

Who Me Be/Who Be Me

Here's some information about me in prose and poetry. In poetry, you could call it **Introducing the Poet**.

Introducing the Poet

My name is Lincoln Bergman
From Herstory I come
I bathed in primal oceans
'Twas in the year of None

My name is Lincoln Bergman
From History I come
I crawled the rock of ages
'Twas in the year of One

I crawled the rock of ages
To wish my dreams come true
To harvest all my crops
'Twas in the year of Two

To harvest all my crops
I loved and danced so free
Wheat and rice and corn
'Twas in the year of Three

I loved and sometimes learned
I marched against the war
I wrote a thousand poems
'Twas in the year of Four

I spoke a thousand poems
Made broadcasts taped and live
For freedom and for peace
'Twas in the year of Five

I played a thousand games
And laughed at all the tricks
Of darling daughters two
'Twas in the year of Six

I worked and worked and worked
But rarely did bread leaven
The money slipped right through
'Twas in the year of Seven.

Sad story of my life
Too little and too late
Confronted by mortality
'Twas in the year of Eight.

Yet days when we make love
Create a world so fine
Conjoining energies
'Twas in the year of Nine.

And so my story goes
From now till way back when
My heart is in my hands
For 'tis the year of Ten.

I live in Richmond, California, on a hill with a view of the Golden Gate and Bay Bridge, and the San Francisco skyline when the fog lifts. I write to you from a yurt in our backyard.

I retired from Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley in mid-2010 but still do some editorial work there. I have two wonderful daughters—New York City singer/actor Anna Thai Binh Bergman (stage name Anna Ty Bergman; website at www.annatybergman.com and Caitlin Poema Simpson-Bergman, kindergarten teacher *par excellence* at Lincoln Elementary in Richmond, California.



I'm married, for the third time, may it remain a charm, to Lisa Simpson, who gets a lot of kidding about her name, and is Caitlin's mom. Lisa and I have been together over a quarter of a century. Earlier I was married to Gayle Markow, Anna's mom, and before that, during the high tide of the 1960s, to Arlene Eisen.

I'm also infinitely proud to identify myself and be known by many only as "Miranda's brother," as my sister Miranda Bergman is a great artist, muralist, and community activist, whose collective work brightens walls in various cities and countries, as well as the three-story "Maestrapeace" at the Women's Building in San Francisco. Our brother Chris, who was director of Animal Assisted Therapy at SPCA and a wonderful man, died of pancreatic cancer in 2006. Not a day goes by when we don't think of him and long for his physical presence, humor, wisdom, and irreverence. Here's a painting of Chris by Miranda that appears on the great mural at the corner of Masonic and Hayes—"Educate to Liberate" and a photo of the muralist herself.



In addition to my mother, father, sister, and brother, there's extended family, friends—the real, not virtual, "social network" woven into my background and experience. To name them all would take many pages (as in the Acknowledgments to my poetry collection) but I can't keep saying "I" here without at least calling up a few names. Among the roll call of "elders," some of whom will appear on this website, are Dorothy Stoffer, Wilbur Broms, Bernie Stoffer, Meridel LeSueur, Deborah LeSueur, Vicki Garvin, Elsa Knight Thompson, Alex Hoffmann, Guillermo Santiesteban—along with close comrades and friends of my own and younger generations who have had a profound and inspiring influence on the pathways described below. It is *relationship* that keeps us going. I am We. As my brother used to say, embracing not only people, but also animals and plants—"we are all one organism!"

I was born in Houston, Texas in 1944 where I spent six weeks in a dresser drawer in a hotel room before my father, Leibel, was dispatched to the Pacific during World War II, as a navigator on B-29s. My mother Anne then took me by train to Minnesota, where her family lived. I spent my first eight years in St. Paul, Minnesota and then we moved to San Francisco. She made this linoleum block print when I was a baby.



In San Francisco, first in the Fillmore/Haight-Ashbury, and then in the Mission, Miranda, Chris, and I grew up. Both parents were Communists and stayed active through the repressive periods of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Here's a poem called "Red Diaper Baby."

Red Diaper Baby

—such a background
continues to provide, I think,
a cultural bedrock,
a song, a mural, a poem
a connection to the poorest
and most oppressed
a strong sense of justice
passionate sincerity
irreverence and laughter
lots of love to give and receive

so,
even though
such a background
also has other
more negative, traumatic,
and wounding aspects.

