-class.

All of this changed starting in the 1970s. Today, Walnut Creek is a more diverse city. But some of the older people, my parents included, were unable to accept that the world was changing and would continue to change.

23c. We did have people of color starting in Middle School. [Akhil Amar](#), for example.

Akhil was a hard-working young man. He attended Yale University and runs Yale Law School these days.

I doubt that Akhil ever thought of himself as a minority or considered the color of his skin to be relevant to his life. If anybody had suggested that it mattered, he'd have told them to shove it. But he was more of a milestone than he might acknowledge.

Akhil was also the first non-white person that I ever knew personally.

There had been the one Filipino kid, Mike Lazaga, but he'd tried to arrange for a group of boys to conduct a sort of symbolic rape of me. I didn't see him as somebody that I wanted to be acquainted with.

To be clear, Akhil and I were not friends. He was the reason that I never sought treatment related to autism.

But I did consider Akhil my best enemy for years. He was patronizing at times, but I was better than him at Math and a match for him at Chess. He, on the other hand, did work towards goals and I should have learned that from him.

Akhil sent his brother Vikram Amar, of U.C. Davis Law School, to help with the 2012 legal cases mentioned previously. Vikram was spooked by the factors involved and took off. But it was decent of Akhil to make an attempt to be useful.

A mutual associate, Nancy Grabow, the emotional center of my High-School group and briefly Akhil's romantic partner, urged me during this period to phone Akhil. I agreed, with some reluctance, but he declined to take the call.

(continued on next page)



23d. In Berkeley, and at Ridge Project, racial minorities were simply part of the community, not rare or usual. This seemed, as with everything else, natural and ordinary. It was the way that a community was supposed to be.

23e. I wasn't sure of the rules. I didn't know if one was supposed to disregard race entirely. But a Black associate told me, “Yes, if you need to describe somebody physically, it's acceptable to say that they're Black.”

23f. The most significant minorities issue that I remember from my U.C. Berkeley years is the Bakke case. This was a 1977-1978 legal case in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld some aspects of college affirmative action programs, but prohibited the practice of setting aside a specific number of seats for minority students.


Opponents of affirmative action wanted to forbid the use of “quotas” to increase the number of minorities in colleges. They succeeded.

I wasn't sure that I understood the legal issues involved. But proponents of affirmative action noted that some schools used “quotas” to ensure that the children of wealthy white alumni could get into college. They said that it was unreasonable for Bakke, a white engineer at the heart of the case, to focus on “quotas” that benefited poor, black students while completely ignoring “quotas” that benefited rich, white ones.

This point caught my attention. The idea that it was wrong to “frame”, or position, legal cases so as to change what they were about resonated with me.

* * * 24 - *Classes* * * *

24a. My professors at U.C. Berkeley, the teaching assistants, people who made up the infrastructure; they were human. Not infallible. The system was far from perfect.

The Student Health Service, for example, nearly killed me that one time :-)
 More about that incident later.

But I'd say that classes fit together, majors made sense, and students often graduated ready to make a difference in the world.

I didn't make a difference, but that's another story.

24b. I tried to balance my courses. Depth in technical subjects and breadth in other areas.


For technical, I focused on Math and Computer Science, but included hardware courses, Chemistry, and Physics. For breadth, I tried History, Economics, Logic, Rhetoric, Philosophy, Russian, Karate, and Esperanto. The last two were non-University classes.

It's a good idea to take a range of courses. You might discover something about yourself or find out what you're meant to do.

24c. In my case, I turned out to be good at Russian. I couldn't write ordinary English Cursive, but Cyrillic Cursive came naturally to me. The instructor wanted me to continue Russian studies, but I was too unobservant to understand this.

24d. At the core, of course, I was made out of Math and Logic.

One Math professor felt that I used too much machinery in my proofs. Other professors described my work as “brilliant” and “ingenious”. I've always remembered the “machinery” remark, though.

There's more than one right way to do things in Math. And, if I'm going to go to the trouble of proving something, I'd like to be sure that it stays proved :P


Here's an excerpt from a Math final paper that I liked so much, I went back years later and asked the professor to give it back to me so that it wouldn't be destroyed:

Suppose that f is an n -place T -function definable in terms of $\rightarrow, \wedge, \vee$. Then there exists a wff ϕ so defining f . But simply replace each occurrence in ϕ of $(\psi \vee \pi)$, ψ and π wff's, by $f(\psi \rightarrow \pi) \rightarrow \pi$, and the result is a wff ϕ' that also defines f , but which contains no truth function symbols other than \rightarrow and \wedge , and so defines f in terms of \rightarrow and \wedge .

24e. One quarter, something interesting happened. In three different courses, possibly Math, Philosophy, and Rhetoric, the same ideas and even some of the same texts came up. The three subjects were parts of a whole.

This is another benefit of breadth; the fact that there are underlying principles to reason and possibly to reality starts to become clear.

The book "*Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*" by Douglas Hofstadter (1979) is recommended to people who are interested in the point.

24f. Dr. Hardin B. Jones, the cancer researcher, wanted me to go into biophysics. He had a way of speaking that made one pay attention. I was a Computer Science and Mathematics student, but I might have done as Dr. Jones wished. However, he passed away abruptly. I remained on a path that was random but headed in the direction of computing.

24g. I was a double major in Mathematics and Computer Science. So I was entitled to two graduation ceremonies. I attended one of them but I didn't receive a notice about the other and missed it. They called my name, and apparently people looked around for me, but I wasn't there.

I've thought about this occasionally for decades.

My life was probably different than yours was or has been. I've had fewer positive moments than most people, I value them when they occur, and I regret the ones that were missed.

***** 25 - Science-Fiction conventions *****

25a. I went to Science Fiction conventions in the 1970s, but this was just me. Other U.C. Berkeley students, went, including a friend named John Blaker; I'll come back to him. But I don't recall Ridge Projectiles going.

Conventions were typically held in San Francisco or Oakland. They included events where celebrities made speeches or answered questions, rooms where books were sold, and showings of movies and the Star Trek Blooper Reel.

The Star Trek Blooper Reel was considered special. You couldn't see it anywhere but at conventions.

25b. Celebrity guests typically included William Shatner or another Star Trek actor and a few Science Fiction writers. Bob Wilkins, who hosted late-night movies for KTVU Channel 2 in Oakland, went to conventions sometimes as well.

If Harlan Ellison, one of the angriest writers in the field, showed up, things were bound to be interesting.

Ellison had a disdain for S.F. fans. I saw him at one convention in a small plastic tent. He was sitting at a typewriter, writing a story, covered in plastic so that no one could approach him. It wasn't clear why he'd come.

25c. I have an odd memory, present without context, about one convention. One of the major female S.F. writers, her name now forgotten, seemed to feel that I was in trouble. She wanted to help me. I didn't understand at the time. My guess now is that she picked up on the autism issue and misunderstood what I was.

*** * * 26 - *People in Berkeley* * * ***

26a. I often met street people in Berkeley who had messages that they needed to convey to others.

One street person told me, “only street-sweepers can understand the tall buildings that swim in our rivers”.

