

The Poetry and life of Allen Ginsberg



Allen's Harmonium 1997

Edward Sanders

Dedicated to the building of
the civilization envisioned by
Allen Ginsberg in such poems as “America”:

When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need
with my good looks?

and “Death to Van Gogh’s Ear!”:

Now is the time for prophecy without death as a consequence

and “Memory Gardens”:

Well, while I’m here I’ll
do the work—
and what’s the Work?
To ease the pain of living.
Everything else, drunken
dumbshow.

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THE POETRY & LIFE OF ALLEN GINSBERG

Part I

1926-1943

In a way Allen Ginsberg's life was
shaped by pogroms and the surge of
revolution
in the Jewish Pale of Settlement

first in the 1880s
and then in the pogrom-evil years of '03-'05
which caused his grandparents on both sides
to flee to the freedom of the USA

THE PALE

The Pale was the legal zone in western Russia
set up through the centuries
where almost 5 million Jews
were forced to reside

The Pale extended from the Baltic Sea in the north
to the Black Sea in the south.
In the 19th Century it included Lithuania,
Belorussia (White Russia), the Crimea
Bessarabia & much of the Ukraine.

GRANDPARENTS IN THE PALE

Allen Ginsberg's grandfather, Pincus, was born in a town called
Kamenetz-Podolskiy on the upper Dniester River
He was orphaned early,
then moved to Pinsk further north in the Pale

There were ghastly new restrictions on Jews in 1881

in the repression after the assassination of Tzar Alexander II
and many instances of government-sanctioned pogroms.
The Tzar even banned the Yiddish Theater;
and restrictions were increased on where Jews
could live in the Pale.

There were quotas set up on the number of Jews
to be let into the universities,
and to legal, medical and government jobs.

It was in this context that Pincus Ginsberg fled to the USA
in the 1880s
to settle with relatives in Newark, where he met his future bride
Rebecca Schechtman–
Louis Ginsberg, Allen's father, was born in '95

HIS MATERNAL GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER

Mendel Livergant
was Naomi's father
(changed to Morris Levy at Ellis Island)

& lived in a village named Nevel
south of St. Petersburg, west of Moscow
& north of Vitebsk
in the middle of the Jewish Pale
where he sold Singer sewing machines to the peasants

Mendel married a woman named Judith
they had four children,
all of whom wound up in Allen's poems–
Eleanor, Max, Sam & Naomi
who was born in 1894

Naomi grew up speaking Yiddish
She played the mandolin
Her parents were sympathetic
to the revolutionaries.

In the Russo-Japanese war of 1904
Mendel Livergant and his bro' Isser
went to the U.S.
to avoid getting drafted
(& underwent the name-change
from Livergant to Levy)

& Judith & the kids
 moved to Vitebsk
 a city of radical ferment
 (where Marc Chagall
 had lived when young)

–Vitebsk was later destroyed by the Nazis.

Then there was
 what they called the Revolution of 1905
 when the Tzar’s soldiers opened fire
 on 300,000 marchers petitioning for
 the 8-hour workday, more money, the
 right to vote & a parliament
 & 100 protesters,
 some praying and carrying ikons
 fell dead in the snow
 by the Winter Palace
 after which
 there were massive strikes in cities
 all over Russia,
 and then massive repression
 including ghastly pogroms
 in the Northern Pale

–pogrom is the Russian word for “devastation”

This was the year that
 Naomi, age 10, & her mother and sisters
 escaped to New York
 to Orchard Street

(Isser’s family went to Winnipeg)

& her father Morris opened a candy store
 in the Lower East Side

Then the family moved to Newark
 Naomi went to Barringer High
 in 1912
 where, both age 17, she met Louis Ginsberg.

ONE SOCIALIST, ONE COMMUNIST

Allen's mother was a communist

Louis was a socialist like his parents

& thus was established a
classic pull-&-shove
in the family
'tween the two sets of politics

NAOMI'S FIRST BREAKDOWN

Naomi had gone to Normal School
& become a teacher
in Woodbine, NJ

She suffered her first breakdown in 1919
light was painful to her
she lay in a dark room 3 weeks
She was not yet married
but later that year, with the opposition of
her future mother-in-law
she and Louis were hitched

The first son, Eugene, was born 1921
and named after the great American Socialist
Eugene Debs

THE BARD

The bard named Irwin Allen Ginsberg
was born at 2 a.m. on June 3, 1926
in Newark, NJ

They named him after
his great-grandfather
S'rul Avrum Ginsberg

Louis was an English teacher
at Central High in Paterson

He was a well known poet
with three volumes published during his lifetime

“Would that all sons’ fathers were poets!”
 A.G. later exclaimed, in his “Confrontation with Louis
 Ginsberg’s Poems” in Louis Ginsberg’s
 Collected Poems.

An early family apartment was
 on Fair Street in Paterson
 (now torn down
 & not far from the Great Falls
 in the Passaic River)

where Louis sat
 in the evenings
 at a modest wooden desk
 ’neath a gooseneck lamp
 writing poetry
 –a desk that Allen later acquired
 after his father’s passing in ’76
 and brought to his apartment
 in the Lower East Side

Allen wrote a poem when he was nine or ten
 which was published in the Paterson Evening News
 He could still recall it 60 years later:

“Once upon my window sill
 A sparrow hopped but then stood still
 I asked him why he did the latter
 He said to me, ‘It doesn’t matter.’
 Men kill a cow for mutton pie
 So should I confide in you my woe?”

Allen, his brother and mother spent
 two summers at Camp Nicht-Gedeiget
 which means “No Worry”
 near Monroe Lake
 in Orange County
 about 60 miles north of
 New York City (Louis wd visit on weekends)

Allen’s first songs were
 learned at his mom’s communist meetings:
 “On the Line” &
 “The Red Flag”

& wondered which college to attend

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He leaned toward Columbia
to follow a friend from Paterson High

He kept getting crushes on fellow students
One student, Paul Roth, went to Columbia
later became a doctor

Allen kept his crush in secrecy

'42

Naomi was again hospitalized at Greystone
in '42 and '43.

Part II

'43

The Vow to Help the Working Class

The slender & nervous sixteen year old
took the ferry from Hoboken to Manhattan
on the way to the university entrance examination
and made a solemn vow
that if he got into Columbia
he would devote his life
to helping the working class

(Ginsberg was prone to vows—
see his later vows with Neal Cassady
and Peter Orlovsky)

He enrolled at Columbia in '43, age 16
an Ivy league school— hardly a citadel of sentiment
for the workers

even with exradicals like Lionel Trilling
and Marxist art-genius Meyer Schapiro
as his mentors

That was the school year
he'd meet young Republican Jack Kerouac
and continued his fierce training in rhyming

(He forged beautiful skills at rhyme
 to which he returned toward the end of his life.
 He was famous throughout his career for his
 spontaneous rhymes)

Among his faves were Thomas Wyatt &
 Christopher Smart (1722-1771)
 whose “Jubilate Agno”
 was written while Smart was crazed.

Ginsberg
 with a crazy mother
 was very very sensitive
 to
 craziness
 Crazy Wisdom
 Crazy Times
 & Vision

Another big influence, of course, was
 Walt Whitman, Ginsberg’s life long “unwobbling pivot”
 described by him in a letter to one of his college professors as
 a “Mountain too vast to be seen.”

Decades later, when reading from Whitman to his students,
 he would weep during “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed.”

And so Irwin Allen Ginsberg began
 a polite, Cold War liberal Columbia upbringing–

In December o’ ’43 he met one William S. Burroughs
 who was working as a bartender in the Village
 His parents, who operated a gift shop and
 garden supply shop in Fla., sent him \$200 a month–

Ginsberg & Kerouac
 learned much from Burroughs’ library
 Ginsberg first experienced Blake there,
 and Baudelaire

Big impact on future Beats:
 Burroughs’ Book Hoard

Another life-long friend A.G. met his first year in College
was Lucien Carr, a polished & confident youth from St. Louis
whom Allen first saw in Lionel Trilling's Great Books Seminar

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'44

Naomi had been released from Greystone
& Allen often went with her to the opera

Louis & Naomi broke up that year
Her paranoia & all the fights
were finally too much for both to endure
Naomi moved to NYC

where she had a love affair with a doctor
for the National Maritime Union
& lived with him for a while.

Around May of '44
the 'Zap* met Kerouac
who was then a merchant seaman
(it was World War II)
apparently at the pad of
Edie Parker and Joan Vollmer
on 118th Street
(the crowd hung out at the nearby West End Bar)

Kerouac flunked out of Columbia in '42
In Dec '42 he joined the Navy, but then feigned
bonk bonk to get a discharge
then joined the merchant marines.

Ginsberg and K. were talking buddies

On August 14, Lucien Carr killed David Kammerer
Burroughs' pal from St. Louis
who was erotically obsessed with
the attractive young man

-late at night, in Riverside Park, Upper West Side of
Manhattan
knifed him twice in the heart

tied up the body & rolled it in the Hudson River

Burroughs gave Carr some cash and some advice
Kerouac helped dispose of the death knife
and Kammerer's glasses

•

Through Burroughs Kerouac and Ginzap
discovered uppers, particularly benzedrine
available in drugstores in inhalers
an important force
in Kerouac's novels
and Ginsberg's poems

& in the forging of literary frenzy

•

August 16 Carr turned himself in
confessed, charged with murder

Burroughs and Kerouac were arrested
& Kerouac's father refused to bail him out.

Jack was taken from jail to marry Edie Parker

Then, freed on bail, they went to live in
Grosse Pt., Mich. for a while
—a brief while

'45

3-16-45 a Columbia U dean
rushed into Ginzap's room at the college
and found him in bed with Kerouac
(they had on shorts)
sleeping

Allen had written "Fuck the Jews" with accompanying
skull and crossbones on the window,
putatively to miff the reportedly anti-Semitic
cleaning woman.

Ginzap had also written on the glass
“Butler has no balls” (Butler was one of the
college’s deans)

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AG had to wipe off the words
and was suspended from college
ordered to see a shrink
and tossed from the residence
for having the unwelcome overnight guest (Kerouac)
& for the graffiti

AG later told his biographers he was trying to goad
the antisem cleaner

A YEAR FROM COLLEGE

After this, age 18,
he took a year from college

He worked first as a welder at
Brooklyn Navy Yard, till April
then at Gotham Book Mart, but
owner Frances Steloff fired him.

June of '45 he received his draft notice.
Hitler was dead &
Hiroshima a few weeks ahead
He declared himself homosexual
was sent to merchant marine training school
for rest of summer of '45

Beginning in August
he was in U.S. Maritime
Service for 3 1/2 months

During '45 Kerouac's father dying of C
and Jack spent lots of time at home

Ginsberg and Jack
began talking about the “New Vision”

early urgings that lead to the B.G.

Ginsberg fell in love with Kerouac
Down in the gay part of Manhattan, by th'

West Side docks,
they caressed one another

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'46

Naomi living with Eugene, who was out of
the WWII army & off to law school
She was prone to stride around nude
A.G. apparently felt his mom's nudity
reinforced his gayness

(see Ginsberg's poem "Kaddish")

In th' fall of '46 Ginzap readmitted to Columbia

Same fall Kerouac was living in Ozone Park (in NYC)
working on The Town and the City.

& Lucien Carr was let out after two years
for the Kammerer killing

Ginsberg was in constant communication with his father,
often by card and mail
The correspondence was often
what they call brutally direct

Fall of '46 Neal Cassady to NYC with
17 year old wife LuAnne
Cassady was from the flophouse realm of
Denver

'47

January, Ginsberg met the youth from Denver

Cassady was already friend of Jack Kerouac
A.G. and Cassady made it first
on a cot in a Harlem pad
in January '47

March Cassady split back to Denver

Summer Kerouac and Ginsberg joined him there

Ginzap went to Denver

to be with Cassady
 Cassady was very involved with
 girlfriend Carolyn
 –also seeing first wife, and
 various others, plus furtively
 making it with A.G.

Ginsberg frustrated,
 wrote fairly good poem on August 23
 “The Bricklayer’s Lunch Hour”

writing rhymed quatrains on Benzedrine
 the summer o’ ’47 in Denver

Hitching ca end of August 47
 with Cassady toward Burroughs’
 grass ranch
 in New Waverly, Texas

they took a vow of love and fidelity
 kneeling together in Oklahoma
 (as mentioned in “The Green Automobile”)

Ginsberg dropped out of Columbia again, and after summer
 took merchant ship to Africa and back

Then rest of fall worked odd jobs in Paterson

Winter to pad in East Harlem

In the Milieu of Aimless Frenzy

Naomi moved in with her sister Edie
 who worked days as a union organizer.
 Naomi getting crazy
 fearful of relatives with bags
 of germs
 on the fire escape
 or the “three big sticks” in her back

1947 she flipped again & was
 sent to Pilgrim State on Long Island
 Hitting her head against wall
 Docs recommended lobotomy
 Allen signed forms okaying

it in late Nov. 1947
(a source of some of his later guilt)

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I think she was there till she died
on June 9, 1956

'48

Winter of 47-48 the 'Zap returned to Columbia
in a frenzy

Writing a paper on Cézanne
for Meyer Schapiro
he'd take some tokes
then go Cézanne-staring
at MOMA

On way back from a seder in Paterson
(at Louis' house)
Allen and Kerouac
parted at 125th St.
Allen demanded Jack hit him--
"I wanted attention from him
any kind of attention"

April Cassady wrote he was married, and wife
was pregnant

"Two Sonnets" After reading Kerouac's manuscript,
The Town and the City Spring of 1948

Serendipity
Allen's friend w/ tb
from whom he rented a pad w/

orange crate shelves
theology studies
St. Theresa of Avila
Plotinus
St. J of the C
all material for "Howl"

Living in East Harlem- June-July 1948:

where he had an auditory “vision”

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heard a voice chanting Blake’s “Ahh, Sunflower, Weary of Time”
and “The Sick Rose,” and “Little Girl Lost.”

(Out of that vision his early poem,
“On Reading William Blake’s ‘The Sick Rose’”)

WATCH OUT, BARD

He crawled
 onto the fire escape
to the window next door
He tapped and shouted
“I’ve seen God!”
 to two startled women

Part III

We left Allen Ginsberg in his East Harlem apartment
in the summer of ’48
where he had experienced a powerful auditory “vision” of
the Bard William Blake chanting poetry

an experience that was to be key in Ginsberg’s
next fifteen years as a poet.

Around this time Allen began inserting questions
into his poetry—

His very early works
contain few, if any
bardic questions:
but when he gets to his

"Vision" poem:

 "On Reading William Blake's 'The Sick Rose,'"
written at the time of the Blake Voice Vision,
"The Sick Rose" and "Little Girl Lost,"

there are three sentences ending in question marks.

After the Vision of Blake, the Elegant, Pulsing Question
became one of his most powerful poetic devices

(There are 47 question marks in Allen's Collected Poems
in the poems BEFORE he wrote "Howl" in 1955)

("Howl" has no question marks
because "Howl" is, in a way, the long declarative
throb-answer to
hundreds of questions he had already asked.)

In his Blake Vision, of course, he sensed Eternity
and it set off a long hunger to
"see Visionary Indian Angels who WERE Visionary Indian Angels"

(The next fifteen years were a quest for Cosmic Consciousness
up until his poem "The Change" written after experiencing
the Calcutta ghats
amoil with flame
-a poem renouncing the
"power" he had constructed out of
the Blake Vision)

The Blake Vision also had "Holy Loner" aspects
that brought into focus
his "feelings of rejection as a confessed homosexual
and as a Jew,"
as the writer Paul Christiansen has pointed out.

His father, Louis, watched his son with a wary eye:
July '48:
Louis' advice re Neal
"Dear Allen, Exorcise Neal.
-Louis"

'49

There came a time in February o' '49
when a bedraggled, Loner Beat, Famished Phantom
named Herbert Huncke showed up at A.G.'s pad
at 1401 York Avenue

just released from prison, feet blistered, socks wet
and talking suicide

He was the archetypal "Madman beat in time"
of the "Howl" threnody

Allen offered him a place to stay
 Not long thereafter Huncke began bringing his pals to the pad
 a heist gang
 that used the place for storage of stolen stuff

On April 23 all were arrested,
 even the Bard Allen Ginsberg,

it made a big splash in The New York Times:

One of the accused, Allen Ginsberg, of 1401 York Avenue
 told the police that he was a copy boy for a news service who
 had “tied-in” with the gang, all with police records, to obtain
 “realism” he needed to write a story.

Sure, Allen sure.

A sad sad dad bailed out his son
 Mark Van Doren, of the Columbia U faculty, offered help
 and Lionel Trilling introduced the Bard to a Col. U law prof
 who recommended that A.G. plead bonk bonk

Allen did just that
 and was sentenced to Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute

There wasn't a room available right away
 so he lived with his dad in Paterson

and then on 6-29-49

the up-a-creek Bard went into the 6th floor ward of the
 Institute on
 168th Street

where he met poet Carl Solomon
 to whom he was to dedicate “Howl”

Part IV

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg
 when he was in Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Center
 in Washington Heights

after being swept up on the edges of a heist gang
run by the future Beat hero,
but then down and out, Herbert Huncke

-There was a car chase, with Ginsberg
one of the occupants
and a famous arrest that made the
front page of The New York Times

Several professors at Columbia pulled strings,
as they say,

and Ginsberg entered the Washington Heights shrink zone
in late June of 1949-

He was very depressed

Then one day Ginsberg was standing in the hallway
watching a guy being wheeled into the ward

swollen from insulin shocks

and began one of the more famous of
20th century literary conversations

He traced through his visionary experiences
(the Voice of Blake in Harlem '48 for instance)
The man listened exceptionally unimpressed, then said,
"Well, you're new here. Wait awhile and you'll meet
some of the other repentant mystics."

The man asked who Ginsberg was. "I'm Myshkin,"
Allen replied, referring to the rather crazy prince in
Dostoevsky's The Idiot.

The bloat-faced man then said, "I'm Kirilov," referring
to a character in The Possessed.

The shock patient was Carl Solomon, to whom the Bard was to
dedicate "Howl" five years later.

A talented writer, Solomon was living proof to Ginsberg
that the best minds of his generation were
destroyed by madness.

Solomon had once seen a performance in Paris by
Artaud himself

and on another famous occasion
had thrown potato salad at
a lecturer speaking On “Stéphane Mallarmé
and Alienation”
at Brooklyn College

immortalized later in “Howl.”

Ginsberg wrote William Burroughs from the
institute and said he was again thinking
of becoming a labor lawyer

Burroughs wrote back in a disquieting mood:
“I think the US is heading
in the direction of a
socialist police state
similar to England, &
not too different from
Russia. I congratulate myself
on my timely withdrawal.”

'50

2-27-50
'Zap
left the
nut house
& moved in w/ Dad
in Paterson

He was convinced, at that moment,
that the best course for his life
was to find a job, get a girlfriend, return to Paterson.

He told Jack Kerouac his days of being gay were over

Five days later Ginsberg sent 9 poems to the
great William Carlos Williams

(having just seen Williams read at the Guggenheim Museum)

including “Ode to the Setting Sun,” a New Jersey industrial
landscape graveyard poem
(written in the Psychiatric Institute)
which predicted the great “Sunflower Sutra” o’ 1955

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The Letter to WCW
with 9 poems, and “several other verses
form the text of the small collection known as
The Gates of Wrath, which was later
lost for many years, it seems, and was only
able to be published when Bob Dylan
found it in his archives around 1968

The Gates of Wrath’s themes are “passionate love and
the divided self.” Plus, of course, thanatopsis

No other bard since Poe has so delved death.

Ginsberg once told me what an influence Poe was
on his poesy.

The thanatopoesis opted early, as in
“In Death, Cannot Reach What Is Most Near” &
“This Is About Death”
both from mid-1949

The first version of “The Shrouded Stranger”
was in The Gates of Wrath

“The Shrouded Stranger”
to me
is his first poem
to match the pulses of his psyche

•

In the spring of ’50
in Provincetown
true to his promise to the psychiatrists
he had his first heterosexual love
an out-of-door bliss-zap by the docks

with a woman named Helen Parker
who had once been engaged to John Dos Passos
They fell in love

but he was not willing to leave Paterson & his therapy
 for life with her in P-town
 and a few months later she set aside Ginzap
 for a singer named Ramblin' Jack Elliott!!

That was the spring he was hired as a reporter
 for a labor newspaper, Labor Herald,
 in New Jersey

but he was fired in September

then decided he'd go on prole-patrol with a job in a
 ribbon factory in Paterson.

Meanwhile his father Louis
 had married a woman from Paterson named Edith
 & Louis & Edith had purchased a house.

Always a family man
 Allen & Edith were close over the years
 & Edith was pleasantly tolerant
 of the young men soon
 to form a Generation

1951

Meanwhile in '51
 Williams put two of Ginsberg's letters into the fourth
 book of Paterson, published that year

and in the spring in an apartment on West 20th
 across from a seminary
 Jack Kerouac wrote On the Road
 cooked for and coddled by his wife Joan Haverty

That summer she was pregnant
 He insisted she have an abortion. She refused.
 And he dumped her
 refusing to pay for the
 prenatal doctor
 & denying he was the father of
 Jan Michelle Kerouac
 born on 2-16-52

From mid-'51 to the end of 1953
 the 'Zap lived in NYC

(which was not published till 1961)

'52

New Directions' James Laughlin
accepted some "prose poems" for publication.

'53

Good poem:
"The Green Automobile" 1953-1954

& in the summer
Ginzap worked as a copy boy
for the New York Herald Tribune
\$45 a week

and almost every day
of these years he read torrentially
and asked 10,000s of questions
(Allen asked more questions, I think,
than anyone I ever met)

In late '53
to Florida to hang out w/ Wm. Burroughs
then Havana, then Mexico

for a few months of many adventures.

'54

One of the adventures included
making himself some huge drums
suspended by vines
and tapping a rubber tree to tip his drumsticks

(See his poem, "Siesta in Xbalba Chiapas-SF")

That spring he split for California
to be with Neal Cassady

and lived for a while in an impossible
ménage à trois

He savored the quick and flaming literary scene:
Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Kenneth Patchen

the year of Allen's great song
"The Weight of the World is Love."

He moved to a pad on Nob Hill with a girlfriend, Sheila Boucher
and the 'Zap picked up a job for \$250 a week
doing market research

Then in December he met Peter Orlovsky
a friend of the painter Robert LaVigne
and they soon became lovers

Orlovsky came from a troubled impoverished family
the third of five children
and had been on his own since age 17
He brought his brothers Julius & Lafcadio
into the beat milieu with him.
Both brothers were in and out of hospitals.
Julius once remained silent for 14 years,
(or so A.G. once told Ezra Pound & Olga Rudge)
in the mode of a Manichaeon
because he felt that the entirety of evil in the cosmos
was coming from his mouth and body

'55

Ginsberg's
shrink
at Langley Porter
told A.G.

it was OK to
move in w/ Peter Orlovsky
give up his job
& write poetry

"I asked him what the
American Psychoanalytic Association
wd say about that
& he said

‘There’s no party line
 no red book
 on how people are supposed
 to live

If that’s what
 you really feel
 wd please you
 what in the world
 is stopping you from doing it?”

On February 3
 Ginsberg moved out of his hotel
 (he’d broken with Sheila)
 across the street from the Hotel Wentley
 (famous from John Wieners’ poem sequence)

and moved to 1010 Montgomery
 Then 8 days later
 P.O. moved in also

He & Peter
 took vows to one another.
 A.G. was reading many books
 but writing little

He was interested in experimenting in W.C. Williams’
 triadic line
 or indented tercets
 combined with Jack Kerouac’s long-breathed lines–
 when he turned 29 on June 3

Peter then went off to NY to visit his family.

Allen took a hitchhiking trip to Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, etc.
 then back to SF

One day in early August
 He began typing
 on a used typewriter
 on scratch paper
 with nothing to gain
 nothing to lose

the first 12 pages of “Howl”

(He had a line from
an earlier notebook

“I saw the best mind angel-headed hipster damned”)

–I saw an early version of “Howl” at the
Whitney Beat show in ’95
and remarked to Allen about the indentations
–which, of course, are not in the final version–
and he told me he had been
imitating W.C. Williams–

Then, the same day he wrote those brilliant
long-breathed pages beginning with
“I saw the best minds of my generation....”

he chant-jotted the Carl Solomon
section (Part III)

Peter returned from his trip
to the East Coast
when high on peyote
he & Peter went forth on a
peyote-halo walk in SF

and spotted
the Sir Francis Drake Hotel
looming in lit-up gloominess
like the blood-eating fire god Moloch

So he added the
Part II Moloch section
beginning “What sphinx of cement....”

He began the revisions of Part I which
lasted a number of months

In September ’55, A.G. and P.O.
moved to 1624 Milvia
in Berkeley
for \$35 a month

revising revising revising revising
tuning the lyre for the Mind Entire.

Part V

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg
in the fall of 1955
when he was still revising “Howl”

CITY LIGHTS

In 1953
a poet named Lawrence Ferlinghetti, & Peter Martin
founded a paperback book store in San Francisco called
City Lights Books

A.G. and Ferl’ met in August of ’55
Ferlinghetti didn’t want to publish Empty Mirror
but liked the manu of “Howl” Allen showed him—
and wanted to publish

THE SIX GALLERY READING

Ginsberg learned that
a young bard from Wichita
Michael McClure
had been invited to set up a reading
at the Six Gallery
but had been too busy

Ginzap took over the planning
and lined up
McClure, Phil Whalen, Jack Kerouac, et al.
w/ Kenneth Rexroth as mc
for Oct 13, 1955
It was a Thursday

There were about a hundred
in the audience
First Philip Lamantia read
Then McClure’s
“For the Death of 100 Whales”
then Phil Whalen

after which Ginsberg read "Howl" (Part I only)
building in confidence

 -Kerouac shouting "Go! Go!"
 while beating rhythm on a wine jug-

The crowd was "blown away"
 (to use the parlance of a few years later)

Ginsberg was in tears
 by the time he roared to its end
as was Rexroth.

Snyder ended the Six Gallery reading
w/ his "A Berry Feast."

(A good account of the Six Gallery reading can be
found in Michael McClure's book Scratching the
Beat Surface)

There was an actual orgy after the reading
which I always forgot
 to ask A.G. to describe-
 dang!

•

One afternoon
 on a SF bus
he came up w/
 the "Footnote to Howl" finale:
 the famous chant of "Holy Holy Holy.."

'56

Naomi died on June 9, 1956
 while Allen was in California
As the casket was lowered
at Beth Moses Cemetery
 in Farmingdale, LI
the rabbi would not chant Kaddish
because a minyan

(10 men)
was not on hand

28

Naomi quiescat

It ate at his heart
she'd not had the proper chant
and he began a search
to write one of his own.

In July of '56 Ginzap took off
on a ship, the USNS St. Pendleton
carrying Cold War stuff
to the arctic circle
for the Defense Early Warning
radar apparatus up there

carrying the proofs of Howl
which City Lights had set
(printed at Villiers Press in London)

There were errors in the line breaks of the 10-league lines
He had to pay for the fix-ups himself!
(Though it only ultimately cost \$20
he volunteered to pay up to \$200!)

While on ship, Phil Whalen forwarded mail
to A.G. (which he picked up in Takoma)

One was a letter from Naomi
just before she died

She mentioned the mimeographed "Howl" he had
sent her, and she lamented how
"I still have the wire in my head."

"I'm looking for a good time," she wrote
"I hope you are not taking drugs
as suggested by your poetry.
That would hurt me.
Don't go in for ridiculous things.
With love and good news.
Naomi"

After Howl was published in August '56

among the recipients:

Pound, Moore, Eliot, Auden, Jeffers, Charlie Chaplin,
Carl Solomon, Patchen, et numerous others
over 100 copies

There was a big article in the
September 1956 New York Times
by Richard Eberhart
on "West Coast Rhythms" which ID'd A.G.
as an important young poet.

A.G. always helped his friends
get their books published
This is not so common
among literati

It was the Best Minds factor
Ginsberg promoting his friends
Kerouac, Corso, Burroughs, Snyder, Whalen, &
even Levertov, Niedecker, Oppenheimer, et al.

Fall o' '56
Ginsberg
met Denise Levertov
in Guadalajara
& added her
manuscript o' poems to
his collection
to show editors

Returning to NYC the same fall
Peter and Allen stayed with Elise Cowen
in what is known as Yorkville, in Manhattan,
Upper East part.

A.G. had manuscripts by Snyder, Whalen, Duncan, Dorn,
Creeley, Lamantia, Levertov, McClure, and Charles Olson
even

He surged into The New York Times offices
on West 43rd
and requested a review of Howl

(Don't you wish you had the guts
to do that for YOUR book of verse?)