I like to think
I led a truly happy childhood.

The five of us
The feeling of family
Extending outward
Connecting to
Progressive folks.

Together we shared
Vision of world transformed
By revolution

Family tree
Spreading branches
Rooted in
Shared vision of
Deep passion for
Freedom and Peace.

I went to McKinley and Dudley Stone Elementary schools, Roosevelt Jr. High, and Washington High School—*alma mater* of notables such as Lana Turner (her cheerleading sweater was in a display case), pro football great Ollie Matson, and sweet singer Johnny Mathis—I was in the band with his brother Ralph; I played the French horn. I still have a horn and play it now and then. Here is a “childhood sketch” I wrote in my late teens, when I was 16 or 17, over-written I know, but it will give you a sense of my adolescent love for music and the horn.

Childhood Sketch #23: Music at the Library

Tonight there would be music, for tonight was Thursday and a group of young musicians, grown together through common love of classical music, would give a free concert in the assembly room on the third floor of the main public library.

David looked out at the audience. He blew through his horn to keep it warm, made sure he'd emptied the spit from it. Sitting in folding chairs were a few of their friends, some music teachers, and a group of the old men who always hung out around the library until San Francisco passed a law against it. There were about thirty people. Right before the conductor raised his hands David noticed an old man come in the back door and take a seat at the very back of the hall. For a second their eyes met.

Then the sad and mellow chords of Tchaikovsky's Pathétique symphony began. David, his lips to a winding horn, looked out at the audience, enjoying that inner feeling of full group participation, the making of an individual note and tone color that combined with all the others to build a melancholy chord, as the chords in turn blended into a symphonic melody that for David sang the harshness and pathos of life itself. Now the tone of the horn rose free in a lyrical solo that was yet in unity with the entire symphonic meaning. As usual, David picked one person to look at while he played, and tonight he played to the old man at the back of the hall.

He always played Tchaikovsky with a certain measure of anger, anger at those experts on classical music who considered the great composer's work overly sentimental and not very good. As far as David was concerned, there were real feelings in this music and those who negated or belittled them seemed somehow afraid of showing those feelings themselves.

But not the old man. David could see he liked the music. David wondered about the man's life. Perhaps he'd worked in a factory for many years, like David's father did. Maybe he lived in a little room on Third Street or near the waterfront.

He'd seen such men often, sometimes they asked for some change, sometimes he gave. Maybe this old man was here because of his love for music, maybe because he'd seen the mimeographed notice for the concert and taken it as a free way to pass the time. The time—what kind of life did he lead now? It must be terribly lonely. Lonely at night, lying in a little room, listening to the begging voices from the street, different voices, changing in pitch and timbre, young and old, asking, "could you spare a quarter, I've tried to be a good Christian all my life." Now and then crutches scratched on the pavement, bottles broke, foghorns sounded out in the bay. And always, endlessly, the cars flashed by, circling his little room with their lights. It must feel good for him to listen to something like this for a change. This concert was for him.

The group played several more pieces, including a spirited adaptation of one of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, and then the concert was over. David and his friend, the bassoon player, passed the old man on their way out after the concert. The old man said to David, "I don't know much about music, but tonight I listened to you and all the players and I guess that's what music is." David said politely, "I'm glad you liked it."

The bassoon player said, "let's go."

But the old man called David back. "Wait a minute please...ah...I...just wanted to tell you somethin' more, to wish you success in all that you do. Keep blowin' that horn, nobody else is ever gonna blow it for you."

"I will, thank you."

"What did that old bum have to say?" the bassoon player asked.

"Nothin'."

Later that night David thought over the old man's words, and wondered where the man was now. Keep blowin' that horn...it reminded David of something else. Once his father gave him a book called The Art of Scientific Investigation. In the front his father wrote: "read it, but don't take it too seriously. There's no substitute for good clear thinking. You've got to make it on your own."

You've got to make it on your own, nobody else can it for you. But make what on your own? Success in all that you do, but what should he do? Everything you did seemed to suck you into things that you opposed or found morally questionable; everything had so many complications.

Maybe it would be better to be a French horn player; it was a good life. Most musicians he knew were really fine people. If he set his lips and mind to it he could become a very capable hornist, and it would be good to do at least one thing well, instead of many things poorly and half-heartedly. Look at that old man, what kind of life was that, kicked aside by the society after being forced to pour out the sweat and tears of a lifetime in hard labor for low wages. Yes, maybe being a musician would be a way out of the mess.