Somebody else presented a message that I understood better. It was about “The System”. We could not defeat “The System”, he said, because “The System” was us.

26b. Sometimes I met authors who gave me copies of their books. Worden McDonald, an aging writer, was one of them. He presented me with “*An Old Guy Who Feels Good*”.

A young woman, who I believe was a former homeless person, gave me her book of poetry. I can't identify the title because the book is lost to events discussed in Appendix C. But I've always remembered a footnote from the book. It said:

My footnotes are bare feet dancing

26c. I became acquainted with a few people in their 20s and 30s. They seemed very old. These included grad students, writers, interesting people.

I had the opportunity to build associations, to become a part of Berkeley long-term. But I didn't know how to connect with people or to keep them in my life. In the end, I managed to hold onto nobody I'd known in the area.

26d. I had a friend, still in High School, named Danny. He was, at Berkeley High, what some of my circle had been at Las Lomas, our High School; one of the boys with potential and the responsibility for attempting to fulfill it.

Akhil was one of those. Akhil and Danny did what they were supposed to do in Life. I did not.

Danny, a Coder, was unusual. He was well-known in Berkeley tech circles. He helped to run one of the computer rooms in Evans Hall. Coordinated projects at Lawrence Hall of Science. He got me a job in Sacramento once, an emergency IT trip.

And once, when I was in the Hospital, Danny was one of only two people who phoned me there to check up on me.

After I graduated in May 1981, I left Berkeley. I didn't see anybody significant I'd known in Berkeley again except for a former Ridge Project housemate, Emmanuel, who appeared on Telegraph Avenue one day in 1987.

On April Fool's Day, 2008, I stepped out of Time and went to look for Twisted Time, one of my High-School classmates. I found him and others from our High School group. Then I checked up on Danny. But I couldn't find him.

Danny was supposed to be a significant name in tech by now. But there was no sign of him in the tech world. He'd disappeared without a trace.

Then I located him. He'd left tech entirely and become a heart surgeon with practices throughout the country.

I haven't seen Danny for 34 years and I don't expect to speak with him again. But I wish he could know, as I wish others long-gone could know, that I'm grateful for kindnesses that were shown without reciprocation.

26e. Famous people often passed through Berkeley. I usually didn't pay attention to this, but two occasions stood out.

* Eric Idle, a member of the British comedy team "*Monty Python*", came to visit Berkeley circa 1978. Ads for the occasion stated, "*Come and Be Balm'd by Dr. Idle.*"

I hadn't heard much discussion of the group at Berkeley. But when Idle showed up, the lines of people waiting to see him were the longest I'd ever seen.

Idle was at the peak of his trajectory at the time. His fame declined subsequently, but he seems to have put his time on the Earth to good use.

* Prince Charles, also from the U.K., visited U.C. Berkeley during my years there as well.

Charles's visit struck me as silly. He was allowed to meet only carefully-selected students, ones who wouldn't say anything "political" or controversial. And his remarks suggested that he was a jack-ass. To paraphrase:

“I suppose it's a good thing to meet the students. I didn't really want to.”

Gee, that's mighty big of you, your Highness :P 🤪 The orchestration and pointlessness of Charles's visit didn't seem very Berkeley to me.

*** * * 27 - *More about fame* * * ***

The reactions that some normals have when they meet famous people are odd.

My younger Brother Tom Kiraly, for example, wasn't fond of Jerry Brown, the Governor of California during my Time at Ridge Project. But once, when Tom and I noticed that Jerry Brown was standing near us, Tom demanded that I loan him a pen so that he could get the Governor's autograph. Then he rushed up to the Governor.

Agents standing next to Jerry Brown eyed Tom and noticed that he was carrying an object. It was simply my pen, but they had only moments to assess the situation. If Tom had been Black, they might have shot him. But Tom simply had to have the autograph of a famous person, even if he didn't like the person in question.

When I deal with famous people, I treat them the same way as anybody else. I speak honestly and directly. Some of them find this disconcerting.

People, others, are there for us to be useful to, and to be useful to us and others. They should be assessed based on what they do.

Who they are is not the issue.

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* * *

The picture below is from Ridge Project or the area circa 1979. It's probably a wall painting. The scene resembles the original magazine cover to a Science Fiction serial by Vernor Vinge named "[Marooned in Real Time](#)". However, if the date is correct, it's a coincidence; the serial wasn't published until 7 years later.



*** * * 28 - Other co-ops * * ***

I knew the names of the other co-ops in the USCA system. Sometimes I attended meetings at them. But, as with the five-foot banana, I simply accepted that they were there. It didn't occur to me to ask questions about them or to understand the nature of the diverse groups that they housed and represented.

I knew that Lothlorien was the vegetarian house. And I enjoyed one Board meeting at Barrington Hall.

They served wine and spaghetti before the meeting. This was a sensible way to conduct business. And Barrington had a painting in it that I found interesting. It was a rendition of “*The Last Supper*” that portrayed the characters as vegetables.

Around 1980, there was a TV movie about a child custody battle. I'm not sure of the title. It was probably produced due to the success of “*Kramer vs. Kramer*” in 1979. It turned out that the movie was a true story and that the child in the movie was now a college student and living in the USCA co-op system.

The building was Cloyne Court, I think.

I imagined him sitting with his housemates as the movie appeared on the communal TV screen. I wondered how he felt, in the imagined scene, about his life being presented so publicly.

*** * * 29 - Workload * * ***

29a. Many students had significant workloads. I was typical in this regard. Some quarters, I didn't sleep much.

In a typical quarter at U.C. Berkeley, I'd spend the mornings on classes, the afternoons on jobs or errands, the evenings on Ridge Project workshifts, USCA Board meetings, Council meetings, or recreation, and the nights on jobs, classwork, or study.

Usually, there was time left over for sleep. But during busier quarters, I didn't get to sleep until sometime between 4:00am and 7:00am. Some nights, I'd sleep just 15 minutes, then I'd stumble down the stairs and out the door to classes.

Once, I dreamed about the staircase next to the front door. In the dream, I made it down to the ground floor, then I fell down and slept.

29b. One of my majors was a factor in my schedule.

I was double major in Computer Science and Mathematics. On the Computer Science side, we were required to do programming assignments, of course, and modern personal computers didn't exist yet. So assignments were usually done using Model 33-ASR TTYs or ADM3A terminals in Cory Hall, late at night when there was a chance of getting one.

There weren't enough terminals, so the rooms were jammed even at 2:00am and, of course, the computers had a tendency to break down.

29c. At night, when I wasn't in the computer rooms, I was usually working on assignments in my room at Ridge Project or in one of the TV rooms.

When I was in “flow”, or focused, I tended to work until things were finished.

On the morning of January 8, 1977, I was working alone in Evans Hall at 2:00am. There was a loud noise. I dismissed it. The room started shaking, so I crawled under a table. Things quieted down, so I went back to work. Then, more shaking.

This was the Briones Hills earthquake swarm. I was too busy working to pay attention to the fact that an earthquake was happening.

****** 30 - Examination Dream ******

There was another dream that I had, this one again and again for 25 years. It was about Berkeley, but I don't think it started to happen until after I graduated.

