

## Everyday Gerrit

*Gerrit Lansing, 1928-2018*

Gerrit loved to take baths. He took them often. He loved the water and for many years he sailed upon it. Not only does the theme of water recur throughout his poetry but he was, to me, a magical body of water himself. As Bob Creeley said, or maybe it was my brother Kevin, water seeks its own level, takes the form of the container it is in, is colorless, and is the essence of life. At the sight of his friends, Gerrit's face would light up immediately, his clear blue eyes would dance delighted like water rushing over stone. He would meet everyone at their own level and his influence would seep through. Like water, Gerrit's spirit and intellect were constantly replenishing, cleansing and refreshing for whomever he selflessly shared these gifts.

Gerrit and I talked or saw each other almost every day. Our conversations would include a wide myriad of topics usually covering our day, our plans, food, restaurants, poetry, spirituality, readings our friends and books. Gerrit possessed a rare genius for not only having read more books than anyone I have ever met, but his special ability to connect idea to idea and book to book in casual conversation, was truly amazing to witness. Even with the wide range of knowledge he possessed and the pure genius of his work, his never ending interest and curiosity in people kept him vibrant and eternally young, right up to the moment of his death. No matter whom Gerrit would meet, whether they be a poet or a plumber, he would accord them the entire focus of his attention and the fruits of his delight. He once described his relationship with an old poet friend as "capering"- to skip or dance lively around. Gerrit was truly a capering spirit. His belief in Whitman's idea of the cohesive companionship aspect of brotherly love was important to him. Fame never interested him. He believed in the idea that we do our best work in the shadows, under the radar. Although he became a recognized respected authority figure in many disciplines, he never courted such attention. His continual worldly curiosity and thirst for knowledge kept him youthful and full of a seemingly endless source of spiritual energy. Even as his body began to fail him and decline swiftly and irrevocably, his spirit was brimming, bright and strong and his presence and attention to the many people who came to visit him never wavered.

I am deeply grateful for his time, his friendship and his eternal generosity of spirit and of mind. I wish him fair winds and following seas.