

the eighth grade than I'll have in college!

All in all, it was a worthwhile experience. For one thing, I'm now on record as Social Security No. 999-10-9000, a number I can write with a flourish on my bank account, driver's license, and myriad other places in years to come. With a name like Smith, I figured I deserved it.

## MERRILL KENNETH WOLF: A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AT 14

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In September of 1945 Merrill Kenneth Wolf of Cleveland, Ohio, became quite possibly the youngest American ever to receive the baccalaureate when he took his B.A. in music from Yale College at the age fourteen (since his birthdate was 28 August 1931, he had just turned fourteen). Because Yale was on a special accelerated schedule during World War II, Wolf completed his degree requirements in less than the usual number of academic years.

Prior to his Yale career, Wolf had a most amazing development history, being highly precocious both verbally and musically. When he was an infant of only four months, he began to speak his first words. At the age of six month he said his first full sentence, "Put on another record." In a personal communication to the writer dated 3 February 1976, Dr. Wolf explained the context of this remark: "Phonograph recording was still a very imperfect technique in 1931, and the pianola, which we now think of as a saloon accessory, was an important medium of classical musical reproduction. It was another pianola roll I was asking for, and the device served as my first — in some ways, my best — piano teacher. About a year and a half later, my mother discovered me playing the piano myself, and apparently imitating tolerably well what I had seen the mechanical device do in the way of depressing given keys to obtain given sounds. Confronted with this, my father taught me to read music, and lessons with a professional teacher then followed, at age 3." By this time his education had commenced; his father was using flashcards printed with whole words, not just letters, to teach the baby how to read. On his first birthday, Kenny was given a first-grade reader, for which he was by then ready.

When he went to school for the first time at the age of six he was placed in the sixth grade. On his first day of school his classmates were being given a final examination, which the little boy took and easily passed. His presence disrupted the class, however, and therefore his parents were asked to take him home. When he was eight he found the junior high school mathematics class he was attending so boring that he lasted only two days before asking to be kept home.

Until he was ten, his education was continued at home. Then he was given a standard college entrance examination and was accepted by Western Reserve University (now Case Western). Among the three subjects he ended up taking was an elementary college chemistry course for which he had prepared himself by reading chemistry textbooks for amusement. But young Wolf's interests really lay in the direction of music. He played the piano from the time he was a baby and wrote his first symphony when he was eight. In March of 1944, when he was 12 1/2 years old, Kenneth and his mother went to New Haven, Connecticut so that he could study music at Yale University under Pual Hindemith; he became a Yale sophomore at twelve. There, the Ohio boy learned musical composition. For his final thesis, thirteen-year-old Wolf wrote a 170-page septet for piano, two violins, viola, cello, clarinet, and French horn. After Yale, he studied privately for four years under the great pianist, Artur Schnabel, an influential pioneer in the esthetics of performing classical music.

In 1952, at the fairly typical age of 21, Kenneth Wolf decided to make medicine his profession and entered the Western Reserve University School of Medicine. He took his M.D. degree from there in 1956 and was the recipient of that school's Steuer Award in Anatomy. He then went to Boston, Massachusetts, where he interned at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. Dr. Wolf became a teaching doctor and worked up the ladder to become an associate professor at the Harvard Medical School. Now a professor of neuroanatomy at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and a lecturer in neuropathology at the Harvard Medical School, he has a substantial list of publications to his credit.

Although Dr. Wolf views himself as primarily verbally and musically talented (saying that he never progressed beyond a B+ in elementary calculus), he is an enthusiastic supporter of SMPY. He has graciously allowed SMPY to cite his example many times when

describing the adult outcomes of precocious children because he is happy to see the renewed interest in the gifted that SMPY symbolized, "considering the human waste that is involved when the people at the other end of the spectrum (the gifted) drop out and are lost to the system . . ."

(For documentation of some of the statements in this article see pages 316, 318, 327-29, 331, 334, and 335 of Daniel P. Keating (Editor), *Intellectual Talent: Research and Development*, published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland 21218 in January of 1976.)

## FRESHMAN YEAR AT THE NEW SCHOOL

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The New School for Social Research (66 West 12 Street, New York City 10011, telephone 212-741-5630) offers an interesting first college year designed primarily for students who have completed the eleventh grade. The program at the New School presents an opportunity to skip the senior year of high school and receive an intense, stimulating first-year overview of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. From sketchy evidence we tentatively infer that it might not be suitable for those whose primary interests are in mathematics, engineering, and the physical sciences. It would, however, be quite useful for students interested in the social sciences and humanities. Application can be made at any time to Ms. Edith J. Wurtzel, Director of Admissions of the Freshman Year Program, but it is advisable to apply in the fall because the class may be filled by spring.

The "new" School for Social Research was founded in 1919 as a graduate institution by a number of prestigious social scientists. Other than the Freshman Year Program it offers no work during the freshman and sophomore years, so those who take their first year there must transfer. That probably will not be difficult except to the most prestigious institutions such as Harvard, MIT, and Cal Tech, which tend to have few places for transferring students. Though the program has been in operation only a few years, its graduates have gone on as sophomores to a wide variety of excellent colleges and universities. A female former student is now a mathematics major at The Johns Hopkins University and doing well.