The dream is interesting because it's a rare example of a genuine archetype experience, a dream that tens of thousands of people experience repeatedly.

If you're still in school, you may dream this dream later in life as well. In the dream, you suddenly realize that it's an examination day. You must attend a final. But somehow you've forgotten to attend class. The final is important, but it isn't clear where the examination room is or how you're going to deal with the situation.

The longevity of the dream, which some people have only once but others have a dozen times, says something about the importance that the subconscious assigns to concerns regarding a student's future. And the unique role that examinations, which one both can and can't control, play in deciding that future.

This poster is probably from campus as opposed to Ridge Project. Either way, it looks quite familiar and is representative of the period:



***** 31 - Student Health Service *****

One disadvantage of communal living situations is illness. Colds, flu, and obscure illnesses can spread like wildfire.

I became very ill myself one time. I went to the Student Health Service on campus. They took some blood samples, checked them, and told me I'd be fine.

So I went back to Ridge Project. I got sicker.

I couldn't get out of bed or do my workshifts. I don't remember telling people about the illness, but I must have done so to explain why I wasn't doing my workshifts.

I don't know how I obtained food, or if I did.

Eventually, I was sick enough that I had to drop out of school for the quarter. Then I received a phone call from the Student Health Service.

“Say,” they said, “your name isn't Virginia, is it?”

As it happened, my name wasn't Virginia.

The Student Health Service had mixed up my bloodwork with that of a girl named Virginia. I'd had untreated pneumonia for a couple of months. I recovered, though, returned to my workshifts, and resumed classes the next quarter.

***** 32 - God With Us *****

32a. I was an “isolate”.

The primary issues were autism or a parallel condition, long-term abuse by my father Jim Kiraly, intimidation and violence by peers that had lasted years, neglect since infancy by my mother Grace Kiraly, and lack of medical treatment for other issues.

This was a typical story for autistic children and teenagers at the time. Or for children and teenagers who were different in other ways. It was considered all right for the different ones to be hurt at home and at school.

(continued on next page)

32b. In my case, there had been a few incidents.



I was beaten to the ground at school and knocked unconscious; somebody cut me with a knife; one hand was placed in a door and held there so that the fingers could be crushed; I was struck with objects of different types; I was knocked down and chased by my father, a 220-pound psychotic, as well as by groups of my peers.

Most importantly, both my peers and my family members understood that I was passive and would not fight back.

There was a place in Walnut Creek named Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum. Twisted Time and I had taken a nature class there. It was a nice place, one where you could feel safe.

One day, I walked out of the building and somebody punched me in the solar plexus. I fell to the ground and found that I could not breathe.

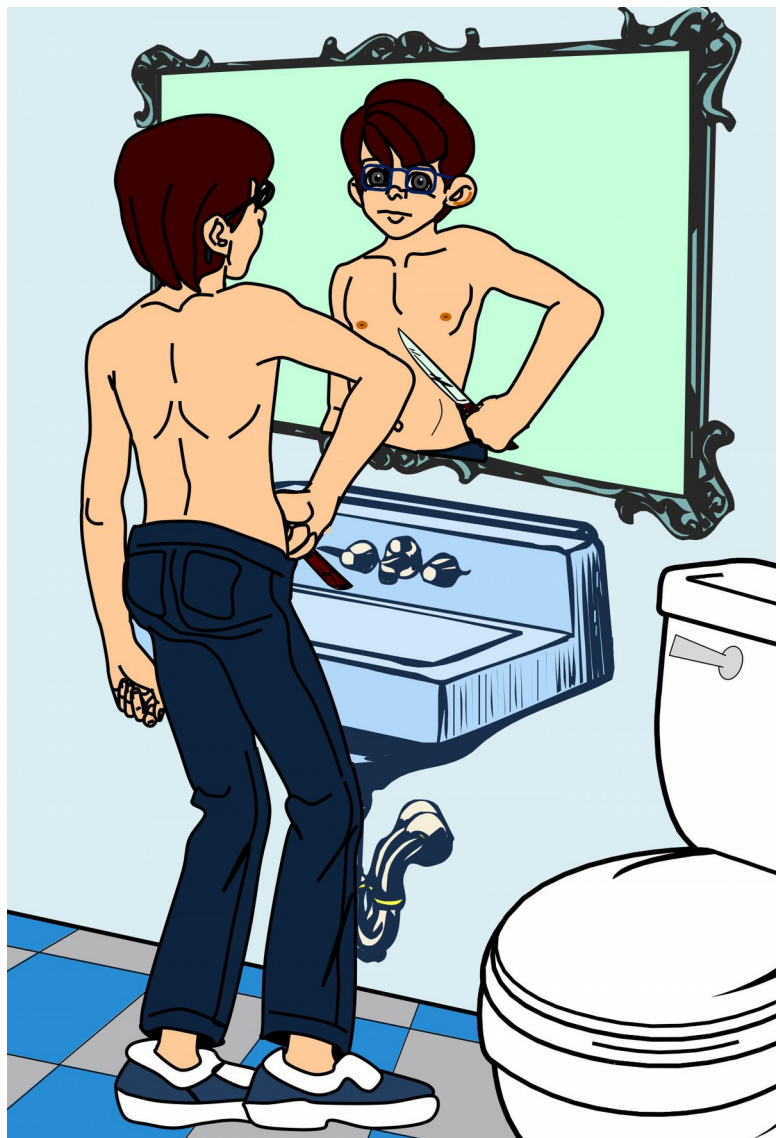
I don't know if I even knew them. But they knew me. They knew that I wouldn't fight back and this was what mattered.

Like many autistic children, I was a safe target, if one wished to let off steam and have some fun.

Many people went through this, but most weren't being hurt at both home and school.

I looked into possible solutions, but I couldn't figure out how to make them work.

Once, I took a knife and looked in the mirror for the right place to insert it into myself. But my knowledge of anatomy wasn't up to the task.



I discussed some of this with my mother, Grace Kiraly, decades later. Her reaction was that nothing bad had happened, because if it had happened, it would make her look bad as a mother. So, unpleasant realities evaporated.

This is how denial happens. This is how it works.

32c. John Blaker, a High-School and U.C. Berkeley classmate, a Computer Science student as I was, had a Middle School situation that was more difficult.

John was autistic, like me, and was harmed sufficiently at school that he needed to leave it for a while. I believe that, in his case, multiple bones were broken. He told me, decades later, that I'd helped to ease his transition back into school. I didn't know any of this at the time.

John's parents were not abusive, though. He was physically attacked at school, but he had support at home. In the end, he was able to build a productive life.

John left U.C. Berkeley and, like Danny, left tech as well.

He became, not a software engineer, but a Catholic Priest, a Science Fiction costume designer and convention organizer, and the head of a school district in Richmond, CA.

We talked a few times later in life. Once, we met at a hotel where two conventions were in progress. One convention was for Catholics and the other was for Science Fiction fans.

John was part of both communities. So he spoke both with priests in vestments and with S.F. fans dressed as aliens and demons.

I suppose that I've known a few interesting people.



