

George Kennedy

1979, T1, S1

GK: [in a vehicle] I guess about the Copenhagen is about all the time ___
JG: I don't know.
O: What else do you wanna?
JG: Uh, let's get back a little bit...
GK: If I'm right here am I clear, JG:erry?
JG: ___
GK: It was shaken a little bit there for a while. I might say this ain't a regular whiskey, but it's probably ___
JG: If I'm not in the way I'll just stay here just in case.
GK: Here's to the man who loves his wife, loves his wife...[tape interruption]
JG: Go through that again.
GK: Here's to the man that loves his wife and loves his wife alone for many a man who loves another man's wife when he should be lovin' his own. Here's to the man who rocks his baby and rocks his baby alone for there's many a man who rocks another man's baby when he thinks he's rockin' his own. [laughs]
JG: Say, have you... Over the years have you had any vices?
GK: Huh?
JG: Have you had any vices over the last ninety years?
GK: ___
JG: Vices?
GK: I don't know what...
JG: Like smoking or drinking or anything?
GK: Oh, well, I social drinker. The fella says, I...he says, "I'm just a social drinker," he says. That's a social lie.
JG: [laugh] How 'bout cigarettes?
GK: I never smoked a cigarette in my life. The cigarette smoked and I was a sucker.
JG: [laugh]
GK: Does that answer the question?
JG: I think it does.
GK: But I was a sucker for sixty-five years.
JG: You were, huh?
GK: Yeah.
JG: What made you quit?
GK: I ran out of... I think somebody called me on a hook for a supper and I had to quit.
JG: [laugh] When you were coming out over the Oregon Trail did you have any idea that you'd live to see the day of cars and people landing on the moon?
GK: Hell no. And I think a lot of 'em's gonna wish they never saw the day, too.
JG: How 'come?
GK: Well, they're gonna kill theirselves off with it.
JG: How?
GK: Progress.

JG: Too much progress, you think, huh?

GK: Too much progress. Now how's a man gonna give twelve, fifteen thousand dollars for a car to run it down the road on a dollar and half gasoline when he used to have an old mule and eat grass and get on ride and go someplace. It took more time, but more time you have, why, the better you're satisfied you're alive, ain't ya? You wouldn't want to die with ___ on. [laughs] No, I'll tell you, progress is...St. Helens up there, that's a big start run. They can't drop a doe in a town ___ big hole there and stop that lava. They'll forget their...they left their ___ in a garage. It ___ blow out through it.

JG: So you said you had ten commandments for a logger. What are those?

GK: No, six.

JG: Six commandments.

GK: Yeah. Eat, sleep, drink, smoke, ___ and fight. You can put frapish if you want to. That'll take care of that, won't...be apology. [laughs]

JG: I think so.

GK: I want to see ___ maybe. What are you doin'? Wipin' tears out of your eyes? Is this cry baby ___? [laughs]

JG: What was the other one that he just was reciting? [tape interruption]...big decision.

GK: Oh yeah.

JG: You kind of glossed over that part about her getting a five and then you threw and got you six.

GK: Oh yeah.

JG: Go through that part again.

GK: I says, "We'll chuck the dice and see will you marry me or not." "What do you mean?" I explained it to her, I says, "Take this die, through it out there and the one that gets the highest number says yes or no." She says, "Go ahead." "No," I said, "You chuck." I says she rolled the dice out on the ___ table and got a five ___. I let her groan out of me like a dyin' mule and "What's the matter? You gonna cry about it?" I said, "No, I've got one chance out of six that you'll be my wife." "Well hurry up and chuck!" I did and I got a six. I did let a groan out of both ends. That's... But anyway, why, I told her that we'd get married as soon as ___ was on. And we went and got married and then...it cost me five dollars, two-and-a-half for license and two-and-a-half to make the preacher ___, but she was worth five dollars!

JG: You think you got your money's worth out of it, huh?

GK: I'll tell ya...I've got as much out of good that... Five dollars in and to get me out it was five hundred. That'll go with the public, won't it?

JG: I think so.

GK: That's about...

JG: What was it like when you finally pulled into the valley here? Were you... You were conscious and all by then?

GK: Oh yes. I was pretty well all healed up and everything no more than my jaw was set.

JG: You were still drinking out of a hollowed out reed?

GK: I was drinkin'...drinkin' milk and soup and something you could just swallow. Mother she'd put it...put it in my mouth, lay down on my back and pour it into it I'd swallow. It was over a year that I never...I had no solid food and I haven't drank milk since. I figured I got my share of Vitamin D. [laughs] Is that still goin' yet?

JG: Yeah. Could you go like this, chuck the dice, like...

GK: Well, we...I rolled 'em in your hand like this. I'd be loose, you know.

JG: But just go through that, chuck the dice, you know.

