

The Rise and Fall of Mere Keep

by

Sam Aurelius Milam III
c/o 4984 Peach Mountain Drive
Gainesville, Georgia 30507

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caveat lector

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An amazing feature of the way that people use the English Language is that a listener can correctly understand what a speaker intended to say without either of them having the least notion of what the speaker actually said.

—Tuesday, February 1, 2011
Sam Aurelius Milam III

Back during the 1980s, I established Mere Keep. The name came right out of a dictionary.

keep, *n.* 4. A stronghold in the middle of a castle, the last resort in a siege....

keep, *v.t* ... [ME. *kepen*, *kipen*; AS. *cepan*, to keep, observe, await.] 1. To hold; to retain in one's power or possession; not to lose or part with.... 2. To have in custody for security or preservation.... 3. To preserve; to retain....

mere, *a.* [L. *merus*, unmixed.] 1. Pure; unadulterated; free from admixture. [Obs.]

mere, *n.* [ME. *meer*, *mere*; AS. *gamære*, a boundary, limit.] A boundary.

mere, *v.t.* and *v.i.* To divide; to limit; to set bounds. [Obs.]

— from *Webster's Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, 1910

Using those old definitions, a mere can be regarded as a pure, unadulterated boundary or limit. A keep can be regarded as the act of holding or retaining something in a safe condition, or a place for doing so. Thus, Mere Keep was a sanctuary for the protection of boundaries.

The boundaries that I'd intended to protect at Mere Keep were the boundaries between ideas. I had in mind the boundaries between such ideas as freedom and slavery, rights and privileges, currency and money, sin and crime, God and religion, diversity and complexity, law and legislation, brainwashing and education, and anarchy and chaos. Such boundaries exist as the differences between the ideas that they separate. The lack of such a boundary represents a failure to understand the differences between the things that ought to be separated by the boundary, but which aren't. Such a lack of understanding is revealed by confusion in the use of the words to express ideas that ought to be different from one another, but which aren't. Mere Keep was intended as a place for the discovery, exploration, and protection of such boundaries.

The sloppy use of words both reflects and encourages sloppy thinking. A while back, I was riding somewhere with a friend and I made the comment that, in the USA, there are very few things that a man can do without permission. My friend quickly announced, "I don't need permission to drive this car!" I tried to explain to him that his driver's license represents his permission to drive the car and that, if he's caught driving the car without permission, then he'll be punished. He didn't reply. I think that he didn't understand me.

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Permission represents the difference between freedom and slavery. Maybe to my friend freedom and slavery are synonyms. In that case, permission is a meaningless word to him. If the words freedom and slavery both mean the same thing to him then, for him, the idea of permission won't even exist because it's a non-existent boundary between identical things. When the words mean the same thing, then the ideas that they express become the same. When that happens, one of the ideas will eventually disappear. Privileges will become rights. Currency will become money. Brainwashing will become education.

By 2050 — earlier, probably — all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron — they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking — not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.

—from 1984, Section One, Chapter V
by George Orwell

The philosophical and academic atmosphere that I fostered at Mere Keep didn't prevent me from understanding that government would be a serious and physical threat to a free man. As I worked to achieve that status, I realized that I'd need some kind of defense. I decided early on that good camouflage was my best bet. In addition, camouflage was compatible with my efforts at the time to divest myself of any and all obligations to government. I was already in the process of cancelling every account or service that I could cancel for which a street address was required. I made camouflage a part of the agenda. I cancelled every agreement that I'd previously had with government, driver's license, voter's registration, and so forth. For accounts or services that were necessary, such as electricity and gas, I cancelled them and then opened new accounts, using pseudonyms.

I won a few skirmishes with people like the thugs that work for the Census or the California Employment Development Department because none of them could find me to enforce their will upon me. I found ways to earn cash outside of the documented employment establishment. My activities weren't always legal but they were always honest and moral. I wasn't rich but I was surviving. I could probably have survived at Mere Keep indefinitely if Lorita Ann Taylor hadn't informed the District Attorney's office of my address.

Apparently, the nitwits in the DA's office had been too stupid to use the county tax records to locate me. In retrospect, I can see that such a thing would be entirely consistent with the bumbling stupidity and outright incompetence that they later demonstrated. At any rate, after she gave them my street address, they were after me

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like a pack of slavering, rabid skunks. I opposed the thugs on the basis of jurisdiction, sovereignty, social contract, that sort of thing. They utterly ignored my positions, except when they found some opportunity to use one of my own statements against me. They didn't even bother to dispute my positions. They just ignored them, insisted that it was a child support issue, which it wasn't, and did whatever they wanted to do.

Eventually, in late 1996, I lost the fight. I was forced to sell Mere Keep. I received a fraction of the sale price, after the bureaucratic leeches and authoritarian blood-sucking thieves took what they wanted. After that, I moved to Mecham's Farm, in Idaho. Eventually my pittance from the sale of Mere Keep was gone and I was forced to move again. I began to survive on whatever help I could get from friends and family, which I've done ever since.

After the fall of Mere Keep, even surviving on the good will of friends and family, I still haven't abandoned the objective to which Mere Keep had been dedicated. To this day, I continue to advocate the distinctions between the meanings of words and the understanding that's expressed by those distinctions. One effort in that regard is *Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends*. It's available in *The Sovereign's Library*.

I've shown in the documents that are associated with this memoir the entire documentary record of my efforts to oppose the thugs in Santa Clara County, California. I've included letters, the diary, and whatever else seemed relevant. The story is also included in my memoir *Outward Bound*, in *Pharos*, under the heading *The Fall of Mere Keep*, and in my essay *Lorita Ann Taylor*, also in *Pharos*.

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