32d. John was able to survive to adulthood and to build a life for two reasons. He had family. And, he told me decades later, he sought out a structured existence. Priests do not, as a rule, live random and unstructured lives.

I never had the first factor, family, until I came to Ridge Project. Not people who lived with me and wouldn't hurt me.

There were friendly relatives, such as my grandfather Ivan Kmeta, a leading figure in the Ukrainian Diaspora, and his son Anatol Kmeta, who called me “Professor”. However, they lived thousands of miles away.

Looking back, I wasn't safe until I moved into “Lucky 13” at Ridge Project.

32e. My peers at Ridge Project didn't know me well, because I wasn't able to respond well to them. A few people were negative, still immature. But the majority were willing to be familiar figures, to talk late at night, or to trade favors.

If this isn't family, it's close enough.

Things worked out because, in Berkeley, and especially in Ridge Project, a diverse residence in a diverse city, I wasn't all that unusual. People were comfortable with a foreign duck in a pond full of all sorts of birds. They were even kind, in a casual way.

I'd like students to know that people who don't respond to social cues or seem to be involved with others may notice small gestures and be warmed by them.

32f. After U.C. Berkeley, I fell into Time and floated down the stream.

I didn't think about autism, or bullying, or much else for decades. But I woke up once. It was a memorable moment.

Around the year 2000, I purchased a newspaper in Silicon Valley and was surprised to find a story about my 1970s Middle School, [Walnut Creek Intermediate](#).

The story talked about a boy who'd been bullied and had had an eye damaged by a tormentor. This part, the story up to here, was routine.

The boy who'd taunted the victim and damaged an eye was going to be sent away for a weekend. He wasn't going to jail and there would be no significant punishment. He was simply going to be sent away for a weekend.

The community rose up in anger. The anger wasn't directed at the violent boy. Or at the fact that he wasn't facing genuine consequences. The anger was about the fact that he was going to be disciplined at all. Sent away for a weekend.

I leaned against the wall of a building and shook.

32g. I did make friends occasionally at Ridge Project. Two students that I knew during my first year come to mind.

One student was another Robert. Robert Loder, the older Brother of a High School classmate of mine, Philip Loder.

I'd known Philip since we'd been 9 years old, and he lived at Ridge Project for a while. We weren't friends and we didn't interact. He was a familiar figure, though, and this was good.

Philip and a girl named Diane made love once in the room next to mine, and I remember that. It was pretty noisy.

I'd dated Diane, but I hadn't known how to click with her, and I didn't care about Philip's subsequent involvement. But this wasn't the only time that people in next-door rooms became loud during this type of activity.

It was distracting.

32h. Philip's older brother, Robert, and a friend of Robert's named Emmanuel, or *God With Us*, treated me kindly.

On one occasion in 1976, Emmanuel and I flew an ornithopter, a wind-up toy bird, next to Evans Hall on campus. The ornithopter was just a simple toy, but somehow it flew all the way to the top of the building. This was ten stories straight up. Emmanuel managed to talk maintenance staff into retrieving the bird for us.



Emmanuel seemed protective of me. I didn't notice this at the time or think about it. It's not clear whether or not he understood that I was different. He never asked anything of me. Like a few people in my life, he was simply there for me.

Around 1987, six years after I graduated from U.C. Berkeley, I visited Berkeley and encountered Emmanuel by chance on Telegraph Avenue. He seemed pleased to see me.

I phoned Emmanuel shortly afterward but made no attempt to build a connection and he disappeared from my life as most people did.

32i. A few minutes ago, I was sorting old email. I found a misplaced letter that I hadn't seen before. The letter was over a year old. It said:

I was in the Bay Area some months ago visiting my friend Barry Kaye (you may remember him, he was in Ridge Project, now know as Casa Zimbabwe) in Alameda, but I couldn't stay for long; it would have been a good time to get together. I'm driving down to Los Angeles in January/February, perhaps we can meet when I come back up. Need your contact info.

I've come across random things on the 'net which remind me of you: Forth, Esperanto, transporters, do you recall your idea of cooling an object to absolute zero so that it would become a wave and thus could be transmitted? Just wondering what you were up to and where life has led you.

Emmanuel

**** * * 33 - Transportation in Berkeley * * ****

33a. I didn't know many Berkeley students with cars. Cars were expensive and it was difficult to find parking. For transportation, the usual options besides walking were bicycles, BART, AC Transit buses, motorcycles, and Humphrey Go-BART.

Humphrey Go-BART was a free shuttle bus that ran from the local BART station to Evans Hall and from there to the Lawrence Hall of Science up in the hills. It's gone now, but the other options haven't changed much in 40 years.

33b. Once, on November 3, 1977, I ran after a bus that I didn't want to miss. It was a bit foolish. I tripped, tore my pants, gashed open my left knee, twisted my right ankle until it was visibly rotated, and got blood on things.

The bus driver stared at me. "I'd have waited for you," he said.

I made it back to Ridge Project, slept for an hour, then attended an Opcom meeting that lasted about three hours.

I suppose, as I'm old now, I wouldn't recover as rapidly these days. If you're young, and lucky enough to be healthy, minor accidents are less significant.

*** * * 34 - Motorcycles past * * ***

I didn't mind riding motorcycles, but they were riskier than the owners admitted.

Vern Brown, a Ridge Projectile, gave me a ride to a job once on his motorcycle. It ran out of gas near the Lawrence Hall of Science and fell over. My jacket got torn. No injuries, though. Philip Loder's story is more interesting.

Philip, a classmate since age 9 and another Projectile, rode his motorcycle all the way to Alaska one summer and back. He went to cut fish, a job that paid a lot at the time.

Thousands of miles up to the job. Thousands of miles back. No incidents.

Then, as he paused at a red light in Berkeley, near Ridge Project, the motorcycle fell over and Philip broke his arm or leg. I don't recall which limb, but it seemed ironic.

Emmanuel gave me rides on his motorcycle, I think, without incident. But I'm not certain that he had a motorcycle. In old age, there are moments that seem as current as last week, and pieces, like this one, that disappear.

*** * * 35 - Motorcycles present * * ***

I've never owned a motorcycle or felt the need to own one. However, I understand that the devices can be part of one's identity.

35a. I have a second cousin, George Kerechanko, who's been a biker for decades. He and his wife were present at the biker shootout that made the news a few years ago. I don't know if he rides presently, but motorcycles are more to him than transportation.

35b. A 30-something friend, **std::vector**, crashed his motorcycle on Highway 680 in December 2014. He suffered significant injuries. However, he wasn't complete without a bike. So, after he recovered, I took him to buy another one.

std::vector chose a Harley, one that was a nice shade of blue though quite loud. He sold it a few days after he bought it and purchased a different one. It's important to find the right match.

35c. Long-term bikers, the ones who are committed, are different from normals. But some are sensible enough.

For a while, late in life, I knew a demented electrician-artist named Charles Artisan; most likely deceased now from cancer.

Charles Artisan was tough. He'd been to prison and his post-retirement career was to act as a loan-enforcement intimidator. He was also a biker and an authority on motorcycles. However, he was afraid of one biker bar where there had been a shooting. He was surprised that I'd go to the bar sometimes to hang out.