David knew two things: that it had been good to play for the old man and that, without a doubt, somehow or other, he would have to make it on his own. Then, to the still echoing strains of Pathétique, he closed his eyes and dreamed of heroic pursuits for himself, and about an old man at the back of the hall.

I attended Deep Springs Jr. College—a unique liberal arts college and working cattle ranch, isolated in Deep Springs Valley, two valleys up from Death Valley, over Westgard Pass from Big Pine and Bishop, California. There are usually about 20 students, all young men, and about five professors. There, I listened to “the voice of the desert” and learned a lot—from literature and philosophy to irrigating alfalfa fields, herding cattle, and milking dairy cows. I have strongly favored a move to coeducation, but even the 21st century has not led in that progressive direction.

I went on to junior year at Cornell University, living at Telluride House, in 1964/5. The next year, thanks to my father’s intense interest in and support of the Chinese revolution, I taught English to college students my age at the Institute for International Relations in what was then Peking, now Beijing, in the People’s Republic of China (it was forbidden for US citizens to travel there in those years). I had an amazing year there, and during the last month was able to travel the route of the revolution, from Chingkangshan—the first high mountain liberated countryside site—to the caves of Yen’an. I came home in 1966, graduated from UC Berkeley, and attended Journalism graduate school, also at Berkeley.

In my checkered career, I have been a student, poet, and radical activist, have worked on a cattle ranch, as a biochemistry lab assistant, print and radio journalist, union proofreader, medical editor in ophthalmology, and science/mathematics educator/writer. What can I say? As one of my poems, a “Redwood Rhapsody,” puts it—we become what we become.

REDWOOD TREE #12

We become
What we become,
Seemingly
By chance and choice,
But actually,
As inexorably
As ripening plum,
Or redwood tree.

So as you grow,
To live and love,
Be reminded of
One rule of thumb:
We become
What we become.

- From 1966–1969, I was on the Editorial Board of *The Movement*, a national monthly newspaper based in San Francisco, affiliated with Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) with primary emphasis on exchange of experiences in civil rights and community organizing efforts.
- I was News Director at KPFA-FM in Berkeley in the late 1960s/early 1970s, where I anchored daily newscasts, did interviews with numerous activists and authors, and produced documentaries. The battle for People’s Park, the expansion of the Black Panther Party and violent COINTELPRO repression against it and all other progressive movements and organizations, the rise of the prison movement—George Jackson and Attica, the Native American occupations at Alcatraz and Wounded Knee and many other places, the Chicano Moratorium, the student and anti-war resistance at hundreds of campuses and the murders at Kent and Jackson State—it was all happening and we did our best to report on and reflect the militant spirit of the times.
- In addition to the year in China, I lived and worked for a year in Havana, Cuba in 1973–4, broadcasting daily news on Radio Havana Cuba and as a Pacifica foreign correspondent. I had earlier gone to Cuba as part of an “underground press” delegation where we were able to exchange experiences with Cuban

journalists. We also visited the beautiful city of Santiago, site of the Moncada Barracks, attacked on July 26, 1953 in a failed action led by Fidel Castro that nonetheless sparked the revolution that was to triumph six years later. One of my most often recited poems, and one of the best, IMHO, imagines the consciousness of one of the Moncada participants—"The Night Before Moncada."

The Night Before Moncada

The night before

The night before
The night before Moncada

How did you
Who were there
Prepare?

Did not fear
Rise inside your stomach
Spread to your head
With all the strength it gains
When you know
Tomorrow you may be dead?

The night before
The night before
The night before Moncada

Did not your eyes and mind
Perceive reality
With the immense intensity
Of the kind only freed
When human beings
Meet with historic destiny?

You were there
In Santiago secretly
In the restaurant
Eating with a few other comrades
Days of Carnival
Of masked costumed festivity
Days of Carnival
You were there
In Santiago secretly
Eating in the restaurant
At other tables
People sat and talked and laughed
The tree of liberty
Life moving on in Santiago
Good and evil
Hate and love
The sea below
The stars above
Santiago de Cuba
Life with a few who loan
Many who have to borrow
Life with all its joy
And sorrow
The other people
Eating in the restaurant
Did not know
What you would do tomorrow

How many
Maybe agents of Batista
Do you see
No it can't be
Fears about security
A cry a shout
Trying not to nervously
Look all about
The night before
The night before
What did you and your comrades
Talk about?

