

Edward Henry -- Le Roi

19 and 21 was mighty long ago
They're bringing out a baby, his tiny face aglow
Cocks crow, pealing bells, at morning mass it's said:
The Henry's have a newborn and call him little Ed.

In olden days, St. Cloud's streets were rough and tumble
Unpaved they ran and dusty, with ruts that made you stumble.
But Ed Henry plied them, and grew legs fast and long
Walked her roads night and day and never did them wrong.

The Henry children were five, Mary Louise and four obstinate boys
Who loved mischief and wisecracks while playing with their toys.
But a Catholic upbringing brought home some P's and Q's
Blessed them with prayer, and on Sundays, kept them in pews.

Rose Kraker, their mother was not to be trifled with.
She used her ladle liberally to stir but also to stifle with.
And she was last in her generation to go, surviving 'til '67
When Ed and brothers buried her, remanding her back to heaven.

Father John was banker, merchant and eventually St. Cloud's postmaster,
Political honcho, stern father but also, renown toastmaster.
And apples don't fall far if you look at this residence,
I count one priest, one judge, one banker, three fathers, and 4 college
presidents.

19 and 21 was mighty long ago,
They're swaddling a baby, his tiny face aglow.
Cocks crow, pealing bells, at morning mass it's said:
The Henry's have another one, look out for that kid Ed.

How did he obtain that first Ford "T"?
Was it hard work, circus prize or familial charity?
Ed rode the town stopping at many a St. Cloud girl's stoop.
Then traded her in for a rumble seat and a '32 Chevy Coupe.

Reporter, honor student and All-Conference tackle made his claim:
He wasn't bragging talent, looks or charm – just building up a name.

When Depression hit, he didn't quit, and found it satisfactory
To work 10 hour shifts in summer at a luxury... pickle factory.

From Cathedral to Saint Johns, Ed thirsted to learn
Playing football, reading classics and studying Bennies in turn.
The boy became a man right there on the prairie
Handling a rosary and professing love to St. Mary.

In 1941, all men enlisted – the Great War.
Fend off Hitler and fascism, save freedom's store.
Ed signed as ensign on a destroyer in the navy
Dodged live fire in both theatres, eating shit on a shingle without any gravy.

19 and 21 was mighty long ago
Once there was a baby, his tiny face aglow.
Cocks crow, pealing bells, a morning mass gets said
Home comes a prodigy, try to keep him out of bed.

At 25 in 19 and 46, home after surrender
Ed frequented Melrose and Betty Reiten, hoping to befriend her.
And succeeded too, as was Ed's want in life,
Drove clear to North Dakota, bringing her home as his wife.

Betty was beautiful with womanly parts both strong and supple,
Despite Ed's poor looks, they made a hell of a couple.
Not long after their marriage papers were filed,
In Chicago, Ed and Betty, at the university, made their first child.

Anne Louise, then Paula and Steven in Atchison, Kansas
Susan, Michael, Mary Beth and Rebecca, enough to fill all of these stanzas.
Peter the poet and John finished their run,
Ed never did like stopping in the middle of fun.

Professor, broker, mayor and vice-president of development
St. Mary's, St. Michael's, Belmont and Marion – professional envelopments.
Ed saw, he came and conquered, raising nine in his stead
With Betty beside him cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping, talking,
teaching and loving – making bread.

19 and 21 was mighty long ago
89 years later, his wrinkled face aglow
Cocks crow, pealing bells, the morning mass gets said
Even nearing 90, folks still just called him "Ed".

Born of St. Cloud, he lived America's dream becoming mayor.
From youth to old age and in cards, was always a player.
In finances, academia, athletics or girls
On family hikes, in politics, new cars and trapping squirrels.

The live look on his face, the light in blue eyes.
Home happy smile scratching back of his head, nose – oversized.
Edward, the little boy, was destined to lead
Picked up for John Henry, and outdid him spreading seed.

Neophyte, acolyte and proprietor premature of a Model T Ford.
Officiant, scholar, navy veteran and Henry – Doctor.
Growth, challenges and people – waxing fuller with time
It's helping others get up, not the summits you climb.

Made a name for himself using names out of history
I figured this out, it isn't a mystery.
You see, in Europe, before Divine Right of Kings became dead words,
There were crowned ten kings named Henry, and a full dozen Edwards.

19 and 21 was mighty long ago.
How a baby gets his wisdom, these words can never show.
Cocks crow, pealing bells, a morning mass draws near
Chisel it in granite, Edward (Le Roi) Henry, died just last year.