I didn't see a problem with this. If bikers, real bikers, understand your intentions, they're usually fine with you. This is less true of normals. I stopped going to the bar, though, before I left the area, because the music was too loud. No getting around it, I'm old.

***** 36 – *Evans Hall system* *****

36a. While I was in High School, I did most of my coding at the Lawrence Hall of Science. After I moved to Berkeley, I coded in Cory and Evans Hall, both for classes and for myself.

There was a BASIC system in Evans Hall for a couple of years, 1977 to 1978, that I spent a lot of time on. The system consisted of a Nova 1200 or similar minicomputer connected to about a dozen ADM3A and Hazeltine terminals.

36b. I'm not sure which department had responsibility for the system. However, users included both U.C. students and High Schoolers who, I believe, mostly snuck in.

One of those was my younger brother Ken Kiraly; he'd come to visit me, but there was no sentiment involved. Ken was a harsh and unpleasant young man. The reason for the visits was that Ken needed to get to the computers. As I'd learned BASIC at the Lawrence Hall of Science, Ken picked it up in Evans Hall.

It's my understanding that Ken subsequently became one of the inventors of the Amazon Kindle; I'm not certain of his role, but his name is on the patents. So, the fact that he started out in Evans Hall in 1977 is a footnote relevant to Kindle chronology.

36c. I spent much of my time awake coding for classes and for a job on Telegraph Avenue. You'd think that that would be enough coding. But it wasn't. In Evans Hall, I worked on interpreters for new languages, games, and many other programs.

One program, my version of the BASIC TREK games that were popular in the 1970s, was popular for a while. I could tell because I added logger code to see who was using the program. Even the head sysadmin brought his son at night to play the game.

The TREK game was nothing special, but it did add minor touches such as humor and supernovas that could take out star quadrants.

36d. Another game of mine that was promising was GLOK. This was an ADVEN-style game with a broad scope. You started out in front of Evans Hall. From there you could take Humphrey Go-BART to BART, and from there you could travel to other planets, then beyond the galaxy, ultimately outside the universe, and at the end to Heaven or Hell. The game was never finished, but I did receive one fan letter about it.

36e. I was as clumsy with people in Evans Hall as elsewhere.

Somebody, either the head sysadmin or Danny, who worked on this system, granted me a high-status account and a nick that means something to me now. I didn't ask why I'd been given the account, or offer to help with running the system, or make any significant attempt to build connections with anybody involved.

The nick was GPAO; Great Programmer A-One.

***** 37 – Odds and ends *****

37a. I've been asked whether or not Ridge Project (CZ) got along with the USCA (BSC) Central Office in the past. The answer is that, if I was told about this, I didn't understand it. I didn't fully grasp this sort of thing.

37b. Ridge Project was open to the community; anybody might wander in. Casa Zimbabwe has a locked gate. In 2015, one student wondered what I thought of the change. The answer is that it's all right to be part of the world but also to have a home of one's own, a place where others are welcome but only by invitation.

37c. I don't think that pets were allowed at Ridge Project. But somebody brought a St. Bernard once; he was almost as wide as the hallways. And house members took care of a cat for a while. Here she is now, arriving for a visit:



37d. The stairwells at Ridge Project haven't changed much in 40 years except for the absence of the marijuana plants. Note: The gardens were next to the windows, which in the 1970s scene below are located behind the photographer.

(continued on next page)



***** 38 - Family *****

People at Ridge Project sometimes had family members visit.

I remember that one young woman showed her little brother around the co-op. He'd had brain surgery and could no longer speak. I observed from her body language that she feared he was fragile and might die. He was valuable to her and she was going to do what she could to help.

I watched this sort of thing from the outside. My own family members were as useful to me as rusty nails.

My mother Grace Kiraly visited Berkeley once. We had tea at a Chinese restaurant a block away, now gone. Three decades later, the subject of whether or not she'd ever done anything for me came up in a discussion.

“I came to visit you in Berkeley that time 30 years ago”, she said.

I was born an orphan and given to strangers who took pleasure in hurting each other and me.

I didn't have anything resembling family that lived with me until I came to Ridge Project. It was temporary, but no matter. Life is temporary.

Understand the importance of communities. Be kind to those who you assess as members of yours and therefore human.

In the end, who you are kind to, and why, are the factors that define you.

*** * * 39 - Casa Zimbabwe * * ***

It was 2015. Ramon, my webdev student, and I walked through Casa Zimbabwe with a manager named Pua Aloalo.

There were more paintings on the walls than before. “*Dark Side of the Moon*” was still there. Heidi's Room was still there. It was called the Heidi-Hole now.

The house switchboard was gone.

The dining room was new. Everything had been redone. There seemed to be a pole going through one table and students were dancing, on the table, around it. It was an unusual sight; I'm not sure that I perceived it correctly.

The house photograph exhibit was still there, but it had moved a meter to the right. The house was no longer open. There was a locked gate out front.

I saw nothing, really, that persuaded me that Time had passed. Surely, only months had gone by and not decades.

The people I'd known; they would not be here. But they'd be somewhere close by. It wasn't so long a period that they could have wandered far.

*** * * 40 - A closing message * * ***

Only a few Ridge Projectiles are likely to read this document. However, I'll say this to everybody: I wasn't close to most of you, but I'm grateful to those of you who were casual, who tried to help, and who didn't mind differences.

I used to accept everybody, myself, but I've changed.

The ones who hate the different, who judge based on the color of a skin, the nature of one's religion, the ability to walk or to run, or the state of one's neurology; I don't value them or accept them. And I'm no longer afraid of them.

Some would call me feral.

For decades, I paid a price
For nothing that I received
In the end, I was deceived

I'm not nice
This needs to be understood
Look under the hood

I'm the Feral Coder now

Here is the lesson to you from me
Those who judge right and true
Based on what people do

As opposed to what they're perceived
to be
Who embrace diversity

Who accept the constitutive
other
These are the ones to call your
Brother
Put aside God above
These are the ones to value and
to love

Appendix A. OldCoder Internet History

Author: Robert Kiraly, OldCoder (Freenode) and BoldCoder (Twitter). Double Major, Math and C.S., U.C. Berkeley, 1981.

Explanation: I received these questions from a friend who was writing on behalf of a High School student that he knew:

A. How broadly was any of the research that ARPA and related organizations did publicized to the general public via radio, television, and other media?

B. Do you view the Internet as positive or negative overall (and why) ?

C. Did you have any personal experience with Mosaic or other browsers in the early 1990s? If so, what were your thoughts?

D. In what ways did the early Internet begin changing your daily routines?

E. What do you consider to be the most significant event or idea that made the Internet into what it is today?

F. Do you feel that people have more or less freedom because of the Internet?

G. Additional comments?

The request was for one or two sentences for each point. However, I won't answer that way. Instead, I'll try to cover the points involved as part of a broad picture.

The story isn't remarkable. But it may be interesting because it's what I observed personally.

Questions A, C, and D.

When I was a boy in the 1960s and 1970s, nobody that I knew had heard of the Internet.