30

Mademoiselle, thanks to the 'Zap, published Levertov
and even some Burroughs.
He approached Time, Life, Esquire, The Hudson
Review, Partisan Review, The Kenyon Review, The New
Yorker, and New Directions, et al
demanding ink for himself
and the Best Minds group

'57

Ginsberg
helped persuade Don Allen
to do the famous San Francisco Scene
issue of
Evergreen Review (#2)

(which I purchased at the University of Missouri bookstore that fall)

Early '57 Kerouac, Allen, Peter, Gregory
split for Tangiers and Paris
(Ginsberg loaned Kerouac \$225
for the passage, which he had a lot of trouble
getting repaid.)

In Tangiers Allen spent 5 or 6
hours a day
typing Burroughs' manuscript
later known as Naked Lunch
(Burroughs concept of how even the reverse side print
showing through as giving
sense to text-flow cut-up sequencing)

•

In March, U.S. Customs seized 520 copies of Howl
coming in from the printer in England

May 21
two cops bought Howl at City Lights
and it was handcuff time

The American Civil Liberties Union took the case

In October the judge declared “Howl” not obscene
a huge historic “victory” for a generation
that had discovered new sounds for
America’s great Liberty Bell

The media hay harvested by Ginzap
from the “Howl” triumph
catapulted him into a worldwide fame
which was to last till his death
in April of 1997
almost 40 years later.

In Nov 1957 Ginsberg wrote Kerouac
from Paris
announcing he’d written the lines
much of which later graced part IV of “Kaddish”

Farewell
with long black shoe
Farewell
smoking corsets and ribs of steel
Farewell
communist party & broken stocking
with your eyes of shock
with your eyes of lobotomy
with your eyes of stroke
with your eyes of divorce
with your eyes alone
with your eyes
with your eyes
with your death full of flowers
with your death of the golden windows of sunlight...

Part V

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg
in November o’ ’57
when he wrote Kerouac
from Paris to announce he’d written many of the lines
that would later form one of the most riveting

He was already famous from the publication of Howl
and the victory by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's
City Lights Books
in the "Howl" obscenity trial.

'58

In February in London
he read all of "Howl"
felt full of tears
as the reading built in the
howlin' intensity he
gave those early readings
that he was reading to Blake himself
the "Soul in the Fog."

July '58, A.G. returned to NYC
He was a famous poet

and he had written some remarkable poems in Europe
"Death to Van Gogh's Ear" "Poem Rocket" "Europe! Europe!"
and the beautiful threnody "At Apollinaire's Grave"

He was more and more fascinated with Whitman's prophecy
of the Fall of America:

"I'd like to write a monstrous and golden political or historical poem
about the fall of America....
talk about Dulles the way Blake talks
about the kings of France shuddering icy chill
runs down the arms to their sweating sceptres."

I remember how excited the NYC poetry scene was in 1965
when John Ashbery returned from living in Paris

It was the same whenever Allen returned
There was that klieg light buzz to a room
A hush and electric spark at his entrance

I think it was because he made you believe wherever he went
that the world was going to get better
through the power of Bardery alone

Jack Kerouac on the other hand
was having a bit of trouble with fame

Fame has a way of eating livers
and it was snacking away on the anxious author of On the Road

Kerouac's mom, Gabrielle, had been
sending hate letters to Ginsberg in Paris.

Meanwhile Ginsberg successfully urged James Laughlin
at New Directions
to publish Corso and Snyder

•

We have already traced how when his mother died
(Allen was in S.F.)
the rabbi refused
to chant the Kaddish
because there was not a ten-man minyan
to codify the chant

His mind kept whispering "kaddish kaddish kaddish....."
on his triumphal return to NYC
after 18 months in Europe
till one night in mid-November of 1958

Allen was at the pad of a friend
in the West Village named Zev Putterman
They listened to Ray Charles
Allen chanted from Shelley's "Adonais"

They took some morphine and meth
in an pre-hep-B, pre-AIDS mode of needles and nickel bags

He told the story of Naomi
now dead two years
and when he traced the tale of Naomi denied

Zev Putterman found a copy and chanted it

The 'Zap walked home from the West Side
to his East 2nd Street pad after the Putterman Kaddish
yearning 'pulsively

He jotted nonstop from 6 a.m. Saturday
till 10 p.m. on Sunday
taking some Dexedrine
till 58 pages were done

He began editing and reworking in January '59
a process that lasted till '61.

'59

In early '59 a famous underground flick was filmed
by Robert Frank and Al Leslie
more or less based on Act Three of
Kerouac's play, The Beat Generation

The shooting lasted 6 weeks, but MGM had
copyrighted the name B.G.
so it was renamed Pull My Daisy
after the poem/tune written
by Allen, Jack & Neal
back in '49

Also early that year a
benefit by Ginsberg at Living Theater at 14th & 6th
I attended
so that William Carlos Williams' Many Loves
could be produced

On February 5th a big reading at Columbia's McMillin
Theater
1,400 packed the place
and 500 outside
-a kind of bardic vindication
for all his undergrad troubles.

It was around that time also
there was controversy over the banned issue
of the Chicago Review

A section of Naked Lunch was selected for publication
in the Chicago Review in early '59
plus Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight,"
and prose by the estimable Edward Dahlberg

but a right-wing columnist in the Chicago Daily News
wrote about it in a column called
“Filthy Writing on the Midway”

so that the university pulled it.

The 'Zap and Corso and Peter went to Chicago
to protest

(Allen read “Howl” in Chi
which Fantasy released as a record)

There was a benefit for the Chicago Review legal expenses
at the Gaslight on MacDougal Street-
Miriam and I went

We were students at NYU
we'd met in Greek class

& on our dates

paid careful attention to Beat readings in coffeehouses
the Beat bookstores of 4th Avenue,
beat folkies in the park, Beat summertime drum sessions
on the Staten Island Ferry
in honor of Edna St. Vincent Millay
& any place where poets clutched spring binders

(See the story “The Poetry Reading” in Tales of Beatnik Glory)

In the summer Ginzap went back to CA
& first took LSD as part of a research project
conducted by Gregory Bateson
at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto

While 'Zap was in CA that summer
Corso sold his tv, bed, etc
for cash to return to Europe.

'60

Allen kept polishing polishing polishing
the verse to be published in '61
in Kaddish and Other Poems

“I write so little,
painfully & revise... I don't

have your football energy
 for scrawling endlessly on pages....
 I guess all this publicity is bad," he wrote to Kerouac
 after Kerouac had advised:
 "Beware of fame,
 poems will be nonsequitur"

•

Beat Political Split:

Kerouac supported Richard Nixon in the fall 1960 elections
 Ginsberg Kennedy.

At Tim Leary's place on Nov. 26, '60
 he took some psilocybin
 and believed he could cure
 Leary's bad hearing
 and fix his weak eyes

Mr. Leary was hesitant
 to allow the naked Irwin Allen Ginsberg
 to roam the streets of Cambridge
 to preach love
 zonked in a pro-tem Messiah mode

The Mailer Rule:
 (Nov. 19, 1960)

Do not stab your wife
 at the party
 where you
 are set to announce
 your candidacy for mayor.

At the same unfortunate party
 Ginsberg and Norman Podhoretz
 —a famous Beatbaiter—
 had a famous-at-the-time squabble
 with Ginsberg calling P. a fuckhead
 and P. calling G. an idiot.

Part VII

And then came 1961
the year of the Kennedys

and Allen donated the handwritten draft of
“Kaddish” to the Living Theater
for a benefit
(De Kooning and Kline gave paintings
& Paul Goodman + John Cage also manu’s)

Ginsberg was caught in the age-old
“You’re famous, now what?” problem.

Allen took very seriously
his psychedelic experiences with Tim Leary

to the point he felt he had to proselytize
their use
for a New Consciousness
and a New Aeon

Among the first of those he turned on to psilocybin
were Thelonius Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Willem de Kooning
Franz Kline & Robert Lowell.

“The Revolution has begun,” he wrote to
Neal Cassady as a New Year’s salute

March 23, Peter and Allen departed for Paris
on the SS America

There was a young woman named Elise Cowen,
who had typed the final version of “Kaddish” for Allen
and very much in love with him

She was there waving on the dock, with Allen’s brother Eugene,
Carl Solomon, Janine Vega, LeRoi Jones,
and others

waving waving

In Paris 'Zap discovered

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Burroughs had become obsessed with experiments in cut-ups
(a writing technique Brion Gysin had discovered)

Burroughs used the cut-up method
to break down what Burroughs called th'
either/or "Aristotelian Construct"

Burroughs had checked out of the
Beat Hotel in Paris for Tangiers

& Corso, Allen, Peter Orlovsky
split to hang out at the Cannes Film Festival
then by boat to Tangiers
to hang with Burroughs

a crazy set of months
which scholars of Beatdom
nod and noodle over

Burroughs was always "difficult" as they say
and there were plenty of miniature storms
among those attracted to the author of Naked Lunch

The reviews for Kaddish and Other Poems
were coming in
and were not of the type such
a great poem should command

Allen left Morocco in late August for Greece
He had royalties! sacred royalties!
One check from Ferlinghetti for the
big sales of Howl

and another - \$450- from the magazine Show Business Illustrated
for a piece on the Cannes Festival

After Greece, he went to Israel
where he met the socialist theologian Martin Buber

then
the 'Zap
was depressed going
to India (first from Israel to Kenya)

some say because he seemed to have lost his
sense of identity.

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Perhaps Burroughs' cut-up method, in part,
had pared away the power, word & image
& flung the Bard into a place
of frantic futility & galactic mush-gush

He was singing the "Famous First Book/You're Famous/
What Next? Blues."

(I'd heard he was depressed— I was a 22-year-old student
at New York University—
and began sending him issues of my mimeographed magazine
Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts
which, when he wrote back, he told me
had helped bring him out of his darkness

(part of his depression perhaps came after his
friend Elise Cowen— in Feb. of that year— had
jumped from her parents' apartment window
to her doom
—see Joyce Johnson's fine book *Minor Characters*
for more information on Elise Cowen,
whose poetry I published in my magazine.)

Allen's self-analysis
in India:
not to be so
Jeremiah-like
& drive opponents
into a raging corner.

One of the finest nature poets, Gary Snyder,
and his brilliant wife Joanne Kyger
arrived in Delhi in late February '62
just days after Allen and Peter O

The four soon split for the Himalayan foothills
in search of a well-known holy man named Swami Shivananda

Ginsberg was to search and search
in India for the final answers from holy guys

Snyder, of course, knew much about Zen practice
and in his calm teacherly way
 tried to fill the frenetic Allen
 in on the waves of Zen

40

They traveled more, and went to the town where the Dalai Lama
had set up his Tibetan gov't in exile

The Dalai Lama granted the four an hour's audience

He was not that interested in trying acid.

 It was in India, after many travels
 that the mail caught up with A.G.:
 the news that Elise had suffered a nervous breakdown
 and jumped

In Bombay, just before Joanne Kyger and Gary Snyder
were to leave the country

Gary, Allen and Peter
gave a public reading
 attended by over 100, including the American consul-

 Summer of '62
 Lawrence Ferlinghetti
 was reluctant
 to accept
 either one
 of A.G.'s
 suggested titles:

 Bunch of Poems
 or
 Hiccup
 for the tome teleos'd
 as
 REALITY SANDWICHES

Part VIII

We left the story of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
when he was in India with his mate Peter Orlovsky

His great books, Howl and Other Poems
 and Kaddish and Other Poems
 had already been published

He was an international celebrity
 yet he was in a depressed mood in India

and was seeking out holy men
 and learning the mantras & melodies
 he was soon to bring to America
 and sing
 with his ever-present finger cymbals-

The poets Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger, then married,
 joined Allen and Peter

They traveled to the Himalayan foothills to see
 Swami Shivananda
 and then to visit the Dalai Lama
 before Snyder and Kyger returned to their
 home in Kyoto, Japan.

In May '62 the 'Zap visited Sikkim where he met Gyalwa Karmapa

considered a direct descendant
 of the Buddhist poet Milarepa
 who lived around 1000 A.D.

The meeting went well
 “He offered to
 teach me tantra
 & I offered to
 teach him pills,”
 he later humorously described it.

In the fall of '62 Ginsberg went
 what I would call ghat-batty

He began to visit the Nimitz Ghats in Calcutta
 smoking pot (with many others there also)
 “a strange visionary experience”
 which helped him to observe the ghastliness
 with a measure of calm, as he jotted to Kerouac

For instance when he had visited the Caves of Ajanta
with Gary Snyder

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he'd marveled at Snyder's singing
of the Prajnaparamita Sutra--

Allen then decided to chant mantras at his readings

(Allen made sure that all of his friends got
copies of the Prajnaparamita Sutra
Mine resides on the wall of my Woodstock studio)

He flew from Calcutta to Bangkok in May of '63
then to Saigon
where the U.S. was just then beginning its
twelve-year violence

Then to Cambodia to see the beauty of Angkor Wat
and wrote his well-known poem of the same name

then on June 11 to Japan
for additional time with Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger
in Kyoto

He was there for five weeks
then took a train to Tokyo
On the train he wrote his eery, scary
poem-chant "The Change"

in which he summarizes his spiritual quest
since the 1948 vision of William Blake
through all the spiritual flashes
of the 1950s and early '60s
the burning ghats of Calcutta
the visits to holy people

and, simply stated, decided
that it was time to renounce the impersonal concepts
of "Vision"
and return to the body.

He sent me the poem "The Change"
and I published it that year in my magazine
at a secret location in the Lower East Side.

Part IX

We left our tracing
of the great bard A.G.
after he wrote a poem
 important to his bardic path
 called "The Change"
on the Kyoto-Tokyo express in July o' '63

in which he pulled away from his intense drive
for universal vision
 and a Hunger for Prophecy & Futurity
and came to know the "truth of only the
 body" as in the halls of the Kremlin
 and Kennedy's doomed White House

"the schemers draw back
weeping from their schemes."

On the hurtling iron horse he jotted,
 "In my train seat I renounce
 my power, so that I do
 live I will die...."

He was headed back to the USA
from travels to India, Japan and SE Asia
 in '62 & '63

no longer needing to alter
 the unalterable.

He had an invitation to a poetry conference in
Vancouver organized by Robert Creeley
 in July of '63

It was a big success
and Ginzap was out of his doldrums.

The great Charles Olson
also at the Conference
 told Allen, "I am one with my skin."

Allen was also
 "I'm actually happy,"

After Vancouver

Allen returned to San Francisco
staying with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and his wife Kirby

Ginsberg then moved back into one of his old apartments in SF
on Gough
and his early love Neal Cassady and his girlfriend Anne Murphy
moved in also!

(Cassady had already met Ken Kesey
and the proto-Merry Pranksters
on their voyage into Learyland)



The Beginning of The Vietnam War

Madame Nhu

sister-in-law of Pres. Diem of 'Nam
was coming to 'Frisco
and A.G. decided to join the protesters

He fashioned one of the most unique posters in
the history of peacework,

printing the following on a large sign
on which he also sketched the Buddha's footprint
three fish joined at one head:

Name hypnosis and fear is the
Enemy— Satan go home!
I accept America and Red China
To the human race.
Madame Nhu and Mao-Tse Tung
Are in the same boat of meat.

However interesting as a sign in a picket line
outside the Sheraton Palace Hotel

the Vietnam War was to continue
another 12 years.

'64

Late in '63 Allen flew back to NYC
experiencing a severe money drought

Robert Frank wanted to make a movie of "Kaddish"
so the bard went every other day
to Frank's house to write a possible scene

For each, Frank, the bard later wrote, paid him \$10

"& thus kept me in money for about two months
while I was getting on my feet again."

Finally Allen gave it up, because
of the "areas of embarrassment & invasion of privacy"
as he jotted in his diary
if he had transformed elliptical verse
to the harsh light of dialogue.

In early '64
'Zap met Bob Dylan
at Ted Wilentz' house
through the writer Al Aronowitz

Ted & Eli Wilentz had the very best bookstore on the set
It was then at 8th Street and MacDougal

and above it Ted lived
and set up a kind of literary salon.

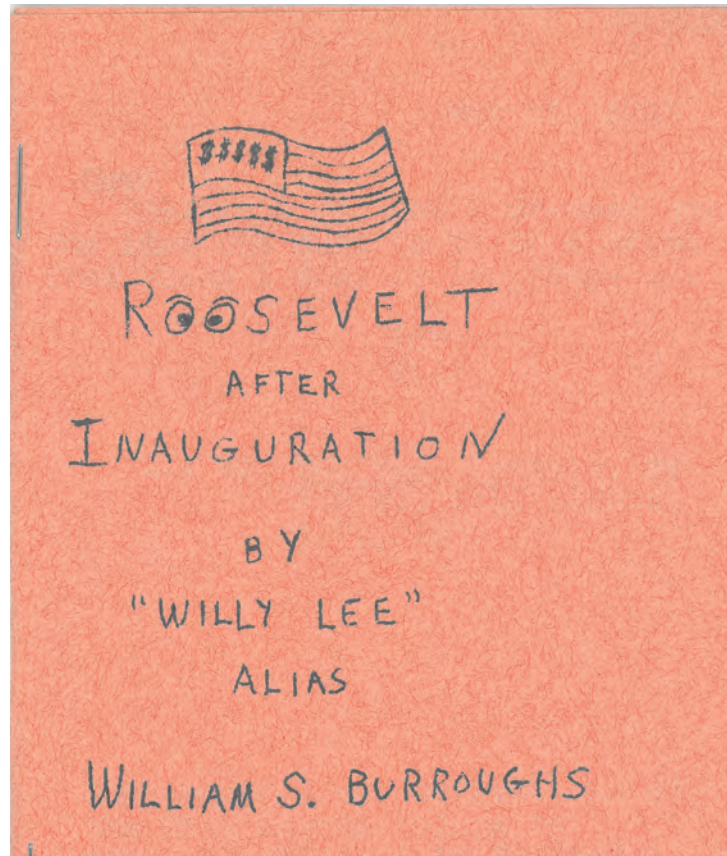
Thus began an association 'tween bard and minstrel
that lasted from '64
all the way to Ginsberg eagerly trying to stay alive
in early 1997, diagnosed with liver cancer,
in order for Dylan, Paul McCartney, Patti Smith,
et al
to perform in an MTV salute to the 'Zap.

•

It was now too that I met the bard
and we began the first series of many capers
together

The first was when he drew the cover stencils
for a little book by William Burroughs called
Roosevelt After Inauguration

which I published in Feb. '64
when the printer refused to allow it in
the City Lights edition
of Yage Letters



Allen's Hand-drawn Cover for the Fuck You/ Press
edition of Roosevelt After Inauguration

I felt so incredibly awed & honored
when he treated me
as an equal

He took me to parties and introduced me to
literati such as Norman Podhoretz, John Hollander
& Mary Frank

Allen & Peter O moved to a legendary pad
at 704 East 5th

My Peace Eye Bookstore was just about to open
a few blocks away
at 383 East 10th
& a few months later we began to hold rehearsals there
for a folk-rock poesy/satire band called the Fugs

Some of the ambience of A.G.'s place on East 5th
can be picked up in Tales of Beatnik Glory,
particularly the story
"Siobhan McKenna Group Grope"

I was putting out "rare book" catalogs
and had just graduated from NYU
One day I went over to Ginzap's pad
to scrounge some literary relics
for my catalog

I'd heard
of a signed Dylan Thomas
dress shirt
that'd shown up in someone's catalog.

A.G. graciously donated his cold cream jar
by the bed, and inscribed it as follows:

"This is the jar of bona fide ass-wine or cock
lubricant, into which I regularly plunged my
hardened phallos to ease penetration of P. Orlovsky....
winter 1964," and signed it.

It was not the fastest-selling item
in my catalogue
&, as I recall, I gave it later
to Richard Avedon
during a Fugs photo shoot.

•

All of a sudden the real estate people were
calling the grid of tenement streets
(slums since after the War of 1812)
the East Village

For some reason, the Dept. of Licenses began to
bust poetry readings, if you can believe it

Allen Ginsberg, Ellen Stewart of the Café la Mama, Joe Cino, myself,
Jackson MacLow and others began to protest–
(young firebrands Henry Stern and Ed Koch helped us)

We started a campaign that ultimately led
to the city gov't pulling back
and letting verse be heard without chop-bust.

But it wasn't easy, and it wasn't instant.

Then, late in 1964, LeMar
The Committee to Legalize Marijuana
was formed

(and there was a demonstration,
I think it was January 10, 1965
outside the Women's House of Detention
in the West Village
in a mild snow
with Allen, snowflakes on his beard,
holding a "Pot Is Fun" sign
one of the most widely spread images of the time.)

•

NYC in '64 also cracked down on Lenny Bruce
He had a way of putting together crisply timed and
brilliant routines that ruffled prudes
and angered squares–

His routine on Adolf Eichmann is as controversial now as it
was 33 years ago. Ditto for his vignettes on Jacqueline Kennedy
and the JFK assassination & the one on Eleanor Roosevelt's bosom.

(Bruce's famous Rule #16 [deny deny deny, even if you're caught]
is being used right now, as I type this
during the Clinton/Lewinsky Spurtgate
controversy)

Bruce was arrested in NYC
and Allen developed a petition in his defense
which was signed by a wide selection of Americans,

from young Woody Allen through Reinhold Niebuhr to Bob Dylan,
Lillian Hellman, Susan Sontag, Paul Newman, John Updike
& many others

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Part X

The great bard Allen Ginsberg
was invited to Cuba
by the minister of culture
to a writers' conference in Havana
in January o' '65

The State Department said no,
but the bard threatened to sue
so he was given a visa

(Many of us would have muttered, "Oh, the
gummint doesn't want me to go, I'd better
change my plans,"
but not Ginzap)

The rules allowed him to fly in via Mexico City
but he had to RETURN by way of Prague

The CIA and its pals in organized crime
were desperate to snuff Fidel

and the political climate in Cuba
was on its guard

That's not all that was on its guard
for reasons that are utterly unobvious
America had its own worshiper of surveillance
& violation of privacy

one J. Edgar Hoover, then
the head of the FBI
and busy already

trying to disrupt the antiwar movement
and overestimating (it kept his budgets & prestige high)
the threat to the Flag from America's miniscule Communist Party

Anyway, J. Eddie Hoov'

that spring o' '65

sent out a one-page secret document
declaring Irwin Allen Ginsberg "potentially dangerous"

& possessed of a "propensity for violence and antipathy
toward good order and government":

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535
April 26, 1965

~~SECRET~~

In Reply, Please Refer to
Bureau File 105-137059
New York file 105-71471

Chief
United States Secret Service
Department of the Treasury
Washington, D. C. 20220

Re: Irwin Allen Ginsberg
Internal Security - Cuba

Dear Sir:

The information furnished herewith concerns an individual who is believed to be covered by the agreement between the FBI and Secret Service concerning Presidential protection, and to fall within the category or categories checked.

1. Has attempted or threatened bodily harm to any government official or employee, including foreign government officials residing in or planning an imminent visit to the U. S., because of his official status.
2. Has attempted or threatened to redress a grievance against any public official by other than legal means.
3. Because of background is potentially dangerous; or has been identified as member or participant in communist movement; or has been under active investigation as member of other group or organization inimical to U. S.
4. U. S. citizens or residents who defect from the U. S. to countries in the Soviet or Chinese Communist blocs and return.
5. Subversives, ultrarightists, racists and fascists who meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - (a) Evidence of emotional instability (including unstable residence and employment record) or irrational or suicidal behavior;
 - (b) Expressions of strong or violent anti-U. S. sentiment;
 - (c) Prior acts (including arrests or convictions) or conduct or statements indicating a propensity for violence and antipathy toward good order and government.
6. Individuals involved in illegal bombing or illegal bomb-making.

Photograph has been furnished enclosed is not available
 may be available through *U.S. Secret Service, New York, New York*

Very truly yours,

~~SECRET~~
J. Edgar Hoover
John Edgar Hoover
Director

1 - Special Agent in Charge (Enclosure(s) (2)
U. S. Secret Service, New York, New York

ENCLOSURE

Enclosure(s) (1)
Registered Mail

Upon removal of classified enclosures, if any, this transmittal form becomes UNCLASSIFIED.

105-137059 - 6

1 copy to Secret Service 5/7/65 - JWS/jff

Things started out okay
He was given a spacious room at the Havana Riviera.

Ginsberg was ever attentive
throughout his career
to the concept of having fun at night

so the first evening he took a bus to La Rampa
known for its nightlife

There he was approached by some young men

who published a literary magazine called El Puente
(The Bridge)

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They asked if he was Allen Ginsberg
Yes, he was

and they took him to an out-of-the-way club
and began to speak freely about the oppression in Cuba

There was a police group, they said, called Laca Social
which was harassing gays

and those known derisively as los infernos
–apparently a Cuban type of beatnik.

People could be arrested for long hair and beards
even though it was Castro's own appearance

The young people asked Ginsberg to tell Castro about
the persecution from Laca Social

As swamped with interviews and attention as anywhere else
Allen began speaking in public against Laca Social
and the accusations of oppression

A reporter asked Allen what he would encourage Castro
to do, should he get to meet him

Allen said he would inquire why Laca Social was
abusing los infernos and gays
and why was pot not legal, and why not do away
with capital punishment and instead give
those prisoners magic mushrooms and
jobs such as being the elevator operator
at the Havana Riviera hotel?

Allen kept bringing up the issues
in interviews

He visited Hemingway's house
and was a judge
at the festival's poetry competition

One of Allen's translators
was a young man

This young translator was taken to the
police station one night
and asked about his
association with the 'Zap

The man was detained again
after an evening in a theater
and Allen was angry

He demanded an explanation
from the Cuban minister of culture, Haydée Santamaria,
during a meeting he had with her.
Haydée Santamaria was a
heroine of the revolution & revered in Cuba—
She had watched her fiancé and her brother too
tortured to death by Batista's goons

Allen was upset at what she said,
that Cuba was taking a stand on homosexuality
because "too many gays
were making public spectacles
of themselves and seducing impressionable
young boys"

and, in a moment that caused a national scandal,
Ginsberg pat-swatted her rear
as she left the room.

Things grew chilly in Cuba right away
for the American bard
His poetry reading was canceled at the university

He learned that the minister of culture
was also upset with Ginsberg
for suggesting that Raul Castro was gay
and Ché Guevara cute

At a luncheon a few days later
Ginsberg tried to set things right
with Haydée Santamaria
on the rear-swat
He'd meant it to be friendly
he said

She was in addition miffed over Ginsberg's
 talking about marijuana
 to young people

Allen countered her upsetness
 by suggesting that Cuba invite the Beatles
 (whose Help! was just out)
 to perform

During the discussion on having the Beatles, Santamaria said
 "They have no ideology
 We are trying to build a revolution
 with ideology."

Ginzap's days in Cuba
 were going into the toss-out countdown

After a couple of parties
 -'65 was a year in which
 there was often a party
 AFTER the party
 and so it was that night: back-to-backers,

and finally he was asleep around 6 A.M.
 when three soldiers
 & an immigration official
 beat on his door

and took him to the airport
 to a plane bound for Czechoslovakia.

•

THE KING OF THE MAY

In Prague, Allen was treated well
 He was a guest of the Writers' Union
 and was the beneficiary
 of one good aspect of a socialist country:
 there were performance royalties
 due him, built up in a bank
 from his poetry being
 read by others at a literary café
 There were also other royalties

There was the sense of thaw in Prague
that three years later would lead to the
famous Prague Spring
(followed by a Soviet invasion)

Allen was having a ball
He was always thrilled by the
hundreds who wanted to interview him

& he was the hero in the neobeat cafe known
as the Viola
where huge blow-ups of Fred McDarrah's
photographs of American artists and beats
were arrayed on the wall

He wrote an excellent love poem
"Message II"
from Prague to Peter Orlovsky
(p. 348 in Collected Poems)

Allen planned to stay a month in Prague
including trips to Moscow and Poland.

In late March of '65 he trained from Prague to Moscow
chrono-tracking himself in his intricate journals.
His diaries always scorched with
his erotic explorations on the road
which, as we shall see,
would betrouble him yet again
with another authoritarian/police state

In Moscow the famous bard
was the official guest of the Writers' Union
once Tolstoy's mansion

Lots of smoked salmon, borscht, vodka, caviar and
visits to St. Basil's, the Kremlin, the Pushkin
Museum and the
huge Gum dept. store

He met the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko
and true to his relentless vision

Ginsberg plied him with his theories
of open gayness, ganja and LSD

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This was Russia after all, land of a million ears,
and Yevtushenko asked him not to continue

"I feel rejected," A.G. said after the rebuff from
Yev'.

Nor did Yev' dig Kerouac's theories about
spontaneous composition.

With the poet Andrei Voznesensky however
the bard formed a long-term bond
that lasted the rest of his life

Ginsberg went to Leningrad, toured the Hermitage
then went by train to Warsaw,
where on April 10
another one of his fine peripatetic works
"Café in Warsaw" (page 350 of Collected Poems)

then to Krakow, and by car to Auschwitz
-there's a famous snapshot of A.G.
by the Arbeit Macht Frei
gates of the evilness zone

Then it was back to Prague
just in time for the ancient festival
in honor of May Day
called Majales

The commies had banned it about 20 years
and '65 was the first year
it was realloved

Students were to vote for a King of the May
and there would be a beauty pageant to
select a Queen

By a strange series of circumstances
(the poet Josef Skvorecky was to have been the King
but he became ill)
Allen was voted in as the Kral Majales
the King of the May!