The night before
The night before
In a cheap hotel room
The next morning
Coming so soon
Sounds of Santiago night
Thin walls
Voices from the next room
Thin walls
Could not dilute
The argument between
A customer and prostitute
On that night
What a heavy impression it made
The argument about
How much she should be paid
Slavery and sorrow
The other people
Did not know
What you would do tomorrow

The night before
The night before
The night before Moncada

Did not you wonder too
If it was
The wisest thing to do?

Doubts can't be
Blindly stamped out
Rather thought about
Analyzed and debated
Contingencies anticipated
Doubts can't be
Blindly stamped out
Rather thought about
Carefully struggled out

The people of our land
Live in misery
Degradation and corruption
Terror of tyranny
Listen to their cry
The people of this land
Shall surely rise

The revolutionary struggle
Is in the world
In Cuba and in Santiago
That is true
The revolutionary struggle
Also takes place
In you

It's not as though
You haven't thought it through
Before
It just gets more and more

You have agreed
To join freedom conspiracy
Because of so much
That you knew before
Your love for life and people
A comrade's grip
Your hatred of oppression
And this dictatorship

Perhaps a patriotic song
Or any unsung melody
Runs through your brain
What can be done
To prepare for pain
Perhaps some lines from
Revolutionaries of the past
The ones you love
The faces that you see
The tree of liberty
Your family
It's not as though
You haven't thought it through
Before
It just gets more and more
The future present and the past
At last
Another clear courageous inner light
Born of struggle
Resolves to do its best in freedom fight
It just gets more and more
Real people in real liberation war
The night before
The night before
The night before Moncada.

I'm also the author, co-author, and/or editor of various books and publications, some of whose contents will appear on this website. These include:

- *Chants of a Lifetime: Selected Poetry of Lincoln Bergman 1953–2003*, Regent Press, Berkeley, California, 2003—**324 pages worth! Spanning 50 years, this is a wide assortment—from my first published poem (in the *Daily Worker!*), a tribute to Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, written when I was 8 years old, to limericks and sonnets that reflect upon love, freedom, revolution, peace, justice, and the post-September 11th world. Numerous editorial notes provide historical context and social background. The book is available from Amazon.**

The Frameups Shall Cease 1953

When Ethel and Julius Rosenberg died
It was because the bosses had lied
Ethel and Julius false would not tell
As for the bosses, they can go to hell.

Ethel and Julius died in the electric chair
But the bosses didn't seem to care
When they died they gave new spirit to us
If we don't have peace the world will bust.

As long as the dove of peace shall fly
The thought of peace shall never die
Before very long we shall have peace
Then all the frameups shall cease.

September 11, 2001 by E.A. Poet/Lincoln Bergman

The eleventh of September
We are certain to remember
Babel's towers crashed colossal
On Manhattan's teeming shore
People leapt in desperation
Facing instant immolation
Flaming fuel of aviation
Shook a nation to its core.

Upon that mournful morning
Death struck without a warning
Our minds in shock unending
Throbbled with numbing roar of war
Like lightning bolt and thunder
The whole world blown asunder
Nightmare television image
Things we'd never seen before.

So many people slaughtered
Mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters
This one word, "terrorism"
Is on everybody's tongue
Nation reels with losses tragic
Horror hemorrhagic
Heroes face the flames of fury
Patriotic anthems sung.

The eleventh of September
World is certain to remember
When lion of the Pentagon
Lay wounded in his den
Now he roars in rage and panic
His armaments titanic
He will punish evildoers
Bomb to bits the Saracen.

Does Bin Laden bear the blame?
Take a look at whence he came
Fundamentalist fanatics
Funded by the CIA
Like Saddam Hussein before him
He now bites the beast that bore him
On his head they place a ransom
They will make the whole world pay.

Mobilize U.S. attack
Maybe finish up Iraq
(That's been on the agenda
Since dad sat on the throne)
Every week more children die,
Blockade the reason why
Spyplanes circling like vultures
To feast on flesh and bone.

Twist both arms of Pakistan
Take out Afghan Taliban
There, where lines of land mines
Run a flood incarnadine
As Israeli occupation
Exploits the situation
To step up assassination
On the soil of Palestine.