GK: I started to think ___ better keep my mouth shut on that. Is that a-goin' yet? Now this... The public's gonna wonder what in the hell put all them big black slices of watermelon on your face there. [laughs]

JG: Is that it?

GK: Yeah. I think...

JG: I think we probably got 'er. [tape stopped]

[people talking is a room with echoes]

Fem: Okay, let's go with our right arm ten times. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Alright. Left arm. One, two, three, four, five, six... [people noise] [laughing] [further exercising and counting] [tape stopped]

RS: Is this thing goin'?

JG: Maybe too, Rick, is try to keep in a little bit close. I don't know, Gary, if you can give any kind of signal, like...or maybe if she'd recite the poem would be then, you know, just back off...

RS: Yeah, okay.

JG: ...just get out of the view so he can zoom right in.

RS: Okay.

Male: Okay, I'll just say three, two, one and then I'll bring it up and you can start. Three, two, one.

JG: Say Mabel? How are you doin'?

M: I'm not even doin' anything but just settin' here.

JG: You're almost ninety years old now aren't ya?

M: No.

JG: Not quite. Eighty-nine, huh?

M: Yeah.

JG: You came out west by wagon, didn't ya?

M: Yeah.

JG: Do you remember very much of the trip?

M: Yes, I remember a lot of it.

JG: When you...you left Hayes County, Nebraska in 1898 you had a friend there with you named Grace. What kind of a girl was Grace?

M: She was the same kind of girl I was.

JG: About eight years old? Were you both about eight years old?

M: Yes. Something like that.

JG: When you left home your mother gave you a autograph book when you started to come west and you had Grace sign it. Do you remember what she signed in your autograph book?

M: No, I don't.

JG: Didn't it go, "When you get old and ugly like young folks tend to do remember your friend Grace who's old and ugly too."

M: Yeah.

JG: That was it, huh?

M: Yeah.

JG: Do you think you could recite that?

M: When you want me to?

JG: Yeah, if you could.

M: "When you get old and ugly like young folks usually do __ Grace who's old and ugly too."

JG: How are you doin' now? Okay? This isn't runnin' you down is it?

M: Yes, it's runnin' me down.

JG: Okay, we'll be real quick about it then. I'll have you recite that poem one more time for me in a second here and then we'll...

Male: Okay, I'll give you a count. Three, two, one.

JG: Mabel, you're about eighty-nine years old now, aren't ya? Pretty close to that?

M: Yes. I guess I am gettin' close to that.

JG: You left Hayes County, Nebraska about eighty years ago come out west by wagon. Do you remember very much of the trip?

M: Yes. I remember a lot of it.

JG: Did you come with horses, or... Did the horses pull your covered wagon?

M: Yeah.

JG: When you left Nebraska you had a little friend named Grace, Grace Fitzgerald.

M: Yes.

JG: What kind of a girl was she?

M: She was a nice girl.

JG: And when you...when you left your mother gave you a autograph book and you had Grace was the first one to sign it. Do you remember what she wrote in it?

M: No, I don't.

JG: Wasn't it a poem?

M: I couldn't tell you.

JG: I think there's a poem that said, "When you get old and ugly like young folks tend to do..." Do you remember that now?

M: Yeah.

JG: Could you tell it to me?

M: "When you get old and ugly like young folks usually do remember your friend Grace that's old and ugly too."

JG: I think this'll probably be plenty. [tape interruption] ___ It's good to see you're up and gettin' around so good. I'd heard that you been a little sick this winter.

M: I was.

JG: You're snappin' out of it now, huh?

M: Yeah.

JG: What's the matter? Are you too ornery to die?
M: Yeah.
JG: [laugh] Did you ever think that when you were coming over in a wagon that you'd live to see the day that men landed on the moon and you could drive from Nebraska to North Powder in two days?
M: No, I never thought of that.
JG: What did you think when you saw 'em land on the moon?
M: I didn't see 'em.
JG: You didn't watch it on TV?
M: No.
JG: Do you believe they did?
M: I heard they did. I don't know.
JG: You just gonna have to take their word for it, huh?
M: Yeah.
JG: Did you hear about the volcano?
M: No.
JG: You know Mt. St. Helens down there by Mt. Hood?
M: Yes.
JG: They had a volcano there this last Sunday and it blew the whole top of the mountain off.
M: Oh, it did?
JG: Yeah. [tape stopped]

[recording]

Fem: ...by wagon, but one Oregon man has a better feeling for it than most people. Author Rick Steber recently hiked the Oregon Trail from the Snake River. PM Magazine joined him near The Dalles. [helicopter sounds] It started twenty-three days ago near old Fort Boise where the Oregon Trail crossed the Snake River from Idaho into Oregon. Rick Steber has followed wagon ruts four hundred-fifty miles. He is now approaching a destination he and his pioneer counterparts struggled long and hard to reach, The Dalles, Oregon. Along the way he sprouted a beard, was changed by range bulls and sang a lot to warn the snakes he was comin'.