He had always wanted to be the world's
 King of Maytime
 so it was something
 that made him smile the rest of his life

On May 1 Allen was brought to the May Day parade
 wearing a golden cardboard crown
 escorted by five beauteous damosels
 and a rout of students
 some with top hats and canes
 right out of the 1890s

He was dazzle-driven on a flatbed truck through Prague
 clinging his finger cymbals
 and singing mantras

thousands and thousands pouring to the streets
 driving past Franz Kafka's pad
 with Allen giving speeches
 like someone out on the stump
 whenever the truck should stop

Allen had been elected King of the May by
 an overwhelming vote
 and the partying continued till midnight
 the moment the Queen was to be elected.

The Czech Communist Party secretary for cultural affairs
 waxed furious at
 the spectacle of a gay beatnik
 chanting to Shiva
 & eyeing guys

elected the Kral Majales

and so on the spot nullified A.G.'s election
 and called a halt to the nominations for Queen.

It was too late
 as evinced by the bard's fine poem,
 "Kral Majales," p. 353 in Collected Poems.

Meanwhile the secret police had placed A.G. under surveillance

'Zap was a secret policeperson's dream come true
They all drooled to surveil him

J. Edgar Hoover
the Cuban police
and now the Czech

One of Allen's notebooks came into the possession
of the Czechoslovakian fuzz

I recall a few months later at the Berkeley Poetry Conference
he described some of the items in the notebook
that might have put secret police in a tizzy
—one in particular
that described erotic experimentations
with a broom

On May 5 he was punched and hit by a man
snarling with homophobia— then
taken in custody by police

The officer snarled "Bouzerant! Bouzerant!"
Fairy! Fairy!

Allen hummed the seed syllable "Om"
to quell the violence

Then he was set free, but next day
police said they had his notebook
and at the police station
they told him it was being turned
over to a prosecutor for illegal writings

And then he was tossed from another
authoritarian nation

"due to many complaints about your presence
in Prague from parents and scientists and
educators who disapprove of your sexual
theories." This was May 7, the
day he wrote the powerful

"Kral Majales"

He was held incommunicado
and put on a flight to London

where he was to hang out with
Dylan
and the surging Beatles.

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Part XI

Allen always loved the time
he was the
King of the May

in a country where they had just
begun to allow Kafka's *The Trial*
to be published
again—
driven through the streets of Prague
past Kafka's house
clink-clanging his
finger cymbals
and wearing a golden crown

It had been one of those
frozen moments of fun

Then the police had come for him
and shipped him to London
They'd stolen one of his notebooks
& he was upset about it

On the plane he wrote his poem
"Kral Majales"

•

GINSBERG MEETS THE BEATLES

There was some genius-level music
being made in '65
by the Beatles,
and Bob Dylan

Both the Beatles & Dylan were in London
when the kicked-out Kral Majales from Kafkatown
arrived.

Allen was a bit drunk
 as he rushed to greet
 the ill-at-ease singers
 (who were glancing around to make sure
 no cameras were snapping)
 for the 'Zap was naked, wearing his jockey shorts on his head,
 and a "Do Not Disturb" hotel doorknob sign
 attached to his Clinton.

•

Allen spent time with the poet Basil Bunting in Newcastle
 Bunting had been a pal of Pound and W.C. Williams
 and had been "rediscovered"
 by young English poets

Ginsberg's June '65 poem "Studying the Signs" after reading
 Bunting's book Briggflatts.

Another distilling beautiful 4-page poem,
 from the chaos of the first half
 of '65, "Who Be Kind To" p. 359 in the
 Collected Poems

was written for the International Poetry Reading
 at Royal Albert Hall on June 8

(which Allen and the filmmaker Barbara Rubin
 organized-
 with 7,000 people in attendance,
 including Indira Gandhi)

Then a week in Paris
 strip-searched at JFK and a pocket-lint search
 for pot

returning to the USA June 29.

•

HALL DANCE OF GUGG JOY

Most of us who are honored
 with Guggenheim Fellowships in verse

wait patiently
 for the check
 but not A.G.
 who, upon returning to the States,
 raced to the Guggenheim offices
 on Park Avenue South

to do a dance of Nike! Victory! Triumph!
 and Joy of Cash!
 through the hallways and offices
 (and perhaps also to get
 the fellowship check
 a little ahead of schedule)

The Guggenheim gave him the largess
 for one of his most important poetic ventures—
 He purchased a VW camper
 & outfitted it with a desk, bed & icebox

so that he could drive around the nation
 while composing a series of travel poems
 including the fine “Wichita Vortex Sutra” of ’66

•

In July Allen flew to SF
 for the Berkeley Poetry Conference
 one of those gatherings
 whose impact ripples out through
 decades in the world of
 poesy & theory—

Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley,
 Jack Spicer (who would pass away soon after), Robert Duncan
 John Wieners, the great Charles Olson
 plus some of us (then) younger bards:
 Ted Berrigan, Lenore Kandel, and myself

(Donald Allen, editor of the New American Poetry anthology,
 arranged for Grove Press to fly me out
 —many thanks to Grove Press, which I too casually
 forgot formally to thank 35 years ago)

Ginsberg read to a huge crowd in Wheeler Auditorium

where, later in the week, Charles Olson
gave a genius-level Bacchic talk
that astounded a generation.

65

In August, after the Berkeley Poetry Conference
A.G. went camping with Gary Snyder for a month
in the Cascades, Crater Lake National Park,
and Mount Rainier in Oregon

They were alone in the vastness
reading Milarepa's poems aloud in the morning
Allen learning again
the ineffable Zen centerédness

that made the bard Snyder
such an emblem of the times.

Part XII

1965 was a great year
to understand the soul of the great bard
Allen Ginsberg

for it was then
we see how he refused to be isolated
from the broader culture
no matter how controversial he might have seemed

and he dared to be his own history.

We have noted how
in August of 1965, after the Berkeley Poetry Conference,
A.G. went camping with Gary Snyder for a month
in the Cascades, Crater Lake National Park,
and Mount Rainier in Washington

alone in the vastness
reading Milarepa's poems aloud in the morning

While Allen was away
I was picking up his mail for him in New York City—
My Peace Eye Bookstore was thriving on East 10th
and the Fugs were performing at standing-room-only

That August, while Ginsberg was in the mountains with Snyder
we learned of an attempt by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics
& Dangerous Drugs
(forerunner of the DEA)
to set the 'Zap up for a pot bust

It was an archetypal event
Allen responded to it
with his own investigation
conducted over decades

into the involvement of U.S. gov't agencies
in dealing and drug smuggling.

What happened was this:

A couple of young men, Jack Martin & Dale Wilbourne
had been arrested for alleged
possession of marijuana

Four BNDD agents
met with Martin
and threatened additional charges
plus a bail bump-up from \$5k to \$100k
unless he set up Ginsberg
for a pot arrest.

(Ginsberg had been very outspoken for legalization
The photo of him at a Lemar march
with a "Pot is Fun" sign
had been published around the world)

"We want Ginsberg," one of the agents had said.

We learned about the incident
& I put out a press release about it
The Fugs and others held a benefit for the defendants
where the Federal agents in question
showed up outside the gig
and harassed people!

As a further emblem of his soul

Ginzap did not quail
and vacuum his pockets

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Instead he went on the offensive
began clipping articles on
 how many times the police
themselves were arrested for selling drugs
started asking questions
 (Ginsberg I think asked more questions
 in his life
 than anyone in the history of
 Western Civilization)
and later, of course, the famous
 bet Ginsberg made with the
 head of the CIA, Richard Helms,
 over CIA involvement in the heroin racket

•

That fall, Ginsberg was in California
 & took part in large antiwar rallies
 in Berkeley & Oakland

organized in good part by Jerry Rubin.

(The Fugs drove across
 America in a VW van
 to take part in the rallies
One of our concerts
was with Ginsberg and Country Joe & the Fish
 at UC Berkeley.)

There was a march from Berkeley
 through the black area of Oakland
 and into downtown Oakland

Ginzap and Gary Snyder
 sang mantras
 from a sound truck
to spread peace

But the police stopped the march
 at the Oakland city limits
& members of the Hell's Angels bike gang
 tore into the head of the march

and pulled down a
PEACE IN VIETNAM sign

68

They cut the speaker wires
& the march ended right there.

Several weeks later
another march was scheduled
and the H. Angels again threatened violence

Allen organized a public forum
for a kind of debate 'tween
the Vietnam Day Committee
(sponsor of the upcoming march)
and the H.A.'s.

The bikers came away
still planning to disrupt the walk.

Then Ken Kesey
proposed a meeting
'tween the march organizers & the bikers

at Sonny Barger's house in Oakland

The Angels had some kind of ultra-'noidal vision
of the Domino Theory

The D.T. held that, like a line of dominos falling in a flowing ripple
the nations of SE Asia would
tumble to commie

& it was somehow felt that
the dominos led across the moily Pacific
and would implode
upon a commie Oakland
-too much amphetamine.

Most of those at Kesey's pad
dropped acid
except Ginzap,
who feared what they called in those days a
Galactic Bummer.

The talk oozed acrimonious

till A.G. opened his small harmonium
and began to chant the Prajnaparamita sutra

69

Soon some Angels joined the chant
and Neal Cassady, Ken Kesey
and everybody finally.

Barger put Dylan's "Gates of Eden" on the player
and the Angels agreed not to
break up the rally

Allen wrote one of his better poems of the year,
"First Party at Ken Kesey's with
Hell's Angels"
dated December '65.

It was an example of quality peacemaking
The Angels issued a press release
they were not about to attack a bunch
of dirty commies

& the march occurred without any violence.

Part XIII

We left off our tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
in the fall of 1965
when he intervened
with the Hell's Angels
to get them not to
attack an antiwar march
in Oakland

Bob Dylan was in California in late '65
He gave Allen \$600
with which he purchased a
reel-to-reel Uher tape recorder
just about the finest you
could get in that era

(Dylan also bought the bard Michael McClure
an autoharp, and Peter Orlovsky an amplifier)

Allen took the Uher with him

It was portable, with a shoulder strap
 and a hand held microphone
 with a pause button

Thus, on the beach
 on the road
 in the woods
 at a party
 or at Ferlinghetti's cabin in Big Sur

Ginsberg could experiment
 with a kind of spontaneous verse
 acutely observational in the mode of W.C. Williams
 with the long lines of Blake
 & the eye of a photographer
 (Ginsberg's photos later became
 very well respected- he took
 literally tens of thousands of them,
 beginning in the 1940 proto-Beat era
 all the way to his death in 1997)

Allen did his best work
 after periods of introspection & study
 and now he was ready to take on a Whitman-level
 study of America
 in early 1966
 with the Vietnam war
 throbbing in the background.

The war the war the war
 Dylan's politics had shifted to the right
 as far as Vietnam was concerned
 It chilled McClure when Dylan
 let it out &
 refused to take a stand against
 the Vietnam War
 and in fact took what would have been called
 in the era
 an imperialist stance.

During recent months
 Allen & his father Louis
 had been arguing furiously by letter
 over the war

and it was in the context
of Blake, Uher, Williams,
the beauty & balefulness of his nation
that Ginsberg
began, in a few weeks,
his great poem "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

Tim Leary was arrested on 12-23-65
in Laredo for grass
(On trial on 3-9-66
and given thirty years in the slams!)

My Peace Eye Bookstore was raided on January 1, 1966
& I was charged with obscenity
for my magazine
(though I later won the case)
Allen immediately did a benefit for me in Los Angeles

On January 26
the 'Zap began a long journey in his
new VW van
across the USA
driven by Peter Orlovsky
and recording instant verse
in the front seat with his Uher

the line breaks
indicated by the clicking
of the on/off switch

The camper meandered here & there in the west
and into Texas
and then up to Kansas
where the radio blurt-blared
with religiosity & war news

Barry Farrell, one of Life magazine's best writers,
traveled with Allen
on the Wichita Vortex trip
writing a big story, "Guru Comes to Kansas"

Driving in to Wichita
the bard began dictating the lines

that were to become the 18-page poem
which he finished on February 14.

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“Thy sins are forgiven, Wichita!
Thy lonesomeness annulled, O Kansas dear!
as the western Twang prophesied
thru banjo, when lone cowboy walked the railroad track
past an empty station toward the sun
sinking giant-bulbed orange down the box canyon–
Music strung over his back
and empty handed singing on this planet earth
I’m a lonely Dog, O Mother!
Come, Nebraska, sing & dance with me–
Come lovers of Lincoln and Omaha
hear my soft voice at last....”

A post-acid post-Whitman song of a great nation
published in the Village Voice
on April 28
a further revelation
of his stature
as an American bard

•

Allen found time to write the liner notes
for the second Fugs record
which we recorded that spring.

•

April 17, Gordon Liddy, later
sent to jail for his role
in Nixon’s dirty tricks team,
led a raid by Dutchess County police
on Tim Leary’s huge 2,500-acre estate in Millbrook
loaned to him by Billy Hitchcock

29 people were there and searched,
and all 64 rooms of the mansion searched
but no grass was found.

Liddy was sure he had found something
ascribable to Leary
but it turned out to be peat moss

Allen helped organize a full-page ad in The New York Times
to help Mr. Leary

In June Allen testified in D.C.
against making LSD illegal
to no avail.

The summer of '66
saw the death of the brilliant poet Frank O'Hara
struck down by a dune taxi
on Fire Island July 24

Allen wrote his
"City Midnight Junk Strains" for Frank O'Hara
(p. 457 Collected Poems)

The next day
Bob Dylan had his motorcycle accident in Bearsville
an injured neck and other bruising

Three weeks later Allen visited Dylan
bringing him some books, Rimbaud, Blake,
Dickinson, Shelley.

The fall of '66
loomed like the frenetic highway
of the same name
hundreds of interviews, readings, letters, journal entries,
skin-slurps, hookahs, plane trips, arguments & kisses

He wrote "A Vow" on October 11
a fine example of what could be called the Scold Poem.
Like the great Norman Thomas,
the bard was sometimes content merely to scold-
singing his vision of calming down the Greed Machine
(p. 460, Collected Poems)

Then came the great year of Flower Power, 1967

Part XIV

The Year of Flowers

On
 February 12, for instance, a huge celebration in
 Toronto called Perception '67
 with Marshall McLuhan, The Fugs, Paul Krassner

In May in Cleveland, a benefit for the ultraharassed young
 poet named d. a. levy
 one of America's
 great unsung.

•

Ken Kesey had purchased a farm near Eugene, Or
 & 'Zap visited
 -Neal Cassady and the Merry Pranksters were there

May 25, they took the great psychedelic tour bus
 called Further
 on the road
 to a gig at Western State College in Oregon
 with the Jefferson Airplane

It was the last time Ginzap would
 see great pal Neal Cassady.

•

JUNE 27

The year before
 after a Fugs concert
 the police had invaded Peace Eye Bookstore
 & seized many issues of
 Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts

I was arrested; the ACLU took my case
 and after a trial before 3 New York judges
 I was found not guilty

So I threw a victory party at Peace Eye June 27
 1967

The great bard was there
 The place was totally packed
 on a hot summer night
 when some neighborhood kids

began to toss firecrackers
through the open door

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We went outside to cool them out
A.G. came too

One of them was brandishing
a wide-tipped hunting arrow
It was an emblem of Allen
as he sank to his knees on the sidewalk
in front of the wide-eyed youth
and made his hands in the shape of a mudra

The young man raised his arm back
as if to hurl it into the bard's neck

but Allen's calm words
caused him to put it down
to his side

—another emblem of conduct by a great poet

•

On July 5 'Zap flew to Italy
for the Spoleto Festival, where he met Ezra Pound
and tried to get Lb to abandon his famous multi-year silence
though all he would do was shake Allen's hand
then it was off to London
& a party for 'Zap at James McNeill Whistler's house
Allen was always thrilled when the bacchants of rock & roll
allowed him to hang with them
as when he sat in the recording booth
during the Rolling Stones' recording of "We Love You"
with Lennon and McCartney doing harmony

July 20

Allen gave a talk "Consciousness and Practical Action"
at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London

at which, also, Gregory Bateson gave a seminar
"Ecological Destruction by Technology"
which astounded the American bard—
Bateson had predicted Global Warming decades
before it came to public parlance.

Allen took his father Louis and stepmother Edith
on what they call a “whirlwind” tour of Europe, then
after his parents had returned to the States,

July 28 driving to Wales
he stopped for a visit to Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey ruins
& then once in Wales

a poem writ on acid, one of his better,
called “Wales Visitation”

•

That summer, while Allen was in Europe
his mate Peter Orlovsky was in Bellevue
after too much amphetamine

Peter was spotted in those months cleaning
the cobbles of Avenue C with a toothbrush

I remember he sold me his Bellevue pajamas
for \$6 one day in the park after he escaped
I wanted to wear them at Fugs shows

•

On September 23 drove to Sant Ambrogio to have lunch with
Olga Rudge & Ezra Pound

He brought along his harmonium
sang Lb the Prajnaparamita sutra—
a few weeks later, in mid October
he visited Pound again at his winter home in Venice
played “Eleanor Rigby” and “Yellow Submarine”
and Dylan’s
“Gates of Eden” & “Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands”

One evening he spoke at length with Pound
after walking around Venice checking out
locations mentioned in the Cantos

Pound spoke finally of himself & his troubles—
“But the worst mistake I made was the stupid suburban prejudice of anti-
Semitism. All along, that spoiled everything.”

October 21 was the day of the
 Exorcism of the Pentagon in D.C.
 & Allen visited again with Pound
 & his longtime companion Olga Rudge

helping the grand old man of meter
 try to escape his past

*

Ginsberg was one of the greatest
 givers in the History of Verse

Charles Rothschild, one of the managers of the Fugs
 began to help Allen get properly paid for his readings
 Allen wanted

what other famous writers obtained
 for barding

He'd formed a non-profit corporation
 The Committee on Poetry
 (I was vice-president for a few years)

to create a sense of order
 in the thousands upon thousands upon thousands
 that Ginzap gave away to help others.

In '67, the Year of Love
 he gave away around \$20k

\$4,000 to the filmmaker Jack Smith, \$1,500 each to
 beat bro's Corso and Huncke
 the West Coast communitard Irwin Rosenthal, \$2,500

\$1,500 to the great artist/scholar/filmmaker Harry Smith
 \$400 to Ken Kesey, and money to the filmmaker Barbara Rubin,
 to the bards Ray Bremser, Diane di Prima, Amiri Baraka,
 Charles Plymell, et alia bardifica

He paid the Chelsea Hotel bill for the English poet Basil Bunting
 when Bunting came to NYC
 to read at the Gugg

He bought a new harmonium for Bhaktivedanta
 & four Vedic chanting records for Ezra Pound

•

beginning with the startling image
 shown to the world
 of Guevara's face in death
 almost seeming to smile.

“One radiant face driven mad with a rifle”
 he wrote
 “Confronting the electric networks”

Part XV

The great bard Allen Ginsberg
 kept his famous shoulder to the wheel
 in the ghastly year known as '68

In February
 Ferlinghetti replied
 he loved Allen's next book of verse
 Planet News
 especially the beautiful poem from '67
 called “Wales Visitation”

February was also the month
 his friend and onetime lover Neal Cassady passed away
 Cassady had gone to a wedding in
 San Miguel de Allende
 He'd left his bag at a railroad station
 a few miles away
 and after the party
 drunk and high
 he died on the tracks
 walking back

He was the first of the beatnik hexad
 to pass.

His “Elegy for Neal Cassady”
 laid down beautifully the grief
 of someone who'd lost a soul buddy
 with memories of discourse
 Spirit to Spirit
 as in the lines,
 “I could talk to you forever,

The pleasure inexhaustible,
discourse of spirit to spirit,
O Spirit”

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(p. 488, Collected Poems)

•

Late in February Allen (and the Fugs) performed
in Appleton, Wisconsin
where Senator Joseph McCarthy is buried

We performed an exorcism
that enraged the right.
Right wing radio man Paul Harvey
growled enormously about it
on his show

but we summoned his soul
–the Fugs, Ginzap, and about 50 locals–

with Allen commenting on the Great Redbaiter’s homophobia
but we were respectful

Allen recited a Hebrew prayer, and an invocation to Shiva
and we recited the Prajnaparamita Sutra
then sang “My Country ’Tis of Thee”

then a few minutes of Hare Krishna
after which I chanted the final words of
Plato’s Republic
in Greek

people left friendly items
on and around the stone

then we got the hell out of there

•

THE FARM

Huge stacks of mail
and the endless ring ring of the phone

helped make the bard want to get to silence

& he asked filmmaker Barbara Rubin
to look for a place in the country.

A big factor in wanting a country place
was to help get Peter Orlovsky off methedrine
His condition had gotten more serious than
toothbrushing the cobbles of Avenue C
in a meth-addled thirst for cleanliness.

Peter, of course, was a poet of stature. I often think of
his graceful lines in Don Allen's New American Poetry:
"...on a hill a butterfly
makes a cup that I drink from, walking over a bridge
of flowers."

Allen and Barbara Rubin had been occasional lovers
He made it with women more often
than commonly known
& she apparently had a passion to marry the bard
a passion she shared with but a few of her friends

She looked around Sharon Springs and Cherry Valley
west of Albany,
near Jewish summer resorts
She was increasingly drawn to orthodox Judaism
which may have led her where to search

She found an old farm outside Cherry Valley
surrounded by state forest
90 acres, run down, no electricity

Allen bought it
& he and Barbara went to the farm mid-March '68

In addition to helping Peter,
who came to the farm with his oft-hospitalized brother Julius
Ginsberg also had in mind getting Kerouac up there
to dry out his liver

Though Barbara Rubin soon drifted away from her dreams
of marriage with the bard
the Farm remained a factor, a haven for poets & seekers
for the rest of A.G.'s life
through the 1990s

•

MAY '68

one of his more
controversial poems
 “Please Master”
the 1st bardic evidence
of his interest in what they call
 “rough trade”

•

Allen agreed to come to Chicago in August
as part of a Festival of Life

It was intended to be a rock & roll antiwar peace party

but the year had other intentions
It was a year of pings
 –the pings of bullets

Martin King in April– ping!
Robert Kennedy in June– ping! ping!

The great uprisings of students in Paris
 and Columbia University
& the biggest antiwar movement
 since just before World War I

So that by the time of the Chicago Democratic Convention
there were soldiers everywhere
 and a thuglike convention
 where dissent was suppressed, as we shall see.

•

Allen had taught many of us the mantras
he'd brought back with him from India

and just before the Democratic Convention
he and I issued a statement
published in the underground press
calling for those who came to Chicago

to chant OM
to quell the violence.

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GINSBERG IN CHICAGO, AUGUST 1968

Allen had an assignment (and press pass)
to cover the convention for Esquire Magazine
(along with Terry Southern, William Burroughs and
Jean Genet, who sneaked into Chicago from Montreal)

Allen's French was very good
and I was amazed how well
he translated for Genet

The city had refused to issue permits
for participants in the Festival of Life
to camp out in Lincoln Park

where each night at 11 p.m., the police
would billyclub and teargas everyone out of the park

Allen sang OM for hours,
and sometimes I joined in

MONDAY, AUGUST 26

Barricades were built in Lincoln Park
to defend the right to sleep there
at 12:30 a.m. the police
clubbed and attacked the barricades

Tonight they marched behind
a street sweeper truck whose
water tanks had been
converted to hold tear gas!

(These ghastly police state devices
maybe gifts from Garden Plot or the CIA Chaos program?)

To me this was the last mote of proof
in 1968
that the Nation was lost

Ginsberg said
"I got gassed chanting AUM

with a hundred youthful voices
under the trees...

85

The Daily Mayor has written a
bloody vulgar script for American Children."

•

GINSBERG SHOWS ABILITY AS HALFBACK DURING TEARGAS ATTACK

We left the park to return to the Hotel Lincoln
(next to Lincoln Park, where we were staying)
but there were snout-nozzled cops there
lobbing tear-gas grenades
which plomfed near our feet.
We crouched down and dashed through
the hostile molecules
heads low, knees high
as if we were halfbacks
on a high school football team
toward the lobby.

TUESDAY AUGUST 27

At dawn on the 27th
Ginsberg came back to the park
singing various mantras
for several hours
till his voice became hoarse and whispery.

Allen was the only bard in the history of Western Civilization
to have over-ommed,
that is, he'd uttered the seed syllable "Om" so many hours
trying to quell the violence
he peace-pained his voice
and was omming, at the end,
like Froggie the Gremlin.

That night the protesters threw a
60th Unbirthday Party for Lyndon Johnson
at the packed Chicago Coliseum
Six thousand people were there
While Phil Ochs sang "I Ain't Marchin' Anymore"
a guy burned his draft card
and then in one amazing sequence of seconds

there was a sudden poof-up of
 maybe a hundred blazing draft cards
 pointillistically patterning
 the Coliseum audience.

Ginsberg's voice had not yet returned
 from his many hours
 of chanting
 to quell the violence
 so he passed me a note to read
 to the audience:

“Introduce me as Prague King of May – Ed– in my turn,
 you explain I lost my voice chanting Aum in park – so please
 you read my piece – then I’ll do 3 Minutes of Silence Mind
 consciousness & belly breathing”

•

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 28

That afternoon
 Daley had allowed
 a single rally at the bandshell
 in Grant Park
 sponsored by the Mobilization–
 From 10 to 15,000 showed up

About 4:30
 Dave Dellinger addressed the crowd
 through a portable bull horn
 to announce a nonviolent march to the Democratic Convention.
 4 1/2 miles
 from Grant Park

Grant Park is connected to downtown via a series of bridges
 across railroad tracks to the west
 Lines of soldiers prevented the march from leaving
 over any of the bridges
 and many of us sat down in front of the troops while
 U.S. Army helicopters circled overhead

It was very scary
 There were fixed bayonets
 & jeeps with barbed wire

hippie-sweeping screens
 plus the whoppa whoppa
 of helicopters
 that mixed with the songs Phil Ochs
 sang to calm us:

"We're the cops of the world, boys,
 We're the cops of the world...."
 & then his song,
 "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends."

singing through the bullhorn
 someone was holding to his face.

Then Allen Ginsberg,
 still hoarse from singing seed syllables
 in the rings of violence
 chanted "The Grey Monk" of William Blake
 through the bull horn

All of us who were sitting and waiting
 were chatty and restless
 yet by the time he chanted (from memory)
 the final verses of the wounded Gray Monk
 All grew silent
 except the ghastly helicopters:

"Thy Father drew his sword in the North,
 With his thousands strong he marched forth;
 Thy Brother has arm'd himself in Steel
 To avenge the wrongs thy Children feel.

"But vain the Sword & vain the Bow,
 They never can work War's overthrow.
 The Hermit's Prayer & the Widow's tear
 Alone can free the World from fear.

For a Tear is an Intellectual Thing,
 And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King,
 And the bitter groan of the Martyr's woe
 Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow.

The hand of Vengeance found the Bed
 To which the Purple Tyrant Fled;
 The iron hand crush'd the Tyrant's head

A few of us had pushed fresh daisies
into the rifle barrels at the Pentagon
just 10 months ago
and now, even though
I again had fresh white flowers
I knew this was a different type of event
and that I would likely have been
bayoneted and shot
pushing petal in metal

Finally, after hours of negotiations,
the protesters found a way
of getting out of Grant Park
and they surged
across a bridge
& gathered in front of the Hilton
on Michigan Avenue at Balbo

In the lobby where the Democrats
prepared to go to the convention hall
four miles away
soldiers with helmets & guns
marched past the plush divans
& the potted trees

Then, without warning, a throng of police charged the
demonstrators at 7:56

smashing, macing, beating
apparently to clear the avenue

Jeeps with machine guns mounted to them
arrived at the Hilton

"Wahoo! Wahoo!"

like the bomb riding cowboy
at the end of Dr. Strangelove
shouted an officer on a three wheeled motorcycle
as he mashed into the crowd

Thus began hours of bloodshed
In the streets outside the Hilton and Convention Center
and it was there
in the surgery-room glare of the television lights--

that thousands took up the chant

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"The whole world is watching
the whole world is watching....."

McCarthy volunteers set up
a first aid station on the Hilton's 15th floor
at his suite

They gave up their passes
to get the injured up to the rooms

Humphrey was on the 25th floor--
An aide opened a window and complained
of tear gas

On the nominating floor four miles from the Hilton
CBS-TV's Dan Rather gave a live report,
"A security man just slugged me in the stomach,"
to which Walter Cronkite replied,
"I think
we've got a
bunch of thugs here,
Dan."

Inside the convention that horrible night
Senator George McGovern was a last minute peace candidate
after McCarthy refused to lead a floor fight
against Humphrey

Senator Abraham Ribicoff was giving his nominating speech:
"With George McGovern," said Ribicoff, "we wouldn't have Gestapo tactics
on the streets of Chicago."

