

**Letter to my Fellow Americans,
from Mormon Station Park, Genoa, NV
(July 4th, 2016)**

Rita Geil

Dedicated to my son Captain Adam T. Gross, USMC (retired after 22 years of active duty)

“... *From the mountains, to the prairies,/ To the oceans, white with foam ...*”
God Bless America by Irving Berlin

Who lives in the house of freedom? Do you?
Do you celebrate your expansive view?
 With a microbrew, or fine chardonnay,
 do you raise a toast on Independence Day
to our grand old flag: to the red, white, and blue?

Or maybe your days run too short. It's tough
when even two jobs don't bring in enough.
 Thank God you live in the land of the free
 but, frankly, discussing democracy
doesn't help much when the going gets rough.

We count on our rights, on our liberties.
We say what we think. We pray as we please.
 If we don't like what our leader's about,
 we sign our *John Hancock* to vote the boss out,
shoot *ballots* to bring errant chiefs to their knees.

In this house of freedom, we're not alarmed
when we feel the wind of a rising storm,
 notice the din of a distant battle.
 We watch TV as storm windows rattle,
assured that our ramparts are safe from harm

while dead heroes watch, from rows on the lawns –
the fallen: beloved daughters and sons,
 with their crowns of bone and weapons of rust.
 They perished preserving the freedom we trust.
Now they lie, voiceless, in groves of stone.

What might they tell us, if they still could talk?
Freedom! To keep it, you must walk the walk!
 Given the ultimate price we all paid,
 consider with care every choice to be made.
 Citizens, do not deserve our rebuke!

From the mountains, to the prairies,
to the oceans flecked with foam,
 ground teaches us to remember

blood. The brave remind us
how we call this house *home*.