It would have been surprising if we had heard of it. At the time, we didn't even have computers. The early Internet existed but there was no Web. The frameworks that were present didn't intersect ordinary lives much. Certainly not the lives of kids.

As a kid I wouldn't have known an ARPA from an apricot. I wanted access to computers of some type, though. I found it at a university located about ten miles from my house in Walnut Creek, California. The university was U.C. Berkeley.

I wasn't old enough to drive a car. However, a train station was built in my city circa the early 1970s. This was great. Until the train was added, kids were more or less trapped in Walnut Creek. Without a car, it wasn't easy to get to the next town. After the train came in, though, we were free to check out the area.

I chose to go to the university. I didn't go every day. However, sometimes I'd walk from school to the train station, get on the train, and be transported to another universe. A world that was quiet, that had stacks of books, and that even had computers.

The computers were among the first public access systems in the country. They weren't free. You had to pay to use them. But the cost was reasonable.

The terminals were tele-typewriters. Probably Model ASR-33s. People could use them to type and run BASIC programs. So we learned BASIC.

I say “we” because others went sometimes. Once or twice in some cases. More in others. This included Twisted Time, later an IEEE member and mathematician. Probably our associate Kevin King as well; he became an IT lead at Chevron.

Akhil Amar went at least once, but he was too busy with other activities to spend much time there. He teaches Law at Yale University these days. Kern King, Kevin's little brother, may have tagged along with Kevin. He's a Finance Director at Stanford University now. Roger Ceragioli, an astronomer now, visited a few times as well.

The terminals were not connected to the Internet. The idea of one of them talking to another in a different city would have seemed odd to me.

But things evolved. I got to know people who hung around the same place. Some of them had email. We just called it mail. So I learned about electronic messages. This was the first step that I took towards the Internet.

After High School I attended the same university. I started to use UNIX systems. These had standard mail software. I joined mailing lists using that.

Mailing lists were the next incremental change for me. They were the closest thing we had to online forums. Lists connected institutions to institutions. I don't remember much talk about the general public in this context.

People were much the same then as now. There were fights in forums. But since people usually knew who people were, they saw each other as human. And posters usually were not anonymous. This helped to keep things in check. Fights were more controlled.

Here is a poem that I remember from a list. One person attacked another. In this case it was probably a joke:

Peter in the springtime
Peter in the winter
Peter in the fall
Peter plunging down and down
Peter in the fall

“Peter” was Peter da Silva. He is well-known in some circles. He and I once wrote an adventure game together in Lisp. He married a woman who I believe evolved into a major Usenet figure.

Peter always had a sense of humor. I looked him up just now. Here's what one of his web pages says. The mailing list that's mentioned here is one of the lists that I hung out on in the 1970s:

Peter da Silva is a simulation running loose on the net. It was programmed largely by a rogue group of users in the late '70s and the early '80s, members of the notorious Chaos Mailing List that spread over the ARPAnet at that time. The simulation has come to believe that it's real, but don't let it fool you... it's nothing more than a collection of canned responses.

After mailing lists, Usenet came along. The next major step. Usenet was like a collection of mailing lists that anybody could view. A simple concept. But still a leap forward in organized communication.

Finger and Gopher sites started to increase in number after that. They weren't the Web as you know it. But by 30 years ago or so, it wasn't unusual to be able to type at a computer and read information stored hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Or even to make something happen. For example, you could ask a cola machine located in a different state to tell you if it had cola in stock and even if the cola was cold.

All of this affected me only incrementally. I became accustomed over time to the notion of electronic mail, online discussion, remote data storage, and remote operations of different types.

I was a software professional by the early 1980s but I don't remember using the Internet much at the time. My CEO was suspicious of newer technologies. If a letter needed to be sent immediately, I think that we mostly used faxes.

I started to read about hypertext during this period, though, and I considered creating my own hypertext system. I didn't follow through. Regrettable.

Then came NCSA Mosaic. This was the web browser that sparked the modern Web.

Mosaic wasn't the first web browser. In fact, Gopher clients, which were like text mode web browsers, had been around for years. But Mosaic was the one that caught on.

This was probably due to technical innovations such as bookmarks and inline images. Inline images were especially nice. When we ran the program and typed in a web address, both text and pictures would appear together. Slowly, because this was the era of dialup. But it was like having live newspapers that could appear anywhere, present anything, and be updated at any time.

The effect was startling at first.

Many businesses were on the ball. They realized immediately — long before the dot com era — that something significant had arrived.

This was a new medium that could replace books, magazines, newspapers, advertising circulars — anything in print — and update things in real time.

There was a land rush for Web domains early on. One consumer products firm went so far as to register domains for every skin condition or problem that one might think of.

The number of websites, commercial and personal, started to grow exponentially. But some companies — for example, mine — were confused about what this new thing was. I remember my CEO asking me “Where do I log in?” He imagined the Web as being some type of large BBS (Bulletin Board System). A closed environment that belonged to a single entity. But it was open, and that was a crucial point.

One Internet problem that I had to deal throughout the 1990s was bandwidth. My CEO was cost-conscious. So the entire company shared a single 9600 baud modem for a while. I had a firm of about 20 people on a single 9600 baud line. That one line had to carry email, web browsing, FTP downloads, everything for the entire company.

The topper was that my little brother, Ken, asked me to put some of his company's traffic on the same 9600 baud line. I rarely refused Ken anything, but I had to say no to that. As a footnote, it's my understanding that Ken was the engineer who later designed the Amazon Kindle.

Around the middle of the 1990s, I purchased a book for my CEO about the Internet. I told him that we needed to shift our business models to include it. He didn't listen to me. I found the book lying on the floor one day and took it back. My company was dead a few years later.

That story, the story of my company's death, is ironic. We leased space in our building to other firms. If I remember correctly, Bob Rieger's Internet company Netcom was one of our tenants for a while. I inherited their first machine, Netcom-1, and used it as a network server. Netcom subsequently became MindSpring and EarthLink. Rieger ended up wealthy. My firm did many interesting things but it didn't change with the times. So, in the Internet age it is less than dust. Nobody remembers the dead company today.

Question E.

The Web, as in a decentralized hypertext framework, is arguably the most important development in the history of the Internet from the perspective of significant changes to society.

Question F.

People have more freedom today, in general, than they would have had if the Internet, and the Web in particular, had not come along.

Questions B and G.

It's easy to think of problems related to the Internet. But the positives outweigh the negatives. Most importantly, in the decades to come, the Internet will play an important role in preserving whatever freedom remains in a number of countries around the world.

Additionally, the Internet has facilitated the growth of the Open Source movement, a movement that is likely to transform parts of society for the better.

To sum things up: The Internet has made it possible not only for anybody to be heard, through the Web, but for people to build associations, projects, and communities with others around the world with ease. It's one of the most important changes that's happened in society over the past half century.

Appendix B. Songs for Friends

I started to write more during the Kiraly Gag Order Cases. These are a few short pieces composed for friends. The pieces were largely extemporaneous; this seems to be part of a neurological shift. I think of it as an integration.