Mayor Richard Daley, his face reddened with malevolence,
shouted, "Fuck you, you Jew son of a bitch!
You lousy motherfucker, go home!"

Daley was seated in the front
Ribicoff looked down at Red Face, and said
"How hard it is to hear the truth."

Allen Ginsberg leaped to his feet in the balcony
and began shouting "OMMMMM" for about five minutes
Meanwhile, outside
in the television lights
the teargassed, terrified and angry crowd

continued its own version of ommmmm,
chanting, "The Whole World is Watching!
The Whole World is Watching!"

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(This section adapted from 1968, a History in Verse)

Part XVI

After the ghastly Democratic convention
in August '68
in Chi

the great bard Allen Ginsberg
condensed his feelings
in an interview with Playboy:

Chicago had no government, he said,
"It's just anarchy maintained by pistol. Inside the
convention hall it was rigged like an old Mussolini strong-arm
scene— police and party hacks everywhere illegally, delegates
shoved around and kidnapped, telephone lines cut."

He spent the rest of the year
at his farm in Cherry Valley, NY
(not far from Cooperstown)

They were good months. There was
plenty of organic produce,
no electricity,
and he built a meditation room in the attic.

Over the years he attracted an entire generation of
poets and the creative
to the Cherry Valley area—
so much allure there was in his soul-mind.

His book Planet News came out
from City Lights that fall

He bought a pump organ
& spent the Cherry Valley winter
(& wow does it get cold up there!)
writing melodies to William Blake

Readers will recall Ginzap's '48 auditory "Vision" of

Blake chanting “Ah, Sunflower, Weary of Time”
& “The Sick Rose”
in a tenement in Harlem
spiritual experiences
that profoundly affected his verse.

91

He turned to the “prophetic simplicity”
of Blake’s songs
after the “Police State shock despair” of Chicago.

The fine keyboard man Lee Crabtree,
who had been in the Fugs
visited the farm and showed Allen
how to transcribe his melodies.

Once that fall Ginzap drove to Woodstock
where he sang his version of Blake’s “Grey Monk”
with members of the Band
at Big Pink.

•

CRACKDOWN ON UNDERGROUND PRESS

Ginsberg had begun his multi-decade investigations
into the secret police
There was an extensive network of what they called
Underground Newspapers
all over the States–

Around October of ’68
a CIA Chaos (Civilian Disruption) Agent
(Chaos was a disruption program against the
anti-war movement)
whacked out a memo which noted
“the apparent freedom and ease in which filth,
slandorous and libelous statements
and what appear to be almost treasonous
anti-establishment propaganda
is allowed to circulate”
in underground papers.

The CIA smut-sleuth then suggested a strategy for silencing
the underground:

“Eight out of ten,” he wrote, “would fail if a few phonograph record companies stopped advertising in them.”

92

The CIA of course denies it directly carried out the concept of interdicting the record company moolah stream—

Instead the FBI did it. In January of '69 the San Francisco office of the Bureau

wrote to headquarters
that Columbia Records
by advertising in the Underground
“appears to be giving active aid and comfort to enemies
of the United States.”

The memo suggested the FBI persuade Columbia Records to stop advertising in the underground press

It worked.

By the end of the next year
many record company ads had been pulled
& a number of undergrounders had folded

Ginsberg sniffed this crackdown out
and spent years researching it

finally supervising a book, based on his
research, for the PEN American Center

called The Campaign Against the Underground Press.

•

MARCH 12, 1969

Ginsberg (and Kerouac too) kept everything
doodles on napkins
drafts of poems, bus tickets,
you name it

On March 12, Allen began shipping the many
boxes of his papers
from his dad's attic in Paterson
to the Special Collections department

•

Allen's melodies to Blake
revealed another of his Muse skills:
he was good at shaping melodies—

The Fugs had done some recording
at Apostolic Studios
at 39 East 10th
with an engineer named David Baker

We liked what he did
and so when Allen Ginsberg wanted to record his
settings of William Blake
I recommended Apostolic

The summer of '69
when Allen recorded there—
he had some fine musicians to help—

Julius Watkins, who had played with the Thelonius Monk Quintet,
on French horn,
Elvin Jones played drums on some of it

Charles Mingus recommended Herman Wright on bass

Don Cherry breathed some hot trumpet & percussion
onto the oxide-dappled tape.

Allen recorded 19 Blake tunes
that June & July
which were released, as they say,
by MGM Records in 1970

•

In October of '69
Allen was just about to leave for a poetry tour
beginning with Yale
& then a teach-in about Vietnam
at Columbia U

He was up at the farm

Gregory Corso
had come for a visit

94

It was the night of October 21
the phone rang
Gregory answered,
it was the writer Al Aronowitz

He turned to Ginsberg–
“Al! Jack died.”

Early the next morning
Ginsberg and Corso
walked through the early snow
to the woods up the hill
& carved Jack’s name
in a tree

Part XVII

Kerouac was watching The Galloping Gourmet
eating some tuna & sipping whiskey
in his living room
jotting in a notepad
when the blood burbled up his throat.
He never regained consciousness

Allen wrote a beautiful poem, “Memory Gardens”
after Jack’s funeral
with the lines
“I threw a kissed handful of damp earth
down on the stone lid
& sighed
looking in Creeley’s one eye,
Peter sweet holding a flower...”

& ending with:

“Well, while I’m here I’ll
do the work–
and what’s the Work?
To ease the pain of living.
Everything else, drunken

•

The fall of '69 saw John and Yoko's
Bed-In for Peace
in Canada

Allen was mentioned in “Give Peace a Chance”
so he called Lennon during the Bed-In
to give good wishes.

In early December the 'Zap testified at the ghastly
Chicago Conspiracy Trial

It was a rough time
Allen was subjected to what William Kunstler
depicted as “a refined form of fag baiting”
by sex-&-drug obsessed
prosecutors

But it was probably the first & only time
mantras & the Seed Syllable Om
were ever sung in a Federal trial
plus Allen chanted from memory
much of “Howl”

•

Allen's poetry was becoming ever more imaged with
environmental issues
beginning in 1970

when he was in Philadelphia for the first Earth Day
April 22
walking with Senator Ed Muskie & thousands
on a three mile walk
from the art museum to a park

Then 12 days later
the hideous shootings on a campus hill
at Kent State University
–the subject of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's
“Four Dead in Ohio.”

Allen was investigating
 the involvement of US agents & agencies
 in the drug business
 & during a meeting with former Attorney General
 Ramsey Clark
 A.G. learned about the FBI's sleazy campaign
 against Martin Luther King

He was still fascinated by Whitman's concept
 of the Fall of the nation
 & was writing the verse that was to become
 The Fall of America
 poems of these states
 1965-1971

Allen stayed at his Cherry Valley farm for
 much of 1970
 It was run as a commune

with a busy moil of guests & residents
 Ray & Bonnie Bremser & 3 year old child,
 Peter Orlovsky & his good friend Denise Mercedes,
 Gregory Corso,
 & oodles of visitors such as Robert Creeley
 Ann Charters, Carl Solomon, Herbert Huncke

 a big thatch of the Best Minds crowd

THE MARCH '71 HELMS BET

As we have noted, Allen began researching
 the drug trade
 & asking thousands of questions
 wherever he went

Being a Jack the Clipper, Ginzap amassed
 hundreds of clippings and articles on the subject
 (a bunch of which he sent me in 1970)

It was inspired by the 1965 attempted set-up of
 him by Federal narcs, & by the continued troubles
 two consecutive generations were facing (Huncke,
 Corso, Burroughs
 & then the Ken Kesey/flower child generation)

Allen “developed information,” as they say, that the CIA
was involved in drug distribution
 & that a CIA-operated air base at Long Cheng
 was being used as a dope depot
 for opium -running

Then, on March 4, 1971 he read with his father Louis
at the Corcoran Gallery in DC

At a reception beforehand Ginsberg met
the head of the Central Intelligence Agency
 Richard Helms

Many would have fawned, bowed & quailed
 at a meeting with the great secret policeman
 who had a fascination, it later was learned,
 with CIA mind control experiments
 robowashing and programmed deeds

but Ginsberg was not afraid
and challenged Mr. Helms about CIA
 involvement in the drug trade

Helms denied it, of course,
and then they made a bet

If Allen was right about CIA/drugs
 then Helms would meditate an hour a day
 for the rest of his life

If Allen was wrong,
 he'd give Mr. Helms his bronze dorje

The liberal D.C. establishment
 was a bit miffed & horrified
 at the great bard's
 exchange with the spymaster
but it was another illuminating
 look into his soul—

Seven years later C.L. Sulzberger of The New York Times
wrote the 'Zap a letter:

“Dear Allen,

I fear I owe you an apology. I have been reading a succession of pieces about CIA involvement in the dope trade in South East Asia and I remember when you first suggested I look into this I thought you were full of beans. Indeed you were right and I acknowledge the fact plus sending my best personal wishes.

Cy Sulzberger”

(4-11-78)

As far as I know, Allen never attempted
to get Mr. Helms to start
a daily meditation practice

Part XVIII

We left the tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
in March of 1971
when he made a bet with the spymaster Richard Helms
in D.C.
that the CIA had been involved
in drug trafficking
in Southeast Asia

Pshaw! Pshaw! sputtered the wry spy guy
but Ginsberg was correct
(and out of it came his marvelous tune, later,
the great “CIA Dope Calypso”)

The Seventies had begun
& the Bard was as famous as ever
on his 45th birthday June 3

By '71's end he'd written 575 pages of verse
he later placed in his Collected Poems

The spring of 1971 he spent in California
where, in May, he met Chögyam Trungpa

the founder of the first Tibetan Buddhist center in the USA
Tail of the Tiger, located in Vermont

(they'd met very briefly before, in India)

Trungpa urged Allen to “make up your own poems
on the spot.

Don’t you trust your own mind?”

The next night, at a benefit, the 'Zap unlocked the lid of his
little Indian harmonium

and spontan’d forth with a 25 minute
piece called

“How sweet it is to be born here in America.”

Thus had begun in verse

what Kerouac had long ago urged,

bebop level spontaneity
grounded in Mind

(I know from first hand experience A.G.’s genius
at spontaneous verse– in the spring of 1966
when the Fugs were recording their second album
one night we all made up spontaneous verses
at a recording studio up by Lincoln Center

I have it on tape
–he was very very adroit
at the instant laying down
of interesting lines)

June 30 Allen set Blake’s “Tyger Tyger Burning Bright” to music
while that summer helped put together a petition
to the Swiss gov’t to grant political asylum
to Timothy Leary

on the lam after escaping from jail
convicted for just a tiny amount of grass

The petition of 25 writers included Kenneth Rexroth,
Anais Nin, Ferlinghetti, Kesey, Laura Huxley, Michael
McClure and others

UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR

Out of the U.S. mail blue an “unknown benefactor”
sent Ginsberg a round-trip ticket to India the summer o’ ‘71

He left in September

–he'd not been there for 9 years
 and was horrified
 at the ghastly poverty & starvation
 he viewed in refugee camps
 long lines, not enough food to be given

& huge throngs of people on Jessore Road
 'tween Bangladesh & Calcutta
 failing & falling & filling
 the fire-fumed ghats
 He wrote a long poem, "September on Jessore Road"
 in which he chant-sang against
 the malice-moiled powerful of the world
 more concerned with napalm
 than relief of suffering

It's the final work in his book
 The Fall of America
 poems of these states
 1965-1971

October 9, 1971
 was John Lennon's 31st birthday
 & he and Yoko Ono were in Syracuse, NY.

The day before the great album
 Imagine
 had been released

Allen visited them at their hotel room that night
 for a party

Jonas Mekas filmed it
 Allen on harmonium & finger cymbals, Lennon on guitar
 Phil Spector & Klaus Voorman also on guit's
 doing the kind of thing so easily done
 in those days
 a jam session consisting of
 mantras, Blake's "Nurse's Song,"
 and then a medley of Lennon/Beatles
 including "Yellow Submarine"
 & "Give Peace a Chance."

•

That fall also Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky read at NYU's

on the south side of Washington Square

Allen, still surging with Trungpa's urging
to go Spontaneous
created a poem on the spot
that lasted an hour, titled
"Why write poetry down on paper
when you have to cut down trees to make poetry books"

Unknown to the Bard,
Bob Dylan & David Amram
were standing in the back of the hall,
digging the spont'-riffs

Dylan and Amram
came over to Ginsberg's pad later that night
where they jammed
with Amram on his famous French horn,
Dylan on a Guild
& the 'Zap on harmonium

(Dylan gave him some chord lessons
so that Ginsberg discovered he
could improvise in a 12-bar blues format
-Lightbulb!)

THE RECORD PLANT SESSIONS

This led to some memorable recording sessions
beginning on November 9, '71

at the Record Plant in NYC

Dylan brought a pal from Woodstock with him
the singer/guitarist Happy Traum.
Also on the sessions were Jon Sholle, David Amram, Ginsberg,
and a number of poets
including Gregory Corso, the Russian bard
Andrei Voznesenky, and others

The filmmaker Barbara Rubin was on hand
and I was there too
my book on the Manson group, The Family, had just

I remember that someone was playing on a milk crate with
wires stretched across it like a psychedelic psaltery.

There was a second session November 17
Allen improvised an early version of
“CIA Dope Calypso”
with Dylan on guitar

There were other tunes, including “Going to San Diego,”
an anthem urging
everybody to go to San Diego
and protest Richard Nixon
(after Kent State & the secret bombing of Cambodia)
–San Diego was at that time the site of the Republican Convention
though later it was moved to Miami Beach

They also recorded Allen’s “September on Jessore Road”
which he was just putting in final form
in these temporary moments
in the quick flow of the Seventies

Part XIX

The poet, publisher & counterculture leader John Sinclair
had been set up for a miniscule pot bust by an undercover
agent in Michigan
and sentenced to “10 years for 2 joints”
It was a very very very unjust sentence.

By late 1971, John had been caged in maximum security
for a couple of years
and was a burning cause in the counterculture.

After I’d finished my book on the Manson group
I wrote a long investigative poem called
“The Entrapment of John Sinclair”
tracing the Sinclair set-up
which John Lennon read when it was published
in the Los Angeles Free Press .

Lennon decided to do a concert in support of John Sinclair
They booked Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor

It was an eery police state time in America—
The entire weight of Attorney General John Mitchell's
apparatus was about to focus on Lennon
& sometimes our phones clicked and popped
like a performance poet
doing throat-boings

Miriam and I were living a couple of blocks from Lennon & Yoko Ono
in the West Village
and somehow our phone lines got crossed

I kept hearing this English chap trying to make calls
while I was on the phone
Finally I realized who it was,
It was Lennon!
so I complained to the phone company
who said there was a shortage of lines
which caused the screw-up

(which I found not quite believable)

The concert for John Sinclair occurred on a chilly December 10th
Ginzap began the night by singing mantrams
for about a half hour
and performed one of his spontaneous poems.
Stevie Wonder had just come out with "Superstition" and
overwhelmed the packed crowd with his
rendition

The great Phil Ochs was there; I read a poem, Bob Seger performed
Jerry Rubin spoke, & others including Dave Dellinger & Rennie Davis

Phil told me that Lennon had called him to sing a song
he'd written about Sinclair,
He imitated Lennon's voice doing the opening lines
"It ain't fair, John Sinclair
Ten for 2 for smoking air"

The crowd was stunned to silence when John Sinclair spoke to
the 20,000 from a phone at Marquette Prison.

There was a party afterwards,
and the last thing that happened
was Allen— it was almost dawn—

fingering chords on his harmonium &
 singing to a very sleepy Lennon & Yoko
 his long lament about suffering in India
 "September on Jessore Road."

Lennon had told us that he was willing to do concerts
 in city after city
 till the counterculture hero was set free.

Fifty-five hours after Lennon and Yoko's performance
 they let John Sinclair out of prison.

The Republicans had intended at that time to hold their
 convention in San Diego
 to renominate the Nix man
 & Lennon had agreed to participate
 in big demonstrations
 in San Diego

I think it was then
 that the INS, the FBI, the U.S. Senate even
 took fierce action to toss Lennon out of the country.

1972

Early '72
 saw a staged version
 in a theater in Brooklyn
 of the great poem "Kaddish"
 which ran for a month

Allen then left for a tour of Australia with Lawrence Ferlinghetti
 I remember he returned with tales of
 the Aborigines and their concept of
 "Universal Dream Time"

In May
 in Boulder, Colorado
 Allen took Buddhist refuge vows
 He'd decided to place himself in the lineage of
 Chögyam Trungpa,
 the Tibetan Buddhist teacher
 whom he had met in '71

He loved Trungpa much in the
 way he'd loved Jack Kerouac

that is, one who called him to account
at just about every point
yet remained a friend

•

When Ginsberg was visiting Gary Snyder
in Nevada City, California
he decided to call presidential advisor Henry Kissinger
at the White House

He got through! Allen wanted the future Secretary of State
to get together with peace movement leaders
such as Dave Dellinger
to forge a dialogue.

Apparently Eugene McCarthy offered to host such a meeting
and Allen tried to set it up,
but, you know, a bard can get through
to someone like Kissinger once,
but not twice.

I recall how Allen told me
he had these dreams about Kissinger
which caused such anger
that he was grinding
his teeth down
as he slept!

•

In June there was a weird break-in at the Democratic offices
at the Watergate Hotel complex in D.C.
Some CIA-connected guys, plus a right wing Cuban,
were arrested
and thus the Fates were about to unravel
what Nixon was trying to weave

Ginsberg went to Miami with Peter Orlovksy
to commit civil disobedience
at the Republican Convention (moved there from San Diego)

He had prepared an ambitious collection of verse,
The Fall of America (Poems 1965-1971)
one of his finest books
& it was about to be published in late '72
to win him the National Book Award

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1973

Early in the year the 'Zap
fell on ice at his Cherry Valley farm
and broke his leg. A few weeks later, April 19-21
Miriam, daughter Deirdre (then 8), and I
visited A.G. at the farm

As we wended our way o'er very rural road-ruts
in our Land Rover
I spotted A.G. sitting in a reclining aluminum chair
in bibbed overalls and leg-cast
by the driveway

He was writing some short poems he called
"Annotations to Amitendranath Tagore's Sung Poetry."

Just as we arrived he jotted:

"Right leg broken, can't walk around
visit the fishpond to touch the cold water,
tramp through willows to the lonely meadow across the brook—
here comes a metal landrover, brakes creaking hello."

He read it to us, hot from his bard-eye.
We spent a couple of days there.
Part of the fun was going with Allen to a farm auction
We went rockhounding in nearby road cuts
for Devonian fossils &
Miriam & Allen cooked a groovy stir-tossed dinner
of asparagus/Chinese mushrooms/onion chunks/ ginger/oil
in a huge iron frying pan
a repast that A.G. had learned from Gary Snyder

On Easter afternoon
we drove the pain-legged bard back down to
his apartment in the Lower East Side
with his cast arest on a round-topped trunk
we'd bought at the auction

Part XX

1973

When Miriam, I and Deirdre
 had visited the great bard Allen Ginsberg
 we'd found him in an introspective mood
 after breaking his leg on the ice at his
 farm in Cherry Valley

He did seem more subdued
 & he was in pain

He had just been inducted, with Kurt Vonnegut,
 into the very prestigious
 American Academy of Arts & Letters

It was the months of the Watergate mess
 and it slowly was becoming apparent
 that Nixon might come to justice.

Because of John Lennon's 1971 concert for John Sinclair
 & his general antiwar stance
 the forces of Attorney General John Mitchell
 tried to toss him out of the country
 though he was living here legally

They reached back to a small pot bust in England
 as an excuse

Lennon brought his energy & vast international clout
 (plus his big financial resources)
 to organize an impressive defense

Allen did what he could to assist Lennon
 and during that year he also worked his network
 to defend Timothy Leary who had at long last
 been seized by the U.S. in Afghanistan,
 after a long flight from
 another miniscule pot bust
 that had 'shroomed
 in police state stupidity
 into a big deal

It was also the year Abbie Hoffman was busted,
charged with dealing
& energy was poured forth to help him also.

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Thriving in the chaos-moil, Allen went on a long tour of Europe
still on crutches, leg in a cast

His new collection, The Fall of America
Poems 1965-71
was getting the type of attention & praise
that bards tremble to receive

THE CIA/KISSINGER OVERTHROW

Meanwhile, before he could be byebye'd
Nixon, plus Henry Kissinger and the military-industrial-surrealists
in their serial aggression
organized a coup against the elected leftist gov't in Chile

On September 11, CIA-backed military men
attacked the presidential palace and
killed the elected president of Chile
Salvador Allende

It was a time of evil.
When the great Pablo Neruda died a few days later
the new right-wing nut government of Chile
would not allow a public funeral

Ginsberg had been a friend of Neruda's
and mourned.
He vowed to try to have Kissinger imprisoned
if Nicanor Parra or any of his other
Chilean friends
should come to evil.

Another great poet died also around that time
W. H. Auden on September 28
A.G. & Auden had not long ago read together
in England

It was adding up.
It wasn't so much Time's Wingéd Chariot
but the whack whack whack of the Scythe Man
in the Time-Track

& the futility of it all

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that pointed the bard toward

meditation & an actual religious practice.

He was about as famous as a bard can be

but it was a different fame than that gi'en poets

more belovéd by the people

such as, say, John Greenleaf Whittier

or Robert Frost

It was the fame of turbulence, of an acid-age Sappho,

or a Whitman without the 19th century constraints

of jail-risk & censorship

So, the great bard turned to

Vajrayana Buddhism

& the teachership of Chögyam Trungpa

Ginsberg took part in a 3-month retreat near
Jackson Hole, Wyoming in late 1973

He sat many hours a day

sorting through his rich

mind-river

& wrote a lot

including "Mind Breaths"

which would be the title verse

for his book of 1978

1974

Ginzap won the well-deserved National Book Award

for The Fall of America

Poems 1965-71

–with some fine poems,

including "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

& the poem about calming the Hell's Angels in the fall of '65

at Ken Kesey's

& the elegies to Neal Cassady

& Ché Guevara

& Frank O'Hara

& I can't not mention the poem

"Consulting I Ching Smoking Pot

Listening to the Fugs Sing Blake."

It was about the only major literary
 award Allen received
 He always hankered for more—
 the Pulitzer and, say, the Nobel Prize
 though he was just a tad too, uh, erotic
 for the long-sought phone call from Stockholm.

Once we were talking about the MacArthur Fellowships,
 and the 'Zap brought forth a kind of high-pitched, anguished,
 c'mon! tone to his voice:

 "I want one of those!"

•

Meanwhile Chögyam Trungpa
 wanted to open a Buddhist poetry school
 in Boulder, Colorado

 & asked Allen, Anne Waldman, & others
 to help him

It was the summer of Nixon's famous farewell
 helicopter trip
 cleansing the White House

& there was a mote of hope in the nation.

Allen & Anne Waldman
 became the cofounders of the school
 but what to name it?
 Anne came up with the Gertrude Stein School
 —probably in the long term
 a better name, though not
 without drawbacks
 but A.G. wanted a Kerouacian symbolism
 and Anne summoned what was to be:
 The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics
 which had its first
 summer session in '74.

This was the same summer A.G., Peter Orlovksy
 & Orlovsky's friend Denise Mercedes, worked on his cottage
 at Kittkidizze
 in the gold country

1975

In the spring of '75
Bob Dylan was back in New York
with a kind of '64-'65 hard edge
hanging out in Greenwich Village clubs

His album Blood on the Tracks
had been a big success.

After the summer he decided to go on the road
in a bus
with friends

Bass player Rob Stoner he charged with setting up a band.
And he invited Joan Baez, his
friend from the early '60s

The concept grew
to include security guys, advance workers
(who go in advance to every place where a
concert will happen
to set up hotels, meet with concert hall staff,
work the media
et alia multa)

D. had decided to make a movie
Sam Shepard was brought aboard
to write spontaneous scripts

At 4 a.m. one morn Dylan called Ginsberg
& invited him to join the
tour

Allen got Dylan's permission
to invite William Burroughs
but W.B. wasn't about to
get sucked into the
chaos/coke/chasm
of a mid-'70s rock & roll flow.

Part XXI

We left our tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
in the fall of 1975

when he was invited by Bob Dylan to
join the Rolling Thunder Review

It was ten years since Dylan had given Allen
the money to purchase a fancy Uher tape recorder
with which he wrote his brilliant
“Wichita Vortex Sutra”

Allen continued his awed perception of Mr. Dylan
and was flattered
to be asked aboard the Thunder

It was organized in secrecy
Apparently not even the musicians knew
what town they would play in
till the day of the gig

There were many musicians
who performed in segments,
and then all came onstage for the finale:
“This Land is Your Land”

And so it began.
On November 3, after a few concerts,
Ginsberg, Dylan, Sam Shepard, Peter Orlovsky
and the film crew
visited Jack Kerouac’s grave in Lowell, Massachusetts
where A.G. chanted from K.’s Mexico City Blues
then he and Dylan sat cross-legged by the stone
& composed a slow spontaneous blues
exchanging stanzas for Kerouac
'Zap on harmonium, Dylan on guitar.

The Rolling Thunder buses came to Madison Square Garden
December 5, 1975
for a concert
to raise money to help free
Rubin “Hurricane” Carter

The night before R. Thunder had performed
in the prison where Carter was being held
for a murder he did not commit

(\$100,000 was raised at the Garden
and, after six more years, Carter was finally freed)

SNOWMASS

Meanwhile, an incident occurred
at a Buddhist retreat in Snowmass, Colorado
that caused quite a stir in literary circles.

The well known American poet W.S. Merwin &
his partner, Dana Naone,
were attending what is known as a Seminary

Merwin and Naone had spent the summer at Naropa
in Boulder

He'd given a reading with John Ashbery
a couple of lectures, and a workshop

That fall Chögyam Trungpa invited the couple
to take part in the Seminary, which lasted three months,
from early September till around Thanksgiving, 1975
at the Eldorado ski lodge, at Snowmass, about 14 miles
northeast of Aspen.

There were from 125 to 130 in attendance.
At the Seminary about a month was spent on Hinayana,
a month on Mahayana and the final 30 days on Vajrayana

The schedule set two weeks of lectures & classes
followed by two weeks of sitting & meditation

A Halloween Party

Trungpa decided to have the group hold a party on October 31
and that everyone should wear a costume

The party was held in what Merwin described as a
“semi-dark ski-lodge dining room” of “boom-resort architecture.”

The place was packed

It had a kind of Vajra-Bacchic atmosphere
There were costumes of a wide variety
including several men with
 wrathful deities painted in, on and around
 their genitals
and another, wrapped Warholishly in aluminum foil
 as Enlightenment

Trungpa himself arrived
and not long afterwards his guards
began stripping some of the revelers.

W.S. Merwin and Dana Naone had danced for a while
 then returned to their room.

Trungpa asked for his "assistants" to go fetch them.
They didn't want to come down.
Several hours of negotiations ensued.
Finally the guru ordered his guards
 to break and enter.
They smashed into the room
Merwin defended himself with a broken beer bottle
They were dragged before Mr. Trungpa
where there were angry words 'tween the poet, his partner
and the guru.
Several others spoke up. Trungpa punched one of them in the face
and his assistants, who had been given the
baleful name "vajraguards"
 stripped Merwin & Naone.

It was a famous literary event, in that
the telling of it percolated though
 literature-land for a number of years.

Ginsberg was not at the Seminary
but was caught in the moil of its repercussions
because the alcoholic Trungpa was his teacher.

In the world of the Beats, however,
 it was probably to be considered a minor event
and to be ascribed to the paths of Crazy Wisdom
though to many it was an moment of semifascist infringement.

Allen Ginsberg
now in his fifties
kept up his complicated balance
of research, writing, actual Buddhist practice, founding a school,
coping with his eros,
& singing now, always, the High Metabolism
Gotta Roam Blues
(a midlife variety of his "Father Death Blues")

These were the years he
was formally investigating the activities of
the FBI & intelligence agencies.

(The reader will recall how A.G. in the '60s
& early '70s did historic research in
the connection between the CIA
& drug smuggling from Southeast Asia.
There was his famous bet with CIA
chief Richard Helms of 1971.)

An attorney named Ira Lowe, in D.C. helped Allen
and others (including myself)
get their secret files

F.O.I.A.

Though some complain that it's still difficult to get their files
one of the marvels of America is
the Freedom of Information Act of 1966
which requires that the records of U.S. government agencies
be made available to the public.
The law states that such information must be made available
within ten working days as a rule
to the person requesting it.

The law exempts nine classes of information including
some related to national security

The F.O.I.A. was amended by the Privacy Act of 1974, which requires federal
agencies to provide individuals with any information in their files relating to them and
to amend incorrect records.