Rapidly the cauldrons boil
In a torment of turmoil
Drums of war are beaten
Flags of pride and fear are flown
As they launch a new Crusade
Paths of reason seem to fade
Oil transmuted into blood
Crimes that no god can atone.

It was on the same sad date
When a free Chilean state
Was so viciously cut short
By Kissinger and crew
To gain justice in our times
All who perpetrate war crimes
Must be brought before the people
To receive their earthly due.

As in Vietnam they said
As they left more millions dead
We had to bomb the country
To save it, can't you see
Will that also be their plan
To save Afghanistan?
The ghosts of Nagasaki
Gaze down in empathy.

The eleventh of September
World is certain to remember
The "century's first war"
Bush rushes to proclaim
Names network of Bin Laden
Never mind the Earth's downtrodden
Vows to smoke out every terrorist
Set the globe aflame.

Civil liberties rear-ended
Rights of speech suspended
Congress rolls right over
One brave woman who dissents
Seal up each and every border
Hail the same-old new world order
Use the anti-Muslim frenzy
To repress all discontents.

Yes sadly we'll remember
The eleventh of September
Long after every ember
Has turned to ash of war
In this tragic bitter hour
Can we somehow find our power
Work for peace with every fiber
With the world say—War No More!

The eleventh of September
We are certain to remember
As with sorrow, pain, and anguish
We pace upon the floor
In the distance hear the chorus
Freedom spirits still implore us
A courageous chant is rising
Let there be war—Nevermore!

- *The East is Red: Paper Cuts of the Chinese Revolution*, a poetic history of the Chinese revolution, published by China Books and People's Press, 1972, with prints of paper cuts made by members of a People's Commune in Fatshen. This book is now apparently a collector's item and I have seen it listed for hundreds of dollars by some booksellers—an irony considering its \$1.25 cover price.

II. The Night Was Long

The night was long before the liberation
Old China landlord whip foreign warship
Suffering poverty disease exploitation
The night was long before the liberation.

Always popular resistance sometimes war
Taiping Revolution 1851 to 1864
Revolution of 1911 led by Sun Yat-sen
Resistance rising again and again.

These rebellions failed to unify or liberate
Their contribution great but failed to see
That the major obstacles to freedom were three
All had to be removed to reach victory.

Three heavy mountains as the Chinese now say
Foreign imperialism, starting with opium slave trade
Early capitalist production, workers brutalized
Feudalism, landlord-warlord rule of the countryside.

Old Shanghai foreign controlled
Corruption and starvation bought and sold
A few rich Chinese businessmen could profit if they kowtowed
Sign in a Shanghai park said "No Chinese or Dogs Allowed."

Child dead in mine, boss says come back another time
Can you imagine what it must have meant
For the landlord to take away your daughter
When you could not pay an impossibly high rent?

The three heavy mountains had to be removed
Only when that was done
Could liberation be won
So long so long before the rising of the sun.

The night was long before the liberation
Old China landlord whip foreign warship
Suffering poverty disease exploitation
The night was long before the liberation.

- *Puerto Rico: The Flame of Resistance*, People's Press, 1972, I am one of a number of co-authors, including Gail Dolgin, Robert Gabriner, Maisie McAdoo, and Jonah Raskin. This is also out of print, and although dated, remains an excellent and accessible radical history of this U.S. colony's centuries-long quest for independence.
- *Will We Remember?* a biography of my father with a selection of his poetry, 1985. The introduction is an essay that summarizes some of our family's story and my father's revolutionary career.

I've written, produced, and narrated numerous radio documentaries and commentaries on community, national, and international events. I love radio, both live and produced, and after my time as News Director at KPFA, I kept my voice in the mix for 25 years or so:

- I co-produced a weekly radio program on KPFA from 1971–1995, beginning by myself with *The Midnight Flash*—the news of the week in poetry—at midnight on Saturday.
- In 1972, the program moved to Saturday at 6 pm, now with co-producer Claude Marks and became *The Real Dragon*. (As Ho Chi Minh said in one of his poems, "When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out!")
- In 1973 it became *Nothing Is More Precious Than [Independence and Freedom]* with Claude and Nancy Barrett, and went from 30 minutes to one hour. By 1976 the program became *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, produced by Barbara Lubinski, Heber Dreher, Emiliano Echeverria, Nina Serrano, and Kiilu Nyasha. By the 1990s, I was only an occasional presence. Emiliano and I did do program series—on Pete Seeger, on Paul Robeson, and *Hughes and Blues*, featuring the poetry and stories of Langston Hughes.