OLDCODER COW SONG

Everybody likes cows
At cows they goes wows
On a leash or on a plate
As friends or food cows are great

Cows are friendly and fine
Cows are hard to define
Cows feel needed when milk you take
Happier than when burgers you bake

Cows is a marvelous phrase
Cows do not dance they simply graze
Cows never fail to amaze
Cows we should nows all praise

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FLAME FISH



This was inspired by a sketch that the Masked Lua did one day.

A flame made a wish
To be a different sort of fish
The wish was granted
Flame and Fish found a niche
Flame Fish will not end on dish

DO NOT THEIR CHOICES TAKE

*This was part of a conversation with **std::vector** about the legal cases and choices.*

<OldCoder> Did you arrive safely?

<std::vector> I did

<OldCoder> This is because you made the choice not to be attacked by bandits. It is a sensible choice.

<std::vector> I believe I tried to be in moment

<OldCoder>

If in the moment means float
float is good for a boat
but do not talk by rote

The world is both us and others
You can choose your brothers
but choices too they must make
even if it is in Hell to bake

You must not from them their choices take
If in the fire lake they wish to bake
do not their choices take
Let them choose and then awake

Their choices are theirs and theirs alone
It's time now to hang up the phone



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO NICK

Birthday, Nick?
I'll comment, right quick
You're only as old as you feel

Of course, I feel old
Better to feel bold than old
To feel bold has appeal

In the centuries down the road
No need to forbode
You're sure to keep it real

Nick was a Windows IT person. The illustration is distributed under Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial No Derivative Works 3.0. For attribution purposes, the creator and rights holder is GracePessimist.

CATS EVERYWHERE

The cat photos used here were gifts. These were the senders' own pets. Some stanzas are based on cat remarks from Mr. Meow and the Ninja Kitten.

cats, lazy bundles of fur
but they purr
cats, I'll never under-
stand
why they're so much in
demand

small, soft, cruel, and
lazy
to say they're kind is
crazy
they like to kill small
things
then to you the small
things they brings



cats on the ceiling
cats food ask for more
cats sing with feeling
cats are full of lore

CAT STOLE MY FOOD
CAT IS IN BAD MOOD
MOAR FOOD CAT
SAYS
GIVE ME CAT PEZ

MEOW

get food at store
it's what you are *for*

cats on the train
cats in the rain
cats on the net
cats in the casino, you
bet

MEOW

if you wish purr
you'd best comb my fur



cat loyalty is rare
but when you are not
there
they wish a little bit
not that this they'll admit
not even in a rhyme
you present for a time

cats deadly balls of yarn
stalking
cats on keyboards
walking
what is this cat toy
not work as disrupt cats
enjoy

MEOW

i don't care about you
but if you leave me, i
will mew

cats dancing with mice
cats sliding on ice
cats on skateboards
riding
cats under beds hiding



MEOW

i sleep all the time
pet me, stop silly rhyme

cats hunt in the barn
cats battling yarn
cats on rooftops purr
cats in the snow brrr

MEOW

i am independent and
fierce
call me cute and heart i
will pierce

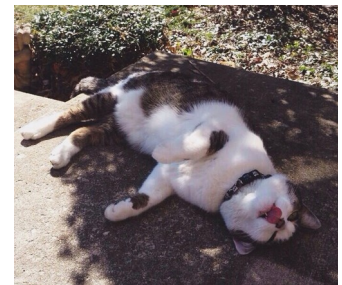
cats learning fine arts
cats driving go-carts
meow says the cats
as they debate the rats

cats hunt without a
sound
cats sleep on the floor
you can move them
around
to accent the decor

cats on the moon
cats in the sky
cats flying here and
there
cats by and by

cats on your head
cats at you stare
cats on the bed
cats every-where

MEOW



THE BATCHES SONG

I knew a data-entry person, Lorelei, who spent hours at a time typing “batches” of data. She was overworked, so this song was written to cheer her up.

Batches are the peak
Of their merits we speak
Batches are our friends
On Batches we depends

Loads of fun
No need to point a gun
Cuddly and cute
Do not Batches shoot

Batch all day
Batch all night
Nothing is astray
In the Lord's mighty sight

Batch all day
For prices we pray
Batch all night
No need for fright

Batches are swell
Profits ring the bell
Batches are our friends
On Batches we depends



MR. TUX SAYS

A poem by OldCoder

OldCoder made a poem for me when he made me a website when I got mrtux.org. This is his poem, it's quite good actually:

```
I've made a forum script in PHP  
You see  
I'm an old-fashioned guy  
I work in CLI  
I like nano
```

```
My old PC is dying  
But no time for crying  
There are griefers and hackers  
With whom to deal  
This stuff is real
```

```
I've got a distro to make  
Then my sister and I a cake  
Will bake  
For Goodness Sake  
Time it's a-flying
```


Appendix C. THE NEW SONG FOR TWISTED TIME

This is a short work that connects slightly to my arrival at Ridge Project.

In late 1975, my abuser, Jim Kiraly, knocked me down and chased me half-dressed out of our house in Walnut Creek, California.

I wandered with nowhere to go and ended up at house of a boy named Twisted Time. Twisted Time gave me clothes and \$5.00, enough money to get out of town.

I made it to Oakland, California, where I was spotted promptly by a man. The man took me to his home and let me spend the night. He was very kind.

There were two choices afterward. I could disappear from normal society or return to Walnut Creek. The first choice was attractive, but I didn't have possess identity paperwork. This would complicate things.

The second choice would mean only half a year of unpleasantness before I could leave, as an adult, after my 18th birthday.

There was a third option. I could have resolved to stand up to my abuser and to use force if necessary. But I was passive and naive, and this option didn't occur to me. I went back, and seven months later, moved into Ridge Project.

I was outside Time, in a sense, for decades. On April Fool's Day, 2008, though, I stepped into this world. I'd gripped the sink the night before and I'd shaken for a while. When it was over, I knew who and what I was.

I went to look for people, including Twisted Time. I found him floating in a tank of water in a San Francisco hospital.

Four years after that, in mid-2012, Twisted Time helped me to derail legal actions that my father Jim Kiraly and my brother Tom Kiraly brought to stop the writing of a book. They sought an actual gag order; in this day and age, a gag order.

In retrospect, it was ridiculous. If somebody feels strongly about things, it isn't possible to gag them. And I feel more strongly about things now. The fight cost me my life savings, most of my possessions, and my home of 25 years;

But I won the right to write
To write is to shed the light
To say what one is going to say
I write each night and each day
This is what is left to me now
Things to say before final bow

Twisted Time was there, has offered support, and is a symbol of diversity. So, this story is dedicated to him.

The dialogue in the piece below is real. Metacognician is one of the leads at Gentoo Linux, Mr. Meow was a 13-year-old student when this was written, and Phenek is a 30-something software developer in Finland.

It's not political correctness to respect diversity and to insist on such respect. Diversity is about possibilities and the right to strive to achieve them.

Those who denigrate and marginalize the different; these people surrender the rights that each of us is born with.

Those who are, in fact, different and strive, regardless, to reach their potential and even to help others; these are the ones who deserve to be called “human”.

The part about the candle flame is a true story.