It was this law that A.G. used to sail into the
 haunts of the secret police to examine its campaign
 in the 1960s which effectively
 wiped out the Underground Press movement

Allen amassed a big collection of FBI and government documents.
 He worked with the writers/editors group called PEN
 and its Freedom to Write Committee
 to present this research to the public
 –a project he called “Smoking Typewriters”

*

READING WITH LOWELL

February 23, '77 Allen read with Robert Lowell
 for the Poetry Project
 at St. Mark's Church in NYC
 Since Lowell had enormous stature
 in the academic world
 the reading gave Allen
 a sense of well-tuned satisfaction,
 as he said at the time:

“What this means is that people won't be able
 to attack me so easy anymore
 because I'm, in a sense, protected by his regard.
 If he's willing to read on the same platform with me
 & say I wrote a masterpiece –Kaddish– it means
 I can't be considered a barbarian jerk,
 which is what I've been having to listen to
 year after year.”

It was a famous reading and the great Lowell,
 who had once, in 1965, declined to attend
 a White House Arts Festival because of the war,
 was so soon to pass away, age 60,
 on September 12

LUNCH WITH COUNTERINTELLIGENCE CHIEF

I had a chat on the phone with the 'Zap

on April 25, '77

He said he had picked up from Ira Lowe some of my
FBI files,

one of which indicated the Bureau had
Miriam's and my pad on Avenue A (in the '60s)
under surveillance
since, for instance, it described how once I left the house
& entered an automobile.

He and Peter Orlovsky had recently lunched
with the legendary former CIA counterintelligence chief
James Angleton

Angleton, whose cover was blown as director of counterintelligence
in fine reportage by Seymour Hersh in the New York Times back in '74
(Angleton complained later to Hersh that his wife
had no idea for 31 years he was the feared
counterchief
and as a result had left him!)
had been forced from his job.

Anyway, by the time Peter Orlovsky & Ginsberg had lunch with him
the superspy was working on a book, Allen told me,
& quite anecdotally fluent.

Angleton told Ginsberg he had ordered Ezra Pound into the
Pisan tiger cage in '45 to keep him from being killed
by Partisans.

At the time Allen was researching the names of
those whom the FBI & CIA had sent into U.S. domestic groups
such as the Panthers
to sow dissension
under Cointelpro or Chaos.

Angleton, a lifelong friend of T.S. Eliot's,
gave A.G. the name of a deputy director of the FBI
who, he said, held a master list of provos & informers.

•

The PEN Center report was published in 1981
by City Lights Books
under the title Unamerican Activities, and included
Ginsberg's Smoking Typewriters

and other essays on the activities of the secret police
to stifle the alternate & underground press.

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•

That summer I taught a month-long class in
Investigative Poetry
at the Naropa Institute in Boulder.

The class voted to work together on a single
poetic investigation
& to my surprise
decided to take a close look at

the incident between the poet W.S. Merwin, his
mate Dana Naone, and Chögyam Trungpa & his
vajraguards
that had occurred at the Buddhist retreat
in Colorado on Halloween '75.

For a month the class conducted interviews
& searched for the truth
by creating a composite weave
of statements from those who
had observed the event & aftermath

The result was a book, fabled in its time, titled
The Party, A Chronological Perspective on a Confrontation
at a Buddhist Seminary.

To his credit, Allen did nothing whatsoever to
hinder the research
though it pained his heart.

Part XXIII

We left our history of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
in the summer of 1977

when he was supervising an investigation
of the activities of the FBI and the CIA
and other intelligence agencies

against the antiwar and Underground Press movements

As we have noted he secured the services of
attorney Ira Lowe in D.C.
to help poets get their files

(Lowe obtained some of mine for instance)

Ginsberg was at the level of Blizzard Fame
The letters, phone messages, knocks on the doors,
manuscripts demanding book blurbs
 blizzarded in to Box 582
 Stuyvesant Station
 NY, NY 10009

In the late summer/fall of 1977 Ginsberg worked
on his next book for City Lights, Mind Breaths Poems 1972-77
with some excellent poems, "Don't Grow Old,"
(about his father)

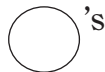
"Ego Confession," plus a high-energy
poem about being mugged
on East 10th

 in which he was probably the only
 person in the history of
 Lower East Side muggery
 to have chanted "Om Ah Hum"
 o'er and o'er during the mugging,
and in the book another fine poem
 "Contest of Bards"

•

There was never a bard with so many friends
& so many humans whom he animated

He had circles in France
Circles in Italy
Circles in LA
Circles in Boston
There were Circles from his visits to India
Circles in China! &



all through Eastern Europe!

& all swirling in his retentive mind

Most of them felt DIRECTLY connected to him
and they all wanted action!

•

October of '77
he was in the air on the way
to a symposium called "LSD: A Generation Later"
at UC Santa Cruz

and dropped a hit in the plane
thinking about the CIA & LSD.
Later at the symposium
he told what he had done and asked
"Am I, Allen Ginsberg, the product of
one of the CIA's lamentable, ill-advised, or
triumphantly successful
experiments in mind control?"

•

There comes a time in the
Glut of 20th Century Stuff that a bard
especially a pack rat like Allen
HAS TO ACHIEVE SOME SORT OF
Zenification of the data chaos!

The 'Zap kept everything
doodles on napkins
gigantic blizzards of incoming mail

He had moved to a building at 437 East 12th street
near Avenue A and Tompkins Park
where he had taken two apartments on the
same floor and connected them

The result was a complex of small rooms
that served him well

He finally had walls for bookshelves; a room where all the
tapes of his readings were organized (he
taped EVERY single reading- there must have
been thousands of cassettes)

Around this time the poet Bob Rosenthal
 became Allen's personal secretary
 Rosenthal in the coming years
 made Allen's ever increasing bardic burdens
 possible to endure

 otherwise Ginzap could have wound up like the old
 coot I once read about whose
 cabin was entirely filled with a giant string ball
 he had created

because for Ginsberg, even though he had stored
 many boxes of archival material at the Columbia U library

the Bard Blizzard
 had become nearly overwhelming!

Students at Naropa by now were typing his notebooks
 but there were those mail sacks from the Globe!

Once around this time I visited Ginsberg and
 he asked me what I did with all the magazines and books and
 galleys wanting book blurbs that arrived

I said I stored them chronologically. He lowered his voice,
 almost as if he were admitting a crime,
 his voice just about a whisper, and said
 "I've started throwing some things away. It's
 just too much."

•

He began focusing on teaching
 –transmitting his studies of William Blake for instance
 He and I shared a passion for the study of metrics
 and Allen compiled a study list on the
 complicated ancient Greek & Latin metrics
 In addition he created Beat Generation reading lists
 to formalize a canon
 He knew how important the
 Battle for Space in the Textbooks would become.

His Buddhist practice continued
 He created a place to meditate and to

do prostrations
at his new pad on East 12th.

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Ginsberg performed in Woodstock, NY in December of '77
with Peter Orlovsky, Happy Traum & a
young man named Steven Taylor
whom he'd met at Taylor's New Jersey college in '76

It was amazing. Taylor had a beautiful high tenor voice
and could follow Allen's vocal phrasing as
adroitly as a ventriloquist!

& those of us in the audience at the Woodstock Artists Association
were astounded
at how Taylor's harmony voice floated
in a kind of mystic perfection
above Allen's bardic bass

For the rest of Ginsberg's life Taylor worked
with him,
touring, recording, arranging, and
annotating his melodies.

Allen was upset with
never-too-brave Columbia Records
for recently declining to release the bard's album
produced by John Hammond

Allen told me at the time that a Columbia executive
said, "Ginsberg, you're shaking
your putz out there
in front of everybody" &

"What if William Paley heard it?"
was another comment
(Paley was the founder of CBS)

The album had such classics as
"Everybody's Just a Little Bit Homosexual,"
"Hard-on Blues"
& "CIA Dope/Calypso."

John Hammond's comment on the project:
"It's absolutely brilliant"

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•

Allen spent the winter of '77/'78 at his Cherry Valley farm

though I note that in January o' '78
he came out on stage one night
improvising poetry at an Iggy Pop concert.

That year
Ginzap taught a line-by-line course on William Blake's
The Book of Urizen

(after Allen passed away, I heard that
the transcriptions of his various lectures on Blake
at Naropa were something like 2,000 pages long)

Allen began to focus on the Rocky Flats nuclear plant near Boulder
where they built the plutonium triggers
for the Bomb
Plutonium had leaked out into nearby ground water.

1978 was a big year for the anti-nuke movement.
It was reflected at Rocky Flats by ongoing demonstrations
particularly at the railroad tracks leading into the place

In June of '78 Allen
wrote his antinuke/antibomb "Plutonian Ode"
& less than a day after finishing it
he was arrested for blocking the railway
at Rocky Flats.
At the court hearing where he entered a plea
he read the poem to a crowded room
then returned to the tracks
—a group of protesters had put up a tepee on the ties—
& was arrested a second time.

Part XXIV

We left our history of the great bard Allen Ginsberg
in the summer of 1978 when
he was arrested at Rocky Flats

released
then returned to be arrested again
the same day

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blocking the railcars of plutonium
coming in to build the triggers of doom.

•

November 30-December 2
saw the great Nova Convention
in New York City
honoring William Burroughs

There was a wide variety of performers
including John Cage, Merce Cunningham,
Brion Gysin, Laurie Anderson, myself,
Anne Waldman, Frank Zappa, Philip Glass
& others
including Robert Anton Wilson
& Timothy Leary

to celebrate the shy-bold humorist
and space prophet from St. Louis.

•

Two books in '78:
Mind Breaths
and a book of his correspondence
with Neal Cassady

•

In February 1979
The National Arts Club gave Allen its Gold Medal
for his lifetime achievement in poetry

at the club headquarters on Gramercy Park South
with the great Ted Berrigan as master of ceremonies

Luminous minds of many sorts were on hand
such as John Ashbery, who said,
"I think he's changed the role
of the poet in America. Now everybody

experiences poetry. It's much closer to us now
 than it was twenty years ago. And I think
 that is due not only to his poetry
 but to his truly exemplary way of living."

Allen toured in the spring through Europe
 with Peter Orlovsky and Steven Taylor
 By now Taylor was the musical firmament
 on which the 'Zap rested

Taylor brought Allen's songs
 to art
 with his perfect harmonies
 & his skills at arranging

That summer Allen taught a course at Naropa
 that went line by line
 through Wm. Blake's "Vala, or the Four Zoas"

In the fall he toured Europe again for several months
 in those exhilarating/exhausting
 cycles of the thrill of performance

only to return to his New York office
 & Glutted Mountains of mail and duty!
 in what Thomas Carlyle called the
 "Dry-as-Dusts"

The politics of America of course impinged
 upon its most political of Bards

Back in July of '79
 the Sandinista National Liberation Front
 had tossed out the creepy Somoza family dictatorship
 (in place since 1934)

The Sandinistas nationalized some industries
 & right-wingers around the world rolled their eyes
 in Domino-Theory dread.

During those months the slow-building stage was hauled into place
 that led to the Contras
 Irangate
 & the continuing involvement of

Another big crisis was the November 4 seizure of 66 U.S. embassy
employees
in Tehran by students

who demanded the return of the Shah of Iran for trial.
(The Shah was in the United States for cancer treatment)

President Carter was perceived as “weak” for his handling,
especially when the attempt on April 24, '81
to rescue the hostages failed.

Ginsberg's bardic sniffing skills
were sniffing
a right wing drift
& he didn't dig it

•

Meanwhile his guru, Chögyam Trungpa
had encouraged the bard to consider
wearing a suit and tie
so as to get a more serious
hearing from his audiences.

Allen's haberdasheries were the various Goodwills
in the cities he visited
but soon he began to sport
white shirts, ties and suit coats.

I chuckled at the emphasis on suits and ties
recalling how I'd seen the great 'Zap
back in 1959, and then in '60
at poetry readings
wearing the same shirt
& it wasn't clear if it had been
given a intervening wash

•

Added to the moil in Nicaragua & Iran
was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

where there had been a Marxist coup in 1978

followed by the kind of shooting &
 clique-kill confusion
 that led to a Soviet invasion
 in December of '79.

This gave the CIA and other clandestine services
 the chance
 to intervene secretly against the Russians
 in a long & hounding war

a legacy that's still not very well understood
 (& will not be till
 the activities of the CIA & Reagan's CIA director Wm Casey
 are fully explicated.)

Carter was battered by it
 especially when he stupidly refused
 to allow American athletes to compete
 after training all their lives
 in the 1980 Moscow Olympics

1980

And so, when 1980 blossomed in the Time Garden
 Allen Ginsberg faced
 an uncertain American future--

After all, had he not won the National Book Award
 for a tome titled The Fall of America?

Thanks to Steven Taylor in the main
 Allen began to write Public Poems
 with Music
 on political themes

a pattern he continued all the way to his passing in 1997

Political Poems with Music for 1980 include
 "Birdbrain" and
 "Capitol Air"

1980 saw Allen compose one of the century's finest
 environmental poems:
 his "Homework"

with its startling series of lines

on what it would be like to clean up
the Earth’s polluted air & waters,
beginning

“If I were doing my Laundry I’d wash my dirty Iran
I’d throw in my United States, and pour on the Ivory Soap,
scrub up Africa, put all the birds and elephants back in
the jungle,
I’d wash the Amazon river and clean the oily Carib & Gulf of
Mexico,
Rub that smog off the North Pole, wipe up all the pipelines
in Alaska,
Rub a dub dub for Rocky Flats and Los Alamos, Flush that
sparkly Cesium out of Love Canal
Rinse down the Acid Rain over the Parthenon & Sphinx.....”

& flowing onward with startling images
-It’s worth finding and memorizing
& then to take action!
Allen would have wanted your
action.

MARCH 1980

The Party was published
-the poetry group I’d taught at Naropa had voted
to set it loose to the public
& it was nicely produced by Susan Quasha at
Station Hill Press in Barrytown near Bard College.

Tom Clark also published a book on the Trungpa/Merwin/Naone
incident,
The Great Naropa Poetry Wars

and so Allen was upsettedly swept up again in the moil & boil
of this matter
for about another year
till the literary kettle ceased to spew.

Over his shoulder the bard heard the iron clacks
of Reagan’s stern-wheel’d chariot.

Reagan showed the kind of robotic persistence
that Democrats often lack:

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He tried in '68, ping!
He tried in '72, ping!
He tried in '76, ping!
and then in 1980, he won the nomination!

Carter swung to the right on domestic issues
He refused to support Senator Edward Kennedy's
historic
"Health Care for All Americans Act"

and the first real chance for a National Health Care System
since Truman's 1948 proposal
was shot down in
grimy conservative-Democratic
lack of vision

•

That year the bard received a \$10,000
NEA Creative Writing fellowship

He'd become friends with financier George Soros
For years the bard went to the New Years parties
thrown by Soros and his wife Susan
Back in the late '70s he was worth a mere \$600 million
and when Allen won the NEA
he called him and asked what he
could do with the money

Soros laughed & suggested he put it in the bank.

•

In October the filmmaker Barbara Rubin died
of postnatal infection
in France
after giving birth to her fifth child

She was a ceaseless advocate for interesting art & music
during the '60s
(She was the first one to point out to me the presence
of the Velvet Underground)

Barbara had located the Cherry Valley farm Allen bought
& can be seen rubbing Dylan's aching head
on the Bringing It All Back Home album jacket

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Rubin, whose films include Christmas on Earth,
once hoped to settle down with Allen in Cherry Valley
later married and lived as a devout Chasid
till the Scythe Man seized her early too early too early

•

Allen was on tour in Europe
when someone told him the ghastly news
December 10 of John Lennon's shooting,
an event that tore out the soul
of a decade much
as Kent State had done
in 1970

To Allen it was as if someone had stolen the
Mona Lisa's smile
from the time-track.

Part XXV

In 1981
on rising
he'd record his dream thoughts
in the long gift of Jung & Freud

do prostrations
(as part of his Buddhist practice)
then discuss his daily schedule
with Bob Rosenthal
the General Manager of his
interface with the
gnawing public

It was a year when Ronald Reagan & th'
neo-cons
began the attack on the Nicaraguan Revolution

•

He'd returned to his two-apartment complex
 on East 12th in NYC in early 1981
 after a long five-country tour of Europe
 with Peter Orlovksy & Steve Taylor

He was at the age where a big one-nighter tour
 started to take what they always
 call a "toll"

–a sort of Scorch Tax
 on his physicality and his continuing
 ability, to use the words of Tuli Kupferberg,
 to "stay above room temperature."

•

He always carefully arranged the things
 of his pad
 artworks, books, meditation zones
 his writing supplies

almost as minutely precisioned as, say,
 Robert Creeley

•

Early in March
 novelist Bill Burroughs, Jr., son of William
 died in Florida
 of cirrhosis of the liver
 He'd had a transplant in '76
 I remember him throwing up blood
 in our apartment at Naropa one summer

Later, hopelessly craving alcohol,
 he would sit on the floor of the Liquor Mart
 in Boulder
 chugging vodka

to join the flow
 of the solar system's
 second generation stardust
 as quickly as he could.

Allen returned to Naropa in the spring

where he taught a minutely detailed
“Literary History of the Beat Generation”

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& organized Bill Burroughs, Jr.’s papers
made sure that Billy’s journals were
typed into manuscript form

as for the “Literary History of the Beat Generation”
it was duly taped
& no doubt transcripts are held in the
Allen Ginsberg Library at Naropa

Conservatives & Literary Opponents
sneered at Ginsberg often
as some sort of
barbarian invader

but in truth he was a better scholar than
just about all of them.

Time will drum this truth.
In fact, he was a great scholar
The same ferocity for accurate detail
he brought to, say, the history
of the CIA & heroin smuggling
in SE Asia

he brought to the details of
Poesie’s History.

He could recite by mind
thousands of lines of verse

& knew the history of poetic things
as much as any staid professor
in bentwood walls

How do I know this?
Read the transcripts of his essays,
interviews & lectures

June ’81

The ’Zap had gone back to NYC and
was getting ready for a long tour

when he went to a club called Bonds to
meet a group called the Clash

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and went backstage to meet them

The lead singer, Joe Strummer, asked the bard
to read some poetry

Instead he proposed his po-tune "Capitol Air"
They rehearsed it

a few minutes

& A.G. sang it for the 3,000 awaiting

thus adding a new-wave hero band to those with whom
he had performed (the Fugs, Phil Ochs, John Lennon,
Dylan, et alia multa)

SUMMER '81

Ginsberg worked on the proofs of
Plutonian Ode: Poems 1977-1980
for City Lights

his 8th for Ferlinghetti's great House
(if you count Iron Horse, published
in tandem with Toronto's Coach House Press)

•

All these tastes of the mega-stage
with rockers
helped him hunger to form a band.
In August I heard from a staff member
that Ginsberg was going to call his band
Glass of Chicken

Glass of C. apparently
was Corso's term for Shambhala

•

A RETURN IN TRIUMPH

The bard loved to return to Columbia
for triumphal readings

as if he had some sort of spot on the palm
 from his university days of the '40s

November 14, 1981
 marked his third historic reading
 at McMillan Theater

for a 25th anniversary recitation of "Howl"
 Was it really twenty five years
 since the great threnody/joy psalm
 had been published!?

Jack Kerouac who had beaten time
 on a jug of Burgundy
 and shouted "Go! Go!"
 during the first performance
 at the Six Gallery back in th' fall o' '55
 was gone
 Neal gone
 the surge of the late '50s & '60s gone
 & the nation was oozing & spewing to the right

yet the theater was packed
 His family far and near had gathered
 and as one person who was there has described it:
 "Many luminaries, including Carl Solomon were present.
 Steve Taylor accompanied Allen..... The audience
 was literally awestruck, one of the only times
 I've experienced that. Allen made many funny asides
 annotating his works
 as he read."

Thunder always thunders.

•

In late '81 he moved to a house in Boulder
 where he was to headquarter for the next five years
 devoting himself more to the
 growth of the Jack Kerouac School
 of Disembodied Poetics
 at the Naropa Institute

& left his New York office

worked on the text for
Plutonian Ode: Poems 1977-1980
for City Lights

•

EARLY '82

At Jimi Hendrix' Electric Ladyland studio
on 8th St. in the Village
the Clash were recording

Ginsberg spent a few days with them
helped write three or four tunes
His suggestions they tested
on empty tracks
to gauge their flow
The bard loved the ambience of
successful rockers
and couldn't resist the urge to teach
bringing them Gregory Corso's newest book for instance,
and the City Lights classic Clean Asshole Poems by Peter Orlovsky.

The album was called Combat Rock
and the bard, not always so modest
did not ask for
publishing royalties on the
tunes he helped doctor.

•

JANUARY 16, 1982

Tuli Kupferberg & I got together
with some hot musicians, including Coby Batty,
John Zorn, Marc Kramer, Randy Hudson &
Steve Taylor
to play the Mudd Club in New York City

It was not quite a reunion of the Fugs
(who had not performed since 1969)
but close enough

I invited Allen to sing along with us when
we performed Tuli's great tune "Nothing"
from the first album of '65

Tuli basso'd forth with his traditional verses
"Monday nothing Tuesday nothing
Wednesday and Thursday nothing....."

The music was slow and properly eery
John Zorn on saxophone
Kramer on scary organ
Coby Batty on hand held drum

Then Allen sang a verse
in a slow Ancient Bard voice of declination:
"New York Nothing
Moscow Nothing Washington DC Nothing
Salvador War fooooo Nothing
Chögyam Trungpa (pause) Buddha (pause) Nothing"

•

Allen & Peter O flew to Nicaragua on January 21
at the invitation of the poet Ernesto Cardenal
(the minister of culture
after the Sandinista Revolution of '79)

for an international literary festival
in honor of the national poet of Nicaragua, Rubén Darío

The bard did not want to incite the kind of trouble
he had
back in 1965
when he had been tossed, first from Cuba
& then from Czechoslovakia

for this time the circumstances were very different.

Much had been learned by 1983
of what the CIA and military intelligence
had done in Chile in the early '70s
to destabilize & overwhelm the
freely elected left-edged government

Allen knew those intricacies, knew them well
& wanted to see for himself
 what was going on in Nicaragua
without helping
 the harbor-miners & Contra-feeding maw
 of the Reagan era.

It was an era of the Lie
(For instance, New York's own Senator Patrick Moynihan
resigned from the Senate Intelligence Committee
in 1985 when CIA director Wm. Casey flat-out lied
 under oath about the CIA mining of
 Managua's harbor)

The Sandinista National Liberation Front that
finally overthrew the ghastly Somoza family dictatorship
was named for Augusto Cesar Sandino
 a great Nicaraguan patriot
 who was killed by Anastasio Somoza
 on whose orders he was lured to an airport
 in Managua and offed in '34.

The FSLN, as it was known, put together a broad coalition,
including business interests, to get rid of the dictatorship,

but Daniel Ortega's Sandinistas felt the opposition of the USA
from the very beginning

 During the festival
 Allen, Ernesto Cardenal
 & Yevgeny Yevtushenko
 wrote a "Declaration of Three"
 which called on the "world's writers to come
 to Nicaragua to see with their own eyes
 the reality of Nicaragua, and lift their voices
 in defense of this country,
 small but inspired."

Not long after Allen and Peter returned from Managua
a CIA destabilization plan, worth \$17 million in '82 dollars
oozed into the media.

now brought to Boulder a list of humans that included
 Wm Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Diane di Prima, Carolyn Cassady,
 Herbert Huncke, John Clellon Holmes, Lawrence Ferlinghetti,
 Carl Solomon, Robert Frank, Joyce Johnson, Ken Kesey,
 Ted Berrigan just months to live, Ray Bremser, Anne Waldman,
 Michael & Joanna McClure, Timothy Leary, Paul Krassner &
 Kerouac biographers
 Ann Charters, Dennis McNally, Gerald Nicosia
 plus Abbie Hoffman
 & father-thirsty Jan Kerouac
 now almost 30

There were over 130 “accredited” as they say
 reporters on hand

Robert Frank filmed conversations
 on the Chautauqua porch
 where those of the Beats or Beat-touched
 bumped & interacted
 were introduced, or renewed antique friendships

A.G. was everywhere
 urging and coordinating
 sleeping just five a night

till it was over
 & he took to bed for three days

It made Naropa good bread
 but it had cost the Bard a few thousand of his own money
 but money never measures the love of a soul

It was another pay-out for Jack
 in the lineage of
 Ginzap pressuring Mark Van Doren
 on The Town & the City
 so that Robert Giroux
 accepted it unread from Van Doren
 & a \$1,000 advance

& Ginzap coming up with the ending of Doctor Sax
 & hundreds of other benevolences
 toward his thankless pal

The reader will recall how back in 1978
 the feeble-thinking & cowardly Columbia Records
 had refused to put it out
 so Hammond, the discoverer of Dylan,
 formed his own label.

There had been additional sessions in '81
 and now here it was,
 24 tunes

TO SING OR NOT TO SING

“...I know Allen will follow me around the world
 with his terrible singing voice...”
 –Ted Berrigan
 Ann Arbor Song

In the matter of his music and singing
 some liked, some disliked

Some felt it detracted from his writing
 but it came from a long tradition
 going back to Archilochus
 & the choice of a bard
 to sing, to chant, to recite
 & to do all three
 in freely-chosen combinations

Allen loved his voice
 His phrasing was very good
 Check out “Ballad of the Skeletons”
 or the fast-metered
 “CIA Dope Calypso”

&, with Steve Taylor singing harmony
 say, on “Father Death Blues”
 or “Do the Meditation”
 it was very pleasing to see & to hear

but the 'Zap used as few chords as John Lennon
 or the early Dylan
 and, as art songs,
 wend weakened in the Time Track

however brilliant the Mind & Voice
infiring them.

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A SCHOLAR AT SONG

Steve Taylor told me how once
during the '80s
he went to the Metropolitan Opera with Allen
& the bard knew all the melodies & words
of La Traviata by heart!

PETER IN TROUBLE

As Allen and Steven Taylor toured Europe
Peter Orlovsky was set to join them
bringing his banjo & his fine skill at yodeling

yet Peter was again in sore trouble.

Always a caregiver
& attentive to the super-minutiae of healing
he'd nursed his father Oleg dying of cancer
that fall
trying to "ease the pain of living"
till November 12 he'd passed away in NYC

He arrived in Europe
moily & erratic
& needing care himself

& strayed beyond Beat Generation standards
for deportment on the road
which were among the most relaxed standards
in the history of western culture.

1983

John Lennon had suggested that A.G. do "Jessore Road"
(from his 1971 tour of India
the refugee horror on the road from
Calcutta to East Pakistan)
with a string quartet

Steven Taylor composed it & it was recorded in Amsterdam
with the Mondrian String Quartet.

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Allen was in an interesting film called
Poetry in Motion
much of it shot in Toronto early in the year

then he went out on a big
tour to “support”
the double First Blues

returning to

’s of correspondence

•

June 3, his 57th birthday
celebrated with his brother Eugene
who had just turned 62

•

Burned out from Naropa he
became codirector emeritus
after ten years with Anne Waldman
(and year ’pon year of flaming youth eagerness staff)
creating probably the finest academy of its time

•

AUGUST 1983

The poet of beautiful vowels
Lawrence Ferlinghetti
& his City Lights Books
had published all of Allen’s great collections

and what a March of Ink they were!!

Howl and Other Poems
Kaddish and Other Poems
Reality Sandwiches
Planet News

The Fall of America
Mind Breaths
Plutonian Ode

– twenty five years of
Bardic sizzle cymbal
in the Final Ensemble

•

This was the year he secured the services
of a young book agent
famed for his brashness & boldness
named Andrew Wylie
who had begun his agenting in 1980
by representing the great I.F. Stone
in his book *The Trial of Socrates*.

Wylie urged the bard to publish a *Collected Poems*
with a major publisher
Allen was hesitant at first
not wanting to break his
long-time flow with Lawrence Ferlinghetti

They telephoned the author of *A Coney Island of the Mind*
and he was less than happy
so AG.. was ambivalent about proceeding

Then there was a breakthrough
Wylie negotiated a six-figure contract
with Harper & Row (later HarperCollins)
which allowed Ferlinghetti
to keep all of AG's *City Lights* books in print

Harper & Row would publish a *Collected Poems*,
an annotated edition of "Howl,"
(in the way that such a book had been done
for Eliot's "Waste Land")
a book of new poems (which was to
contain the exquisite poem "White Shroud"),
a volume of Letters,
one of Essays, and one of Journals

(Wylie, who had studied ancient Greek at Harvard,
then written for the underground papers and owned

a bookstore on Jones Street in the West Village,
 w/ stints at cab driving and showing up at Max's Kansas City
 in the afternoons for free fried chicken,
 surged forth to become one of the most successful
 of American literary agents
 with around 300 clients at the
 time of this writing
 & offices in NY, London, Madrid, Tokyo
 and perhaps other places too)

•

MIRACLE DREAM

He was always a Dream Man
 and so
 he awakened before full light on October 5
 in his apartment in Boulder

from a dream
 no Gentleman from Porlock
 would interrupt

to write one of his finest poems.
 He called it "White Shroud"

It began with 10 rhymed & semi-rhymed couplets
 the first one:

 "I am summoned from my bed
 to the Great City of the Dead"

He was walking with the great pacifist writer
 David Dellinger
 It was a kind of Sheol, or Bronx Elysium

He comes across
 a cranky-haired shopping bag lady sleeping on a wooden platform
 in an alley
 whom he startingly recognizes as Naomi!