Out of this rich body of work, in 1999, with all of the above great folks, I co-founded and continue to work closely with The Freedom Archives, a non-profit community organization with a large and growing collection of historical tape recordings, videos, and documents, and which, under the able direction of Claude Marks, has produced CDs and DVDs, utilizing the materials in the Archives to make programs of modern relevance, and bringing in over 150 high school and college interns. You can learn more at: www.freedomarchives.org

I also co-produced three KQED-TV (public television) documentaries—one of them, on the May 19th birthday of Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X, utilized rare footage of Uncle Ho and excerpts from one of the best documentaries on Malcolm.

Until retirement in mid-2010, I was Associate Director/Principal Editor of Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS), a K–8 curriculum program at UC Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science (www.lhsgems.org) where I edited and sometimes co-authored about 100 teacher's guides, pedagogical handbooks, and parent publications over 25 years. I also sprinkled numerous science/mathematics poems and articles into GEMS publications—such as "Penguin Deluxe," "Planetary Verses," (written when Pluto still was considered one) and, in a guide about plate tectonics, with geological thanks to Poe—"The Plates."

Penguin Deluxe

Penguin deluxe
Bird in a tux
Elegant, debonair
Birds of a feather
Who do flock together
But never take to the air.

Planetary Verses

I love the planets in all their splendor
They whirl elliptical in Milky Way
The Sun, resplendent at their center,
Gives us heat energy, lights up our day.

Mercury, the smallest and the closest to the Sun
Mercury, the god, of course, was the fastest one.

Venus, love goddess, shrouded in mist
Beneath evening star, many lips have been kissed.

Earth—wondrous mother of life itself
From molten core to continental shelf.

Mars, named for the god of war,
Red rusty surface, with iron at core.

The prize to Jupiter for immensity
Red Spot a storm of great intensity.

Wondrous amazement the sight of Saturn brings,
Famous for its necklace of at least 10,000 rings!

Neptune with his trident, ruler of the sea—
The planet is a cold one, way too cold for you or me.

Uranus's axis, near-horizontal, spins
Fifteen moons, eleven rings, very rapid winds.

Pluto of the Underworld, sits upon his throne.
Rocky icy outpost on the edge of the unknown.

They rotate and revolve, spinning tops through space,
Orbit in a spiral dance of such amazing grace.

I love the planets in all their splendor
They whirl elliptical in Milky Way
The Sun, resplendent at their center
Gives us heat energy, lights up our day.

The Plates by Edgar Allan Bergman

Hear the pounding of the plates—

Massive plates

What a crust of constant change their throbbing thrum relates

How they thunder, thunder, thunder

In the deep recess of soil

While hot magmas rush asunder

And the heavens glare in wonder

As all slowly comes to boil

Keeping time, time, time

In a geologic rhyme

To the tectonabulation that so loudly emanates

From the plates, plates, plates, plates

Plates, plates, plates—

From the thunder and the wonder of the plates.

Hear the great tectonic plates

Moving plates!

What a vast cacophony their clashing stimulates

Through the day and through the night

How they shift with main and might

And the molten mantle burns

Plates collide

What a thrum of twist and turn

Homes and hearts begin to shake, stomachs churn

In wild ride

Oh, from grinding plates it grates

What a rush of energy its labor liberates!

How it breaks

How it cakes

As the ore-filled oven bakes

Of the power that it makes

To the turning and the churning

Of the plates, plates, plates, plates

Plates, plates, plates

The burning and the churning of the plates.

See the ridged volcanic plates

Magma gates

What a story of eruption, now, their turbulency states!

In the startled eye of sight

How we roar out our delight

Too incredible to speak

We can only shriek. shriek, shriek

With deep fright

In a clamorous explosion made of molten rock on fire

In a mad expostulation of a fierce frantic fire

Leaping higher, higher, higher

With a desperate desire

Till unfurrowed faults do sever

Now—now to flow forever

By the side of the cratered moon.

O the plates, plates, plates

What a tale their twist relates

Of great mass!

How they clang and clash and roar!

What a lava they outpour

From the cauldron of the palpitating gas!