RS: [singing] As I was searchin' from bottle to bottle somethin' I'm foolish to say. Silver-tongued devil just slipped in beside me and smiled. Here's what he said: [end singing] I want to make a little bit of noise when I'm going through the brush because I'm...I was following the trail, I wasn't following the road and there's a lot of snakes. I probably saw sixty or seventy snakes. Most of 'em were bull snakes, but I did see about, oh, fifteen to twenty rattlesnakes.

Fem: A clanging cup adds to the snake warning system and helps keep the beat.

RS: It tells me if it isn't clanging I'm not making good enough time. If it's giving me a little bit of a beat then I'm movin' out alright.

Fem: Hiking the Oregon Trail isn't easy. In some places it's almost wilderness. In others, freshly plowed farm fields make walking difficult. There are certainly more scenic walks in Oregon so why is Rick taking this one?

- RS: History is the reason I'm doing it. I've wanted to see what was left of the Oregon Trail in our time in 1979. And you can't...when you stand in ruts...[tape pause]
- Fem: ...Oregon takes on a new meaning when you consider walking twenty miles takes all day. In a car, twenty miles takes about twenty minutes.
- RS: Distance is...is completely different. I mean it took me twenty-three days to come up here and four hundred and fifty miles driving it took...it'd take you about twenty-five gallons of gas. So if you want to figure your...your time and your distance, we're paying way less for gas than what...what really we probably ought to be. Although I hate to say it. [laugh]
- Fem: Another big difference between walking and driving is finding your way. Roads are clearly mapped. The Oregon Trail isn't.
- RS: It's... It's different than any other kind of road. The trail is something that's beat down into the road. It isn't... It isn't been... Hasn't been scooped out by blade and there isn't dirt on either side. It's little chips of rock where the iron wheels beat the rocks and chipped the rocks. The people that talk with most of 'em were little kids when they came out and most of 'em walked barefooted saving their shoes for school when they got out to Oregon. That's what made this country, you know, that's why Oregon is what it is is because those people had enough guts to come two thousand miles out here.
- Fem: The pioneers may have come with very little, but they've done a lot since. Changes in land, air and water are striking along the trail. Early travelers said they could see the Cascades when they crossed the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton. But air pollution and agricultural dust clouded Rick's view until he got very near The Dalles, almost at the foot of Mt. Hood. There were some unexpected changes, too. Rick planned to stop at numerous springs the pioneers had used to replenish his canteen, but many of the springs are dry now.
- RS: Places where the pioneers had watered there isn't any water because it's been used for irrigation and the water table has dropped.
- Fem: Many things have changed, but some things have stayed the same.
- RS: My feet were in bad shape. I remember when I first started out about the first mile I walked there from the Snake River a guy stopped me, he goes, "What in the hell are you doin'?" And I said, "Walkin' the Oregon Trail." I said, "Going about four hundred and fifty miles." And he said, "God," he said, "I feel sorry for your feet." And that came back to haunt me more than once.
- Fem: Rick put countless band-aids on his blisters, but his feet only suffered through four hundred-fifty miles of a trail that stretches another fifteen hundred miles east to Missouri. The Oregon portion of the Oregon Trail was really the homestretch, but it was the hardest.
- RS: Other states you go back to Nebraska or Wyoming and they make a real big deal out of a little hill that had a drop of maybe a couple hundred feet. In Oregon we have places that drop a thousand feet in a mile. And, you know, there really...up till now there really hasn't been very much pride in the Oregon Trail, you know. Right now we have the very last of the pioneers. If we don't do something to preserve it at this point and mark where it is in another twenty years I don't know if you're gonna be able to find where the trail is, you know. I mean in some places it's really faint now.

Fem: So to try to preserve it, or at least the memory of it, Rick and two friends are publishing a book called *Traces*. Photographer Jerry Gildemeister has captured the trail in its many moods and seasons. Artist Don Grey has tried to portray the spirit of the pioneers push west in his oil paintings. For Rick, the hike has become a lot more than an attempt to write a better book. Before he set out on his trek he talked with over forty people who had come out on the Oregon Trail. Their stories will be included in the book. But Rick's appreciation of what they did has grown dramatically.

RS: People coming out on the Oregon Trail it's almost like thinking about God, there's no way you can conceive it. There's no way you can really conceive it.

Fem: Rick Steber completed his four hundred-fifty mile trek in style. He ran. Ran the last ten miles into The Dalles while all the townfolks cheered him on. Whoa, that's quite an accomplishment! We'll be right back with a look at tonight's departments.