 He spots
 a nearby basement store
 room where he could
 live

“she needed my middle aged strength and worldly money knowledge,
housekeeping art. I can cook and write books for a living,
she’ll not have to beg her medicine food, a new set of teeth
for company, won’t yell at the world, I can afford a telephone...”

Then he awakened
in a “glow of life”

before dawn
wrote down his poem, ran out of ink
went downstairs
where Peter Orlovksy was already up

“I kissed him & filled my pen and wept.”

•

I remember how A.G. had wept
reading the Crazy Jane poems of Yeats.

'56

'83

a 27 year
flow of guilt
for Naomi

still minyan-less
still with wires in her body
still singing the Internationale
from the Beyond

for a mother
dying weirdly
never dies.

Part XXVII

FALL 1983

I spoke with Allen on October 25
We chatted about many things

how to improve relations with Russia
for instance
& techniques he'd learned from Trungpa
on the struggle against nukes

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He mentioned he was leaving Boulder

"I'm retiring here
I'm about \$10,000 in debt
because I've been sort of inert
I've got about \$10,000
in secretarial fees....

[He'd not been touring since the spring]

I'm coming back to NY
[after a few years in Boulder]
"I've hired an agent, Andrew Wylie,
to peddle my books to Madison Avenue
for a standard edition of poetry & prose
about 4 volumes– collected poetry & everything.

I'm coming back to NY in December
& I'm going to try to restructure my
whole finances."

I broke in, "I thought you did some investing with your brother
I thought you were set up for life!"

He protested, "Oh No! NO
I'm just living on what I make from readings
and what I get from City Lights
(reportedly about \$7k a year)

E.S.: "I thought you had salted away
a lot over the years."

A.G.: "No, I've got to do it now (laughs)
I'm going to see if I can do something
w/ my papers at Columbia
to get an annuity out of them
as Robert Bertholf suggested

I have all of my stuff
more or less intact

All his life
 all the way back to the Spanish civil war
 he'd been a compulsive news clipper
 and he was also the Kodak Man!

Ann Charters had gathered some of his photos
 back in 1970
 for a small collection called Scenes Along the Road

but few sensed what photographic hugeness
 lurked in the Forest Ginsberg!

Ginsberg's photos were "on deposit" along with his gigantic archives
 at Butler Library at Columbia

On deposit meant that they were open to scholars
 with the bard's permission

Over the years he'd sent people to the photos in the archives
 and sometimes the prints & negatives both wd. disappear

A.G. asked a young writer & publisher named Raymond Foye
 to work on the photos

Foye went to Butler Library
 & was rather horrified to see the negatives out of their sleeves
 & scattered here and there in the boxes

There were thousands upon thousands of
 his photographs
 many of them still in their '40s/'50s packets
 from the Tompkins Square Park pharmacy
 where he'd had them developed

Many were the large old-style negatives, 2 1/4-inch square,
 which stood the test of blow-up well

that is, would a scrubbly-chinned, defiant Jack Kerouac
 leaning up against a Lower East Side roof-wall in 1953
 stand the test of becoming a 11X14 art print?

Foye tried to keep a chronological sense of the rolls
 putting the negatives into archival sleeves
 creating a numbering system in 3-ring notebooks

AG studied the prints and contact sheets
selecting what he liked

He tried blowing up a few of the negs
onto top quality 11X14 paper

Brian Graham made prints of those choices
(Graham is Robert Frank's printer)

Borrowing an idea from his friend the photographer Elsa Dorfman
Allen wrote detailed histories
which he inscribed on blank space at the bottom fronts of the photos.

Foye and Allen put together a portfolio of signed prints
and Foye began to show them to galleries and dealers
The Spencer Collection at the NY Public Library
was among those who purchased a set at \$5,000

The Holly Solomon Gallery on 57th Street
agreed to do the bard's virgin show
which Foye curated
(with an opening in early '85)

Thus was born another industry in the Forest Ginsberg:
A.G. – Chronicler of the American Beat Generation Experience

Up to then his cameras had been
not that carefully chosen & his techniques
dancing somewhere 'tween luck, Cage, & excess energy.

He pestered his pal Robert Frank
one of America's finest photographers for advice.

And met the great Berenice Abbot
who once had worked with Man Ray
A.G. dug immensely her NYC photos from the 1930s

"It was like going back in a time machine..."
he later wrote.

She urged him to get a camera with large negatives
He got Abbot to accompany him to Olden's camera store in NYC
to check out the action on a Rolleiflex

Another example of the bard
throughout his career
reaching out to the best minds
for the best advice.

After his early negatives were blown up
and it was seen they were art

the same bard who
made his own
big set of drums
in the jungles of Chiapas
in '54
was utterly unafraid
31 years later
to leap into the art of
the Visual Muse.

In fact, he went click-batty for a while
He shot thousands upon thousands of pictures
during his roamings
One person on his staff spent all her time
keeping track of the prints

It was a visual diary: "It's beginning to replace writing a lot,"
he wrote, "not the poetry, though, but the peripatetic notes
I used to take."

At first, before the explosion of photo shows,
it was a financial drain,
as he blew up hundreds of shots and alternate shots
of the same view
to large size prints

•

HAWKING CHUCKLING AT THE EDGE

One of Allen's key assistants
during those years
was his bibliographer, Bill Morgan
who'd worked since 1980 on a very detailed
bibliography– it included even rounding up
the multitude of book blurbs

He started cataloging all the books in Ginsberg's apartment
Then around 1984
began work at Columbia
 "to organize those hundreds of boxes"
 as he later described it

Around that time Barry Miles had gotten a contract
from Simon and Schuster
 to write a bio of Allen

The 'Zap worked out a deal
for Morgan to get a percentage of Barry Miles' S&S advance

so that Morgan could work full-time
 bringing order -heh heh-
 to the "word horde"

Allen loved to feel
 as if his work were organized
 in a retrievable, graceful
 raked-sand Zen Zone

(you can see it in the order he made
 in the room, say,
 where he began "Howl"

except that apparently,
in the Universe
 you create more disorder
 when making order of your things
according to Hawking's A Brief History of Time

so that if you memorized all of Bill Morgan's two-volume
bibliography of the great poet's writings
 for instance

you would create disordered energy in the form of heat
 from the ordered energy of food
 lost in the air around you
 in convection and heat

such as to increase the disorder of the Universe.

as he prepared to face the

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impending publication of his heart's work
he wrote a fine little
addendum to Christopher Marlowe:

It's All So Brief

I've got to give up
Books, checks, letters
File cabinets, apartment
pillows, bodies and skin
even the ache in my skin.

September 14, 1984
(p. 57, White Shroud)

echoing, say,
that searing final line of loss
in Olson's Maximus Poems:

My wife my car my color and myself

Part XXVIII

A TRIP TO CHINA

We left our tracing of the great bard's life
with the completion of 88 pages of notes
for his Collected Poems

which now Harper & Row
was taking to galleys
corrections, design
& ink
& the great bard was not the sort
to wait around
eating his nails.

In October he traveled to China
with a delegation that included
Gary & Masa Snyder, Francine du Plessix Grey,
Harrison Salisbury, William Least Heat-Moon, Toni Morrison,
Maxine Hong Kingston, William Gass
for the American Academy of Arts & Letters

A.G. prepared himself by studying
the '66-'76 Cultural Revolution in China

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& learned that
“I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness”
meant to the Chinese those wrecked
by the Cultural Revolution

Gary Snyder
moved by the visit to Cold Mountain temple
where Han Shan had lived
Gave the monk there his '58 translations
of the Cold Mountain Poems
and wrote some verse on the spot
“At Maple Bridge”

As for Allen, he was shock-miffed
at the rather puritanical Chinese culture
& made sure he talked aplenty
on sex & politics & personal freedom
He had a gig to file reports on China
to UPI

From Shanghai on Dec. 14
he sent me a packed postcard:
“The Cultural Revolution here 1966-74 was like worst
elements of U.S. right and 'left' takeover, bookburning,
gangs of street kids with spears going downtown to torment
old bearded scholars, etc. New Economics '4 Modernizations'
now really interesting “open door” of Mind too. Students shy,
eager, virginal, good English, a few able to talk frankly private
thoughts.

Been down Yangtze Gorges on 3 day boat- & various cities,
teaching. Now on weekend vacation rainy train Shanghai to
Nanching, travel with postgraduate English student translator
interpreter whose wife had baby last week- mist & smog,
marvellous small scale farming fields along the R.R. line, heavy
industry, umbrellas, cranes, orange buses, beehives along the
road.

Mental open door limited by Party rigidity, karma of past
crimes, official figure 20,000,000 'bad elements' sent to work
camps country or killed 1957-1976. Merry Xmas Happy
Hanukah New York to Miriam & Didi-
Allen Ginsberg.”

1985

In January

the photo show, called "Hideous Human Angels"
 at the Holly Solomon Gallery
 was a fiscal success
 & another strollway opened wide
 in the Forest Ginsberg

I count 47
 photo shows
 all o'er th' world
 'tween '85 & '96

February 2

Harper & Row published
 Collected Poems 1947-1980

It was one of the best selling books of verse
 in the history of western civilization

& the reviews flowed forth—

It upset Gary Snyder
 that the Collected Poems
 was snubbed by the official culture

didn't get the awards it was due
 He mentioned the Pulitzer
 & the National Book Award

I could guess why

What Kenneth Rexroth called "The light from Plymouth Rock"
 still beams mightily
 o'er what used to be called squaresville—
 There were too many hard cocks
 trails of semen
 & attacks on the military-
 industrial surrealists
 to win corporate sponsorship

•

HARRY SMITH: HOUSEGUEST

'85 was the year the artist/filmmaker/magician
 Harry Smith
 came over to visit
 –a car backed into him & fractured his knee–
 he was homeless
 & stayed about a year in the bard's guest room

“Harry Smith painter, filmmaker, sound archivist
 & occult bibliophile, roommate for bulk of year”
 is how the bard described it in
 his biographic précis

The bard had always attracted the verbally combative
 such as Kerouac, Lucien Carr, Barbara Rubin, Burroughs,
 Corso–
 some of the sharpest tongues in a
 sharp-tongued time

& now Harry
 One part of his brain a brilliant creator
 One part a ruthless destroyer
 capable of even gutting his own work
 & a wit as pointy as a laser knife

It wore on Allen
 though one of his finest photographs
 (the first on his new large-neg Rolleiflex)
 had been taken of Harry not long before
 in Harry's tiny room at the Breslin Hotel
 pouring some milk.

When Bob Dylan came over for a visit
 Harry refused to get up
 and chat with the singer.

Dylan (and much of his generation)
 had been impacted by
 Harry's famous Folkways collection
 Anthology of American Folk Music

Allen's psychiatrist finally
 suggested that

because he was raising the Ginzap's blood pressure

•

SUMMER OF '85
Naropa in Boulder

There was a symposium with William Burroughs & Norman Mailer
on the subject

“The Soul: Is There one, What Is It, & What's Happening
to It?”

I recalled a dinner

at Burroughs' bunker on the Bowery
on Valentine's night '74:

He was talking about the Soul
how out-of-body sex was possible
like John Donne's
floating lovers
& how he also believed that
souls crisp up and die
at 10,000 degrees
& that was America's great sin:
it was the nation that first murdered souls.

•

November-December 1985 the bard went to Moscow
with a writers delegation
from the American Academy of Arts & Letters

There's an eery snapshot by the bard of
writer Louis Auchincloss
standing next to Dostoevsky's writing desk
at the Dostoevsky Museum
in Leningrad
(in 'Zap's 1991 photo book from Twelvetrees Press)

It was just before Glasnost
and the bard complained of political and erotic censorship
whereupon a bureaucrat with the Moscow Writers Union said
“Henry Miller will never be published in the Soviet Union.”

1986

The bard became Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College
replacing John Ashbery

who was in the second year of
his MacArthur Fellowship

Ashbery had invited Allen to B.C. a couple of times
& had been impressed with Allen's teaching at Naropa
and so recommended him for the gig.

It was a good choice.

Ginsberg began at something like \$60k
(it advanced to \$85k during
his years there)

& later also taught at the CCNY graduate school
on West 42nd

Freed from his administrative duties at Naropa
the bard tossed himself into his new gig
with an überworkaholic dedication

–with the same

high metabolism, guilt & need for bardic laurels–

–working too hard

when sleep was required

tired eyes like bruised apples–

that he gave to his photos

his diaries

his politics

his love life

his search for verse

THE NICARAGUA STATEMENT

At the PEN International Conference in NYC
he drafted, with Arthur Miller and Günter Grass
what he called a
“controversial widely-endorsed delegates’
statement against American
intervention in Nicaragua”

and he went for the second time
to the Rubén Darío Poetry Festival
in Nicaragua

We have noted now & then on the bard's
complex relationships with Cultures:

Italy England France Germany Scandinavia
Russia Eastern Europe: Poland, Czech. & Hungary
China & of course India

In each place
he had pals
and passions


For instance, India
Indira Gandhi had been at the Royal Albert Hall in '65
when Ginsberg read
Also there was a woman named Pupil Jayakar,
a close friend of Gandhi's
Around 1985 A.G. was contacted
by Pupil Jayakar, then the Indian minister of culture
who wanted the bard to organize a poetry reading
as part of a two-year Festival of India

Allen accepted the task
but basically handed the project
over to Bob Rosenthal

who recalled, "Allen suggested a pan India festival with tribal
dancers, Vedic chanters, Baul poets Dalit (untouchable) poets"
as well as several poet friends from Calcutta

This was under the umbrella of A.G.'s
Committee on Poetry

Part of it was a Festival of Poets in Bhopal
and Rosenthal worked with the Indian gov't
"and got together a tour in the USA which included bilingual
readings at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC hosted by Lita Hornick,
UCLA, Santa Fe and maybe Chicago."

Another example of
the vast s of the Zap.

60 YEARS ON EARTH

There was a
 Festschrift: Best Minds: A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg,
 edited by Bill Morgan and Bob Rosenthal
 with glory-zings from the likes of
 Cage, Creeley & other best minds.

He wrote a foreword to John Wieners' Selected Poems: 1958-1994
 for Black Sparrow Press

•

White Shroud: Poems 1980-1985 out from
 Harper & Row

with some of his finest verse
 including the title poem

Out too that year the interesting
 Howl Annotated
 edited by Barry Miles
 from Harper & Row

It was modeled on the Waste Land facsimile book
 & featured scans of the original
 typed manuscript of Part I
 with numerous hand corrections

and then also facsimiles
 of four subsequent drafts
 with their many alterations

& then 18 typed drafts
 of Part II ("What sphinx of cement & aluminum.....")

& then various version of Part III
 ("Carl Solomon, I'm with you in Rockland")

& also various versions of the "Footnote to Howl,"
 ("Holy! Holy! Holy!")
 some of which I thought were
 a little better than the Footnote the
 Bard finally chose

•

There was a “Howl” 30th anniversary panel
& Gala Reading at the MLA convention
in NYC

SUMMER OF 1986

A man of means in Texas named Michael Minzer
wanted to finance a CD project starring Ginsberg

He'd already produced a recording in Dallas
of “Airplane Blues” and Blake’s “Nurses Song”

Minzer met that summer with young Hal Willner
who'd been music coordinator for NBC's “Saturday Night Live”
since '81
Willner was renowned for his “multi-artist tribute productions”
and asked Hal to produce the Ginzap

Willner has a tendency, going into such a project,
to project a maddening vagueness
as to particulars & methodology
but he is famous in the music world
for knitting fine art from Chaos.

Allen was skeptical for months
–he was as scorched as Samuel Beckett's toast from
being burned down by Columbia Records
& from all the offers
o'er the years
that had wound up as
dried foam
on the failure bucket.

•

MACEDONIA

The 'Zap was invited to Lake Ohrid in Macedonia
to the Struga Festival
to receive their annual award
a laurel wreath of gold

Steve Taylor composed his remarkable string quartet piece
to "White Shroud"
& it was premiered August 25 in a cathedral
with the Pro Arte Quartet
under the ikon painting of the black Madonna
on the inside of the dome

On this tour the 'Zap also went to Budapest
& and also some benefits for Solidarity
in Krakow & Warsaw

Part XXIX

1987

Peter & Allen's year of planned separation ended
Peter wanted A.G. to sell his archives
& move with Peter to
Chögyam Trungpa's Buddhist center in Nova Scotia
and bring there also Peter's sister, brothers & mother

Meanwhile Trungpa
was gravely ill
He'd been in and out of a coma
for a number of months

from too many Bacchus vines
on the Vajra

•

This was the year the Bard tried to
"slow down"
Of course perhaps his own metabolism
was signaling the braking
He had now passed over the festschrift
year

Why are some writers so Driven?
I think of the frantic eyes
of Dickens & Dostoevsky

& Ginsberg

“my queer shoulder at the wheel”

always groaning

o'er all the work

that teemed on his desk

APRIL 4

Trungpa passed away of heart failure on April 4

His body was embalmed in salt

and placed in a meditation position

in an upright closed box of wood

at the Karmê Chöling center

in the Green Mountains of Vermont

& carried in a procession

to a two-story brick stupa

in a meadow

and there atop it

the leader was cremated

with thousands assembled.

The bard was once again seeing flames

& smoke

eat love.

“Universe is Person,”

the bard once wrote.

“Mind is outer space,”

he also wrote.

“Candor ends paranoia,”

a sentence for the Path

•

BAD BLOOD

May 9

There was a three day symposium

at St. Mark's Church
to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Poetry Project
with readings and panels

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I'd ended the reading on Saturday night
with my "Yiddish Speaking Socialists of the Lower East Side"
sliding my hands into the gloves of the Pulse Lyre
to forge sweet tones
beneath those socialist days

A bunch of us went out afterward to the Taj Restaurant
on East 6th
(Ed Dorn, Alice Notley, Ginsberg, Jerry Rothenberg,
Anselm Hollo, Bob Rosenthal, Anne Waldman
& others)

I was feeling upbeat rather than beat-up
I showed everybody the plastic handcuffs
I'd kept as a souvenir
from the sit-in a few days before
at the CIA in Langley.

Allen sat across from me &
mentioned John Clellon Holmes
locked on the path of mouth cancer
how he'd had his jaw, his
tongue & part of his throat removed—
it will give him an extra year, he said,
to write more, & wind up
his affairs

& then we were talking about
cyclical vengeance

He said there was speculation that the MOSSAD was behind
the murders of Indira Gandhi & and Anwar el-Sadat
to block peace
(Gandhi had been at A.G.'s reading at Royal Albert Hall in '65)

He'd thought it was paranoia
till he brought it up with William Burroughs
who thought it not at all impossible

"It's a terrible problem," he said,
"Bad blood"

& then the bard who was famous for being able to chant verse
by the hour

who knew poems like "Lycidas" by heart
then recited some lines

from Yeats' "Meditations in Time of Civil War":

"Vengeance upon the murderers,' the cry goes up,
'Vengeance for Jacques Molay,' In cloud-pale rages, or in lace,
The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,
Trooper belaboring trooper, biting at arm or at face,
Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide
For the embrace of nothing: and I, my wits astray
Because of all that senseless tumult, all but cried
For vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay."

Bad Blood Bad Blood
Born in the Time-Flood

•

SUMMER OF '87

Allen was pulling his text-dappled oar
on his teeming Boat of Books
at the Naropa summer session

They had invited Marianne Faithfull to teach
Her CD "Strange Weather," produced by Hal Willner
had just come out
and it was impressive—

she had a thick-woven, true-toned voice
you liked to hear.
Faithfull played her CD for the bard
& Allen gave her some cassettes of his tunes in exchange

She listened
& then made a lawyerly pronouncement
"Maybe you shouldn't sing"

The message was don't sing please don't sing
but you're a great reciter of
your great American lines

That settled it. Allen decided to work with Willner
on a spoken verse/music project

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in the hugely cool tradition of

Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth
& the Kerouac/Steve Allen session

Allen went back to New York
after the close of Naropa's season.

The bard, Willner, and exec. producer Minzer
chose 80 poems
which A.G. read one night at his pad on East 12th

Everybody listened to the tapes
& the 80 was winnowed to 50.
Willner has very extensive contacts
among the better musicians and composers
He contacted about 12 of them &
invited them to A&R studio in NYC to hear AG read his verse

AG rerecorded the selections for six hours, then
poems were assigned to composers such as
Gary Windo, Steve Swallow, Mark Bingham, Arto Lindsay,
Marc Ribot, G.E. Smith, Lenny Pickett, Bill Frissell, et al.

They created music to swoop around the words
17 pieces
that flowed across the AG bardic passion-zone
from tender family memories to rougher modes
–from “Aunt Rose” to “Shrouded Stranger” to “Kral Majales”
to the spank-me ditty, “C'Mon Jack”

After a week in the studio
A.G. performed with some of the musicians
at the Bottom Line in NYC
on August 21

as part of a Fugs reunion
in honor of the 20th anniversary of the
Summer of Love

Peter Orlovsky was there.
During one of our tunes
he started screaming “Lydia! Lydia!”
in a soprano voice
over and over

enraging some of the audience
 & then security guys
 carried him away
 eyes widened
 & legs spread wide

(The sessions and mixing for Allen's project
 continued into the next year
 -Chris Blackwell and Kim Buie of Island liked the project
 & voted to release The Lion for Real)

•

There was a festival inspired by the presence of
 William Burroughs in Lawrence, Kansas
 in August of '87
 called the River City Reunion

A.G. had an exhibition of his photos at Lawrence
 & gave a beautiful reading of
 “Howl”

Much of the audience could follow it
 with pursing lips
 or memory-flashes
 as if listening
 to great music long familiar

Allen had suggested that Hal Willner
 produce a CD of Burroughs

so Willner visited Burroughs at his house
 to begin the CD project known as Dead City Radio

Another project brought into place by the
 bard of howl.

•

There's a general bardic rule
 that says that a poet
 should never declare herself
 a deity

yet on October 31

A.G. tossed off a brief poem called "Proclamation"
which began

I am the King of the Universe
I am the Messiah with a new dispensation

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It was the mindset of
wanting to stroll naked through
Cambridge in 1962
after his first psilocybin with Leary

or, say, 1948, when he crawled out on
the fire escape in Harlem
to startle the neighbors with
"I've seen God!"

•

PEACE NOW '88

Early in the year called '88
he flew to Israel
to teach a course called Photographic Poetics
with Robert Frank
at the Camera Obscura School in Tel Aviv

While there in Tel Aviv
he took part in a huge Peace Now demonstration
against the bad treatment of Palestinians
in occupied territories

He read his 1974 poem "Jaweh & Allah Battle"
before a crowd of 60,000
(one of his best political poems,
ranking, say, with the 1980 eco-chant "Homework"
"Jaweh & Allah Battle" was
later set by Philip Glass as part of Hydrogen Jukebox)

Back in New York
the bard began attending weekly meetings
with around 100 Jewish writers/artists
(among them, Norman Mailer, Kate Millett, Susan Sontag, Erica Jong,
& Roy Lichtenstein)
to forge a stand on the treatment of Palestinians

AG arranged to have the PEN center come out against

Part XXX

An Opera with Glass

The opera Hydrogen Jukebox began calmly enough
when Philip Glass ran into A.G.

in the St. Mark's Bookshop

and asked the bard if he'd perform with him
at a benefit for the Vietnam Veterans Theater
at the Schubert Theater

Allen took down from the store shelf
The Fall of America

and showed Glass "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

The performance went well
and there were meetings at
Ginsberg's apt to plan a grand collaboration

Work began in earnest in the fall of 1988
with neither Glass nor Ginzap
impressed with the

wormwoody proposals of Dukakis or Reagan
in the struggle for the Presidency

They selected a trail of verse
as a descant on the real America
and its real future—

Did the bard chant accurately
when he named one of his books
The Fall of America ?

Glass and Ginsberg selected sections & slivers
"Iron Horse," the beautiful "To Aunt Rose"

Peter O's 29th birthday poem from Calcutta '62,
"Wichita Vortex Sutra"

"Going to Chicago"

"The Green Automobile"

"Cabin in the Woods"

and the 1974

“Jahweh and Allah Battle”

175

fresh in mind from chanting it in Tel Aviv.

the Moloch section of “Howl”

& sections from the “National Security Agency Dope Calypso”
intermingled with his poem “Violence”

& ending with the

po/tune he composed on the plane
coming back from Boulder after father Louis passed:
“Father Death Blues”

(The American Music Theater in Philadelphia

sponsored perf’s in the spring of 1990

w/ the world premieres at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston,
SC & Spoleto, Italy in June 1990)

The opera featured six singers, a small ensemble of keys,
winds & percussion, with Martin Goldray directing

•

In ’88 there was another opera

based on the bard’s works

at th’ Hamburg State Opera House

titled “Cosmopolitan Greetings”

with Robert Wilson directing & music by George Gruntz

•

A tour of Japan next

with readings,

plus an anti-nuke rally in Osaka

& benefits at Seika & Kyoto Universities

with his friend the poet Nanao Sasaki

“to protect Okinawan Shiraho Blue Coral Reef.”

•

JUNE 25, 1988

Lowell, Massachusetts began to
celebrate its hometown boy

In late June they dedicated the
 Kerouac Commemorative Park
 with 15 passages from Kerouac
 cut upon 8 three-sided granite columns
 more or less dolmen'd
 into the array of a mandala

•

Harry Smith

Harry could be like a lasery sandbur
 but had a gentle fraction inside
 that brought him intense friendships
 especially with women

Miriam would talk with Harry for hours on the phone
 over the years

so A.G. arranged for Harry
 to live at Naropa as a kind of
 “Shaman-in-Residence”

He had a cottage on campus
 which became a kind of Seekers' Abode
 an Adytum
 where he collected things, made hundreds of tape recordings
 from '88 to '91

(After Harry passed away it
 became the Naropa hand-set print shop.

–A.G. had first met Harry in the '50s at the Five Spot
 at a Thelonius Monk gig. Harry was taking notes on
 Monk's syncopation. Harry brought Allen to his pad
 and rolled some of his movies. Later A.G. took a reel
 to Jonas Mekas, thus introducing Harry
 to the prime instigator of the
 underground movie movement)

•

The 'Zap delivered
 the Charles Olson Memorial lectures
 at SUNY Buffalo

Meanwhile his photo career was in full careen, with
shows in Tokyo, Krakow, Warsaw, Tübingen, Whistler House in Lowell,
Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Vision Gallery in Boston, & Tilton Gallery
in NYC

•

The end of the century saw the
kudzuing of ghastly right wing think tanks
& foundations
well funded & weird

In October o' '88
the right-winger's right-winger, Senator Jesse Helms,
with the help of the Heritage Foundation
vom'd forth a law which forced the F.C.C.
to enforce a 24-hour ban on "indecent" language
on all the nation's airwaves

The 'Zap realized "There goes Howl"
& so, again, rose to the protection

& in his own words "organized consortium P.E.N. American Center.
A.C.L.U. with Pacifica Radio to oppose F.C.C. censorship of arts broadcasting."

(The results? There were court decisions in 1993 which left in
place a ban on erotolalia from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., with freedom to
chant eros over the air from late in the evening till dawn.)

•

POE JOB PHOBIA

I spoke with the bard on 12-16-88
He was in the hospital
He seemed short of breath
The dr., he said, told him
he was healing like a young man

I was calling to ask him to
perform at place called the Kitchen in January
to protest the crackdown in Czechoslovakia
on the Plastic People band
and a cultural leader named

He said, "If I'm healthy, count me in."

He said he'd been reading a hostile biography of Bob Dylan
& we talked a bit about what I'd come to call the "Poe Job"
such as what Goldman had done to Lennon
The Poe Job of course goes all the way back to
Rev. Rufus Griswold's hate-bio of the Raven man

The bard was feeling a bit Poe'd himself
He'd read the manuscript of Barry Miles' biography
which was about to come out
and he felt Miles was harsh on his Buddhism
by which I guess he meant
the considerable space
Miles devoted to
the '75 stripping at Snowmass
& its literary aftermath.

1989

We gathered January 29 at the perf space called the Kitchen
on West 19th
to call upon the government of Czechoslovakia
to give total freedom of speech
to its artists and singers

There were many performers, including Eliot Sharp,
Vicki Stanbury & the Plastic People's own
Bratislav Brabenec
with his long-toned saxophone

Allen had healed enough to
read "Kral Majales"

and Steve Taylor & I sang my
"Incantation Against the Government of Czechoslovakia"
to the overflow crowd.

Not many months ahead:
the nonviolent rev in Czechoslovakia

•

The 'Zap was honored at a banquet Feb. 11
at the Associated Writing Program's Convention
in Philadelphia

The Fugs performed with the bard.
We wrote a melody to
his '55 masterwork
"The weight of the world is love."

