

one lord, one faith, one cornbread

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introduction

This collection of articles, poetry and fiction is taken from the *Free You* magazine, which flourished from 1968 through 1970 as the public voice of the Midpeninsula Free University on the San Francisco peninsula, one of the earliest and liveliest experimental universities.

The Free University began as a serious, Marxist-oriented challenge to the remote and ponderous educational style of nearby Stanford University, but its membership quickly swelled with repressed housewives, students, sexual revolutionaries, Haight-Ashbury evacuees, drifters, Maoists, artists, psychologists and psychotics, an occasional professor, and just enough curious souls straying in from the straight community to give it a twist of respectability.

Some of the original, more serious activists withdrew in the face of this confused onslaught of organized do-your-own-thingism, but enough stayed on to give the Free University at least the appearance of revolutionary teeth—an easy illusion to summon up, in the quiet, elegant communities near Stanford—as it combined its private classes with rallies, occasional sit-ins, flower-festooned rock concerts in public parks, and other fairly amiable public activities before falling back to its original posture, with fewer members and more militant leaders, as the Cambodian invasion ignited the Stanford campus in 1971.

The *Free You* magazine occupied the colorful and erratic middle period of the organization's life, growing rapidly from a mimeographed house organ to a full-size, fifty-page magazine with opulent color graphics and wide distribution outside the Free U's membership.

The magazine reflected the group's diverse membership and outlook: It wasn't quite a literary magazine, standing in proud, esoteric obscurity, but it wasn't quite an underground publication, shrill and self-conscious. . . . It was sort of, well, a sort of *Saturday Evening Post* of the left, a wild assemblage of fiction,

fancy, and hard street-reporting sewn together under a common masthead in a monthly-magazine format.

Its editors held the magazine to only one enduring editorial policy, but it was truly revolutionary: Within space and budget limitations, the magazine printed any Free University member's contribution without first straining it through the editors' criteria for political or literary suitability. A simple-enough-sounding policy, but deceptive. It meant that a manuscript carefully coaxed by an editor from a Stanford creative writing student, or from an established writer, could be followed immediately by the volunteered philosophy of a newly liberated steamfitter from a Free U. encounter class. It meant a hundred flowers blooming noisily every month over the heads of a dismayed Free University governing body, whose liberationist instincts did noble, regular battle with that old, irresistible urge to rein in someone else's divergent opinions. It meant a rare instance of editors struggling to facilitate communication, not to stifle it.

It also added to the challenge common to all magazines, particularly small ones: establishing enough reader identification to have the magazine anticipated every month and bought and read in preference to the reams of other printed material competing for a reader's attention. The stories had built-in relevance; we added personality with strong graphics, consistent format, and an overriding sense of humorous self-perspective bannered by Wendell Berry's contributed motto: One Lord, One Faith, One Cornbread.

The magazine ended suddenly, changing as the Free University changed, evolving into a narrower, less-expensive tabloid newspaper to express the organization's new political realities. It was a loss of sorts, but it's easy to lament too much a magazine's passing. Magazines serve a need, but even as large and established a magazine as *Life* should be allowed a quick, natural death when the need no longer exists. The makings of a successful magazine—people and their changing ideas—remain free to fall together again into new forms, to serve new needs and opportunities. The pieces in this book represent the best use of our own opportunity.