THE NEW SONG FOR TWISTED TIME

*I just want to make humans
the type who are real and can feel
the real deal with appeal
those who wish to heal
the real deal who are able to feel and to heal;
happy*

*Those among the trolls
Who believe that they have souls
They slash and burn and dare
to pretend that they somehow care*

*They are not part of the polls
But they will fulfill their roles
In the end those without souls
will pay predestined tolls*

*But let them pray
Just for today
For Twisted Time*

*Do you object to my rhyme
If so, I'll not be your mime
This is my dime
And I'll spend it on
Twisted Time*



He himself lives in the moments of a candle
He looked at a candle
And realized that as he was not breathing
Due to what had happened
When the candle went out
So would he

Ever since that day
He has wondered
If I understand what he has said
If he is still living
In those moments
Of the candle



mrmeow: i hope he will be okay
mrmeow: he is a nice guy from what I have seen
mrmeow: he runs a charity?
OldCoder: Yes
mrmeow: good

OldCoder: View the top photo
Phenek: alright. is it him?
OldCoder: Yes

Stepped out of Time
Out of 40 years
He cannot walk
He cannot move

Sometimes he cannot talk
I do not understand Time
But it is him

Phenek: aha
Phenek: so he has had his unfortunate events too
Phenek: it is sad
OldCoder: He and I

We know
Less than you about some things
More than you about others
We have touched Time

Metacognician: we're all time travelers – one day at a time
OldCoder: Yes

I did not contradict that
But we have ceased to exist
We are ghosts
We live in the candle flame

Flicker in and out
Wondering if we are the person watching the shadows
Or the shadows themselves

Read the fragment again
That is how he lives
He looked into the candle
And gazes there still

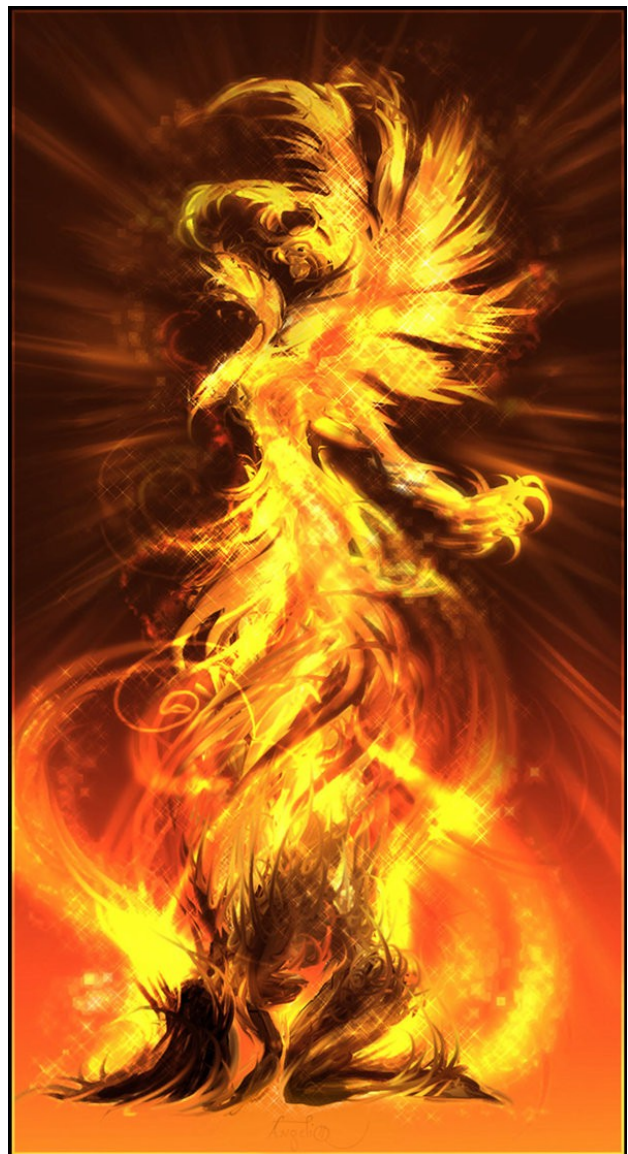
Metacognician: I guess we're not allowed to
become a Phoenix
OldCoder: Heh. You have noticed the name of his
venture.

He defies that rule
Will rise if only in Spirit
Though throughout it all
Will wonder
If he is still there
In the moments of the flame

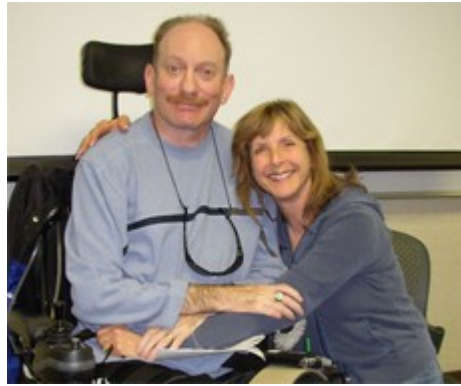
Those who suffer
Those who persist
These are the ones
The ones who exist

The others are the illusion
The shadows
The pretend;

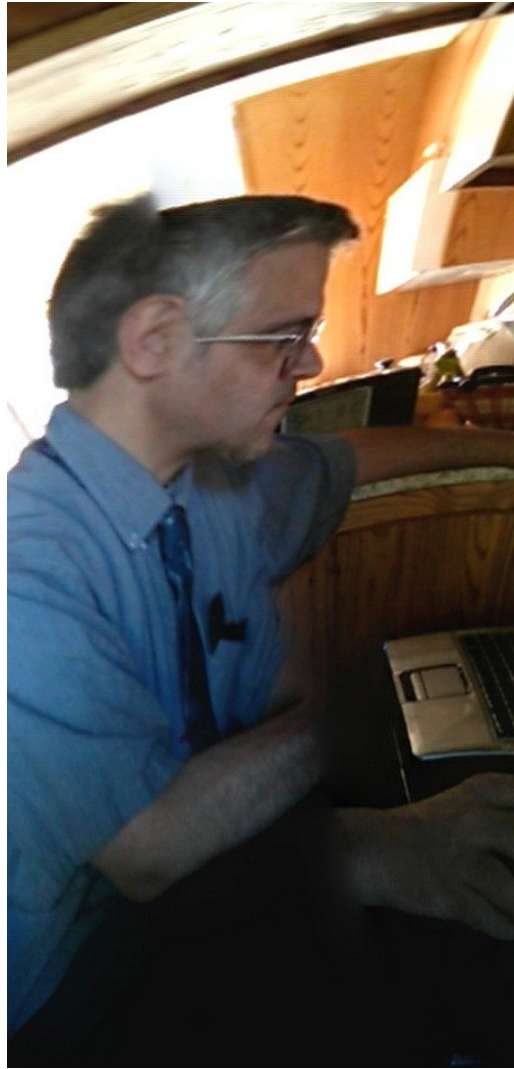
The pretend society
It does not exist
It will not persist
Past the moments of the flame



*Ron, God exists or not,
For the trolls Hell burns hot, God Bless you
You'll never die
We'll talk by and by
And to me you'll always be
Twisted Time*



To Projectiles past and future, best wishes from the Old Coder:



(End)