& it still gives a thrill to listen to the tape of it
from that night
with 1,000 screaming writers & professors
at its close

At the end A.G. and the Fugs sang Blake's "Nursing Song"
with the sing-along final lines,
repeated o'er and o'er
"& All the Hills Echoéd"
to an ecstatic crooning auditorium

again a thrill to hear
over 10 years later
Allen's voice had all its fine bass qualities
that night
in key in control & reaching
his golden thread toward Blake

•

Barry Miles' 533 page biography Ginsberg
was published by Simon & Schuster

I liked its honesty
& how Miles was able
close as he was to the bard
to get to a critical distance

•

As for Allen, there was a further frenzy
of readings at schools & colleges

He kept up the flow of fund raisers

that year

180

I count at least 11 benefits

for WNYC, AIDS Prevention, Abbie Hoffman
Foundation, Lower East Side homesteaders, squatters,
Hanuman Books, Albert Hoffman Memorial Library in LA,
et alia

In addition he had some more photo exhibitions
in LA, Chi, Poland, Austria & Germany

and his fine spoken verse/music CD

The Lion for Real

by Great Jones/Island Records

produced by Hal Willner

(secret executive producer Michael Minzer)

•

In May he moved his office from his East 12th pad
to 2nd Avenue & 14th

subletting two rooms from the daughter
of Arlene Lee

(Lucien Carr's ex & Mardou Fox in K's Subterraneans. It was in torrid
eros with Arlene Lee in the '50s, A.G. once told me,
that his dong was perma-bent to the left)

Then a few months later

the office moved to 41 Union Square, th' 14th floor

probably the only poet
ever to have his own staff
& office in the former Great Zone
of the Left

•

In a more controversial area
he attended a NAMBLA convention in '89

Sometimes he complained to me he was being attacked
from the right for his love of youth

He was always extremely candid in matters of eros

"Candor ends paranoia"

he wrote in "Cosmopolitan Greetings"

but he would travel to colleges
 & give forth the message
 it was okay to make it with
 his legal-age students

& now and then I give a reading at a college
 where they still talk of the furor from
 A.G. erotic talk
 of decades ago

“I myself don’t
 like underage boys,” he once told The New York Times
 “But they have a right
 to talk about the
 age of consent.
 I see it as a free speech issue—
 a discussion of the law.”

•

The bard helped get a three-year grant
 for Harry Smith
 from the Grateful Dead’s Rex Foundation

On December 2, Bush & Gorbachev
 announced the end of the Cold War

and on December 29
 the writer Vaclav Havel
 was elected the president of Czechoslovakia

Part XXXI

1990

In March A.G. came to the Zen Center
 near Woodstock
 with Anne Waldman.
 He recited the libretto of Hydrogen Jukebox

Later we chatted
 He told me that Burroughs
 sold \$180k of his shotgun-paint-tube-splatter
 on-plywood/collage paintings last year

He'd taken up art after his trilogy
 Cities of the Red Night
 The Place of Dead Roads
 & The Western Lands

Burroughs gets up, Allen said, smokes a j
 takes his methadone,
 writes till 4 p.m.
 then dinner & a few drinks, then zzz

"And he's healthy!"
 the bard said with a cackle,
 comparing W.B. to himself
 crunched with high blood pressure,
 gout, diabetes, et al.

PRAGUE

That spring Allen organized a visit to Prague
 to celebrate the warless revolution

He'd not been back since
 being tossed in '65

This time he was received by the Lord Mayor Mr. Koran
 & President Vaclav Havel

and re-laureled as King of the May once again!
 and toured various colleges
 reading & lecturing

•

Hydrogen Jukebox premiered
 with Philip Glass
 at the Spoleto Festivals
 in Charleston, SC & Spoleto, Italy

I spoke with him when he returned
 & he mentioned how he dug being called Maestro
 at opera houses

•

The 'Zap was an American delegate

And what was probably the first lecture by a major poet
in the history of Western Civilization:

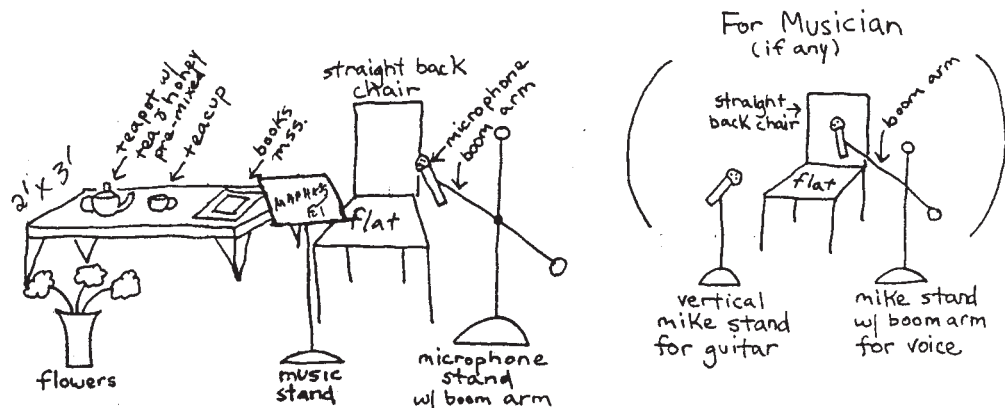
“ Chemical Substances & Poetics,”
at the Albany College of Pharmacy
in Albany, NY

•

A GOOD SYSTEM FOR BARDING AROUND

In his final years
the bard had the same stage setup
wherever he read

A sketch of the stage was included in a rider
to his contracts:



The flowers on the lower left were to be,
in the bard's words, "a modest bunch of flowers, preferably
non-florist, local weeds or garden growth."

His rider also called for a pot of chamomile tea and honey
"already pre-mixed to save mess of honey on mss. and audience time."

1991

Around the time of the Gulf War's
inception of spent uranium-shell bombardment

Ginzap was a guest lecturer for a week

There's a fine photo by Gordon Ball
showing cadets in grey uniforms
reading "Howl"
one with his long thin fingers
wrapped up over his short-shorn hair

Oddly it was America's poets who sensed
the underlying
sham of Desert Storm
& Allen joined Poets Against the Gulf War

•

There was a MLA Special Session on "Kaddish"
with Gordon Ball and Helen Vendler
in San Francisco

and the book Allen Ginsberg Photographs
from Twelvetrees Press in Santa Monica

MORE SCURRY HURRY FLURRY OF '91

- Master Class at the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, Long Island, NY
- Symposium on Tiananmen Square with Feng Lizhi at the New York Academy of Sciences
- Keynote Speaker, Buddhist Psychology Conference, at th' Karma Triyana Monastery in Woodstock, NY
- Symposium with Lewis Hyde, "Art & Politics." at Kenyon College, Ohio
- Great Falls Preservation and Development Corporation 200th Anniversary,
Paterson, NJ
- Reading Jack Kerouac's Dharma Bums & Jacob Rabinowitz's Translations of Catullus for Spring Audio Cassettes
- Harriet Monroe Poetry Award at the University of Chicago

TOUCHING THE COOLING NOGGIN

There was a party for the Portable Beat Reader
 at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church
 February 5

Joyce Johnson, Hettie Jones, Ann Charters, Peter O.,
 Herbert Huncke, Allen and I read

It was a fine, unsentimental evening
 & afterwards Miriam & I, Ann Charters & A.G.
 had a late dinner at
 Kiev on 2nd Ave. & 7th.

He mentioned how he had helped Jan Kerouac
 sue for a share in Jack's estate
 She now got 50%, he said.

•

In Paris the French minister of culture, Jacques Lang
 presented the bard with the
 Chevalier de l'Ordre des Artes et des Lettres

& he was also elected
 fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences
 in Boston

NODDING AT NAROPA

I taught a course at Naropa that summer
 on setting up multi-decade information systems
 to assist in the long-term writing of verse.

Our apartment
 was next to A.G.'s

which gave us the first evidence
 of the bard's declining health

I was distressed at his condition
 He could be seen sleeping at readings
 He had severe diabetes
 & at dinner parties
 he would excuse himself
 to rush back to his apt
 to shoot up his insulin

& was restricted to a stringent macrobiotic diet

yet noddy as he seemed
 his legendary metabolism
 kept foaming through
 to give us a sense
 “This Bard is Forever.”

•

That October
 Michael Schumacher’s 769 page
 biography of Ginsberg, called Dharma Lion
 was published by St. Martin’s Press

(Dharma Lion, read in conjunction with
 Barry Miles’ Ginsberg
 together give a hologrammatic
 view of the bard
 from birth up into the late 1980s)

•

Brooklyn College
 & CUNY Graduate Center:
 Walt Whitman Centenary Celebrations

(For a brilliant Ginsberg presentation on Whitman
 read his essay “Taking a Walk Through Leaves of Grass”
 in A.G.’s Deliberate Prose, Selected Essays
 from HarperCollins, 2000

Part XXXII

1993

A newspaper, Long Island Newsday
 asked the bard to compose a poem for
 the upcoming occasion
 of Bill Clinton’s inauguration

so, after consulting friends, the bard put together his
 “New Democracy Wish List” on January 17

perhaps as a kind of response to Maya Angelou's
poem at the inauguration

It had many good points
which Clinton mostly ignored
(the bard sent him a copy)

•

February 28
the bard called with the ghastly word
that Carl Solomon
had passed away that morning
from lung cancer

•

& a few days later, March 2
the World Trade Center bombing
–fundamentalism cursing the American city

•

March 26 I went to his apartment
and filmed the bard reading his
“New Democracy Wish List”

It was a fine slice of his '93 life
because while we were running tape
various pals called the bard,
Phil Whalen, Gary Snyder,
and ex-governor Jerry Brown
who wanted A.G. to write a pamphlet
for a series he was starting

•

Around this time he began Buddhist retreats
with (and benefits for)
Gelek Rinpoche of
Jewel Heart in Ann Arbor

plus annual benefits for Tibet House
with Laurie Anderson

•

The bard went to his 50th high school class reunion
at Eastside H.S. in NJ

•

SOLOMON

“ah Carl.... now you’re really in the total animal soup of time–”
“Howl”

I always admired Solomon’s
good-hearted, very aware Lonerism
& I was surprised
that no one seemed to be giving him a public memorial
to I called Ed Friedman at the St. Mark’s Church
and Allen too of course

and helped organize the one
which was held at the Church on June 16

That day I bused to NYC from Woodstock
and visited Allen’s office on Union Square

He had just come from a dr.’s appointment
I was surprised at how much of the office was devoted
to his photos! There was a shot of a very beautiful
Joanne Kyger from 1963
 & a young Harry Smith that looked
 just a tad like
 d.a. levy of Cleveland.

The bard gave me a big piece of kombu energy seaweed–
very expensive he said, from a rich friend
He cracked off about a square foot– you chew it
 for proper bardic metabolism

Also a copy of Louis Ginsberg’s collected works
& Solomon’s final big book

The bard through the 33 years of crossed paths

always loaded me down with books, CDs,
clippings, manifestoes & urgings

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The highlight for me at the Solomon memorial
was singing harmony with Allen on the
Prajnaparamita Sutra
while playing my 3-stringed Strum Stick

Ted Morgan, Ann Charters & others spoke
then Gregory Corso
read a fresh poem written in big scrawls
on a crumpled & folded paper.

The bard closed the night with “Howl”
He started slowly, then built it up in a
rhapsodic, rapturous way
He later said he given it an “operatic rendition.”

Allen had to split almost at once
because he’d promised to appear that night
at the opening of a club called Shaman.

•

That fall the 'Zap had a sabbatical from Brooklyn College
so in a horror vacui temporis
he filled in the gap
with a four-month tour of Europe

I saw him on September 5
just before he left
He had come to Woodstock for my musical drama Cassandra

He’d read a pamphlet on Bosnia by George Soros, the financier
who was spending some of his millions
promoting free trade & democracy
in Eastern Europe

Soros was alarmed at the rise of nationalism
“His point,” the bard said, “is that replacing the
Cold War mentality now
is a hypernationalism
that threatens the peace
not only of Europe
but of the whole world

and that's going to be the big plague of the future
and the cause of wars."

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He taught with Anne Waldman at the interesting
Schule für Dichtung in Vienna in September

and went to Budapest, Belgrade, Bydgoszcz, Krakow,
Lodz & Warsaw

Then traveled to premieres of
Jerry Aronson's "The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg"
in Paris, Berlin, Prague, Barcelona, Madrid, Córdoba,
and Athens
in a long ego-ribboning
line of praise & money-scoop

He performed in Berlin at a Jewish festival
& did a few tunes with the klezmer band, the Klezmatics.

In Athens he wrote one of his better hortatory poems,
"C'mon Pigs of Western Civilization Eat More Grease"
(in his final book Death & Fame)

He toured to Dublin
where he did what he called a "TV collaboration"
with a rock star named Bono
of the band called U2

At trek's end the bard visited Paul Bowles in Tangiers
& the spots
he had haunted with Peter Orlovsky
& Jack Kerouac
back in '57 & '61

Then it was back to the States in January
for a Vajrayogini Buddhist retreat with
Gelek Rinpoche in Michigan.

Gelek Rinpoche was Allen's Buddhist mentor
following the demise of Chögyam Trungpa.

•

Hydrogen Jukebox
which had been recorded in a studio in '92 and '93

1994

The CD Kronos Quartet H Howl USA
came out early in the year
On it the bard performed the poem to music
on a CD that contained a piece called “Cold War Suite”
with the voice of the great I.F. Stone!
On January 20 he performed “Howl” with the Quartet
at Carnegie Hall

Tikkun magazine honored
A.G. at its January 16-17 conference
“because of his important contribution
to progressive culture, and because of his unique
blending of Jewish particularism & universalism.”

•

NEW AMAZING GRACE

Since '92 I'd been collecting verses
from poets & composers
for The New Amazing Grace

The verses could be on any subject
and very secular
except that I wanted just a faint beam of
hope— like the “sunlight in the window”
in Naomi's final letter
in “Kaddish”

NPR had picked up my quest and had broadcast a piece
on it
so that a big influx of submissions had come in from
ministers in the heartland & regular folk, but

I was having trouble getting New Amazing Grace verses
from some of my bards

Pete Seeger was one of them
Finally I wrote him to the effect that I couldn't
believe that one of the greatest song writers

The guy who wrote “Turn, Turn, Turn,”
 & “Where Have All the Flowers Gone”
 & half of “If I Had a Hammer”

couldn't come up with
 a 4-line quatrain for NAG.

It worked. Seeger finally mailed his in on April 14

Burroughs, Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg were other holdouts
 though all ultimately came through

Allen called one evening in late January & said he had a verse
 and started singing it.

It was something like,
 “When you grow old
 you'll shit your pants.....”

I broke in, “No! No!”

I never would have thought I'd ever edit or censor
 my hero

but I mentioned that the NPR piece
 had brought in a rinse of submissions
 from Methodist ministers
 & the regular folk of radio land

(I had no idea he was having incontinence problems
 from his diabetes)

On March 14 he wrote:

“Re Amazing Grace– I've just
 not been able to do anything– or
 nothing's occurred to me– my head full
 of panic at unfinished CD Rhino notes now
 delaying release of the 4 CD's another
 2 months, my overload responsible–
 I'll still try–
 Love Allen”

I wasn't sure he even knew the melody and meter for
 “Amazing Grace”

so I sent him a note with the
 metrical structure:

U-U-U-U-
 U-U-U-
 U-U-U-U-
 U-U-U-

in 3/4 time

Two weeks later he called
 complaining that he'd been up all night

and sang me some very beautiful verses

After he'd finished

& I'd remarked how excellent they were, he asked
 "Do you know where I am now?"

"No."

"I'm on the toilet."

The verses arrived
 in the mail

a few days later:

Stamps for Amazing Grace

○ homeless hand on many a street
 Accept this change from me
 A friendly smile or word is sweet
 As fearless charity

Woe workman who hears the cry
 And cannot spare a dime
 Nor look into a homeless eye
 Afraid to give the time

So rich or poor no gold to talk
 A smile on your face
 The homeless poor where you may walk
 Receive amazing grace

I dreamed I dwelled in a homeless place
 Where I was lost alone
 Folk looked right through me into space
~~And~~ passed with eyes of stone

Alcubinsberg
 4/2/94

“Your last letter with ballad
meter (◡-◡-◡-◡-), helped clarify the
form.

Here’s 4 stanzas. The last
stanza could go first

Use 2, 3 or 4 of the stanzas
in any order you edit.

Thanks for the prompting &
persistence– but I lost a night’s
sleep working it over!

Love
Allen”

It was some of his
final finest verse.

MAY 8, 1994

I went to NYC to mc a panel at St. Mark’s
on Investigative Poetry
& once downtown I
called A.G. He was just getting up
after a party he’d thrown last night
for his Brooklyn College students

He’d been dreaming, he said,
as he awakened, about Olson’s poem
that begins “Mud & wattles” (#4 of “The Songs of Maximus”)

He dubbed for me a tape of Joyce reading from
Finnegan’s Wake
and Wilde reading “Ballad of the Reading Gaol.”

Then we went to the church
for the panel with Bernadette Mayer, Nourbese Philip,
David Henderson and A.G.

Then oodles of kids and poets to Ginsberg’s for dinner,
then back to the church for a poetry reading
Backstage Allen told me that

Jan Kerouac was going to hold a press conference
at the upcoming NYU Beat Festival
challenging Kerouac's mom's will

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A slice of a day in
the life of Allen

MAY 15, 1994

I spoke with the 'Zap
He told me that Johnny Depp
had paid Kerouac's estate \$50,000
for one of Jack's jackets

(I must have mis-heard him,
because I think it was only a mere \$15,000)

NYU BEAT FEST
May 17-22, 1994

Its formal name was "The Beat Generation
Legacy and Celebration"

It was the kind of conference
that the bard always
joyed to serve

in that it validated
all the frenzied years
of forging a generation

It was sponsored by the NYU School of Ed
Ann Charters and A.G. were the honorary chairs

•

One of the B.G. panels was titled
"The Legacy, Connections & Influences"
with myself, Doug Brinkley, Gordon Ball and others.

I was innocently sitting at the red-clothed dais
when Hunter Thompson arrived
in a curl-brimmed beige campaign hat
& a green shirt

and handed me a lit hash pipe
 in front of 8 or 900 people
 in packed Eisner & Lubin Auditorium

What could I do but
 flow some smoke
 from my distinguished writer pal?

•

They invited Jan Kerouac
 who chanted some work
 at Eisner & Lubin Auditorium one evening

She was screwed up physically at 42
 Was on dialysis I heard

& yet she read with great vitality
 & even chant-sang a poem
 to a rap track

and looked not that different from when she
 was a 14-year-old wild child on Avenue B
 in 1966.

MAY 19

There was a big reading at Town Hall on 43rd Street
 of the poets at the conference

Anne Waldman & I m.c.'d
 We called William Burroughs in
 Lawrence from a phone on the stage
 & he read a piece

Then later backstage
 based on what A.G. had told me
 I mentioned to Michael McClure
 that Johnny Depp
 had paid 50 grand
 to Kerouac's estate
 for one of
 Jack's jackets

Ferlinghetti was out on the mike

Corso & the Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky
were chatting nearby

Ray Manzarek & McClure were just
about to go out
to do their poems w/ piano

when McClure flipped me
his hard-analysis Dorian eye, & said
"I have five or six of those."

"So do I," I replied,
my mind shifting cunningly
from free will
to Goodwill
thinking, of course, that
Depp might need a
2nd coat for when
the 1st is in the cleaners
& a third for his summer home

A HOME FOR HIS ARCHIVES

Allen wanted his archives
to go to his alma mater

but the Atropos/Lachesis/Clotho trinity
had other plans

The archives had been brought to a sense of order
after years of work by Bill Morgan
(& also Jacqueline Gens)

A few years previously it had been appraised
in an item-by-item manner
by Bob Wilson of the Phoenix Bookshop

at over \$4 million
(and Bill Morgan told me Wilson
did not actually get through all the items)

It was a perilously lofty figure

In the end Columbia could not find the
resources to acquire the trove

It turned out that Stanford University
had money– there had been a hiring freeze on personnel
The library wanted to spend their \$
on one large expensive item.

A scholar named Steve Watson
was doing some research at Stanford
The librarians there thought Columbia
owned Allen's files
and when they were told otherwise
they called Bill Morgan

By now the bard had selected an unwobbling price
–a million dollars
(excluding A.G.'s massive photo archives)

Morgan negotiated back and forth for several weeks
with the bard's agent Andrew Wylie
handling some of the fine points

among which was the provision that the bard
would be given 2 week's free room & board
per year at Stanford
to visit his treasures

Key professors at Stanford, Marjorie Perloff in particular,
plus Gilbert Sorrentino and Diane Middlebrook
stepped forth to urge the purchase.

Part XXXIII

A CELEBRATION OF THE BARD AT NAROPA

They organized a celebration
of Allen that July at Naropa called
Beats & Other Rebel Angels: A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg
It was a huge one
& since there was a kind of
edge-of-frenzy

tap tap-ing at the edge of the Beat Generation anyway
there was Cannes-esque
flavor to the celebration

200

as Meredith Monk, Miguel Algarin, Joanne Kyger, Ferlinghetti,
Amiri Baraka, Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, Robert Creeley,
Gregory Corso, Philip Glass, Michael McClure, Francesco Clemente,
Raymond Foye, Anne Waldman, David Cope, Gary Snyder, Antler,
Andy Clausen, Ken Kesey
& a pleth' of Others
flew to the high air of Boulder.

They dedicated the Allen Ginsberg Library
July 3

My part included a lecture on July 5,
"The Ginsberg Method: How to Keep from Getting
Boxed-In in a Chaotic World."

7-8-94

I watched the great bard
read his "Sunflower Sutra"

& jotted in my notebook,

"How afire
this spire"

•

There were a series of national ads for the Gap clothing line
One featured Andy Warhol, another William Burroughs
and one with the text:

"Allen Ginsberg wore khakis"
for which the bard received \$20,000
which he donated to Naropa

He insisted that the ad state the Naropa donation
but it was printed in such small pointed type
that you needed a
magnifier to see it.

•

The bard did a book signing at Barnes & Noble in SF
which miffed Lawrence Ferlinghetti
because of the store-eating
aspect of big chains.

201

Out came, in the fall o' '94,
the 4-CD set from Rhino Records called
Holy Soul Jelly Roll Poems & Songs 1949-1993

& the 'Zap went forth on what they often call
a "whirlwind" tour
of signings & readings
to promote sales

ARRIVALS AT STANFORD

In September o' '94
The bard's papers began arriving at Stanford

174,601 items in around 500 boxes
all meticulously indexed w/

24,179 pp of manuscripts
18.9k of "Journals & Notebooks"
& 2,500 tape recordings

Hey o bright scribe of 2002,
want to write a 50,000-page
bio of a bard?

•

The fall of '94 saw a right-winger named Newt Gingrich
& a ghastly cohort of like-minded wing nuts
take over Congress
for the first time in 40 years
the Senate too fell to a form of right-winger
a bit more polite than Gingrich' sneer squad.

The bard had a fearful take
on the right-wingers froth-fingering
the throat of America
They boded no good
he felt

for freedom,
especially for gays

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and any who might fall into
the remarkable category of
“madman beat in time”

•

NEW AMAZING GRACE

I was barding around
& flew to New York from Milwaukee
then headed to Allen’s house on November 20
to get ready for the first performance
of the New Amazing Grace
a benefit for the Poetry Project & St. Mark’s Church

We practiced at the church during the day
–a remarkable gathering of top-rank gospel singers
plus musicians such
as Steve Taylor & Coby Batty

The audience was treated to a thrilling
hour and a half
of beautiful singing

The quatrains of Waldman, Rothenberg, Creeley,
Schickele, Seeger, Bly, Wakoski, Eshleman,
and about 75 others
soared to a sacred/secular zone
of great power

But it was when Allen Ginsberg walked upon the
stage among the singers
to soft-voice his four amazing quatrains
that the summit was found

The audience had been given copies of all the lyrics
and encouraged to sing along.
By the close of the evening
everyone was on their feet and trembling the walls

She was not allowed
 There were some exasperated words
 & apparently security guards escorted her out

Meanwhile a long banner was unfurled in the room
 "SAVE JACK'S PAPERS"

•

A group of poets calling themselves the Unbearables
 held some parody events
 –such as a Kerouac Impersonator contest–
 calling the \$120 per head NYU conference
 "The Beats Sell Out"

June 6 was a big night at Town Hall
 on 43rd Street off 6th Avenue called
 "An Evening With Jack Kerouac: Poetry and Prose with Music"

As I entered the Unbearables picket line was chanting
 "Where are the Fugs
 Now that we need them?"

A bunch of us read, focusing on Kerouac's writing
 Graham Parker, Odetta, Anne Waldman, myself, & others
 including Gregory Corso
 who wowed them
 by complying when the audience
 shouted for "Marriage"

Annie Leibovitz was posing us
 for Vanity Fair
 in the upstairs dressing room at Town Hall

I sat next to Allen
 who looked weak and sallow

He said he'd had a pulmonary embolism last week
 They'd done a chest X ray
 and it had blipped on the negative

of Kerouac's words
as Allen exited stage right
to his cab.

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•

The 'Zap made it to his photo exhibit "108 Images" at
the Venice Biennale on June 8
with Hiro Yamagata, a rich & famous Japanese artist
who was reported to be supporting Gregory Corso
with \$3,500 a month

The invitation to the Yamagata Venice exhibition
bore a color photo of a psychedelically painted
Rolls Royce convertible
with whitewalls
parked in an opulent yard

•

With the money from the
Stanford archives purchase
A.G. purchased and rehabbed
Claes Oldenburg's former loft
on East 13th near 1st Avenue
Larry Rivers also lived in the building

(Oddly enough they found the place
in an ad in the Times.
Rosenthal hired an architect
though the bard worked on the design
& the long loft was completely redone,
with separate offices & a guest room)

Allen told me that the monthly maintenance
was kept low
because a McDonald's
rented the ground floor
on the 14th Street side of the
building

There was a bit of jeering and sneering in the media
over the sale of his archives.

In an interview with The N.Y. Times

he said that his agent got 5%, the archivist Bill Morgan
 who slaved 13 years on the trove
 & set up the deal 10%
 plus a giant slice for taxes &
 “I was left with a third
 I bought the loft
 Now I’m back to square one.”

All of us wanted him to get into
 that building as quickly as possible

One night Miriam and I walked the bard
 up the three flights to his apartment on E. 12
 & it was a painful experience

He walked very very slowly
 pausing at each landing
 breathing heavily

I was reminded of how Chekhov
 in his final winter
 decided to stay in Moscow
 to be with his wife Olga Knipper
 but the flat was on the upper floor
 & it took the wrack-lunged doctor
 as much as a half hour
 to pause-puff up the steps

Miriam noticed how very yellow
 his skin seemed to be
 She thought, “Why are they taking so long fixing
 up that place so beautifully
 when it’s killing him
 to walk up the steps
 He’ll be dead before he gets to use it.”

diabetes
 gout
 high blood pressure
 liver prob’s
 congestive heart failure

-thock thock thock

DECEMBER 8
BEAT CULTURE AND THE NEW AMERICA
1950-1965

210

There was an interesting show on the Beat Generation
at the Whitney Museum
curated by Lisa Phillips
which opened on December 8

I bused down to the opening
It was a typically jittery NYC art crowd
as manic in '95
as it was in '65 or '55

I'd never seen so much well-turned-out black attire
There must have been several million dollars' worth
of fresh purchased noir!

A girl on a bench wearing wide black lipstick
in the Whitney lobby
was frantically wave-drying
her just-painted black fingernails
while a friend to her side in black sunglasses
was chatting on a cell phone
—an image of an image as Plato described in the
Allegory of the Cave.

Inside was a mighty flow of images!
Especially a glass topped case of
William Burroughs' cut-ups

& the manuscript of On the Road
in a shrine-case

DECEMBER 10
BEAT NIGHT AT THE WHITNEY

Then on Dec. 10th
there was a reading at the Whitney
A.G. with Steve Taylor, and myself with Steve, plus
David Amram, Michael McClure w/ Ray Manzarek
& actor Keir Dullea reading
Beat texts

Miriam and I were getting ready in Woodstock

when Allen called early in the morning with bronchitis
and asked for “Pavarotti’s” throat therapy

(A doctor friend of mine had helped restore
my voice before a Fugs reunion
–he’d gotten the method from from Pav’s dr.)

I read it to him:

1. Take lots of liquids
2. Squirt Vanceril down throat
every ten minutes
3. Don’t talk
4. Just before show time
spray Afrin down throat

Then you can fully
croon.
It works.

We drove to NYC
to 437 East 12th, the bard’s pad

where Steve & I rehearsed the Sappho poem
we’d sing in Greek at the Whitney

Allen was still weak.
Miriam didn’t see how he could possibly perform.
An accupuncturist & massagist were working on him

yet somehow by show time
the bard was ready–

(It was sometimes the same with Gregory Corso
–backstage you might think
he could never go on
yet, like a Kennedy, he’d spring up
and press his lips to the mike
in full bard vitality)

He performed the beautiful section
“Oh mother, what have I left out
Oh mother, what have I forgotten....”
from Kaddish

and the fine pol-song “Ballad of the Skeletons”
with Steve Taylor

It was in The Nation that week
Allen was less than pleased with the quality
of Calvin Trillin’s political poems
The Nation published

so that “Ballad of the Skeletons”
was his answer lick
(to use a guitarist’s term)
on what pol-poesy should be

in the tradition of his “Capitol Air”
“Hum Bomb” and “CIA Dope Calypso.”