Yet the people fully know

By the banging,
And the clanging
How the dangers ebb and flow
Yet the sound distinct berates
In the jangling
And the wrangling
How the danger always waits
By the drifting and the shifting in the angle of the plates—
Of the plates—
Of the plates, plates, plates, plates,
Plates, plates, plates
In the clamor and the clangor of the plates!
Hear the rolling of the plates—
Rugged Plates!
What a world of awesome might their majesty inflates!
In the violence of the night
How we quiver with affright
At the geologic menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the quartz within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people—ah, the people—
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All Alone
And who, toiling, toiling, toiling
In excited multi-tone
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone
They are neither sea nor shore
They are neither crust nor core
They are Coals
Mother Earth's hot brimming bowls
And she rolls, rolls, rolls
Rolls
An anthem from the plates!
And her heaving breast inflates
With the pounding of the plates
And she dances and creates
Keeping time, time, time
In a geologic rhyme
To the pounding of the plates
Of the plates
Keeping time time time
In a geologic rhyme
To the sliding of the plates
Of the plates, plates, plates—
To the gliding of the plates
Keeping time, time, time
As she swells, swells, swells,
In a true tectonic rhyme
To the churning of the plates
Of the plates, plates, plates
To the turning of the plates
Of the plates, plates, plates, plates—
Plates, plates, plates—
To the shaking and the quaking of the plates.

- **Co-author, with Nicole Parizeau and Jacqueline Barber, of *Spark Your Child's Success in Math and Science*.**
- **In the 21st century I contributed to and helped edit teacher's guides in the *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading* series (www.scienceandliteracy.org) including several student readers—*Gary's Sand Journal*, *Into the Soil*, *Habitat Scientist*, and *Ever Think About Ink?* **The last was never published as unit content changed, but perhaps someday will see the light of day. A middle school curriculum that also combines science and literacy is under development.****
- **Primary playwright for five children's LHS Science Discovery Theatre productions: *Inspector Spectrum Catches the Wave* (1988); *Dino Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1988); *The Soap Opera* (1989); *The Story of Itiba* (1991); *The Wizard of Odds* (1994). *The Story of Itiba* **focuses on the Taíno, the first people to encounter Columbus in the Caribbean, dramatizing the experience of a young girl before and after. It was developed as part of an exhibit marking the 500th anniversary of Columbus' genocidal enslavement and colonization of the Americas.****
- **I received an Honorable Mention in the San Francisco Bay Guardian Poetry Contest, 1997, for this song/poem to Allen Ginsberg.**

Frere Allen April 1997

**"The beautiful souls are those that are universal,
open, and ready for all things." — Michel de Montaigne**

*Three verses for Allen Ginsberg,
in his own great spirit of rhyme and play
and audience participation, to be sung to the tune of "Frere Jacques."*

Allen Ginsberg
Allen Ginsberg
Has passed on
Has passed on
Peaceful prophet poet
Find a seed and sow it
He's not gone
He's not gone.

Allen Ginsberg
Allen Ginsberg
Buddhist Jew
Buddhist Jew
Ringing in the spirit
Everyone can hear it
He rang true
He rang true.

Allen Ginsberg
Allen Ginsberg
Good gay seer
Good gay seer
Rage against the warlord
Singing out the life chord
He's still here
He's still here!

Since mid-2010 I've been active in the Revolutionary Poets Brigade, a growing organization begun in San Francisco, but with chapters in other states and nations, and I am honored to included with many other poets in the Brigade's first anthology, published by Casa de Poesia, (www.casadepoesia.com).

I'll close this initial attempt at a website biography, with an autobiographical poetic confession. "Confessional" and a photograph of myself, taken by great photographer and friend Joe Blum, at a birthday party more than 20 years ago, that also appears on the back of *Chants of a Lifetime*.

Confessional (2003)

I confess
I am guilty of—Love!

I confess
I have engaged in friendship.

I admit I have consorted with
All manner of people

Have tenderly touched—
Cats, dogs, lovers, flowers

Been guilty of marveling at
The stars, a stone, an autumn leaf

I acknowledge
I've committed crimes of kindness

Been implicated in
Acts of empathy and passion

Been convicted
Of having convictions

Conspired to
Breathe in better air

Gone underground
To pray with earthworms

Secretly plotted
To save the redwoods

Stand accused of harboring visions
Of evolution of our species toward justice and peace.

I confess
I am guilty of—Love!

