

Greasy tendril of black hair knifed down on his pale forehead like a scythe. Ken Pizzolato, with luxuriant, coal-black mane and lacking any intent to do so, taught semi-rural high school underclassmen what it was to be cool in late 1960s. New Jersey autumn was upon us: black leather jacket fit him like a detective's well-worn shoulder holster. Still a teen, his square-shouldered height and bulk exceeded requirements for State Police induction. 'Pez' took no shit. Calmly possessed of all that was latent and vital within him, he was probably what Elvis wanted to be ... if the Tennessean had not been a Mama's Boy or sold out to Hollywood's heartthrob scene. Either could command with hushed, baritone mumble.



*Reverie for Kathy Seward, 2023*  
by Roger David Hardesty

It was Hallowe'en. Dark night in suburban development not a decade old was pushed back by incandescent porch lights on fifty homes. Less so on periphery of Pike Brook County Club, where golf course lay in inky blackness the color of Ken's jeans. Our loose knot of 'hippie types' estimated squealing kids bluffing in costume, some illuminated by parents' car headlights, in crawling co-surveillance as offspring feverishly gang-paraded toward sugar reward they felt was their due.

And here I will admit to being conflicted. I *liked* Hallowe'en. I had several years earlier forgone trick-or-treating in favor of hosting eager young neighbors. I'd followed role model who converted parents' colonial-era home into death trap; only the bravest among foragers would navigate tableaux of horror to pluck tentatively from well-lit basket of candy under Dracula's watchful eye. My crowning achievement had been prompting little Billy Johnson to wet his pants as he tromped dimly lit hallway in my parents' mid-50s-modern ranch house on Lonely Mill Pond Road: I had set luminous bait ... and then hosed passersby with warm, high-velocity air from concealed closet perch. Having swapped vacuum cleaner tube for output instead of suction, I blasted his mask sideways. The little cowboy hit a wall in panicked flight for his mother.

Tricksterism remained in the air, in comparatively populous Pike Brook development. 'Mischief Night' had passed. Yet toilet paper pennants still raveled among young tree branches in new lawns. Evoking for me littered chaos of Việt Nam war, beckoning to its own horror my friends who wouldn't make safe leap from high school graduation to college asylum.

In the main considered 'other' in the homeland, for counter-cultural indulgence in marijuana, rock-and-roll, and scant respect for authority ... as well as plethora of unappreciated, creative outpourings ... we adhered as 'freaks' in high school clique assignment. Our huddle was accustomed to alienated, observer status as we broke from shadowed lawn to saunter into childish fervor.

Discomfort rippled among us. Pint-sized, shrieking candy fiends were not our 'scene.' Gaggles in costumed disorder was certainly a Happening. But I sensed we dragged a gulf behind. I'd not cross back to childhood innocence. I'd grown cool like a soulful Miles Davis riff into the blue. A deep blue that nuclear warheads could blazingly eradicate in next heartbeat.

Unflappable Ken Pizzolato seemed to intuitively fathom how to handle our awkwardness. He'd unholstered another can of illicit beer from black leather. After guzzling his wont, he – without fanfare or putting much body energy into it – tipped substantial pour into passing trick-or-treater's paper bag. I watched him repeat the process several times: sip, spy, pour. Timing it immaculately, he then just dropped spent can, unobserved, in a kid's carryall.

I still recall cackling delight. Some minutes later in our skulking I encountered first string of candies, inert on dark macadam street. More dotted trails became evident. Day-Glo plastic consumer packages lay spent in wake of blithe passage. Dispersion seemed so fitting, as industrialism's rapaciousness left despoiled creeks and waterways no longer suitable for fishing poles: heading for the moon, optimistic Americans fixated on what was next to become available. We were shamelessly ignorant of losses streaming behind us.

*PLOT SPOILER:* Ken became a union plumber, purchased large-lot home overlooking Pike Brook Country Club greenery. Last I knew, he was accruing deep satisfaction as very effective baseball coach for community youth.