(beginning around this time the bard,
working with poets Andy Clausen & Eliot Katz
began collecting pol-po’s [political poems]
from his friends
particularly on America’s rightward drift.
The pol-po’s were to be published in a
special section of The Nation)

The Whitney gave us a Town Car
for the trip back downtown
with Corso announcing he’d support Colin Powell for pres
& A.G. heading
to a Harry Smith celebration at St. Mark’s.
where they were rolling Harry’s ’53 3-D movie
called Number 6

& Miriam & I said good bye to
bard Corso & bard Ginsberg
and drove back to Woodstock

Part XXXIV

1996

If you look at the Raw List
of things he did
in the year before his

it's just about as complex
as Beat Frenzy '56

Ginsberg was determined to go the Thomas Hardy path:
to write great poetry as he geezered

•

In February he played at the annual
benefit for Tibet House at Carnegie Hall

In the audience was Danny Goldberg
then the president of Mercury Records
who had helped launch a spoken word label called Mouth Almighty
(headed by Bill Adler & Bob Holman)

Allen sang "Ballad of the Skeletons"
& Goldberg offered to release it on Mercury/Mouth Almighty

•

In March the 'Zap
collaborated with Ornette Coleman
in a "poetry/jazz telecast" from Paris

He toured with Philip Glass
in France & the Czech Republic
doing portions of Hydrogen Jukebox

& he scarfed further moolah from
Retentia, the Muse of the Retained Image
from a photo show in Milan

•

I called Allen's office on April 10
The bard was in Texas
and there was bad news
about his congestive heart condition
a very serious situation

How about his new loft?
It won't be ready for a few months,
I was told.

On April 13, I chatted with Allen
 He was back in his NY pad
 and seemed okay

I wanted some more info on his '77 lunch with
 CIA spook James Angleton
 (for 1968, A History in Verse)
 &, as always,
 he grabbed it out of his lobes
 with not a missed beat
 including some unfriendly remarks from the spy-sleaze
 on Martin King
 (that the great American was “nothing but a
 whoremaster and a hypocrite”).

•

More good news from Retentia in April
 the bard went down to D.C. for readings
 & a part in the National Portrait Gallery photo show
 “Rebel Poets & Painters of the 1950s”

In May there was the fine Illuminated Poems
 with illustrations by Eric Drooker
 from Four Walls/Eight Windows

BALLAD OF THE SK'S

May was the month they recorded “Ballad of the Skeletons”
 w/ Lenny Kaye producing
 Apparently they did a basic track and vocal
 with Lenny on bass and Marc Ribot on guitar
 David Mansfield on guitar
 The era of “mailing around the ADAT”
 for overdubs had long begun
 so they forwarded an ADAT (digital 8-track tape)
 to Philip Glass who laid down some piano

Then it was sent to Paul McCartney
 who put on a bunch of stuff
 including guitar, drums, an organ part & maracas

Mouth Almighty brought in Hal Willner

known for his miracle mixes
to work the faders, settings, pannings
and knobs

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“He took a little bit of bagginess out of the record”
said Bill Adler
o’ Mouth Almighty

•

Jan Kerouac died on June 7 at 44
in Albuquerque the day after her spleen was removed
She had been on dialysis since '91
the author of Baby Driver of '81
Trainsong of '88 & she'd been working on Parrot Fever
about her mother Joan Haverty

•

His usual bard-in-residence
for the summer session at Naropa
Then he spent ten days with Burroughs in Lawrence
taking pictures, and helping edit Burroughs' essay on
“Bureaucracy & Drugs”

In August
he read the Blake-thread “Sunflower Sutra”
to music by Philip Glass
& conducted by Yehudi Menuhin
at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center

•

On August 8 beat hero Herbert Huncke
respected writer of tales
passed away at 81
at Beth Israel in NYC

thock thock

•

In September the bard went on a
Buddhist retreat for ten days
with Gelek Rinpoche



On September 20 it was announced
that filmmaker Gus Van Sant
would direct a music video
for “Ballad of the Skeletons”

Then, again at the St. Mark’s Church on October 8
there was a musical party for the bard’s
Selected Poems 1948-1995
the release of “Ballad of the Skeletons”
& the thirtieth anniversary of the great Poetry Project

AN EVENING WITH
ALLEN GINSBERG
AT THE POETRY PROJECT

Mixed-up Time-Travel

celebrating the Poetry Project’s 30th Anniversary and
HarperCollins publication of *Allen Ginsberg’s Selected Poems 1947-1995*

READINGS & PERFORMANCES by Allen Ginsberg with Art Baron
Kim Deal Lenny Kaye Tuli Kupferberg Norm MacDonald
David Mansfield Lenny Pickett Colin Quinn Lee
Ranaldo Marc Ribot Stephan Sald Ed Sanders Steve
Shelley Steven Taylor Hal Willner Garro Yellin
MEMBERS OF THE JAZZ PASSENGERS & OTHER SPECIAL GUESTS

√ 8 PM Tuesday, October 8, 1996 St. Mark’s Church in-the-Bowery

We had a quorum so we could call ourselves the Fugs
& we began with the core of our vision
Wm. Blake’s “How Sweet I Roamed”
with the great David Mansfield on
mandolin!

I was surprised when the bard asked
Tuli, Steve & me
to include “River of Shit” in our set
so I composed some new words for the bridge
to fit the night

& performed it with
the all-star cats
some from Sonic Youth
& Saturday Night Live.

People

tend ne'er
 to speak
 in public
 of their rears or
 their daily
 visits to the
 porcelain vortex

but the bard who could
 write brilliant pol-po's
 and ruminative philosophical poems
 to limn the age

never let his audience
 forget the vortex.

& so the Fugs roared forth with "Wide Wide River"
 and the audience "caught fire" as they say
 and roared along with us.

•

I was beginning to notice a memorial quality
 in this string of salutes to the distinguished professor.

They seemed to me fueled by his obvious physical decline
 these fetes for the 'Zap
 in the '94-'95-'96 triad

They celebrated Chekhov
 at the opening of The Cherry Orchard
 in 1904

He could barely stand erect on stage
 rained upon with flowers
 and speeches of glorifications
 from actors, journalists & the heads
 of literary societies

as if he were already gone

•

He finally moved to his shiny new loft
in September o' '96

Peter would have the double apartment on East 12th
–he had originally been a cosigner of the lease
& so had legal claim under the
ever crumbling NYC rent control rules
–in place since the rent struggles of World War II.

•

One of his final poems was a salute to his
fast-voiced accompanist & arranger
since '76 Steve Taylor
now on the faculty at Naropa, and married to Judy Hussie

Generous as ever the bard
helped pay the maternity bills
for Steve & Judy's baby Eamonn
born 12-3-96

1997

In February as in recent years the bard performed
in an all-star Carnegie Hall benefit for Tibet House
with Philip Glass, Michael Stipe, Natalie Merchant
& Patti Smith.

THE MTV SPECIAL

In his elegant loft
appointed so well with light-hued wood
fresh shiny floors
& un-catabolized white on the walls
the hourglass
was doing what it does so well
& the fate shears
were staring at the bard-thread.

I stayed there overnight on February 13
I'd taken part in a CD project with a bunch of recording artists
to lay down poems of Edgar Allan Poe

(I set to music the sonnet “To Helen” & “The Haunted Palace”
from “The Fall of the House of Usher”
–I learned from the bard that Poe had been
one of his first inspirations)

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The CD was produced, as had been A.G.’s The Lion for Real
by Hal Willner & Michael Minzer
for Mouth Almighty Records

After the sessions I headed for the loft
on East 13th

At last enough wall space for his art collection
His records, books & CDs!

I was glad that the great Bard
had a pad with bowling alley bigness

Along a wall past his piano and a pump organ
was a spacious votivity zone–
a prayer rug & cushions
a cabinet & a table with candles
& Buddhist relics

beneath some tankas
whose meaning he could trace
with intricate tale
& Trungpa’s large “AH”
on the wall of peace, love,
acceptance, surrender.

He showed me his guest room
which sported a painting by Paul McCartney
& he took me into his bathroom
to marvel at his bidet!

The bathroom had its own window
which looked out onto the loft
toward the windows overlooking 14th street!

As weakened as he was
he told me he had a new boyfriend
and he was going to have his own
MTV Unplugged!

I slept on a long white leather-covered couch
he assured me he'd gotten from the Salvation Army

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The Bard's living room with Salvation Army couches

His bed was at the other end of the wide-hearted loft
The light stayed on by his distant bed
in his nighttime habit
of journals & verse

I heard the padding of slippers at 4 a.m.
through the high-vaulted loft
I looked up and agreed with Miriam
how yellow his face skin shone
as he passed in the hour-glass silence

When we awakened
he offered a fresh rhubarb tart & rice milk,
plus coffee & a hard boiled egg
for breakfast

Hal Willner came over
to talk about the A.G. MTV Special scheduled for July 20
Allen was about as excited as I'd ever seen him
He said Dylan had agreed to do it,
plus the hot young singer named Beck, and Philip Glass
& he thought McCartney
would come

He checked his blood, then shot up some insulin

He asked where he could get pump organs fixed
for even his little hand-held one from Benares was broken

I suggested doing a Net-search for pump organ sites
–Bob Rosenthal agreed

I mentioned the big victorian pump organ
with the nice bass sound I'd borrowed
back in '85 to write some arias
for an opera the Fugs were doing

I said we'd ship it from Woodstock
down to the loft
so that he or perhaps even Dylan, McCartney or Glass
could thunder-pump it for the Unplugged
(we did ship it a few days later)

He was going out to lunch with Bono of U2
Got dressed in his flower-tied finery
On the kitchen window sill
was a goblet of pennies
next to the Tarot card for Justice



Ten days passed
& the great bard was feeling ever more fatigued so on February 23
Bob Rosenthal accompanied him all weak & unsteady
on the shuttle to Boston to see his cardiologist

On the flight A.G. read a poem from the night before
called "Fame and Death"

beginning “When I die
I don’t care what happens to my body.....”

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It was then, in Boston I think, that his doctor
asked him to go off all his various medications
to try to focus on the cause
of the tiredness.

MARCH 4

The bard left his sickbed in Boston
to shuttle back to NYC
in order to see Steve Taylor & Judy Hussie
& new baby Eamonn
in from Colorado for a visit.
Aboard the plane
he write a little rhymed poem “A fellow named Steven”
(p. 73 in his final book, Death & Fame)

Part XXXV

March 15 Gary Snyder called Ginsberg
Bob Rosenthal answered
who told him the diabetes, the heart murmur
and various medications had joined
to make the bard very very disoriented
& fatigued

He called A.G. in the hospital
who told his old pal he’d been diagnosed
with a recurrence of hepatitis C
“from years ago in India or Mexico.
He was so medicated that he wasn’t able to
talk very clearly,”
Snyder later wrote.

•

When Allen was brought to Beth Israel
an emergency room doctor
handed him a poem
asking for suggestions

and the frail poet complied on the spot!
 made some notes on the page
 & the bard who wrote in Asclepiadeans
 improved the poem
 of the devotée of Asclepius

•

Of his final poems the most beautiful, to me
 is the simple yet complex
 four quatrain “Starry Rhymes”
 at 4:51 a.m. on March 23, ending

“Orion down
 North Star up
 Fiery leaves
 Begin to drop”

and then the next night
 in tightly rhymed couplets
 “Thirty State Bummers”
 his final political poem, a remarkable
 summation of the evil side
 of the American imperium
 it’s secret wars, support for killer dictators

with doublets such as
 “Richard Helms Angleton live
 we were lucky to survive”

We WERE lucky
 to survive these oppressionists

•

March 27 at 2:29 a.m. in the hospital
 “w/ dangerous hepatitis C” in the bard’s words
 he awakened from a dream
 that he’d had a baby

and there was a “glow of happiness next morn,
 warm glow of pleasure half the day”

•

He phoned the world
 in cordless profusion
 probably made 500 calls
 maybe more

A.G. called Gary late at night in Nevada City
 He'd just been diagnosed
 with the teminality
 He had two to five
 Gary said he'd come to NYC for a visit in a few weeks
 and the call sang to silence with A.G.'s sob

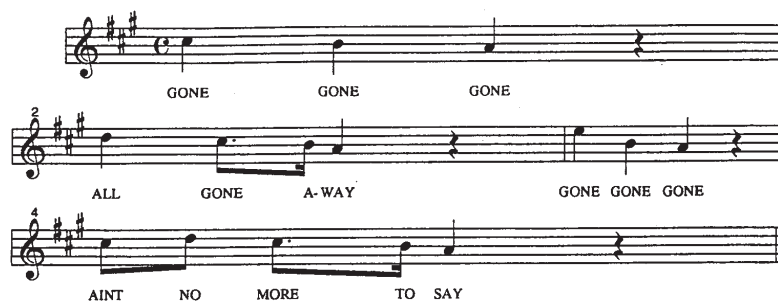
•

He called Steve Taylor in Boulder:
 "...the doctor came in and I said well what's the news
 and he said not good and I said cancer and he said yes. And I
 said any operation or remedy... and he said no... They gave me
 four to five months... But I've been weakening, I can tell,
 and I think maybe only one or two... I was amazed how calm I was...
 Some kind of equanimity- must have been all those years
 of Buddhist lectures, sitting...."

Taylor asked if he should fly to NYC before the Fugs went to Italy
 He said "No, carry on,"

 Taylor could visit after the tour, and
 maybe they could do some recording

Taylor asked if the bard had any new songs and he sang:



Steve Taylor sent us a note
 that Allen was in the hospital

Right away I called Allen's # in NYC
 & reached Peter Hale
 long time staff member

who sketched out the bitter truth:
 “He has liver cancer
 There are so many nodes there’s
 no way to pick it out–
 a liver transplant is out of the question

He’s making a lot of calls
 & writing furiously.”

•

How many phonecalls? Maybe a thousand?
 To Dylan, McCartney, boyfriends, girlfriends,
 relatives, writers
 & a long sad tearful call to Burroughs.

To Hal Willner he said
 “Sorry for not doing the Unplugged”
 He suggested Hal check out the 25 hours of
 tapes from the Knitting Factory in ’96

•

That afternoon, March 30, the bard called Woodstock
 & spoke with Miriam
 Peter Orlovsky, he said, was going to be his
 attendant

“He wouldn’t leave me alone
 if I were sick in bed, dying,
 grey-haired...he’d have pity on me,”
 the bard said long ago

and he recalled how carefully Peter had cared for
 his failing father Oleg back in ’82)

He assured Miriam he was not in pain
 He’d finished his book
 & he would be receiving guests at home.

He told her of the dream
 wherein he’d had a child
 and awakened very happy
 It was the day, he said, they’d
 given him the bad news

He asked how Miriam was
 & wanted to be remembered to our daughter Deirdre
 He said he wasn't afraid

She said, "We love you."
 He replied, "I know."

•

A few hours later
 when Miriam described the call from Allen
 I dialed him at the hospital
 He was having a meeting with Bob Rosenthal
 and couldn't talk long

He said he'd finished his book
 & was signing some photos

The perils of his illness, however,
 were not so great
 as to stop the
 famous pr instincts of the bard
 –he was afraid I was going
 to break the story of his
 terminal illness
 in the Woodstock Journal
 "Don't write about it in the Journal,"
 "Of course I won't," I replied.

"I'll send you a new poem," he said.

The bard with maybe a 25-page press list
 & the keenest sense of ink since Whitman
 wanted to coordinate one more release

"OK honey," he said
 "See you in a while
 Love you."

•

Among the calls were those to wealthy friends
 asking them to keep up their support,
 say to Naropa

“This is great!”
 he exclaimed to Bob Rosenthal
“I’m dying, & no one can
 say no!”

He was trying to reach George Soros
whose Christmas parties he attended
 to ask for help
but couldn’t get through.

Maybe the 'Zap could have gotten Mr. Soros
to fund the much-needed
 Golden Bard Retirement Home network!

Part XXXVI

They brought him home on Wednesday, April 2
 to the light-wood-hued
 loft with his books & paintings

& set up his final encampment

They placed a hospital bed near the
 white-bearded photo of Whitman
 on a white brick wall
 between two windows that looked
 upon 14th Street

•

There were plans to bring in portable
 recording equipment
and possibly try to do his MTV special
 from his resting place

Peter Orlovsky was there
helping him into his pajamas

It was around then, w/ Shelley Rosenthal’s help
that they made a mighty
fish head health stew on the stove

with all kinds of shellfish & restorative items
tossed aboard

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Wednesday night he listened to his final music
Ma Rainey's "See See Rider"
and they brought down a blues text
from his well-ordered walls
so he could sing along

•

Miriam & I were at the Woodstock Journal office
that night late
getting the paper out before we
flew off to Italy for Fugs reunions

so we missed a message from the bard. First a cough,
then a weak voice, "This is Allen Ginsberg. It's
Wednesday night, 10 or 10:30. I'm out of the hospital
and back home. I think the last time I talked to you
I was too tired to say much, but I'm home now.
So you call, you know, lunchtime 12:30 or 1:30."

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

The next day A.G. was fairly alert
coming up with instructions for the next few weeks
and settling in for a multi-month Hey Jude fade

He was on the phone with Nanda Pivano
from Italy, one of his finest translators,
when he started to throw up

Rosenthal told her he'd have to hang up
& the bard said he wanted to go to sleep.

He'd written a letter to Bill Clinton
which noted he was sending some poems
but he'd not gotten to choose them

•

That afternoon before we left for Newark International
I called but they said he was asleep

It must have been after that terrible moment
on the phone with Nanda Pivano.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 4

Night came and then morn
& both Bob Rosenthal & Bill Morgan were worried
came early to the loft

Peter was not there
He had gone out
and purchased a hot bicycle.

Bob went in to awaken the bard
to see what they should do
but he could not be roused

They even went so far as to give a pinch
but the genius so easy to be awake slept fast

They called the hospice doctor
who quickly came
& judged he'd suffered a stroke in the night
had just a few hours to live

The staff called the family
& his brother Eugene & family arrived
late in the morning

•

The Fugs were in Milan
but Steve Taylor called the loft to get filled in
We'd just returned to our hotel
from a rehearsal place
along a canal designed
by Leonardo da Vinci

when we heard about the stroke
Bill Morgan said that
the end was very near.

We shared a loaf of olive bread
then opened some liquor

and held our glasses high, clinked them,
“Here’s to the soul of Allen Ginsberg.”

230

TURN TURN TURN
(TROPÉ TROPÉ TROPÉ)

Voice to voice to voice
by e, by fax, by phone, by street-stop
the word spread worldly

& I heard there were satellite trucks
with their focusing dishes outside the building

The loft filled with friends
Old pals gathered in quiet grief

There were Peter Orlovsky, Rani Singh, Shelley Rosenthal
(& her and Bob’s two sons Aliah and Isaac)
Francesco and Alba Clemente
Philip Glass, Patti Smith and her daughter,
Oliver Ray, Andrew Wylie
Larry Rivers came down from his loft above
Roy Lichtenstein, Raymond Foye
Gregory Corso,
George & Anna Condo & many others

They went to sit beside him
hold his hand,
whisper a message,
kiss him, weep

•

Andrew Wylie later said
“I certainly worshiped him
I thought he was a great man
He had this amazing effect on me
I always felt good for a day and a half
after seeing him.”

Wylie put his words on an important
part of the bard:
the good feelings lasting days
from interactions

•

Gelek Rinpoche flew in from Michigan
 He and other monks
 chanted and prayed
 by the bard's extensive
 sitting zone & altar in the midroom.

•

Allen's cousin and doctor, Joel Gaidemak
 was on hand as was a hospice nurse
 to administer morphine

Two narrow tubes went up to his nose
 with oxygen

Joel lived upstate, and the bard over the years
 had "counted on his opinion a lot
 in medical matters"
 Bill Morgan later said

He was the kind of doctor, far too rare,
 who would actually explain things
 in bard-mind depth

•

Everybody was aware of the bard's
 photos of the dying Julian Beck & his uncle Abe Ginsberg
 so the delicate issue of photos arose
 A few went out to purchase cameras.

Corso wanted a picture with Allen
 He crouched by the death cot
 with his arm over the bard
 while someone took a snap
 with a toss-away Woolworth's camera

(Oddly too that evening all of Corso's books,
 signed over to the bard
 from all those years
 somehow vanished
 from the pad)

•

A friend who was there told me of one
 of the bard's young pals
 sitting on the death bed
 his back to Ginsberg
 laughing and chatting

•

At last the quiet grieving day departed.
 They sent out for food
 and late in the evening many left
 –his brother, weeping and
 saying good bye
 Gregory, others.

and then about 2 a.m.
 people sacked out here and there

•

It was said his face perked up
 toward the end
 how the stress-lines smoothed
 “I had never seen him so handsome,”
 wrote Rosebud Pettet
 in her careful
 memoir of those hours

•

The artist George Condo
 made some sketches
 for a painting
 which the bard had said was okay

•

Old friend Rosebud Pettet
 sat stroking his feet

the bard attired in a Jewel Heart T-shirt
 frailer and skinner than any had seen

but his face showed peace
 to Rosebud closely looking

His breathing slowing down to 20
 19, 18 per minute

And then at 2:40 a.m.
 Saturday morn
 4-5-97
 he seemed to try to sit up

and then his diamond brain ceased being served.

Thus left earth
 the bard called Allen Ginsberg
 whom so many of us loved

the Lion faced one
 in the long Egyptian boat
 no doubt getting
 as close to Osiris
 & the sun disk
 as he can

Buddha singing one
 on a blue Tara raft

Kaddish chanting one
 on a boat made of stone

Fun shouting one
 on a boat made of froth

Pain relieving one
 on a boat made of sighs

•

People were asked to give space
 & touch him not till
 certain prayers and inductions were performed.

His body was cordoned off for hours
 as Gelek Rinpoche & the lamas

-there was something about
waiting till his cheeks
had sunk in a certain way
plus I think they had to grant the bard some initiations
which he had not had a chance to receive

All through Saturday they sat and chanted
till finally Bob Rosenthal called the
midnight squad from the morgue
who zipped the phantom all skinny
in a body bag

Peter Orlovsky
at the bed's foot
hands pressed together
& bowing at the zip

Thus went back toward sunshine
the great bard Allen Ginsberg
O float on the wave just a bit more, bard flower

-Edward Sanders
March 1997-December 1999

Afterword

The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg

I did not plan to write a book on Allen Ginsberg, but rather an extended elegy, which I began at the time of his death in April of 1997 when for a while grief seemed to course without limit. I would be walking down the street and suddenly weep thinking about him. After a while, I decided that maybe silent mourning was the proper route, and decided to abandon the inch or so of notes I had made for the elegy.

In September of that year, I taught a course called "The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg" at the Schule für Dichtung in Vienna. To prepare, I created a fairly thick 3-ring notebook which included a history I put together of his life. In 1998 I decided to run some of that notebook in the Woodstock Journal. There was a favorable response from readers, so I kept publishing the notes, polishing them and adding new sections till it became obvious that a book was forming.

The life of Allen Ginsberg was very complicated, so *The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg* is really a kind of pathway through the Forest Ginsberg, and because it is a pathway I have had to leave out a great many interesting anecdotes, events and interactions. Allen's soul was such a great and positive beacon that he attracted literally thousands of people who felt close to him. Inevitably this walkway through the Forest Ginsberg could not touch a number of important connections in his life, and I ask for the indulgence of those poets, activists, filmmakers, musicians, family members, painters, Beat Generation scholars, & friends in countries all around the world, who had their own complicated relationships with the great bard Allen Ginsberg, and whose memories are not heard and seen along this pathway.

There are two good biographies of Allen Ginsberg, *Dharma Lion* by Michael Schumacher, and *Ginsberg* by Barry Miles. Read together, each with a slightly different point of view, Allen Ginsberg emerges as the great human that he was. His journals, his multitudinous interviews, his poems (always biographical), the endnotes to his books, his descriptions of his photos, and my own files, including many clippings, journals, letters and tapes from my own numerous interactions, performances and capers with him for thirty-four years, were helpful in creating this book. The memories of my wife Miriam, and of Bob Rosenthal, Bill Morgan, Raymond Foye, Rosebud Pettet, Steve Taylor, Andrew Wylie, Hal Willner, Bill Adler and others were very helpful, and I am very grateful for them.

I loved him, and he is in my mind almost as if he were alive even as I type this on a warm spring day, wishing he were staying across the street at Raymond Foye's house (as he sometimes did) so I could go over there for a chat (and some good advice, for he was a teacher around the clock).

He kept everything— doodles on napkins, the 60,000 letters of friends, the 18,900 pages (and more) of journals, and just about every fragment of his time-track, so it might be interesting for someone to do a Total Biography of Ginsberg.. He seemed to be asking for it with his tens of thousands of photos, his thousands of recordings and interviews, so perhaps a day-by-day bio, maybe 25,000 pages long, is what is required. That would be a Joycean endeavor. On the other hand, his final ten years would make a fine project for a biographer.

I cannot be the one, but I have written a temporary path, with log bridges over streams and ropes down cliff sides, through the Forest Ginsberg, for your study and enjoyment.

—Edward Sanders
Woodstock, NY

ALLEN GINSBERG

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Growing up in America. Cineophile, Ltd. 508 Queen Street West, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5V 2B3 Phone (416)-368-7499 Directed by Morley Markson 1988. [Small interview].

It Don't pay to be an Honest Citizen. 78 min. color copyright 1984 Object Productions/Jacob Burckhardt 201 E. 4th Street NYC 10009. [Bit part].

Voices & Visions. Series on Modern American Poetry in 13 one-hour segments, Jan. 1988 PBS broadcast. Allen Ginsberg appears in the segments on Whitman and W.C. Williams. Available in video cassette and 16 mm film through N.Y. Ctr. for Visual History, 625 Broadway, NYC 10012, 212-777-6900. [Comment on W. C.W.]

Beat Generation. Renaissance Motion Pictures, 23 W. 73rd St. suite #101 NYC NY 10023. 212-496 0088. Produced by Janet Forman, 1987. [Appearances.]

What Happened to Kerouac. 96-minute, 1985. Directed by Richard Lerner & Lewis MacAdams, a Richard Lerner Production, New Yorker Films, 16 W. 61st St., NYC, 10023, 212-247-6110. [Appearances.]

Father Death Blues. Part of "Don't Grow Old," for the Manhattan Video Project, Out There Productions, Inc., 156 W. 27th st., Ste. 5-W, NYC, NY 10001, 1984. [4 minute music poetry video].

Burroughs The Movie. Directed by Howard Brookner, produced by Howard Brookner and Alan Yentob.

Giorno Video Pak 2, VHS GPS 034. (c) 1983 Citifilmworks, (c) (p) 1985 Giorno Poetry Systems Institute Inc., 222 Bowery, NYC 10012. [Appearances.].

Writers In Conversation #16, Allen Ginsberg with R.D. Laing, ICA Video, London, 1985, Dist. Roland Collection, 3120 Pawtucket Rd. Northbrook, Il, 60602 [Performance.].

Allan 'N' Allen's Complaint. 30-minute color video, Nam June Paik & Shigeo Kubota. Appeared at 1983 Whitney Museum Biennial. Dist. by Send Video Arts, 1250 17th St., San Francisco, CA 94110. [Interesting feature.].

Poetry in Motion. 87 minutes, produced and directed by Ron Mann, 1982. Sphinx Productions in association w/Giorno Poetry Systems, 222 Bowery, NYC. Distributed by Giorno Poetry Systems. Includes "Bird Brain," "Do the Meditation," "Capital Air" and an interview with Ginsberg. [Bit part, not good].

The Living Tradition: Ginsberg on Whitman. Full Color Sound Filmstrip with addit. cassette and Teacher's Guide. Jr. High-Jr. Coll. CE392 (The Liv. Tradition--2 cassettes.) Single cassette: (Ginsberg Reads Whitman.) Dist: Centre Productions Inc, 1312 Pine, Suite A, Boulder, Colorado, 80302.

Fried Shoes, Cooked Diamonds. With Corso, Burroughs, Leary, Orlovsky, Anne Waldman. Dir. Constanzo Allione. Dist. Mystic Fire Video, 24 Horatio St. #3, N.Y. 10014.

Renaldo & Clara. 2 & 4 hr. versions, 1977. Dir. Bob Dylan, Rolling Thunder Review stars. Distributed by Circuit Films, 910 Hennepin, Mpls MN. 55403. (o.p.) [4th Lead Role]

Me & My Brother. Dir. Robert Frank with Orlovsky Brothers, Joe Chaikin, NY, 1966 Distributed as below.

Pull My Daisy. Dir. Robert Frank & A. Leslie, Narrated by Jack Kerouac with G. Corso, P. Orlovsky, L. Rivers and D. Amram. NY, 1958. Dist. Houston Museum of Art

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