

**BRIGGS, Donald Robert (1/5/40--10/25/07).** Don Briggs from Albia, Iowa, attended Grinnell for his first two years of college, 1957-59, where he lived in Gates Hall. He completed his undergraduate education at Drake University with a B.A. in Education in 1961. In 1965 he obtained a M.A. in Library Science from the University of Illinois.



In the 1960s Briggs taught English at a Des Moines high school and an Episcopalian mission in Liberia. He also worked as a librarian at the University of Illinois. During this decade he confronted his alcohol abuse through AA and for the rest of his life was active in AA, helping many people with their sobriety.

In the 1970s Don lived in Los Angeles where he nurtured his love for theater and opera. In 1975 he was diagnosed with testicular cancer, but after experimental treatments, he recovered. He wrote a play based on his fight with cancer and alcoholism; entitled *Phil & Mac*, the play was produced by the Los Angeles Actors Theatre and won the Hollywood Drama-Logue Award for Writing in 1983.

In 1980 he moved to San Francisco where he preferred to be known as "Bob" and presumably came out of the closet as a gay man. He worked as a records manager for the Labat-Anderson information management firm. He studied Buddhism and counseled AIDS patients and their loved ones through the Shanti Foundation for Peace. He also wrote the libretto for the opera *Least of My Children*, which told the story of a mother caring for her son dying of AIDS. Premiered in May of 1989 in San Francisco, it was described as the first opera to deal explicitly with the AIDS epidemic.

In 1990 Labat-Anderson transferred Bob to Philadelphia, and he worked with the firm until 1997. He then began work as a librarian for the Philadelphia Free Library, which he continued until 2006. At the Library, he was "well-loved and respected;" he had "vision and warm enthusiasm." He also joined the Philadelphia Artist Conference Network and began creating paintings and collages. Grief counseling for groups in the gay community was a major volunteer activity.

In 2000 Bob entered into a life partnership with Brian Arcarese, who was still with Bob when he died in 2007 of Myelodysplastic Syndromes, a bone-marrow cancer. (Gayle Ronan Sims, *A renaissance man who turned around his troubled youth*, Philadelphia Inquirer (Nov. 18, 2007).)